

Things New & Old,

A

GOSPEL MAGAZINE,

WITH PAPERS FOR THE FLOCK OF GOD.



“Christ is all.”—Col. iii. 11.



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
How the Believer has been Justified with God—	
No. 1	1
Notes on Acts xvii., xviii.	9
First Years of Christianity—No. 5	13
A Third Letter on the Sufferings of Christ	22
How the Believer has been Justified with God—	
No. 2	29
First Years of Christianity—No. 6	37
A Third Letter on the Sufferings of Christ—Continued	46
Zechariah xiii. 7 (Poetry)	53
Correspondence	54
A Few Plain Words on Eternal Life: What it is, and	
Who has got it	57
First Years of Christianity—No. 7	64
“There shall be One Flock and One Shepherd”	72
Preaching	75
Correspondence	81
A Few Plain Words on Eternal Life: What it is, and	
Who has it—No. 2	85
First Years of Christianity—No. 8	91
Letter from the East	100
Correspondence	110
Practical Grace	113
First Years of Christianity—No. 9	118
Encouragement and Warning	126
“There is a Time to Dance”	131
The Christian Pilgrim (Poetry)	138
Correspondence	139
The Midnight Cry	141
First Years of Christianity—No. 10	145
Hours of the Crucifixion	154
A Letter on Propitiation	160
Correspondence	168

	PAGE
First Years of Christianity—No. 11	169
The Preparation Day -	176
Glad Tidings of God—No. 1 -	184
Fellowship	192
The Book of God (Poetry) -	196
First Years of Christianity—No. 12 -	197
The Preparation Day—No. 2 -	205
Law or Grace, Which ? -	212
News from Japan -	220
Correspondence -	224
First Years of Christianity—No. 13 -	225
Glad Tidings of God—No. 2 -	232
The Preparation Day—No. 3 -	240
News from the East -	248
Correspondence -	251
First Years of Christianity—No 14 -	253
The Preparation Day—No. 4 -	261
The Gospel, the Power of God unto Salvation -	268
Jesus in the Midst (Poetry) -	276
Correspondence -	277
God's Glad Tidings—No. 3 -	281
What is the Church ? -	286
In the Field -	294
" Before Him in Love " (Poetry) -	299
Divine Certainties -	300
The Lord's Table (Poetry) -	307
Extract from the East -	308
What is the Church?—No. 2 -	309
I . . . Me . . . My. -	324
The Close of Another Year -	329



Things New and Old.

HOW THE BELIEVER HAS BEEN JUSTIFIED WITH GOD.

I.

WE now turn to the New Testament. Is it possible that millions in Christendom are as ignorant of the righteousness of God as Job was, or as Israel were? And is it true, that so far as there is any attention to their souls' interest, they are seeking to attain to a righteousness of their own? One would think that the experience of ages would convince men of the folly of seeking to attain to righteousness or justification by works. Did the teaching of all the schools of heathen philosophy improve man? Let Romans i. answer the question. Man sank to the lowest possibility of degradation. Even the moralisers and great teachers, learned and eloquent, "Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that

judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things." All ancient histories confirm the awful description in Romans i. of human society.

Every scheme of human improvement left man growing worse and worse. Did the law of God improve man? Scripture answers, No. (Rom. ii.)

The sure word of God concludes all guilty, the Jew no better than the Gentile. "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." (Rom. iii.) All are under sin; every one. All are guilty before God. All subject to the judgment of God. And still much further: "Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified IN HIS SIGHT; for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

How then can man be justified with God? God in His word takes pains, if we may so speak, to shew that on the principle of works, or law, this is impossible. That is, that which man is still preaching, teaching, trying to do, God says is impossible. Nay, further, if righteousness can be in this way, Christ died in vain. (Gal. ii. 21.) And if it is impossible to attain to righteousness, so as to be justified before God by the

law of God—how much more so by the ritual, the mass, sacraments, and works of that vast confederacy of opposition to God's word, which calls itself "the church"? No wonder that this vast confederacy of rebellion against the word of God swells into increasing millions. It is the principle of every human heart. Oh how your heart and mine have longed to keep the law, to be so righteous by works, that God might approve us!

What unspeakable distress has it given us to find this impossible. The more we have struggled to keep it—yes, the more we have tried to attain to righteousness by works—the deeper we have sunk in the mire and filth. Thus striving, we only found we had no power to do the things we would. Yea, we did the things, the horrid things, we hated. (Rom. vii.)

Oh where is Job's interpreter? May the Holy Ghost now set God before us. Yes, the Holy Ghost is Job's interpreter; He alone can answer Bildad's question: "How then can man be justified with God?" Let us recall that all Job's talk about being clean without transgression will not do. It will not do for you. It will not do for me. Let us then examine the full revelation of God in the New Testament, even in Christ, as to a few things Elihu said to Job in his deep distress.

1st. He says God is gracious to him.

What saith John? "God is love." His very nature is love. "God so loved." Such was, is, and for ever shall be the unchanging God, against whom we have sinned. The law did not reveal this. Very justly it demanded love to God from us. But when God in man was here, He only found hatred. Oh, my soul, dwell on this: God is gracious to thee. He has shewn that love in the gift of His Son for thee.

2nd. God saith, "Deliver him from going down to the pit."

Is there a pit? Yes. Jesus thus describes it, "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." There is a pit, and here we see a departed spirit enduring a foretaste in fearful consciousness of what it will be to be cast into the lake of fire, after the resurrection of the body. (Luke xvi. 19-31; Rev. xx. 12-15.) "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Man may believe the lie of Satan, and be indifferent: he may even deny there is "the pit." God is not indifferent for poor deceived man. No, God in grace says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit." Are you on the way to that pit?

Yes, you say, and I deserve it; I cannot deny I am guilty, and I cannot make myself fit for God and heaven. Harken then to what God says further.

3rd. "I have found a ransom,"—an atonement.

What is this, that God hath found?—that God hath provided? This is the most serious question that can occupy us; for in this atonement, the whole character and righteousness of God, in justifying the hell-deserving sinner, is involved, and revealed. This is the great substance of all revelation of God. Paul takes this ground very distinctly; so that to set aside the atonement, is to set aside God, and His righteous dealings with man. Satan, and his ministers may seek to destroy its whole value by a play on the English word "atonement," by making it "at-one-ment." If it be said "at-one-ment" means "reconciliation," even then let us remember that our reconciliation to God is the effect of the atonement. (Rom. v. 11, margin.)

It you take a Hebrew Concordance and examine all the ninety-six places where the Hebrew word occurs, you will not find a single one that can possibly have such a meaning. The word "*kāh-phar*" is used to mean a covering. (Gen. vi. 14.) That is, the ark was covered and made waterproof by pitch. It was God's purpose to cover man to make him proof against

every charge of the enemy. Was not this distinctly seen in the first recorded case of death, since man's creation and fall? The Lord God made coats of skins and clothed them. There must be death of a victim; blood must be shed, before God could cover the sinner. This is the great truth of scripture. Without shedding of blood there is no remission: no justification in the sense even of forgiveness. Do you not hear in this very verse God saying, "I have found a ransom"? God did not clothe, or cover them with the wool of the living animal. It must die. They also do err, not knowing the scriptures who teach that the living obedience of Christ to the law will cover the sinner for righteousness. Nothing can cover or meet the full need of the sinner, but the atonement which God has found. God in one verse corrects, if we would be corrected by Him, many of the mistakes of men. (Gen. iii. 21.)

God is love: and love in all this, but what meaneth all the thousands and thousands of victims killed, their blood shed for atonement—from Abel to the Lamb slain as the substitute of Israel's first-born in Egypt—and all the victims slain for 1500 years until Christ came, the Lamb of God? This was all done by the express direction of God, to His servant Moses. It is ever set before us as "atonement," and is justly translated sometimes, "to make recon-

ciliation for sins and iniquity." Did they not all point to the Lamb of God drinking the awful cup of divine wrath against sin? As Gabriel said to Daniel, "To make reconciliation for iniquity." Can this mean that God would by the death of Messiah be *at one* with iniquity? Oh that every author who has so misrepresented the atonement, would buy up their books, and burn them!

God says, "I have found a ransom;" the same word is translated, "atonement." And for what purpose? That God, in righteousness, may deliver every soul that believes Him, from the pit of deserved everlasting wrath. And, oh, what a RANSOM has God found! No mere creature could pay a ransom for man—a mere creature could only die for himself. "My son," said Abraham, "God will provide himself a lamb." We now know who that Lamb was. The eternal Son that dwells in His bosom. Such a ransom, such an atonement, fully vindicates the righteousness of God. "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." (Rom. iii. 22.) But this righteousness cannot be of man or his works; "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Now mark, reader, are you a believer? It is not then, How can you be justified, but the most

clear explanation how you are justified before God. Let us keep this before us. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

It is one thing for a poor slave, with a deep anxiety, to inquire how he can possibly be delivered from his present hopeless condition; and quite another to hear with joy how he has been delivered. In like manner, it is one thing for a sinner under the just condemnation of guilt and sin before God to inquire how he can be justified. And quite another, to have it fully explained how he has been delivered: for he *is* justified, and how God is righteous in declaring him without condemnation.

God knows thousands of believers need this explanation. And a knowledge of the love of God alone will not give this explanation. Do you know, dear reader, clearly how God is righteous in justifying you? It is essential you should know this, in order to really have peace with God, and enjoy it. How gracious of God to take such pains to explain this matter. May we be before Him, and sit as it were at our Lord's feet whilst He by His word makes it plain to us.



NOTES ON ACTS XVII., XVIII.

As Paul preached the resurrection, some mocked ; others said, We will hear thee again. It is solemn that after that wondrous address to that worldly-wise people, they should mock, or say they would hear him again. But as far as we know, they never did hear him again. Of course, any time may be the last time. They would not have minded how long they argued, but those who did not mock turned away—"Howbeit certain men clave unto him."

One has no hope at all, save in the Holy Spirit. What could be hoped for when Paul preached with nothing carnal to back it up? But when we bring God in, it is all right. The church of God is on earth, those who by the Spirit have been baptised into one body ; who have received the good tidings of salvation.

Paul was here preparing the way for what came after. The scriptures were the great safeguard. What might adversaries not have brought in but for the scriptures? They had the scriptures, and could prove all things from the scriptures ; the Lord Himself said, "Search the scriptures." It is a great blessing to us in this land that we have the scriptures, and can compare everything with it.

Chapter xviii. 28. "He testified that Jesus was the Christ." All this affects us as much as it did them. Are the blessed truths of the gospel as a pleasant tale or a pleasant song passed by? It may not have been the opposing or the blaspheming, but insensibly many a one goes on hardening his heart. All the blessed truths of the gospel are talked about as a pleasant tale, and then they go about their employments as light as ever; and so pass by the only remedy for their souls. They may talk about the progress of religion, &c., but that is only passing by the remedy.

Paul boldly asserted that the One they had rejected was the Lord of glory. They had cast Him out. Israel had rejected Him, their Messiah. They crucified Him in whom all their hopes were bound up. "They opposed and blasphemed;" and, as we read this, it has not the point and bearing it might well have.

A Christian is a person who has not a will of his own, *that* belongs to the old man. I know it crops up, but the more we give ourselves to the word of God and prayer, the more we shall find it out. We want to make plenty of room for the things of God. Our little mind is soon full, we want a vacant space, as it were, to treasure up the things of God.

