

T H E
Christian's Helper.

"By love serve one another" (Gal. v. 13).

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THE CHRISTIAN'S HELPER.



GOD'S WONDROUS GRACE.

"All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord" (Ps. cxlv. 10).

THE psalmist speaks of Jehovah's wondrous works (ver. 5), His terrible acts (ver. 6), His great goodness and righteousness (ver. 7), His graciousness, compassion and mercy (ver. 8), His goodness to all, and His tender mercies over all His works (ver. 9). So His works must praise Him, but His saints they bless Him; for it is theirs to behold His handiwork and intelligently comprehend the testimony they give forth. God's works in creation, His works in government, and His works in grace, all speak powerfully of Him. They voice His praise. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." What is needed is eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand; and then praise will flow out naturally to Him who is Creator, Controller and Saviour.

Long, long ago, Jehovah said, "My people doth not consider." There have been exceptions, and the writer of Psalm viii. was a happy one; for he wrote, "When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained"; and the effect upon his soul found expression in the words, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him; and the son of man that Thou visitest him?" God's greatness was forced home upon him, and man's insignificance was deeply felt by him.

And so it ever is. God's greatness as manifested in the heavens and the earth, fill the heart and mind with awe, with reverence, and with godly fear. As examples of power, of wisdom, of precision, of vastness of conception, of attention to the smallest details, they overwhelm us. What indeed is man? Why should he be thought of? Why should he be visited? The wonders of God's grace surpass all else.

God the Infinite, the Eternal, was mindful of man ; so mindful that He Himself, God the Son, would become a man—not only a man, but the Son of Man, and so He speaks of Himself over and over as if loving thus to regard Himself.

The Son of Man of which the Psalm speaks, was not Adam, for he was no man's son ; but the Son of Man was the very Son of God, "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father." Marvel of marvels that He should be made lower than the angels ; that He should have such an experience as verse 4 expresses ; that He should pray as in Psalm xvi., "Preserve me O God, for in Thee do I put my trust ;" and that on the Cross He should say, "I am a worm, and no man ; a reproach of men, and despised of the people" (Ps. xxii).

He was going to die : He had become a man to be able to do so. He was "made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death." But that was no afterthought, no sudden impulse. It was pre-arranged long before. Peter says in Acts ii. that Christ was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." All had been divinely planned ; all settled in divine counsel. The need all foreknown, God had in eternal counsel decided to people the heavenlies with a race of men, of which race His Son, a Man, but a Man who had died and risen again, and who was ascended and glorified, should be the Head. Thus would there be a new creation, a spiritual race, each member of which was to be holy, and without blame, before Him in love. Hence we read of being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. i.).

It is well to remember that God's eternal purposes have not time but eternity in view. All was settled in the Divine mind before time began ; before even the foundations of the world were laid :—What kind of creatures should fill the Courts above ; what the relation of His Son to them and theirs to Him ; what the condition in which each one should be ; what the kind of blessings they should have bestowed upon them

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with each one conformed to the image of His Son and He the first-born, the pre-eminent One, among the entire company—all was settled. An inheritance too was provided, the riches of the glory of which we should earnestly desire to know. But that vast inheritance, God's very own, is now to be possessed and enjoyed by them through association with the appointed heir of all things.

Wondrous glories are given to Him. He will share these glories with His brethren—God's children, each one having been begotten of Him and partaking of the Divine nature (God's moral nature). Also, possessing spiritual life, everlasting life, through being quickened as to the soul by the Son, each one is to have his mortal body quickened to participate in everlasting life—if living when Christ comes, the body will be changed; if dead, raised in incorruption, a spiritual body like unto the body of glory of the Man of God's counsels.

In this vast plan, devised before the world, God has immensely excelled all that creation can display. He created the earth and put a man upon it, and to him He gave a woman to be his wife. Sin entered, and we know the sad, sad story, having tasted, perhaps deeply, of the misery caused by sin—the mighty sorrows of mortality. But it is asked, As all was good, why did God allow it? Infinite in wisdom He is, and we can now spell it out. The Divine plan, revealed since the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, lets us see that but for sin there would have been no coming down of God's beloved Son into this world, no incarnation and no death.

The presence of evil, of sin, called forth the full manifestation of the attributes of God. Hence Satan, knowing nothing of God's purpose, acted in the hatred to God that filled his being, and God allowed the tempter free scope. He might have kept him in chains; but no, he was free to attempt the ruin of our first parents, and he succeeded. But, great as Satan is, he is not omnipotent; wise as he is, he is not perfect in knowledge. Outwitted, defeated, and

disgraced, he will be eternally the most miserable of all the creatures God has created. Sin is the dark background, which shows up, in the way God has to do with it and those affected by it, all that He is.

If we think of His love, how was it manifested? "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 (the) love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son, the propitiation for our sins." If we think of His holiness, Sinai with its devouring fire proclaims that truth but sinks into insignificance in the presence of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who was it that forsook the Holy One, the Obedient One, the Dependent One, the Trusting One, whose every desire, purpose, and aim was to glorify God? the One who had the right to claim equality with God, but who pleased not Himself, affirming, "I do always the things that please Him." He could say of Himself that He was in the bosom of the Father, yet when as a man, amid deepest depths of shame, He refused to act for His own deliverance, or even to pray for legions of angels to come to His aid. With every moral quality in perfection in Him, and never before so exquisitely delightful in His perfection to God, yet had He to cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He answered His own question by vindicating God in so forsaking Him: "But Thou art holy."

Christ was there for sinners. Sins, the sins of all those who will have a part in the blessedness of being on high with God's beloved Son, and all those who will truly know and worship God in the millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, had been laid upon Him. Upon Him the strokes of vengeance fell. He suffered for sin, the *Just* for the unjust. So if we think of mercy, justice, righteousness, none of these would have been manifested but for sin.

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." "What a love was that! He, the Son, become a man to do God's will, yet when amidst

God's Wondrous Grace.

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the most terrible circumstances that it was possible for Him to be in, God forsook the one unswerving Servant, the man Christ Jesus. He died, He made atonement, caring fully for God's glory amid all. Man's villainy nailed Him to the cross. Satan made use of men to do his will. He was the prince of this world. His policy was to dishonour God, to cover Him with shame. And the Son of God was left alone in His agony.

Said He, for now truly had He become a man: "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." The one He had treated as His friend had lifted up his heel against Him. Those who loved Him were too terrified to stand by Him. Peter denied Him; all forsook Him and fled. "Alone He bare the cross."

"Alone forsaken Thou
Of God, Thy God, when doing all His will."

Jesus died! Will God do nothing? Man's unrighteousness had put Him on the cross, "they killed the Prince of Life." What will God's righteousness do? He raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory. Christ on the throne in heaven, exalted high above all principality and power, is the expression of God's righteousness; and soon God's righteousness will put in heaven too, as co-sharers of glory and partakers of the inheritance on high, myriads of those who had been His enemies, but not one save those whose sins had been borne by their Substitute upon the cross. There, yes, there, and there for ever, made like unto God's Son, holy and without blame, glory all around them, and each one a medium for the display of God's grace, His righteousness, and His glory. God the Infinite, the Eternal, will feast with ineffable delight on the blessedness of creatures who owe their all to Him and to the Son of His love, who has fulfilled His will. His purposes, His counsels for eternity will be completed. The objects of His grace and love capacitated by nature, life, and glory, by God's Spirit too, to enjoy eternally God fully revealed.

We have not spoken of the Church, nor of her

peculiar blessing, of her unique position as the assembly of God, the body and the bride of Christ. Who can tell all? The wisdom, the skill, the power, the grace are all divine. To Him be glory in the Church throughout *all* ages, world without end. Amen.

E. R. W.

GOLDEN THREADS.

“All things work together for good” (Rom. viii. 28).

WEAVING, weaving, every moment lending
 Unseen fibres to the weft of life;
 Hour by hour the mystic cords are blending
 Into beauty wrought beneath the strife.
 Wondrous fabric! “all things work together,”
 Linked by golden threads of love between;
 All converge to our God’s appointed centre
 Where the glorious end will yet be seen.
 While for us our Father’s love enriches
 Every pleasant form in this design,
 So likewise through the long and painful stitches,
 Countless threads of living gold entwine.
 Though at times our weak, impatient fingers
 Interfere, and would confuse the whole;
 Even there some golden thread still lingers
 As an ensign of His sweet control!
 Has a cord of sacred worth been broken
 Where it seemed that all would smoothly spin?
 Ah! this is a sure, abundant token
 Golden threads are being woven in!
 These we trace when God subdues with sadness
 Dazzling scenes that mar faith’s vision here;
 Sanctifies our morning flowers of gladness
 With the evening dewdrop of a tear.
 Day by day the web increases slowly;
 “Light affliction” is the hidden wheel,
 Working for us such a “weight of glory”
 As eternity will yet reveal!
 If thou canst not comprehend His weaving,
 Leave the tangled mazes to His care;
 Joy and peace are thine, His love believing,
 Trust Him then, for golden threads are there!

The Baptist's Teaching.

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THE BAPTIST'S TEACHING.

(Luke iii. 7-14).

WHEN John the Baptist speaks to the multitudes that come to be baptized of him, he warns them, as the other evangelists do also, to flee from the wrath to come, and not to presume upon their privileges of birth, saying, "We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Moreover, already "the axe is laid unto the root of the trees"; judgment was at the door; "every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (verses 7-9).

This process was what was now going on. So far we have what is common to Luke with Matthew. But we have afterwards what is peculiar, "And the people asked him, saying, 'What shall we do then?'" and then we have John's detailed exhortation to different classes of men, "He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat let him do likewise" (10-11). Although John called to repentance, it is a poor and superficial sorrow for sins that simply owns the past and judges, however strongly, the evil that has hitherto broken out in our ways. John lays down suitable conduct for those who professed to repent. God was acting Himself for His own glory in the spirit of this same grace. Repentance prepares the way for grace; it is produced by grace of course, but at the same time it leads into a path of grace.

So also (ver. 12-13) when the publicans came to be baptized, instead of dismissing them contemptuously as a mere Jew would have done, he answers their question, "Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you." Notoriously they were extortioners; their rapacity was proverbial; they plundered the people of whom they were the official tax-gatherers. The soldiers similarly (ver. 14) "demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do

violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages."

It is clear that there we are warned against violence and corruption, the two great features of men left to themselves. But, besides, contentedness with their wages is pressed upon them. It is remarkable how much the spirit of contentment has to do not only with the happiness of a soul but with its holiness. There is scarcely another thing that so tends to disturb our relationship with God and man as discontent. It makes an individual ripe for any evil. It helps, on a great scale, to the revolutions of nations and other social ruptures. On a smaller scale, it subverts the equilibrium of families and the right attitude of individuals as nothing else can. So we read of "unthankful, unholy," classed together by the Spirit of God. We also find unthankfulness mentioned as leading into idolatry. The Gentiles not only did not glorify God as God, but they were unthankful, and they fell into all kinds of moral depravity. There is nothing more important than to cherish a thankfulness of heart, sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts, having confidence in His goodness, and also in the certainty that He has given to ourselves individually exactly the thing that is best for us. But the only way to be thus content, whatever may be our lot, is to look at God as dealing with us in Christ for eternity.

There is thus, under the most homely words of John the Baptist, real moral wisdom from God, suitable to men's circumstances here below. We have not here heavenly things; these are the fruit of Christ's redemption. Nevertheless, the sketch that is given us of John's teaching is eminently practical, and suited to deal with the heart and conscience.

—*Bible Treasury*.

A ton weight of human literature is not worth an ounce of Scripture; one single drop of the essential tincture of the Word of God is better than a sea full of our commentings and sermonisings, and the like.

Notes on John.

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NOTES ON JOHN.

(Some notes taken on a perusal of John xiii. 31—John xvi.)

THESE things spake Jesus and departed and did hide Himself from them (the people) (John xii. 26). In such words are described the closing scene of our Lord's public ministry as recorded by John. Hidden for a brief season from the gaze of the world, He gathered His own around Himself in the upper room; and knowing that His hour had come, that He should depart out of the world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end (John xiii. 1). What comfort and encouragement do these words convey to the hearts of those who have bowed to His name, while aware of their own shortcomings and failures along the way!

The occasion which brought Jesus and His disciples together was, we learn from the other gospels, to eat the Passover Supper, followed, as this was, by the institution of the Lord's Supper. And although no reference is made to the Supper or its institution, save in an incidental way (verses 2, 4, etc.), yet we have recorded in this gospel much instruction which is lacking in the other gospels; instruction which appeals, powerfully but tenderly, to the heart of every Christian as he ponders over it.

Gathered together for the last time, it is deeply affecting to learn that there is no place too holy on earth; no occasion too solemn; no company too select, but that the enemy of our souls can and will obtrude himself. In the far-off days of Job, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them (Job i. 6); and Scripture informs us of his presence and activity in the heavens even at the present time, though we rejoice to know that there is a day coming when he shall be cast out and his power and influence be for ever annulled (Rev. xii. ; xx. 10). The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray the Lord; and after receiving the sop, Satan entered into him—took possession of him. Being brought under the Adversary's power, he could no longer remain in the Lord's

company, but leaves the table and passes out into the darkness.

The Lord's troubled spirit now found relief, and He is free to unbosom Himself of much that is of deep and abiding interest to His disciples of all ages, for He is speaking to them as disciples, and not as apostles, or as a special caste, as Rome would teach us. It is noteworthy that the author of this gospel only once uses the word "apostle." "Verily, verily I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent (lit.: an apostle) greater than He that sent him" (xiii. 16).

In the prologue of this gospel, we read: "He came unto His own (things) and His own (people) received Him not, but as many as received Him, to them gave He power (or right) to become sons (rather children) of God" (i. 11, 12). His own things embrace the whole world, and His coming unto them is in harmony with what is affirmed of Him in the opening verses of the chapter: "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (verse 3). His own (people) were, of course, that favoured nation, the Jews. His name was to be called Jesus, "For He shall save *His* people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). And again, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people ('the' should be here inserted), for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke ii. 10, 11). But the circle diminishes (though capable of very great expansion): "As many as received Him," be they Jews or Gentiles, "to them gave He right to be children of God." Glorious truth! "His own" in chap. xiii. 1 formed part of this restricted circle.

Like Joseph who, when he had caused every man to go out from him, bade his brethren come nearer to him (Gen. xlv.), the Lord would draw His disciples nearer to Himself, now that Judas had departed. There was a stronger and closer relationship between them than Teacher and disciple. They (but not Judas) had received Him, and, as if to set His seal to the truth of their having the right to be children of God (John

Notes on John.

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i. 12), He addresses them now, the only occasion He did so, as "children," using the diminutive form of the word, so emphasizing His intimate regard for them (John xiii. 33). Peculiarly appropriate was the use of this affectionate compellation, as He was about to speak to them of the "Father"—a name which, as coming from His own lips, occurs no less than forty-four times in these chapters, which are, in a special manner, the Son's testimony to the Father, as the two preceding chapters are the Father's testimony to the Son.

About to be separated from His beloved disciples, He would, first of all, urge upon them to exhibit, as became partakers of the divine nature (John i. 13; 2 Pet. i. 4), love to one another: a request or commandment which, ere the close of His remarks, He several times repeated (xiii. 34, 35: xv. 12, 17). Knowing what was in man (John ii. 25), and the tendency there was for strife among themselves (Luke xxii. 24), He would emphasize this salutary, this necessary commandment by repeating it. And is there not need to press this commandment home to our own hearts? If they truly loved Him it would be shown by their keeping His commandments (xiv. 15), and alternately, they who kept His commandments loved Him, and were the objects of the Father's love, as well as His own; and He would manifest Himself unto them (xiv. 21). If they kept His commandments, they should abide in His love, even as He had kept His Father's commandments and abode in His love (xv. 10). Indeed, it was by so doing that the world knew that He loved the Father (xiv. 31). But their love to one another was to be nothing short of His love to them (xiii. 34; xv. 12)—a love that could be likened only to the Father's love to Himself (xv. 9). How was this (His) love to be demonstrated? "Greater love hath no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (xv. 13, 14). Before many days should pass away, He would demonstrate it by laying down His life. For His friends? Yea, and for ungodly

ones; for sinners, for enemies! (Rom. v. 6-10). "Hereby we have known love, because He has laid down His life for us; and *we* ought for the brethren to lay down our lives" (1 John iii. 16, new trans.).

The news of the Lord's departure from among His disciples had filled their hearts with sorrow (xvi. 6). Did they love Him? Then they should rejoice because He was going to His Father (xiv. 28), and His Father was greater than Himself. When the final parting came, "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem *with great joy*, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God" (Luke xxiv. 52-53). Besides, He was going away to prepare a place for them, and was coming again to receive them unto Himself (xiv. 3-28). They had received Him at a time when He was in the world, and the world knew Him not (John i. 10-12), but in its ignorance cast Him out and crucified Him. Would He, could He, ever forget their receiving Him? He, in His turn, would receive them unto Himself.

Though bereft of the Lord's presence, yet He would not leave them destitute amid the many difficulties and dangers which would beset them. He would send the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete or Comforter, who would not leave them as He (the Lord) must needs do, but would abide, not only with them, but in them, for ever—for time and for eternity. Marvellous truth! The Father would send the Holy Spirit in the Son's name, and the Son Himself would send Him (xiv. 16-18; xv. 26; xvi. 7). What oneness of the Father and the Son! Truly, "I and my Father are One"! (John x. 30). But the Holy Spirit was not an emanation merely; He was a Person of the Deity. "He went forth from with the Father" (xv. 26, new trans.).

It will be noted that the Lord Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as *another* Comforter (or Paraclete); the Lord Himself being one. There are, then, two Paracletes—a paraclete being one who is called or sent for to assist another, whether by pleading his cause as an advocate, or as a helper or supporter. The Lord is Advocate or Paraclete (1 John ii. 1), and the

Holy Spirit is the *Comforter or Paraclete. The latter on coming into the world would undertake services of a truly wonderful character. He would take the place of Teacher, as the Lord had done, and lead His disciples into all truth; He would call to their minds all the things the Lord had said (xiv. 26), shew them things to come, glorify the Lord, receive the things of Christ, and announce such to them. As with the Lord Jesus, so with the Holy Spirit. He would not speak from (not of) Himself (xiv. 10; xvi. 13); that is, He would not act, as it were, independently. He would speak the things He heard.

Does not this declare to us the oneness of our Triune God?

But more. The world would hate the disciples of the Lord, as it had hated Him before them (xv. 18). As the Lord had loved His own (xiii. 1), so the world would love its own (xv. 19). The world's hatred and ignorance would bring persecution to those who, like their beloved Master, bore witness concerning it, that the works thereof are evil (John vii. 7). But the Holy Spirit, while not screening them from times of stress and storm, would be their Comforter and Sustainer as they passed through them. The world, however, would feel His power, for He would bring demonstration to it of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (xvi. 8). He would be the world's Convicter. For what is the world? The term is used in a variety of ways. Sometimes it is synonymous with the earth; sometimes it is applied to the earth's inhabitants; and at other times to the two taken together. In its moral sense the word refers sometimes to the place or sphere in which the natural man dwells, seeking his own ease or pleasure, and carrying out his multifarious schemes of business, government, etc., without reference to God or Christ; and sometimes to that arrangement or system of things established by the hand of man, and maintained by his own power, wit, and ingenuity. It is, of course, the moral world which is hostile to God.

*I have retained this word in conformity with the A. V. ; The "Advocate" might be used here also.

There is much truth in the remark that rulers are the reflection of the people whom they rule. In the case of the prince (or ruler) of this world, this remark finds sad verification. Of him it is averred that he has "nothing in Me" (Christ)—nothing in common, nothing in harmony with Christ (xiv. 30), and that he is "judged" (xvi. 11). The world (unbelievers) also is already judged (John iii. 17-19, R.V.); but though judged, they are not yet condemned. Their condemnation awaits a future day. Solemn truth! Who can be surprised at infidels striving to cast doubts upon the genuineness of this Gospel? And what of the Christian? He can joyfully exclaim: "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1).

The world is still in moral darkness. What is recorded of it in the Scriptures of truth, holds good at the present day. Of the Son of God it is said that the world knew Him not, and received Him not (John i. 10, 11); and of God the Holy Spirit, that the world cannot receive Him, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him (xiv. 17). And of the Father? When the world thinks, in its moments of religious enthusiasm, it is rendering service to God by persecuting His people (and how often has this been the case?) it is because it knows not the Father (xvi. 2, 3). The world then knows not the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. What fatal ignorance spite of its boasted education!

The Lord was fully aware of what would befall His beloved disciples, who were about to be left by themselves in a world surrounded by so much that would be hostile to them. They were but men, subject to the weaknesses and infirmities incident to our common humanity. He, therefore, encourages them to have recourse to prayer (xiv. 13, 14; xvi. 23-27), which is ever the heartfelt acknowledgment of weakness and dependency. But their prayer was to take a form different from that to which they had been accustomed (see Matt. vi. 9-13 and Luke xi. 2-4). Hitherto they had not asked "In My name." Now (after His death)

they were to do so, and their prayer should be answered, that the Father might be glorified in the Son, and that their joy might be full. What grace! Let the persecutions be what they might, a prayer offered up "In My name" would impart fulness of joy to them (compare Acts v. 41; xvi. 25). What power in "That name all names excelling!" A power, however, which would be exercised, not for crushing their enemies and so bringing deliverance, but for giving joy to their hearts while in the midst of the fires of persecution.

It is in connection with prayer that the oneness of the Father and the Son again shines out so beautifully, "At that day ye shall ask in My name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God" (xvi. 26, 27).

The Father's love was a direct and personal love. He did not bestow His love upon them as it were by proxy. He Himself loved them. This personal character of the Father's love is made yet more distinct and emphatic in the choice of the word translated "loveth"—a word expressive of intimate personal affection. (It is the same word which is used in the next sentence for "loved," by which the Lord speaks of the disciples' love for Himself). Love takes a variety of forms. "God so loved the world": in His grace and pity He looked down upon us—objects beneath Him, the creatures of His own hands. He loved us; and, as led by His Spirit, we look up to Him—the Almighty God—and, while conscious of our own nothingness before Him, are made sensible of His love to us; and, in return, love Him, our hearts overflowing with gratitude and praise (1 John iv. 10). There is another form of love engendered by close personal communion and contact combined with the consciousness of a relationship which permits, encourages, and cultivates, sweet and hallowed intimacies which yield mutual pleasure and delight. Such is the character of the love wherewith the Father

Himself loves His children; and such, too, is the character of the love which this devoted band of men is credited, in grace, with rendering to the Lord Jesus. How sweetly must these words have fallen upon the listeners' ears! How fondly would they cherish them! And who more so than the warm-hearted Peter?

There were many other things which the Lord was desirous of speaking to His disciples, but they could not bear them then (xvi. 12). He had a purpose in speaking these things, viz., that they should not be stumbled on account of the troubles by the way (xvi. 1), that His own joy might be full (xv. 11), and that in Him they might have peace. In the world their portion was tribulation, but they were to be of good cheer, as He had overcome the world (xvi. 33). They, too, should overcome the world, even as He had done (1 John v. 4, 5).

With these tender words the gracious Saviour closes His discourse. He had been speaking to His own of His Father; and now He will speak to His Father of His own (xvii.).

A. C. H.

LAW OF THE SIN-OFFERING.

(Leviticus vi.).

THE Old Testament, from its commencement to its close, bears testimony to the Christ of God. Christ was the central figure in the counsels of God from, yea, before, the foundation of the world; and in the precious revelations given of God, He is constantly referred to and foreshadowed. In the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms, the Lord said there were things written *concerning Himself* (Luke xxiv. 44). Mind it is not, as is sometimes extravagantly stated, that all written in the Old Testament is of Christ. The language of our Lord to the wondering disciples journeying to Emmaus negatives that entirely. "He expounded *in* all the Scriptures *the things concerning Himself*." True, Christ is found

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in every part. Genesis opens with Him in the humiliation and sufferings He would endure, as Malachi closes with the glories that would follow.

To the sceptic and unbelieving professor, the communications therein given are but myths and legends; to the believer they are revelations from God full of unspeakable preciousness. Let us not allow man to rob us, through vain deceit, of the immeasurable joy that comes through entering by faith into the mind of God thus revealed. For how apparent it becomes that God has been setting Christ forth.

Turning to "the law of the sin-offering," we find the opening words (ver. 24) indicating a fresh communication from Jehovah for the priestly house. To Aaron and his sons it appertains, and what is so exceedingly expressive is the manifest care to jealously guard the character of this offering. "*It is most holy*" speaks, how eloquently, to Christians of the spotless purity of the great Antitype who "offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. ix. 14). Just where men are likely to reason and draw deductions only to come to conclusions quite contrary to fact and the mind of God, is where God speaks the needful word to keep from such. "*It is most holy*" is His safeguard respecting the *sin-offering*.

"In the place where the burnt-offering is killed shall the sin-offering be killed before the Lord." Setting out two different aspects of the work of Christ—the former for acceptance (Lev. i. 4), the latter to obtain forgiveness of sins (chap. iv. 20, 26, 31, 35)—there is this in common that both were to be killed in the same place. And surely we read here that the cross of Christ is the only adequate fulfilment of this. He, the Holy One of God, the spotless Lamb, was made sin for us. He knew no sin, but became the sin-bearer in His devotion, love, and grace, surrendering Himself entirely to God and bearing the judgment that was due to us. Oh, immensity of love!

And, intrinsically holy, no manner of defilement or uncleanness could possibly attach to Him. He was,

He is, undefiled (Heb. vii. 26). He came from God, the true Sacrifice for sin (Rom. viii. 3), and to God He returns, the absolutely pure One, after accomplishing that for which He came out. He became man to die; but however deep the depths of suffering He passed through, "He was going back a man without a shade over that intrinsic holiness which marked His coming out from God." Whatever the work He accomplished, undefiled He abides. "It is most holy" carefully secures the character of the sin-offering. Nowhere was holiness so conspicuous as in Christ's cross, when He who knew no sin was made sin for us.

Then next, "the priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it." Eating expresses identification, and here is set forth the fact typically that Christ on high, "in the holy place," identifies Himself with the one who had sinned. His death on the tree is the basis of all, but how blessed to have recalled to one's heart and mind the truth of Christ's advocacy. On high He makes our cause His own—identifies Himself with those for whom He died. Marvellous is the grace expressed in those words: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." To fathom the immeasurable depths of His grace thus expressed is clearly impossible, but to realise it more fully should be our desire.

Holiness is characteristic here, and the sanctifying power of the offering is noticed. For, "whatever shall touch the flesh thereof shall be holy," is the next statement. It answered adequately all the claims of God, and brought to the sinner the forgiveness of his sins. So all trace of that must be put away as the sin was. Hence an earthen vessel used in connection with the sacrifice was to be broken, a "brazen pot" had to be scoured and rinsed in water. Not one trace must remain, as Jehovah would remember no more the sin which had occasioned the offering.

Another point of importance now comes forward: "Every male among the priests shall eat thereof" is the word, a command that is followed again by the solemn announcement that "*it is most holy.*" Woe

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be to those who despise or profane the Lord's offering ! Do we not here learn that as we are made priests to His God and Father (Rev. i. 6), so we are called to exercise the priestly function of eating of the sin-offering and thus identify ourselves with another's failure, whilst entering blessedly if solemnly into the provision made for sin ? We surely are neglectful here ! Never would the conscience become hard and unsensitive if the identification here indicated typically were entered into ; nor could sin in any sense be lightly regarded. To confess a brother's sin before God is to have appreciation of the true sin-offering deepened in the soul. Is this without value ?

The last verse calls attention to the fact that when the blood of the sacrifice was carried within to make atonement for the holy place, it was not to be eaten, but burnt with fire. In the former cases the restoration of an individual was in question ; in the latter, propitiation has to be made in the holiest, providing a righteous foundation from which God could act in grace towards a failing people. This concerned them all, as also when the anointed priest sinned or the whole congregation (Lev. iv. 1-13). Everything was out of course, and communion interrupted must be again restored.

The special teaching for us, Christians, comes out in Heb. xiii., where we learn that of the sacrifice, whose blood was carried into the heavenly sanctuary, we do partake. On Christ we feed, and enter into the full abiding effects of the work wrought on Calvary's Cross. That work has everlasting validity. So, partaking of the true sin-offering, a privilege is ours that priests under the law were debarred. How little we can say of the depths of truth in these typical unfoldings, but from the "shadow" we can pass to the "substance," and have our hearts stirred as we more clearly perceive how God had been revealing Christ the ages down.

H. F.

1 SAMUEL XVII. 55.—David, we are told, stood before Saul, and he (Saul) loved him greatly (1 Sam. xvi.) And no wonder, for David's playing on the harp soothed the king when troubled by the spirit which God sent on him judicially. He loved him for the good and refreshment he received. This seems to have been of short duration; for in the next chapter (ver. 15), David is returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem; and "out of sight out of mind," had to be proved as true in David's case as in many another who has stood in the court of a king, especially of one so disordered in heart and mind as king Saul.

But this is not all. David now appears the forlorn hope of Israel in the immediate and public service of the Lord, not of the king; and that makes a man a stranger even to his brethren, and an alien to his mother's house, as the Lord knew pre-eminently. Such certainly David was to Saul and his courtiers. "Abner," says he, "whose son is this youth?" And Abner said, "As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell."

The chosen of God may have extorted the world's esteem, nay love, for what it cannot but admire, and feel the need of; but they are soon forgotten, and their reappearance in the work of the Lord becomes the occasion of showing how little they were ever known. "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not."

It is the same divine power, though exerted in an ordinary way, which multiplies the seed sown in the ground every year, and makes the earth yield her increase: so that what was brought out by handfuls, is brought home in sheaves. This is the Lord's doing. It is by Christ that all natural things consist, and by the word of His power that they are upheld.

Faith can find encouragement even in that which is discouraging, and get nearer to God by taking hold on that hand which is stretched out to push it away. So good a thing it is to be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.

2 TIMOTHY IV.

THE authority and use of the Scriptures having been decisively set forth—for they are God-breathed, and by them His people are to be fully fitted unto every good work—Paul bears solemn witness and testimony before Timothy in charging him to be urgent and faithful, earnest and true, in the discharge of the services he was called upon to perform. And this in view of the growing laxity amongst those professing godliness.

Speaking with all the solemnity and weight that comes from being before God, and consciously pressed with the illimitable glory and omnipotent power that appertains to Christ's appearing and His kingdom when as Judge He is manifested, the Apostle confirms, as it were, his "beloved child" in the office he filled.

Great were the responsibilities devolving upon Timothy; urgent were the necessities of the declining day; hence the "charge." "I charge thee before God," so setting him down in the Divine presence; not to overwhelm with fear and dread, but to give the servant *then*, and the servant *now*, a due sense of the spirit such an one should have labouring in view of the end. Nightfall would soon be with gross darkness covering the people. And the Lord Jesus Christ would come—not in character as Saviour but as Judge—not in wondrous weakness (Luke ii. 12), but with power and great glory, to whom every man must render his account (Rom. xiv. 12). Lord of dead and living, quick and dead would by Him be judged; the former, when revealed from heaven in flaming fire He takes vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not His Gospel (2 Thess. 1, 8); the latter, when in awful majesty He occupies "the great white throne," and dead, small and great, before it are arrayed (Rev. xx. 11, 12). "At His appearing and His kingdom" thus embraces Christ's day of glory and administration, opening with judgment and closing with judgment. How calculated such a charge to impress one with the need of faithfulness and diligence in labour!

To that Timothy is turned; and truly he was to redeem the time for the days were evil. Every oppor-

tunity was to be embraced whilst the ear was yet open to listen. So the Word was to be proclaimed. The "good seed" was still to be scattered; for man's failure could not hinder the exercise of God's sovereignty in stemming the outflow of His grace. The opened Word gives light; by heeding it the way is cleansed; and the Paul who, a prisoner in bonds, rejoiced that God's Word was not bound, now lays this on Timothy—"Preach the Word."

And earnestness was to characterise him. The need for that was ever constant. There is a time for all things and the time for urgency, watchfulness and diligence, is always *now* whilst the dangers that call for such prevail. "Be instant in season, out of season" indicates a readiness for action whenever necessity arises. To be dilatory when the life of the patient is fast ebbing away is to be guilty of neglect and indifference. Great need calls for instant, drastic action, and when great need abounds urgency is always in season. It was so in Timothy's day. Is it less so now?

So he had to "reprove, rebuke, exhort"—convicting where error existed; rebuking the indulgence of lust; exhorting the halting and frail. Conviction had to be pressed home to silence gainsayers; rebuke had to be administered that others might fear; exhortation had to be given to encourage the weak. And all had to be done in the spirit of love that never fails—with the patience that waits long upon need, clasping its object with the grasp of love, each case met with the doctrine, or teaching, suited to it. The spirit that animated Paul when he said of saints that had wandered far from the truth of God, to which he was earnestly endeavouring to recall them, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy," and this because he had, in his heart of hearts, espoused them to Christ (2 Cor. xi. 2)—that spirit was required here. The giving up would be on their side, not his. And so much is indicated in the words "with all long-suffering and doctrine."

The wax of worldliness and self-pleasing was fast closing the ear to the reception of the truth. The

heart was waxing gross; and soon, having already in principle abandoned what once they professed, their cloak is shed and they appear in their true colours—renouncers of God's Word and enemies of Christ's Cross. The "pure milk of the Word" had become nauseous to them; but any fable, the fruit of man's perverted mind and imagination, found ready acceptance. Sound teaching they could not endure, and would not bear with. The ear itched for sentiments pleasing to them, and most exalted amongst them would be the teacher most willing to gratify their lusts. "*After their own lusts*" is the Apostle's comment on their doings.

Ah! and where are we to-day with regard to these words of Paul to Timothy? "The time will come," he wrote; then how much nearer are we to it than when the letter was indited; and how much greater the need for care and watchfulness lest, love for His Word declining, we be caught in the current now running strong, and are soon found in direct opposition to the truth. We must spurn the spurious and obey the truth—hating the evil and loving the good.

But "serve on," is Paul's counsel to his son, make full proof of thy ministry. The father's course was nearly run; his service neared completion; his warfare was nigh ended. But for his son in the faith much remained to be done. In all things sober, judging with a balanced judgment events as they arose, he was to "endure affliction"—not a persecutor but one persecuted, patiently bearing for the sake of the truth. And amidst many needs "the work of the evangelist" was to be performed—a work that ever brings the precious reminder that God's arm is not shortened that He cannot save, and that verily the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation (2 Pet. iii. 15).

The future filled the eye of the Apostle. His heart was absorbed in it, as with confidence he awaited the crown of righteousness, a crown that would be given by the Lord, the righteous Judge, *at that day*, and not alone to Paul, "but unto all them also that love His appearing." "That day," a day well known and anticipated, is the day of review—for the heavenly

saints, the "day of Christ;" for those on earth and for the world the "day of the Lord"—when upon His seat of judgment (or manifestation) (2 Cor. v.), He gives to each His meed of praise and commendation (1 Cor. iv. 5), and awards the crown. For it is evident that "the crown of righteousness" is connected with faithfulness, service, and the discharge of responsibilities. The Lord's title as Bestower of it, and the link with His appearing, confirm this. Judgment and the appearing are joined, but He who judges is the righteous One and "faithfulness is the girdle of His reins." Nothing escapes His watchful eyes, but every action is weighed by Him in the balances of the sanctuary, and every deed done is appraised by Him at its proper value, that is, as He knows it, and not as men view it.

Do we then number with those who love His appearing? That can be no sentiment—not mere saying, but downright solid fact; for every detail of our paths is challenged by it. There, from the righteous Judge, obedience and devotion will receive their due acknowledgement, and the path of faithfulness be consummated with the crown of righteousness, "the labourer's bright reward."

Paul looked forward and knew that the time of release for him was come; the time when his heart's desire would receive its fulfilment and he would "depart to be with Christ" which was very far better. And with his heart in eternity he looked back and gave a brief summary of his way—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." In conflicts many, in perils often, he had been; many cares and anxieties he had to weigh upon him; and now the race drew to its close. How stood it? Ah, doubtless it was joy to the servant to be privileged to add, "I have kept the faith." Many had renounced it; many had turned away on various pretexts; but this servant *knew* his Lord and loved His will. Paul's sun ascended as the day declined; and an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ was about to be ministered unto him. May we, dear readers, covet this likewise! H. F.

NOTES OF ADDRESSES TO YOUNG CHRISTIANS (NO. 7).**THE HOLY GHOST DWELLING ON EARTH.**

WE have had before us during these meetings various portions of Scripture that speak of the presence of the Spirit of God upon earth, but in this address I take up some of these Scriptures in more detail, and earnestly desire that souls may be turned to read the Word of God and believe it. It is a humbling thing that vast numbers of God's children have not laid hold of the fact that God the Holy Ghost is upon earth. The prayers for the sending of the Holy Spirit show that this tremendous fact is not really believed, that the third person of the Trinity is *now, and has been for more than eighteen hundred years, dwelling upon earth.*

Some will say they read in Scripture of the Spirit of God all the way down. That is true, but what I point out is that God the Holy Ghost is never spoken of as dwelling upon earth in Old Testament times. He wrought everywhere and in every day, I know. The second verse of the Bible says, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," and when we come to God's dealings with His people Israel, we learn that the Spirit of God came upon many of them. But we never read of the Spirit of God *dwelling* in them individually, or in them collectively, until Christ had died and gone up to heaven, redemption having been by Him accomplished.

When Christ took His seat at the right hand of God, the Spirit was sent down (John xv. 26), and believers builded together—Jews, and Gentiles as well—became His habitation on the earth, and this abides at the present time (Eph. ii. 22). In His sovereign grace He has wrought in all those who have confessed Christ. He shewed us the need we were in as lost and guilty sinners, and how that was all met by God giving His Son to die and be raised again, and on our believing this blessed and wonderful Gospel we were sealed as Eph. i. 13 tells us. God put His mark upon us. He gave us the *gift* of the Holy Spirit to dwell in us until the day of redemption (Eph. iv. 30). In Eph. i. 13,

writing to the saints, the Apostle states the fact that after they believed they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, telling them also that He is the earnest of their inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. From this verse it is plain that the Spirit of God came to dwell in us *after* we believed the Gospel. The working of the Spirit of God in the new birth (John iii. 5) is a previous thing. God takes up a dead sinner and works in him. Life comes through believing the word of the Son of God (John v. 24), and the moment the soul believes he is sealed (Acts x. 44), marked as belonging to God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

We read (Numb. xxiv. 2) that the Spirit of God came upon Balaam, and he had to utter the words which God gave him. Balaam had no pleasure in doing this, and yet he spake wonderful things, perhaps there is nothing more wonderful among the prophetic utterances of God about His people. Balaam had been taken up as a tool in the hand of the king of Moab to curse the people of God. But he could not do it. God would not allow him, and he could only utter the words which the Spirit of God gave him (Numb. xxii. 18, 20, 35).

The Spirit of God came upon Saul (1 Sam. x. 10), and as you travel along the line in Scripture of God's dealings with Israel you will find other instances.

In the days of the Judges, before Samuel came upon the scene, there are instances given of the same thing taking place (see Judg. iii. 10; xi. 29; xiv. 6).

What we have seen of this subject would show to any one considering the matter in the light of Scripture only, that the Spirit of God never had a dwelling-place upon earth during the period of God's dealings with Israel. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. We have His words in the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and the other prophets. Then when you come to the Gospel of John, you have the Lord Jesus telling His disciples that *He would send another Comforter*.

In the earlier chapters of this gospel we have actings

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of the Spirit of God which you do not find in the other gospels, for the reason that John starts with Christ's rejection, and specially it is given him to set Him forth as the *only-begotten Son of God*, the One who never began to be, but who gave being to all things. In Matthew, Mark and Luke it is *the same person*, but presented to us as the One who "became flesh and dwelt among us."

The Lord says, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter. . . . Even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and is in you" (John xiv. 16-17). As I have placed this verse (17) before you, you will observe a difference from the A.V. in the last clause. The Holy Ghost had not come at the time the Lord uttered these words. A note I give at foot of page explains in the words of another the bearing of the verse.*

In chap. xv. the Lord speaks still about the fact that the Holy Ghost had yet to come. At verse 26 we read, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me," etc.

In chap. xvi. 7-11 we read, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send Him unto you; and when He is come, He will reprove the *world* of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

(1) Of sin, because they believe not on Me.

(2) Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more.

(3) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

From these verses we learn that the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth is the proof or demonstration of

*"The present tenses are here characteristic, denoting results of the Holy Ghost's coming, which at that moment was a future event."—*Tracings from the Gospel of John*.

these three things. You will note that when "sin" is mentioned it is not said that it is in order that the individual sinner may believe on Christ, but "*because they believe not on Me.*" "Righteousness" is not seen here. It is at the right hand of God. The wise man in Ecclesiastes (iii. 16) says, "I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there," foreshadowing in that early day what would in the most absolute way become true when the Lord Jesus was condemned by the Gentile governor, and a murderer they desired released unto them. When the Gospel of the grace of God is proclaimed, it is the Holy Spirit of God who makes it effectual in those who hear it. Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase (1 Cor. iii. 6).

The Apostle speaks to Timothy about rightly dividing the word of truth, and that can only be done through waiting upon God. In the Scriptures there are many subjects taught, and the Holy Ghost is upon earth to open them to us in connection with Christ.

In the Gospel of John we have thus three testimonies to the fact that the Spirit of God was not here when the Lord was on earth. You will find other portions in the same gospel telling us the same thing.

We shall look a little at what the Book of Acts presents to us on this subject.

Scripture distinguishes to us the operation of the Spirit of God *on an unbeliever* from the gift of the Holy Ghost *to a believer*.

The working of the Spirit of God on the unbeliever has existed all the time. This all important statement the Lord made to Nicodemus in John iii. 10, "Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things." The Lord Jesus tells him at verse 5 that "Except a man be born of *water* (*the word*: for this symbolic use of water see Eph. v. 26) and of *the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

In Acts ii. we have the fact recorded of the presence of the Spirit upon earth (see verses 16 and 33). Multitudes of souls were brought to repentance

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through Peter's preaching applied to conscience and heart by the Spirit, and thereafter they received the *gift* of the Spirit (verse 38).

Peter continues to press upon the Jews their sin in slaying Jesus, and the grace of God in exalting Him to be a Prince and a Saviour to Israel, and he adds, "We are His witnesses of these things, and *so is also* the Holy Ghost whom *God hath given* unto them that obey Him" (verse 33). Peter and the other Apostles were standing there seen by everybody. *The world could not see that other witness* (John xiv. 17) which proved the darkness they were in. God wrought with His servants by the Spirit.

The Holy Ghost came to earth at Pentecost and is still here *in* those who believe, and also, as we have seen, in the house of God (Eph. ii. 22).

I must not here take up in detail the various portions of the Word where we learn still further of this wondrous subject. I can only name some of them and trust that those to whom the theme is new, and who are not satisfied regarding it, will turn to them and read them. *It is loss* to neglect and to be unacquainted with anything God has been pleased to tell us. Acts x. 45 records for us the *gift* of the Holy Ghost to the Gentiles.

The sealing of the Spirit is of much importance. We are told in Scripture that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise after we believed the Gospel of our salvation (chap. i. 13) and that it is unto the day of redemption (iv. 30). We do not learn from Scripture any difference of action for our day from the days of the Apostles. I have no doubt many a soul has been converted to God (*turned* to God to receive), and is still, in this day, who has not yet received the knowledge of forgiveness of sins. Intelligently we could not affirm that such had received the *gift* of the Holy Ghost, that is, that they were sealed. In Acts xix. we find Paul asking disciples at Ephesus if they had received the Holy Ghost *since they believed*. They had believed on Christ Jesus as One *to come*. Practically the general belief of Christendom is little

further advanced. How few have believed the Gospel of the grace of God, and are in the present possession of peace with God.