Distinctness of separation from all that is dubious and doubtful is very necessary. If those

here (ver. 7) had gone and mixed, how confusing it would have been. I can only worship with those who are alive from the dead, and who are acting out in their worship that which is according to the scriptures. There was separation here, and then the blessing comes. These Jews (chap. xviii.) were in a heathen land, and far from the temple; but they kept to the worship of the one God, and read the scriptures.

The truth for us is always the truth in advance. A few years ago, I remember a clergyman who was hooted and expelled for preaching the simple gospel of justification by faith. What was once peculiar has now become common. And when a truth becomes popular, the offence of the cross has ceased; but if we get beyond the line of the world, then there comes persecution. The truth is held by unconverted people in a worldly way.

We get here the planting of the church at Corinth (ver. 11); eighteen months Paul was there, and no one could set on him. Paul preached, the hearers believed and were baptised. Paul, then, was teaching them; but they had no New Testament scriptures. They had the Old Testament and Paul's teaching, and there was large blessing and miraculous power. But that power was not the chief thing: but the grace of God that bringeth salvation was converting lascivious people, and a case of immorality was not allowed inside. The religion of the place was

immorality ; but they had got " he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure."

Paul did not teach them eighteen months without their having the hope of the glory, and the speedy coming of the Lord. (1 Cor. i. 10.) " I beseech, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ " —consecrating the name of Jesus, adding, Lord, Christ.

Everything short of the level of Christ is too low. We are always cast down to think how little we have attained, but if we have purpose of heart we endeavour to walk according to Him. An action has the same importance if done with the thought of His coming, whether He comes or not. The power of the coming of the Lord upon the walk is, that every single thing should be done with reference to that coming. And we are always brought to the confession of loss, by allowing things which are not according to Christ. All were to speak the same thing, that there be no divisions. There were contentions, not schisms. If anything approaches to contention, how pleasant to drop it at once. Paul does not go into particulars about it, he drops the mantle over it ; but he speaks out. Evil begins in contentions and strife, and the apostle warns of it.

What a comfort we do not want the wisdom of words. What we want is the gospel. All the news from God is good news.

He will not tolerate evil, and He has fixed the

standard so high that our ambition is to be Christly, that is, Christ-like. And, while we are humbled at the distance that we walk after Christ, let us encourage one another.

G. J.



FIRST YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY.

V.

“THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING.”

LUKE continues the inspired narrative in the Acts. Forty days did Jesus remain, shewing Himself to His chosen apostles, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, commanding them not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard from Me. They were to be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. At that time they had no idea of the church, or this present period of grace to the Gentiles, but were looking for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. He opens up quite another work for them—a work that they never fully understood or performed.

After the Holy Ghost was come, He says, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the utter-

most part of the earth." How little they, how little we, respond to the heart of Christ! And now instead of setting up the kingdom in Israel, "While they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." There was the cloud, emblem of the divine presence, and He was taken from them. And whilst they gazed up into heaven, two heavenly witnesses assured them that, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Thus, if we think of Christianity as a kingdom, it is the kingdom in mystery, for the King is in heaven; hence, Matthew calls it the kingdom of heaven.

As a kingdom, whilst the King is in heaven, there are in it both wheat and tares; the children of God, and the children of the devil. In the kingdom is seen the work of man, and the work of Satan. But the church, the body of Christ, is quite another thing. What He builds shall stand for ever. Jesus says, "I will build MY church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. xvi. 18.) Let us keep these two things distinct, as we now enter more fully on "That which was from the beginning." The greatest possible mistake is to presume that, that which man builds, is the same as that which Christ builds.

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."

Everything was now ready for the descent of the Holy Ghost, that the church might be formed. He could not be thus given until Jesus was glorified. If the church had been an earthly society, seeking salvation, it might have been formed whilst Jesus was here. But redemption must be accomplished. Jesus must be raised from the dead and received up to glory, before He, the Spirit, could be sent to form the church. People have no idea what an entirely unknown and new thing the church was. There had been for centuries Jews and Gentiles, but now a third company is formed. The disciples then were all together in one place, when a mighty rushing sound from heaven was heard in Jerusalem, and it filled the house where they were sitting. And they were all, not merely the apostles, but they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and a marvellous miracle bore witness to the presence of the Holy Ghost. They began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. The Jews who came together, who were present in Jerusalem from various nations, heard them speak in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. There was great amazement and wonder.

Peter, an unlettered fisherman, then stood up, and preached such a discourse as had never been heard on this earth. Fifty days before, this very Peter knew not the scriptures that Jesus must rise from the dead. He now opens the scriptures

and preaches Jesus of Nazareth, the risen and exalted Lord, and Christ of God. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. . . . Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

This, then, is the first great truth, according to the promise of Jesus: the Holy Ghost is now come and convicts of this dreadful sin. They believed not on Him, but crucified and killed Him, whom God had sent from heaven. He whom this world has murdered, God has raised from the dead, and made both Lord and Christ. Conviction of this terrible sin seizes their hearts, and makes them cry out, "What shall we do?"

Is the reader unconverted? Do you know that you also belong to that world which has killed and rejected the Lord Jesus, now seated at the right hand of God? And what must they do? "Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The very enemies, and murderers, must become the very disciples of Jesus, and they must fully confess this discipleship in baptism. What a complete

and confessed change of mind, what self-judgment, for that is what the word translated 'repent' implies. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptised; and the same day there were added about three thousand souls." They were deeply convicted of sin, they believed, were completely changed in mind, and shewed it by being gladly baptised as the disciples of the crucified and risen Jesus, whom they had so lately rejected and murdered. All this was real matter of fact, confessed, and seen of all men. They were not ashamed to own Him Lord and Christ. Their sins were forgiven. They were gathered, and by the Holy Ghost added to, and formed the assembly of God. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . . And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house [or at home]; did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," or were being saved—that is, from day to day. All were added, but to what? evidently to that which the Holy Ghost was forming, not to different

bodies or churches of men, but to the one only church of God.

It is important to notice the connection there was between repentance and baptism: so the Jews must have understood it. John preached, saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And great multitudes went out to him, "and were baptised of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." (Matt. iii. 1-6.) "John did baptise in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for [or unto] the remission of sins," &c. (Mark i. 4, 5.) Confession of sins was the scripture ground of forgiveness from the days of ancient Job. "He looketh upon men; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light." We see how this was in the end produced in Job. He says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. And it was so." When Job was brought to that point, instead of seeking to maintain his own righteousness, he now counted himself vile, completely changed his mind, in dust and ashes. There God met him in un hindered blessing. (Job xxxiii. and xlii.)

Was not baptism the outward profession of this entire change of mind? On the day of Pentecost there was a vast multitude of Jobs, so

far as seeking to maintain their own religiousness, or righteousness. With astonishment they were convicted of the greatest sin a creature is capable of. They had rejected and murdered the Holy and the Just One. See how Peter, or rather the Holy Ghost, pressed this. In chapter iii. He says, "But ye denied the Holy One and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you: and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." And then, after shewing them that all this was what God had made known by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, he calls upon them to repent, to entirely change their minds from the mad course they were pursuing; and as many as believed and did thus change their minds were baptised, and this was the evidence, or proof, of confession of sins. In the preaching then of Peter to the Jews, repentance, baptism, and forgiveness were most intimately connected in the name of Jesus. And they thus became the disciples of the crucified and risen Christ.

And when preaching the gospel to Jews, Mahomedans, or heathens now, these things would be the same. We could not admit the repentance of a Jew to be genuine if he refused to be baptised.

It is somewhat different in an already baptised country. There is little or no connection there

between repentance and baptism. Unconverted parents, who never have repented, bring their children to be baptised, but this is confusion. They are in the nominal profession of Christendom, and as such they must be dealt with in preaching. Practically they are much like circumcised Jews. But repentance there must be, and a repentance so deep as to set aside all hopes of improvement in self. Self must be counted vile, abhorred. But then this true repentance is scarcely known. It is most probable, from the subsequent history of Peter himself, that he may not have fully understood the repentance of a Jew, and his baptism unto a DEAD and risen Christ.

The death of Christ was the complete end of Judaism. Christ had been a Jew in the flesh. But now dead and risen He was a Jew in the flesh no more. Paul shews that we know Him no more as such. But then Judaism was God's trial of man. Just so, but that trial was over in the rejection and murder of Jesus. The whole administration of that system of law, and trial of man, was over, abolished, and in every way a new thing had come in. Yes, so new that it is spoken of as new creation. If we only understood this, we should see how strikingly the figure of baptism shews the end of man, the first man in the death of Christ.

It was most important to shew this first in

Jerusalem, the centre of Judaism, and to man under law. God in grace bore with the disciples, still clinging to the temple and its service. But now the great High Priest had passed into the heavens, of what value was the temple priesthood? And now the one sacrifice, offered once, in continuance perfected the worshipper, what was the value of all the blood shed in the offerings of the law? Jesus was dead. There was the end of the ages of trial of man. The first man, under the most favourable circumstances at Jerusalem, is set aside for ever. A new order has begun—a new creation, that which had been hid in God. The one purpose of His heart was now an accomplished fact.

These were the first days of the church. What a wonderful description we have of it in Acts iv. 23-34, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own: but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all."



A THIRD LETTER ON THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I will begin my answer to your letter by referring to your question about John i. 29. You quote it, "take away the sins of the world." I do not know if it was just a slip of the pen, or whether you have never noticed it, but this is not correct. It is "sin," not "sins." And this makes an immense difference. It is often quoted, "sins of the world;" but this is wrong. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the *sin* of the world." It is not a question of the *sinful deeds* of men, but of *sin* which came into the world by the first man. *Sin* has blighted and ruined everything connected with the first creation. The very ground is cursed for man's sake, and brings forth thorns and briars. Now sin which has done this is to be removed; and the Lamb of God is the One who is to do this. On the ground of His sacrifice on the cross every vestige of sin will be removed. This has not been done yet, though the sacrificial work, which is the ground of it, has been accomplished. The removal of it will be completed when the new heavens and new earth are brought in. The present heavens and earth are defiled, and will be dissolved, and when that takes place, sin will be removed. There will be no sin in the new

heavens and new earth. The wicked will not be there, and no evil will be there. All will be purified according to the value of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and righteousness will dwell there instead of sin. (2 Peter iii.) So we see in 1 Colossians i. 20, that all things in heaven and earth—all *things*, not all *men*—are to be reconciled to the Godhead by the blood of Jesus' cross. In verse 21 we see that men who believe are *now* reconciled; but the reconciliation of *all things* will be when the new heavens and new earth are established. Wicked men, who refuse Christ, and wicked angels, are never reconciled, but will be banished from the presence of the Lord, and from the heavens and earth, the scene of the display of His glory, never to defile them again through sin.

Now a word about Isaiah liii. 6. You desire to know who is meant by "us all." I believe there the prophet, speaking by the Spirit, gives utterance to the sentiments that will be wrought by the same Spirit in the hearts of the remnant of the Jews who will be brought into blessing at the coming of the Lord; that is, when God's dealings with Israel will have led this remnant to repentance. They will look on Him whom they pierced, and confess their sin and iniquity in having despised and rejected Him. But this will be in faith, and therefore in blessing to their souls. Through grace they will see that the One

whom they despised and slew was wounded for their transgressions, and that Jehovah had laid *their* iniquity on Him, and that He had atoned for it, His soul having been made an offering for sin. It is the language of faith, confessing sins, but at the same time seeing how Jehovah had dealt with their sins in the death of their Messiah.