At Eph. iv. 3 we are exhorted to *endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit* in the bond of peace. This is a unity the Holy Ghost has formed on the earth. The Holy Ghost at the beginning (Acts ii.) *united believers to Christ* in heaven. He the Head in heaven, and they the members on the earth. *All believers* wherever they are, in whatever association they are found to-day, are members of this body. "There is *one* body," *only one*. I am responsible to the Lord to endeavour to keep that which has been Divinely formed. I can only keep it as I am obedient to the Word of God. I do not move a step in obeying this exhortation if I yield myself to *human* rules and principles. Alas, much else than obedience to the written Word is pressed, and efforts are made to gain souls to follow leaders, that will not stand when all our works are manifested at the judgment seat of Christ. Let it be noted that it is not unity of spirit that is presented to us in this Scripture. The unity here presented is one that has been Divinely made and can never be destroyed, but has been destroyed in its *manifestation*. If we take our own way that will in no way manifest it. We have to submit to the way of the Lord as given us in His Word. The Holy Ghost abides for ever in those He has sealed (Eph. iv. 30). We grieve Him often (*but never grieve Him away*), and so hinder His manifestation in us and by us. A great portion of the history of a child of God is taken up by the Spirit of God correcting that which is wrong in his thoughts and ways.

We are to pray to be *filled* by the Spirit (chap. v. 18). That is totally different from praying for the Spirit, which is a prayer not in keeping with the Word of God.

In chap. vi. we have the Spirit as the sword. By it we overcome the adversary. How little are we "experts" in war like Zebulun and Dan who came to make David king (1 Chron. xii.).

“*It is I.*”

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1 Corin. xii. is large in instruction to us as to the different actings in the assembly and in individuals, but I must bring these lines to a close, calling attention to the beauty and glory of grace, as presented to us in Rev. xxii. 17: “*The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.*” This is “*Come*” to the One who has just spoken, even Jesus. He, by His Spirit, leaves the thought of His coming *for* His people on their hearts, as that which is imminent at any moment. D. S.

“**I T I S I.**”

What aileth thee, my heart, why dost thou trouble?

Hast thou forgotten that thy God still lives?

That He hath power omnipotent, transcendent

That to the powerless He freely gives?

Oh! get thee low my heart, down, down beneath His
mercy,

E'en if it be a judgment stroke He giveth thee;

It is thy Father's hand and He is holy,

Righteous and true in all His ways is He!

One said of old, that even should He slay me,

Yet will I trust and shall not be afraid!

'Tis God that giveth grace and shall give glory,

'Twas for His joy that thou poor heart wert made!

Oh, weary heart, sink down beneath the shadow

Of that great Rock, in this a weary land;

There shall the living water-stream flow past thee,

Refreshed thou'lt be by His own loving hand.

It may be thou art weary of well doing,

The fight of faith seems never to be gain;

Let “in due season” stand beside the “be not,”

For “He hath chosen that your fruit remain.”

Then lift thy weary head, go on rejoicing,

Although thy tone be mellowed, be not sad:

The flower that's crushed sends forth the sweetest
fragrance,

'Twill be thy joy to know thou'lt make Him glad!

M. M.

"IF IT BE THOU."

(Matt. xiv. 28).

How much depends for the soul's blessing on the getting rid of the *if* as found in the sentence that heads this paper. Simon Peter was the speaker; the occasion was a remarkable one; the circumstances were new; the experiences were very trying; and just then there appeared what they took to be a spirit, or as we should say, a ghost. Strong men they probably were, and several of them too; yet were they afraid; for reason will totter and fail in presence of a vision of that kind—a visitor from the other world.

In appearance it was a man, but to their minds that could not be; for he was walking on the water. Surely never had such a sight as they were beholding been observed by any eyes but theirs! They were the disciples of Christ; and at His bidding they were in a ship, (or boat we should term it) crossing the little sea of Galilee. Jesus had remained behind. A storm of wind was raging, the waves beat high, and then came in sight ("It was dark," John tells us in chap. vi.) this supernatural manifestation—a man walking on the sea and drawing near to them. They were afraid. "They cried out for fear."

Another voice is heard. We do not read that it was a loud voice. At the grave of Lazarus Jesus cried *with a loud voice* (John xi.). On this occasion they hear a voice which the raging of the storm could not drown. It was the voice of One who though a man, was complete master of all creation. "All things serve His might." He was deeply interested in them. He cared for them. He was coming to them. He could have prevented the storm. He could have made the voyage a pleasure. He could make our voyage to-day across the sea of life free from unpleasant experiences yet He does not do so. Can we trust Him? Can we hear His voice saying in our times of deepest distress just what the disciples at that time heard—"Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid"?

Was it absurd to say, "Be of good cheer"? Was it a call to transcendentalism, or to one of indifference

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to danger? No! that was not the case. "*It is I!*"—how tender, how gracious, how considerate. That *I* made all the difference. His presence for the moment altered nothing as to the tempest, but it altered them. As they heeded His gracious words, as they took them in, a new experience would be theirs. "Be of good cheer; it is I." Let this be engraved on your heart and mine beloved reader! "Sorrow may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning." The full import of those words are not learnt in an hour. The truth about that *I* no heart of man has fully grasped. That night of misery, a night of distress and of danger, had brought Jesus to them in an unfolding of what He was as divine as well as human. They might well be of good cheer.

Peter speaks. He did so on the mount of transfiguration, but displayed his ignorance; for he spake "not knowing what he said" (Luke ix. 33). He put his Lord and Master on a level with Moses and Elias, who, though highly honoured servants of God in their day, are not to be named beside Jesus, God's beloved Son. Had Peter's faith been in lively exercise as to the deity of Christ, he would not have blundered so sadly; and we may say that had there been no lingering suspicion in his mind as to the identity of this mysterious person who spoke to them, or even if there was no doubt on that point in his mind, we may yet think that if he had really before him the divine greatness of Jesus, he could hardly have failed as he subsequently did.

Still Peter did what none of the other occupants of the boat did. "If it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water." This was a bold request! Peter got what he asked for. "Come," was the brief reply. Authority for this bold step is obtained, and with it every requisite for the fulfilment of that command must be granted. Peter left the ship; left, too, the company of his fellow disciples, *to do alone* what can only be done alone, either by Peter literally then, or by a saint to-day spiritually. For the invitation given by Christ to Peter has a wider significance, and tells of

power through grace to walk on the top of the sea of unrest in human circumstances to go to Jesus, spite of every hostile action and all the enemy's opposition.

Peter ventured; that was well. He succeeded; that was better. Peter also failed; and why? "*It is I,*" and "*Come,*" the Master's words, held not their due place in his soul. With his eye on the storm, and not on Christ, he began to sink. Yes, Peter failed, but not so the grace of Christ. Blessed Master! "Lord, save me," came from the lips of the drowning Peter, and Jesus saved him.

Peter learnt that night several important lessons. (1). He proved that having the word of Christ for authority for acting, and having Christ Himself as the One to be going to and to fix his eyes upon, that the impossible became possible—that the most difficult thing became easy. As Paul at a later date could say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me"—not some things, but all things! Peter had the word—Come; he had one to go to—"Jesus"; and with the eye on Jesus, Peter did what no one else ever did save He who was God as well as man. True, the roar of the wind, and the raging of the water, effaced for a moment the authority for his action; and worse still, effaced from his observation the beloved Object he was going to meet. What then? The water on which he had been walking would soon be above him. Above the water one moment, but the next beneath it.

But Peter learnt (2) that though his faith had failed, and his brethren were all aware of it (and that was not pleasant to reflect on afterwards) yet the power and grace of Christ did not fail. "Lord save me," cried the drowning Peter in an agony of fear, and Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, adding a word of gentle reproof, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Fellow believer, have you ever boldly left all when having learnt what the Word—Christ's Word—God's Word—enjoins or authorises? Have you ever stepped out alone to walk above the circumstances of life here around us to go to meet that Saviour who has said, "I

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will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there you may be also"? Do you know the sufficiency of the Object, that *I*, that divine and human Person? He loves thee as none other ever did or could. He gave Himself for thee. He calls thee to leave all to follow Him, to come to Him, to trust Him; for He has said, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." He avows that His grace is sufficient for thee. It is not thy courage, nor thy power, nor thy devotion, but it is the grace and power of Christ. We walk by faith. Would you be miserable? Look around you, or within you. Would you be happy? Obey the Word, keep your eye on Jesus, trust, oh trust in Him, and thou shalt indeed be happy!

E. R. W.

LESSONS IN DISCIPLINE.

(Judges xx. 11-17).

I WANT you to notice what has awakened them. It has been the commission of evil that has awakened them, and they gather together as one man, for what purpose? To take vengeance upon the evil. It is evil that has awakened: it is evil that brings them together; it is the execution of judgment upon evil that nerves their arm and unites their hearts. Ah, beloved, evil will never serve as a tie to hold the people of God together. Have you ever seen in some much more quiet way, people drawn together by occupation with evil? It will draw together for the time being; you may have your indignation meetings over evil, but having indignation meetings over evil is not the way that God would draw His people together. We were singing at the beginning:

"Thou Holy One and True,"—

It is the Holy One and True who draws His people together.

"Our hearts in Thee confide,
And in the circle of Thy love,
As brethren we abide."

It is Christ, the Holy One and True, who attracts us by His love, and who holds us within the circle of His

love, and that makes possible the exercise of all care and love as brethren together.

Now that is the first lesson, I believe, that we are to learn from the next chapter (Judges xxi.) The people are brought together and held together by only this one thing. Evil has been committed, and until that evil is judged, not a man will go to his home. Did you ever read of any gathering together at Shiloh to keep the Feast of the Passover like that? Do you read of the Feast of Tabernacles drawing the whole nation together with joy? Ah, God had been tacitly inviting them year after year to come up and keep the Feast, to come up and enjoy the holy fellowship of His things. But they had preferred to dwell amongst the heathen; they had preferred to settle down with their enemies by their side, teaching them their ways, and all that. But it is only when they are shocked out of their lethargy by their unspeakable corruption, that they flow together, drawn, not by grace, not by the attractiveness of love and goodness, and the fulness of blessing, such as you have described in the basket of first fruits in the twenty-sixth chapter of Deuteronomy. None of these things draw them together, but an evil has been committed, and they are galvanised for the time being into wonderful faithfulness to God.

Now I want you to notice something: there is not a single comment upon the deed that was done. It needs no comment. God does not need to characterize it. Even the natural man revolts from the awful details that we have. There is no need to stigmatize it as unspeakably wicked, horribly corrupt. But you do find that what the Spirit of God dwells upon is the state of soul amongst the rest of the people that rendered them utterly incapable of executing divine discipline upon the wrong doers.

Let us look at it a little in detail. An evil has been committed in Gibeah of Benjamin, one of the cities belonging to that tribe. There was provision in the book of Deuteronomy for tracing an evil to its source, and for dealing with it. Everything was to be done deliberately and quietly, after due meditation, and above

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all, in the presence of God. It was to be done in the spirit of subjection to Himself. These people take a short cut. They have not been used to the presence of God; they have not been accustomed to dwelling in that holy presence. And now they think the matter is simple enough. They sent a curt message to Benjamin, deliver over these men of Belial, and we will deal with them.

It is a curt and short message, and it has the effect that you would expect. It arouses Benjamin against his brethren. The whole tribe is summoned before Israel; it is made a matter of tribal pride, and Benjamin is arrayed against Israel. The men of Belial are done for, they are out of the account. You hear no more of the wickedness done. Do you not think there must have been as much conscience in Benjamin as there was in all the other tribes? Do you not think that if the matter had been dealt with in the fear of God, and in dependence upon Him, that Benjamin would have been as ready to purge himself from the awful shame as the rest of Israel? But ah, this sudden bluntness, this harshness, above all this covert pride, which would say, such an evil could not take place in Issachar; Ephraim would not have such a state of things in her midst; but Benjamin allows it. It is the stirring of all the worst passions in the human heart, of pride, and at once Benjamin forgets entirely the corruption, and says, "We will stand out in the face of all Israel, and will not allow ourselves to be trampled upon."

Well, they were wrong surely. We quite admit at once they were grievously wrong. They had no right to array themselves in this way; they ought to have waited with their brethren in execration of this horrible thing. But then the steps that were taken to deal with the matter at once, and the self-righteous curtness, left out the wrong-doers from their mind. It was not a question of dealing with them, and so it became a question of dealing at once with Benjamin himself. Dealing in that way, stirring up the pride and rebellion of the natural heart, is the surest way

to produce the very same fruits spiritually, as you have here literally. There is such a thing as taking people by the throat, and trying to shake the evil out of them. There is such a thing as pounding out a man's sin, sin that he may be connected with, not personally, but responsibly, in such a way that you touch his pride, and bring out in him the antagonism of his nature, rather than show him the evil which he should judge and abhor.

Let us learn that lesson. Let us not be as Israel, just simply trying to stir up opposition instead of leading people in the fear of God to judge evil with which they are responsibly associated. I need not apply this; I am sure the application is simple enough, and in our own minds we will very easily make application of it to things that we have seen, alas ! too often amongst the Lord's saints.

—*From "Lectures on Judges."*

MATTHEW. XVII. 24-27.

HE does not wait for Peter's question, but shows His divine knowledge by anticipating. "What thinkest thou, Simon?" He asks; "from whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? from their sons or from strangers?" There could be but one answer: "from strangers." "Surely then," the Lord replies, "the sons are free."

But, though He vindicates this liberty, in practice He does not insist upon it. Personal right one is always entitled to surrender, and the "giving offence"—the causing spiritual injury—to any one, by any claim of it, through misunderstanding wholly, *that* were indeed for Him, the Lord and yet the servant of His people's need, impossible to be thought of. "But that we may not give them offence, go to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that cometh up first; and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a shekel: that take and give unto them for Me and thee."

Thus He veils His glory, yet declaring it in the very

way in which He veils it. To summon a fish of the sea to pay a tribute for Him, guards indeed well His glory, as the Lord of the higher temple *which Israel's temple figured*, and which is the universe that His hands have made (Heb. ix. 23, 24). There is not even the appearance of compromise as to what He is, and only His grace is shown in thus stooping. Not an adversary even can cavil at it; and the weakest instead of stumbling, can find in it only measureless comfort in the realisation of this union of power and grace in Him.

But not only so: as "Son over" this "house of God" (Heb. iii. 1-6), He can make others free of it (John viii. 36). Yea, He can set free the very slaves—and there is no slavery in God's universe but that of sin—and make them sons of the house of which He is Master. And this is what He shows us now in Peter, the representative disciple. The fish brings the tribute money for Him also, a piece which is the equivalent of two half-shekels: "for Me and thee," the Lord says; not "for us": for if He had not His unique glory, *we* could not have our blessing. "For Me," and so through My grace, "for thee": and in this (or what is implied in it) we all have part.

We, through His grace, are sons of God and free. Yet must we be content to wait for the time when we shall be recognised as His, and in the meanwhile to pay tribute, as if we were not what we are. Not expecting recognition, and not claiming rights, and earnest to avoid giving offence by any self-assertion, our privilege, as well as our responsibility is to walk in the steps of Him with whom the path of humiliation and of service was His choice and glory.

F. W. G.

DANIEL III.-VI.—Chapter iii. shows us that the first use the Gentile makes of the imperial power, intrusted providentially into his hands in chap. ii., is to establish idolatry, and to compel universal submission to the golden image, under pain of death. Against this the faithful make no resistance; but, resigning themselves

absolutely to suffer the consequences of their obeying God rather than man, are delivered by His manifest and immediate intervention. Chapter iv. gives us, first, the self-exaltation of the Gentile power in the earth; and then, the execution of the Divine sentence, the bestial change outwardly and inwardly, the loss of reason and conscience towards God till the complete periods pass over, and they know "that the heavens do rule." Chapter v. details the frightful impiety which characterises the Gentile power, or at least its Babylonish form, immediately before its destruction. Chap. vi. reveals how an amiable man, the subsequent holder of the power, was betrayed by others into the terribly false position of virtually setting himself up as God. "Make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions." "Wherefore, king Darius signed the writing and the decree." It is the sad type, most clearly, not of Babylon, but of the beast; of man worshipped as God in the highest sense, to the exclusion of the only true God.

The Lord came to earth to seek and to save that which was lost. The Holy Spirit has to do with each case; none are brought to repentance apart from the Shepherd's work, and the light and broom of the Spirit, if one may so put it. I have much appreciated the thought that what gives joy in heaven, God's joy, is not the great result in the future but true repentance on the part of a sinner, and this is illustrated in the prodigal coming to himself—"I have sinned."

A dishonoured Christ *will* fail to satisfy. Let us not impute to Him what is due to the dishonour we have done Him. We must take Him for all, to find Him all-sufficient.

It was the union of Godhead with the manhood of the Lord Jesus that constituted the wonder of His person here below, and the blessedness of the manifestation of eternal life in Him.

“WHITER THAN SNOW.”

Psalm li. 7.

It is an immense mercy to know, on the abundant authority of the word of God, how absolutely and divinely perfect for us are the results of the work of Christ. What is essentially characteristic of His person is essentially characteristic of His work—it is infinite, it is eternal, it is divine! It cannot be exceeded or surpassed, and its present results to every believer are therefore perfect, positive, and permanent. God has glorified Himself in this display of His abounding grace to us. May our hearts, as we think of it, respond thereto, and well over in ever-flowing and ever-increasing gratitude and adoration to God and His Son.

It is instructive to see that the Psalmist *anticipated* this effectual work, though it was not for saints of that day to know its accomplishment, and consequently they were unable to speak—as it is our privilege to do—of standing in the full value of it, both now and for ever, under the eye of God. David wrote (Ps. li. 2): “Wash me *thoroughly* from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.” And again: “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be *whiter than snow*” (verse 7).

Now when we consider this language, we cannot but conclude that the Spirit of God was using the pen of the son of Jesse to anticipate the efficacy of the blood of Christ. Who has ever seen in natural things what is whiter than snow? The purest of Carrara marble after receiving its highest polish is not so white as snow! The finest cambric linen that was ever bleached is not so white as snow! The choicest quality of writing paper ever produced by man is not so white as snow! As the snow falls from the heavens it is purer than the purest, and whiter than the whitest of any merely natural or artificial thing ever seen upon earth.

At the transfiguration, Luke records that the raiment of the Lord was “white and glistening” (or effulgent);

“white as the light,” says Matthew (new trans.); “shining,” says Luke, “exceeding white, as snow, such as fuller on earth could not whiten them” (new trans.). So Daniel (vii. 12) says of the “Ancient of days—whose raiment was white as snow,” and the Apostle John, describing the Lord Jesus in this same character (Ancient of days), says in Rev. i. 14: “His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow.” The Spirit of God in the whole range of natural things found nothing so suitable to illustrate the unsullied holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ as the snow that fell on the mountains of Lebanon and glistened in its heavenly purity and effulgency under the eye of God and man. And those of us who have seen it covering the summit of the Alps, and illuminated by the sun in the heavens, will acknowledge how marvellous a figure it is of the essential holiness of Him before whom is heard through day and night the adoring exclamation, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Rev. iv. 8).

In John xiii. 10 we read, “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every *whit*.” This old English word is very beautiful here; it signifies a point, a jot, the smallest part or particle imaginable. The believer once entirely washed or bathed, referring to the work of the cross of Christ, is absolutely cleansed, not the smallest particle imaginable being left out of the efficacy of the blood, clean *every whit*! How blessed is this!* Isaiah in his day, by the Spirit of God, foresaw this efficacious work, as my readers will doubtless remember, when he wrote: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (chap. i. 18); and by the same Spirit the sweet singer of Israel, in the passage we have already referred to, said, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter

* “Hast no part *with Me*” refers to *communion*, which the external defilement we contract in passing through the world sadly hinders, but our ever-living, ever-loving Advocate on high meets this “with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. v. 26).

“Whiter than Snow.”

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than snow.” Will any ask how it is that when the illustration is used of Christ it is “white as snow,” while, when used of us by the Psalmist, it is “whiter than snow”? I can only suggest that in the former God is speaking *to us*, who never yet have seen anything else even so white as snow; and in the latter the Holy Ghost was leading David to speak *to God*, who has seen and does see what is whiter than snow in His eyes, whenever He sees one who is washed in the blood of Christ!

There may be also a latent thought of *beauty* here. When *we* look out upon the landscape after a fall of snow, seeing the earth covered with its monochrome mantle of white, we may be struck with the monotony of the scene. But not so with God. He who seeth not as man seeth, is the One who alone hath fully “entered into the treasures of the snow” (Job xxxviii. 22). Every flake as it falls is a fleecy crystallisation, which if the rays of the sun fall upon it is lit up with the varied colours of the rainbow. And under the microscope each single particle of every flake appears to have its own elaborate and peculiar beauty of form and structure, a recent investigator having found no two particles alike. In all this multitudinous variety of beauty does God behold those who are in Christ, graced in the beloved (Eph. i. 6), clad in the mantle of His adorning!

My soul marvel, now and for ever marvel, at the efficacy of that blood and the value of that sacrifice before God which has “*perfected for ever* them that are sanctified, whereof the Holy Ghost is also a witness to us” (Heb. x. 14, 15).

Surely we cannot fail to see that God is signifying how earnestly He desires that our peace should be as solid and as enduring as the Rock of Ages upon which He has established it! Could anything in the English language surpass these three expressions by which He describes what the believer is even now in His sight—“WHITER THAN SNOW,” “CLEAN EVERY WHIT,” and “PERFECTED FOR EVER!”

W. R.

UNBELIEF AND ITS TRUE REMEDY.

Luke xxiv. 13-35.

DOES it seem too hard a name to give to the disappointed and despondent spirit which is manifested by the two disciples who are here introduced to our notice on the road to Emmaus? Do we judge harshly when we lay such a thing as unbelief to their charge, remembering all they had recently come through? Reflection on the magnitude of the crisis through which their faith was just then passing, such a crisis as we have no experience of, would to the natural mind suggest a milder term to apply to their gloomy state; but in the estimation of the One best able to judge, the Lord Himself, this was really what it amounted to, unbelief, as it was assigned by Him as the cause of all their darkness: "O fools and slow of heart to believe."

We have to remember at the same time that these two disciples were in no wise peculiar in this respect; for they but reflect here the general state of the company of Christ's own after He was taken from them, and in presence of the new perplexity created by the report of His resurrection. Some attention therefore must be given to some of the general features of that condition during the critical interval.

If there is one fact made clear by the accounts of all four evangelists, it is that the disciples of Christ as a whole were anything but prepared for the turn things had taken with them, either as regards the death of their beloved Master, or His return from the grave. With regard to the first, there is little evidence in any of them of intelligence beyond what others having no relation to Him showed; and of the second there was really no more clear expectation in the one case than in the other. By their great bereavement everything had been quenched in a dark swamp of sorrow.

Now, in spite of all that can be said in their favour, and notwithstanding the real affection that manifestly still bound their hearts to the Lord, this utter darkness on their part we must put down as being nothing else than the fruit of unbelief. No doubt the trial of their faith was severe. Many ingredients went to compose

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their cup of sorrow; many things to perplex and harass them presented themselves. Grief at their loss of the One they truly loved; disappointment as to the future they had supposed to be assured; fear of the Jews who had manifested so bitter a hatred of their Master, and all who associated with Him; amazement and wonder last of all, in presence of the empty tomb, at that which had come to pass. Such were some of the exercises through which they passed. But, at bottom, that which gave any or all of these considerations weight, and that which characterised their state as the ruling principle, was lack of faith.

Now, wherein did their want of faith, their unbelief consist? Intense sorrow at their bereavement, and sore grief at the manner of, and circumstances attending the Lord's death, we can well understand the disciples felt. So contrary it must have seemed to all they had expected of what was in store for the One for whom they had left all, the One of whom their earliest witness had been—"We have found the Messias." One thing evident is that in general it was with the Lord here on earth, a visibly present Messiah, that their hopes were bound up, and their affections occupied. There are glimpses no doubt of that deeper faith, fruit not of what flesh and blood had revealed, but of that which "My Father which is in heaven" had made known, which confessed Him as the Son of the living God. Yet in spite of all His teaching, all He set before them to lead them on to a fuller knowledge of Himself, and of the true nature of His mission, the former was in great measure the nature of their attachment to Him. So that when the cruel wrench came, and He whom they loved was gone, He, in whose power they trusted, crucified in weakness, with the sorrow of their bereavement was mingled something like an eclipse of their faith. A very dark cloud at least overspread their sky.

Yet they need not have been entirely unprepared. As nothing weighed more heavily on His own heart throughout, so there was nothing He taught them more clearly than His death on the cross in love to them as its motive, and to atone for their sins as its purpose.

His resurrection from the dead also He had repeatedly foretold; but, occupied with their own conception of His advent and ministry, they neither understood nor remembered His plainly-spoken words. Yet, strange to say, they were the only ones who forgot the prediction. Angels knew of it. "Remember ye not," said the two angels at the sepulchre to the women, "how He spake unto you while He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and the third day rise again." His enemies too had noted it, and kept it in mind. "We remember," they said to Pilate, "that this deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." But the disciples, those to whom its recollection should have been of most value, forgot it. We can only understand it, as already said, by supposing them so much pre-occupied with their own idea of what His place and work were to be that the truth, unpleasant as it was, fell upon deaf, because unwilling, ears.

Again, it is in one way a remarkable fact in regard to the various appearances of Christ to His own after His resurrection, that in no single recorded instance was there such a thing as unprompted, immediate, or in some cases even an early, recognition by them. All needed some reassuring word. Doubtless, among the phenomena attending the resurrection, we have it recorded in one instance that "their eyes were holden that they should not know Him"; and other cases seem to suggest that His resurrection form was such as to be on occasion unrecognisable to them, as on another occasion we know it "became unseen by them," or "vanished out of their sight." It may even be that, in what we may call its *normal* condition, Christ's resurrection body was invisible to human eyes, and that only when He was pleased to "manifest Himself" or "appear" unto them could even His disciples be cognisant of His presence. But, when all is said, it forms one of the most striking features of the case that the *thought* of His resurrection never seems to have been seriously entertained by His disciples. It never seems to have been taken as a possible event by them;

otherwise, however vague, recognition of Him, even in unfamiliar guise, could not have been so tardy.

There were surely some links with the past in, for instance, such a case as that of the two on the way to Emmaus, some familiar features in the method of their Instructor; nay, was not even the very nature of His communications such as might have struck them with a conviction of who He was. Reading even the part of His conversation recorded for *our* instruction, one looks over and over again for some sign of their being arrested as it proceeds, expecting continually some such exclamation as that of the beloved Apostle—"It is the Lord." Whatever the explanation, there seems to have been no awakening to recognition of their fellow-traveller just then. And, making due reserve for this special case, similar slowness to recognise the Lord appears in all recorded cases. (There are, of course, here considerations which, in presence of the mystery surrounding the Lord in resurrection, impose limits upon us in appealing to it as a proof of the disciples' unbelief, yet within these limits that fact is clearly evidenced by their unpreparedness for His various manifestations.)

Thus the cause of the disciples' unbelief, as very often is the case, seems to have been a faulty or perverted apprehension of the truth, rather than entire unacquaintance with it; this again resulting, may we not say, from neglect of that portion of it which proved unpalatable. And what more unpalatable than such a termination to His earthly career as the Lord over and over again warned them to expect. "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee" was but the outspoken utterance on the part of Simon Peter of what was really a common feeling with them all in presence of the prediction of His rejection and death. So that it is scarcely to be wondered at that when that prediction was fulfilled the unpleasant truth dismissed so cursorily was found, in spite of its being reiterated so often, to have left little impression. Had they added it to their armoury then, it would have fortified them. So as to His resurrection. All unprepared for either event, their faith could not rise

to the occasion; for a fuller and truer conception of His teaching than they had opened their hearts to was called for. Even after the fact of His resurrection had been duly attested, it is said of some that they "believed not for joy"; of others that they "doubted" or "hesitated"; some are described as "troubled" with "reasonings arising in their hearts"; many distinctly that they "believed not"; one, Thomas, avowed his scepticism in strong terms: "Except I shall see . . . I will by no means believe." In however varied measure, measures as various probably as the individuals concerned, one thing the risen Saviour encountered in them all—unbelief.

This characteristic feature of the disciples' state is so remarkable as to occasion surprise. Probably we are apt to credit those who companied with the Lord on earth with a fuller measure of spiritual intelligence than they actually possessed. We must remember how incomparably deficient in many respects they must have been. In many ways we, of times since the descent of the Spirit and the completion of revelation, are furnished for the exercise of faith in a manner they were not. Drawn by the Father to Christ they undoubtedly were. Divine love had really cast its spell over them, and that their hearts were truly drawn and attracted to the Person of Christ is very evident, more abundantly so perhaps just at that crisis when their faith was at its lowest ebb. But of real spiritual enlightenment the whole account of their sojourn with their beloved Master makes it evident that a very small measure was theirs. The whole question of what degree of spiritual apprehension the company of Christ's disciples in the days of His flesh were capable of, and what measure of knowledge they actually acquired under His teaching, deserves consideration. Therein will be found, without a doubt, the key to the truly remarkable inability they displayed in their entertainment of the "Easter-Faith," the explanation of the unbelief they displayed in their reception of the "Easter-Message."

J. T.

(To be continued.)

NOTES OF ADDRESSES TO YOUNG CHRISTIANS (No. 8). The Coming, and Day, of the Lord.

(John xiv. and 1 Thessalonians).

I DESIRE that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His people, and His coming with them, should engage us this evening.

I remark again that the *purposes* of God, which were before the foundation of the world, are all resting on the second Man, the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore before sin, and could not be accomplished until the question of sin had been settled. The moment the question of sin was settled, there was just one thing that delayed their being fulfilled. It was, it is, the long-suffering of God with sinful man. This we learn as we read 2 Peter iii. God's long-suffering is salvation. Nearly two thousand years have passed since the Lord said He would come for His people. He still waits. Many of God's people have tried to fix the date when He will come. But it is to no profit, and it takes the heart off the hope of His return. The Lord would have His people always in the attitude of waiting. "Times and seasons" written of in 1 Thess. v., do not refer to the coming of the Lord *for* His people, but to the day of the Lord when He will bring His saints with Him. At any moment He may come.

In the Old Testament Scriptures the kingdom is spoken of. He will associate His heavenly people in the rule of that kingdom (Rev. ii. 26).

In John xi. 25, 26, we read of the Lord telling Martha how those who had died, but were believers, would live again; and those who lived and believed in Him would never die. The Lord asked Martha if she believed this. She did not understand Him. She ran away and got Mary to come, no doubt thinking that Mary would be able to enter into it, but Mary was in the same state. It is a humbling thing, but still true, that after near two thousand years have passed, God's children, the great mass of them, are still of these dear sisters' mind. The Lord's teaching here is taken as if it were a *moral* state, but it is

plain and evident that the Lord is speaking of the resurrection of the body. When the Lord, according to 1 Thess. iv. 13-17, descends into the air, He will gather all His people from their graves, and then those alive on the earth who have never died will be changed. Thus and then we shall go together to meet the Lord in the air. The Lord has gone to prepare a place for His people. The place was all ready the moment a Saviour, the Saviour, was there. His presence before God (Heb. ix. 24) makes all ready for us. Our fitness to be there is founded on His having accomplished the purification of sins.

In every chapter of which the Epistles to the Thessalonians are composed, you get allusion made to the Lord's coming. To speak of the Lord's coming in a general way, would mean not only His coming for His people, but also the day when they will be displayed with Him in the glory of His kingdom. This last is the subject in the second Epistle.

Let us hurriedly look at the first Epistle. In the first chapter the Apostle speaks of it in the most simple way. The Apostle has been recalling how the Gospel came to them (5), and how they received it (6), how they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven (this portion tells us they were converted to this hope), even Jesus who delivered them from the wrath to come. These Thessalonian saints were representative of all Christians from their day to the present day. When I say "representative" I mean as to learning God's thoughts to usward. "Converted," that is *turned* to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven. There is no question as to our sins. He has delivered us from the wrath to come.

The Thessalonian believers were not expecting the world to improve. We never read of that in Scripture. Christians are not left here to improve the world.

In chapter ii. we read of the affection of the Apostle for the Thessalonians. He loved to see them going on well, but he would not be so ready to count his

converts as some are to-day. He writes, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in *the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?*" He had many exercises of heart about those to whom God had blessed his labours. He had much sorrow over some of them.

In chapter iii. Paul writes, "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ *with all His saints.*" Paul desires that the state of their affections to one another and all their ways might suit the day when they would meet the Lord in His glory. He speaks of it to another assembly (see 2 Cor. v. 9), "We make it our aim, that, whether present or absent, we may be *acceptable to Him.*" What we need to watch for is that our hearts are set on holy objects, and then our feet will follow in holy ways. If our hearts are full of love to the Lord, we shall love His people. The Apostle Paul's heart was full of the love of Christ, and he loved all who belonged to Christ. He prayed that their hearts might be stablished in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ *with all His saints.* That is the day when all things will be manifested.

When we are caught up in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, it will be the fruit of absolute grace. The manifestation, or appearing, comes after. Everything will have to be looked at. We would not be happy if it were not so. If we had secrets from the Lord, would we be happy in His presence? No, verily, but everything will be out. Many a thing has been passed over in your life and mine and been lost sight of. We have had a very imperfect judgment of it, but we shall have His judgment of it at that day. Nothing will come out to our *condemnation* in that day. His love in dying for us has met the whole question of our sins and of our evil state, and when He comes into the air, He will call us up because He has saved us.

In the fourth chapter the Spirit of God gives us interesting details as to this wondrous event which is the hope given in Scripture to every child of God, and may at any moment take place. This portion is given for the comfort of those who had been bereaved of their friends and who were sorrowing lest those who had died would therefore lose blessing.

We are taught from this portion (14), that when the Lord Jesus comes and is manifested, that God will bring them with Him. What follows explains how this will come about. Those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord (15) shall not prevent, or go before, them which are asleep. Those who are alive on the earth will have no precedence over those who have fallen asleep. The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up *together with them* in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. The dead in Christ, or the dead who are Christ's, embraces all the saints who have been on the earth in all ages up to the moment of Christ's return.

In this portion (iv. 13-18) there is no question of conduct introduced. The Lord Jesus has died for us. His precious blood has put away the sins of those who believed before He came, as well as the sins of believers since He came, right on until He returns. Thus Scripture teaches us regarding the rapture of His saints and not the rapture of the church or assembly only, which is His body. We are taught in this Scripture that we shall *all* go up together *to meet the Lord in the air*.

In chapter v., "The day of the Lord" is the subject. The writer commences by saying that "of the times and seasons" he does not need to write to them. Many parts of Old Testament Scripture teach regarding the events of that day. When the Lord has taken His people whom He is gathering out of the world at the present time along with all who preceded them, then He will begin a new work (the present time is a parenthetic period). He will fulfil the Scriptures that were given to His people to rest on in days past.

There are important exhortations for us in this fifth

chapter to which I will briefly call your attention. He tells the saints he was writing to, that they were children of light, and children of the day, and, therefore, when the day came they would come with it. We are not of the night, nor of darkness, so we are not to sleep as do others, but are exhorted to watch and be sober. We belong to the day, but are in the world where darkness reigns, and we are exhorted to put on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the *hope* of salvation. In Ephesians the helmet is spoken of as a present thing—a present realised thing. We are presented here as waiting for salvation in all its fulness, therefore it is set forth as a *hope*. As the Lord looks down upon us, and is acquainted with all our thoughts and ways, seeing the objects that we set before our souls, are we looking for Him? This is what is pleasing to Him.

I simply remark as to the 2nd Epistle of Thessalonians, that in the three chapters which form the Epistle reference is made to the Lord's coming.

Some had evidently written a letter to the saints in Thessalonica in Paul's name (2). They were not to be shaken in mind, or be troubled by Spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from Paul, that the day of Christ was *now* present (see R.V.). *We must be gathered to Him first* (1).

There is another blessed portion that we find in the Gospel of Luke—words uttered by the Lord Himself. I refer to chap. xii. 36-42. There are three characteristics that the Lord desires to see in His disciples. He desires that they should be—

Waiting (36). Watching (37). Working (42). He wishes to see us having *Himself* as the supreme object. An illustration is taken from the servant in the household who loves his master. The Master is away, but He is returning, and everything must be ready for Him, no delay in letting Him in, and the house all in order. He is just at the door. Are we *waiting* for Him? Secondly, we must *watch*. The Master has given us work to do and things to care for for Him, and not let the enemy get access to His property. So we are to be *on guard* and watch, and

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lastly, whatever the *work* He has assigned to us, we are to be at it when He comes.

The Master then gives utterance to the wondrous words contained in verse 37, and with special reference to the *watching*, He is to gird Himself and make them to sit down, and He will come forth and serve them !

What think you of this, dear friends ? Think of it, and judge yourself, shake yourself from the follies that you perhaps think have no dangers for you. No one has died for you but the Son of God, and He wants you to be *waiting, watching, and working* for Him until He calls you home or comes for you.

We are to be faithful to the trust He has reposed in us. We have all got a “pound.” Is it being traded upon, or is it laid up in a napkin ? (Luke xix. 12-27).

The Lord bless us all, and all His people, that we may *seek* His way and “be found of Him without spot and blameless” (2 Peter iii. 14). D. S.

“CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD.”

Oh, believer ! often perplexed and overburdened with cares thou shouldst not carry, and griefs thou shouldst not feel, behold yonder beauteous lily, and see, standing by its side, “the great Teacher,” pointing to its drooping petals and brilliant colours, the workmanship of His own fingers, and asking thee why it is that thou art so frequently cast down, and why thy spirit is so far from peace and rest. It is a poor Man who speaks to thee, though Lord of all, so that thou mayst well listen to His voice ; for He preaches not that to which in practice He is a stranger. True it is that He is as free from inordinate care as the lily that blooms by His side ; but no less true is it that, as a Man, He lived upon the bounty of His Father ; well, therefore, may He speak to thee and say : “ ‘Consider the lilies of the field.’ Has thy huge mountain of trouble hidden Me from thy sight, or sorrow so filled thy eyes with tears that thou canst not read *My Words* ? Then look upon this gorgeous flower, mark well its every beauty, for I tell you that ‘Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.’ In vain does art

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seek to emulate its beauty, to match its grace. I made this lily; I marked its first green bud as it sprang forth, the unfolding leaves and the opening flower; I guarded it from adverse influences by day, steeped it in dew at night, and bade the genial ray to foster its upward growth; through every stage of its progress to maturity I nursed it, and here it stands, a perfect flower, eloquent in beauty—a silent preacher of My tenderness and care. Look at it, My people. My name is written upon it. Is it not worth your notice? I made the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and I made *it*. Consider it well. Can I make that which is not worthy of your observation? Am I attentive to that which is not worthy of your thought? I point you to the lily which you frequently overlook: you often overlook *My care*. You have often passed these flowers by, but now *consider* them. This lily here will instruct you: I placed it where it is that it might do so; I gave it its beauty, that it might attract your eye, and thus become a preacher to your heart. It stands now just where I placed it; no human hand has tended its growth, no human eye watched its development; yet here it is, a faultless specimen of my creative power, and ever-present care. Soon, however, it will pass away; some heedless foot to-day may tread it down, and on the morrow you may look for it in vain. And is it so, and does my care embrace this flower, to paint its leaves, to tend its growth, and screen it from the blast, and shall it not reach you, oh, ye of little faith?”

Look at this lily: saint, consider! Does not its stem, its every leaf, its brilliant tints, cry shame upon your unbelief? Does it not speak to you and say, “I am but a flower, beauteous it is true, but still a *flower*—a frail, a passing thing: but you are a *saint*, beloved of God, redeemed by Christ, and destined with Him to live for evermore. And did God find a place for me where I can grow and thrive, and will He not select a place for you? And has He so adorned me that even Israel’s king was not so sumptuously arrayed, and will He not clothe you?”—*Extracted.*

2 TIMOTHY IV. 9-22.

WE enter now upon the closing section of the Epistle, and it is to be remarked that it is full of the human element. Personal references abound; different individuals with varying activities appear upon the scene; freely the heart is opened out; and there is given, under the Spirit's guidance, what is of abiding interest and instruction. The presence of this element, though professedly a difficulty to some, and made to appear as though detracting from the dignity proper to the Scriptures, is one of the most precious features of God's Word. For, though divine, it is, as one remarks, "withal thoroughly human, as the blessed Lord Himself whom it reveals; thoroughly and entirely divine, 'words which the Holy Ghost teacheth,' yet perfectly and divinely adapted to man as being by man."

So in writing to one dear to him, how natural that Paul should freely mention trivial details connected with his own immediate circumstances, details that touched him closely. God who gave the affections and faculties of heart and mind, does not require that their expression be quenched. All is intensely real. Here is one of like passions with us. By the faithfulness of one the heart is elated; by the failure of another depression of mind occurs. From all that is recorded we are to learn, marking the condescending love and grace of God, but we must not endeavour to make self the centre round which every unfolding revolves. That idea is pernicious in the extreme.

The aged servant, standing on the threshold of eternity, desired the presence once more of the man, younger in years, but yet "like-souled" with him (Phil. ii. 20), who had comforted him before, and had in measure shared the sorrows of his pathway. "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me," he wrote. Others had left him. Some had been his companions in trial ere this, but their hearts had laid hold of the world, and they had turned aside.

Pathetic is the word regarding Demas, revealing the keenness of the cut caused the Apostle by this abandonment of the path—the path of faith, an un-

worldly one—proper to a Christian. For it was not simply that Paul was forsaken, but “this present age” was loved.

Good had been overcome of evil; faith had fallen before present day advantage. Christ had decreased; the world had increased. Christ died to redeem us from this present evil world (Gal. i. 4) that Demas had come to love. Ah, Demas! how are the mighty fallen! Once thou wast happily associated with the Apostle in greetings sent to the saints (Col. iv.), now thy defection is noted; but 'tis the saying of sorrow, the weeping of the night.

Preservation from this love we need to pray for. Those who stand are warned to take heed lest they fall. Perhaps we little realize how insidiously the world makes inroads upon us. Just tasting, touching, handling at first, but the end is effectually if quietly reached. Worldliness in the Christian eats like acid upon the metal. Only the eye of faith fixed on Christ, the feeding on the Word, and the maintenance of prayer, can save us from its inroads.

Then after noting the absence of others also, as Crescens and Titus, and informing Timothy of the presence of Luke with him, the command with reference to Mark follows. Warned by the word respecting Demas, we can be cheered by the word regarding Mark. Here is the joy of the morning. Loudly it declares that, should failure intervene, there is grace for recovery and restoration. Had not Mark turned aside at a critical moment? left the Apostle and his company and returned to Jerusalem? (Acts xiii. 13). Had not Paul refused to have him as his associate in labour because of this? (chap. xv. 38). True; but many days had passed, and God had wrought—God who is able to make all grace abound. Mark's company is desired now, “for,” wrote Paul, “he is profitable to me for the ministry.” Thus is the fruit of God's grace recognised and owned.

This statement regarding this servant, how simple and yet how precious! so much lies beneath the surface. His past was not to stand in the way of present

usefulness. Doubtless he had gone through much and deep exercise respecting that past, and this is the outcome—"Profitable for the ministry." Ah! our Lord, ever gracious, is not slow to note the real turning of heart to Him, and the disposition of mind begotten through failure, and the servant finds again, through His grace, fields of fruitful toil. The will of man leads him in paths self-chosen; but in dependence upon the Lord spheres of divine appointment are found. So it was with Mark. So it is with all His own.