In Leviticus xvi., the type answers to this. There are two goats, one for Jehovah, and one for Israel; one whose blood is carried into the holiest and put on the mercy-seat, and the other for a scapegoat to bear away the sins of the people. When the high priest carried in the blood of the slain goat, and sprinkled it on and before the mercy-seat, &c., he came out to the waiting congregation outside, and confessed their sins on the head of the scapegoat, and they were then borne away into a land not inhabited. Now you will see in that chapter there were two classes of people—Aaron and his house, and the congregation of Israel. Aaron offered a bullock for himself and his house, but there is nothing about his coming out and confessing the sin of his house on *another* bullock. Why this difference? It shews the perfectness of the type. Aaron's house is a type of God's house now, as seen in Hebrews. Aaron's sons were priests, and served in the holy place. So we see in Hebrews, those who are of God's house now are priests

and have access by the blood of Jesus into the sanctuary, even the holiest, because the veil is rent. And there they have Christ over them as their High Priest.

Now this High Priest has gone into the presence of God for us by His own blood, *but has not yet come out again*. Only the Holy Ghost has come and testified that He has obtained eternal redemption, and that our sins shall be remembered no more, so that we have *now* access to the holiest as a priestly house while the High Priest is still within. We do not need to wait till He comes again to know our acceptance, since the Holy Ghost has borne witness, and we have believed. Through grace we are associated with the High Priest as His house, and with Him over us we draw near to God without a veil, and without a cloud, because we are there according to the infinite, unchanging, eternal value of the sacrifice of Christ.

Not so Israel. They are still outside, waiting till the High Priest comes out and shews Himself to them. Just as the congregation waited outside until the high priest came out and confessed their sins on the head of the scapegoat, so Israel *now* waits (in unbelief, as we know) until Christ comes out and reveals Himself to them as the true High Priest who has presented a propitiatory sacrifice for them, and who has confessed *their* sins as His *own*,

and borne them away. This they will learn and acknowledge, as in Isaiah liii. They will look on Him whom they pierced, and they will say, "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." It is most blessed to see the grace that leads them to acknowledge their sins, and leads them to see how when they were killing their own King, the Prince of life, God was providing a Sacrifice to put away their sins.

The direct application, then, of Isaiah liii. is to Israel. Yet the principle applies now wherever there is faith. Peter so applied it with Jews who accepted Christianity, as we see in 1 Peter ii. 25. As sheep gone astray they had returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, who had borne their sins in His own body on the tree. We have the same principle also in the end of Romans iv. where Paul says, "Who was delivered for OUR offences." It is the language of faith. Those who submit to God's righteousness by faith in Jesus have the title to say, "Who was delivered for *our* offences, and was raised again for *our* justification." And when they can say this, they have peace with God. They see that their sins were judicially transferred to Christ,

and borne by Him, as the One who offered Himself to God for this purpose; so that now, through faith in Him, they are justified by His blood, that blood which cleanseth from all sin.

I know not whether I make it clear to you or not. It is clear to my own soul. And I may say, it was this truth that set my soul in God's presence without a cloud, according to *God's righteousness* by which He justifies on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ.

I will now refer to some points in your letter connected with the sufferings of Christ.

You say, you "see that Christ suffered from God, or rather that He suffered because in time of need He was forsaken of God." You also say these were "the most terrible sufferings;" and again, this "was the inward suffering, and the outward sufferings were from men." I think there is a partial admission of the truth here, though not clear; and it is afterwards spoiled by your calling in question His suffering "under the judgment of God." Now what I affirm is, that He *did* suffer under that judgment, and that is the uniform teaching of scripture;—under God's judgment, not for His own sins (for He was without sin), but for the sins of His people. He "was delivered for our offences," "bare our sins," "was offered to bear the sins of many," and when they were laid on Him, He was bruised and smitten of Jehovah.

You may say, *men* were the "instruments," and God "permitted" them, and that what God permits is often spoken of as if He does it Himself. To a certain extent this is true, and has an important bearing on the sufferings of Christ, especially in their application to the nation of Israel, or the remnant that will form the nation by-and-by. But this must not be used to neutralize the truth as to the really *atoning* suffering of Christ. The Jewish remnant in the latter day will be given up to their enemies as Christ was, and will be down-trodden and oppressed when the wicked are set up, and flourish as the green bay tree. They will feel too that they are under the hand of God, in affliction and sore chastisement because of their sins, and, while upright in heart, without the sense of God's favour. The blessed Lord has entered into all this at the cross, as delivered up to His enemies, and as Messiah cut off, and not receiving the kingdom. And thus He will be able to sympathize with the remnant in the latter day, and sustain them in all their sorrows and anguish of heart. But this is not our subject just now, important as it is for the understanding of many scriptures in connection with Israel. Our subject now is the *atoning* suffering of Christ, not what He suffered in order to sympathize with others.

(To be continued.)

HOW THE BELIEVER HAS BEEN

JUSTIFIED BEFORE GOD.

II.

“BEING justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. iii. 24.) The believer then is justified. This is his actual position before God. God accounts him righteous before Him. This is his unchanging place before God. “Being justified.” This is not what has to be done; it is, it exists. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God,” &c. The great mistake men make is, that they think they have something to do before they can be reckoned righteous. No, “Being justified FREELY.” Does not that word “freely” shut out all thought of human merit? The Holy Ghost uses this word “freely.” He explains it thus, that on our part we have done nothing for this great blessing.

And further, “by his grace”—the free sovereign favour of God. Oh think of this, thou highly favoured child of God. Justified freely by the free sovereign favour of God. It is all of God. It is what God is to us in free undeserved favour. Why should we ever doubt Him?

But by what means has God brought us into this everlasting favour of justification? “Through

the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." How simple and yet how blessed the explanation. It is not through anything we have done. It is through what He hath done, whom God hath sent. And not only what He hath done, but that redemption which is in Him "in Christ Jesus." The ransom price was His own blood. He laid down His life for us, as He said, "I lay down my life for the sheep." (John x. 15.) "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Do you notice here "we have." It is not we hope to have, it is the blessed possession of all believers.

There are, then, two parts in justification: what has been done for us by Christ in His death—His atoning death, the ransom price; and what He is to us in resurrection. If Moses had only gone down into Egypt and died there, that would not have redeemed Israel. Nay, more, if the lamb had been killed and its blood sprinkled, would they even then have had redemption? They must be brought out of bondage, out of Egypt, and into the land by Joshua, to complete the picture or type of the purpose of God.

In like manner the blood of the Lamb of God must be shed. His atoning death for our sins must shelter us from divine wrath. But then God brought out His people from bondage. And, dear fellow believer, have you ever seen and understood how God has, in raising Jesus from

the dead, brought you and all His redeemed out of sin, death, and bondage, into everlasting life, and holiness, and liberty? If you had a child in cruel slavery in a distant land, gladly indeed would you pay the ransom; but would you not long to see your child not only out of that place of bondage, but also in full liberty in your own happy home?

Now this is just what God has done. He found the ransom, the atonement. The Holy One must lay down His life for us. He has done it. But He is not in death now. He is not in this dark world of sin and death now. God hath raised Him from the dead. God has raised us from the dead, quickened us with Him. What a redemption! "The redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Thus our eyes are fixed on Christ the Lamb of God. Where has God placed Him? In the brightness of the glory. To faith that is now our place, and soon will be to sight, soon to be caught up in bodies suited for ever WITH the Lord.

Do not, dear reader, turn your back on Christ, and seek a full redemption in yourself, or in your feelings. Christ descended to where we were; God has raised us to where He is. Do you want a fuller redemption than this? You will never get it.

As we have often said, when a cage is let down into a pit, and the imprisoned miner is placed in

that cage—if in the cage, where the cage is there is the miner. If it is still at the bottom, there is he; if half-way up, there is he; if out in the broad sunlight, there is the miner. It is just so with the believer. If Christ is still in death, so is the believer; if Christ is in the glory, so is the believer in Him.

How great then, how complete, must the justification be of every believer. "Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Do you say, "If this is so, then justification is always complete, always the same; for Jesus is always seated at the right hand of God"? Exactly so; and this is full, your full redemption. How good of our God to make it all so plain.

There is another thing God would explain to us. His own righteousness in all this, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." (Rom. iii. 25.) The righteousness of God is what God has done. How gracious of God thus to explain to us how He was righteous in justifying the Old Testament saints, by setting forth a mercy seat through faith in the blood of Jesus. In all the types of the law this was ever before the mind of God, but now declared. God is now glorified by that blood before His eye, once offered on the cross. This

equally applies now, "To declare, I say, at this time, his [God's] righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Let us dwell a little on how God is righteous in the matter of our justification. Let us turn to a few scriptures. Jesus said, "I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John xvii.) Now, what was that work which the Son had done? And then, did the Father in righteousness answer this claim?

We will turn to the prophetic account. Read Isaiah liii. 5 to end. Is this the work God gave our precious substitute to do? Yes, when Jesus said, "Lo I come to do thy will," it was to be bruised for our iniquities, as well as for the transgressions of those who were under the law. The whole question of our peace with God was laid upon Him. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "It pleased the Lord to bruise HIM; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin . . . he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities . . . he bare the sin of many." This is the work of atonement, of expiation.

And He can say, I have done it, "I have glorified thee."

All this is fully confirmed in the New Testament. And in thus dying for us, in thus bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, He was, as Man, the righteous Servant of Jehovah. Oh, my soul, in bearing the wrath due to my sins; in being bruised thus for my iniquities; in being forsaken of God on the accursed tree for me; in doing the will of a righteous God—He bare that wrath for me, the wrath of God against my sins. Yes, for me. This was the work that God gave Him to do, and He could truly say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. . . . Glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

Would it be possible for God to refuse this righteous claim; the claim of His righteous Servant, of His only begotten Son, who had met every claim of the righteousness of God? No. Could the Father leave His Son in death and the grave, and thus our eternal salvation be an uncertainty? Impossible. The righteousness of God is revealed, demonstrated. The Holy Ghost has come to prove this, to convict the world of this, as foretold by Jesus, on the night of His betrayal. "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." (John xvi. 10.) He who paid my ransom, who bare my sins,

who was made sin for me—a sin-offering for me, who took my place, and met all my responsibility, is gone to the Father; and God has raised Him from the dead for the very purpose, in view of my justification: and received Him as Man, my substitute, in the glory that He had with the Father before the world was. This is how the believer has been justified before, and with, God; and being justified we have peace with God.

Thus you will see, my fellow believer, peace is based on the righteous answer of God to the blessed and perfect claims of Christ. This is the righteousness of God, what He has done in raising Christ from the dead who had perfectly glorified Him, and receiving Him up above all heavens.

And not only so, but as this work of Christ was for all believers (and God raised Him from the dead on their account), the righteousness of God consists in reckoning the infinite value of the work of Christ to them. They are cleared of all guilt, and meet for the same place, the same inheritance in light, in which He ever dwells. Thus the believer in Christ becomes the righteousness of God. The righteousness of the believer is not human righteousness, for there is not such a thing: all have come short of the glory of God. But the righteousness of the believer is what God has done in raising up

from the dead, and accepting Him, the atoning ransom. This God must do in righteousness, and has done. God thus reckons the believer righteous who has no righteousness of his own; and being thus reckoned righteous, he has peace with God for evermore.

What has God wrought? His wrath against my sins is maintained to the utmost; sin in the flesh is fully judged and set aside. The old man, my old self, is reckoned dead. All are closed in the grave of Jesus; and now the resurrection—a new man; a new creation; all of God; and all is the righteous answer of God to the perfect work of Him who came to do His will.

Surely we may say of many, as Paul said of the Jews in his day, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom. x. 3, 4.) Yes, the work is done, and God has shewn His righteous acceptance of that work in raising His beloved Son to glory. The Spirit bears convincing witness, "Of righteousness because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the

right hand of the majesty on high." (Heb. i. 3.) Thus has the believer been justified from all things. Glory, glory everlasting, be to Him who bore the cross.

C. S.



FIRST YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY.

VI.

WE have seen the formation of the church or assembly; its united prayer; the place shaken where they were assembled; and all filled with the Holy Ghost. The word of God was spoken with boldness. All that believed were of one heart and soul; the apostles with great power gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all. Such was the assembly in the beginning. Alas, what a contrast now!

And yet the true heavenly character of the new assembly was not then fully, if at all, revealed. The man, who was the chosen vessel to make known the church, was not even yet converted from Judaism. This man, Saul of Tarsus, was a mad persecutor of the disciples, the great enemy of Christ. As he was on his way to Damascus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, suddenly there shined round about him a light

from heaven, brighter than the noon-day sun. The mad persecutor fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Amazed at these words, he said, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." What a revelation; and what a revolution in this man!

The Jesus he persecuted was the Lord of glory. But most wonderful: this Lord of glory owned every disciple, every true believer, as part of Himself. What was done to them was done to Him. This contained the mystery—stupendous fact, that every believer now on earth was one with the Lord of glory. Many years after this we find it written, "As he is so are we." How little had Saul thought, that what he did to the feeblest disciple he did to Jehovah Jesus, Lord and Christ. What a repentance, what a change of mind! Trembling and astonished, he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He was directed to Ananias, a devoted disciple in the city. Ananias was greatly afraid of this terrible persecutor. The Lord calmed his fears, and said to him, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings and the children of Israel."

Such was the effect on Saul of this revelation, that for three days he was blind and could neither eat nor drink. His eyes were then opened, and

he at once proved the reality of his repentance, or change of mind, by being baptised, and took his place with the disciples as those whose sins were washed away. The full account of his commission to preach and teach in the name of the Lord Jesus we find in Acts xxvi. 12-23.

It must be observed that, as the sample minister of Christ, he received his commission and authority to preach direct from Christ Himself: not from man, not from the church. He takes great pains, in Galatians i., to prove that this was from God. Never did he go to Jerusalem, to the apostles even, to receive authority to preach. He was only recognised by them. "When James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision." Gal. ii. 9.)

It may justly be asked, if the apostles or the church never assumed to give authority to preach the gospel, or teach in the first years of Christianity, how is it that those who profess to be the successors of the apostles do so now? That is a question for them to answer. They will tell you, they have derived that power and authority to appoint and ordain those who alone shall be set apart to preach the gospel, and

administer the sacraments. And yet in the beginning there was no such power or authority in the hands of these very apostles. If there was, let it be shewn. Paul was most jealous to disown all such authority.

The subject of the Christian ministry is a deeply interesting one. Does that which assumes to be that ministry now correspond with what it was in the beginning, or is it a totally different thing? Men are now ordained or authorised by men to preach and teach. But we must honestly own, that there is nothing in the New Testament account that corresponds to this. There was the one church of God or assembly of God; and all Christians formed that one assembly. There was the church of God at Rome; but there was no church of Rome at any place but Rome. There was no distinction between the assembly in Greece, and in Italy, or Syria. There were no denominations. If you had spoken of the church of Rome, or church of England *in* Scotland, or *in* Ireland, not a man on earth would have understood you. Then, if there were no denominations or national churches of the world, there could be no ministers of such churches. Now since this is assuredly, manifestly, the case, it follows that people may be members of such human churches, and not be members of the one body of Christ at all. Quite true, you will say, no doubt millions are so at this day. Then does

it not equally follow, that men may be ministers of such churches and not even be Christians, and not ministers of Christ—in a word, that the christian ministry, and the vast denominational ministry, are two very distinct things? There is one thing perhaps above all others that marks this distinction.

The true christian ministry owned and had the guidance of the Holy Ghost where to minister. The ministry, which is of man, is solely appointed by man, and scarcely dares truly to recognise the presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost. Let us turn to the word. We will first take Peter. Christ appointed him (John xxi. 15–17) and gave him the special ministry to open the door of the kingdom to Jews and Gentiles. (Matt. xvi. 19.) As to any other appointment from men he had none. Human education, none. He was an unlettered man. (Acts iv. 13.) Could the Holy Ghost come down from heaven and use such a man? What a question! Let the preaching in the mighty power of the Holy Ghost answer (Acts ii., iii.), and how distinctly he had the guidance of the Holy Ghost. (See Acts x.)

Then let us take the ministry of Paul. Sometimes Acts xiii. 1–4 is quoted as authority for ordaining a man to be the minister, preacher, and pastor. This scripture is doubtless a most important one as to ministry in every way. It gives us the most distinct view of true christian

ministry that we could have. Here is the assembly as seen in the first years of Christianity: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers: as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen and Saul." Mark, all these were prophets and teachers. They were the chosen gifts of the ascended Lord. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Let us then take Saul. We read at his conversion that he "was certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." This gave great amazement to all; but his authority to preach and the power were alike from Christ alone. Then Barnabas took him to Jerusalem, and told the apostles how he had preached at Damascus. "And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians," &c. He is then sent to Tarsus. (Acts ix. 18-30.)

Then again in the formation of the church from the Gentiles at Antioch, Barnabas went to Tarsus and brought Saul: "And it came to pass that a whole year THEY assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people."

(Acts xi. 21-26.) Indeed, this scene at Antioch (chap. xiii.) is after the collection had been sent by the hands of Barnabas, and Saul, and after their return. "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry," or charge. (Chaps. xi. 30; xii. 25.) So that there is no sense whatever in quoting chapter xiii. as authority for doing the very opposite of what the Spirit did here.

Now look at the assembly gathered together at Antioch. There is no man as *the* minister of that assembly, but the prophets and teachers. *They* minister to the Lord. Where is this the case now? Is there no president? Yes, the Lord by the Holy Ghost. And where He is, there can be no other chairman or president. They so own the presence of the Holy Ghost that they have His very guidance as to the persons He appoints for a special mission. Here is the secret of the power of the first years of the church. And there is only power now, in proportion as we truly own the Holy Ghost. He is the power.

In all the great gatherings of Christians, can you tell me of one that answers to this assembly at Antioch? Is not the Holy Ghost as truly here now as then? Assuredly, but men put a man in His place, and then pray for the Holy Ghost to come!

Is it not incredible that there should be such

darkness as to quote this scripture, when men appoint a man to be *the* minister over a church? The Holy Ghost did not say, Separate me one of these teachers for this special work, but He sends two; and we see this principle throughout. And in the preachings it is Paul and Barnabas speaking boldly, though Paul was the chief speaker. (Chaps. xiii. 43-46; xiv. 12; xv. 35.) "Preaching the word of the Lord with many others also."

And after the separation of Paul and Barnabas, it is the same with other companions, Silas and Timotheus. (Chap. xvi.) And how the Holy Ghost guided their steps as to where to preach. For the time they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia; but they were guided to Europe, and from place to place. (Chap. xvi. 6-9, &c.) How distinctly also the Spirit guided Philip to join himself to the eunuch, sitting in his chariot. "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him." (See Acts viii. 26-40.) But we look in vain for a single instance of human ordination of a minister over a church to preach or to teach. It is said of Apollos, when he began to preach the gospel, "When he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace." (Acts xviii.

27.) Surely this is an important scripture for our guidance now.

But, if such was the christian ministry in the first years of the church, as seen in the Acts, and fully borne out in the epistles, where is that same true christian ministry now? It is quite true that the various divisions of modern Christendom each has its ministry. But what have all these in common with the ministry of Christ, or christian ministry, as seen in the word of God? It is high time to search the scriptures to see what is of God, and what is of man. The apostolic appointment of elders and deacons was quite another thing. These might, or might not, be the gifts of Christ to teach or preach. The elders were appointed to care for and guide the assembly in spiritual matters, and the deacons to care for the poor in temporal things. The apostles could also delegate a Timothy or a Titus, but very few would assume that we have apostles now. Let us then, in dependence on the Holy Ghost, turn to His inspired epistles, and inquire what was the church, what its ministry, and what the doctrines taught in the First Years of Christianity.



A THIRD LETTER ON THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

(Continued from page 28.)

Now I freely admit, that men were the instruments in much that Christ suffered, and that as from God. For if God gave Him over to His enemies, this was a terrible thing as coming from God. But must we stop here? Did not Christ suffer because God *forsook* Him on the cross, and suffer not from men but from God? Was there any instrument here? Was it not God's own act? God, instead of comforting Him, abandoned Him. Suppose there had been *no* men there, and that God had given Him up to darkness, withdrawing the light of His face, so that impenetrable darkness came in between the soul of Christ and God, would you say there were any instruments here, or that God only permitted it? God forsook Him. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is no question of instruments, but of what God Himself did when He had laid our iniquities on Him. To deny this is to deny atonement. I know you do not wish to deny the truth, but I do not believe your soul has grasped the real character of Christ's atoning suffering, and so this scripture has not its proper weight with you.

You ask for scripture as to using the word "wrath"—Christ enduring "judicial wrath." Read Psalm cii. There the Messiah pours out His soul to Jehovah, who has lifted Him up and cast Him down, weakened his strength in the way, and shortened His days. In verse 10, He says, "because of thine *indignation* and thy *wrath*." He cries to Jehovah, "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days." Jehovah answers: "Thy years are throughout all generations," &c. (Vers. 23-28.) Compare Hebrews i. All this, no doubt, is connected with Christ as the Messiah of Israel, who came and was cut off instead of getting the kingdom; but it reaches up to the sufferings of the cross, and "indignation" and "wrath" were there. And this is quite in keeping with the general teaching of the word of God. "Wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness," &c. (Rom. i.) When and where revealed? Was it not at the cross where God's true attitude toward sin was fully revealed? The wrath of God abides on the unbeliever. (John iii. 36.) Why? Is it not because his sins are on him, as having refused that which alone could remove them? God's wrath is against *sin*. Sin must be dealt with in righteous judgment according to the majesty of God, either in the person of the guilty one, or the Holy Victim on whom the sin is laid. And thus when the sins of God's people

were laid on Christ, they brought down upon Him God's wrath and curse. This was on the cross, and there only. It is very simple, but needs that our souls bow to God's estimate of what sin is, and His way of putting it away, to understand it.