But, continuing, how brightly shines the "human element" in the simple directions found in verse 13—Paul's concern about his cloak, his books, and his parchments especially. Why should such a word, so common-place, be accounted part of the volume of inspiration? and of what use can such a statement be save to Timothy? asks the critic. Such know neither the import of the Scriptures nor the heart of God. The Scriptures are in the wisdom of God, as already quoted, "by man for men," and how like Him that in them the feelings of the servant should be freely expressed. Paul's desire could have been conveyed in a note accompanying this, but rather it has pleased God that it be a part of the "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." What will satisfy the haughty arrogance of a mind at enmity with Him whose Word it is? Let us be lowly and seek His mind in all.

The testimony of many witnesses could be adduced to answer the second query, though, be it remarked, it is far from a spiritual exercise to put such a question. This asking WHY makes *I* of all importance, the very centre of revealed truth. What egregious folly to thus magnify self!

The winter was coming (verse 21) when the cloak would be of use, and it surely is instructive to note this request as coming from one who had verily *learned* in whatsoever state he was to be content (Phil. iv. 11-13). He knew how "to suffer need," so no word of complaining would have escaped him had it not been forthcoming. But in the utterance there shines the compassionate tenderness of God who knows our every

need. "The books" were evidently for his general reading, as "the parchments," expressly required, were for writing upon. It might be, as has been intimated, though here we can only conjecture, that Paul, in view of his departure, desired them for the purpose of copying his epistles. But there we must leave it.

Of an adversary, Paul next warns his son, of one who had accomplished much evil in withstanding the Apostle's words. "Alexander the coppersmith," an enemy of the truth of God, caused the servant's heart to burn within him, as the effects of his mischievous efforts came to light. Much evil had been wrought, and upon the evil-worker the righteous judgment of God would surely fall; according to his works would his reward be.

Then of the failure of those who had been with him, Paul next makes mention. In the hour of trial they forsook him, even as he stood firm and championed the truth, and the servant experiences a little of what his Master proved. His disciples forsook Him and fled, and He was left alone, and yet not alone—His Father was with Him (John xvi. 32). And as the experience of the Master was the experience of the servant, so the Master's gracious spirit is displayed by the Apostle in the trying circumstances. Will—human will opposing God's—was at work in Alexander, but weakness prevailed in Paul's associates. For them he prays, pity welling up in his bosom. "That it may not be laid to their charge," is the petition he utters for them. How like the blessed Lord Himself!

But, if like brittle reeds they broke down in face of difficulty and danger, was the Apostle utterly forsaken? Nay; for whilst proving the unreliability of man, he at the same instant proved the abounding faithfulness of the Lord who stood with him and strengthened him. (verse 17), so that His work might go forward spite of adverse wills and conflicting elements. Blessing for the Gentiles was in the plan of the Lord, and neither the weakness of disciples nor the wilfulness of enemies should frustrate it. Deliverance for him was effected. "I was delivered out of the lion's mouth."

What cheer there is as the unfailing character of Christ's grace comes out. We fail. Our weakness is oft contemptible, so much we must confess. Following in the smooth and easy way, we turn and flee when the "lion" appears. But here we are instructed that we might *know* our Lord, and knowing Him we should do valiant deeds and perform exploits. Perfect pity is with Him; tenderest compassion dwells in His loving breast; He knows when the spirit is willing but the flesh weak, and never misjudges; but we want the power of His promise, "I will be with thee"—with thee whether passing through waters or through fire—to be consciously realized. Let us rest upon the rock-bed of His faithfulness, assured, as is Paul here, that from every evil work He will effectually deliver, and will preserve unto His heavenly kingdom. Who shall stay the final consummation of His sovereign purpose? And how fitting that in this book which speaks of the peculiar trials awaiting the saint who would live godly, and in this chapter of experience, these reminders of the Lord's faithfulness, power, and final victory, should have a place! Increased confidence in Him these should beget, and less of self-sufficiency as we note the part we are so liable to play. Our hearts surely with acclaim take up the words: "To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

And now with salutations from one and another the letter closes. Timothy was to endeavour to reach Paul before winter, and the tidings are given, ere the closing benediction is pronounced, of the abode of Erastus and the condition of Trophimus (verse 20). At Corinth the former stayed; at Miletus the latter was left sick. In this brief reference there is confirmation of the fact that the gift of healing, possessed by the Apostle and others, was not exercised capriciously or to serve their own ends, but in dependence upon the Lord and for the glory of God surely.

And here our notes end. Brief and fragmentary, yet may the Lord graciously deign to add His blessing, and may His grace be abundantly upon us all.

H. F.

UNBELIEF AND ITS TRUE REMEDY (*Continued*).

Luke xxiv. 13-35.

WE have then, in this case, a typical instance of this unbelief, and of the wise and gracious dealing of the Lord with His own for its removal.

Let us look at these two as they set out on their seven miles journey. It is customary with some to attach a kind of typical significance to their action in leaving Jerusalem here—withdrawing from all that pertained to Judaism as some say; forsaking in despair the Christian company say others. Perhaps, however, it would be safer not to build too much on either of the features supposed to be illustrative. In the one case, the road to Emmaus would be the way of faith, in the other the track of declension. Does it not seem probable that it was neither, but simply the path of unbelief? For, one thing we may allow indeed. It was one among many evidences of how little faith these two put in the testimony to the Lord's resurrection. We can understand them leaving the city, the scene of so much sorrow, if they reckoned that in His death they had reached the end of it all. Not if there was any hope of any further development. Had they credited in any measure the testimony of those who had been to the sepulchre, they would surely either have waited on in the company of their fellow-believers, a sorrowing company though it was, or else have taken their journey to Galilee, the appointed meeting place. On the whole, qualify it as we may, we may fairly say it is on the road of unbelief we see them here journeying to Emmaus.

We are told several things about them. Their demeanour, first of all, was one of sorrow. They were sad. They talked together as they walked of all that had happened. The matter was discussed in all its bearings; for they communed together and reasoned. What their reasonings were we can surmise from what they afterwards said in answer to their unknown fellow-traveller. "We trusted that it should have been He which is about to redeem Israel." That is to

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say, their conception of Him was that of the Messiah present on earth to deliver and bless their nation, and establish them in the place and portion destined for them according to prophecy. In understanding such a thing to be expected of Him they were not mistaken either, for such indeed is the theme of many prophetic scriptures. But immediate accomplishment of them was what they had been looking for—"which is about to redeem Israel." In its own appropriate season that shall come; but the prophets had testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ as well as of the glories that should follow.

Therein was their want of sense in the use of the Scripture manifest. "O fools," said Christ. "Senseless" He called them. So also said the Apostle of the Galatians—"O foolish" or senseless "Galatians." The deficiency in such cases is not merely in intellectual acquaintance with the truth, but in real faith and spiritual comprehension. "Slow of heart to believe"—does the statement appear peculiar? Are we on the wrong track when we trace unbelief *to the heart*? In Scripture we shall find that both faith and its opposite are thus spoken of. It is "an evil *heart* of unbelief" we are warned against in Heb. iii. 12, and the examples of unbelief set before us there are those of whom it was said "If ye will hear His voice harden not your *hearts* as in the provocation." The failure to hearken unto His voice on the occasion referred to is attributed not to an error of judgment, but because "they did err in their *hearts*." Such always is unbelief—heart opposition, not mere incredulity. So, on the contrary, faith in God implies believing Him; but involves more than is generally termed belief. It is "with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness" while "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." If unbelief is not mere incredulity, neither is faith simply an assurance of the credibility of the truth. It is heart work in both cases. "The progress of divine truth," as one has well said, "is not so much from the head to the heart as from the heart to the head."

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From all that the prophets had spoken was it not manifest, and according to God's prearranged plan was it not a necessity, that Christ should have suffered these things and then enter into His glory? How the two disciples would be arrested and held spell-bound by this new conception of things. It was nothing short of a revelation to them we may be sure. "Ought not Christ to have suffered"? Then, after all, things had fallen out just as they ought to, just as had been purposed, if the testimonies of their own prophets were to be believed. But was that really what their scriptures foretold? "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself." No wonder their hearts burned within them with unusual emotion, as the wonderful panorama of scripture testimony to the Person and work of the Redeemer was unfolded before their eyes.

We must remark particularly the course of the Lord's treatment of His disciples' lack of faith in this sample case. He grounds their faith first of all on the written Word of God. After hearing what they had to say, He does not proceed forthwith to discover Himself to them. For their good, and with a view to the proper rooting and grounding of their faith, a wise order is observed. There is from the first on Christ's part every care taken to leave their inability to recognise Him undisturbed. Mark, whom we may take as referring to the same incident, informs us that it was "in another form" He appeared to them. Whether this is equivalent to Luke's statement or not, that "their eyes were holden that they should not know Him," of one thing we may be assured, that the purpose of this withholding in some peculiar manner of the means of recognition was simply that their faith should stand, not in any conviction by evidence, even the highest, but primarily in the inspired Word of God, its true resting-place.

Compare with this case that of John and Peter's visit to the sepulchre (John xx. 1-10). We are distinctly told what impression was produced in each

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as they beheld the empty tomb, and the unmistakable evidence of the resurrection of its Occupant, and in neither case was there true faith shown. Peter, we are told by Luke, "departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." John, he tells us himself, also beheld in the condition of the tomb the evidence that the Lord was risen, and, rejecting any such conclusion as that which Mary Magdalene arrived at, correctly judged by inference that such must really be the case. But was even this, in fact, true faith as to that momentous event? "He saw and believed" we are informed; but we are immediately told by way of explaining the statement "for as yet they *knew not the Scripture* that He must rise again from the dead." To "see and believe" is not true faith—of the first order and in full power. It produces therefore no definite result, consequently "the two disciples went away again unto their own home." To "see and believe," to add another instance, was the demand of Thomas (John xxi. 24-29), and to help such infirmity of faith the grace of Christ will even condescend on occasion, with the exhortation to "be not faithless but believing." Yet it is made clear even then that true faith is not dependent upon such exceptional treatment. "Because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Here, in the treatment accorded to the two on the road to Emmaus, we observe the means taken to produce this more blessed character of faith—faith in One unseen, unmanifested. It is the method also alone available for us of later times. Appearances of our risen Lord we do not look for. None the less may we be assured of the fact, and intelligent as to its significance, for scripture testimony, on which He sought to ground their faith, remains still. The great object of the incident, it really seems, and that which confirms the thought of its being a sample case, is to point out the true remedy for unbelief. So that for good and wise reasons, Christ, when He joins them on the way, appears in the guise of an ordinary fellow-

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traveller. The interest He manifests in them leads on to an expression on their part of all that was perplexing them, and thus, their distracted state of mind disclosed, the unbelief at the root of this can be dealt with. To be convinced by evidence was not enough. To be assured by faith is quite another matter, and it was this the Lord endeavoured to lead them on to, laying bare, as a clear and sure foundation for them, the testimony of the written Word to Himself. Did their feeble faith even then ground itself upon the basis indicated? We know at least from their own confession that the Scriptures were opened to them in a wonderful manner, so much so as to flood their hearts with unusual and fervent emotion as He conversed with them.

Arrived at their destination, their fellow-traveller, as strangely enough, we may think, He appears to them still, they invite to tarry with them, and with their request He complies. He is now to make Himself known unto them, and the means used is His action in the breaking of bread. Their eyes are opened and all at once they recognise in their erstwhile Companion and Instructor, the Lord Jesus Himself. As a sudden flash the light of His realised presence breaks in on them, and as suddenly is withdrawn, for immediately upon the disclosure of His real identity He vanished out of their sight. But that lightning flash—how it would illumine the whole road they had journeyed from Jerusalem, as they looked back on it. All He had said and taught by the way, with what added force and significance would it be recalled. They could no longer doubt. Their unbelief, and all their perplexity and sadness it had engendered, were gone, and the same hour back they go the seven miles to Jerusalem to share their new-found joy with their brethren. Their former unbelief was evident enough. And the lasting effectiveness of the remedy seems even in the limits of this short account to be proved. It is of good omen in their case at least that not only what might be called the marvellous element in what had happened fixed itself on their minds, that not only the

manifested presence of the Risen One to *confirm* their faith, and awaken joy in their hearts was recollected; but that His teaching by the way, and His wonderful unfolding of Scripture truth as that on which their faith would be *based* remained impressed upon them. Both in their remarks one to another after He had vanished, and in their account to the rest at Jerusalem subsequently, they recall, not only the fact of His appearing, but what things were done in the way. This is but saying in other words that, while it was the lightning flash that broke the darkness of their unbelief, it was light itself that was left to illumine their path.

These two disciples give us a typical case of the state of Christ's followers between the time of His death and the time of His manifestation in resurrection. It is a most interesting phase, for, critical time as it was, the actions and the words of these two were but characteristic of the whole company. They had only uttered the thoughts and reasonings which occupied the minds of the rest at this crisis, and Christ's dealing with them accordingly was full of instruction for them all. May we not benefit also by the lesson conveyed. When overwhelmed with unbelief we have to recollect the true nature of our malady. "Slow of heart to believe" is the Lord's description of it. Our faith also to be rightly in exercise must be grounded upon the testimony of God's written Word, and there we shall find whereon we may confidently build. Again the remembrance that Christ is risen should relieve our perplexities, remove our doubt, and give both energy and joy in the path of faith and witness-bearing.

J. T.

Presenting a want to God (as in Gen. xv.) is not communion. "God talked with Abraham," "His friend"—that is communion. What a different idea we are apt to have of God! Communion with God is the retiring place of the heart. It is essential for a soul to be brought into perfect confidence in God Himself, in order to a walk with God.

OBEDIENCE.

(1 John ii.).

FROM verse 3 we have searching tests applied in order to make plain to ourselves, and to others also, how life manifests its reality or its absence. The object of faith was first fully presented in Christ; next the necessary working of God's nature in such as are His; then (after the brief supplement of grace to restore the fallen) we come to the revealed tests of life. Verses 3-6 furnish the first test. What is this primary test for any soul? That which distinctly and at once, from the very beginning, stamps a man as having life, and which, if he lack it, means the absence of life, is obedience. "And herein we have known (or have the knowledge of) Him"; (it is a continuous result that we have the knowledge) "if we keep His commandments." This is none other than obedience. It is not the only form in which the spirit of obedience is proved; but as a rule it is the earliest. It begins without delay. It suits the youngest saint. He is sure to be forthwith tested by the question of obedience. And it is exactly what the new life prompts to.

Observe this in him that was to become the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Directly that the voice of the Lord reached his soul, and identified the true God with Him who died on the cross, he could not but cry, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" He judges his error and wants to obey. This is the instant spiritual instinct of life. Converted in heart, his mind is to obey Him whom he without hesitation calls the Lord. Accordingly, if we look at it throughout the Word of God, we see how comprehensive obedience is, and how all-important. Take the case of the soul's submission to the righteousness of God: it is what is called in the Epistle to the Romans "obedience of faith," by which is meant, not the practical obedience which faith produces in the walk, but the prime act of believing God's Word. This is really the heart's obedience. It is the person's obeying the truth, the soul's acceptance of God's testimony to His Son. The man hitherto ungodly owns it truly,

bows to the Word of God, accepts the truth of Christ's person and work, and is justified. Therefore is the Gospel preached to all nations, not like Israel for obedience of law, but for faith-obedience. Such is the true force in order to make the scope somewhat more clear; not an obedience produced by faith, but submission to the Gospel in faith. And this is in many forms carried out throughout the Scriptures.

But there are other signs and proofs of its importance, and we do well to look to the very beginning of mankind. What have you there? The first Adam, the father of the race. Alas! the beginning of man's moral history was the fact that he disobeyed. For the command in Eden was simply and entirely a test of obedience under penalty of death. Eating of the tree of knowing good and evil was not an intrinsically moral or criminal act like stealing, murder, covetousness, or any of the various breaches of the Ten Commandments. These prohibitions suppose an innate evil proclivity, but it was not so then. Adam was as yet innocent and upright, and God told him not to eat of the fruit of that tree. This prohibition had nothing at all to do with the quality of its produce, nor implied in the least that the fruit was a poison. This is the way man likes to look at it: how would it affect himself? But the command asserted the LORD God's authority. It was meant to test man's obedience, his trust in God's Word and goodness, in short, his absolute submission as a creature of God. For Adam as yet could not be called by grace a child of God. He was son of God like the Athenians, the offspring of God. That is, he was not a mere natural animal without reason, a brute beast; he had from the first his soul from God's inbreathing, an immortal soul. In that sense of course he was God's offspring; but he was not yet a child of God, born of Him by faith through grace. Such a birth is never the fruit of anything but of His grace in Christ. Thus only one receives the life in His Son, and Adam had nothing of that kind whilst simply an innocent man in the paradise of Eden.

But the plain fact which quickly appears and characterises his ruin is his disobedience. He disobeyed unto death; the grand contrast of which is the Second Man, the Last Adam, who became obedient unto death. Yet in His eternal being, in His proper position, in His inalienable personal dignity, the Son was a divine person, and, as such, had nothing to do with obedience. For this very reason it is said in Heb. v. 8, that He learned obedience from (or, by) the things which He suffered. He did not know what it was to obey until He came down to be man. He knew perfectly well what it was for others, for every creature; but He was no creature, but Creator. Nevertheless, having become man, He loyally undertook the duties of man, and the very first duty of man is to obey God.

The Lord manifested obedience as no one ever did, and glorified His Father in every feeling of His heart, as well as every word of His mouth, and in every step of His way. He overruled John the Baptist by "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He met Satan's temptations by nothing but obedience. This indeed is the profound difference between the Lord Jesus as Man and every other man. Never was there another who invariably obeyed. This is a much greater distinction than working miracles; anybody could do miracles if God gave him the power. Judas wrought miracles; and many will say to the Lord in that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out demons, and by Thy name do many works of power? And then will I avow to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work lawlessness" (Matt. vii. 21-23). To work miracles only is in no way a necessary sign of moral excellence. As a general rule it did go with those righteous servants of God who inaugurated His revealed will, or vindicated it when apostacy betrayed itself. But God, for His own wise purpose, shows us the most wicked of men working great signs, even the traitor to the Lord Jesus as already mentioned. Another, indeed, is to be referred to presently; but the first one of those called "the son of perdition" unmistakably showed that he had not the slightest

appreciation of Christ. He was invested with power, but there was neither obedience nor the faith that leads to it.

Therefore one naturally looks from that first son of perdition to the last—the Antichrist. And what is it that stamps the Antichrist, what is it that fits him to be a vehicle for Satan's taking possession of him to the most exceptional degree? Nothing could be a greater affront to God than the way in which Judas showed his revolt in betraying the Beloved of God. So the Antichrist will be the ruin of both Jews and Gentiles beyond any man that ever lived. What is it that marks him before that power of Satan is allowed to work in him so mightily for a little while? What prepares him for it? His self-will, the spring of disobedience. He is described therefore as the king that shall do according to his will (Dan. xi. 36), not the will of God but his own and Satan's. He is "the man of sin," "the lawless one" (2 Thess. ii. 3-8). Alas! whenever you do your own will you become Satan's slave; but he pre-eminently will be so.

Thus we see in the most opposite way what an essential place obedience has from first to last. At the beginning the first man abandons it, and all ruin follows. And then the Second Man, when He came here, is just the obedient man, who brings in not only blessing for man, freely and fully, but also atonement and peace by the blood of His Cross. For He blots out the sins of sinners on faith completely and perfectly; and from heaven is sent the Holy Spirit as the witness of Himself and His work for everlasting redemption, and the reconciliation of the universe when He comes again. Hence obedience is the soul's bent and resolve and joy when Jesus is known and confessed. The proud, careless, dark heart is arrested by the Word and the Spirit of God, who fills him with horror at his wickedness, presents Christ with the goodness of God in giving Christ for his soul, and he bows to his Lord and Saviour, earnest to obey from that moment. As the all-importance of obedience from the first beginning of life in the soul is evident, so it is in all the public ways of God.

W. K.

HUSHAI—DAVID'S FRIEND.

TRUE friendship is proved in the times of adversity. Not the day of welcome, but the day of rejection it is that sharply discriminates between the true friend and the time-server. There is truth in the old saying that "Adversity doth best discover virtue"; for it tends to bring into prominence reality, constancy, and devotedness. Many monarchs have found their true devotees and most loyal subjects in their day of deep distress. Many admirers, many followers, many professed friends come forth when the sun of prosperity shines brilliantly, but are found not, or their defection is manifest, when the storms sweep up and hide the face of that sun.

Among the kings who have proved this, David stands conspicuous. His experience goes to show the correctness of the premise that calamities bring to light fidelity and falsity, strength and weakness. Those who fawn to-day will prove false to-morrow; but the dark trial will bring to activity the integrity and love hidden in the heart.

Such was David's experience in the period before us. We contemplate a distressful moment in his career, one of the most trying that he ever passed through. The black foils of trouble were entwining themselves tightly around him. Sorrow seemed to embrace him. There was rebellion in his kingdom, and to intensify that, the usurper that had arisen was not only one of his own household, but was Absalom, dearly loved of his father. From his capital David fled, accompanied by a faithful band, but the sorrow was his of knowing that many before seemingly true had openly identified themselves with the traitor, his beautiful but rebellious son.

A fugitive from Jerusalem was David, but in that hour of general defection rays of brightness lightened the darkness as one and another gave tokens of loyalty and attested their devotion to the person of God's anointed. General failure brings individual faithfulness into prominence. Such occasions provide special opportunity for the display of it, and that trait

is seen manifested, especially at such times, all down the dispensation. God gives it a very distinct place in the Scriptures of truth. God uses failure to make manifest where His people are. Here He was testing Israel, and it was easy to discern, under these distressing circumstances, where fidelity and love to David's person existed.

It is with Hushai, the Archite, that we are now particularly concerned. To him the proud title of "*David's friend*" has been given; and that it was bestowed on one worthy of it, the brief record of his doings amply show. He was of those whose hearts were stricken with grief at the calamity that had befallen the king, and he hastened to share rejection with his royal master. The true traits of friendship he displayed, and his right to be entitled David's friend was clearly shown by his love and his obedience—*love* shown by the place he took: his heart being knit to the heart of the sorrowing monarch, to be with him was his earnest desire; *obedience* as he obeyed the request of the dejected sovereign, and returned to Jerusalem where he was to be of use in the cause of his king.

Pathetic must the sight have been when David with covered head, as one whose authority was gone, with feet bare, and with tear-dimmed eyes ascended Olivet accompanied by a band of followers who were prepared to share his sorrows weeping in harmony with him. Woeful tidings reach David's ears as they go. Ahithophel, his former counsellor (2 Sam. xvi. 23), had identified himself with Absalom. Once occupying the place of friend, he is now found amongst the conspirators, a betrayer of that confidence and love that David had reposed in him. What does David do? Lifts up his heart in prayer, and then reaching the summit of the mount he worships God (chap. xv. 31, 32). Truly he would say, "All my hope is in Thee."

And that expectation is never disappointed. David was learning to "cease from man." But the God of all comfort now was the God of all comfort then, and

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at that opportune moment appears Hushai with all the outward marks of abject sorrow and distress. Oh, what had happened to David? Deeply, most deeply he sorrowed and sympathised with his friend. With coatrent and headcovered with earth he hastened to meet him. To be with the king was evidently his intention.

But his love and devotion were to be subjected to a severe test. Back to Jerusalem he is desired to go that there he may perchance defeat the counsel of treacherous Ahithophel. There in the very presence-chamber of the usurper he is to serve his friend. What confidence David had in him this plainly shows. How searching the test was it also reveals.

Hushai obeys and came into the city, and Absalom enters Jerusalem (verse 37). On coming into the presence of the rebellious son, he utters the words nearest his heart, "God save the king," an expression which Absalom, applying to himself, answers with a taunt. Appearances were certainly against him. "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" evidently suited the case. "Why wentest thou not with thy friend?" was certainly a seasonable question. In presence with Absalom, in heart Hushai was with the chosen of Jehovah. Such an one he would serve; with such an one he would abide. Occupying a place of peculiar difficulty and danger, was he not laying down his life for his friend, and illustrating the word which speaks of losing one's life to find it? To all appearances David's cause was a waning one. Policy led Ahithophel to espouse the cause of the rebel son. Love led the Archite to identify himself with the reproaches of David, and it was only obedience to that monarch's request which kept him at the court. There he faithfully served, and under the Lord, was the means of frustrating the wily counsel of Ahithophel (chapter xvii. 14). With grief gnawing at his heart, and fear oft pervading, he watched over the interests of his absent friend, and justified his designation. He was "David's friend."

Great was the honour thus put upon Hushai, but yet how feeble a foreshadowing is that of the honour

put upon those who are called by Christ Jesus, the Son of God, "My friends." As great as the contrast is between David and "great David's greater Son," so great is the difference between being associated with David and with Christ. Inestimable honour and privilege is conferred in connection with the latter association.

"*My friends*"—What a precious word! We learn from Hushai's history what goes with friendship. Love is the basis of it. Heart was knit to heart. Obedience followed, and where "the less" is linked with "the greater" obedience is the responsibility imposed. In that portion of Holy Writ where the Lord uses the above words, He places obedience in the foremost rank. The foundation is love; next, "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John xv. 12-14); and then comes the enjoyment of that wondrous intimacy spoken of—the unfolding of the Father's counsels.

Hushai thought not of himself but of David and sought his interests. Shall we not, loving Christ "for His glorious worth," seek His glory and His interests, and render to Him devotion and faithfulness in this His day of rejection?

H. F.

A CONTRAST.

(1) Isa. xxix. 8.

THERE are visions in the desert,
Of a river, fair and wide;
Do we think that on its bosom
Our frail barque may safely glide?

Do we sing that "life is real,"
As we near the river side?
Do we vainly think to bury
All our woes beneath its tide?

Painted mirage of the desert!
Can the weary traveller rest
As he nears thy glowing borders?
Can he reach thee, and be blest?

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Is it not *life* that he hath gain'd
 As he nears the borders fair?
 Nay; the river is reached never:
 Only *death* is hidden there!

(2) Ezek. xlvii. 1, 8, 9; Rev. xxii. 1, 2, 4, 5.

Springs a river in its glory
 From beside the throne of God;
 Never dying, ever living,
 Onward flows that radiant flood.

River of eternal pleasure,
 Gleaming in the glory light;
 Doth its brightness ever vanish?
 Are its tides for ever bright?

River! River! of all gladness,
 Plunge we in thy crystal tide;
 He is *life*, who gave thee being,
 His the life that shall abide.

Whence the source of that fair river?
 It was born of love unknown,
 When Emmanuel, our Redeemer,
 Made our death and woes His own!

'Tis the altar of His sorrows
 That hath brought us life and peace;
 From His side, once pierced and wounded,
 Flowed the life that ne'er shall cease.

Soothing all the desert sorrows;
 Healing all the desert woes;
 Turning dying into living;
 Bringing rest and sweet repose!

And, when we have reached the Author,
 The eternal Lord of life;
 And the desert days are ended,
 And the desert toil and strife—

Then, beside that glorious river
 We shall rest, with Him, in peace;
 Singing ever, "He is worthy,"
 In the song that ne'er shall cease!

Thoughts on the Lamentations.

And that river shall shine brighter,
 In the radiance of His face ;
 Telling mysteries for ever
 Of the glories of His grace ! H. C. H.

THOUGHTS ON THE LAMENTATIONS.

IN reading the Lamentations one cannot fail to be struck with the abrupt introduction of the subject of chapter iii. The occasion of the composition of the book is manifest on the surface of it. Jerusalem had fallen a prey to the Chaldeans, the Gentiles had entered those sacred courts and enclosures, which need never have been defiled by the tread of uncircumcised bands ; "She hath seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom Thou didst command that they should not enter into Thy congregation" (chap. i. 10). Jerusalem's desolate condition drew forth the prophet's lamentations ; yet a large part of chapter iii. is taken up with a description of his personal sufferings at the hand of his people (for the Chaldeans treated him kindly), while yet Jerusalem was uncaptured. What connection was there between his sufferings from the Jews, and imprisonment in the dungeon, while the throne of David was filled by a prince reigning at Jerusalem, and the house built by Solomon to be very magnificent, was still standing, and the sad calamity which had overtaken the metropolis of the land ? It was just this connection which furnished ground for the sorrowing prophet, inspired by the Spirit of God to pen these beautiful poems, some of whose verses have comforted God's saints in many an age and many a trial since.

That Jeremiah was the writer of the book has been generally acknowledged, and internal evidence of it is afforded in the allusions to his own history it contains. He loved Jerusalem well ; for, though Anathoth in Benjamin was the city of his birth, understanding as he did what Jerusalem was in God's counsels, how could he have helped loving her, and that dearly ? Her troubles then were a grief of heart to him ; and, though he had endured such ill treatment in the city

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from those high in office, he did not exult over her fall, but tears filled his eyes as he saw the destruction of the daughter of his people, and his heart only found a fitting vent for its feeling in the lamentations he poured forth as dictated by the Spirit of God. Gracious it was of the Lord to allow his afflicted servant this relief, gracious however not to him only, but to others, as surely will be acknowledged some day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and all the ways of God in the times that will then be past, shall be meditated on to His glory.

Chapter i. opens with a description of the city and country, consequent on the triumph of the Babylonian arms. Full of people once, now as a widow, great among the nations, princess among the provinces, this enviable position Jerusalem had occupied; now she has become tributary, her independence is gone, and her gates, never entered by the boastful king of Assyria, have been thrown down by the Chaldeans. Zion's ways, once thronged with people, are now mourning, because none come to the solemn feasts. Friendless, bereaved, desolate, how changed is her state! Besides all this the adversaries mocked at her Sabbaths, or rather at the cessation of all her prosperity and glory (verse 7). Was not this enough to call forth the lamentation of any who loved her? Yet not without reason had all this happened. "Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, therefore is she removed" (verse 8). This the prophet owns, nor he only; for from the words in verse 11; "See, O Lord, and consider; for I am become vile," Jerusalem breaks in, and continues to speak (verse 17 excepted) to the close of the poem and chapter. She acknowledges her sin before the Lord, and what it has brought on her. Right was it for her to do this. She thus speaks of the past. But what of the future? The acknowledgment of one's guilt, and of the Lord's justice in dealing with a soul, can of itself give no hope for better times, and renewed prosperity in the future. To own one's sin, when under chastening on account of it, is simply to acknowledge the justice of God: but justifying God

in His dealings with us can never illumine the heart with the brightness of hope. So throughout this chapter there is no hint of restoration to former favour and blessing, nor any relief to the monotony and heaviness of this widespread desolation. All that she can say of the future is simply this: "All mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that Thou hast done it: Thou wilt bring the day that Thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me. Let all their wickedness come before Thee; and do unto them as Thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions: for my sighs are many and my heart is faint" (chap. i. 21, 22). She has felt that God acts in government, and therefore can look for His dealings with the nations as He has dealt with her. But this is poor comfort certainly. She deserved it, and they deserve it likewise, and this is all she here says. The punishment of her enemies was certain. Of her future blessing there is not a word.

In chapter ii. the prophet owns the Lord's hand in it all. He has done it, though the enemies of Jerusalem have been the active and willing agents. The hand which has smitten has been discerned, and the present abject condition of the once beautiful and royal city overcomes him. "Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people (ii. 11). This leads him to say in the bitterness of his grief, "What things shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?" At ver. 20, in response to the call of the prophet, Jerusalem again lifts up her voice to the Lord, but as yet no ray of hope has come in on the dark and gloomy picture. Her cry was in chapter i., "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger." The prophet, in chapter ii. asks,

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"What shall I equal to thee?" and still finds there is no alleviation of her distress. Where could she find any? God, against whom she had sinned, had provided for this, and the man she had so ill-treated as God's messenger to her, is the one from whose experience comfort and hope can be drawn.

Little could Jeremiah have divined what use God was to make of his trials. He had suffered much. He had experienced cruel treatment at the hand of his own people, because he was God's servant. Now one of God's designs in it all comes out, as the prophet, inspired by the Holy Ghost, recites what his condition had been, so similiar to what his nation was. He had seen affliction by the rod of God's wrath. They, including the prophet, could say, God had covered them with anger. He had known what it was to cry, and shout, and have his prayer shut out from God. The nation could say, "Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through." He had been a derision to his people. They could say, "All our enemies have opened their mouth against us" (chap. iii. 1, 8, 14, 43-45).

One difference however between him and his people was this: he had been brought out of his affliction, they were in theirs. He suffered with them as one of them, but the personal suffering he speaks of, as God's faithful servant in Israel, were over. One then had been in affliction similiar to theirs and had been delivered. This gives hope, and this is the way they are supported in this book. What happened to Jerusalem and the nation was the just consequence of their sins. What would happen to their enemies would be richly deserved. But this could give no hope of an end to her troubles. Jeremiah's history is therefore brought in, that God's goodness to the prophet, in delivering him out of all the trials the ungodly in Jerusalem had inflicted on him, should afford comfort to her heart with reference to the future. For just as her present condition was an earnest of what her enemies must look for, Jeremiah's deliverance was an earnest of what she could expect. C. E. S.

(To be continued).

Matthew xxvii. 11-26.—Wondrous scenes come before us in the closing portion of our adorable Lord's life—scenes that must be deeply affecting to those who truly love Him. Here we have a part of the trial scene. The proud, haughty Roman is the judge; the heads of the Jewish nation the foremost accusers; Jesus, King of the Jews, the prisoner. The holy, patient, spotless One—what a prisoner! Well might proud Pilate marvel at the meekness displayed by Him. Not one word of self-vindication came from His lips. The prophecy was fulfilled, "He openeth not His mouth."

The judge was in a dilemma. "He knew that for envy they had delivered Him." Envy!—why did they envy *Him*? Was it on account of prosperous outward circumstances? Nay, not one of His chief accusers would have changed places with Him, the One who had not where to lay His head. But He possessed a power they did not; He could reach hearts as they could not.

"Base envy withers at another's joy,
And hates the excellence it cannot reach."

No real ground existing for judgment, but yet desirous of currying favour, the governor hesitates. He is in a strait betwixt two—fear and favour. He wanted to do right, but was weak. Here the favour of man was a snare. God sends him a message through his wife. He halts still; but weakness dallied with becomes wickedness. The judge gives way, and decides to let the matter be settled by the popular voice. Now vote! Which shall it be—Jesus or Barabbas? Vote then! The choice falls on Barabbas. Oh! awful depths of wickedness revealed.

The responsibility for it "His own" fully accepted. The judge washed his hands. Vain show! Not thus could he be absolved from administering justice. One's responsibility cannot be passed on to others in that way. All were against Jesus, and at His trial the weakness and wickedness of man were openly and fully displayed. Both in His life, and at His death, Jesus put all to the test, but manifested Himself the love that many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown. Above the din His voice is heard, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

"JOTTINGS" FROM AN ADDRESS OF J.N.D's—Sept., 1873.

Scripture : Galatians ii. 14.

CHRISTIANITY is the fullest revelation of God ; first, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ : "he that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father,"—then in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus ; and in the gift of the Holy Ghost which followed, a full revelation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—the Godhead fully revealed. Now through Christ, "we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." These are things which the angels desire to look into, elementary to Christianity though they are.

But the world into which God has sent salvation is utter vanity, and the Lord Jesus Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world," a world indeed whose true character is brought out only by Christ's coming into it, while still He says of it, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me ;" and again, "now is the judgment of this world." And our place is this, we are in a world which is in utter darkness from Christ being gone out of it. ("The night is far spent"), but it is here that we are, and it is here that we have this revelation of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Now that the whole world has rejected the Son of God, its probation has closed, so that it is said, "once in the *end* of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

In another sense the end of the world has not come yet, but when you talk of God dealing with man, as man in this world it had come to an end. He could do no more for His vineyard than He had done, but it was all of no use. Whether as without law, or as under law, or with Christ Himself among them, they would have God upon no terms whatever.

Now it is complete *salvation* and that is what I get when I get Christianity. There is nothing of the flesh in that, and nothing *for* the flesh. The apostle had

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been a Hebrew of the Hebrews, but now he does not know even Christ after the flesh, and therefore he asks the Colossians, "why as *though* living in the world are ye subject to ordinances?" They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and the law applied to all that, *but I have died with Christ*, and the whole question now, is one of connection with Him. We are passing through the world which rejected Him, but we are connected with Him in glory. He came in love, and is gone in righteousness, and we are "made the righteousness of God in Him"—that which is fit for heaven, and nothing else is. I stand sealed with the Holy Ghost, between the first coming of that Blessed One and His second coming to put me into the full place that He has earned for me.

I find my sins totally gone for ever, not merely forgiveness at any given moment for what I have done, blessedly true though that is, but it is only half the truth. I get this, that Christ has offered one sacrifice for sins, and only one, and that at the end of the world, and if that has not wrought for me a perfect acceptance and justification, I shall never have one, because He cannot die again, "else must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world."

If there is any sin left for Christ to clear me of, He must die again to do it, must shed His blood again, and that cannot be.

But Christ is in the presence of God for us, having made propitiation by His blood, and therefore when I go to God at any time, imputation is impossible, or God would deny the Christ who is before Him, and deny too what He has done. I have to humble myself for my faults, and the deeper the better, but if I allow imputation, I am denying the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ.

That cannot be, because God has accepted this one offering, and Christ is sitting—"sitting" is an emphatic word—"sit" the priests of old never did, but Christ does. He has sat down in continuity, from henceforth expecting until His enemies be made His footstool.

Then, He will rise up for judgment.

"Jottings" from an address of J.N.D's. 83

Now, for His friends He is sitting there.

Other blessed truths come in, in their place, but, as regards our standing, God never remembers our sins and iniquities any more, and the worshipper, once purged, has no more conscience of sins. I insist upon this because it is most vital. Of your sins—I speak as to the work done on the cross; I am not talking about your feelings as to your sins—if your sins are not put away by the blood of Christ—I speak to Christians—they never can be. But He has borne my sins in His own body on the tree, and I am as white as snow.

Then there is another thing—there is the nature, too, the flesh, what about that?

That is not sin committed; nor does its existence in me give me a bad conscience. If it did, I never should have a good one. But how have I to deal with it? I am crucified with Christ. "I through the law have died to the law, that I might live unto God." But under the law you cannot live unto God. "I am crucified with Christ" is not merely that Christ has died—been crucified—but I have died too—been crucified with Him. So in Rom. viii., "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, and for sin"—for sin, not *sins* here—"condemned sin in the flesh."

But where did God condemn sin in the flesh? On the cross. Thank God, then! It is all condemned and done with. Ah! then the condemnation is over, and I am not in the flesh before God and there have nothing to say to it. If I look at myself as a child of God, I say I died with Christ as a child of Adam on the cross.

Whose child are you, then?

I am God's child, and I am not to own the flesh any more. So He says, "Yield yourselves unto God as those who are alive from the dead." I do not belong to this world or its religion, no, nor would I have it, for I have Christ in the glory of God. . . . And now see how He lives. You can't live in this world without an object before you, and so he says, "I live by the faith

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of the Son of God." How far can *we* say that *we* live by the faith of the Son of God? "Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," that will be by the faith of the Son of God.

I may fail, but he here speaks as a Christian, and mark how this acts upon the heart. It is He who loved me and gave Himself for me.

You get two things connected together. Christ lives in me, and is this blessed object, and with this the certainty of His deep affection for me . . . Then are you living for Christ? or has the world got hold of your heart? It is possible to live like Lot for a time. Are you living in association of faith with Christ in heaven, or are you living in this world?

The time is short; it is the time of God's long-suffering now, and Peter says, He *is ready* to judge the quick and the dead.

God knows the moment when grace has no more portion in gathering souls to Christ in glory.

Be assured there is reality with God. "We walk by faith, not by sight." Which are you living by—faith or sight?

Things to attract are stretched out on every hand. Shops are full of things on every hand; we all know what that is, but do you allow all that? or are you so living by the faith of the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you, as the world and the devil can't distract you? We are liable to it, all of us. But can you say this: "One thing I do" . . .

The great truth and essence of Christianity is that it takes the heart out of this world, and fixes it on Christ, making us live by Christ, and on Christ, and to Christ.

—*Unrevised Notes.*

Paul *must* go to Philippi, and not only so, but he must go *now*; and, moreover, he must go to the river-side. There are many palaces, many temples, many streets, many houses, much people, but he must not stop, he must go *there*. Why? because there is a humble woman, a seller of purple *there!* and the eye of the great King of the universe is upon *her*.

THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH.

IN commencing a study of Zephaniah's prophecy, we would remark on the urgent need of God's people being acquainted with all the Scriptures. There is a general tendency to confine ourselves in our reading and study to certain set portions of God's Word—portions precious indeed. This is to our loss. Of them we cannot know too much; with other parts we ought to be equally familiar.

In "*the word of prophecy*" we have God revealing Himself in multitudinous ways, and casting His light upon past, present, and future. All is brought into the blaze of day. The past He unfolds, the present He exposes, the future He reveals. Each book has its set purpose and its own unique place. In each God lays out before us a part of that gloriously exquisite design which, with its foundation laid in Genesis, finds its completion in the Revelation.

Doubtless there are things "hard to be understood," and hard to apply. Difficulties arise, and rightly; for God intends His own to show diligence and to exercise their senses. In that way the spiritual faculties expand and we are to find blessing likewise in seeking the solution in Daniel's way—on bended knee with earnest desire of heart (Dan. x. 12). Asking, he received; seeking, he found; and it will not be otherwise with us.

Zephaniah deals particularly with Judah, and in point of time, historically, brings us to the Babylonish captivity. Then he speaks of the future and of Jehovah turning again their captivity (iii. 20). Hence periods of time are passed over, and prophetically we are carried on to an era then very distant, though spoken of as comparatively near. But prophets, the messengers of Him to whom a thousand years are as one day, speak of times not present as though they were. Confusion arises often through not remembering this. A prophet's present, it has been well remarked, is not when he utters his message, but when it is fulfilled.

The Prophet Zephaniah.

The day of the Lord in connection with the enemies in the land, and the subsequent subjugation of all nations with Himself worshipped everywhere and by all (ii. 11; iii. 8), with His own, "an afflicted and poor people" but trusting in Him, delivered and made a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth (iii. 20). These are the things that Zephaniah speaks of. Judgment and glory are intermingled, and the final triumph of God over every enemy is fully assured.

The book closes with that marvellously wonderful revelation of His unbounded delight in His chosen ones—a word that has uplifted many a heart through many a long and dreary day, removing the darkness of sorrow and semi-despair, and replacing it with the radiancy of joy. The preceding prophet, Habakuk, closes his book with the saint, animated by his faith, joying in the God of his salvation altogether apart from blessing granted. Whatever be the outward signs prevailing, God is God. But Zephaniah soars higher still, and shews Jehovah-Elohim rejoicing with joy and with singing over those upon whom salvation has been bestowed. Oh, can we receive it? "Love so amazing, so divine" necessarily exceeds the capacities of our little hearts to grasp!

But coming to the details of the prophecy, the very first verse contains the declaration that it is Jehovah's word; a brief genealogy of the servant by whom the message was to be sent; and a reference to the time when it was delivered. Its opening words attest the divine origin of the prophecy. It was "*the Word of Jehovah.*" HE, who knows the end from the beginning, speaks therein, showing His perfect knowledge of the condition of His people. HE "who inhabiteth eternity" makes known His mind concerning that condition. Judgment must fall. HE who stood in covenant relationship with His people reveals His purposes of goodness and grace. Significant introduction—"the Word of Jehovah," entitling every jot to deepest reverence and most attentive study.

Of the instrument used to convey it to His own we have not much information. The descent of the "son

The Prophet Zephaniah.

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of Cushite" from one Hizkiah is given, a sufficiency of information requisite for the purpose of identifying the servant. But reading beneath the surface we find (as the opening word surely intimates) that Jehovah is all in all.

Then how remarkable that this prophecy telling of the low moral condition of the people, should be given during the reign of the son of Amon. Pious Josiah sat upon the throne, of whom the word is, that "he walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left" (2 Kings xxii. 2). The reading of the book of the law caused the king to rend his clothes, for plainly the ways of that people were not according to the sayings of the book. "Our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book" said the king, giving the obvious departure from Jehovah's written word as the reason why wrath was about to come upon them. Disobedience had become characteristic of them. And not only upon them; for the note first sounded by the prophet is one of universal judgment. "I will utterly consume from off the land." The besom of judgment should sweep the earth, and Jehovah's might be manifested in a way that should reveal it to be His undeniably. In all departments of nature should that power be felt—by man and beast, by fowl and fish, and the wicked and their idols should perish together. And that all might know the thing was determined of the Lord, the testimony was emphatically repeated, "I will cut off man from off the earth, saith Jehovah."

But more. Those particularly responsible are next enumerated. Over Judah and Jerusalem His hand should be stretched, and His power be upon Baal's followers and Baal's priests, as also upon the idolatrous priests, or chemarims, who, as we learn from 2 Kings xxiii. 5, burned incense in the high places and were peculiarly obnoxious because of the position they held. And the grievous departure from the Lord is further noted; for not only were "the high places" utilised for the purpose of idolatry, but the house-tops were put to a similar use. Total estrangement from, not

communion with, Jehovah was the prevailing feature. Idolatry was woven, as it were, into the very texture of their everyday life, and what made it worse was the way in which this was definitely associated with the worship of Jehovah. Here the master hand of the adversary is seen, though doubtless the fact was that, "My people love to have it so" (Jer. v. 31). Corrupting the true by associating the false with it has ever been his way, and alas! success crowns his efforts.

Does not a similarly sad state of confusion exist to-day? On every hand prominently so. Some main features of Christianity are acknowledged, but are mixed with the opposing principles of the world, and as in Judah Jehovah was worshipped, but degraded to the level of their false gods, so in Christendom the true God is owned and yet dishonoured. That obedience which He rightly claims is denied Him and His Word is openly flouted.

But the enumeration proceeds. Backsliders, those who had made enquiry of the Lord, but had "turned back from" Him, as well as those who had totally ignored Him, having never sought or enquired of Jehovah, should come under the might of His indignation (verse 6).

A word of solemn warning follows: "Hold thy peace at the presence of the LORD GOD." How suitable is this, for when "the God of glory thundereth" (Ps. xxix. 3-5), every other voice is hushed to silence. He had spoken and Jehovah's day was near at hand, and the manifestation of Jehovah in the midst of a people where every evil was rampant could only mean direst judgment. So it is here declared. His sacrifice was prepared; the guests were invited. In Rev. xix. we find a call to the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven to "the great supper of God" (verses 17, 18); and as what the seer saw in vision sets out the final consummation of what the prophets speak of, the "sacrifice" plainly alludes to the objects upon whom judgment would fall, and the "guests" to the ravenous birds there referred to. Before He acts they are summoned, for when He did perform it would be

in overwhelming victorious power, and consternation and distress should overtake all. As terrible had been the insult and slight offered to God, who in long-suffering mercy had restrained the rod, so terrible would be the judicial stroke when it fell. H. F.

To be continued, D. V.

"MORE THAN CONQUERORS THROUGH HIM THAT LOVED US."

Rom. viii. 37.

More than a conqueror my Lord !
 And can it really be
 That one so weak and faint as I
 May win such victory ?
 'Tis not by powers of fleshly might
 Mustered in bold array ;
 For while I wait for Thee to work,
 Thy Spirit gains the day.
 And since the very wrath of man,
 Thy " Holy Arm " must praise,
 Against the foe's o'erwhelming flood
 " A Standard " Thou wilt raise.
 " Through Him that loved us," oh my soul !
 Here lies the golden key
 To heavenly peace and triumph now
 " In all these things " for me !
 How oft God's messengers of peace
 On warlike pinions fly,
 To lead me to the living Rock
 That's higher far than I.
 That I shall not contend aright
 A thousand failures prove :
 Lord, teach me to commit my cause
 To Thy protecting love.
 The strivings of a fretful mind
 Weigh down the bruised reed ;
 'Tis better to " be still and know
 That Thou art God " indeed.
 For man it is an end of strife
 A conqueror to be ;
 But " *more than conquerors* " are they
 Who leave the end with Thee. J. M. G.

A LETTER.

I WAS much interested in your brief remarks on the Lord's Priesthood in December number of C. H., 1907.

In Heb. i. 3, we get a fact stated ; " When He had by Himself purged sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." A work done, a finished work truly, and done, so far as the clause states, in the very place where the seat is on which He sat down ; of entrance or of ascension there is no trace in the passage. There is nothing there said about sin-bearing and wrath enduring, nor of dying and rising again, deeply important as these truths are. What we do learn is that One who is both God and man made purification of sins by Himself and sat down.

In chap ii. 9, we have One, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. That One was to become the Captain or Author of their salvation. That same One, God the Son, took part of flesh and blood, that through death etc. Here we learn how He could die, and in part of what that death would result in, even the annulling of Satan's power, and the deliverance from the fear of death of all those who, on account of it, had all their life been subject to bondage. It behoved that One, who though God had become a man, to be in all things made like unto His brethren. Here I take it, it is not simply becoming what God's children were, *i.e.*, becoming a man, but rather in being, subsequent to that, made in all things like to them, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest etc.: merciful to them, faithful to God. This required of course that He should be a man ; for Priest He could not be without His being that. To be a merciful Priest He would be made like unto them. For having suffered in trial or temptation He could succour those who are tried or tempted.

There are, so it seems to me, three processes of trial and education the Blessed Son of God passed through ere He could enter on certain work, and needed by

Him as fitting for office and the work attaching to that office. (1) In Isa. l. 4, 5, we have the ear opened to attention, the lesson given each morning, the obedience of heart of the learner, not rebellious nor did He turn away, but gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. He hid not His face from shame and spitting. Why was this? He tells us "That I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

(2) He is the Captain or Author of salvation and must needs be made perfect through sufferings. Author of salvation He could not be until all His sufferings were ended.

(3) To be High Priest, He must also be made perfect through sufferings. Chap. v. 7 tells us of what He passed through in the days of His flesh. Having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from or out of death, and was heard in that He feared. Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect He became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him. It has been said that the Son of God was born a Priest. One looks in vain for proof of that in the Word. Heb. viii. 4 is to my mind conclusive that it was not so. But as a different interpretation of that passage has been given, we can surely find corroborative evidence of the true interpretation and we need not go far to find it. Had the Son been born a Priest He would have been such without a call, and without consecration. To have been called to Priesthood would have necessitated that the call should have been made before incarnation, and of that there is no trace in the word, as far as I can find. "So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest" are the words of inspiration. Now He was not Christ until born of the Virgin. Further the Priest must be a *man*, and in the case of the Son He must be made perfect through sufferings ere He could become a Priest, or be fitted to fulfil the functions pertaining to that office. Consecration must precede

priestly action. And having been perfected He became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him, called, or named, of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedec. Author of eternal salvation He was not, until death had taken place. Priest He could not be, until death was past; for Christ was a Priest after the power of an endless life, and after the order of Melchizedec. E. R. W.

"IF I WASH THEE NOT, THOU HAST NO PART WITH ME."

In a recent choice article, "Whiter than Snow" in the pages of "Christian's Helper" there is a foot note (page 42,) which might be appropriately regarded as a key unlocking rich and rare spiritual stores for the hearts of redeemed ones to enter into and possess to the praise of the Giver of every good.

Another gifted writer states that since apostolic times the truth specially referred to ("water"—ministry of the word applied to the feet of defiled ones), has been by the various schools misapplied. Evangelical not distinguishing between "blood" and "water," and (Greek, Oriental, Roman, Anglican), regarding the wondrous act of our blessed Lord in taking basin and towel and in so lowly a way washing His disciples feet, to be indicative of baptism. Reformers and Puritans being also astray in rightly dividing the word, were not able to lay open these good things for worshipful hearts. But now that treasures are unlocked, matter expressing love surpassing knowledge, love expressed once in that mighty sacrifice! How our God delights to refer to it, to have it put upon the imperishable page to be constantly in heart and mind, and we can just in fulness of joy turn to the place wherein it is written: "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." Shall we not praise

and adore as this is laid open for the children's hearts, ears and minds? His letters to His children tell that He loved us so—how becoming that we should prize His communications. Having an altar to eat at we commune with Him (Heb. xiii. 10), and converse with the children of God—all saints—over the giving of such a sacrifice, and testify to the sufficiency of that only Name, of that One offering to save, to sanctify, to perfect for ever.

Plainly it is the precious blood which cleanseth from all sin which is referred to in 1 John iv. 10. We have our calls to communion with God upon such heart thrilling themes as this sacrifice He has made. The apostle in speaking to wise men, also calls upon us to judge what he says: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ."

Activity on the part of the enemy goes on in the ranks of the disciples of the Lord, success so far crowning those efforts, as the betrayal of Christ by Judas witnesses, and those expressions telling of Satan's desire to have them all reminded us of difficulties that the Father would weigh before putting all things in the hands of His Son the Great Shepherd of the sheep and Captain of our salvation. Is there really ability with the One revealed to us, meek and lowly, in weakness as a lamb led to the slaughter, to hold all things committed to His hand and dear, how dear to His heart? What had been His proposition and His mission—of the One who came full of grace and truth? What grace on His part to come declaring the Father, fitting for the kingdom, imparting life, and taking up hearts and quieting them in view of sorrows, of partings, of still leaving His own in this world and Satan not even bound. It is good to know better to whose love and care we are confided, and to be convinced He is able to keep all that is committed to Him. It is not uncommon for the Word of God to make mention of that which is so thrilling and that which is most sobering—"The same night in which He was betrayed, He took bread . . . this is my body which is given for you," and when He had successfully

accomplished so wonderful a matter as revealing the heart of God here below—unparalleled hate and hostility is again in evidence. May our present concern be with Him who loved His own which were in the world, and that unchanging love, “He loved them unto the end.” The laying down of His life might well in one sense keep us from surprise at anything the wondrous love and grace of our blessed Lord would from time to time lay open to our wondering and adoring view. “Part with me”—there is a charm about the words—His words—referring as we believe to something that should not be taken away—the washing of regeneration being a necessary part and the washing of purification, a present service His own unwearied love has put in motion. To fellowship with God’s Son who would take up those once poor dupes of Satan and give the promise and the prospect of the Father’s House, that House in unsullied light. And yet there is a little journey through this poor world, the scene of the enemy’s activity, and where defilement can be gathered—such being entirely unsuited to Him and the glory; the mission of the Word, the hated Word and hated users of it, is to accomplish this purifying as occasion requires because of His heart being set on having us with and like Himself. That the precious Word is so efficacious accounts so largely for the hatred those experience who use it spiritually for His glory and the good of those dear to Him. For see ye not there are examples given, yea stress and direction over and over again is drawn to those so blessedly known as Christ’s—the five words to edify, and this most spiritual employ—the washing of one another’s feet—attention to purity, not in a meaningless rite, a formal sanctimonious ablution, but in keeping with what without straining is unquestionably signified, for we get His love again expressed, “Christ also 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.”

Presentation day is to dawn though matters still run on. One who cannot err has placed all in His hands. We see not all the redeemed housed and at home on high in the presence of the Father; some even fail to know the nature of their calling, or to think their feet need the suited ministry of the Word to remove the defiling marks, the condition of things so resembles "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way." "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter"—may as well apply to us as to Peter then, for how little are we in the closeness of intimacy with our blessed Lord in His own, in His present service with a view to the future that is all to Him, and what His love and grace will effect in granting that part with Himself. No doubt communion is most desirable to maintain along the road, but this good part which shall not be taken away should give a bent, as Word and Spirit taught and led, to our prayers, labours, attitude towards His own.

Another part may but emphasize the grace which lays open such to us as we view this awful contrast. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be His God, and he shall be My son. BUT the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Oh! solemn issues—endless bliss or ceaseless burnings.

It is simply to be unbelieving in God's sent One, His only begotten, well-beloved Son. With what impunity has slight, affront, hate and hostility been shown Him since He came full of grace and truth. In the sight of these sanctuary unfoldings who could envy learned unbelievers, who for impiety and blasphemy outstrip poor souls who in other ways, it may be, politely but carelessly, postpone decision for Christ.

Happiness in the present, for there will be no unhappiness in the future for the household of faith—consists

in knowing the will of our blessed Lord and the doing it. A present part of lowly service in communion with Him in holding to the faithful Word and using it in a spiritual way is no small favour, and all this is called for owing to that future part with Him. May these few lines but stimulate enquiry into the present service of our blessed Lord and bring us to a like-mind with Him, giving us to understand the rich results that follow and abide such works of faith and labours of love He sets in motion.

The Father has given all things into His hands. This should tend to calm and restfulness as well as to intelligent activity.

W. B.

GOD REVEALED.

IN CREATION.—If, then, the works are so great and varied, and so far beyond the utmost limits of our thoughts, what must the Worker be? for we are sure the agent must be always superior to the work performed by him; yet, while so great that by a volition of the Divine mind a universe can either be spoken into existence, or crushed to atoms, yet this Great Being watches over the tiny sparrow, provides its food, and suffers it not to fall without His permission. Here, lessons of humility and gratitude are to be learned; here, the soul sinks abased before this Great and Holy Being, conscious of its nothingness, imperfection and dependence upon Him. For whether an angel or worm, all rest on Him; for He openeth His hand and satisfieth the wants of every living thing; and yet while so great that angelic powers fail to grasp the mysteries of His nature, power, and greatness, yet is He so condescending as to say, "To that man will I look, and with that man will I dwell, who is of an humble and contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." The soul who, in the exercise of living faith, receives this into his experience, is calm amidst distractions, feels that a table can be provided in the wilderness, that this gracious Being will guide, preserve, and uphold through life, comfort in death,

and that amidst the crash of universes and systems, all will be well with him.

IN PROVIDENCE.— God reveals and makes Himself constantly manifest to those who are rightly taught in the provision (as the term providence signifies) that God has made, and which He continuously exercises towards and for the comfort and well-being of His creature; and that by this constant supervision and care, thus exhibited by Him, the happiness of His dependents and His own glory are promoted. By the permissive providence of God, we mean the allowance of that to exist and occur which is neither produced by Him nor approved of. Such as the existence of Satan, the entrance of sin into the world, the wrongdoing and injustice of man to his fellow. To say that God permitted sin to be introduced because He did not foreknow it, would be to deny His omniscience; to say man fell because God could not prevent it, would be to deny His omnipotence; to say He sanctioned the entrance of sin, would be to darken His holiness and blacken His character. But here is an abyss the tiny plumb-line of reason can never fathom.

Thy ways, O Lord with wise design,
Are framed upon Thy throne above,
And every dark and bending line
Meets in the centre of Thy love.
My favoured soul shall meekly learn
To lay her reason at Thy throne;
Too weak Thy secrets to discern,
I'll trust Thee for my Guide alone!

IN GRACE.— By God in grace we understand the discoveries God has made of Himself in His Word as purposing the recovery of sinners from the ruins of the fall. Now even this revelation is an evidence of grace. We had no right to expect it, nor could we compel its proclamation. Moreover, God was not obliged to publish it. He would have been just had He withheld it. Then this revelation in itself is an act of grace. But He has manifested His grace by giving His Son to die for the salvation of His people. Now the remedy in its method was quite original seeing it was designed in eternity, even before sin had

been committed, or creation had an existence. It was perfectly unique in its character. It stood, and will continue to stand throughout all eternity unparalled; for there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.

Grace—to see Jesus and to be like Him—there to spend an eternity of blessedness and uninterrupted felicity in the rich discoveries of His nature, providence, and grace. What, then, is our conclusion? That grace is of God from first to last, both in willing, decreeing, and performing. That He must communicate, sustain, and finally consummate, seeing man is utterly incompetent to do anything in or of Himself that can in any way benefit himself or glorify God. So that grace in the believer is thus seen to be the prelude of certain glory, and eternal glory the full development of grace.

Wonders of grace to God belong;
Repeat His praises in your song.

---*Extract.*

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- “There is *an Eye* that never sleeps
Beneath the wing of night;
There is *an Ear* that never shuts,
When sink the beams of light.
- “There is *an Arm* that never tires,
When human strength gives way;
There is *a Love* that never fails,
When earthly loves decay.
- “That *Eye* is fixed on seraph throngs,
That *Arm* upholds the sky;
That *Ear* is filled with heavenly songs,
That *Love* is throned on high.
- “But there’s *a Power* which faith can wield,
When mortal aid is vain;
That *Eye*, that *Arm*, that *Love*, to reach,
That listening *Ear* to gain.
- “*That Power* is prayer, which soars on high,
Through Jesus, to the throne,
And moves the hand, which moves the world
To bring deliverance down.”

PROPITIATION.

1 JOHN ii.—Propitiation is not merely a question of God's children. God Himself had to be glorified as to sin, apart from our salvation, His nature in love vindicated as to His worst enemies. We may see the instruction afforded on the two truths by the type on the Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi.). On that day there were two goats for the people of Israel. One of those goats was Jehovah's lot; the other was the people's lot. Now it was only in the people's lot that all their sins were confessed. This was not the case with the first goat; and it was sacrificed. In this there appears a marked difference. As to one goat, Jehovah's lot, it was for His glory, tarnished in this world by sin, by His grace, to satisfy the exigencies of His nature. He must needs be glorified about sin.

But this did not as yet take up definitely the burden of the sinner. For his remission the sins must be confessed distinctly and positively, and so Aaron did, laying both his hands on the head of the live or second goat, the people's lot. The first goat was killed, and its blood brought unto the sanctuary as everywhere, within and without. Here is the propitiation in a typical way, which so far makes it stand good for the whole world, that the glad tidings might be preached to every sinner.

The doctrine is here and elsewhere. The type of it helps to illustrate the marked difference. The sacrifice of Christ has perfectly glorified God's nature, so that He can rise supremely and send forth glad tidings to every creature. But there is something more needed for sinners to be saved. "Christ bore their sins in His body on the tree." This is never said about "the world"; there is always a sufficiently careful guard. But because God has been perfectly glorified as to sin in the sacrifice of Christ, He can by His servants, as it were, beseech and entreat even His enemies: "Be reconciled to God." God's love is the spring. Christ's death is the way and basis for the gospel. It does not necessarily save every creature, but declares God is glorified in Christ. If there were not a soul converted, God would be glorified in that sweet savour of Christ.

But it is well to note that the difference is great between the two. If God left all to man, not one could have been saved. It is by grace that we are saved. To the elect He gives faith; and there is where the propitiation for our sins comes in. None with the fear of God thinks all are to be saved, or denies that grace makes the difference between a believer and an unbeliever. The Day of Atonement bore witness that the first thing was to glorify His own nature; and this apart from effacing the sins of His people. It was of still higher moment that His truth should be vindicated, His holiness and His righteousness, His love and His majesty in Christ's cross. Therein as nowhere else good and evil came to issue, for the judgment and defeat of evil, and for the triumph of good, for the reconciliation, not only of all believers to God, but of all things (*not* all persons), and for new heavens and a new earth throughout eternity. The basis of this was laid in what the slain goat (Jehovah's lot) typified. But in order to extricate the people from their sins, He would show them His great mercy; and so they are in the second place taken up definitely, and their sins laid on the live goat, which carried them away into a land of forgetfulness, that they might be remembered no more. It is the distinction of propitiation and substitution.

W. K.

Let us note well that the Lord says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart *will* be." He does not say, "*ought* to be," but "*will*." We are not allowed to escape with the easy assurance that what we are diligently accumulating our hearts are not engaged with. Treasure in heaven will keep the heart there, and draw the feet on to where the heart is.

The censer swung by the proud hand of merit,
 Fumes with a fire abhorr'd;
 But faith's two mites, dropped covertly, inherit
 A blessing from the Lord.

" TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH."

Fragments of Lectures on Rev. ii. and iii.

It is sometimes immensely comforting in reading these addresses, to hear the constant repetition of "he that hath an ear." However poor as a Christian, yet one cannot say truthfully one has not "an ear to hear."

Oh what a precious thing if the Lord Jesus can say to some of you, "I see your heart like a vessel in which My word is hid."

It is wonderful the extent to which men, Christians, you and I, have lost sight of Christ as a living person in heaven.

It is sad how little the thought is in our minds that the Son of Man has a heart full of affection, has likes and dislikes, antipathies and thoughts (ii. 6).

Do you understand what heavenly worship is? It is the heart finding its joy in its admiration of God's dealing with you as a poor sinner.

When a Christian gets down into the world, Christ may let him go into captivity until the last hour; but He says then even, "I must be in your heart and you in mine; we must sup together." Man would be saying "Oh the joy at this hour cannot be genuine, after such a life of ups and downs." *They forget what God is.* There is something beautiful in Christ's determination to come into the heart which would shut Him out, and sup there.

It is a conflict and no mistake: but if we know weakness we fight under Him.

What can give bounding of heart, brightness of face? Getting to Christ in heaven, and finding He has there a heart flowing over with affections for you.

Be diligent if you want enjoyment. [But] start from heaven, the mind, the heart there. It is this that enables one to give the slip to all bad habits formed for thirty or forty years. Christ is not under

them, and we can give them the slip . . . The course of this world—I am outside it.

What service does God look for from those risen with Christ? Complete surrender. Satan loves it not, and desires to bring down doctrine, and with it testimony for God.

We should desire to have the fragrance of God and heaven about us, as we pass through this world, fed with the mighty's meat.

Three notes of harmony to which the heart is called to respond—

1st. He is a prayer maker in heaven. Have you responded by bringing all your difficulties to Him?

2nd. He is in heaven, our companion and guide through the wilderness—revealing the Father and Himself to us.

3rd. He is hidden there, and calls to us to respond to His joy in being there.

A small thing with closed doors, but the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Her hair—the glory of the woman—only valued as she can lay it at His feet. "What she could." None so weak, so poor, but may refresh His heart by service springing out of affection for Himself. Woman in Scripture brought nearest to the Lord, through the heart's affection to His person.

What is tribulation? Something outside: to complain of which proves we are not in fellowship with Christ.

You do not know yourselves, if you do not know your infirmities. If you have walked ten years with Christ, He has communicated in *detail* what a poor wretched thing He has found you.

He has given life; and with whom, with what does it connect me? Is it its nature to associate with things here, or with Him.

What overcomes is faith. It makes one part and parcel of the Lord Jesus who has overcome.

The Person of Christ.

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The dearest privilege of the children of God—to look around on all that is contrary to God, and humble themselves on account of it. Help all you can out of it, *but you cast no stones.*

Nothing but *faith* can turn out *self*. *You must get Christ in*, the only overcomer.

If your eye is fixed on billows, there will be failure; if on the Lord Jesus, you may see neither sun, moon, nor stars for many days, but there will be present victory. Many things I can do as a moral man, I cannot do as a blood bought saint. White robes are easily sullied.

Faith knows there is such a thing as a robe of a blood-washed conscience.

Is it true He knows us by name? Names us before God? Where was Christ when He said "Saul, Saul?" Where is He our advocate? Not down here, but up there. Ah! you know little of Him if you do not know that it is true He has named you before God—that He does it now.

We like something vague, but when Christ deals with us, we have nothing vague.

However much I may fail, blessed be God, He has a Church and I belong to it, and the full blessedness of what it is belongs to me. A tache of gold—a loop of a curtain—in the tabernacle formed an integral part of the tabernacle of God, and was to be looked upon and judged as such, and not according to its own individual worth.

G. V. W.

THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

John i. 1-5.

THESE verses form the preface to John's Gospel, wherein we have Christ, as the eternal Son of the Father, brought before us. They give us the truth of His Person, and show us His relation to God (1-2), to creation (3), and to men (4-5).

And we are without delay brought to the subject matter of the unfolding. No introductory details are given. A genealogy would be manifestly out of place. Obviously it is the purpose of the Holy Spirit to engage us at once with the Person of Christ, and attention is drawn not only by the matter vouchsafed, but also by the manner in which it is conveyed; for there is a simplicity suited to those to whom it is given, and a sublimity worthy of Him who in grace deigns to give instruction on so momentous a subject. Deeper depths are here than mind can fathom, but simplicity of statement for the reception of faith.

The first words of revelation are, "*In the beginning*" (Gen. i. 1), an undefined period of time, but there we have creation, here the Creator Himself. There the fact is recorded that *God created*, but He who wrought in creatorial power was before the works of His own hand. So the opening statement of this Gospel predicates eternal existence of Him who was—not became—the Word. *The Word* is His first title. By Him God was to be expressed. Here there are no qualifying words added to the designation, for it is the truth of His Person that is brought out. In grace here He was "*the Word of life*" (1 John i.); in judgment He is "*the Word of God*" (Rev. xix.) Eternity of being is thus in this simple language attributed to Him, the Word. So clearly is the truth stated that only wilful insubjection to Scripture can account for error.

But further, not only was the Word *in the beginning*, but "*the Word was with God.*" Distinct personality was His then. "*God is one*" truly. So the Old Testament stated (Deut. vi. 4), whilst also very plainly intimating that in the Godhead there were distinct personalities (Ps. xlv.; Dan. vii.). In the affirmation before us this is expressly taught of the Word, for He was with God. And to emphasize this truth we have a reiteration of it in the second verse, "*the same was in the beginning with God.*" The seeming repetition is important; for as the Word He had eternal existence and separate personality.

A third statement is given by the inspired Evan-

The Person of Christ.

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gelist. Not only was He with God but *He was God*. How grandly concise! Essential Deity was His. "The Word was God." Such is the truth of His Person. His coming into the circumstances of creaturehood did not touch this at all. He who was God was to express God. Who else could do so?

When we remember that the Person of Christ is the main point of attack to day, the importance of having our faith resting upon Divine revelation should be apparent.

His relation to creation is next stated. He is the Creator. "All things were made by Him." Omnipotence was His, and His eternal power is displayed in creation's works. Universes many there are, but all were made by Him. Animate and inanimate beings all owe their existence to His power. Highest archangel and meanest worm that creeps alike are His handiwork. For "without Him was not anything made that was made." "Let us make," is the express declaration of Gen. i. 26, indicating plurality of persons in the Godhead, but apart from the Word was not anything made that was made. Thus His glory as Creator is secured, and when in grace He comes it is into "a world His hands had made."

But more. Life was in Him, and in connection with this His relation to men is brought out. "In Him was life"—life, eternally, divinely; for it is of Him, not as incarnate, but of Him as the One who was with God in the beginning, and who was God that this is written. He was the "living One," the fountain of life, and so upon Him every one was and is dependent. In incarnation the life was manifested, and "the life was the light of men." So without that life, and it is of spiritual life that the writer treats, men have no light, but receiving it, such have the light of life (chap. viii. 12), Receiving *the life* they have *light* within.

Then man's moral condition is indicated in what follows; for the light shone—where? "In the darkness." Moral darkness pervaded this scene, and men loved it. Men were morally at a distance from God,

A Song in the Night.

and the density of the darkness is shown in that the light shone and yet "the darkness apprehended it not." How marvellous and how humiliating a fact! The light appeared in darkness, but the darkness continued, was not dispelled as is natural darkness when the sun rises. The possession by man of a corrupt nature and adverse will serves to account for this remarkable fact; and "men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil."

"The life was the light of men." So all are dependent upon Him, and surely we can adoringly bless His name that through grace we have been brought to know our own deep need, and have been turned from darkness to light.

What glories are His! and how fitting a commencement is this to the Gospel that is to depict His personal glory. Truly He is God over all, blessed for evermore, Creator of all things, and the Source of blessing for men.

H. F.

A SONG IN THE NIGHT.

Look on high!
 Darkness flees and morn draws nigh;
 Tears of anguish, shed at midnight,
 Shine like pearls in morning sunlight.
 Thus our sorrows end thro' grace
 In the light of Jesus' face.
 Look on high,
 Morn draws nigh.

O how near
 Beams Thy coming, Saviour dear,
 When the trumpet's tone resounding,
 Every heart with rapture bounding,
 Knows the home-call come at last,
 Conflict, toil, and suffering past—
 Yes, 'tis near,
 Saviour dear.

Openings for Idolatry.

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Jesus Lord,
 Let the promise of Thy word
 Stir our souls with deeper yearning,
 Fan the flame and keep it burning
 Till we fall Thy face before,
 Satisfied for evermore.
 Jesus Lord!
 Sure Thy Word!

[Translated from the German.]

OPENINGS FOR IDOLATRY.

THERE is a suited opportunity for idolatry to come in. The people of God who are not satisfied with the full enjoyment of their own inheritance, surely are just ready for the enemy to come in and lead them astray. It is an unfilled heart, a heart that has failed to enter upon its own portion, which is open to these assaults. Just as we were seeing what was characteristic of the whole nation of Israel; it failed to enter upon possession of all that was its own; so here; and the heart that is unfilled with what is its own, that is not in the enjoyment of that, is ready for the enemy to come in and lead it into idolatry. The Danites became restless, just as the Levite did (Judges xvii.), and "like a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place."

There is quite a long narrative here as to how they go to spy out another portion for themselves . . . (Judges xviii.). Of course, one would not say a single word against their conquering territory that really belonged to them; but the point is, that their activity was not in connection with what God had given them. If their activity had been directed against the Philistines; if they had been content to widen out the boundary lines that God Himself had given to them, surely that would have been faith. But here, *not* able to enter upon the enjoyment of what God has actually given them, they go elsewhere to seek an

Openings for Idolatry.

easier place than that held by the redoubtable Philistines. An easier place for themselves; and, dear brethren, how often do God's people slip into an easier place, and desire, as it were, to settle down into a pleasanter portion than the rugged inheritance which He has given them. Though it be a rugged inheritance, yet it yields the choicest fruit.

But is it not a common thing in our own history to choose what costs us least, and to try to meet the enemies which, after all, are secure and at ease, and easily overthrown, rather than those which are stronger and mightier than ourselves, and whose power we fear, and which, if we are not really in communion with God, will overthrow us? So Dan sends off elsewhere to have a portion rather than in the place that God had marked out for Him.

The very things that you fear, that hamper you where you are, that are next to you, and that hinder you in the enjoyment of what is distinctly your own, those are the things that you are to meet and overcome. We see a great deal in the history of the Church of going off into foreign fields. Surely one would not say a single word against going off into the foreign field to carry the Gospel of Christ everywhere. But, the first thing, the absolutely essential thing, is for the people of God to have an activity of soul in the enjoyment of what is really their own here.

And so that hard thing that lies at your very door, that you have looked at and feared, and yet which has been like a great barrier between you and what was your true enjoyment and privilege, that is the thing for you to conquer, otherwise you will be like Dan, turning away from your proper sphere, and further opening your doors to taking lower ground as to God and all His things. Is not that true? Is not that a real and important thing for us to notice, that it is just this spirit of compromise and seeking an easier path that opens the way to dishonour, and to disobey our blessed God?

S. R.

THOUGHTS ON THE LAMENTATIONS.*Continued from page 76.*

BUT what was the path Jeremiah had travelled, and what had been his experience by the way? This was of great importance and interest to her. Hence the prophet speaks of it. To the Lord he had cried, "Remember my affliction, my misery, the wormwood and the gall"; and hope arose from the confidence that God would surely do this. "Thou wilt surely remember that my soul is bowed in me." So some translate verse 20. Therefore he adds, "This I recall to mind, therefore have I hope." Moreover, his continuance in life, whilst bowed under the weight of his troubles, was an evidence of mercy. This point of his past history just fits in with the city's and nation's then present condition. Great as were the desolations of the city and the trials of the nation, they were not consumed. Jeremiah himself, one of them, and others too, alive on earth, were witnesses of this.

How could they account for this? They deserved to be swept off the earth, but God in mercy had come in. "It is of the Lord's mercy we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." His justice demanded the execution of the deserved judgment, but His mercy, of which they were living examples, gave hope for the future. So from this point what the Lord is, and can do, is brought in, as before had been acknowledged what the Lord had done to the rebellious city and the sinful people, "because His compassions fail not." What a ground to stand on, what a refuge to fly to—"His compassions!" "They are new every morning, great is Thy faithfulness." What a thing it is to find one's only shelter in what He is in Himself. But what can afford more security than this? Jeremiah had learnt this, now the nation must learn it; but in him they had a living example of what is here stated. In a future day the remnant will sing, entering heartily into it, "His mercy endureth for ever." Here they have to count on it, and own it as already illustrated

in preserving alive a remnant, that the nation should not be utterly consumed. "God hath concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all" is the divine statement in Romans xi., in explanation of His ways with Israel. Here how the consciousness that He is acting in mercy can comfort them in trial is brought out. As long as Jerusalem was occupied with all that God had done to His city and people she was occupied with the punishment of her sins, but when she can think of what the Lord is, and how the continual existence of a remnant is a proof of His mercy, hope revives in her heart, and she can look up.

More, however, than this is brought out, for Jeremiah recounts his experience of the benefit of the Lord's ways with him in his adversity, and the result of it all on his heart. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him." Thus can the man speak who had seen affliction by the rod of God's wrath. Having passed through seasons of trial, he can tell Jerusalem what he has found, a knowledge of great value. Had he only entered into trial with Jerusalem, he might have stated what he looked for. His expectations might have been just, and his forecast of the future correct, but that would have afforded no comfort like the experience actually gained. So he proceeds, "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." To bear the yoke in his youth had been his experience, and he could speak of the good resulting from it. He had proved what it was to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of Jehovah; for the Lord (Adonai) will not cast off for ever; but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. "For He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." What cheering announcements are these, the experiences of one who had been in the deep waters of affliction. But all comfort here is drawn from the Lord's known character—a wonderful rock to stand on, when all that has happened has been only richly deserved. And if the Lord (Adonai), the One who has full authority to act as He will, did not

Thoughts on the Lamentations. 111

willingly afflict, He did not approve of the oppression and injustice practised by men, even though they were the appointed executioners of His wrath (verses 34-36). And since He was acting, all man's prognostications of evil to his enemies were valueless, when the Lord (Adonai) had not commanded it. None can over-ride His will, none can defeat His purpose.

But as the afflictions of Jerusalem, though instrumentally caused by the enemy, were the consequences of their sins against Jehovah, they must own them before Him. This the prophet exhorts them to do (40-42); and doing this He waits in confidence the Lord's intervention on their behalf, as he had cried himself and been delivered (49-58). But deliverances from evils inflicted by man, for the earthly people, involves punishment on their oppressors. This he looks for to fall on those who had afflicted him, and as his experience has been brought forward as a ground of hope for Jerusalem knowing what the Lord is, he can look onward to the future punishment of her rival, Edom, and the end of the punishment of Jerusalem.

Here then his personal sufferings cease to be the theme of the book, since their introduction has done the work they were intended to accomplish. So in chapter iv. we have Jerusalem's present condition contrasted with her former glory, and her future condition confidently expressed, as is also that of Edom, her bitter enemy. For Jerusalem there will be deliverance; for Edom perpetual desolations (verses 21-22). How different now is the prospect. In chap. i., all that Jerusalem could say was that her enemies shall be like unto her. But since Jeremiah's experience has been dwelt on, deliverance can be predicated of her, and trouble without any hope of alleviation be the portion of Esau's descendants. This the prophet declares.

In chapter v. we meet with other speakers. Emboldened by Jeremiah's own example, who had said, "Remember my affliction" etc., they supplicate God. "Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us, consider

and behold our reproach"; and they ground their supplication on the everlasting existence of Jehovah, and the perpetuity of His throne; for it is the action of the throne they must await. What He could do for one of His own in trial has been seen; He abides for ever, He changes not, so they can count on Him for their nation's future deliverance. Justly deserved was all their punishment, so they add, "Turn Thou us unto Thee, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old." They acknowledge what they are, and the need of God dealing with them in grace; but side by side with that, they can take up what has been manifested of God's character, and find a hope from it. So the book closes with a description of their present condition; or, as some would read it, with a question ("For wilt Thou," etc.), which, after the prophet's recorded experience, admits of but one answer. But the statement or question, whichever may be adopted, is a confession of their grievous failure, a terrible position to be in were there no well-grounded hope of escape.

Thus in this book, which contains no message from God to His people, such as they had often heard, commencing with the well-known formula, "Thus saith the Lord," His character, illustrated by His dealings with one of His saints, gives those in trial confidence about His dealings with His people Israel, a confidence He would have them lay fast hold of, for as soon as they entered the trial, He furnished them with Divine language in which they might fitly express themselves; and though travelling a road hitherto untrodden by them, they might learn what has been the experience of one in trial before them, and his deliverance out of it; an example to them how to behave under the chastisement He has inflicted, and a guide to the faithful as to the sure way out of it.

C. E. S.

JOB XXXI.

DEEPLY interesting and instructive is this closing burst of indignant self-defence on Job's part. Valuable as the law might be—for surely God does nothing in vain—we can see how high was the moral standard for the soul and for the walk of godly men outside Israel, before the legislation from Sinai, as appears in the patriarchs of Genesis. Nor is it only in matters of right and wrong, of which the conscience could judge with more or less precision, according to the amount of light possessed; but we see the effect, in the soul and its affections and judgments, of divine revelation. God had spoken words, and had wrought, too, in solemn ways with men individually and universally, in grace and in judgment, long before He had inspired men to write His mind by divine power. And faith received His word, and pondered on His dealings, to rich profit, before Scripture; though Scripture, when it was vouchsafed, added much to the blessing, and increased the responsibility of those who possessed it, and, alas! of all who despise it.

For it is an immense favour to have God's Word in a permanent, as well as perfect, form, so communicating His mind, whether about Himself and His ways, or about man and man's ways: how much more when He spoke, not by servants, but in His Son, by whom He wrought eternal redemption! On this, however, we dwell not now, but weigh what God gives us of those early days, where we see, as here, how the Holy Spirit, spite of scanty revelation, enabled saints like Job to feel so becomingly as to God, no less than in their ordinary walk of every day. But let us remember that the same faith which turned the little then to such admirable account will not be satisfied now without a deep and growing entrance into all the written Word, and a hearty fellowship with Christ in all of joy or sorrow that His name entails on us, whether we think of our being in Him above, or of His being in us here below. Grace never enfeebles the sense of what is due to God's nature or authority, but, on the contrary,

strengthens him who knows it by faith to walk, and worship, and testify accordingly. Knowledge or privilege, however precious intrinsically, is to us worse than useless, if we love not the good and hate the evil, as He judges each. And now our responsibility is measured by the fullest light and the nearest relationship; for Christ is revealed, and the Holy Ghost given, and we are His children by that Spirit, crying, "Abba, Father." Law, as the Apostle teaches us, came in by the bye, not as a rule of life, as men perversely imagine, but rather of death and condemnation (see 2 Cor. iii.). Christ is really that rule—Christ as revealed in the Word of God as a whole, and applied by the Spirit. Law came in parenthetically that the offence might abound, the power of sin, not of holiness, as grace is, the exact counterpart of law. Hence we see right ways and holy thoughts before the law; as we are called so much the more, that sin should not have dominion over us, because we are *not* under law, but under grace. We have died with Christ to law as distinctly and absolutely as to sin; such is the teaching of the Holy Ghost in Rom. vi.-viii., where it is a question of life as the ground for holy walk, not of blood as for the remission of sins. Would that God's children cast their theological idols to the moles and to the bats, and sought to know and enjoy better the liberty wherewith Christ sets free! Let them be assured that as they would be all the gainers in solid peace, so His name would have glory in their exceeding and abounding in love toward one another, and toward all, to the confirming of their hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

To return, then, Job formally and minutely tests himself by a very comprehensive bill of delinquency, and this toward God as well as man, by failure in good as well as by self-gratification, or other sins. We may be assured that not one of the friends who virtually arraigned him could have afforded to try himself as Job proceeds to do here. He judges unclean lusts as well as actions; and this in the fear of Him who had

power to cast soul and body into hell—Him who meanwhile took cognisance of all his steps. Vanity or falsehood, too, was just as far from Job's spirit and ways as impurity. Whatever men might think who drew conclusions from appearances, he could ask God to weigh him in a just balance, whether he had resorted to deceit or turned aside from the way, and if so, that another should reap the results of his labour, and that retribution, even as to his own wife, should follow any such consuming evil on his part. Most touchingly does he show that, if in an exalted position, his heart never forgot that his servants were of the same race, of the same human family as himself, to the exclusion of unfeeling personal pride. Nor was it merely the strong sense of relationship within the household, for his compassion ever went out to suffering humanity—the widow and the fatherless, the needy and the naked—and this not casually, but with constant and unwearied care as a father, and with vigilance against taking the least advantage through influence with others: so powerfully, he could say, had the fear of God and his indignant vindication of all such acted within him, as to render that hardness a total stranger to his heart. And trust in gold, the covetousness which the New Testament calls idolatry, was as abhorrent to his spirit as the giving to the highest orbs of creation the glory due to God alone; which iniquity would seem to have been in those patriarchal days as distinctly punishable before the judge, as the insidious corruption of domestic sanctity (compare verses 9 and 11 with verses 26 and 28).

Further, he most solemnly abjures all joy over an enemy's calamity, though he had not in the most indirect way asked it; and he could appeal to those most familiar with the habits of his life, whether a single soul had ever gone from him discontented with his fare, or even a stranger near him was left shelterless; and he could absolutely deny the tendency to conceal evil, which we have all derived from our first father, uninfluenced by the fear of man which is its habitual motive.

Finally, he again renews his desire for the Almighty Himself to answer, this being his affidavit as we say, with his mark or signature, as he earnestly wishes the counter-statement in the case, which, far from dreading, he longs for, and declares he would wreath it round his head like chaplets of honour, and, far from hiding, tell all out, as he drew near like a prince, instead of a conscience-stricken coward. No violence nor fraud lay within ; not a field could cry against Job, nor its furrows weep together, as the ground did where Abel fell, as many a plot has since testified against kings and queens, down to the basest of men, throughout this world's sad history. But he asks that, if any wrong had sullied his life, even in such transactions as these, thorns and darnel might curse his toils, instead of the wheat or barley he had sown.

The friends were wholly wrong, unjustifiable, and uncharitable : what Job says was true, but he knows not yet all the truth about himself, as none could of God, till He came who is the Truth, and proved it in grace to the uttermost in His Cross. But Job was occupied and satisfied with himself. From this God would deliver him, and bless him thus more than ever. No flesh shall glory in His presence, and this Job must learn—to glory only in Him. We shall see in the sequel how he was taught it, humbly and graciously. But Job ended his words before it was even begun. —*Extracted.*

SIN separates from God though we see He is love ; but the purging of conscience by a work done without us, and which is perfect in glorifying God, gives me an unhindered delight in Him.

THE first thing God does is to lay us bare in His presence ; He takes away everything. He is occupied with *us*, and not with *our religion*. Then is all quite removed, and we stand before Him, such as we are. Well ! that is what took place when Jesus was here below ; and therefore He was unwelcome, and found Himself in conflict with every one.

TRUE GREATNESS.

Luke xxii. 14-30.

I do not know that there is a more touching lesson in any of the words or ways of our Lord Jesus Christ than that which comes before us at the last supper.

First of all His desire is to eat that paschal feast with His disciples. He was the only One who knew what it meant—the One to whom it spoke of such a burden as never was nor could be borne by mere man. And yet with desire He desired to eat of that passover before He suffered. He knew it was the immediate harbinger of His death upon the cross. Yet there was not one of the disciples that so desired to eat it with Him, as He desired to eat it with them. This is love and love is self-sacrificing.