You object to the statement, that Christ "was made sin." Well, I have no objection to saying He was made a "sin-offering;"* but this only identifies the *sin* and the *offering*, and so really comes to the same thing. In the Greek there is one word used for both "sin" and "sin-offering," and this is remarkable, for it shews the real character of the "sin-offering." Christ offered Himself without spot to God, a spotless victim. But what then? When this spotless One offered Himself to God, God laid our sins on Him—made Him a sin-offering—and then meted out to Him what was due to sin. It was a dreadful cup—unmingled wrath and judgment, I believe, without one element in it to alleviate the sorrow of that dark hour. This cup He drank for me—for all who believe—so that we can say our judgment is passed, we "shall not come into

* While the word may be translated "sin-offering," I have no doubt that "sin" is the better translation in 1 Corinthians v. 21, because it is in contrast with "righteousness." The *sinless* One was made *sin* (sacrificially of course), that we, the *sinful* ones, might become God's *righteousness*—not in ourselves, but in Him.

judgment" (John v. 24), because that blessed One took our iniquities at the cross, and exhausted the judgment due to them; and this is the reason why God is *righteous* in justifying those who believe.

We get substantially the same truth in Galatians iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for us.*" This is a very strong word, as you know. He took the place of an accursed one, in order that those on whom the curse righteously rested might go free. God has attached a curse to the breaking of the law. And the transgressor feels and knows, that he has to do with God as One who has pronounced this curse. This is one side of the truth; thank God there is another: God has given Christ to be a curse, and thus to redeem us from the curse of the law. This quite agrees with the fact, that Christ was made a sin-offering. God made Him to be this, and for us, and laid our sins on Him, so as to put them away in the shedding of His blood, that we might be for ever cleared from the curse and judgment of God.

You ask: "Did He carry our sins in His body as a person carries a burden, or as a person feels in his heart the pains of his relatives?" I do not think it was either, though the former, rather than the latter; He did feel all our sorrows in His heart. But this was during His whole life, as at the grave of Lazarus, and the

like. He was tried (or tempted) in all points as we are, except from sin within, and this that He might sympathize with us, succour us in time of trial. But all this is different from bearing our sins. His bearing our sins was this: that He took upon Himself the responsibility of our guilt, or became identified with it in such a way as a victim, that the punishment of it fell on Him. God, so to speak, in grace to us, transferred the penalty of our guilt to Him, and He fully met it in the shedding of His blood. It was in this way that He came under the weight of our sins, and of God's judgment. He had the sense of this in His soul, felt the awful weight of it, and cried out when abandoned of God. Forsaken of God, the pressure of wrath was upon His soul, as bearing our sins. It was the indescribable horror of this that led Him to cry out. His cry was not exactly an appeal for deliverance (although we get this in Psalm xxii.) but "WHY"? He had not offended God, had committed no sin; WHY should God forsake Him? But scripture tells us why. Our sins were there, and on Him, and the holy fire was consuming Him—the fire of judgment—as the sin-offering was burnt outside the camp.

From this awful pressure He was delivered while on the cross, so that He could commend His spirit in peace to His Father; and this is what you refer to in Luke xxiii. 46. And He

could then also say, "It is finished." Atonement was finished on the cross. God was glorified, and rent the veil, in token that the shed blood had opened a way into His presence. But it was only in resurrection that He was delivered from His enemies. On the morning of the third day the soldiers were scattered, and God raised Him from the dead. But the fact that He could commend His spirit to His Father when He expired, only confirms what I have been trying to shew from scripture was the real character of His atoning suffering.

You believe that He bore our sins in the same manner as He bore our "griefs," &c. I would have you notice the difference. He bore our "griefs" during His life-time; that is, *before* the cross, and not only *at* the cross. See Matthew viii. 16, 17. But Peter tells us He bore our sins "*on the tree.*" One was all along the path He trod as the "man of sorrows;" the other was only on the tree, when He was made a sin-offering—made a curse—and was forsaken of God. The difference is immense.

I know not that I need to add more, unless it be to again express my full conviction, that the translation of Isaiah liii. 6-10, is perfectly correct, and expresses the exact thought which is in Hebrew. In the margin of the English Bible, verse 6 is "made the iniquities of us all to meet on him." This comes much to the same

thing. Our sins were on Him; and this was Jehovah's doing. And Peter, referring to this very passage says He bore them in His own, body—not merely felt them in His heart. It was in His body, the body in which He was offered as a sacrifice, the blood being shed—the life given up which was substituted for the guilty—in order that the sins might be put away, and our eternal salvation secured by this priceless ransom.

Affectionately in the Lord,

Your brother,

A. H. R.

O CHRIST, what burdens bowed Thy head!

Our load was laid on Thee;

Thou stoodest in the sinner's stead—

To bear all ill for me.

A victim led, Thy blood was shed;

Now there's no load for me.

Jehovah lifted up His rod—

O Christ, it fell on Thee!

Thou wast forsaken of Thy God;

No distance now for me.

Thy blood beneath that rod has flowed:

Thy bruising healeth me.

For me, Lord Jesus, Thou hast died,

And I have died in Thee;

Thou'rt risen: my bands are all untied;

And now Thou liv'st in me.

The Father's face of radiant grace

Shines now in light on me.



CORRESPONDENCE.

1. W. W., Chester. There does not seem to be any direct evidence in John xix. 19-22, or Acts iv. 26, 27, that Pilate was personally present at the crucifixion of the Lord. He gave orders for the title which was placed on the cross. Alas! there was time enough for the Jews to go to him desiring the title to be altered. Still we could not say he was not present. There the whole world was represented in its deadly enmity against the Lord and against His Christ. "For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together." But whether Herod and Pilate were actually present at the crucifixion, we are not told. We know from history that the church of Rome has sought to have the rulers present when they have put to cruel deaths the saints of God. And they have copied largely from pagan Rome. What a revelation of the world that lies in the wicked one—the murderer from the beginning. The Lord separate us more and more from that evil world.

2. S. J. P., London. You ask the editor to give you "an explanation of the difference between primitive catholic truth, Reformation truth, and recovered truth. Answer suitable for Bible class would much oblige. Am at a loss for list of recovered truths. What is the best book to read?"

You do not give your address, and you probably have a reason for not doing so. From the peculiar style of the above this is probable. Truth is

truth, and there can be no essential difference between what is the same. There may be different measures of truth known, at any given time. What do you mean by primitive *catholic* truth? Why not use the term, scriptural truth?

In the completion of scripture we have the whole, complete truth. Christ there is set forth, the revelation of the Father. Every ray of light, or every particular truth, is from Him and to Him. Any one going beyond this, or pretending to do so—what is called development—is to be utterly rejected. See the original of 2 John 9: literally translated, it is “Whosoever goes forward, and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ, has not God,” &c.

As you put it, *Reformation truth* would seem to be something in addition to what had been given by inspiration in the scriptures at the beginning; but at the Reformation, much truth was recovered, truth which had been lost, or denied. And traditions which neutralised the truth were found to be false, and were discarded. The tradition of the Mass was found to be utterly contrary to holy scripture. Worship of idols, angels, and the blessed Mother of Jesus, and many other things, were found to be utterly false traditions, errors, not primitive truth, nor truth given in the scriptures. It was felt that every tradition that was contrary to the revealed truth of scripture, must of necessity be false. But truth could not be called properly speaking Reformation truth; but the recovery of truth which was in the beginning.

Recovered truth, then, is the same also as was in the beginning, and found in the word of God. Not new, or additional, truth; but long buried

or lost truth, restored. Take, as we have named it, the Mass, and its bearing on the one sacrifice of Christ. The truth as to that one sacrifice was given in the word—Hebrews ix., x. There, such was the infinite value God set upon the sacrifice, that “there is no more offering for sin.” “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” (Chap. x. 18, 26.) If you please, that was primitive catholic truth, true to every Christian on earth. Now, before the Reformation, this truth was practically lost, and the scripture flatly denied by the pretended sacrifice of the Mass. And the Mass was an invention of men, not found in scripture—an idolatrous denial of the infinite value of the one offering, as revealed and declared in holy scripture. The Reformers saw this and rejected it, at the cost of their lives. They saw it was utterly wrong; but they do not seem to have recovered the full truth of Hebrews ix., x.: that, as to the conscience, every believer is perfected for ever, in unchanging continuance, by that sacrifice, once offered. Here, then, *recovered* truth is not new truth: it is simply, through the kindness of God, the recovery of that which has ever been plain enough in the scriptures.

Let us not forget that the scriptures themselves were recovered for Christians to read, at the Reformation. For this we praise God, and we will also thank Him for a clearer understanding of those scriptures during this century. And the best book to read, as to recovered truth, is that Book of God, the Bible, and test everything you find around by its teaching. It would require a volume to tell out the list of precious heavenly truths that God has been pleased to *restore* to those who make the word their joy and study.

ZECHARIAH XIII. 7.

On list! all ye that fear the Lord, unto His sovereign
voice,

With feet unshod and holy fear, though love your hearts
rejoice;

“O sword, against the Man awake—the Fellow of the
Lord.

Awake! my faithful Shepherd smite,”—such is Jehovah’s
word.

And wherefore wast Thou smitten, Thou righteous Son of
God?

Thou who hadst ever done His will, yet bow’d beneath
His rod?

This mystery of mysteries say, *why* did Jehovah wound,
Though enemies of earth and hell, already Thee surround.

Sinner, it was for thee, that sword of justice fell;
It fell on Christ, from His own hand, whom He had
served so well.

It was for thee the tempest broke on His devoted head,
It was for thee that God’s own Son was number’d with
the dead.

Thy sins were laid on Him, He bore the burden dire,
It was for thee, there fell on Him, Jehovah’s righteous
ire.

Believers all, in Him partake, of righteousness divine,
Oh what a Saviour I have found, who know that Christ
is mine!

And where’s the answer given by us, to love, so vast, so
free—

To love which can’t be measured, to love beyond degree?
Where are the fruits of faith and love laid down before
the throne—

Perhaps by man so little seen, yet to our Father known?

Oh may He grant “the little time” that’s left us here
below,

The world and its vain things, we gladly may forego,
Our lamps well trimm’d, shining our lights, waiting to
hear the voice

We love, and in His cloudless smile for ever to rejoice.

J. H. S.

A FEW PLAIN WORDS ON ETERNAL
LIFE: WHAT IT IS, AND WHO HAS
GOT IT.

ETERNAL LIFE: what do these words mean, as used in the holy scriptures? For the real meaning of the word "eternal" we will turn to 2 Corinthians iv. 18, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal [that is, for a time]; but the things which are not seen are eternal." We do not need to criticise the word "eternal," for this is certain, it is in direct contrast with that which is for a time. It is duration without a limit. When we then read those words of Jesus, "These shall go away into everlasting [or eternal] punishment; but the righteous into life eternal," He clearly taught that the punishment would not be for a time, but for ever and ever. And in like manner the felicity of the righteous would not be for a time, but for endless duration. Such is the plain teaching of the Son of God.

Thousands would fully admit this, that eternal does not mean for a time or temporal; but, as we have said, unlimited duration. What a question for the reader; yea, for every one, Shall I spend an unending eternity in unending woe, or in the

enjoyment of unending eternal life? Eternal life is thus used in scripture as endless duration in the future; but let us now inquire what is eternal life now, and what has it been from all eternity?

We shall find in scripture that eternal life is not a principle, or an abstraction, but **ETERNAL LIFE IS A PERSON**. Eternal life is the Person of the Son of God. This fact is fully brought out both in the gospel and in the first epistle of John. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life." (1 John i. 1.) These words could not be spoken of a principle, or an idea; try them. A Person had been with them from the beginning. They had seen Him, heard Him, looked upon Him, handled Him: and more, "For the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and shew unto you that **ETERNAL LIFE**, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." (Ver. 2.)

The eternal life which was with the Father—yes, eternally, **WAS** with the Father: was not this the Son of God? Ever "was," but manifested unto us. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true: and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John

v. 20.) Thus we learn with absolute certainty that eternal life is the Person of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

How strange also that we should have overlooked the remarkable witness to this fact in verses 6-13 of this chapter. Is it not the Person of the Son of God, the eternal life? "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ not by water only, but by water and blood." Yes, He the Eternal One must die. There could be no cleansing but by death. It was water from the dead side; and there could be no atonement for sins but by His blood. Cleansed by the washing of water by the word; that word that tells of His death for us, and boldness to enter by His blood.

And who bears witness: "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." The Holy Ghost come down from heaven here on this earth is the witness. "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." But what is the thing witnessed? "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified [or witnessed] of his Son." Yes, it is a something that God has witnessed of His Son. See how strongly this is pressed upon us, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that

believeth not God hath made him a liar ; because he believeth not the witness that God gave of his Son." Perhaps nothing in scripture is so solemnly pressed as this. Now we get the thing witnessed by God : and not to believe it is to make Him a liar.

"And this is the record [witness], that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." In giving His Son, God hath given to us eternal life. He is the Eternal Life. This is what God bears witness to. "He that hath the Son hath life ; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." And mark, it was the desire of John ; yea, the desire of the Holy Ghost, that all, babes, young men, and fathers, might know that they had this eternal life. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God ; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." God our Father would not have us entertain such a thought, that the life He gives is only for a time. It is His own Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Let us now turn to the gospel of John, and consider Him, the Eternal Life. Here we look back to the far past eternity, "In the beginning," before He created the heavens and the earth. He created the heavens and the earth in a beginning truly, but in that beginning He, the Son, was not created, but "was." We could not

say of any created being, angel, archangel, principality, or power, "he was." No, all creatures had a beginning; but, "In the beginning was the Word." Yes, the Son of God, the Eternal Life, "was;" "and the Word was with God." This blessed One, the Eternal Life, was a distinct Person, was with God. Distinct in Person, yet truly God; "And the Word was God." And this blessed Person ever subsisted, the true God and Eternal Life; and ever the distinct Word. "The same was in the beginning with God." Think of that eternity before anything was made or existed. "All things were made by him: and without him was not anything made that was made." Yes, He WAS in eternity, the Eternal Life, before anything was made.

"IN HIM WAS LIFE."

Oh, what grace it is; that poor, dying, guilty sinners should be made partakers of such life; and should become one with Him who is the true God and the Eternal Life. What a fountain of eternal life, the Son of God! "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." Thus the Eternal Life became Man, was seen, heard, and handled—the Eternal Life. Yet this poor world knew Him not. Do you know Him,

the true God and Eternal Life? Do you thus behold Him in all His lowly walk here below?

In John iii. we learn from His very lips, that God had no thought less than that we might have this eternal life. But in order that this might be an accomplished fact, this glorious Eternal One must be lifted up, as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness. He must be nailed to a cross, made sin for us. Sin must be judged; sins must be borne. He must die that we might live. He must bear the wrath and condemnation, that we might be justified from all things, become the righteousness of God in Him, and have eternal life, brought into favour in Him the beloved.

Yes, God sent His Son, "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Thus we have the heart of God revealed to us. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." He did not so love us that we might have life for a time, and lose it, and it cease to be. No, God did not give His Son for that. The source of the glad tidings is this infinite love of God. He gave His Son. Do you receive His gift? "He that hath the Son hath life." Yes, He is the true God and Eternal Life. Look back beyond this parenthesis, we call time—time in its utmost bound—and beyond it all

“In him was life :” self-existent, the Eternal Life, “with God, and he was God.”

When He, the Eternal Word, was made flesh, then they, whose eyes were open, could see, could look upon, could handle Him, the Eternal Life. He was ever the Eternal Life, but now revealed to us. The Eternal Life incarnate could say, “I am the bread of life.” “I am the living bread which came down from heaven.” Yes, He, in His own eternal Person, is the Eternal Life. He is not for a time. Look forward beyond the utmost bound of time’s parenthesis, and in the boundless eternity beyond, He is the true God and Eternal Life ; the eternal “I AM.”

Now since He, in His own eternal Person, cannot be for a time, it follows that that which He is, Eternal Life, and that which He communicates cannot be for a time, or temporal. No, He says to the Father the opposite of this. He does not say the life He gives is for a time ; He says, “And this IS LIFE ETERNAL, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John xvii. 3.) If we suppose that God has only given us life for a time, we do not know God, or Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

If we keep, nay, if the Holy Spirit keeps this vast truth before our souls, that eternal life is the eternal Person of the Son of God, it will then become more clear who they are who have it,

and how unspeakable the privilege of those who possess eternal life. Before we go further, may we ask each reader, Are you sure you have eternal life in the Son of God ?



FIRST YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE CHURCH, ITS MINISTRY, AND THE DOCTRINES TAUGHT.

VII.

WE have seen in the Acts that the church, or assembly of God, as distinct from the Jew and the Gentile, and yet composed of both, began on the day of Pentecost by the descent of the Holy Ghost; and that all through the Acts, all that were converted were added to that one and only church. Every local assembly, as Jerusalem, Antioch, Thessalonica, &c., formed the one assembly of God. These were gathered *out of* the world from Judaism or heathenism—they were not of the world, but formed a new company, by the Holy Ghost. And there never had been such a company before. There had been individual believers, as Noah, Abraham, &c. There had been a nation, in a certain relation to Jehovah, as Israel. But the church was not a nation, but all the saved ones out of the nations.

What, then, is this new company thus formed by the Holy Ghost? In the Romans there is very little said on this: the church is not its

theme, but the righteousness of God is the great subject of that epistle ; man before God, and how God is righteous in justifying them that believe. We do however learn this, that "as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office : so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." (Rom. xii. 4, 5.) And then all gifts, service, and work, is in accord with this entirely new position. This "*one body*" is IN Christ—every member of the one body is in Christ.

Now this could not be, as He tells us, until the grain of wheat had died. Until His death and resurrection He must remain alone. (John xii. 24.) The believer is in Christ, who has died and for ever put away his sins, and condemned his sin ; and is now risen from the dead, and ascended on high. The ONE BODY of Christ is in Christ as risen from the dead. We are to minister to one another as members of the glorified Christ in heaven. We are to walk on earth as those who are risen with, and now in Christ, on high. We shall see more of this ONE BODY in other epistles. What a subject ! And yet men can despise, and even deride it. Such seem to be given up to judicial blindness.

We are also told that the mystery was kept secret since the world began. (Rom. xvi. 25.) And this is a fact, that there is not one word in the

Old Testament about this "one body in Christ." Now it is revealed in the New Testament scriptures, we may see figures of it in the Old, as Eve was the one wife of Adam. And it would seem that since the first days of the church until these last days the mystery of the "*one body in Christ*" has been almost lost. And many believers even now have no idea what the church, the one body, is.

Many have a strange thought, that all sects form the one true church. But are all sects *in Christ*? Are all the millions of the Greek, Roman, and Protestant sects in Christ, risen from the dead and glorified? Are all these without condemnation, *in Christ*? No man would venture to say so.

But may there not be some individuals in all sects, or divisions, of Christendom *in Christ*? Surely this may be so. Then are not those individuals, if in Christ, justified from all things? Do not they form the *one body in Christ*? They do; that is the very thing I want to shew clearer. Thus, if the reader is *in Christ*, risen from the dead, he is a member of the one body, in Christ. But though he may be a pope, cardinal, archbishop, clergyman, or minister of any so-called church, yet if he is not in Christ risen, he has no more to say to the one body of Christ, or the true church of God, than a Mahomedan. But if that be so, it is of very little value to

belong to any of the so-called churches—Greek, Roman, &c. Just so. The question is this, not are you in the Church of Rome, or the Church of England, but are you in Christ ?

And it does seem to me an important question, Does the Lord approve of my belonging to any division of Christendom ? We shall find an answer to that question in 1 Corinthians i.-iii. You will notice this epistle is addressed to the true church of God, and also shews the responsibility of all who profess the name of Christ. And do not forget the test, the only test, *in Christ*.

“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth to them that are sanctified IN Christ Jesus, called to be saints [or, saints by calling], with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and ours.” (1 Cor. i. 2.) The church of God is composed, then, of those who are separated from the world, sanctified IN CHRIST JESUS ; and all who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus are responsible to hear. If, then, you are not sanctified in Christ Jesus, if you are not holy as in Him by calling, you have no part in the church of God, the one body, in Christ.

God permitted sectarianism to begin in those first years, so that He might speak His mind by the Holy Ghost on the subject. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus

Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions [or schisms] among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. . . . And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ . . . for ye are yet carnal : for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and *divisions*, are ye not carnal, and walk as men ?” (1 Cor. i. 10 ; iii. 1, 3. See the whole context.) Thus we may even boast that we do the very thing that God in His word condemns. Did you never meet a man that boasted that he belonged to the Church of Rome, or of England, or some other division ? God says, I beseech you that you do not.

If we really know what the one body of Christ is, and that we are in Christ, in the one body, we really could not belong to any other body, be it Roman, or Protestant. The Lord restore this great truth to our souls more clearly. If the fact of divisions proves even Christians to be in a carnal or natural state, acting as men of the world, and forming schools of philosophy ; and, as we have seen, all this is thoroughly disapproved of by the Holy Ghost, then, for the comfort of every believer in Christ, does the same word of God settle the question—that each and all believers in Christ form the one body in Christ. To put it still a little plainer, as God disapproves

of all divisions, they cannot, as supposed, form the true church, or one body in Christ. Can I, then, if I am in the risen Christ, be assured that I am a member of the one only true body of Christ?

Let us hear the answer. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit ARE WE ALL baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been *all* made to drink into one Spirit," &c. (1 Cor. xii. 12 to end.) If, then, you are in Christ risen and glorified, you are baptised by the Holy Ghost into the one body of Christ. This is a stupendous truth, and if known, error will drop off like autumn leaves.

Let us now pass on to the epistle to the Ephesians. In chapter i. 1-18 we have the purpose of God; chapter i. 19 to end, and chapter ii., how that purpose has been accomplished. In chapter iii. the administration of that mystery committed to Paul; chapter iv., the church, the body of Christ; chapter v., the church as the bride of Christ.

But mark again how all this is limited to those only *in Christ*, to the faithful *in Christ*. (Chap. i. 1.) They are blest with every spiritual blessing *in Christ*. They were chosen *in Him* before the foundation of the world. (Ver. 4.) God predestinated them unto the adoption of children

unto Himself. It was His good pleasure, His delight, to have them to Himself. In Christ, the beloved, they are brought into favour. God said, as it were, I will have them in the same favour as my beloved Son. *In Him* they have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. Yes, this was our God's eternal purpose, and such is every saint *in Christ*. God accomplished this purpose by raising up His beloved Son from among the dead, and set Him, as Son of man, the new risen Man, at His own right hand in the heavenlies. Not now as Messiah on earth, but far above all principality and power. And all this as Head over all things to the church, which is His body: "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Chap. i. 18-23.)

Then is revealed to us the riches of His grace in taking us poor sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, and, in pure love, grace, free favour, giving to us, whether Jews or Gentiles, the very same place as His beloved Son, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places *in Christ Jesus*." All this is far beyond anything ever made known or promised before. Thus in the church, all distinction between Jew and Gentile was broken down; peace was made by the blood of the cross, and peace preached to all both far and near. Oh, the depths of His mercy, the riches of His grace!