True greatness at the present time is shewn by being nothing at all. Greatness can go down; greatness, instead of seeking to be served, serves others; greatness now, in an evil world far from God, shows itself in the resources of grace known in Christ before God, and going out of that fulness which it possesses in Christ. Everything in the world is founded on the exact opposite; and the deeper runs the stream of the world, the greater is the desire to be something, and the desire to parade whatever we think we have. This is flesh in its littleness; and flesh and the world always keep company together. Self likes the world: it holds hard what it has got and seeks to make a bargain with the world to get more. The knowledge of Christ delivers from all this. But a Christian who does not know that he is a Christian, who does not know that he has got Christ and eternal life in Christ is entirely inconsistent, and all else must be out of course. In order to have practical power, I must not only have the thing, but know that I have it. Supposing a man possesses all the wealth of India and does not know that he has got it, it is practically useless to him. The consequence is that the man, after the manner of men, is miserable; he can do nothing, serve nothing, help nothing. The possession

of the things of this life never makes a man happy ; but Christ does and we possess all in Him.

Why was the poor widow who gave the mites the richest of all, as the Lord Jesus marks her out with His eye of love ? She was the only one who had such consciousness of what she hoped for from God, that all that she had in the world was but an offering for the Lord. And we rob ourselves as well as defraud Him if we do not exercise this ennobling faith. Conscious of what we possess in Christ, all that we have is at the Lord's disposal. The consciousness of the grace of Christ imprints its own character upon us ; and instead of seeking, it gives, and instead of seeking to be served by others, it loves to serve. There is not one of us that is free from this tendency to self, but there is not one that may not have a complete victory over it. Let my heart be only toward Christ and set upon Christ, and it will be impossible for Satan to get me into anything mean or selfish. But let my eye be off Christ, and there is nothing I may not do, nothing too low or too unworthy that Satan may not slip in by.

—*Extracted.*

OH, holy home at Bethany ! sweet picture of the humble Christian's home with Jesus in the midst ! How many temples which the art of man has raised in which to worship God, with all their pomp and architectural pride, find only room for wealth to show its plumes, while cold Formality lisps out her prayers, and Superstition counts her beads, and dreams of heaven ; while from the lowly cot, unseen, unmarked by men, there oft ascends most fragrant worship to the God of love !

But here we have the Son of God Himself—holiness, omnipotence, and wisdom incarnate—at the feet of the creature (John xiii.). Here we have the Creator Himself the willing servant of the creature ! We have One, at whose feet the angels would have deemed it an honour to sit, doing that for poor sinful men, which many of them would have considered too menial to do for each other.

“GOD IS ONE.

No word but one has yet been found
In Hebrew or in Greek,
Whereby God's truth can be expressed
To those who truth would seek.*

What deep significance is seen
In this most simple fact ;
From what God says He never can
One single word retract.

For “God is One,” so is His truth,
And what He says must stand ;
No power however great can still
The working of His hand.

Truth is not what man *thinks* it is,
Truth is what God revealed ;
His mind is seen through all His Word,
That word His spirit sealed.

Ye men of letters, warning take,
Who stand in high repute ;
When questioning inspiration
With Scripture you dispute.

You quarrel not with men, but God,
Whose words the Scriptures are ;
And “coat of mail” can shield you not
From slaughter in that war.

“Let not rebellious men rejoice,”
“To God all power belongs” ;
Hence they who *will* abuse their gifts
Must answer for their wrongs.

*Many are the words used for *deceit* and *lies*, but there is only one word for truth. God's truth is one ! Man's lies are almost infinite ! The word “*Emeth*” means firmness and stability, perpetuity, security. This is what God is. This is exactly what man is not ! Man is altogether vanity. Truth is found only in the word of God, in Christ, who says of Himself, the living Word, “I am the truth”—and of the *written* Word, the Scriptures, “Thy Word is truth.”—*Bullinger*.

"God is One."

Man's intellect can never grasp
The truth which God reveals ;
It is man's *conscience*, not his *mind*,
To which God's Word appeals.

Men may pretend to seek the truth,
But truth they cannot find ;
Why ? what's the reason ? truth declares
These men themselves are blind.

For "God is One," O ! precious truth
For those with eyes to see ;
No number whole is found by which
One may divided be.

Yes, "God is One," and must remain,
Because there's none but He
Found able to divide *one* up,
And then 'tis one-in-three.

And thus His Godhead is declared
In Father, Spirit, Son ;
Not only is there one-in-three,
But also three-in-one.

Yes, "God is One," and what He does
Can never be undone ;
His words, His works, His counsels *all*
Are centred in His Son.

God gave the Word which gives the life
That's found in Christ alone ;
That life which germinates in death
Proclaims that "God is One."

All that God gives, and says, and does,
As Father, Spirit, Son,
With one emphatic voice declares
This fact, that "God is One."

J. H.

"THE TRUTH" AND "THE LIE."

It was in the days when Adam and Eve, in pure and blissful innocence, were regaling themselves in all the pristine beauties and glories of an untarnished creation, that Satan—the Adversary—found his way into that Garden of Delights to filch from them the unsullied happiness with which they were blessed under the benign favour of their beneficent Creator. No cloud darkened their sky; no shadow of doubt crossed their minds; no conscience accused or excused. All was unmingled joy. How delightful to contemplate a scene so fair; but how transient!

Satan was well aware that the felicity of these intelligent creatures rested on the confidence they reposed in God. Could he only disturb that, his end would be gained. So, approaching the weaker vessel, he furtively raised the question: "Yea, hath God said?" The woman, thoughtless and unwary, gave him audience. This was enough for him. He knew from that moment that he had her in his toils. Woeful moment! If she could listen with composure to the impeachment of the accuracy of God's word, he was sure she would not shrink from receiving the lie: "Ye shall not surely die."

Eve was indeed deceived (1 Tim. ii. 14), though Adam was not; and from that day onward the devil has been deceiving, and will continue to do so until he is cast into the lake of fire (Rev. xx. 10); save, of course, during the interval he is bound in the bottomless pit (Rev. xx. 2).

Similarly to what Eve did, is what many (perhaps unwittingly) are doing in the present day, viz., listening to men who, having a reputation for scholarship, are raising doubts as to the absolute truth of the Scriptures or their divine inspiration. The "Higher Criticism" and the "New Theology," among other similar product of the mind of the natural man (1 Cor. ii. 14), are but varying forms of the question, "Hath God said?" Those who accept, or are inclined

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to accept, these doctrines, need beware lest their solemn fate be that which will assuredly follow the rejection of "the truth," or the acceptance of "the lie."

Away from God, and destitute of faith in His Word, man loves to intrude into those things which he has not seen, being vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind (Col. ii. 18). There was a time when men knew God, but becoming vain in their imaginations, they gave up God, and, as a consequence, God gave them up. They changed the truth into a (lit.: the) lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever (Rom. i. 21-25). "The lie" had turned them from God to idols (or heathenism), as "the truth" had turned the Thessalonians (and how many others besides?) from idols to God, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven (1 Thess. i. 9-10).

Towards the close of His life, the Lord uttered His touching lamentation over Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matt. xxiii. 37). "Ye would not!" He had presented Himself to "His own" people, armed with credentials of so wonderful a character as should have convinced the most sceptical among them as to who He was. But they set at nought all His counsel, and would none of His reproof (Prov. i. 25). "Despised and rejected of men," there was, humanly speaking, no alternative but to give them up; and from that day they have been given up as an earthly people enjoying the special favour of God. But the Lord is coming to the earth again, and then His people (the Jews), learning the wickedness of which they, as a nation, had been guilty in causing Him to be put to death, will joyously welcome Him, exclaiming: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

In the last days—days that are now upon us—when

in the eyes of the world "Christianity is played out," when God's grace will be contemned by the mass of professing Christians, when the Apostacy is come (2 Thess. ii. 3), "the truth" being openly and publicly renounced, a more terrible thing will happen even than being "given up" (Rom. i. 24-28); God will send strong delusion (or an energy of deceit) that they should believe "the lie," that they all might be damned who believed not "the truth," but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. ii. 11-12). Men will again (as in the darkness of heathenism) worship and honour the creature more than the Creator, for the "man of sin"—the son of perdition—will be revealed shewing himself that he is God, and to him they will offer their worship and adulation.

This person is the "lawless one," the "beast" (Rev. xiii. 11), "the king," who shall do according to his own will; and shall exalt himself and magnify himself, and shall speak marvellous things against God (Dan. xi. 36), whose coming will be after the energy of Satan, with all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved (2 Thess. ii. 9-10). This outward display of power and authority will captivate the hearts of men—"the dwellers upon the earth" (Rev. xiii. 13-14)—who are influenced solely by that which appeals to their natural desires and tastes.

Of the Lord Jesus it is said that He was a man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him (Acts ii. 22); yet how quietly and unostentatiously did He take His place among men! Seven centuries before He appeared it was written of Him: "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench" (Isa. xlii. 2-3). The report of the birth of "The King of the Jews" had, indeed, troubled Herod and all Jerusalem with him (Matt. ii. 3); but the occasion, wonderful and great as it was, was unattended by any

outward manifestation to the world. So, while performing wonders on wonders, His lowly grace, His meekness, His simple life divested of all visible glory, earned only contempt and reproach from the very people He came to serve and to save.

To them He was "a sinner" (John xi. 24); "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber" (Luke vii. 34); "He had a demon" (John vii. 20); He "deceived the people" (John vii. 12), yea, He was actually "the deceiver" (Matt. xxvii. 63: see also 2 John 7); and the power by which He cast out demons was satanic" (Matt. xii. 24).

Such were some of the blasphemies and insults which were offered to Him who was (and is) the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His Person, who, having by Himself made purgation of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. i. 3).

But why all this bitter hatred, for many had witnessed to something quite different? Some had declared that "He hath done all things well" (Mark vii. 37); others were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw it on this fashion" (Mark. ii. 12). On one occasion "All bore Him witness and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke iv. 22). On another occasion, "There came a fear on all; and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us: and that God had visited His people" (Luke vii. 16). The officers sent by the Pharisees and chief priests to arrest the Lord had to return empty-handed, and for so bootless a journey could say no more than that "Never man spake like this man" (Luke vii. 32, 46). Pilate had to own (and did so in the most emphatic way) that he found no fault in Him (Matt. xxvii. 24); and the cruel Herod was compelled to admit the same (Luke xxiii. 18). Nor could Pilate's wife remain silent, but sent to her husband the striking message: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him" (Matt.

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xxvii. 19). The centurion in charge of the soldiers appointed to carry out the crucifixion exclaimed: "Certainly this was a righteous man" (Luke xxiii. 47). The penitent robber, while in the agonies of crucifixion, testified that "This man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke xxiii. 41). And even Judas, traitor as he was, overcome by remorse, was bound to confess that he had sinned in that he had betrayed innocent blood (Matt. xxvii. 4).

What a marvellous testimony is all this to the grace, compassion, power exercised in goodness and mercy, and faultlessness of our most gracious Lord and Saviour! We may well ask: Why this bitter hatred? The Lord Himself supplies the answer: "Ye seek to kill Me, a man that hath spoken to you the truth" (John viii. 40). It was THE TRUTH which stirred the hearts of these men against the Lord. Unwilling to submit to the keen, convicting power of the truth, they would resist it by any obtainable means, be it force or fraud.

If such, then, was the case with the Lord—the Prophet raised up from among His brethren, like unto Moses (Deut. xviii.) whose ways and words were ever characterised by grace and truth, how easily when men have turned their ears from the truth and have turned to fables (2 Tim. iv. 4) will the "false prophet" (Rev. xvi. 13), or man of sin, deceive with "the lie," and do his deadly work. Coming in his own name (John v. 43), his conduct marked by violence and deceit (Rev. xiii. 11), he will be received by both Jews and Gentiles. The Spirit of truth will no longer be on the earth as He is now, but the all-pervading influence of the spirit of error (or deceit: 1 John iv. 6) will carry everything before it. Men will be boasters, proud, blasphemers, without natural affection, despisers of what is good, incontinent, fierce, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, and the like (2 Tim. iii. 2-4). What a dark period in the world's history will it be! How nearly we have approached the condition of things as here described! Men of all classes are

grouping themselves together under various names, and for various pretexts, ostensibly for their own benefit or amelioration, but in many of these associations or confederacies lie the germs of some of the cruellest tyrannies with which the human race has ever been scourged. Even in their present embryonic state, their influence and power have been felt in the social, commercial, and political world. As development and progress (so-called) are the order of the day, so will these tyrannies develop, reaching their full consummation at the coming of the "beast" (Rev. xiii. 11), already referred to as the "false prophet," "man of sin," etc. "He causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell save he that had the mark, the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. xiii. 16-17).

But there is more to be dreaded. Socialism is boldly rearing its dark and ugly head, and threatening to invade the sanctuary of the home and the married state. Should the threat be carried into execution (and there is every likelihood that, in due course, it will, as it is in perfect harmony with the spirit of the age) then home—that covert from many a rude storm—that retreat which has so often afforded rest and consolation to burdened hearts and minds—that nursery for hallowed and tender affections, will be reft of its sweetness and loveliness. "Without natural affection," man's foes will be they of his own household (Matt. x. 36).

What calamities await this world!

Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error (or deceit) of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

A. C. H.

JOYING IN GOD AND WAITING FOR CHRIST.

(2 Thess. 3 : 5.)

THERE are two things which constitute the joy of a Christian, if he would have that joy on the road, and keep the true object constantly before his heart. The first is the hope of the coming of the Lord, and the second is present communion and fellowship with God the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these two cannot be separated without loss to our souls, for we cannot have all the profit without both of them. If we are not looking for the coming of the Lord, there is nothing whatever that can separate us from this present evil world ; neither will Christ Himself be so much the object before the soul, nor yet shall we be able, in the same measure, to apprehend the mind and counsels of God about the world.

Again, if this hope be looked at apart from present communion and fellowship with God, we shall not have present power, the heart being enfeebled, from the mind being too much occupied and over-borne by the evil around ; for we cannot be really looking for God's Son from heaven without at the same time seeing the world's utter rejection of Him, and that the world is going wrong—its wise men having no wisdom and all going on to judgment, the principles of evil loosening all bonds, &c., and the soul becomes oppressed and the heart sad. But if through grace the Christian is in present communion and fellowship with God, his soul stands steady, and is calm and happy before God, because there is a fund of blessing in him which no circumstances can ever touch or change. The evil tidings are heard, the sorrow is seen, but his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, which carries him far above every circumstance. Brethren, we all want this. To walk steadily with God we need both this fellowship and this hope.

I do not believe that a Christian can have his heart *scripturally right* unless he is looking for God's Son from heaven. There could be no such thing as

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attempting to set the world right if its sin in rejecting Christ were fully seen ; and, moreover, there never will be a correct judgment formed of the character of the world until that crowning sin be apprehended by the soul. To a Christian who is looking and waiting for Christ to come from heaven, Christ Himself is unspeakably more the object before the soul. It is not only that I shall get to heaven and be happy, but that the Lord Himself is coming from heaven for me, and all the Church with me. It is this that gives its character to the joy of the saint. As Christ Himself says, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also"—when I find My delight, then shall you find yours also, I with you, and you with Me-- "For ever with the Lord."

You may think to find good or to produce good in man, but you will never find waiting for Christ in man. In the world the first Adam may be cultivated, but it is the first Adam still; the last Adam is not found there—being rejected by the world. And it is the looking for this rejected Lord which stamps the whole character and walk of the saints.

Then again, there is another thing connected with my waiting for God's Son from heaven. I am not yet with the one I love, and while waiting for Him I am going through the world tired and worn with the spirit and character of everything around me ; and the more I am in communion with God, the more keenly shall I feel the spirit of the world to be a weariness to me, although God still upholds my soul in fellowship and communion with Himself. Therefore Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 1., "To you who are troubled, rest with us." So then I get rest to my spirit now in waiting for Christ, knowing that when He comes He will have everything His own way. For the coming of the Lord, which will be trouble to the world, will be to the saints full and everlasting rest. Still, it is not that we are to be "weary and faint in our minds." It is not a right thing to be weary of the service and conflict. Oh, no, rather let us be

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victorious every day. Still, it is not rest to be fighting.

However, when walking with God, it is not so much thinking of combat as joying in God Himself. This I shall know all the better when I am in the glory; my soul will be enlarged, and more capable of enjoying what God really is, but it is the same kind of joy I have now that I shall have when He comes to be glorified in His saints, only greater in degree. And if this joy in God is now in my soul in power, it hides the world from me altogether, and becomes a spring of love to those in the world. For though I may be tired of the combat, still I feel there are people in the world that need the love I enjoy, and I desire that they should possess it, as it is the joy of what God is for me that sustains me and carries me through all the conflict, so that our souls should be exercised in both the fellowship and the hope; for if I look for Christ's coming apart from this fellowship and communion with God, I shall be oppressed, and shall not go on. When the love of God fills my heart, it flows out towards all those that have need of it, towards saints and sinners according to their need; for if I feel the exercise of the power of this love in my heart, I shall be going out to serve others; as it is the power of this love that enables me to go through the toil and labour of service, from that attachment to Christ which leads to service, though through suffering, for His sake. If my soul is wrapped up in the last Adam, attachment to Christ puts its right stamp upon all that is of the first Adam.

When this love has led out into active service, then the conflict, doubtless, will be found as in 2 Corinthians 1.; there it is present blessings in the midst of trial. But in 2 Thessalonians 1. it is tribulations, and not rest out of it, until the Lord comes; "that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." In 2 Corinthians 1: 3, 4, there is present blessing in the midst of the trial—"Who comforteth us in all our tribulation;" so that if the sufferings for Christ's sake be ours, there are at the same time the comfortings of God in the soul. How rich a spring of

blessings is this in return for this poor little trouble of mind. I get God pouring into my soul the revelation of Himself; I get God communicating Himself to my soul, for it is really that. I find it to be a present thing; it comes home to me, to my heart, the very joy of God, God delighting in me, and I in God. He identifies Himself with those who suffer for Him. There is no time for God's coming into a soul like the time of trial, for in no way does He so fully reveal Himself to the soul as when He is exercising it in trial.

“The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.” J. N. D.

THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH.

(Chapter i. 8-18).

JUDGMENT, then, “the strange work” of a gracious God, was about to fall. Pleadings had in various ways been sent to that people. Pathetic and beautiful are the words in which this fact is recorded: “The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling-place” (2 Chron. xxxvi. 15). How worthy of God! But necessarily there is a limit to such activities of grace: and with messengers mocked, His messages despised, and prophets maltreated, there was no remedy—no alternative but that Jehovah, to vindicate His holiness and maintain it untarnished, must step in and judge. What in patience He would do is indicated in the word quoted, but to go further and uphold by His power a people upon whom He had placed His name, deliberately despising Him and acting in open rebellion and iniquity, would be acquiescence in the evil. But holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, and, consequently, wrath was upon that people. But His chastening shall presently bear fruition in peace.

So “in the day of the Lord's sacrifice” when heavy judicial strokes should fall upon a people so self-willed,

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the weightiest judgments would come upon those who occupied the highest position of trust and responsibility. Evil in the palace is obnoxious indeed, and there Jehovah's King would begin. "I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel" (verse 8). Here verily in the seat of judgment wickedness was present; and in the place of righteousness iniquity was found (Eccles. iii. 16).

But the all-seeing eye that discovered that also notes the violence, hypocrisy, and deceit which marked those who were in the position of dependents. Iniquity in high places and evil in low places would be punished "in the same day" (verse 9): all were inexcusable, and *all things* that offend would come under the rod.

Consternation would overtake them as the heavy chastisements fell, and cry after cry would be heard. Desolation seemed approaching, and men, entirely indifferent to the pleadings of grace and mercy, utterly oblivious to the goodnesses with which they are surrounded, are quickly aroused from their lethargy when the arm of God in power is bared. So it ever is. Howl, the inhabitants of Maktesh would, when commercial ruin stared them in the face. With traders and financiers cut off, what would they do? When men's temporal supplies are threatened, how earnest they become, but not toward God. Cry they might; howl they would; but as of stricken Israel it was written: "They have not cried unto Me with their heart, when they howl upon their bed" (Hos. vii. 14); so of men generally when the strokes of judgment fall. To God they fail to turn.

And Jerusalem comes into prominence—Jerusalem the highly favoured and privileged. The centre of Judah's religion, it was the abode of indifference and callousness, but it should be "searched with candles," indicating the thorough exposure that would be of what was hid in darkness, and due punishment would fall upon those who in self-satisfied complacency rested in the prevailing condition of things, and reasoned in

their hearts that God was as indifferent as they were and would not exercise Himself to intervene. "The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil" (verse 12). What infamous impiety!

Thus, then, they regarded the long-suffering patience of the Lord. He was altogether such an One as they were—so they thought blinded by their perversity; and most surely did they provoke the extreme anger of the Lord. The declaration of the preacher (Eccles. viii. 11) is: "Because sentence against an evil-doer is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." So it was with the men in Jerusalem.

The long-suffering of the Lord should lead to repentance, but its voice, if heard, was disregarded. But a terrible awakening awaited such. In righteousness He would judge, and such ingratitude, such forgetfulness of Him, the Giver of good, such hardness of heart, such diabolical reasoning, would meet with deserved retribution. Their goods should be snatched from them; their houses should be thrown down; and all their efforts to enrich themselves would be nullified. These very things which should have reminded them of their indebtedness to Him and their dependence upon Him, led them rather to manifest the evil spirit of independence and self-satisfaction. Holding their blessings in forgetfulness of Him, they would be stripped of them. Righteous retribution would fall.

And the cry of "the great day of the Lord" was heard. Deny as they might it was near and hastened greatly (verse 14). The Lord's hand will then be "upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up" (Isa. ii. 12). "The mighty man shall cry there bitterly." For what kind of a day shall it be? Graphically the prophet sets it forth. It was to be a day of overwhelming disaster for the enemies of the Lord, a day too when "God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness." So the end would reveal. The features of that day are set out in verses 15, 16, and the cause of all the trouble

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is likewise made known: "Because they have sinned against the Lord." That was the secret, and refusing to judge the evil, judgment to the uttermost comes upon them.

Nor could there be any escape from it. Corruptible things, as silver and gold, they might possess in abundance, but such could not effect deliverance from the Son's wrath. His holy jealousy could no longer brook the many rivals they had set up, and the enormities they permitted, and He who had so graciously brought them to Himself on eagles' wings is compelled to allow the fire of His jealousy to show itself. Their unworthy actions, their indifference to His calls, showed their state and their distance from Him, but Jehovah's jealousy was the outcome of His love.

And there are lessons here for us. "That day" is to have weight in our consciences. Our hearts rejoice in the blessed hope that has been given us. We wait for His Son from heaven, but there is *the Appearing* spoken of also which challenges our ways and doings, and hence the necessity of self-judgment. If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged (1 Cor. xi. 31). The Lord help us so to ponder His weighty words of judgment as to judge the causes of departure from Him. So shall we surely get, not only knowledge, but present profit from the prophetic Word.

H. F.

THE ZEAL OF JEHU.

2 Kings x.

"BUT Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel *with all his heart*; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam which made Israel to sin."

Now I believe that we may draw very solemn and seasonable instruction from this which has been written for our admonition. The value of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, in this light, has not been sufficiently

attended to. God is not now exhibiting *His ways in action*, but they are *recorded* for our instruction.

There is nothing more fair and plausible than the desire of reformation; but there is no desire which more often cloaks the selfishness of the human heart. A zeal against public wrongs is found a most convenient screen for the blemishes of private character. And it is far more easy with the eagle-eye of self-interest to detect and expose a thousand faults, than for a man in any one thing to deny himself. In a day like the present, when the spirit of improvement is so widely and so busily stirring, it is no wonder that the same spirit should have arisen in the Church, and have manifested itself in schemes for its reformation. And this especially when the Church's inconsistencies with its pretensions and profession are so glaring as to be the taunt and jest of the infidel, and when many real Christians are groaning under the burdens imposed on them by human traditions. It is "good indeed to be zealously affected always in a good thing;" but unless the zeal be according to knowledge, it will just end where the zeal of Jehu ended, in cutting off, it may be, many things which are outwardly offensive; but in leaving entirely untouched the root of the evil—the selfish wisdom of man; for it is this whence has sprung all the disorder in the Church of God. But reformation in the Church is not that which answers the purpose of God. If there were the most awakened zeal, the most decided energy, and the most sincere desire of heart, largely engaged in the reformation of the Church, this would not be effectual, because it is not according to the mind of God. In the first place, the very notion of attempting such a reformation is not the confession of our sin and our failure; but is rather an assumption of our competence to remedy the Church's failure. But secondly, reformation, simply as reformation, has never been the plan which God has pursued, and it is not the plan which God will pursue.

We see in the case of Jehu an instance of reformation, very great indeed in its immediate result, and carried on by an energy which promised permanent

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blessing; but whatever apparent zeal for God there was in the matter, the very first element of godly zeal was wanting, and that is the fear of the Lord. There was no humbling of himself before God for his own sins and the sins of the people; there was no recurrence at all to the law of Moses, so as to learn the real extent of their departure from the Lord; there was no acting on faith. The evil was before him, and it was remedied. Baal was destroyed; but the national sin—that which hung over Israel, and awaited the Lord's judgment, the calves of Bethel—was unthought of. It had been tolerated; it had become venerable; so that it had ceased to affect the conscience at all: and the bringing back of the people from Baal to this worship, was quite sufficient to satisfy this great reformer in Israel, and to make him boast of his zeal for the Lord.

The zeal of the Prophets of the Lord was a zeal according to knowledge. They, themselves, were brought to see the sin and the evil in which the nation was, and to be in their own souls so exercised as became the condition in which they saw the nation to be. However personally exempt from the fearful evils around them, they were led to humiliation and confession of sin, as being themselves part of the guilty body (Dan. ix.; Isa. vi. 63, 64). This was zeal for the Lord, because He had been dishonoured in Israel. We do not find, therefore any self-complacency in exposing or denouncing evil; but while doing this in faithfulness to the Lord, committing their judgment unto Him, and appealing to Him as knowing the desire of their hearts for Israel, that it might be saved. Such was the spirit of the sorrowful prophet, living in the midst of apostasy and commissioned to declare God's judgment on it; and this spirit brought him into constant trial from his own countrymen. Yet he could turn to God and say: "Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them" (Jer. xviii. 20).

In Josiah, king of Judah, we find one zealous indeed for the Lord, and whose conduct is a remarkable

contrast with that of Jehu. The discovery of a copy of the law in repairing the temple, led this young king to a further discovery, and that was the departure of his fathers and all the people from the commandments and statutes of the Lord. "When the king heard the words of the law, he rent his clothes, for great, said he, is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book." Here was the very first element in real godly zeal—no self-sufficient strength or wisdom to set all right, but deep self-abasement and confession of sin. His next step was to enquire of the Lord; and although the word of the Lord was His determinate purpose to bring "all the curses that were written in the book" upon Jerusalem and its inhabitants, yet to the king, himself, the message is: "Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest His words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes and weep before me, I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace; neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same." Here, then, was the occasion for showing a zeal for the Lord; the judgment on the nation was determined, and the blessing of being taken away from the evil to come was promised the king. Surely here was the occasion for saying, as the people did say to Jeremiah, who prophesied at this period: "There is no hope; I have loved strangers, and after them will I go" (Jer. ii. 25). But without the ostentatious display of zeal for the Lord, the king, immediately on receiving the message from the prophetess, "assembled the elders of Judah and Jerusalem and all the people, small and great, and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord, and to keep

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His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book. And he caused all that were present to stand to it." Here was zeal for the Lord. No reformation short of the standard of the word of God, would satisfy one awakened to the sense of the dishonour cast on the name of the Lord. He must go back to the original constituted blessing of Israel, however hopeless he might be of attaining it. Something far short of this might have satisfied others, and have been regarded as a great reformation; yea, so as to become the pattern for others to refer to. He might well have referred to the reformation of his pious ancestor, Hezekiah; but he had the word of God to refer to, and he could own no other standard of reference.

Surely, brethren, we have watchfully to guard against such zeal as Jehu exhibited. There is nothing easier than to detect inconsistencies, and to inveigh against them: and this can be done by the light of our own understandings, quite apart from the Spirit of Christ. It is not the way of His Spirit merely to expose evil, or to draw away from evil by exposing it; but by the setting forth of the attractiveness of good. Nothing is more injurious to our own souls, than the habit of searching out and exposing evil in the Church, and then in self-complacency attempting to remedy it. It always leads to a false estimate of ourselves, by making us forget that we have been implicated in the evil, and that it is chargeable on ourselves as well as on others; for the body of Christ cannot suffer as a whole, without our being affected by it. The word, therefore, is: "Be zealous, and repent." The Church of God is not to be brought into a better condition by the most wise and judicious arrangements; yea, I would say, by the most scriptural re-construction, for there would be no repentance in setting about such a work as that. God can dwell in the humble and contrite heart, and it will be just in proportion as the souls of the saints are made sensible of from whence they have fallen, and are exercised

before God on that account, that they will be blessed. No measure short of God's measure will satisfy Christ, and the Spirit of Christ, in the Church. Jesus has prayed that those who believe in Him, might be one; and His heart's desire shall be given Him, and the request of His lips not withholden. But when shall this be? Even when the Church shall be manifested in the glory which Jesus has given to it, and the world *shall know* that the Father has loved the Church, even as He loved Jesus. This, therefore, can be our only legitimate end. The Father and the Son are working hitherto unto this, and we wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. It is not reformation, but glory which is the end of God. And if the saints of God are looking *backward* for the pattern after which they are working, instead of *forward* unto the glory for which God is working—however honest and zealous they may be, yet since their zeal will not be according to knowledge—it will only make the disappointment greater by having excited larger expectations. It is most needful to look back to God's perfect work in the Church, in order to humble us, and this, indeed is repentance: but this cannot animate us, nor can anything which is not taken entirely out of our hands, and which does not rest simply in the hands of God. It is this which makes the hope of the Lord's coming so blessed and so practical.

Now the same word which shows what the Church was, most plainly testifies of coming judgment on that which bears the name of the kingdom of heaven; and therefore reformation is not the question, but how to be separated from those things which are about to be judged. "The day of the Lord is upon everything that is high and lifted up." Hence it becomes a simple matter of obedience to the ascertained will of God. Judgment on the vine of the earth is God's settled purpose; therefore, cease to do evil—learn to do well. But again, the same word comforts all who tremble at it, by the assurance that it shall be well with the righteous, and that when the Lord comes to be exalted in judgment, He is, at the same time to be

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glorified in the saints. Hence their zeal must be regulated by all these considerations; and then it will be zeal according to knowledge—zeal for the Lord: for they will not be proposing to themselves an object of attainment, because *that* is the hope of the glory, but only how the name of the Lord may be magnified. There is the one hope of our calling to be realized in God's own time. But the present power of that hope is to draw the saints together, because it is an unselfish hope. It leaves no room for rivalry or emulation, neither for our plans nor our wisdom; it is a thing settled in God's purpose. And the saints, having now the Spirit, are enabled to wait for the hope of righteousness through faith. Acting on this hope, they would not be elated by any apparent success, nor be cast down under any sense of failure. They are not acting for a present object of attainment, but only seeking to be found in that path which the Lord will bless.

—*Extracted.***"IT IS THE LORD."**

Alone He stood upon the shore
 The glorious victor—Lord,
 And gazing those bright waters o'er,
 Which had obeyed His word,
 He saw a scene His heart that moved,
 A little band of those He loved.

And there was Peter who denied!
 And there were those who fled!
 And Thomas, who within His side
 Must thrust his hand, had said.
 'To faith and love so little known
 Was He who matchless love had shown.

For tho' the shadow of His cross
 Upon their hearts had lain,
 They counted not all gain as loss
 Till they should see again
 That blessed face, and hear that voice
 That lately bade them to rejoice.

"It is the Lord."

And whilst all this His heart could read,
That heart did ne'er recoil,
He sought them out, He knew their need,
How fruitless was their toil,
So should they learn it still must be
"Not self-resource," but "Follow Me."

"It is the Lord," O joyful word!
By him who loved Him best,
Known first of all, but Peter heard
And foremost to Him pressed,
To Him who, though confessed by none,
And little loved, could still love on.

Could still love on—O love supreme!
How fitting is it, Lord,
That Thou should'st be our endless theme,
And ever be adored?
The love which led Thee here to die
Doth still flow on, unchanged, on high.

—*Author Unknown.*

"CAST your burden on the Lord." "He who loved us from before the foundation of the world has immutably determined all the steps of our pilgrimage. Wherefore, then, disturb thyself? There is a hand upon the helm which shall steer thy vessel safely enough between the rocks, and by the quicksands, and away from the shoals and the headlands, through the mist, and through the darkness, safely to the desired haven.

Our Pilot never sleeps, and His hand never relaxes its grip. It is a blessed thing, after you have been muddling and meddling as you ought not to do, with the affairs of providence, to leave them alone and cast thy burden upon the Lord."

JOHN XII. 25.

He that loveth his life shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

WORDS of the same import as the above are recorded by the other evangelists, giving us to understand the great importance the truth contained in them has in the mind of the Divine Teacher. Do we manifest that it has an abiding place in our ways? If not, it must fail therefore in the place we give it in our hearts.

The path of life, and to life, has been made by the Lord, and applies to all who would walk therein? applies also to all conditions or positions we may be found in.

In the blessed Lord, His life before death was as holy as after it. There was no difference in Him, but with us it is only as death, even His death, has its effect in us that there is any manifestation of the life which has been given to us. There is no following of Christ, but as death holds its sway in us.

The Lord tells us in verse 24 that He would abide alone unless He died, but if He died much fruit would be the result. The many of every age, and from every land and clime under the sun—all the redeemed He here refers to. He is the one solitary grain from which all the fruit to God from the race of fallen man will be gathered* (Rev. v. 9).

The teaching of verse 25 calls for serious attention. *It applies to every child of God.* If "I love my life I shall lose it." I understand by this, that the *life* that permeates every object or plan I have as a natural man must be denied. I have died with Christ, and so am called to reckon myself dead to sin. My desires, my motives, my plans must all come under this judgment. In truth *self* judgment covers all, and *prevents* the activities of sin in its varied forms.

* Neither in John xii, 24, nor in Heb. ii. 11, where the Spirit of God teaches us that the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one, is there reference to the body of Christ which is limited to the saved gathered during the absence of Christ and the presence of the Holy Ghost.

No fruit for God can follow or result from allowing the flesh to direct or govern me. I may do the same things I was doing before grace laid hold of me, but the moment I am Christ's I am under His control for everything.

By the teaching of the Word we learn that, after the death of Christ was a fact, and the Holy Ghost had come down to earth in consequence of Christ being glorified, all who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ were of Christ as Head of the new Race, and having received the gift of the Spirit were declared to be Christ's, or in other words, "in Christ." They are also members of the assembly or body of Christ, but this last relationship, as I have already said, refers only to those believers embraced in the period from His death and on to His coming again.

I do not dwell on the teaching of Scripture as to the fact of headship of race. Not that it is not important—it is vastly so—and it has not by the great majority of the children of God been laid hold of in faith, and, therefore, weakness follows on every hand, but it does not directly bear to be taken up at present.

I desire to ask all who may read these few lines to consider well the voice and bearing of these words of the Lord, "He that loveth his life shall lose it." Turn it over and over in your mind, and keep present in your heart that it is the emphatic declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He was on His way to death. The cup of judgment which He alone could drink for others He was about to take from His Father's hand. He could not pass on in the way He was going, when He learned the Gentiles desired to see Him, without remembering the purpose of God that they should be blessed. As He heard of their desire He knew that He had reached the point in the ways of God when He as the Son of Man should be glorified. That glory had to be set aside for a season. He must die. The corn of wheat which represented the Son of Man must fall into the ground and die. He takes the lead in this new path. There was no way to God until He made one. He became *the way* by dying.

He gave up His life that we might share with Him. The life that is natural to us leads away from God. All its motives are wrong; they have "self" as the spring; they can never rise to God. In other parts the Lord teaches that if a man would come after Him he must deny himself and take up his cross daily. Self has to be denied. The Lord had no interest to gain but His Father's will. He loved what His Father desired and nothing else. Now we are totally different. Our first step then is denial of self—that is *inward*. The cross daily is the next thing—that is *outward*. Reproach and shame follow on the denial of self. Thus and thus only do we live, do we lay hold on what is really life. Truly in *hating* the principles of action of my own life (what is natural to me), which the grace of God only can accomplish in me, I live, then I may say, "not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Our manner of life requires to be our great concern, so that we may please Him who has called us by His grace. We have thus to watch in all things. The spirit and ways of the world have to be judged as foreign to the Christian. He in many things will require to run directly opposite to the wisdom of this world. He has "to please but one." The Scripture injunction is, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Col. iii. 17).

If we take a wrong step and involve ourselves in loss as to this world's goods we ought to suffer rather than take another wrong step to recover from the injury the first one brought us into. We might promise to do a certain thing, and when the time came for the doing of it, it was found that we became losers by doing what we had promised, the Word directs us that we are to perform. It is written, "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not" (Psalm xv. 4).

Service follows. To serve the Lord I must "follow Him." This takes in my whole life. The great matter is to set the Lord always before me. *Obedience* is the Christian's motto. This is the inscription on

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the banner the Master has put in our hands. He alone can teach me what He wishes me to do if I aim at His service. There is to be no turning back, no looking back to where the heart had its home once. "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. iii. 2). Lot's wife started on the way to leave Sodom so that she might escape its doom. She looked back, her heart was in Sodom, and so she perished in its overthrow.

Along with this Scripture in John, I call attention to the words written by Paul to the Corinthians (chapter iv. of 2nd epistle), "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our body" (10).

How distinct the way the life imparted to us can be expressed or lived by us! It is by true association in our ways with the death of Christ. Thus and thus only is Christ lived by us. This is applicable to every circle of life—home, and business life in the world as truly as service to Christ in the church and in the world.

D. S.

CONSECUTIVE ONLY, OR CONCURRENT?
A QUESTION ABOUT THE FOUR LAST CHURCHES.

It is God's prerogative to declare the end from the beginning—on several occasions has He done this. In both the Old and the New Testament we meet with it.

Israel's history has thus been traced out, and that in a double way. Jacob, on his dying bed, foretold the political fortunes of that people. (Gen. xlix.) The Lord, in the arrangement of their ecclesiastical calendar, traced out in order His dealings with them in grace. (Lev. xxiii.)

But there are other interests dear to God's heart of which the Word speaks—the kingdom in which the Son of His love will be displayed as His King; and the church through which God's all-various wisdom is now made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies. Of the glories of the kingdom, and of the previous humiliation of the King, the Old Testament prophets have sung. But between these events

a great gap is found in time. The Lord's humiliation has ended for eighteen centuries. The establishment of the kingdom in power is still a matter of the future. Of truth about the kingdom during this long gap in time the Old Testament can tell us little. It is here that the parables of the kingdom, all given us by the Lord Jesus Christ, come in, supplying, like the pieces of a child's puzzle map, what was wanted to make the picture complete. With these parables the outline about God's kingdom becomes complete.

But side by side in the New Testament, with the truth about the kingdom, we have another revelation of and concerning the church, which, though heavenly in character, as the complement of Him who is its Head, and His bride likewise, has nevertheless an earthly history, ere it enters into its full relations with Christ as the wife of the Lamb. Of the church's earthly history we have in measure an outline given us by Christ Himself in the addresses to the seven churches in Asia, recorded in the prophetic book of the New Testament, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him to shew to His servants things which must shortly come to pass. This outline is prophetic in character. It does not describe the rise and spread of the church in apostolic days. That one must look for in the Acts, and in the historical notices of the work found in the epistles. Nor have we, it should be remarked, in any of these seven different addresses the planting of these churches described. God's assembly had evidently existed for a time in each of these towns, ere the Lord addressed them to state what He saw was their then condition, and to shew how He would minister to souls in such different states, warning and encouraging as was needed.

The order in which these churches are noticed is the order in which, starting from Ephesus, one might have visited them, passing on through Smyrna northward to Pergamos, and then returning southward by Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia, till Laodicea was reached. But another reason there evidently was for

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writing to them in this order, which none but He, who sees the end from the beginning, could then have known; for the state of these different assemblies, illustrative of the church's condition, we now learn, and as the number seven intimates, would comprise a full outline of its history from apostolic days to the Lord's return. Yet surely till our day that could not have been fully understood.

All these assemblies were, it is clear, co-existing, though when a church was planted in most of these places is hidden from us; for with the exception of the first and last named assemblies, namely, Ephesus and Laodicea, we only learn in scripture of the existence of the others from the mention of them in the book of the Revelation. All of them, however, then co-existing, all of them together made up the "things that are" of Revelation i. 19, distinct from the things that shall be *after these*. On this point the word is definite. John was to write the things that *are*, and the things that *shall be after these*. He performed his task as regards the first in chapters ii., iii. He was then told to come up by the Voice which spake to him (chap. iv. 1), surely the same as that of chapter i. 10, to see what must be *after these*. The seven churches then are the things that *are*, the dealing in judgment with the world (chaps. iv.-xx.) comprises the things that must be *after these*. Not that the church as a visible professing body would necessarily cease to exist on earth ere the events described in iv.-xx. would begin to take place; but after the commencement of events, which start from chap. iv., that on earth would be no longer owned as the assembly of God. Hence the phases of church history, illustrated by the condition of these seven assemblies, and in the order in which they are taken up, must all appear as phases of the Christian assembly, *ere* the door is opened in heaven. A word will make this plan. In chapter i. 13 the Lord is seen as the Son of Man, in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, amongst which He walked (chap. ii. 1), and delivered His judgment of each, and to all of them. In the

vision of chapters iv. v. He is seen as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, no longer on earth, for what He owned as the church was no longer here, but in heaven.

But here a question comes in. Granted what has been said, Are these phases consecutive in existence only, or are there any two or more of them concurrent likewise? Consecutive they are and must necessarily be as to their appearance, but they need not be, as in fact we learn they are not, consecutive only in existence.

In the address to the angel in Thyatira we meet for the first time with the notice of the Lord's coming, "That which ye have already, hold fast till I come." (chap. ii. 25.) This hope is spoken of not to the overcomer, though "the rest" of chapter ii. 25 did surely overcome. It is a hope set before those who were already keeping Christ's works. We get the two, the overcomer and the one originally faithful addressed together, yet distinguished. And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works to the end. The overcomer in Thyatira would share with the keeper of Christ's works to the end, as the overcomer in Sardis would share with the one who had always kept his garments undefiled. "He that overcometh shall *thus* be clothed" (chap. iii. 5). It is plain, then, from chapter ii. 26 that there will be the Jezebel character of evil continuing, and those called "the rest" till the Lord comes. The Thyatiran phase, therefore, goes on to the Lord's coming in the air for His own, it being the first of the seven phases of the church history of which we read, that it will continue to that date. And we may now see, viewing these epistles in their prophetic order, that the Lord intimated that the Thyatiran phase of things must appear ere He would come. Yet He expresses it in such a way, that none then could have said, "He will not come in our day."

Thyatira, viewed as illustrative of a phase in the church's history, takes in the whole professing church before the Reformation, being the last of those addresses which viewed the church as a whole. It

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was characterised by corruption in doctrine, whilst the godly manifested themselves by their works. So it is *works* the Lord dwells on with approval, not *doctrine* or *word*. Jezebel most likely signifies the papacy. But as the papacy, though most conspicuous, did not overrun the whole area of the professing body, one can see why, in addressing the angel as responsible for Jezebel's influence being permitted in the assembly, the Lord, nevertheless, distinguished him throughout from her. Of her deeds, that of her children, and that of those who committed fornication with her, we read in verses 20-23. All this is about Jezebel, viewed as distinct from the angel, though suffered by him, so that she taught, &c. The Lord, addressing the angel, says, "I will give unto every *one of you* according to his works" (ver. 23). Here the angel, it appears, comes in for judgment.