The assembly—all who are in Christ—are the

true saints of God, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; *in whom* all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: *in whom* ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Have we been raised from the dead with Christ? If not, we are not stones in this heavenly building. Thus it is nothing to be members of man's churches, but everything to be *in* Christ.

Now the administration and revelation of this mystery was given to Paul. (Chap. iii.) It was hid from ages, and never made known: "That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the joint body, and partakers of his promise *in* Christ by the gospel."

This did sorely perplex the Jews, and fill them with hatred to Paul. It perplexed them, because every promise in the Old Testament, the word of God, gave them a distinct place in the time of the kingdom; the coming time of this earth's blessedness. They knew not of this period of mystery whilst their Messiah is cut off and has nothing.

Every word to them, as a nation, shall surely be fulfilled, but in its time, not now. It wounded their pride to hear that there was no distinction—that in the boundless grace of God, beyond all thought, Jew and Gentile formed the one new

joint body of Christ. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the assembly the manifold wisdom of God. According to the eternal purpose which he purposed *in* Christ Jesus our Lord." What must the church be in the sight of God, and in the sight of all angelic hosts! Is there any wonder that Satan should seek to deface it with all the divisions of Christendom?

Now Paul had very fully put before them what it is to be in Christ risen from the dead. Without this no soul is a member of "the one body *in* Christ." But there is another thing equally important, and without which we cannot comprehend this wondrous purpose of God. For this he prays.



"THERE SHALL BE ONE FLOCK AND
ONE SHEPHERD."

JOHN X. has especial instruction for us at this moment. It is said, "They [the sheep] know *His* voice, and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

The great and important matter is that, "They know *His* voice." Beautiful and divine order is here; and a necessary effect of this is that they do not know the voice of strangers. What then?

This is not all that is said, for (first), they will not follow the stranger; and (secondly), they will flee from him.

How can I discern if it is the voice of the good Shepherd? Easily. You know HIM. You know then His thought, His care, His interest in feeding and nursing every lamb and sheep of His flock. You know what He thinks of any one who would make the sheep *his* sheep, forgetting that they are Christ's. "The thief [thus he calls that man] cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." All this, true in Israel in that day, has remained always true and is still true. Plain words He uses, may we hear.

But there is more for your guidance even than this. The thief gathers the sheep for his own ends, and the result is that there is scattering, for every thief that comes (and there are many that come during the passage of the sheep through the wilderness) is found taking some, and thus increasing the confusion. But if one comes, and by him the sheep are more distinctly led after the Good Shepherd, then the flock is more distinctly united, and thus the opposite of the work of the thief is done. Thus you discern the voice of the Good Shepherd, speaking through the under shepherds, whom He sends forth now to feed and nourish His flock. (Acts xx. 28; John xxi. 15; 1 Peter v. 2-5.)

And the *wolf* may come too, as well as the

thief. But he who serves the Lord as an under shepherd does not "flee as an hireling" even then. Imitating his Lord, who was faithful even unto death, he will not leave them. Any voice you hear suggesting that it is time to flee, you at once know cannot be the Shepherd's voice. It is then the "voice of a stranger."

No animal more foolish, as well as more feeble, it has been said, than the sheep. And thus the Lord by this figure would shew us ourselves, and, blessed be His name, Himself too.

They only know "it is not his voice;" and thus everything is settled for them. They do not argue about the claims or the statements the voice makes. If it waxes louder and louder, it only makes them flee the further and the faster from it. It is their wisdom to hear the Shepherd's voice; no path for them but what it points out; no food for them but what He gives; no love for them like His.

How does all this apply to the troubles and difficulties of these last days? How, my reader, has it helped you in them? And where will you be found, if the Lord leaves you yet awhile to tread the wilderness? Oh, the grace that cares for us notwithstanding all. Jesus is the same (Heb. xiii. 8), His voice is still to be heard; His sheep are His still, either stumbling and scattered, or feeding and resting. Which? (Psalm xxiii. 1, 2.)

H. C. A.

PREACHING.

MANY years ago there was a very remarkable preacher, that drew thousands, and thousands, to hear him. He was a true man of God. We may say he was the most remarkable preacher on earth, and he drew the greatest multitudes after him, far greater than any other man. The whole country came to hear him. It would, if such a thing occurred now, be considered a great revival. To all appearances great numbers repented. Indeed, it seemed to be a great work.

But, so far as we know, there was no real lasting effect from these most popular preachings. Not one really followed Christ.

Soon after this, we are told, and it is true such changes do occur, this very same preacher, though in the open air, had a congregation of *two*. He preached on this occasion a very different sermon, all he said was contained in five words. The effect was marvellous. Both became decided for Christ there and then. They both became most useful servants of Christ; devoted followers of Christ. A work began that day, the like of which had never been seen before on earth, and which has continued until this day; though, we should say, that after three or four years, it became deeper, and even far more blessed.

Do you ask the name of this preacher sent of

God? His name was John the Baptist. You may have read the account many times, and like myself, have never noticed the different effect produced, until a brother at a distance called my attention to the contrast. You may read a minute account of the great revival preaching in Matthew iii.; and no doubt God used this in preparing the way. And often, the preacher can see no immediate fruit that satisfies his longing heart, he may not *see* one soul manifestly brought to Christ; and yet the ground may be preparing for the seed. Is it not remarkable how many may be baptised, and not one be brought to follow Christ? How many now may be baptised, and yet be lost for ever?

Let us, however, turn to the short sermon to two, and mark its effects. (John i. 35 to end of chapter.) "Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." What a living text! The preacher's eyes were on Jesus, "looking upon Jesus," not looking upon the crowd. What he looked at was his text; his subject was the living Person of Jesus, and Jesus as the Lamb of God! And he said, Behold Him, "Behold the Lamb of God." Yes, God's Lamb; hitherto man had brought his lamb. Five words. Without this, tons of volumes of theology are worthless.

What words to Jewish ears who had seen in the law, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Here was the Son of God; and He was the Lamb of God. Behold Him. The two heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. How simple, yet this is the power of God. Has any message come to your heart yet, and turned you from everything else to follow Jesus? You may have gone to confession, and you may have been baptised, and you may have done many things else, but has this blessed Person, the Lamb of God, attracted your hearts to follow Him?

Jesus saw them, and He sees you at this moment. "And Jesus said unto them," and He says unto you, "WHAT SEEK YE?" Do you hear Him? You profess to be a Christian. What seek ye? What is your object? They said, "Master, where dwellest thou?" Has the Spirit put such a desire in your hearts? Do you really want to know where Jesus dwells, where He abides? He says, "Where two or three are gathered together to my name there am I in the midst of them." Do you say, Where is it, Lord? Where is that place? "He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day." Will you come and see? Will you abide with Him? We are near the end; soon He will appear. Now, if Jesus is nothing to you, you will say, No, I will stay

where I am. I see no good in giving everything up to follow Jesus. Oh, what is Jesus to you? Is He everything, or is He nothing?

“Come and see;” and if you see where He dwells abide with Him. You must be with Jesus or with Satan, the god of this world. First abide with Him, and then become a preacher. So did one of them which heard John the preacher, whose name was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He becomes a preacher to the first person he meets. He did not wait until he could get a room, or begin to preach in a room, a chapel, or a hall. “He first findeth his own brother Simon.” Oh, if every true follower of Jesus, the Lamb of God, would just go out and seek a brother Simon? Now mark the preaching of Andrew. He says, “We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.” This was true, but we should say much more, “We have found the Saviour?” Nay, He hath found us. Ah, this kind of preaching would have far more effect than all the learned eloquence in the world.

You walk out in the street, or elsewhere. Who is this? Here comes Simon. For years he has been seeking salvation by law-keeping, by sacraments, by works, by his church, as he calls it. But he is saying to himself, I am as far off as ever. No rest, no real peace. I cannot say I am saved. I cannot look death and judgment in

the face ; and there are so many opinions I am bewildered ; and I have so many sins ; I try to forget them but it will not do. Oh, that I could find out the right thing.

Now speak to him ; tell him. Just take him by the hand, and try Andrew's sermon. Say, if you can, "I have found the Saviour," the only Saviour ; I have found him ; I have found all you need in Jesus, the Lamb of God. And just do as Andrew did, "he brought him to Jesus." Mind you do this. Do not bring him to what men call the church, or to any sect or party on earth. "And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona." Yes, it was the very future apostle Peter brought to Jesus by this little sermon-preaching of Andrew.

And mark, this was the way of Jesus. "The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me." It is quite true the Holy Ghost can and did, and at times still does, work after the Pentecostal way. Thousands heard, and thousands were truly converted, and gathered to the Lord. But John wrote his gospel long after those Pentecostal times ; and does he not give by inspiration, that which continues to the end ? And this is most encouraging for us in these days, when popular preaching may be popular infidelity, or gross superstition.

Philip was immediately imbued with the same spirit: "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Now Nathanael seems to have been a religious Jew. He had been deeply exercised in soul beneath the fig tree, no doubt in self-judgment, and thus without guile, as an Israelite. This religious man was shocked at the thought of any real good coming out of despised Nazareth. Oh, think of Jerusalem the established, with its priests and its temple. Is it not exactly so now? The place where Jesus is in the midst is ever despised. Can there be any good there? "Philip saith unto him; Come and see." Yes, tell the religious man, Nathanael, you have found all he needs (and seeks in vain to find) in Jesus of Nazareth; and say to him, "Come and see." And whom did he find the despised Nazarene to be? He says, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God."

The Lord give us more of this kind of preaching, telling to others what a Saviour we have found; bringing souls to the blessed Person of Jesus, Lamb of God. And how ready He is to receive them. Oh, beloved reader, have you come to Jesus? Do you abide with Him? Do you follow Him? Then surely you can tell your brother Simon.

C. S.



CORRESPONDENCE.

3. G. S., Wentworth. "Could we say from the word of God that all Christians will be taken up when the Lord comes, even though they may be walking in the most worldly manner; or can it be applied only to a waiting people, and to those that look and long for His appearing?"

There is no doubt that all CHRISTIANS will be taken up, whether those that sleep in Jesus, or those who are alive and remain until He comes. (1 Thess. iv. 14-17; 1 Cor. xv. 23.) But the question is, Who are Christians? Christians, according to scripture, are not found mixed up with all kinds of worldliness. *They* are not of the world even as He is not of the world. No matter what a man professes to be, if practising unrighteousness, he is of the devil. See 1 John ii. 29; iii. 7, 9, 10.

The Christian in scripture is regarded as waiting for the Lord. (Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 Thess. i. 10, ii. 19.) And loving His appearing (2 Tim. iv. 8); looking for it (Titus ii. 13; Heb. ix. 28), and keeping the word of His patience. (Rev. iii. 10.)

Further, great numbers who pass for Christians with men, and who profess to be such, will be shut out. (Matt. xxv. 11, 12.) Solemn words! Jesus will say, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." Many, yes, "MANY will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. vii. 22,

23.) We must not then suppose that worldly Christians will be left behind; but that worldly professors will be left, shut out for ever.