Following on the Thyatiran phase comes the Sardian. Not that the former had or has ceased, but the Lord had worked in a new way, recovering truth at the Reformation. The Sardian phase is consequent on the recovery of truth, but when that truth had ceased generally to have power over the consciences of those who professed to hold it. For, as we have already remarked, in none of these addresses have we the state of the assembly as just founded, but its state after it has had time to be proved whether it would continue faithful or not. Thenceforward there are two phases of the church concurrent, namely, unreformed churches on the one hand, and reformed churches on the other. Now these, as we see, continue, and we learn will continue to the close of the true church's existence on earth.

A third phase—necessarily from its character, more recent in appearance—is illustrated by the church in Philadelphia. Here there is no call to repentance as in Sardis, but the angel is exhorted to hold fast what he has, that no man take his crown (chap. iii. 11). In this address he is identified with the whole assembly; no faithful ones being now viewed, as in the two previous addresses, distinct from him. Here, too, for

the first time have we the promise of the church being kept out of the tribulation (chap. iii. 10). To the overcomer, and to the faithful in Thyatira this is implied (chap. ii. 28), but here only is it assured to the whole company, and that not conditionally. It is an unconditional promise addressed to them all, because they had kept the word of Christ's patience, though at the same time they are told they must persevere to the end. Beyond the rapture then, as regards earth, this phase of the church's history does not continue. What characterises Philadelphian condition is faithfulness to Christ, His word, His name, His patience. In a word, the principle which characterised the saints in Thyatira and in Sardis, faithfulness to Christ—His works in Thyatira, keeping the garment undefiled in Sardis—is the principle descriptive of the whole company in Philadelphia.

After this comes the last phase, the Laodicean—profession without reality. Nothing had they which the soul needed to have part with Christ. No sense was there of anything lacking, nor any intelligence of the condition they were in consequent on the fall. Gold, raiment, eyesalve, all three is the angel exhorted to buy, he being described, representing the assembly, as the wretched and the miserable one, and poor, and blind, and naked. But it is said that the Lord's words in verse 19 prove the existence of saints within the assembly. As regards the assembly in John's day the existence of such would be proved by their opening the door to the Lord Jesus. On that of course we can say nothing, for nothing has been declared about it. But His words, it should be observed, are addressed to the angel, as the Lord goes on to say, "Be thou zealous, therefore, and repent." His Christless condition, as representing that of the assembly in general, had been already plainly declared. A conclusion then drawn from those words as to the certainty of the existence of real Christians there would prove too much, for then the angel and the mass there, must be thus regarded. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." Compare this with the language to the

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angel in Philadelphia, "They shall know that I have loved thee." The Lord would let all understand that He loved him, and those represented by him. To the Laodicean angel He speaks differently. It is an abstract statement, His way of dealing with those in whom He feels personal interest. He does not say, "I love thee," nor does He employ the word *Agapao*, commonly used of divine love flowing out in grace, but *phileo*, only twice elsewhere used of such affection to saints (John xvi. 27; xx. 2). Addressing this last church on the ground of its profession, the Lord explains why He thus spoke. It was from the love of His heart, and He expresses His personal interest in the everlasting welfare of souls. But how carefully, it seems, He guards against telling the angel He loved him, or the assembly. But when should this phase of the church's condition appear? Necessarily subsequent to the appearance of the Philadelphian phase, for it is its counterfeit unmasked by Christ. Necessarily, too, must it appear before the rapture, for historically the Laodicean phase ends with the assembly being spued out of Christ's mouth. What becomes of that which is spued out is another matter. The land of Canaan would spue out Israel, its inhabitants, under certain conditions (Lev. xviii. 28; xx. 22), as it did the old inhabitants (chap. xviii. 25). God's final dealings with both the one and the other were a different matter. So with the assembly in Laodicea. It would be rejected as nauseous by Christ. And certainly what He would spue out, He would never take back, or accept, either in whole or in part.

At length, then, we have four phases of the church's history on earth all concurrent; unreformed and reformed churches, which, in these two aspects, together comprise all Christendom. Then those who are for Christ in truth, and value Him, and those who are for Him only in name. In a word, we have in these four last churches, the church viewed in an ecclesiastical aspect, namely, unreformed and reformed assemblies, and viewed also in a moral aspect, real Christians and mere professors.

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All these seven assemblies co-existed in John's day. There can be then nothing incongruous in any two or more of them co-existing when viewed as phases of the church's earthly history. Now these last four are so viewed, for beyond the Lord's coming, first met with in the body of the address to the angel in Thyatira, we have nothing historically of a later date in the body of the addresses to the angel in Philadelphia, or in Laodicea. Of course the promises to the overcomer carry us in time beyond earth. But in the body of each address, which views the assembly as on earth, and the Lord expressing His judgment of its condition, there is nothing historically later in Philadelphia than the rapture (chap. iii. 10-11), and the consequent spueing out of His mouth of the Laodicean assembly (verse 16). In Sardis, on the contrary, the event in history yet to be made good, of which the Lord speaks in the body of that address, is judgment on the professing church with the world. In Thyatira, Philadelphia, and Laodicea the event contemplated is that mentioned in 1 Thessalonians iv. 16, 17, whilst the event contemplated in Sardis is mentioned in 1 Thessalonian v. For the announcement of Jezebel's doom, and that of her children, are merely facts, awfully solemn ones surely, but without any date affixed to them to acquaint us with the time of their accomplishment. Now if these different phases were only consecutive, and not at all concurrent, how comes it that in Sardis we historically look on to a later date than to any that we have in the body of the addresses to the angel in Philadelphia and in Laodicea? In Laodicea it is simply rejection, though in the most decided way, without anything being there said as to what will be done with that which is rejected. In Sardis the language implies more than that, and carries us on to a later date.

Looking abroad in this day, what do we find? Christendom divided into unreformed and reformed churches. But the question of the day in both parts of the church is not, "To which do we belong?" but "Is each one really for Christ or not?" One need

not here particularise instrumentalities which God is now using, but go where one will in Christendom, where God is working, the question raised with souls is surely this, "Are you a Christian in name or in reality?" and that nothing less than the latter will meet the Lord's approval. Viewing the church in its moral aspect, one sees why no date appears in the body of the two last churches beyond that moment, when the Lord will settle whom He will have by separating, through the rapture, the one class from the other. Viewing the churches in their ecclesiastical aspect, it is equally plain that outwardly reformed churches will be found on earth after the rapture, awaiting their doom with the world; and hence why the date in the address to the angel in Sardis looks on to something later than the rapture.

In Thyatira the Lord first speaks of His coming for His saints, so that phase, one sees, must have come into existence before He would come for His own. In Philadelphia He again speaks of that coming, so that phase must be also in existence before He comes. In Laodicea He gives us nothing beyond it. So as that last phase is now confessedly in existence, how near may be that hour for which we are taught to wait!

C. E. S.

THE KINDNESS OF GOD.

"Who is there left of all the house of Saul
My enemy? Let him be brought to me."
Thus spake King David, as he sat enthroned;
He who erstwhile had been despised and scorned,
Cast out, rejected; though God's own anointed
King. His few tried faithful followers
Rejoicing now in David's exaltation.
"Is there yet any left?" Yes, Jonathan
Has still a son, but a poor feeble wretch,
No use to David, lame on both his feet!
He cannot fight his battles, nothing do
To win King David's favour; surely death
Awaits him! Yet list! What is it David says?
"That I may show him kindness." Wondrous words!

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This is not human ! No, it is divine.
 "That I may show *God's kindness*," says the king.
 Ah ! David had been trained in God's own school ;
 Had sat before the Lord, had heard God speak
 Of all the kindness He had shown and still
 Would show to David, and to David's house
 For ever. But where is poor Mephibosheth ?
 He hides, poor, wretched man, from David's face,
 Till forced into his presence, there he waits
 To hear his doom. But what sweet words are these
 He hears ? "Fear not, Mephibosheth, nought else
 "But grace and mercy are for thee, for Jonathan
 "Thy father's sake. Thy place is ever at
 "My table as one of my own sons. Nothing
 "Shalt thou e'er lack ; thy father's land restored
 "To thee, and thou thyself shalt be my care,
 "Thy portion too a son's, the portion of
 "A prince." Oh, wondrous change, from out the land
 Of famine* and the wretched hiding to
 The king's own palace. From the loneliness
 To be companion of the king's own sons !
 Poor, lame Mephibosheth ! But a dead dog
 In his own sight, unworthy of the notice
 Of a king.

Oh wondrous picture this, my soul,
 Of God's own grace and mercy shown to thee.
 What wast thou when He called thee by His grace ?
 An enemy, in hiding from His face ;
 Poor, helpless, starving, nothing in thee to
 Draw forth His love to thee. Yet there, just where
 Thou wast He sent, and drew thee to Himself.
 Poor, trembling sinner, what couldst thou expect ?
 Thou knewest but too well what justice claimed.
 But lo ! the One whom thou hadst thought thy foe
 Had nought for thee but words of love and grace.
 He told thee not to fear ; His heart was set
 On thee from all eternity. A place
 He has for thee in His own house on high.
 A Father's heart of love is thine, a seat

*Lo-de-bar—without pasture.

At His own table—thou a son and heir.
 Thy weakness met, thy wants supplied from His
 Own stores. Henceforth thou hast no cares for He
 Has made thy cares His own, and given thee
 A portion in His Son's inheritance,
 Forgiven, clothed, fed, strengthened, gently led,
 Ere long to reign with Christ in glory bright.

“For Jonathan thy father's sake,” so David
 Said. And well thou knowest for whose sake
 Thy God has so blessed thee. For His sake, who
 In unison with God's eternal plan
 Came down in time the form of man to take;
 Meeting with nought but scorn, rejection, shame,
 Yet glorifying God in all His path;
 That lonely path which led to Calvary.
 And there alone, forsaken of His God,
 He bore the penalty thy sins deserved,
 That from the land of famine thou shouldst come
 To joy for ever in His boundless love.

S. B.

SERVANT AND SAVIOUR.

Isaiah liii. 4-6.

WE are now come to the central section of the prophecy, and doctrinally, also, the very heart of the whole. We are now to learn the true character of those sufferings once so misconceived. It is Israel's voice that we are listening to, the confession that they will yet make of that fatal unbelief of theirs, when once “He came to His own, and His own received Him not.” Here, with their old “Priest's Guide-book” in their hands, they are realizing the meaning of those sacrifices so constantly kept before their eyes in their so over-prized, because so under-prized, ritual. They are learning how “sacrifice and offering he would not,” who yet seemed to insist so much upon them—how much it cost Him who stepped forth to take the place of those rejected offerings, to say, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my God!”

"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

The first clause is quoted and applied for us in the Gospel of Matthew. "And when the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils, and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

The application here, then, is to what our Lord did in His life on earth—not on the cross, but in His miraculous healing of those that were diseased, and deliverance of the victims of Satan's power. This is plainly not atonement, though some have strangely argued it to be so. It is not vicarious suffering, but sympathy, manifested practically in the relief of the varied forms of distress around. And these He "bare," not vicariously or sacrificially, as He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree," but entering into them in the tender pity of His heart, feeling every sorrow to which He ministered.

It is not atonement, yet it is the path and spirit of Him who made it, who made it because men were what and where all this declared them, and *He* was what His word and works declared—"marked out Son of God, with power according to the Spirit of holiness"—but on man's behalf, "by resurrection of the dead." For of all this that had come in as the fruit and shadow of sin, from the lightest prick of the thorn to death itself, there could be no relief but through His crown of thorns and His cross. He who pitied must make a way for His pity, that it might reach the objects of it.

People have asked, Would nothing else suffice? The Lord Himself answers, "The Son of man *must* be lifted up." And He who gave His Son would not have given

Him, had there been any other way to save. Love itself could not have been shown in giving, where there was no absolute necessity to give. Yet, apart from revelation, who could have fathomed the need, or anticipated the way, of divine love in meeting it? Unbelief could thus take up the depth of His humiliation as an argument against His personal claim. The stone lay low enough for them to stumble over it. "Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." It was His glory which had blinded them, as now they own: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed."

Here is truly vicarious suffering, and suffering which not only removes wrath, but restores to God those who were afar from Him. The two parts of the verse give these two aspects of the cross. According to the first, *our* transgressions, *our* iniquities, have received their punishment in Him. According to the second, His stripes are *our* moral healing—"the chastisement of *our* peace."

The last is an expression which needs to be considered. The word for 'chastisement' certainly means that, and nothing else. It is translated also in our version, 'correction,' 'discipline,' and so 'instruction'; and in none of these senses could it be applied to the Lord. *He* certainly never needed, and never could have received, chastening or correction; and a moment's thought as to the verse will shew us that it is not to the Lord that it is here applied. It is "the chastisement of *our* peace." That last word is one which includes in its meaning the whole well-being of those as to whom it is used. *His* stripes are for *us* the restorative discipline which brings us to spiritual health—our healing, as the last clause plainly says. It is as we find our guilt borne by another, our peace made by, our sin condemned in, the sufferings of God's Holy One, that we realise the disciplinary virtue of "His stripes." Surely nowhere else has the lesson been so taught us, nowhere else is the discipline so real.

Not for peace only must the cross be known. It is the judgment of the world, the defeat of the prince of the world, the annulling of the body of sin. It is the supreme display of divine righteousness, truth, love, all the glory of God, in triumphant goodness in Him who was crucified in weakness there—"the Son of Man glorified, and God glorified in Him." Oh, to know more the reality of this holy discipline—"the chastisement of our peace!"—to eat more the salutary "bitter herbs" at our passover feast, all leaven put away out of our houses! What power for purification for us, as for Israel, looking upon Him whom they have pierced, and saying, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all."

Let us observe here—simple fact as it is—that our "own way," is our "iniquity;" it is our misery also, for when was misery far separate from sin? and who but utter orphans have to choose their own path through this world's maze? It is true we are outside Eden, but not even so has God left us to this. He who numbers our hairs, numbers our steps no less; and to walk in our own way is to refuse divine wisdom and love, incessantly occupied with us, and to imagine we can do better for ourselves than these.

But how often is our own way disguised for us by some seeming goodness of it, which can never take off the fatal stamp of a will in independency of God's! "Lo, I come to do *thy* will" was, as we well know, the characteristic of the pattern proposed to us; and there, where His own will rightly shrank from the dread cup before Him, there it was yet, "*not* my will, but thine, be done." What a commending of that will to us comes with the knowledge that what was before Him then was, in fact, that "Jehovah" was about to lay "on Him the iniquity of us all!" And notice how the covenant name, Jehovah, has here its suited place. "Crucified through weakness," the will-less One was to be "Jehovah's arm" of power.

F. W. G.

THE SALVATION OF GOD, AND SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD.

ALL the life of Christ only brought out the state of man's heart as to God, while He Himself showed what God was.

At the beginning Satan tempted Him by the privileges that belonged to the Son of God, and at the close came with all the terrors he could bring upon His path. And so the Lord says, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." And death and judgment stood in the road too, but there was love enough in Christ to go through all. He saw what the cup was, as none of us can, and then in His own infinite and blessed love accepted it in full. And there man's history as man was ended in the cross. It was "the end of the world." Not the end historically, but morally. And then, He who had accomplished that work is set by God Himself at His own right hand for the display of God's own righteousness.

Man rejected Christ and was the instrument of His death, and the second Man in the perfectness of His ways before God is taken out of this world and is set at God's right hand, so that the testimony of the Holy Ghost now—His special work—is to convince the world of righteousness, because Christ has gone to the Father, and they see Him no more. That is the end of the world.

There is a Man in heaven now. True Christianity is founded on that. We learn by degrees, but there was in the cross the total, entire, complete condemnation of man, and in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ a totally new place is taken (which is the foundation of all blessedness) where Adam innocent was not, any more than Adam guilty. It is a new thing altogether, and "if any man be in Christ he is a new creation."

We have not yet got in full into the new scene founded on the cross, but, in Christ, I am a new creation, and so now here we have to manifest the life

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of Jesus in this mortal flesh, while we walk by faith not by sight.

The Christian has to go through the things down here, but now they are not his object, nor is it merely that certain things will do him harm, of course they will; but he is looking at things not seen and eternal. He groans too, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with his house from heaven. The Apostle adds, "Now He that hath wrought (fitted) us for the self-same thing is God." God hath wrought *us*—not only prepared a place there, but hath wrought us for that self-same thing, which is the glory with Christ there. That is what God has wrought you for. The world comes to chain me down, but God has wrought me for that which is inside the vail, and the vail is rent. I can talk of it therefore as having it, because God has so wrought me for it, and prepared it for me; and though as yet I have not actually got it, yet I have the earnest of the Spirit. God has sentenced the "old man" in the cross of Christ, and brought in a totally new thing.

That is the salvation of God.

God has gone through the whole probation of man, his whole moral history, and has sentenced his entire state.

* * * * *

Of course, we look for good fruit from all this; we ought to manifest the life of Christ in everything—buying, selling, the counting-house, dress, everything.

Are *you* doing so?

Do *you* do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus? If not, you are giving up Christ for some folly or other. If you can't do the thing in that name, don't do it at all. That is the way the Lord walked—by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God.

—*From Unrevised Jottings of Meetings*
with J.N.D., 1873.

1 KINGS XVII. 2-9.

THE way the Lord would have us spiritually is that He never gives us a stock of anything—of grace or of gift—so that we can say, “I have got enough to last me so long at least.” That would be taking us out of the place of faith, and depriving us of the blessing God has for us. He covets to show us what He is: His power, His love, His unforgetfulness of us. As it is said of the people whom in His love and His pity He redeemed: “He bare them and carried them all the days of old.” It is a great thing to get this in a real and practical way for ourselves with God. If He keeps us low down here—and you know it is His way in more senses than one to call and choose the poor—it is not because His hand is niggard, God forbid, but that we may not miss realising this great blessing of His care. Often, all we think of is having our need met; but how little a thing is that with God! It would cost Him nothing, we may say, to meet the need of a life time in a moment; and a lesser love than His would supply it at once and get rid of a constant burden. But that is not His way. To supply the need is a small thing; but to supply it in such a way as to make us feel in each seasonable supply the Father’s eye never withdrawn from us, the Father’s heart ever employed about us—that is what He means. “Give us day by day our daily bread,” is the prayer the Lord taught His disciples; and thus we ask Him continually to be waiting on us. Is it not much more than to ask, Give us now, that we may not have to come again? F. W. G.

MOSES would not have the people cut off on the top of the mount; he called the faithful to cut them off when below, and both for the same reason. He connected the glory of God with the people—an extreme case, no doubt, but which shews us that divinely-given love for God’s people on *high* is the spring of severity even, if needed, *below*. God’s glory the plea for and against the people.

THE SACRIFICES—WHO KILLED THEM?

IN the details recorded in connection with the sacrifices in the Old Testament, nothing is put down in haphazard fashion; all is absolutely and divinely perfect, and "written for our admonition" and instruction. Moreover, seeing they are types of the one great and perfect sacrifice offered on the cross at Calvary, it behoves us to notice carefully these varied details and seek guidance to understand them. We are not permitted to *assume* in such matters, or take things for granted, and then speak as though they were recorded facts and generally accepted. God has spoken, and though it be in type, yet it is in such a way that the type answers fully and perfectly to the antitype, like hand and glove each fit the other, and there is neither inconsistency nor confusion. If there is, then it is plain we have missed our way in our interpretations. It is an evil thing to come to Scripture with our own ideas, be they what they may, and try to get support for them, for often when that is the case it is found that Scripture is twisted and distorted to fit the mould we have brought for it. We ought ever to remember we have nothing to lose in letting go our own thoughts, and everything to gain in getting hold of God's thoughts.

Now if we are careful in our examination of the sacrifices in Leviticus, we shall learn, and learn from God, the difference between *the offerer*, *the offering*, and *the priest*, and the place God assigns to each in connection with sacrifice. Nor shall we be found confounding the work of the priest with that of the offerer, and thus bringing in confusion where God has spoken and displayed Himself as the God of order. How well for us when we grasp the differences which He has made, and learn to "rightly divide the Word of Truth."

We shall commence then with the burnt-offering (Lev. i.). When any man desired to offer a burnt-offering to the Lord, he had to bring his offering of *the herd* or of the *flock*. If of the herd, it had to be

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a male without blemish. He brought it alive and presented it, or offered it "for His acceptance" (ver. 3, N.T.). He next put his hands upon its head (ver. 4) and then *he killed it* (ver. 5).

Up to this point, it will be observed, neither the priest nor his work have as yet had a place. The presentation of the intended victim, the laying on of hands, and the killing it, are the acts of the offerer. Then we read, "And Aaron's sons, the priests, shall present the blood and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar," etc., (ver. 5). But observe carefully, *they did not kill it—that act* formed no part of priestly work as such, which commenced as we have seen, and shall still see, with the dealing with the blood *after* the death of the victim.

The work of the offerer however was not yet finished; he had to flay (skin) the offering, and cut it up into its pieces (ver. 6). Then the priest comes in again with *his* work connected with the fire, and the wood on it, and laying the head and fat in order on it (ver. 8). Then the offerer once more is seen: he washes its inwards and legs in water (ver. 9). Then the priest burns it *all* on the altar, a burnt-offering, an offering made by fire to Jehovah of a sweet odour (ver. 9). Each have their appointed place and work.

All this detail is repeated in the next part of the chapter in connection with an offering out of the flock (vers. 10-13). When we look at the last case in the chapter (vers. 14-17), an offering of a turtle dove or a young pigeon, we have the first exception to this rule, and we see the priest, not the offerer, killing the bird. We shall see, however, that these exceptions, instead of upsetting the rule, strengthen and *prove* it. Why it should be so in this case I do not know sufficiently to speak decidedly, but would *suggest* what appears *likely* to me, viz., the smallness of the victim, and the physical necessity that it should be done quickly and the blood squeezed out at once. Therefore the one who *had to deal* with the blood *killed it* so as to enable him to deal with it at once in God's appointed way, namely, "press out the blood at the side of the

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altar" (ver. 15, N.T.). But these exceptions will be noticed more fully presently.

There is one thing every *careful* reader must have noticed in reading these chapters relating to sacrifices, and that is, how particular God is to distinguish between the offerer and the priest. When He speaks of the former He says, "*he* shall offer it"; "*he* shall flay it"; "*he* shall wash the legs," etc. Whereas when speaking of the latter He says, "And *the priests* shall sprinkle the blood"; "and *the priests* shall lay the parts," etc.; "and *the priests* shall burn all," etc. Surely this careful distinction was not meaningless. Nor is it only seen in the case of the burnt-offering in Lev. i.; it runs throughout the whole of the sacrifices recorded in the Book. The reader need only read carefully to verify this for himself. It would be easy to quote or note each passage, only it would take up too much space to do so. Each one must therefore look it up for himself. It is seen in chapter iii., the peace-offering; in chapter iv., the sin-offering; in chapters v. and vi., the sin and trespass offerings; in chapters viii., ix., the consecration offerings; in the cleansing of the leper, chapter xiv; in the day of atonement, chapter xvi; and the red heifer, Numbers xix.

We will now look at the other two exceptions, for there are only three, and we shall see how fully "the exceptions *prove* the rule." First of all we must notice that chapter iv. 3-14 is *not* one of them, inasmuch as the anointed, or high priest, was mortal like others, and if he sinned had to bring his own sin-offering; therefore *as the offerer he killed* the victim—not as the high priest—and then in his priestly character he dealt with the blood, so that the detail in this case corresponds with what has already been before us.

The second exception to be found is the day of atonement (chapter xvi.). There we see Aaron, the high priest, killing all the victims on that memorable day. In the first place he came with a bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering for himself

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and his house (ver. 3). But when he killed these victims he did not do it as the priest, but as the offerer, *offering for himself and his house*. Then again, when he killed the goat of the sin-offering that is for the people (ver. 15), and the burnt-offering of the people (verse 24), neither did he do that as high priest. Had he done it in that character, it would have contradicted the uniform testimony and teaching of Scripture on that subject, which shows that *the offerer* kills, and priestly work only begins with the dealing with the blood *after* the death of the victim.

The subject only needs a moment or two's quiet thought to see its teaching and its perfect agreement with all that we have noted. It was the offering of the people *as such* on that day—the day of atonement. Now it is self-evident that *they* could not kill the victim, although it was *their* offering in that case. Some one *must* do it as representing them, and this is exactly what was done. Aaron *represented* the congregation, and so when he killed their victim, he did *not* do it *as* the priest, but took the place of *the offerer*, and *represented* the people in that act, and then his own priestly work commenced after that. Thus we see how the exception *proves* the rule, and that the offerer, or one representing the offerer, always killed the victim offered.

The same thing is seen again in the third and last of the exceptions (chapter iv. 13-21). If the whole congregation sinned, they had to offer a young bullock for a sin-offering, and the elders of the congregation had to lay their hands on its head. It is again quite evident that the whole congregation could not do *that*; so the elders or responsible men did it for them. Then it says, "and the bullock shall be killed before the Lord." It does not say *who* killed it. But it is certain the whole congregation could not do it, nor could all the elders do it; consequently one of their number would do it as representing them, and so he took the place of the offerer and killed it; then priestly service began after its death.

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Here, too, we must not lose sight of a very important omission in chapter xvi. in contrast to the scene in chapter iv. In chapter xvi. there was no laying on of hands on the head of any victim to be slain, only on the head of the live goat—the scapegoat. Why? Because in chapter xvi. it was not a question of a specific sin—it was the maintainance of Jehovah's relationships with His people "*once a year*"; whereas in chapter iv. it was a special sin, whether individual or by the people, and had to be confessed as it were on the head of the victim by the offerer or the representative of the whole congregation. The only laying on of hands in chapter xvi., as I have said, was on the head of the scapegoat, the two goats being so linked up together that they are viewed as *one offering* and spoken of as "*two kids of the goats for a sin offering*" (verse 5)—so that the laying on of hands and confessing all the sins of the people on *its* head (verse 21) is still in keeping with the general teaching of Scripture as we have seen. It was all done by the *representative* for the offerers. He was the offerer—it was *not* done by the priest as the priest.

Once more we see it in the case of the red heifer in Numbers xix. It was the congregation who had to provide the victim, and we read, "And one shall slay her before Eleazar's face" (verse 3). All could not slay it. Some one had to do it for them, then priestly work began after its death. Surely all this is incontrovertible. The teaching is consistent throughout and shows that the priest, *as such, never killed* the victim—it was always the act of *the offerer*, or one who represented him and so took his place as offerer, and then priestly work began.

What then is its teaching and application for us? Surely it is simple and plain enough! Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, whose one great sacrifice for sin, offered up at Calvary's cross, and accepted by God according to His own estimate of its infinite value and perfection, as well as its own blessed, glorious, and peerless worth—and which gives every sinful and worthless child of Adam's race who believes the

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Gospel, justification from all things—nearness and relationship to God—acceptance in Christ risen from among the dead and now seated at the right hand of the Throne of God—not to speak of other blessings which are the portion of believers—*He*, blessed be His peerless Name for ever, and for evermore—even *He* is, and none other is, or ever could be, *the Offerer, the Offering, and the High Priest*. He is the great Anti-type of it all. It all has its fulfilment in Himself.

Is He not “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world” (John i. 29)? “The Lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter i. 19)? Surely He is! The flaying and washing of the parts of the burnt offering were only to make the victim *outwardly* and *typically*, what He ever was in His own peerless and spotless person. And while all that *had* to be done *after* death in the case of these types—necessarily so—it was all true, literally true, blessedly true of the Lord Jesus *before* He died. He was ever “that holy thing” and “without sin,” so that the washing and cleansing were but to make those victims *fitting types* of Him who took them all out of type into fulfilment in His own blessed and holy person.

Was He not too *the Offerer*? Hear Him saying, “Lo I come, (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me) to do Thy will O God” (Heb. x. 7-9). Was it not He who “through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God” (Heb. ix. 14)? Was His life ever taken from Him? Never! He said, “Therefore doth My Father love Me because *I lay down My life* that I might take it again. *No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself*. I have power to *lay it down*, and I have power to take it up again” (John x. 17, 18). Could any mere human being say such words? Or could any child of Adam present a motive to call forth the love of God? Impossible! They reveal to us *who* He was, as well as *what* He was, and bow our hearts in adoring worship. Then yet again, “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished, and He bowed His head and *gave up the ghost*” (John

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xix. 30). He was the Antitype of the offerer who slew the victim—*He laid down His life.*

But He was more than offerer and offering, He was also High Priest. “We have a great High Priest who is passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God” (Heb. iv. 14)—One who was “made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb. ii. 17)—“who needed not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people; for this He did once when He offered up Himself” (Heb. vii. 27). Here we are manifestly thrown back on the day of Atonement to behold Him who is *now* our great High Priest offering “*once for all*” as representative of the people.

If therefore the types are meant to teach us anything, they have already shown us that priestly work only began *after* the death of the victim, and with the dealing with the blood—so the priestly work of our adorable Saviour only began *after* death. Blessed be His holy Name, all the atoning work is finished, blessedly, perfectly finished—the rent veil, and the risen Christ attest its finished perfection; and now our Great High Priest carries on His present priestly work on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary after the Aaronic *function*—but He Himself is a priest not after that *order*—but the order of Melchisedec. How much there is to say as to this blessed priesthood of His, but space forbids.

May our ever gracious God give us all eyes to see, and hearts to appreciate and love, more and more, His beloved Son who has taken all the types and carried them all into fulfilment; and who alone demands and deserves the worship and adoration of these hearts of ours, as well as our implicit and devoted obedience.

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THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN SALVATION.*

THE sovereignty of God is what alone gives rest to the Christian heart in view of a world full of evil, which is gone astray from Him. To know that after all, spite of the rebellion of the creature, things are as absolutely in His hand as ever they were—that still with the Apostle we can adore “one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all”—this brings, and alone brings, full relief. Still He rules over all, and where evil cannot be turned to good, limits and forbids it: He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath (what would go beyond this) He restrains.

The shepherd-rod, the type of power exercised in love, out of the hand to which it belongs, and become a serpent, is the vivid picture of what we see on every side. The prince of this world is not Christ, but Satan; but it was the sign of a deliverer for Israel that Moses had but to stretch forth his hand and take back to him what was already his, for it to become a rod in his hand once more. For us how sweet is this assurance! The rod had not *slipped* out of Moses' hand, but was *cast* out; and even when cast out it was fully under his control: so is it with the government of this world; for Him who rules it, even disobedience works obediently; Satan, meaning nothing less, accomplishes His purposes as do the holy angels which wait around His throne. Through all, spite of all, He yet “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.” “He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?”

We rest, for we know who reigns. It is not mere sovereignty, the almighty despotism of mere will, to which we bow because we must, but the sovereignty of wisdom, holiness, and goodness—of One in whom love is revealed in light. How strange and saddening that in any phase of it the sovereignty of God should

* May be had of publisher in separate form.

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be an unwelcome theme to a Christian heart! Surely, one would say, there must be something very wrong with the state of such an one, or with the manner of its presentation to him, or with both, for this to be the case. Yet is it not so, that the sovereignty of God in *salvation*—and where else is the thought so simple and so necessary?—is by the large mass of Christians perhaps a thing most vehemently denied; and even where entertained, is entertained with coldness and suspicion. The truths of election and predestination, while the favourite cavil in the mouths of unbelievers, are undoubtedly, by many who receive them, received with inward shrinking—as at most necessary, rather than really approved. And both causes named no doubt contribute to this result.

Yet if God be (what He must be to be God) perfect goodness, and wisdom without fault, what could one possibly desire, but that everything should be absolutely in His hand, plastic to and moulded by His blessed will, working, according to plan and forethought, His eternal purpose? It is not possible to conceive of objection on the part of any, worthy of the least respect. But this is all that predestination can at all imply. It is the simple and necessary result of a really divine government—of the supremacy of One who lacks neither wisdom nor power, nor benevolent interest in the work of His own hands.

I know, of course, the objection that will be raised. “Open your eyes,” it will be said, “and look around! Is the world as you see it just what you would expect as the fruit of a wise and perfect and omnipotent will? What of the suffering that abounds on every side? and what of the sin? Can you say of that, It is the will of God, and attribute to Him still nothing but perfection?”

It is of course true that we find around us a very different state of things from what we could have at all imagined from the necessary perfection of an almighty Creator and Governor. Nor dare we ascribe moral evil to the direct will of Him from whom it is a revolt. Nevertheless the doctrine of predestination

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remains our only comfort and support in this perplexity: to give it up would be to abandon ourselves to the despair of good as the final goal to which all tends. If the rebellion of His creatures has thus far thwarted the will of God, and filled the world with an unanticipated or unavoidable confusion, who can say how this may perplex the final result? On the other hand, complete foresight of all being His, with full power to avert whatever will not fall into harmony with His purposes, predestination of all things may be safely maintained. God is neither made the Author of sin, nor compelled helplessly to admit defeat at the hands of men. And this is what Scripture asserts as the truth of His government. "He worketh *all* things after the counsel of His own will."—"Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee; the *remainder* of wrath"—foreseen in its issue as not glorifying Him,—“Thou shalt restrain” (Ps. lxxvi. 10).

It may be said by some, "This is not predestination: this is only government." But what is worthy of God to do, it is worthy of God,—and only worthy of Him,—to determine before, or from eternity, to do. This foredetermination, or predestination, alters in no wise the character of what He does in its appointed time. It frees it only from the character of after-thought, which would imply weakness and change in Him. And thus we can say, "Known unto God are all His works from eternity" (Acts xv. 18).

Thus, take the worst act the world has ever seen—the crucifixion of Christ; it can be said, "Of a truth, against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts iv. 27-28). If in this act then, in all acts whatever we are privileged to read the hand and foreordination of God; and thus alone everywhere the darkness is no more unrelieved.

The will of man is recognized in all this, and not set aside. Certainly we are nowhere led, from Scripture, to think of him as a mere intellectual

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machine, moved necessarily by influences external to himself, but as a being free and responsible, though now, alas! fallen, and become the willing slave of sin. As to this, we shall see more directly. It is certain that in no wise are we to think of God as determining to evil the wills of His creatures, or as involving them, whether by (what is to them) the accident of their birth or in any other way, in irretrievable ruin. This Scripture unites with our own consciences to assure us of. There may be difficulties, and there are; but however even insoluble may be the mystery, God has given us that within us which witnesses unfailingly for Him, that man's evil and man's ruin are of himself alone.

How, spite of contrary and conflicting wills, God is yet as absolutely "over all, and through all, and in all," "working *all* after the counsel of His own will,"—this is beyond our skill to fathom. But so it is: and blessed it is to recognise that, as the Apostle witnesses, it is as "God and Father of all" He is so. This is in fact the very web and woof of Scripture. This is what so irresistibly appeals to us in those tears wept over impenitent Jerusalem by Him who could pronounce its sure and approaching doom—a doom to be executed by the hands of men ignorant and careless of Him whose sentence they fulfilled.

This predestination extends to everything. Foresight and omnipotent will are everywhere. Thank God they are. In the moral as in the physical universe, nowhere can one escape from His presence, save, alas! by such an insensibility as the mass of men have sunk into. For the Christian, it is joy unspeakable to recognize this pervading presence, which recognized brings light into darkness, order into disorder, peace into whatever circumstances of distress. In the strain of triumph with which the Apostle closes his development of the Christian state in Romans viii., the basis of all is this precious doctrine. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to those that are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, them

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also He 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. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

But this leads us to another doctrine, closely connected with this of predestination, and suffering the same reproach, even from those who owe their all to it. I mean, of course, the doctrine of election. Election is so plainly taught in the Word that it is surely only the opposition of the heart to it that can account for its not being universally received among Christians. Nor is this an election nationally or individually to privileges or "means of grace" such as plainly Israel, and for long the nations of Europe, have enjoyed, but to salvation; and to salvation, not on account of foreseen holiness or faith, but *through*, or by means of, these. "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation, *through* sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto He called you by *our* gospel" (2 Thess. ii. 13). Nothing can well be plainer than this; nothing more positive than the assertion by the same Apostle which was just now quoted of that "chain of salvation," link riveted to link, whereby predestination issues in calling, and calling in justification, and justification in glory. A hundred texts would fail to convince where two such as these would. But in truth, the difficulty is not textual; it lies elsewhere.

Election involves many another truth most humbling to man's pride of heart, and this is in a large number of cases the real hindrance. On the other hand, it is quite true that in the conflict of minds upon a subject which has been in controversy for centuries, the balance of truth has been very much lost (although I could not say equally) by those who contended on either side; extremes on either part have tended to throw

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men off into the opposite extreme. Thus Calvinism and Arminianism, or what are commonly so-called, have nearly divided Christians between them, each refusing to recognize, for the most part, any truth in the other. Yet each has in fact its stronghold of texts and arguments, and its unanswerable appeals to conscience, never fairly met by the other. The mistake has been in the supposition that what was really strong on both sides was in necessary opposition. The fact is, that, as another has said, in general, the strength of each lies in what it affirms; its weakness in what it denies. The truths of Calvinism cluster about the pole of Divine grace; those of Arminianism, about that of man's responsibility. The world revolves upon its axis between the two.

But, upon the ground of responsibility merely, men are lost. Hence the texts upon which Arminianism relies have to do with the world at large, with the provision made in grace for these, and the Divine appeals to and dealings with them. An important class of texts, however, even with regard to these, they overlook or explain away, while they infer wrongly from their general texts as to the actual salvation of those saved. Calvinism, on the other hand, when it treats of actual salvation, is almost wholly right. Scripture and conscience agree here in their witness to its truth, and the opposition made is compelled to be mainly upon another ground, namely, the supposed bearing of this upon the case of the lost. Here the Arminian is upon his own ground, and if the Calvinist follow him here, he loses the strength he but now had, and Scripture and conscience turn against him.

Let us take up first the texts upon which the Arminian relies, and see how far they lead us, before we speak of those which may seem more to suit our present subject.

In the first place, then, God's love to the *world* is manifested in the cross. "God so loved the *world* that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." It is not allowable to narrow this down to a love

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simply to the elect, as has been only too often done. It is true that the elect are all originally of the world, and that thus He loves them when dead in trespasses and sins, and for His great love quickens them (Eph. ii. 4). But we cannot limit His love here to this: it is out of keeping with the whosoever which follows. Moreover the "world" cannot fairly be interpreted as less than the whole of it, if we believe in the transparent honesty and accuracy of Scripture. God's love to the world, then, is so deep and wonderful that it can only be measured by the gift of His Son. We dare not refuse to credit fully what is so solemnly assured.

But this being so, it settles decisively the meaning of Christ's death being for all. "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all;" "a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world:" these and many similar passages assure without any doubt of full and sufficient provision for all made in the atonement.

Upon this ground, and to give express utterance to what is in the heart of God, the Gospel is bidden to be proclaimed to "every creature." Men are assured that God "willeth not the death of a sinner," but that on the contrary He "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." These testimonies are simple, and they deny that there can be any contrary decree of God hindering the salvation of any. The Redeemer's words as He wept over Jerusalem assure us that it is man's contrary will that resists God's will—"How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not."

But this will of man itself, what shall we make of it? Is there not after all in it, define it as we may, some mysterious power which, spite of the fall, spite of the corruption of nature, should yet respond to these invitations, these pleadings of divine grace? It is clear that final condemnation is not for any sin of another, nor yet for any depravity of nature derived from him, but for men's own sins. They are treated

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not simply as a race but individualised. And thus the Apostle teaches that the whole world is brought in guilty before God. Conscience bears witness in the same way of these individual sins, and refuses to put them down simply to the account of nature. Eternal judgment according to the "deeds done," by each man, "in the body," a judgment which of course will recognize all diversity of circumstance, knowledge or ignorance of the Master's will, will proclaim a personal difference to which 'few,' or 'many stripes' will answer. All this is the antipodes of a mere necessary development of a common nature, alike therefore under like conditions. Freedom, in some real sense, is recognized by us all, whatever our creed, as necessary to responsibility, although it is true that we may freely deprive ourselves of freedom, and be accountable for this. There is a confessed mystery here, which no one can pretend to solve; but Scripture and conscience unite to assure us that man's guilt is truly his own, and that all those tender pleadings, admonitions, reasonings of God with man have in them a real suitability to men in general, and are no vain show.

Man's *will* is no mere inheritance from his fathers as his "nature" is; it is something which is in Scripture and in conscience held as his own personal, righteous accountability. It constitutes him, we may say, a person, a man; and to men God ever addresses Himself; as fallen creatures, born in sin and shapen in iniquity, "by nature children of wrath," yet always and none the less proper subjects of appeal; if destroyed finally, then *self*-destroyed.

So the Spirit of God is represented as striving with them,—with those who nevertheless to the last "resist the Holy Ghost." It is of no special consequence whether we can show or not the manner of this striving; it is enough that the word of God speaks of it as that,—that it is that. All this shows something very different from a simple condemnation merely, and giving up by God of all but the elect; and whatever it prove as to man at large, something more is meant

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than simply to demonstrate his ruin and helplessness, by that too which increases his condemnation. On the contrary, when the law has proved man's unrighteousness, and the cross that the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, still in this very cross is it manifested that "God so loved the world that He gave His Son," and the gospel goes out addressed to every creature.

Thus far we must needs go, then, with the Arminians, and the truth of predestination does not conflict with this in any way. We have here simply to enquire what is, and we can affirm that omniscient goodness willed it so to be—from eternity so willed it; did not of course desire or work the evil, but ordained to suffer it, and in this sense that it should be. The mystery of evil being thus suffered we accept—do not explain or suppose it possible to be explained. As a fact, we know it is, and know too that God is, and that He is against the evil. Scripture is of course in no wise responsible for it, while it gives us, not an explanation but such a revelation of God Himself, and in view of it, that we can have perfect faith in Him and leave it unexplained. The cross has glorified Him in every attribute more wonderfully as to sin than this could raise suspicion; while it demonstrates that not mere power could deal with evil, the victory must be that of goodness, and in suffering.

Christ dying for the world, the testimony of God's love to men at large, is no vain thing because in fact all are not saved by it. It demonstrates to us that infinite goodness from which men have to break away: that, of which He has sworn, "*As I live*, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; *but* that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why *will* ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11).

Men die because of their own will, not of God's will; yet they die. And men crudely ask of God's omnipotence why He cannot convert them all. But omnipotence itself must needs be limited by His other attributes. What infinite wisdom *can* do, I must be myself infinitely wise to know.

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Let it suffice us that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son," and that full provision has thus been made for that return of all to God to which they are besought. The result it is for man himself to decide.

But now as to this result, what? Is it uncertain? Are we to conclude that because if a man die, he wills himself to die, that therefore if he live, it is by his own will also? We may not argue so; for here, too, God has spoken, and the conscience of His saints responds ever really to what He says. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not; He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Was this rejection universal? No; some received Him. What, then, of these? "But to as many as received Him, to them gave He right (see margin) to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, *nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man*, but of God" (John i. 10-13).

Nothing can possibly be more decisive. And this plainly covers the whole ground. It is not, of course, that the will of man is not implied in the reception of Christ, for reception is surely not in this case unwilling, but rather that, as the Apostle tells the Philippians, "it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do"—"both the willing and the working"—"of His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13).

Every description of this new birth ascribes it in the fullest to divine and sovereign power. The very idea of "birth" implies it, for who is aught but passive in his own birth? It is also quickening from the dead, and "as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will" (John v. 21). It is a new creation, "for we are His workmanship, *created* in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. ii. 10). And this defines the character of what is therefore truly effectual calling: "Whom He predestinated, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified."

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This sovereign, gratuitous work in man, done in accordance with that eternal counsel which all things work out, defines clearly for us what is election. It means the gracious interference of divine love in behalf of those who, no different from others, dead in the same sins, instead of being given up to perish, are given to Christ to be the fruit of His blessed work, "that He might be the first-born among many brethren." It is love, and only love, righteously and in perfect goodness manifested in salvation only, and of those worthy of damnation. To charge upon it the damnation of the lost is blasphemy, however unconscious, of that in which the whole heart of God is pouring itself out. If others remain obdurate in pride and careless unbelief, and going on to destruction, while we, justified by faith, and having peace with God, rejoice in hope of the glory of God, is it because we are better than they? What Christian heart can believe this? No; it is because "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." No man has found his true level who has not come down there, and only there do we find the full and impregnable assurance of perfect and enduring peace. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of *God's elect*?" A love that found us with nothing to indue us with all, is a love that has in it no element of change.

"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,"—what possible cause of harm is there that is neither a thing *present nor to come*?—"nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

F. W. G.

BUT the Cross is indeed the great central point of light in human history, and, therefore, the lesson of lessons: God and man alike displayed in it; God and man come together, man opposed and reconciled.

THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH.

(Chapter ii.)

THE first chapter of our prophet closes with the overcast gloom of the prophecy of the day of the Lord, and the terrible results of Jehovah's just judgment upon a people so grievously at variance with Him: for lying vanities forsaking their own mercies. Immunity from that righteous wrath could not be purchased with silver or gold; only a turning to Him in heart, judging and abhorring the ways so foreign to His holiness, and in true repentance bowing to His word, could bring relief.

So the second portion opens with a trumpet call to repentance. The decree had gone out—but space for repentance was given ere it brought forth. What grace was thus manifested! According to His own declaration He would act—a declaration that beautifully reveals the infinite tenderness hid beneath His stern, authoritative, just, holy judgments. Everywhere in Scripture the *heart* of God is discernible, and how plainly in this: "If that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them" (Jer. xviii. 7-8). And it is this *heart* that we must not miss; the grace that flows from it we must not lose sight of. "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" He had pleadingly said to His people out of the deep depths of His heart. Callous and cold, they "formed a nation not desirous." Heart for the Lord they had not, yet the earnest call is to them to humble themselves ere His fierce anger came upon them, as it surely would. Persistency in evil must end in condign punishment.

But there existed a remnant in whose hearts the fear of the Lord was found, and a word is addressed to them. "The meek of the earth" they are named, revealing what was characteristic of them. Craven-hearted they were doubtless to the sinner with seared conscience, but their cause was in another's keeping, and to Him they are commended. His judgment they

had wrought. They had been in the current of the Lord's thoughts, and had done according to His mind. Upon that they were not to rest (though it was the commendation of the Lord to them), but were to still seek Jehovah and the objects they had already pursued, righteousness and meekness.

The Lord comes first—"Seek Jehovah"—for surely as the psalmist says of Him, "Thou, even Thou, art to be feared." In that direction, surely, their blessing lay.

But their danger lay another way. The spirit of compromise is so present with all naturally, that there is a peculiar liability to it when the way seems fenced with thorns, and bristling throughout its length with obstacles. As one used to remark, the saints are fond of looking for gaps. But those who are set to seek Jehovah, are also exhorted to seek righteousness along with the twin virtue of meekness—a blessed combination. *Seeking* implies energetic action, and the commands are imperative. Gaps are not of His providing. The end is looked at, and He is Himself "a shelter in the time of storm."

No compromise, no modification of the obedience proper to His people, to obtain a *seeming* relief (which is but a deceit and a mockery after all), from continuous and strenuous trials, is even hinted at: no resort to carnal weapons to maintain their *just* cause is mentioned. In meekness they could suffer seeking right, and then in the words of another prophet, "In that day shall the Lord of Hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of His people" (Isa. xxviii. 5). So should the end be, "when the Lord their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity" (verse 7). Their eyes were to be up to Him, and His eyes would be upon them, and He would maintain their cause, and secure their safety; for would He not "arise to save all the meek of the earth" (Ps. lxxvi. 9), hiding them in the day of His anger?

To be continued.

TO BE LEFT TILL CALLED FOR!

"To be left till called for," eh?

Yes, that's the idea, "to be left till called for."

Bought by our present Master so that we belong to Him. Redeemed by Him we are no longer Satan's slaves but the Lord's free men. He has left us here till He calls for us to take us home to our Father's house and home on high.

Then we do not belong to the world?

No! We are *in* it, but not *of* it. "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world" (John xvii. 16). Not taken out of it yet, but left in it till called for. Not left to be useless, however, but left to be useful—to be "witnesses unto Him" (Acts i. 8)—to be lights in the midst of the moral darkness around, "holding forth the word of life" (Phil. ii. 14 16)—illuminated advertisements, as it were, manifesting Christ—setting forth the moral graces and beauties of Christ, and thus commending Him to those around.

"Left till called for." Yes! But left to the care of a Holy Father until called for: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me." We are looked after, cared for, provided for, by the very One who gave us to His Son at the first. How wonderful! How blessed! Then the Father's truth poured into our hearts and made good there by the Holy Ghost so that we may be sanctified by it. Could love do more for us?

Think of what it cost Him at first to obtain us! Who can measure the sorrows and sufferings of Calvary where He died to redeem us to God by His precious blood. Think of that awful cry wrung from the broken heart of the holy and beloved Son of God—"My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Behold in the unutterable agony of that holy Sufferer on the cross the price paid for our redemption—for you and me.

Then think again of the pains He has been at to make the fullest provision for us while He is away. Think of His present intercession for us, of His

Priesthood and Advocacy; of those breathings of His loving heart into the ears of His Father, while He pleads for us in that ever memorable chapter, John xvii.; of His precious promises given to cheer and comfort us, and of the certainty of His return to receive us unto Himself. Oh, what has that thrice blessed Saviour not done for us! Blessed forever be His peerless Name!

"Left till called for." By whom? By Himself of course. Too precious to be entrusted to others, He says, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself" (John xiv. 3). "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord; wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. iv. 16-18). No servant is to be sent for us however trustworthy. No. No. It is Himself. We were saved by Himself. We are kept for Himself. We wait for Himself. He will come Himself. We shall be for ever with Himself. Let that thought fill and flood your heart and mine, beloved in the Lord. Oh, it is sweet, surpassingly sweet!

"Left till called for." Yes! But the world has no idea of the value of what is in its midst and being kept. He has! Yea, He only knows the true value of the kept ones. But what a day of surprise awaits the at-present ignorant world. By-and-bye, caught away to be with Christ in bodies of glory, changed and fashioned like unto His own body of glory, we shall be brought out and brought back again in the day of display, each one reflecting the glory of God (Rev. xxi. 11); and Jesus "glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. i. 10). It will be a wondering and admiring world then. Then they will see *what* was kept, and *why* it was kept.

Now, dear fellow-believer, let this simple but precious truth get deep down into your heart and

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mine: we are here in the world, left by the Saviour "till called for," and the call may come soon, we know not how soon. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly" (Rev. xxii. 20). Did it ever strike you that that is the last recorded word the Lord ever uttered? "*Quickly.*" It is! Then let us put away and get rid of everything unsuited to Him and that would make us ashamed were He to come and find us engaged in it, and let us respond to His last loving message and say, "Amen! Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

"E'en now let my ways, Lord,
Be bright with Thy praise, Lord,
For brief are the days
Ere Thy coming again.
I'm waiting for Thee, Lord,
Thy beauty to see, Lord,
No triumph for me
Like Thy coming again."

NEW ZEALAND.

WM. EASTON.

SOME REASONS FOR REJECTING CERTAIN TRUTHS CONSIDERED.

WE are living in a period of the Church's history in which nearly every fundamental truth of Christianity is being assailed, not only by men who openly and unblushingly assert their disbelief in God and His Word, but by those who hold the place of teachers and ministers among communities of Christians—men who, in many cases, occupy their position on the understanding that they teach their "flock" the verities of the Christian faith.

Lately, we have been told by one who is sometimes referred to as "a leader of religious thought," whose voice, alas, is often heard, and whose teachings are all too popular, that the Bible should be criticised in the same way as any other book. How clearly does an assertion like this show that the real glory of that book is hidden from such a man! And no wonder; for the Bible is not addressed to "leaders of religious thought," to theologians, to professors of divinity, or to "Higher Critics," any more than to the licentious

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man of the world, or to the speculative man of science or of letters; but it is addressed to the "man of God" (a sinner saved by grace), whose perfect confidence as to its unquestionable truth rests not upon any external evidence, but upon its internal evidence—upon the hold that it has on his soul, and upon its convicting power over his conscience. To him this book is a revelation from God. It is "God-breathed." He has found it, and ever will find it "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. iii. 16-17). He pores over its hallowed pages in a submissive and adoring spirit. He would not dare approach it in any critical spirit, for he well knows that it will judge all critics, be they learned or unlearned, in the last day (John xii. 48).

It is a matter of grave concern that there are so many men of sceptical views boldly promulgating their false doctrines from the pulpit. This but too clearly indicates that the congregations who listen to them must approve, for, "like people, like priest" (Hos. iv. 9). What is taking place at the present time is similar to what happened in the days of Josiah, king of Judah: "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land, the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and My people love to have it so" (Jer. v. 30, 31).

Among the truths which have in recent years been attacked, is that of the virgin-birth of the Lord Jesus. The absence of any reference to it by the Apostle Paul has been adduced as one reason for rejecting it as untrue. How readily some people become inoculated with the virus of infidelity! And how easily, from a want of apprehension of the scope and drift of Christianity, are they turned aside! "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," said Jehovah, through the prophet Hosea (iv. 6). May not similar language be applied to the mass of professing Christians to-day?

The Lord's miraculous birth is recorded by only two New Testament writers—Matthew and Luke; and, as if anticipating the question that would be raised in

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regard to this wonderful event, the Spirit of God has established the truth of it at the mouth of two witnesses (Deut. xvii. 15, etc.). But though, as to the fact itself, the one corroborates the other, yet corroboration could not have been the object of the authors themselves, because it is evident that they wrote independently of each other, and from different points of view. For example—Matthew relates the divine communications made to Joseph, while Luke records those made to Mary. The genealogy given in Matthew's gospel is that of Joseph—the royal and official genealogy; in Luke's gospel it is that of Mary (as it is commonly thought)—the family genealogy. And throughout these gospels, the many differences to be found in them show that the object of the writers was not identical. Mark and John pass over the nativity of the Lord unnoticed, and their reason for so doing is plain, when the purport of these gospels is seen. Mark, as is well known, delineates the Lord in His character as Servant, Teacher, or Prophet; and the abrupt way in which he commences his gospel is beautifully significant. He has, as it were, caught the spirit of the words, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" and at once proceeds to portray the Saviour in the full energy of His service. John sets before us the same gracious Person as the "Word" who became flesh and tabernacled among us. And although He was in the world, and the world had its being through Him, yet men did not know Him (John i. 10), nor did they want Him, because they were enveloped in moral darkness. From the outset of this gospel, He is viewed as "despised and rejected of men."

On turning to the epistles of Paul, we find teaching of a very different character from that found in any of the gospels. So far from touching upon the events and circumstances of the Lord's life here on earth, the apostle says: "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh, yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet, now henceforth know we Him no more" (2 Cor. v. 16). He presents, not Jesus the Messiah to

His earthly people (the Jews), but the Christ of God, glorified on high, to Gentiles as well as Jews. He is occupied with truths founded upon, or resulting from, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had received his Gospel from the Lord in glory (Acts ix.), and, hence, he speaks of it as the "Gospel of the glory" (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, R.V.). There were, there are, things in his epistles, "hard to be understood, which the untaught and ill-established wrest, as also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Pet. iii. 16).

Only a modicum of care and intelligence is sufficient to forbid even a doubt being raised as to the truth of the virgin-birth of the Lord on the ground that the Apostle Paul has not alluded to it. If the plea for its rejection were genuine, then what the Apostle teaches with great fulness—viz., the resurrection—ought to be accepted. Such, however, is not the case, for, of late, this fundamental truth has again been attacked. It is asserted that Scriptural evidence in support of it is very slight! Verily, none but those who *wish* to deny the resurrection could make such a statement. It is true that the Lord did not rise from the dead in the same public manner as He had been put to death, and for obvious reasons. It was the world—the princes of this world (1 Cor. ii. 8)—that crucified the Lord of glory. It was God who raised Him from the dead. The Jews, together with the Roman Governor and his men, had treated the gracious Lord with the most revolting indignity, and put Him to the most ignominious of deaths; and after what had occurred subsequently to His death (Matt. xxvii. 62-66; xxviii. 11-15), no one could fail to understand why He refrained from appearing to any one, save to those who had received Him. But for all their enmity, there being "no deceit in His mouth," He had said to the Jews, "Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxiii. 39). Do not these words imply resurrection? Moreover, the Lord had several times told His disciples of His approaching death, and of

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His rising therefrom; and in spite of His having done so, the news of His resurrection was to some of them as "idle tales, and they believed them not" (Luke xxiv. 11). The cause of such dulness in understanding the Lord's words is also made known to us (Luke xviii. 34). Nothing is hidden. It is a "plain, unvarnished tale," told with such artless simplicity as at once to quell the thought that there was any attempt on the part of the disciples to concoct an untrue story about it. But let men cavil as they may, there is a day coming when *every* eye shall see Him, *every* knee shall bow to Him, and *every* tongue shall confess Him, Lord (Rev. i. 7; Phil. ii. 10, 11).

The resurrection was that which gave God's sanction and seal to the Person and work of Christ. By it He was declared to be Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness (Rom. i. 4); a title, for the taking of which, He was condemned to death (Luke xxii. 70). It was, therefore, of supreme importance that this glorious truth—on the acceptance of which the salvation of men's souls depends—should be made known and firmly established. Hence, on the occasion of the election of an apostle in the room of Judas, Peter stated that the one chosen must be "a witness with us of His resurrection" (Acts i. 22). Is it to be wondered at that so profound, so momentous, so vital a truth should be stoutly opposed? In those days there were sceptics (the Sadducees), and, as usual they were not behindhand in making their voices heard. They believed in "no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit" (Acts xxiii. 8), and once during the Lord's life, they had the temerity to confront Him on the question of the resurrection, and received from Him a reply which effectually silenced them (Matt. xxii. 23, 24). After the Lord's death, and when "with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection" (Acts iv. 22), they were quickly to the fore to oppose them. They made no attempt to prove the falsity of what the Apostles were proclaiming, nor did they offer any suggestion as to how the actual truth (in their views of the case) might be arrived at; but

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to threats, scourgings, and imprisonments they immediately resorted (Acts iv. and v.) Did ever opposers of the truth (when they had the power) act differently? The great arch-enemy of all truth is a murderer and liar, and can his progeny be expected to do aught but follow in his wake? (John viii. 44). With what grateful feelings does one learn of the way in which God deals with sinners—rebels against Himself and His truth! “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved” (John iii. 17). Salvation, not judgment is His delight. Well might David who had often tasted of God’s grace, exclaim: “Let us fall now into the hands of the Lord, for His mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hand of man” (2 Sam: xxiv. 14).

May it not be asked as cogently to-day, as it was nearly 1900 years ago: “Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?” (Acts xxvi. 8). They who refuse to believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ will, if consistent, be bound to regard the whole of the New Testament as unreliable, if not absolutely false, as all the writers of this inspired volume believed in, and taught it. Are all these Apostles and Evangelists, in very deed, “false witnesses of God because they have testified of God that He raised up Christ”? What can be the object of those men who, calling themselves Christians, preach and teach that there is no resurrection? Is it to draw the attention of the public to themselves by proclaiming something heterodox, and so enjoy a short-lived notoriety? If so, they cannot in the least realise the awful consequences of such a course. Preachers and people, priests, ministers and laymen—one and all, will do well to lay to heart the potent and pungent words of the great Apostle: “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished” (1 Cor. xv. 18). “ARE PERISHED”! No resurrection? Then perish the precious name of Christ—perish the sweet tale of His love for poor sinners—perish all

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knowledge of His life, of His death, of the cross with all its shame and woe—perish the name of God, and all memory of that mighty love which led Him to give His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him *should not perish*, but have everlasting life! “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor. xv. 19). And Paul might, in all verity, so write, for how many and great were the sorrows and sufferings through which He passed, in the full certainty that Christ had been raised from the dead.

To whom, or to what, then, will these preachers direct us for our hearts' comfort? Where else than in the Scriptures are we to learn of that eternity to which all men are travelling? Is it possible that the gracious God who gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness (Acts xiv. 17), has left Himself unrevealed to His intelligent creatures? Does He, could He, allow them to grope their way through time, in blank ignorance of Himself, and finally to drop into some form or condition of existence about which nothing is known, nothing revealed? Men, however “advanced” their views, cannot get rid of the dread thought that there is “something after death,” and the cry is again being raised: “Where are the dead; are those who have died ‘out of Christ’ suffering indescribable agonies?” As might be expected there are preachers ready at hand to answer that question in a way which suits those who ask it. But despite oracular utterances from the pulpit, the Word of God makes it abundantly clear that there is no stage or state between salvation and perdition; between eternal happiness and eternal torment; between the presence of the Lord, and the being punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord (2 Thess. i. 9). “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth (or obeyeth) not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John iii. 36).

Satan can assume a variety of forms. As a serpent

he approached our first parents, and robbed them of the delights of Paradise. As a lion he walks about seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. v. 8). By his wiles (Eph. vi. 11), and devices (2 Cor. ii. 11), he acts the part of a seducer; and when circumstances are favourable, he "is transformed into an angel of light, therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. xi. 14, 15). It is in this last capacity that he now seems to be putting forth all his energies. His "ministers of righteousness" (not of grace, be it observed) may be persons, apparently possessed of many virtues, and endowed with much intellectual power and vigour, and thus, under a form of godliness (2 Tim. iii. 5) or religion, accompanied with a little rhetorical display, they are able to beguile unstable souls. If people of this present reading age would but turn to the "Living Oracles," in the spirit of the Bereans who "searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so" (Acts xvii. 11), they would soon cease to be led and fed by popular preachers and religious demagogues. The awful doom to which they are now exposing themselves would be more evident to them; and they would become sensible of their own individual responsibility to God, "for all live unto Him" (Luke xx. 38).

Needful is it for all who value their soul's salvation to take heed to, and to act upon, the prophet's injunctions: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. viii. 20). A. C. H.

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD.

The presence of God, the Holy Ghost, dwelling in the individual believer (1 Cor. vi. 19), and in the house of God, which is the assembly of the living God (Eph. ii. 22; 1 Tim. iii. 15).

WE cannot really know either of these facts unless God has taught us. The being believers in the Lord Jesus Christ puts us in a condition for learning. We have received a new mind—the mind of Christ (1 Cor. ii.

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16), and therefore God can communicate to us at His pleasure. He can tell us what He has done, and what He purposes to do. But we have to be taught—we have to learn, and as we learn the facts, we require to keep in mind that only the Divine Spirit can use what He has taught us to His glory and for the profit of others as well as ourselves. We have to be taught, I say, and it is by the Word, the written Word, the Spirit teaches. To be indwelt by God the Spirit, is a tremendous fact to have got a lodgment in the mind and heart of the child of God. The Spirit of God has by the same word to bring us into practical submission to God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. x. 5). He thus teaches us individually, and fits us for His service. He is *Master* in His own house, whose house (*i.e.*, all believers) are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end (Heb. iii. 6). There is no liberty for self to act in His house. He is the Controller of all. I speak of what it is in its normal character, and what it should be in practice. Alas! it is not so in its actual state. Human arrangements have superseded Scripture order given by God for the blessing of His people, and so to result to His glory. While we profess to own the fact that the Lord the Spirit is in His house to lead and guide us when assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is little discernment and exercise of heart when man interferes with it. Many years ago a child of God who had been learning something as to the order of the assembly of God, and of the guidance of the Spirit when saints of God were so assembled, called on a leading divine in Scotland, and remarked to him that she did not find the truths taught in 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. chaps., in practice in the assemblies. The Doctor speedily replied, "O, yes; that is all right, but it will not do to-day." How "not do to-day?" Simply because the natural man can never receive the things of God. He cannot know them. Souls must be, in the first instance, born again, and then be *indwelt* by the Spirit of God. The natural man does not, cannot know

what it is to wait upon God, therefore he arranges things in the house of God along with the believers to suit the majority.

In penning these few lines I specially have in view the guidance of the Spirit of God when believers are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are two special occasions when saints of God are found thus assembled.

First: on the first day of the week "to eat the Lord's Supper" for a remembrance of Christ, and coupled with that, if the Lord is so pleased to give it, ministry of the Word.

Second: assembling together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for united prayer. But before I notice particularly these two points I desire to call attention very shortly to the sealing of the *believer* by the Holy Ghost. The teaching of Scripture very explicitly is, that the sealing of the Spirit follows on believing the Gospel (read Eph. i. 13).

The sealing is a different operation of the Spirit of God from that which is taught us in John iii. 5. In the first place the Spirit operates by the Word of God on *the unbeliever*, and when the message from God is *received in faith*, He then seals the soul by taking up His abode in him. We read in Acts xix. 2, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost *since* ye believed?" Scripture distinguishes between the operation of the Spirit upon an unbeliever and a believer. I submit that these two points are not matters of opinion but the distinct teaching of the Word of God. They have been often presented by those more competent to do so than the present writer, but there is need still to have them enforced.

I pass on now to the second point which is proposed to be dwelt upon, viz., the great fact that believers are builded together for an habitation of God by the Spirit. This is taught us distinctly in Eph. ii. 22. The descent of the Holy Ghost to earth is recorded in Acts ii. This could not have taken place until Christ was glorified we are told in John vii. 39. Let me quote this verse in full as it is confirmatory of Eph. i. 13,

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which states that the gift of the Spirit follows believing. "This spake He of the Spirit (what precedes in verses 37 and 38) which they that believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet (given) because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

In the first Corinthian Epistle we have the saints contemplated coming together in assembly (1 Cor. xi. 18). This would have been to partake of the Lord's supper, and on other occasions also for ministry of the word or in whatever other way the Spirit of God might lead when so assembled. Paul by the Spirit evidently deprecated their coming prepared with a psalm or a doctrine (1 Cor. xiv. 26) a tongue or a revelation. The thought that the Lord is in the midst, forbids such ways. We thus have the benefit of Divine instruction and it will be helpful to read and consider and be taught in those things which Paul is instructed to present in his first epistle regarding the various irregularities which had crept into the assembly. He insists greatly that all that is said, be to edification. He himself would rather speak five words with his understanding that others might be taught than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. This principle is of abiding value. Six times at least in chapter xiv. the word "edify" occurs.

God the Holy Spirit who is in His assembly never loses sight of the edification of His people in all He sets before them. It is easily lost sight of by His servants. None but God knows what is needful for His people. He alone can use us to be the instruments of edification to them.

When we come together how happy it is to be thus in His hand for whatever He pleases. It is good also to sit still and be quiet if the Lord does not give the word.

The study of these chapters in 1st Corinthians will result in acquainting the soul with the fact that to come prepared to give out certain hymns or read certain portions of the Word is contrary to the mind of the Lord.

The Apostle Peter puts the matter very solemnly in

chapter iv. of his 1st Epistle. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God . . . that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

The character of ministry on the occasion of assembling to eat the Lord's supper will be generally in keeping with the feast the Lord the Spirit gathers us to partake of. The great thing is to be found waiting on God realising how great the presence of the Lord is. How much we need that prayer were made continually to God to the end that we assemble always in the real spirit of *self-judgment* with our hearts and minds fixed on the Lord to keep us waiting on Him for His guidance in all we say or do; and on retiring our conversation should partake of that which is in keeping with being in His holy presence and with what He had been saying to us. The second occasion I have named is the assembling for prayer.

I do not think it is generally apprehended that the meeting for prayer (Matt. xviii. 19. 20). has the assembly character as much as the meeting for breaking of bread. Surely if saints of God realized this they would endeavour to be frequently present. The Lord's presence is specially assured to us as we have just noticed on such an occasion. It should then be His presence that draws us. But alas! how few are found together in these days to pray! If the Word of God is nourishing our souls (and that should be daily) it will instruct us how much we need to pray not only individually but collectively. It will teach us what the Lord sees to be the lack of our souls. At times we ask Him to teach us to pray. How will He do it? Will it not be by speaking to us through His Word?

D. S.

THE NEW COVENANT.

(Hebrews viii.).

TILL the days of Jeremiah, the prophet of Anathoth, God's purpose to make a new covenant with Israel and with Judah was not revealed. But when things in Judah were going from bad to worse, and years after the captivity of the ten tribes, God by Jeremiah first

announced the making with them of a new covenant. The resources of divine grace are varied indeed. At Sinai, Israel had entered into covenant with God ; but speedily broke it, and so justly forfeited all claim to blessing under it. For, that covenant once broken, no amount of obedience in the future could have wrought for them a recovery of the blessing they had forfeited. The sins of that first covenant must have weighed, for anything they could have done, like a millstone round their necks. Grace only could come in, but it must be grace in righteousness. A new covenant became therefore a necessity ; and the sins under the first, must be atoned for by blood, if the nation was not to be finally rejected (Heb ix. 15).

Century after century passed, and no fresh word was dropped by any prophet or messenger about the new covenant. Had God forgotten it? Had Jeremiah held out delusive hopes? At length, in the upper room in Jerusalem, to just the twelve the Lord referred to it, and in a way to show it had not been forgotten on high. He spoke of it as that which was to be expected, and which would be realised. But *when*, was still a matter undisclosed. "The days come," Jeremiah had said (xxxi. 31). He spoke of the new covenant as certain ; but the time for it was left purposely indefinite. The Lord, as we have said, also spoke of it, but gave no hint how near was the making of it. He added, however, to the revelation of Jeremiah, two important particulars: *one*, that it would rest on the blood of a sacrifice ; and the *other*, that that blood was to be His own (Matt. xxvi. 28 ; Mark xiv. 24 ; Luke xxii. 20 ; 1 Cor. xi. 25). Years again rolled by, and not till the Epistle to the Hebrews was written do we learn who would be its Mediator. Of the Surety of it, even the Lord Jesus, we have already learnt (Heb. vii. 22). Of the Mediator, and that thrice over, are we now informed (viii. 6 ; ix. 15 ; xii. 24). That covenant to be made, the blood on which it will rest, and the Mediator of it, these important facts revealed, the whole subject awaits its completion, when the time for it to be made is definitely

known. It was not made before the Cross, that is clear, for the blood on which it will rest was not shed till then. It has not been made since the cross, for God has not been dealing directly with Israel and Judah; nor will He whilst the Church, the Body of Christ, is on earth. Further, it will not be made with Christians, but with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, though Christians share, and that now, in blessings connected with it—viz., the knowledge of God and the forgiveness of sins.

What a subject is that of the ministry of Christ, as set before us in this Epistle! Christians first enjoy it, but not Christians only. Israel also in a coming day will be found to be concerned in it. God's purposes about His Son, the crucified One, will not be accomplished without the house of Israel and the house of Judah basking in the sunshine of Divine favour, and in the conscious enjoyment of the everlasting blessings of the new covenant. They will not, however, be contracting parties to it. And no possibility of it being broken can there be. God is unchangeable in His purposes of grace. So no failure on the people's part will endanger their enjoyment of it, for He will write His laws on their hearts (Heb. viii. 10). Well may we sing—

“How far the riches of God's grace
Our highest thoughts exceed.”

A better covenant, established upon better promises (Heb. viii. 6).—such is our Apostle's statement. And reading of the blessings of it (10-12), we have to say how true is that description. Under the first covenant Israel were promised blessings if they kept it (Exod. xix. 5, 6). Under the new they will enjoy the blessing formerly promised, though by their disobedience justly forfeited; and the law will be written on their hearts that they shall not break it. What creatures must they be, since that will be needful to secure for the earthly people the continued enjoyment of millennial happiness. Thus will God provide, that He may be able always to bless them, and that in perfect

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righteousness. What a thought does this present of His desire to bless !

But as we have said, the time to make this covenant has not arrived. Why then is it mentioned here? And why is such special attention drawn to it, that the passage from Jeremiah containing it is quoted at length? To wean the Hebrews from Judaism was the real object. For why make a new covenant if the first was faultless? (Heb. viii. 7). And if a new one is to be made, God has made the first one old. "Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (13). Why then continue in connection with that which is transient and is ready to vanish away? The folly of continuing on Jewish ground, and the greater folly of returning to it, must be apparent to the dullest comprehension. Apart from Christianity there was no blessing for those Hebrews. Apart from Christ there can be no blessing for the nation in the future. For He is the Mediator of the new covenant.

C. E. S.

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To be hid in that day is a part of their hope. Connected as their blessing is with earth, and with Him who shall sit upon the throne of His father David, their anticipations are linked with His Kingdom here, and consequently when Jehovah's hand falls in judgment upon all nations to punish for sin, and to make good His rights to the world-kingsdoms, now under the domination of the usurper, the faithful are by Him hid and preserved through the time of His fierce indignation. Zephaniah here speaks (chap. ii.) of the judgment of the nations round about Judah. Upon the whole land of the Philistines His anger would descend, and He would visit to turn away the captivity of His people (verse 7). Precious promise to them—"The Lord their God shall visit them!" Dispelling the darkness of the day of tribulation, they shall see light in His light (Ps. xxxvi. 9),

and He shall usher in everlasting joy and blessedness for them.

Continuing the prophecy of judgment, the reproaches and pride of Moab, and the base revilings of Ammon, are dealt with. Jehovah speaks again: "*I have heard.*" His ear is not closed to the cry of His people, nor is it indifferent to the voice that was lifted against them. Nothing passes unnoticed by Him, but the words and actions that are prompted by pride are peculiarly obnoxious to the Lord. So in the most solemn way sentence is pronounced and their doom fixed. "As I live, saith the Lord of Hosts"—the one to whom both heaven and earth belongs, the sovereign Lord of all—"the God of Israel" too, "surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah" (verse 9). Perpetual desolations would be their portion, and this because of their pride, and because they had exalted themselves "against the people of the Lord of Hosts." Against that people, so exalted on account of this glorious connection, none can speak with impunity without incurring the severest displeasure of Him who chose them before all others.

Then from verse 9 we also learn that the executors of this solemn sentence are to be the very ones against whom the reproaches were directed. "The residue of My people shall spoil them, and the remnant of My people shall possess them." Hence, after the Lord has come in power and glory, the mighty Deliverer of His persecuted ones, and dealt with the apostate powers arrayed against Him (Rev. xix), He will use His delivered ones, "the residue of His people," in punishing those Eastern nations, abidingly notorious for their hate and pride, the exultant enemies of that people in the day of their calamity (Isa. xv. 6).

It will be in the might of His power that they will act. He will be terrible unto them, and at that time will settle decisively the great controversy as to the idols of the nations. "All the gods of the earth He will famish," and all shall render to Him the

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worship due to His name. The earth shall be filled with His glory.

For not only nations near but afar off also come under judgment when He arises to abase the proud in heart, and to bring to naught the satisfaction of the rejoicing city, and to lay low her glory and boasting. Ninevah, full of wickedness, repented at the preaching of Jonah, and the predicted overthrow was stayed; but if the sins turned *from* to avert judgment be turned *to* again, what can result but an increased severity when the rod falls. So Ninevah is here seen by the prophet in her desolation and solitude, when the rod of the Lord's anger has fallen upon her. So shall every high thing be brought down when He arises to shake terribly the earth.

Then in chapter iii. Jerusalem is again reverted to; Jerusalem, not seen clothed in His garments of beauty, but in her actual condition, in the blackness of nature. And woe is pronounced; "Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, the oppressing city" (ver. 1). What a character! filthiness and pollution were in the midst, and oppression accompanied them. Owing her greatness to His gentleness, she, nevertheless, has a name for oppression, only to experience the bitterness of scattering in the day of His manifested jealousy.

And in scathing terms her indictment is set out by that God of knowledge by whom actions are weighed, the just Jehovah who was in the midst thereof (ver. 5). First, then, though in grace He had spoken, obedience on her part did not follow: "She obeyed not the voice." And further she refused to "bear the rod." The stripes were for her healing, but rebellion was in the heart and profiting did not follow, for she was not exercised thereby: "She received not correction." And further there was no confidence in His faithfulness, though her all she owed to Him; and "pride ruled her will," so that she drew not near to Him. Thus concisely are the points against her indicated. Guilty of disobedience, she was also insubject, mistrustful, and independent. The ear was closed and the heart was hardened, so that what Jehovah had been, and

would be, to her was utterly ignored. A picture this of the condition of Jerusalem so favoured, but how true also of the individual, when, refusing His offer of mercy, such an one hardens himself in independency and pride. Much later in the history of that people "*the voice*" still cries, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."

Instances of oppression and pollution are next given, and those high in office and position are shown to be most guilty. Like the fierce lion, roaring over its prey so were her princes. Like the hungry evening wolves, so her judges gloated over their helpless victim; and their exultant glee and satisfaction in their nefarious work is told in the stinging phrase, "they gnaw not the bones till the morrow." Once in their grasp their prey would find no relief: their tyranny of to-day would be wreaked afresh on the morrow. Such were those who were in the position of administrators of justice.

And prophets and priests were little better; for instead of being sober and true, the prophets were "*light and treacherous*;" and the priests, instead of being holy and upright, the ministers to the people of the things pertaining to God, they were perverters of the sanctuary, and violaters of the law. Surely in man dwelleth no good thing, and all flesh is as the grass!

How good, then, to turn from man to God; from the gloomy picture of man's failure and folly to the glorious one of Jehovah's perfectness. Verily they were not consumed because He changed not (Mal. iii. 6).

H. F.

We have in type the heavenly family, who even now by faith see where He abides and abide with Him while night is on the earth, to come out in the morning with Him (John i. 38-39). No name of earth attaches itself to this His dwelling place; and though, plainly, as the time indicates, they pass the night with Him, no night is mentioned, for where He is it is day.

PROPIITIATION.

“*He is the propitiation for our sins*” (1 John ii. 2)

THE making propitiation was the last part of that work—Atonement.

He presented *Himself* after all was over—*after* Divine judgment had been borne because our sins had been laid upon Him—*after* His blood had been *shed*, without which there would have been no remission (Heb. ix. 22)—as the One Who in His Own person comprehended all, as it is stated in 1 John ii. 2, “*He is the propitiation for our sins.*” Near two thousand years have rolled past, but that word remains in all its undiminished value. In the holiest—within the veil—He presented Himself. On the cross outside the gate, He as the Lamb of God’s providing receives our sins—they are confessed on His holy head—allows them to be laid on Him, and in His holy soul drinks the Divine judgment we would have had to bear for ever. “Jehovah bruised Him.” *God* was active at the cross. The *Lord Jesus Christ* suffered and died. All that being over, He, the Son of God, High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, enters the Holiest and is Himself the Propitiation. Hebrews x. 12 agrees.

I am told that Lev. xvi. is strained to make it teach that Christ as High Priest made propitiation in heaven. Lev. xvi. 21 is often presented as setting forth in type the blessed fact that our sins were borne by the Saviour on His own body on the tree *without the gate* (Heb. xiii. 12). He was there our substitute for us. Let me ask is Lev. xvi. 15 to have no voice to us? Does not Heb. ix. 12 teach us the meaning of it?

He who has given our consciences rest as to our sins never meeting us again, speaks in Heb. x. 19-22, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” The entrance of the Lord Jesus Christ into the holiest as High Priest is characterised by His own blood *once*,

in contrast to the Aaronic priest who entered by the blood of bulls and goats once *every year*.

“Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, *as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others*” (Heb. ix. 25). This verse is conclusive as to *where* propitiation was effected, and Heb. ii. 17 instructs us that the Lord *as High Priest* accomplished it.

Another has written, “The sacrifice of Christ (so far as it was antitypical of the slaying of the victim, and its presentation on the altar) was accomplished on the cross. But the antitypical correlation of the presentation of the blood before the mercy-seat was our Lord’s appearance before God the Father bearing His own precious blood” (which was shed on the cross). “That high priestly self-presentation of the Redeemer is the eternal conclusion and ratifying seal of the work of redemption.”

“The final object of His entrance as High Priest and Sacrifice into the eternal heaven is there to appear before God *for us*, presenting on our behalf no exhausted sacrifice, nor one of transient efficacy, or needing repetition, but Himself in His own person, as an ever-present, ever-living victim and atonement. And this object is attained at once, and attained for ever.”

“He is the Propitiation.”

D. S.

“BEHOLD AND WONDER!”

THE grace and loveliness of the walk and ways of Jesus can only be fitly described by the Holy Ghost, and understood by His power. But the mere story contained in the Gospels is enough to convince even a child, that never such an One has been seen on earth before or since, and that never man spake like this man. Let us pause to consider Christ in His humiliation, in contrast with His glorious person, and His place with the Father before the world was. How infinite was the distance between the bosom of the Father and the bosom of Mary, yet He could fill both

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at the same time! He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, condescended to be wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger of the inn at Bethlehem! The only begotten Son of God, bore the name of "the carpenter's son," and even of the "carpenter"! The Father of the everlasting ages humbled Himself to be born as a child, and to be hid in Egypt by Joseph, His supposed father! He who could say, "the world is mine, and the fulness thereof," chose to be indebted to the ministry of woman for His daily provision as a man! The Creator of all things asked a poor sinner for a draught of water! He who came from God and was on the point of going back to God, "knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands," washed the feet of the poor fishermen who were His disciples! The King of kings stood before Herod the tetrarch; the judge of the world before Pilate; the Great High Priest before Caiaphas! The author of life became obedient unto death; and most marvellous of all, the Holy One, He who knew no sin, was made sin, and His soul an offering for sin! "O the depths of the riches!" is all that the best instructed can exclaim. —*Extract.*

THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH.

(Chapter iii. 5-21).

As the sun shining through rifts in black clouds, and lighting up an otherwise overcast scene, so the exquisite unfoldings of Jehovah and His unchanging character spread glory where "sin o'er all seemed to prevail." So side by side with the picture, true if dark, of man's moral character, we have given us the revelation of Jehovah's perfection. Jerusalem—what was she? A moral wreck. Her great ones—what were they? Away from God, and wallowing in pollution, treachery, and injustice.

But—and note well the contrast (verse 5)—the Lord was there: "The just Jehovah is in the midst thereof." Particular emphasis is laid upon the word *just*. Attention is directed to that characteristic, at

once both blessed and solemn—blessed to those whose trust was reposed in Him, and solemn indeed to those who built upon injustice and fraud. Long ere this one had asked when his heart was lifted up in intercession, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. xviii. 25). Most surely! “He will not do iniquity,” but whilst assuredly acting in fullest grace, He will as righteously manifest Himself in judgment against the unrepentant evildoer.

So “morning by morning He bringeth His judgment to light,” giving expression to His abhorrence of sin, by act judging what He had by His word condemned. Word and act were perfectly accordant. He both “said and did,” and failed not. But the unjust, hardened in their manifold sins, know no shame. Whoso hearkened to the just Jehovah, to him should the word, which speaks of dwelling safely and being quiet from fear of evil, be verily fulfilled (Prov. i.).

The next word is a direct address from Jehovah, wherein He shows how the rod of His wrath had fallen upon the nations. For their sins and iniquities they had been judged, and those governmental acts of their God should have served as object-lessons to them. The nations sowed and reaped accordingly. Could they sow and not reap? Hence the reasoning that follows: “I said, Surely thou wilt fear Me, thou wilt receive instruction,” but they had neither delight in heeding His will nor fear of His anger. In the perversity of their hearts they “hasted to do evil,” and refused to profit by the experience of surrounding peoples. In grace He “rose early” to turn them from their folly; in their eager pursuit after iniquity they rose early and corrupted their doings.

“Therefore wait ye upon Me” is again the gracious invitation He issues to those who walked in His fear, trusting under the wings of the God of Israel, feeble and few though they were. The fire of His jealousy would burn throughout the whole earth when He rose up to the prey (verse 8), and judgment clears the way for the bringing in of glory. Through power, not

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grace, will His kingdom come on earth and the time of blessing and peacefulness be ushered in. The Scriptures teach that the nations will learn righteousness when His judgments are in the earth, and the Scriptures cannot be broken (John x. 35), and by His power He will subdue all things unto Himself. Until then the unjust knoweth no shame.

By power, then, will that period be introduced wherein all call upon His name and serve Him with one consent (verse 9). "For then"—after His indignation has been poured upon this scene—"will I turn to the people a pure language," that to Him all flesh may come. "In Him shall the Gentiles trust," and His scattered ones, now suppliant, shall be gathered from beyond the Euphrates, and shall present themselves before the Lord. "*My suppliants*"—how expressive of delight of heart in the attitude taken. When grace has wrought that mighty effect and brought them low before Him in true humility, He instantly says, "My suppliants."

In that day a new heart shall be within them, and truly repentant and deeply desirous, they will be consciously in the enjoyment of sins remitted, with none to remind them of days of failure and high-mindedness. Their sad wanderings from Him over, their enemies removed, their haughtiness taken away, they will be lost as it were in the blessedness and freedom of His holy mountain. His King will be upon Zion, and in righteousness the people shall be there in the enjoyment of "this blessing from the Lord" (Ps. xxiv.).

So with pride removed, they are found there truly "poor in spirit," and simply characterised by that which always marks the true man of God, dependence upon Him. Beautifully it is said, "they shall trust in the name of Jehovah"; for then man will be nothing, and all their joy and boast will be in "Jehovah-tsidkenu." The old deeds shall be put away, and doings suited to their Deliverer shall be produced. Iniquity the remnant will not do, nor (and how significant is this of days of servitude under the

yoke of man) speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth (13). Cringing to cruel masters often, they had sought a little relief from bondage in deceit and lies, but now all was altered. Without fear they shall lie down, having fed, and none shall make them afraid. They, the sheep of His pasture, are under the tender care of the Great Shepherd, and waters of quietness are provided for their refreshing.

But so mighty and wondrous a Deliverer, accomplishing so marvellous a redemption, must be celebrated in song, and suited strains for the lips of the daughter of Zion are here set out. Such grace as had been manifested, and such power as had been displayed, must require a Divine composition to adequately express the heart's deepest feeling. Sorrow's dark day for ever over, evil's dark pall was never to fall on them again. And why? Not only was there remission for them, and their enemy cast out, but Jehovah, King of Israel, was in their midst. That was the culminating blessing, and who could tell all that it meant?

Rejoice they must. Fearful they need not be. Despondent never. And, oh! that our hearts were tuned to take up in praises the strains becoming those so richly blessed as we are. Israel is to soar high here. For what *He is* is the theme. He is *mighty*, and that power is exerted in delivering the objects of His love. *He will save*, and not only do they rejoice in the salvation wrought, but they say, "God is our salvation" (Isa. xii.). And what do we read? Can it be? "*He will rejoice over thee with joy.*" Well may astonishment seize hold of us! Here are depths of satisfaction to which we are strangers. The Infinite God is seen rejoicing over returned suppliants. His heart is found resting in the objects of His choice. In His love He rests, and joys over them with singing. Intensest joy and delight are here expressed, and how good of Him to use human terms to set them forth. Think of it, my soul! The heart of God wells up into song over those poor, despised, afflicted ones. How

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can we understand it? How can we fathom it? The eye dims with tears of joy at the very thought of it. That saints should joy in Him is surely becoming, but that He should joy in them with a joy too deep for utterance is altogether marvellous beyond conception. Joy immeasurable, then, awaits "the daughter of Jerusalem."

From verse 18, the closing section of the prophecy, we learn again what He will do—judging the unrepentant, delivering the halting and needy, and regathering the dispersed ones. And in the lands of their humiliation shall they be set for praise and fame. A future awaits that people, because of their connection with Him, that is little dreamed of now; for, though scattered and peeled, His word is that "I will turn back your captivity before your eyes" (ver. 20), and it is the word of Jehovah which will stand for ever.

Thus we can peer into the future, and with "the eyes of the understanding enlightened" are acquainted with what He is about to do. May we, as we read His thoughts of the nations, and His purposes concerning those who turn to Him, seek grace diligently to keep our garments white, unspotted from the world.

H. F.

"BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM."

(John viii. 58).

THE Jews were immersed, not in the truth of their system, but in the mere ignorance of acting on present appearances. This is a deep essential principle of error, which one has to watch—not seeing God and things according to His mind (which was exactly in question), but the mind of man in the things of God. Hence precisely the present state of the church. It was the grand question between Jesus and the Jews, the point in which Jesus has to be recognised, and in which faithfulness to Him rests as in Him to His Father. The Jews therefore said to Him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?" They thought the sense of this the same, because they looked not beyond the outside. But, on man's ground,

the Jewish reasoning was generally correct. It was utterly morally wrong, without conscience, therefore without God and that which God alone could teach. They now brought it to the point of the mere manhood of Christ—the point of their darkness. Our Lord as the Truth could but give the light. "Before Abraham was (ye see not), I am." Ye know not My existence, My being. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." The great truth was told, the essential, vital, eternal truth, on which all hung, without which there could be no truth, nor coming unto man, nor bringing man back in redemption to God. For how could he be restored by that which was not? And this was true of everything save One. Should dust be a Redeemer? Yet out of dust man was to be redeemed.

The great truth was declared. Lie there could be none against it. The necessity of the existence of the Saviour assumed the nothingness of all else—could be, not falsified, but only denied by violence. They might say it was blasphemy, and take up stones in their zeal for God, rejecting Him manifested. "Then took they up stones to cast at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." The time of their iniquity was not come. But what circumstances! and with whom discussed! and what a truth! Do we believe it? Do we, I say, believe it, that Jesus (a man even as we are, save sin) was "I am"? All is told, if we believe Him thus dead and alive again; for therein is the redemption, and through this must He pass. It is true, most simply true, the centre—wondrous, wondrous to us—of all the manifestation of God, and rightly in its glory to chosen sinners; lovely in its blessing to all sinners; deep, therefore, necessarily, in its condemnation of blind, rejecting sinners. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world," and yet, more wondrous still, "received up into glory." Thus, as to essential truth, He was "I am."

Then as to the dispensation, the thing thus revealed, or rather discussed with the Jews, is the subject of John viii. The Lord is traced as the light of the world, as Son of Man lifted up; all through as the Son in the power of life, in person as Son, up to this great revelation of "I am": the real truth and fulfiller of all Jewish hopes, and the basis of all common promises, and this as, and by, *the Word*—the essential characteristic. I know of nothing that has so astonished my mind as this revelation of "I am," or the real thought that Jesus could say, "I am"; the connection of these—to man—inconvertible possibilities, and the concatenation in which all the dealings of God are brought out as fulfilled in it, while yet He remains truly God; and yet could say therein, "the Son of Man who is in heaven."

How manifest it is, that nothing but the gift of faith could, even in a single tittle, understand or know the truth in the person of Jesus! while yet, by the perfection of its manifestation in the flesh, every soul was put under the responsibility to receive it as the true word of God, our God, in love. The broad, penetrating fact "I am," the all-embracing word, must at once close all controversy. We must be opposers, or bow before the throne of God. We must stand in awe of Jesus. Well may it be said, "Kiss the Son!" Lord Jesus! what sort of subjection is this we owe to Thee? We have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now our eyes see Thee, we abhor ourselves. Oh! can we see this in Jesus? Have we seen it? None can see it out of Him. It is the truth only in Him. Surely we should move mountains if we believed it; yet it is simple truth.

Dwell on it, my soul! Jesus, that thou knowest, that stranger in the world among His own, is "I am." Henceforth let us be dead to all but this. I do indeed stand incapable of utterance; I do read and talk with Jesus; I watch Jesus in His ways—a servant—and, behold, He, even He, is "I am," with whom I am, whose way I follow, whose grace I adore. Christ is the union of these two things: the man, the rejected

man, whom I look at now with most thankful sympathy, and, behold, the presence of God! How low it lays men's thoughts, experience, judgments, notions! The perfection of God was there—God rejected of men. What can meet or have a place along with this? Let this be my experience. Glory be to God Most High! Amen.

Yet to me it is Jesus; in truth it is "I am." Here I rest; here I dwell; to this I return. This is all in all. I can only be silent, yet would speak what no tongue can utter and no thought can think before it. This we shall learn, and for ever grow in—more beyond us for ever, for here is God revealed in His essential name of existence—God revealed in man, in Jesus! I know Him, am familiar with Jesus, at home with God, honouring the Father in Him, and Him as one with and in the Father, yea, delighting to do it. But I say, do we believe it?

I do believe it all, and yet, as it were, believe nothing. I am as nothing in the thought of it, yet alive for evermore by it, blessed be God and His Name. All shall praise Him so. Yea, Lord Jesus, God Most High, so shall it be.

Lord Jesus! Thou art "I am," Thou art "I am"; yet didst Thou take little children in Thine arms; yet didst Thou suffer, die, and be in the horrible pit—yea, for our sins! Thus I know the mercy-seat. I know that there is no imputing sins to me, that I am reconciled to God, and that God is the reconciling One.

J. N. D.

FRAGMENT ON LAODICEA.

REV. iii. 21 directs one so simply and touchingly to the period of the Lord's sojourn here on earth, and so indicating, as it may appear, the closing period of the Church's history as to responsibility *now*—as to Israel's then. "Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne"—and this *as the Overcomer*.

There is that which signifies much in the Lord's

words previously: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door (note the attitude of waiting for response), I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." First there is the "hearing My voice" with its attendant individual exercise of soul as to what is around, and the Lord's judgment of it sinking deep into heart and conscience—and this connected with the thought of what *hearing* is: bowing to His word and hearkening to His counsel. Then follows the opening to Him, and thus, step by step, attentive to and observant of His ways, "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

How this bespeaks the Lord's intense desire and ready response to answer the opening of the door, in order to the enjoyment of *that* so highly valued by the Lord, and ready grace that communion should also be the portion of the hearer of His voice—"he with Me." It is no question of going out to Him in this; nor is it a question of seeking companions; He *makes Himself known* in the unchangeableness of His tender love to the one "who hears." He is faithful, changing never," and He knows His own, He recognises that spirit so suited at such a time, and so gladly responds both as to communion and finding for such that companionship which He so well knows how to provide. Yet it is *Himself*, the all-sufficient One! May we just know Him, and His ways better and better.

There remains His disowning as to testimony, though grace abounds (Eph. ii.). The time is short. "I will spue thee out of My mouth." She is disowned as a light-bearer, but then His own are taken to be with Him.

There were seven golden candlesticks, and Laodicea was one of them, but what of "Thou hast left thy first love"? One may specially note here Paul at Ephesus, Acts xix. 1-20 with xx.; and then, too, 2 Cor. xi. 1-5. How sad all this beguiling, deceiving, "first love *left*." He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself. But, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten."

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May we ponder these things. "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Yet how sweet to remember that grace, which accomplished so much, will yet do so according to Eph. v. 27.

G. C.

AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION.
CHAP. I.

IT is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." Verse 19 gives us the great and divinely-given division of the book: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." "The things which thou hast seen" is the vision of the Lord Jesus seen in His judicial character in the midst of the candlesticks. "The things which are" is the time history of the Church from its commencement to its close, not as the body of Christ, nor yet as the house of God, but as the vessel of testimony on the earth—a candlestick—a vessel set to display Christ—the Light. "The things which shall be hereafter" take up the rest of the book from chapter iv. to the end. If this first and great division is not apprehended the book cannot be understood.

CHAPS. II., III.

The seven churches divide into three and four. The first three follow each other, and do not exist together. The last four run together until the rapture of the saints as it has been termed. Then Philadelphia goes; Thyatira runs on till the seventh vial is reached during the period of the sixth trumpet, when she is destroyed by the beast and the ten kings (chap. xvii.); Sardis and Laodicea run beyond that event up to the coming of the Lord from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire-taking vengeance (2 Thess. i.).

It is important to grasp this division of the churches. Thyatira continues the *Church history*

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begun by Ephesus. It is Popery, and is judged, as said above, by the beast and the ten kings. *Church history* continues and ends with *it*. It is disowned by the Lord on account of the corruptions allowed in it, and their refusal to repent (chap iii. 21). Then for the first time *a remnant* is seen and recognised in contrast to the mass, and "the morning star" is given to *them*, that is, the coming of the Lord is set before them as *their* hope (ver. 28).

Sardis is the deadness of Protestantism with its empty profession, whilst Laodicea is the last phase of it with its full blown infidelity, and is rejected by the Lord as a nauseous thing. Philadelphia is a state suited to the Lord; and those who form it are "kept from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world." They are taken away at the coming of the Lord for His saints, and thus "kept from" "the great tribulation"; as Enoch was taken away before the flood came; while Noah was preserved *through it*—type of the remnant who will be saved through and out of the great tribulation.

CHAPS. IV., V.

This chapter commences "the things which shall be hereafter." First we have two heavenly scenes in chaps. iv. and v. "The elders"—symbolical of *all* the heavenly saints—are from this point always seen in heaven until we reach chap. xix., then all come forth with the rider on the white horse. We cannot be too clear as to this fact, that *all* between chap. iv. and the end of the book *is future*, and *no part* of it can possibly take place till the saints of this dispensation are translated to heaven. Chap. iv. gives us the throne and its surroundings; chap. v., the Lamb and His companions and His worshippers. Chap. iv. gives us the creatorial titles of Jesus; chap. v., His redemption titles. The Lamb is "in the midst" of the throne. Living creatures the first circle; the elders the next circle; the angels the outermost circle.

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But it is "Jesus in the midst," and our hearts say :

 "Worthy the Lamb, that's gone on high,

 To be exalted thus.

 Worthy the Lamb, that died, we cry,

 For He was slain for us."

CHAP. VI.

This chapter lets us see the Lamb opening the seven sealed book. The seals *must* be broken before we can have the contents of the book made known, so that the seven seals are preliminary and providential judgments, and do not therefore begin the seventieth week of Daniel. That eventful period commences with the trumpets. Thus we see that the week does not, and cannot, begin the moment the Church is gone. There may even be an interval after that event *before* the seals are broken.

The first seal ushers in a rider on a white horse, and the symbolism shows us he is a mighty conqueror ; "he went forth conquering" *and* "*to conquer* ; is seen further on in his career. Now inasmuch as the book of Revelation is not occupied with the history of outside nations, but merely with those who are to be in one way or another connected with apostate Judaism and apostate Christianity and their judgments, it is quite evident that this mighty conqueror is one of the leaders in this eventful period in that connection. Indeed, there can be no doubt it is the *advent* of him who is afterwards known as "the beast"—the first beast of Rev. xiii. This is his *advent*.

The second seal symbolises insurrection—civil war—fearful carnage—the rising of the masses—and in all probability the overthrow, for the time being, of Imperialism—the time when he who is its head receives the death-wound with the sword (chap. xiii. 3). Some may object to this being likely on account of it being so early in the history. But we must not forget we are ignorant as to the time which

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elapses in the breaking of these seals, and he must be on the scene in his last form with Satanic-given power, or authority, *before* the week begins in order to make a covenant with the Jews for one week according to Dan. ix. 27. And this is important to grasp. The first seal then is his *advent*. He is the "little horn" which arises and subdues three of the ten horns (Dan. vii. 24). The second seal is his *overthrow*—when he receives the death-wound, and Imperialism is overthrown. Chapter xiii. gives us the next step in his history, his revival or *resurrection*, that is, his rise for the second and last time into the Imperial position: raised into it by Satanic power out of the abyss. It is not a literal resurrection of a man, of course, but a revival or resurrection of the Imperial position and power, and the same man who lost it is placed into it again by Satanic agency. The third and fourth seals symbolise famine (the third), and death (the fourth), the necessary accompaniments of the first two.

The fifth lets us see how very early martyrdom will commence after the Church is gone. The Gospel of the kingdom will commence to be preached again almost immediately after the rapture (Matt. xxiv. 14), and the hatred of *men on earth* to these godly Jews who carry it out, and the accusations of Satan against them *in heaven* (chap. xii. 10, 11), is here seen culminated—they have been slain and sealed their testimony with their blood. They are seen crying for vengeance and receive their answer. The sixth symbolises the overthrow of almost every kind of government. Both heavenly and earthly symbols are used, and men are panic-stricken with fear, imagining the last day has come. But not so! There are no rocks or mountains to fall on guilty men when that awful day comes (chap. xx. 11).

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CHAP. VII.

This chapter is a parenthesis, and a very blessed one too, to let us see in the first place, that ere one stroke of the judgment of "the day of vengeance of our God" falls, He will have secured a perfect number out of the twelve tribes of Israel for millennial blessing. Not only so, He lets us look onward into that millennial scene itself, and gives us the comfort of knowing that there will be a great company of saved Gentiles there as well as saved Israelites: "A great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." These serve Him in His temple. Over these He spreads His tabernacle. Nothing of any kind of hardship which they may have experienced while passing through the great tribulation shall ever affect them again, and God will do for *them* at that time what He will again do for others in the new earth, "He'll wipe the tear from every eye" (verses 15-17; chap. xxi. 4). They are not heavenly saints: they are earthly ones in millennial blessing.

CHAP. VIII.

On the opening of the seventh seal, the seven angels, with the seven trumpets, are introduced, ready to begin "the day of vengeance of our God"—the last and eventful seventieth week of Daniel. The angel at the altar offers up incense with the prayers of the saints, and they are answered by "fire off the altar cast into the earth, and voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake," *i.e.*, terrifying manifestations of God's anger.

The first four trumpet judgments affect only "a third part" of the spheres where they fall. The first falls on the earth—the prophetic earth. The second on the sea—the nations outside that sphere. The third affects the rivers and fountains of water—that is the companies and unions of men formed or banded

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together, like rivers confined by banks and flowing in given channels ; and " the fountains," the rulers of the communities, who frame their laws and thus form the conduct or morals of the people. The fourth affects sun, moon, and stars, and is literal, and thus day and night are touched in some way. All these fall on what is usually called Christendom, and on " a third part " where doubtless most light was given, and therefore most responsibility was attached. It *may be* that the sea is used *here* in a restricted sense, and symbolises that part of Christendom *outside* the prophetic earth, and not the outside heathen nations, if so, earth and sea as used here would embrace *the whole* of Christendom.

CHAP. IX.

This chapter gives us direct infliction of judgments on the Jews. The fifth trumpet is on the ungodly Jews, and lasts five months. Probably the third trumpet symbolised the fall of Satan—mentioned in chap. xii. Then in chap. ix. 1, it is a fallen star and his activities—not a star *falling*. It is the activities of Satan now on the earth just prior to the division of the week, and he lets loose from the bottomless pit a *blinding influence*—a moral darkness surrounds these Jews, and the judgment becomes so awful that they would gladly die if they could. " Skin for skin," said Satan to God, speaking of Job, " all that a man hath will he give for his life." Here, all that a man hath will he give to die—and cannot. There will be no suicides during that awful judgment. God will compel them to pass through this five months' hell upon earth. Men have often talked about a hell on earth. There will be one then, and these ungodly Jews will have to live in it and through it. How awful !

The sixth trumpet looses the four angels at the Euphrates, and the destroying hosts come from that

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quarter: The very hour of the day of the month of the year is settled for their attack—"The time of Jacob's trouble"—to begin. In all probability we have here the first attack of the Assyrian, or king of the North, with its success and awful atrocities, mentioned in Zec. xiv. 2. These two "woes" are distinctly Jewish as I have said; the third and last one is more general. Within the sphere of this sixth trumpet are embraced all the vials; then on the sounding of the seventh trumpet the end is reached and the Lord appears.

CHAPS. X., XI.

These chapters up to xi. 14 form the second parenthesis in the book, and it is only when xi. 14 is reached that we hear the words, "The second woe is past, and behold the third woe cometh quickly." So that all spoken of from chap. ix. 13 to this point is embraced under the sixth trumpet. Chap. xi. 1-14 is to set forth the two witnesses for God on the earth at that time, as chap. xii. and xiii. set forth the trinity of evil in opposition to the Divine Trinity—viz., Satan, the Beast, and the Antichrist—the three great powers and actors who are prominent in the last division of Daniel's week during "the time of Jacob's trouble."

Chap. x. gives us the angel with the little open book who sets his foot on the earth and sea and swears "there shall be no longer delay," and that on the sounding of the seventh angel, the mystery of God shall be finished. A hidden King letting blatant blasphemy have its way shall be no longer witnessed. He will come forth and publicly vindicate His name, and character, and ways; and He will deliver and bless His people as He had promised, and render consuming judgment to their enemies. The prophetic testimony is not yet ended however, and he is informed that he must yet prophesy "as to peoples, and nations, and tongues, and many kings."

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Then we have the two witnesses and their testimony given in chap. xi. They are *two men* in Jerusalem—not two companies of men—the sphere of their testimony is too limited for that. They have the God-given power of Elijah and Moses. *Who* they are must necessarily be mere conjecture. Elijah *may* be one from Mal. iv. 5 ; we say “may” in view of the Lord’s words in Matt. xi. 14. The time of their testimony is 1260 days. Then when that testimony is ended, the beast out of the bottomless pit makes war against them and kills them, and their dead bodies are not allowed to be buried for three days and a half. Then God gives them life, and calls them up to heaven, while a great earthquake slays 7,000 of these diabolical men.

The seventh trumpet now sounds which ushers in the Lord Himself and brings us to the end. *Some* of the events which characterise the end are noted. (1) The anger of the nations. (2) God’s wrath now come. (3) The time of the dead that they should be judged. This is *not* the great white throne judgment, but the answer to the prayers of the martyred saints in chap. vi. 10. God now avenges them. (4) The time for rewards for servants, prophets, and saints, has now arrived. That is, the kingdom is to be established and each assigned their rewarded place in it. (5) “And to destroy the destroyers of the earth,” when the beast and antichrist are “cast alive into the lake of fire” (chap. xix. 20). These are *characteristic* events connected with the Lord’s appearing, but not them all.

CHAP. XII.

Chap. xii. does not follow the events of chap. xi. in chronological order. Both it and chap. xiii. unfold to us the leading actors in that awful division of the week, and inform us of their actions during the sixth trumpet, which is “the time of Jacob’s trouble,” as I have already said. Chap. xii. gives us Zion in her

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travail, protected by God (clothed with the sun)—the supreme power. The moon under her feet denotes that all derived authority on earth at that time is no longer God-given—it is apostate—and therefore the woman disowns it and treads it under her feet. She is in the mind of God about it. She is, however, crowned with 12 stars. That is, she is the one who will display perfect administration in government on earth by and bye; it belongs to the Jew.

Here she is seen in the hour of her travail, in pain to be delivered. Here, too, we see the great red dragon standing before her ready to devour her child as soon as it is born (ver. 4). Let us carefully observe how this dragon is characterized. He has seven crowned heads, ten horns, and a tail that affects the third part of the stars of heaven and casts them to the earth. This then is *not*, and *never was*, what characterized Satan working through the Roman Empire in the past, for the empire never existed in its ten kingdom form before—nor yet was there any one that would answer to the *tail* in the past. “The prophet that speaketh lies, he is the tail,” Isaiah tells us (Isa. ix. 14). We must not, therefore, try to interpret these verses as Satan seeking the death of Christ through Herod. It is not a *past history* that is set before us (except parenthetically in ver. 5, to let us see it is *the same woman* who *had* brought forth the man child, that is now in her travail) but a future one—it is *prophecy*, not *history*. And when it has its fulfilment the Roman Empire will be in existence in its ten kingdom form. Its seven forms of government (seven heads crowned) will then have been seen, and the last, the eighth, which is of the seven, will then be in existence (chap. xvii. 10, 11). Besides that, the antichrist, the false prophet that speaketh lies (the tail), will likewise be on the scene: and both beast and antichrist will be the tools of Satan to destroy the seed of the woman who is here seen in her travail

(To be continued).

HOW TO SEE GOOD DAYS.

"LAYING aside therefore all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envyings, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the Word, that by it ye may grow up to salvation, if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Pet. ii. 1, 2). As in the first chapter the flesh gets its true estimate in God's sight, so here its activities are distinctly disallowed. God having "condemned sin in the flesh," it is impossible for us to have His thoughts of it and yet tolerate those things which are manifestly its active energies. In so far as the believer allows the works of the flesh, he denies that God has condemned it on Calvary. Nor is the doctrinal assent enough; the Spirit of God commends a practical "laying aside"; for evil allowed in the heart rapidly becomes overt evil in the life. Guile, hypocrisy, and evil speakings are the outward expression of malice and envy working within. Therefore God goes to the root. The inward working and the outward works are alike revolting to God. The practical "laying aside" of both root and branches will alone clear the way for what follows—the earnest desire after that which is divinely provided for the positive growth of the soul. The new-born babe has an instinctive and laudable craving for that which is suited to its healthy development. So also we, if the flesh be indeed judged, and all its activities sternly disallowed, shall need little incitement to draw from the ever-flowing spring of the Word of God that which His grace has so generously furnished for the growth "up to salvation" of those who have tasted of the goodness of the Lord.

There is then the "coming" to Him, the One who, cast away as worthless by men, is *chosen* and *precious* to God—His elect and precious corner stone! To us who have believed and are living stones is that *preciousness*; and as a race are we *chosen* too, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a people for possession, raised up to set forth the excellencies of Him who has

called us to His wonderful light, and to be a people unto God, enjoying His mercy; and as a holy priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

"Beloved," says Peter, "I exhort you as strangers and sojourners to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation (or way of life) honest among the Gentiles." Again he warns against the energies of the flesh, which "war against the soul," striking word of admonition indicating the deadly effect of sanctioning the flesh in its lusts. Remembering his own terrible experience of what the flesh is capable of, how could he as a shepherd of the flock of God do other than warn the beloved sheep against every activity of it? Further, the eyes of "the Gentiles" are upon us; nor do they refrain from speaking against us as evil-doers; and the will of God is, that we put their ignorance to silence. Let us take heed, then, that through our good works, themselves being witnesses, they glorify God in the day of visitation, while from nothing short of the whole scope of the works of the flesh we make manifest that we are "total abstainers."

Next, there are political duties insisted upon. The king is supreme, and rulers are his messengers for vengeance or for praise. Not a word about political *rights*, nor could there be without doing violence to the character given us by the Spirit of God of "strangers and sojourners." Our political duties are summed up in two words—"subjection" and "honour." Subjection is to be rendered to the king, whether in his own person or in his representatives; for authority is of God. Honour is to be paid to all men; for man is the image of God. Pre-eminently, however, to the king; for he is exalted by God. Our freedom and our liberty is as God's bondsmen. Our fear is due to Him. "Happy is the man that feareth alway" (Prov. xxviii. 14). Our love is due to the brotherhood.

Such as are servants—another phase of subjection—must be subject with all fear unto their masters; and

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how needful is the added word, "Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the ill-tempered." Can any master read this, or any one directly or indirectly exercising authority, without being forcibly impressed with the suggestive way in which the Spirit of God here commends goodness and gentleness, and deprecates ill-temper in the treatment of those who are under that authority? That which is distinctly acceptable with God is (1) doing good, (2) suffering for it wrongfully, and (3) taking it patiently; *this* is acceptable with God. Do you say, Who is sufficient for these things? Why, it is that to which we have been called. It shone with divine lustre and lovely grace and peerless perfection in the Master, and He has left us a model that we should follow His steps. In Him was no sin, nor guile, nor reviling, nor threatening; He was the One who, accepting in all points the will of Him who sent Him, and who judgeth righteously, gave Himself up in unreserved, unqualified subjection to suffering and to shame, even unto death.

Wives also are to be subject to their husbands, and husbands to honour their wives; they are heirs together of the grace of life; their prayers are to be unhindered. If the wives have unbelieving husbands, not subject to the Word, it is an occasion for faith to display itself in seeking to win them by godly deportment, chaste conversation, and becoming fear. Their dress, too, their hair and their ornaments, are none of them beneath the notice and the solicitude of the Spirit of God, who prescribes for their adorning no outward attire, but that which is of the "hidden man of the heart," and for their ornament "a meek and a quiet spirit," which is priceless in the sight of God!

Finally, we are exhorted to oneness of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, tender-heartedness, and humility (or perhaps courtesy), the beautiful fruit of the Spirit among brethren in their relation to one another. No evil for evil, or railing for railing; but, being themselves inheritors of blessing, also blessing others. This is the way to go on quietly, peacefully, happily

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in this life, and he supports it by quoting Psalm xxxiv. 12-14. But should we be called to suffer for righteousness' sake, that also can we take happily. It is blessed thus to suffer. "Be not afraid of their fear, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts, and be always prepared to give an answer to every one that asks you to give an account of the hope that is in you, but with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that (as to that) in which they speak against you as evil-doers, they may be ashamed who calumniate your good conversation in Christ." W. R.

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(Continued from page 220).

It is evident that it is the godly remnant of the Jews who are set before us. God recognises *them*, and preserves *them* from the efforts of the dragon to destroy the nation. The mass have received the antichrist and are in apostacy and given up of God. So we read, "The woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared by God," and she is fed for 1260 days.

Then we have the war in heaven, and Satan and his angels are cast out into the earth—then "woe to the earth and sea." This event takes place *before* the 1260 days commence; probably under the third trumpet as I have already suggested. It is *because* he is cast out that he persecutes the woman who had brought forth the man child and is now found in her travail; but she is enabled to flee into her place in the wilderness, and nourished there for the 1260 days. A wilderness is a place where there are no resources—all must come from God. The dragon now seeks to use "water as a flood" to destroy her. Probably this is the first attack of the Assyrian (Zech. xiv. 2), and what characterizes the sixth trumpet in chap. ix. as we have seen. The earth,

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however, helps her, and swallows up the flood. Perhaps the beast, the head of the power known as "the earth," may interfere at that point in some way and hinder the purpose of the dragon. When Satan finds himself thus thwarted he is wroth, and makes war with the remnant of her seed. Probably this refers to the two witnesses at the end of the 1260 days, for he overcomes them, and slays them as we saw in chap. xi.

It is interesting to notice two Scriptures in connection with this chapter, Isa. lxvi. and Micah v. From the former we learn that "*before Zion travailed, she brought forth ; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child*" (ver. 7). Then "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" (ver. 8). Then Micah tells us that on account of their treatment of the Judge of Israel, who was "from of old, from eternity," and yet, *as man*, was born in Bethlehem, they are given up "until the time that she which travaileth *hath brought forth.*" Rev. xii., therefore, has nothing to do with the birth of the man child. That event, as I have said, is simply parenthetical to let us see it is the same woman, but it has to do with Zion in her travail, and Satan as the great red dragon, in connection with the revived Roman Empire, in his effort to destroy her and her seed—the Jewish nation, those that God recognises as the nation—the godly remnant.

CHAP. XIII.

We now come to the description of the other two chief actors for Satan—the beast and antichrist. The first is seen rising out of the sea with seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten diadems—Imperial power—and names of blasphemy on his heads" (ver. 1). This is not the *advent* of the

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beast—*i.e.*, his first coming on the scene—*that* was seen in chap. vi. 2. It is quite evident that the Roman Empire was already revived and in existence when that mighty conqueror is here seen; for we read in Daniel vii. 8, that the “little horn” arises *when the ten horns are there* and plucks up three of them by the roots. Our chapter, however, tells us that this beast when he is here seen *had* received a death wound by the sword, and his wound of death *had been healed* (ver. 3, N.T.). So our chapter opens with the description of this beast *after* that event has taken place. We must not therefore go back to Daniel as though this was a fulfilment of Dan. vii. 2, 3. *That* is history and past. *This* is prophecy and yet to come, but we are set down as it were in the midst of it in our chapter. The beast *had* arisen—he *had* received his death wound, that is, Imperialism had been destroyed for the time being, and now we see him rising up out of that condition of anarchy and unrest—the sea—for the second and last time, Satan giving him his throne and power and great authority. But I must not enter into details as to this chapter to unduly lengthen our “outline” and make it a commentary.

This first beast is dominated by Papal Rome at this time (chap. xvii. 3), and up to the division of the week; then he throws her off—becomes an apostate—demands worship for himself—and sets himself up in the temple of God (2 Thess. ii. 4), and along with Satan is worshipped. He receives authority to continue in his blasphemous course for 42 months (ver. 5), and makes war with the saints and overcomes them, and eventually with the anti-christ is cast alive into the lake of fire at the Lord's appearing.

The second beast *is* the antichrist. He rises out of the earth, and is a Jew—*must* be one for the Jews to receive him as their Messiah though coming

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in his own name (John v. 43). He is not the object of worship, nor does he seek it. His great object is to compel the Jews to worship "the first beast whose deadly wound was healed" (ver. 12). He compels them to make an image to the beast, and that all should worship *it*. He deceives them by his signs and wonders, and causes *all*, without exception, to receive the mark of the beast in their foreheads or in their hands, and to worship the beast or die. He is simply the tool of the first beast, though king in the land. He is the head of apostate Judaism, as the first beast is the head and front of apostate Christendom up to a certain point. The number 666 is *not* the number of antichrist, but the number of the *first beast*, and those alive at that day will easily understand it and recognise it.

CHAP. XIV.

The first thing we see here is the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and 144,000 with Him. It is Psalm ii. 6, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." The remnant of Judah are here seen with Him. It is not Israel, but Judah, who have gone through all the horrors of that 42 months, or 1260 days, or 3 years and a half, of the beast's power. They have *His Father's* name written in their foreheads—not their Father—contrast to the apostates with the beast's name on theirs! Next we have a great company in heaven harping and singing. These form the martyred company martyred by the beast. Only the 144,000 could sing that song; because both companies had known and felt the beast's power. The one had died under it; the other had lived through it.

Next we have the everlasting Gospel preached to "them that dwell upon the earth," as well as "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." "Fear God, and give glory to Him, and worship Him for the hour of His judgment is come." These

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dwellers on the earth are *not* apostate Christians : for *them* there is *no* Gospel of any kind—their day is past. They are the apostate Jews who are worshipping the beast, and God is giving them the last chance. What wonderful grace !

Next we have the fall of Babylon announced—not her destruction yet, but her fall. This event takes place at or about the dividing of the week; when the beast throws off the woman and becomes apostate. She had dominated him from the time he rose into power for the second and last time. Now he throws her off. “She loses her place of active governing, involving her moral degradation,” as another has wisely said.

Then another angel threatens the worshippers, or those who receive the mark of the beast in their foreheads or in their hands, with the wrath of God poured out without mixture. A most awful and eternal judgment ! If they do not worship him, it may be death in *this* world. If they do, it will be eternal judgment in the *next*. No wonder it is said, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.” They miss the earthly side of the kingdom, but they get heavenly blessing.

Then we have “One like unto the Son of Man coming upon the cloud, crowned, and with a sharp sickle in His hand to reap the harvest of the earth.” Evidently this is the good—not the bad. It is the gathering the good—“the harvest.” Then we have another angel with a sharp sickle, who gathers the clusters of “the vine of the earth,” and casts them into “the winepress of the wrath of God,” This is unmitigated judgment : the awful judgment on the mass of profession on earth, and which is executed when the great battle takes place, when the Lord appears.

This chapter is really a sort of synopsis of seven important things connected with the last division of the week :—

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(1) The remnant of Judah on Mount Zion with the Lamb—the firstfruits for the millennial earth out of that appalling crisis (1-5).

(2) The everlasting Gospel (6, 7).

(3) The *fall* of Babylon announced (8), not her *doom*. It really takes us back to about the commencement of the last division of the week when the woman is thrown off by the beast.

(4) The threat of eternal judgment on those who traffic with the beast (9-12).

(5) The blessedness announced of those who die in the Lord during that crisis (13).

(6) The *harvest* of the earth reaped (14-16). The *first fruits* were the 144,000 Jews.

(7) The vintage cut and trodden (17-20)—unsparing and unmitigated judgment.

CHAP. XV.

Another sign is now seen in heaven—the seven angels with the seven last plagues. Then the sea of glass—fixed purity—and the *victors* over the beast and his image are seen on this sea of glass, singing the song of Moses and the Lamb—redemption both by *power* and by *blood*. In chap. xiii. 7, it is said the beast makes war with the saints and *overcomes* them. That is the outward and human aspect of it—they are *overcome*. Chap. xv. 2 is God's side of it, the true side, and the martyrs are the *victors*. The seven angels now come forth to empty their vials or bowls given them by one of the living creatures; and the temple is filled with the smoke from the glory of God, so that no one can enter till that awful work of judgment is accomplished.

CHAP. XVI.

These are not judgments that begin after the seventh trumpet has sounded and ushered in the Lord. They all take place under the sixth trumpet. This is seen from the fact that the first is on those who have the mark of the beast. The doom of

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Babylon is under the last vial and therefore before the seventh trumpet has sounded. Indeed everything mentioned from chap. ix. 13 up to chap. xix. 11, with the exception of chap. xi. 15-18, takes place during the period of the sixth trumpet. The vials are wider and more general in their scope than the trumpets; there is no third part, though they touch the same symbols as the trumpets.

(1) "A noisome and grievous sore fell upon the men that had the mark of the beast." This makes it clear that it is some time after (short or long) the division of the week, because it is only in the last division that the beast becomes the object of worship and men are marked as his; therefore we see we are in the time of the sixth trumpet.

(2) This falls on the sea, and every vestige of profession is given up there, and full blown apostacy takes its place.

(3) The rivers and fountains of waters, and they became blood, *i.e.*, spiritual death, apostacy.

(4) The sun is affected, and scorches men with heat—literal, I take it, and general.

(5) On the seat of the beast, and his kingdom is darkened, and men gnaw their tongues for pain and blaspheme God. This, probably, is *when* and *how* "the time of Jacob's trouble" ceases. God turns His hand upon the beast and his kingdom, and they are so affected themselves that they are compelled to cease their persecution of the Jews. But while this event probably ends the tribulation, it does not end the week; there is another month to run to fulfil the 1290 days; from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away and the abomination that maketh desolate is set up till the Deliverer comes (Dan. xii. 1-11).

(6) On the great river Euphrates, and its waters are dried up and the way prepared for the kings from the east. Thus the way is prepared for the

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assembling of all the nations for the great war in "that great day of God Almighty" (Joel iii. 2).

(7) Is the doom of Babylon. Then a frightful earthquake—the worst in the world's history. The great city divided into three parts (evidently Rome), and the cities of the nations fall. All government of any and every kind is shaken and upset; and a great hail from God out of heaven falls upon men; but, alas! only to make them blaspheme the more. No repentance is produced.

CHAPS. XVII., XVIII.

These two chapters give us details of the doom of Babylon: chap. xvii. showing the great whore and her associates and end; chap. xviii. details as to it. Here we see the woman riding the beast. That is, the political and civil power is dominated by the woman—Papal Rome. This, of course, is necessarily at an early stage of the beast's career; though it is after he has had "the death-wound with the sword and lives." So that in the early stage of his career religion is recognised in some way, until about the dividing of the week, when he throws her off and openly becomes apostate. Probably the woman may have a hand under Satanic guidance in bringing about the re-instatement of the beast in his Imperial position; and therefore her dominating the civil power may be the price paid for that help—I merely suggest this. It is short-lived however—she is soon thrown off, and hence her fall. Then in this chapter she is *destroyed* by the same beast and his confederates, the ten kings, who execute *God's* judgment on an apostate church, and for all the blood shed in her midst.

In the explanation given of the woman, and the beast that carries her, with seven heads and ten horns, we have some important characteristics given to mark out both of them. "The beast that thou sawest was,

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and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition " (ver. 8). This is usually taken to mean that the Roman Empire existed, ceased to exist, and will exist again, revived out of the bottomless pit. But this is a mistaken interpretation. Of course the Empire existed, ceased to exist, and will exist again, that is not questioned. But in John's day it could not be said the Empire "is not," for it was in existence then. Besides, when the Empire is first revived it is *not* from the bottomless pit, inasmuch as it is revived we know not *how* or *when*, it may be ere the Church is removed, and probably will be : so that when the Conqueror arises, as seen in chap. vi. 2, it is *already there* for him to "pluck up by the roots" three of its ten horns.

The fact is the passage speaks of the beast—the Imperial head of the Empire—not the Empire itself at "the time of the end," and "the beast thou sawest *was*" refers to the time when he appears as the conqueror ; "and *is not*" refers to the time when he receives the wound with the sword, and Imperialism is destroyed for the time being, as I believe under the second seal ; and "shall be present" refers to his coming up again into power for the second and last time, and put there by Satanic agency from the bottomless pit. Verse 11 puts it beyond question, for it says, "And the beast that was, and is not, even *he* is the eight, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." It is *the head* of the Empire—not the Empire itself.

The seven heads, we are told, "are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth." "Heads" signify rule, and this shows us *where* the woman sits and rules : unmistakably pointing to Rome. Then we read, "And there are seven kings : five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come ; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space." Here we see set forth the different *forms* of govern-

ment which characterize this Empire. Five had fallen, the sixth existed in John's day—the Imperial line of Cæsars. The seventh had *not* then come. It comes with the *advent* of the conqueror of chap. vi. 2, and only continues "*a short space.*" Then we read, "And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." So that when he rises into Imperial power again after his death wound, he is the *eighth* head, but is of the seven, *i.e.*, it is the same form as the seventh—revived Imperialism.

The ten horns, we next read, are ten kings which had received no kingdom in John's day, but they will yet come to the front and receive *authority* as kings one hour with the beast (ver. 10). These eventually make war with the Lamb, and are overcome by Him. This, of course, is at the close. Prior to this event they, *with* the beast, turn upon the woman, Babylon, the great whore, and destroy her, thus carrying out *God's will*, yet little thinking that they are but the mere instruments in carrying out *His* judgment on a corrupted and apostate church.

Chapter xviii. gives us details as to the worldly and corrupted character of Babylon, and the sorrow and wailing of her merchants, and all those who were benefited by her commerce; and we see at the close of it that her doom is fixed and eternal. What an end for Popery! that false and vile harlot church that has deceived the world and slain so many of God's saints! The day of reckoning comes at last with no way of escape, and with no eye to pity, or arm to save. "Strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." A careful reading of the chapter lets us see that ver. 2 is her *fall*; and verses 6, 7, 8, 21-23 let us see that her *doom* is still future then. Her fall takes place about the division of the week; her doom, or destruction, under the seventh vial, near the close of the week.

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CHAP. XIX.

This chapter shows us a rejoicing heaven on account of the judgment meted out to Babylon. Then we have the marriage of the Lamb, which takes place in heaven, and *after* Babylon has been destroyed, and just prior to, and in readiness for, coming out with the Lord. The marriage of the bride of the Lamb is in heaven. Scripture knows of no other *bride*. Israel is not *bride* to Jehovah, but wife. Cast off meantime for unfaithfulness, but to be re-instated by-and-bye in her old relationship *on earth*. "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for *I am married to you*" (Jer. iii. 14). We must not confound these, nor talk of *two brides*.

From ver. 11 we see the Lord coming forth with His armies, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. From chap. xi. 15-18 and 2 Thess. i., as also other Scriptures, we learn what will take place at that time. Here, too, in this chapter we learn of *some* of those events. It is very striking, we have *seven* events mentioned from ver. 11 to chap. xx. 12, each commencing with "And I saw," giving us, as it were, a panoramic view of events from the Lord's appearing to the close: (1) vers. 11-16; (2) vers. 17-19; (3) vers. 19-21; (4) chap. xx. 1-3; (5) vers. 4-10; (6) ver. 11; (7) ver. 12. Then, when we have reached the end, we have an *eighth* "And I saw": *a new start*, the eternal state.

First, then, the Lord comes forth with His armies. Then the fowls of the heaven are called to the great supper of God, to the awful slaughter of Armageddon. Then the great battle itself, but at its start the beast and antichrist, the false prophet, are taken and cast *alive* into the lake of fire. Two men had been taken to heaven without dying—Enoch and Elijah; two men are sent into the lake of fire without dying—the beast and antichrist. What an awful slaughter it will be at that day when the Lord comes forth to execute *His* vengeance!

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CHAP. XX.

Then we have Satan taken and cast into the bottomless pit, not yet into the lake of fire, and shut up for a thousand years—the millennial reign. Verse 5 lets us see the three companies of heavenly saints. (1) The throned and crowned elders (chap. iv. 4). They had been in the heavens all through the book from the end of chap. iii. (2) The souls of those beheaded (chap. vi. 10). (3) Those who had not worshipped the beast (chap. xv.). These all *live* and *reign* with Christ the 1000 years. These are the complement of the first resurrection.

When the 1000 years are fulfilled, Satan is to be loosed out of his prison, and goes forth to deceive the nations of the earth once more. Millions have been born during that time, and are unregenerate, and the material is there for him to act on at the close. Alas! the peaceful and beneficent reign of the Messiah even has not changed their hearts, and when Satan makes his last effort against Christ, he finds multitudes still ready to fall to his delusions, and share his doom. Fire descends from heaven and destroys them. Heaven and earth then flee away, and the great white throne is set up. The wicked dead are raised and stand before the throne, and the Son of Man the Judge (John v. 22-27), and are then cast into the lake of fire which *is* the second death.

CHAP. XXI.

The first eight verses give us the eternal state. Verse 9 to chap. xxii. 5 takes us back to the millennial display of the bride, the Lamb's wife, as the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, and "having the glory of God." Individually, and as sinners, we have "come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii.). As saints through grace "we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v.). Here we are seen "having the

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glory of God." Every thing about the city is absolute perfection, for it is Christ. It is Christ shining out of His saints. They were set here in this world to display Him. Alas, what a miserable failure they have been ! Now, what they did not do when in the place of responsibility, they are seen doing as the fruit of divine love and grace. They are *with* Christ in bodies of glory like His, and *display Him* to a wondering and admiring world (2 Thess. i. 10) ; and the Lamb and His bride are seen in their perfection, beauty, and joy, the true Adam and His Eve, with everything headed up in Him according to the purpose of God (Eph. i. 10), and Eve enjoying it *with* Him, and reigning beside Him during the millennial age.

From ver. 6 of chap. xxii. to the end is a sort of postscript. Vers. 16-21 are especially beautiful. " I Jesus " He is called. The name that charmed our hearts, and removed all our fears as well as our sins at the first, is the name we hear still at the last. It opens the New Testament, and it closes it. He is " the bright and morning star." The sun is set in the heavens in connection with earth in Gen. i. The Sun of Righteousness is to " arise with healing in His wings " in Mal. iv. The sun opens and closes the Old Testament. The star led the wise men to Jesus in Matt. ii. Jesus is the bright and morning star in Rev. xxii. The star characterizes the New Testament. It is " I Jesus " that sends His angel to testify these things. And " He that testifies these things " says, " Behold, I come quickly." That is the last recorded word He ever uttered—" quickly." Does it affect our hearts? Are we on the look-out for Him? Do we miss Him, and long for Him? Can we really and truly say, " Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus "? The Lord grant that we can, and that we " may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless."

WILLIAM EASTON.

NEW ZEALAND.