May not the blessed hope of the Bridegroom's return, restored to us in these last days, be used by the Spirit already to separate the true from the false? "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." (Rev. xxii. 17.) "The bride" will include every true Christian. And the Spirit is moving the hearts of *all* such to say, "Come." Do you meet a mere professor who says, The coming of Christ is nothing to me? No, his heart is ingrossed in politics, pleasure, or worldly gain. He may be a powerful preacher, with fiery eloquence; he may lead thousands to popery or into infidelity; but could you say from scripture that he is a worldly Christian? Satan is leading off his companies, and the Spirit is leading the bride to say "Come." Every day shews that you cannot depend on profession: blessed be God! we can depend on His word, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

4. Enquirer, Salisbury. Revelation xxii. 11 may be applied to either the close of the present time, or after the church is taken to be with the Lord. To us it speaks now, and it is most solemn. A fearful change is coming over mankind. The inspiration and authority of the word of God is boldly denied by many, pretending at the same time to be Christians; dishonesty and unrighteousness are defended; cruelty, robbery, and murder cease to be regarded as crimes; to pay honest debts is to do so at the risk of men's lives. At such a time we hear the words: "And he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." And for our

comfort at such a time it is added, "And behold, I come quickly." Human society is fast becoming unmanageable. Soon it will be as it was in the days of Noah.

5. J. C., New Herrington. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 3.) This is not the thought of union with Christ, or of the believer's security in Christ; but the very peculiar position in which the believer is at present. As to the life of the flesh, that to which sin is attached, and that to which all ordinances are addressed—to man as alive in that sinful flesh, to all this the believer is dead. This is what the Colossians in their day, and we in our day, again, need to know; and if we do not know this, Satan will get an advantage by leading us to ordinances for the improvement of sinful flesh. We have not to die to it or kill it by ordinances and mortifications. *We are dead with Christ.* This is the great remedy for present delusions, gathered largely from heathenism. But then we are in this peculiar position for the present: as to our own sinful life we are dead to it, and our new life is not yet manifested, but hidden, just as Christ is at present hid in God—quite sure and safe, but hidden, soon to be revealed. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." And mark, whilst waiting for this we are to mortify everything of the old life of sin in the flesh. It is still there, but we are dead, and therefore must not seek to live that life at all. Do not forget that our true life in Christ is not yet revealed, does not appear, though we have it and enjoy it.

6. W. J., Bangor. How are we to know the

Lord's guidance? There are scriptures, such as Acts viii. 26, 29; x. 3, 7; xii. 8; xiii. 2; xvi. 6, 10; &c., in which the Lord spake very distinctly to His servants, and gave them divine instructions, *where* they were to go, and *what* they were to do. We must also remember that in those early days of the church there was real faith in the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth. No one ever thought then of praying *for* the Holy Spirit. And no one then ever thought of taking the place of the Holy Spirit, as a pope, or a president, amongst the saints.

Now this kept the saints in the hourly expectation of the Spirit's real guidance. How different now, is it not? It is also true, as you say, that we have not a scripture to say whether we are to go to this place or that to preach the gospel. There is the general principle to preach the gospel to every creature. I have just published "The Way the Lord hath led me."* My chief object in that little volume was to lead souls to have to do with God in this very matter. Very much depends on real faith in the personal presence of the Holy Ghost on earth. I do not say it is a voice; but to you it should be exactly as if a voice spake to you. The little volume is just an answer to your question. I send it you.

"Thankfulness."—Your offering of 20/- for the Lord's needy ones shall be used as requested.

* G. Morrish, Paternoster Square, London.



A FEW PLAIN WORDS ON ETERNAL
LIFE: WHAT IT IS, AND WHO HAS IT.

II.

WE have seen from the scriptures that eternal life is not a principle, or an abstract thought; but the Person of Jesus Christ the Son of God: He is the true God and eternal life. And that this eternal life is not for a time, is not a thing of time that may cease to be; but is the very eternal Person of the Son of God.

Now, that men dead in trespasses and sins should be brought into oneness with the Person of Christ, and have this eternal life, is a thought that could only originate with God. Yes, its *origin is found in the purpose of God, and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.* But the life itself was the Person of Jesus, the Son of God. "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." (1 John i. 1-3.) We are thus referred to the Gospel of John. There we see this blessed Person on this earth.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him. . . . In him was life." He was the eternal God, yet distinct in Person, was *with*

God. In Him was life. Not life communicated, but subsisting. As the I AM, so life 'was,' and therefore eternal. No beginning, but in the beginning. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." "He was in the world . . . and the world knew him not." But John says, "We beheld his glory." They beheld Him, the eternal life, made manifest in flesh. What a sight. They heard, and have recorded His wondrous words. Let us hear the eternal life speak to us. Yes; let us hear His words as to who they are who have eternal life.

He tells us, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John iii. 14, 15.) This first statement, of the eternal life, is most important. No sinner could have eternal life except on the ground of the atoning death of the Lord Jesus. Sin, the very root of all sins, must be dealt with. In a word, He must be lifted up on the cross, made sin, or a sacrifice for sin, in order that whosoever (Jew or Gentile) believeth may have eternal life. For this very purpose God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. (Ver. 16.)

It is remarkable that the teaching of the Lord on the subject of eternal life has not been given in the first three gospels, but given later on in the Gospel and 1st Epistle of John. Does not this fact suggest that the teaching of Christ, as recorded by John, is mainly for these days, since the Holy Ghost came down and the church was formed? Still He spoke them: and He is the truth.

Oh how plain His words! May we be kept from mystifying them. "That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is the plain statement of the Lord Jesus. It is not a matter of attainment, or of superior knowledge. Whosoever believeth in Him hath eternal life. And this truth runs through both the Gospel and 1st epistle of John. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* eternal life." (Chap. iii. 36.) Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." (Chap. v. 24.) We fully grant that this verse could not be true to any child of Adam unless Jesus died and rose again. But then all His blessed teaching was on the sure ground that He would die and rise again. But more, He has died and risen again from the dead, so that *now* this verse is the truth to every one that believes God, who has raised

the Lord Jesus from the dead. No one can deny this ; Jesus says it. It is wonderful for a poor lost sinner to be brought into actual possession of this eternal life : yet Jesus gives us His double assurance—**VERILY, VERILY.** Oh, has God the Holy Ghost opened your ears to hear the word of Jesus ? Do you believe that God sent Him ? Then He doubly assures you that you have eternal life ; that you cannot come into judgment ; no, you have passed from the region of death to life. All is now new, and all of God. Mark, it is the eternal life itself you have. Such are the words of Jesus.

And further, it is the very will of God, not that a few advanced Christians should have it : “ And this is the will of him that sent me, that *every one* which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have eternal life.” (Chap. vi. 40.) Oh let us keep to the plain words of scripture. How plainly Jesus reveals the will of the Father, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have eternal life.

Jesus says again : “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath eternal life.” (John vi. 47.) He then presses the truth that He Himself is the eternal life—the living bread that came down from heaven. There is no eternal life in any other. We eat His flesh, and drink His blood. His atonement for sins must be received into our inmost souls, as bread and wine

is received into the body : there is no eternal life in us apart from Himself. His death is the way into His life.

He further assures us that He does not give His sheep life for a time—a temporal life that may be lost. He says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” (Chap. x. 27.) Thus there is not a single sheep in Christ’s flock that has not eternal life. Not one shall perish : How can they since Jesus is the resurrection and the life ? Yes, He is the life, the eternal life. The life that He gives is eternal, as He says to the Father : “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. AND THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (Chap. xvii. 2.) It is not temporal life, it is not human ; it is eternal and divine. We are thus made capable of knowing the true God and Jesus Christ. Do we ask, then, who have eternal life ? The answer is, every believer, every sheep, every one whom the Father hath given to the Son.

A most important question arises here : How does the believer understand, and enjoy this stupendous truth ? Now we have seen that eternal life is the blessed Person of the Son of

God ; and further, that when He was in this world, the world knew Him not. He was the revelation of the Father. God in His own essential being could not have been known to the creature ; but by taking the creature's form of the Son. And man was proved utterly incapable of knowing the Son. Hence the blessedness of the Trinity ; the Holy Spirit reveals the Son, and thus we know God, even the Father. It therefore follows, that as the Son of God is the eternal life, it is only by the Spirit that we enjoy the Son, and the Father, and thus know and enjoy eternal life. The Holy Ghost reveals the Son, the eternal life, to us, "This is eternal life that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." This is a most important subject in itself.

All this revelation of the Person of the eternal Son, the eternal life, is more than confirmed in the 1st epistle. "That eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Ever with the Father, but manifested unto us. What a privilege. In chapter v. we have the remarkable witness of the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. Yea, the witness of God ; and the solemn declaration that he that believeth not the witness of God hath made Him a liar. And what is the thing witnessed ? "This is the witness, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he

that hath not the Son of God hath not life." And mark, the "us" includes all believers—babes, young men, and fathers. Yea, "These things have I written unto *you that believe* on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." "And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

May we never entertain the shadow of a doubt on these plain words of Christ and His apostle.

C. S.



FIRST YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY.

VIII.

THE CHURCH, ITS MINISTRY—AND THE DOCTRINES TAUGHT.

EPHESIANS III.

OUR being in Christ is evidently all of God. And it is to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ that Paul prays in Ephesians i. 17. Now he bows his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He longs that we may comprehend the subject before us: therefore he prays unto the Father, knowing the delight that the Father has in Christ and in us. He prays "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory." The glory given unto His Son, and unto us. (See John xvii. 22.) According to this

glory, that we might be "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height."

So great is this mystery, this eternal purpose of God as to the church, that it is not enough to know what Christ has done for us, and what it is to be in Him risen from the dead, we need also to be strengthened with the Spirit, that Christ may dwell *in our hearts* by faith. We are lost in the infinity of the purpose of God. "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Oh think of this amazing place of privilege: the risen Man in the glory of God. "He is the head of the body the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." It pleased the fulness to dwell in Him. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." And we are in Him, and He dwells in our hearts by faith. And all is grounded in love, the love of Christ unclouded and unchanging, filled with all the fulness of God. Well might the apostle bend the knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ that we might comprehend all this. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages"—to the ages of ages.

Such was and is the church. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Yes, every believer in Christ, in every land. He may be down in some dark mine, or in some ship far away at sea, on a distant island, or in the centre of a continent: he may know it or not, yet it is true. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ." And just as with the human body, if members of the body joined to the head, we are members one of another. What a strange mistake to suppose that all sects compose this one body. We must see that it is only those who are *in Christ*. And mark, Christ is in heaven; the church, then, His body, is not an earthly society, but joined to Him in heaven, though as to our persons we are on earth. A heavenly people on earth, but our politics are in heaven, and we are waiting for Him to come and take us there. Paul was a prisoner of the Lord for this very truth; had he circumcised the heathens who believed, and thus incorporated them with the national system of Israel, the offence of the cross would have ceased—the high priest might have become the pope.

But according to the eternal purpose of God, the church is separated from every worldly thing unto Himself. It is one, and its absolute unity

excludes every imitation or competition. Is it a light matter to be treated with indifference? Paul says: "I . . . beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." Mark, it is not a question of mere agreement in opinion; but the entire state of soul: lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance. Lord give us more of this. It is not a human organisation, but "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." How important, then, to be quite sure that the unity we are seeking to keep is the unity of the Spirit. How am I to know this? What are the marks, the facts? These are the facts, the marks, the circles of unity:

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." One body excludes the idea of many christian bodies, just as one Spirit excludes the idea of many Holy Ghosts. The idea is repugnant in either case to scripture. There is one body; we have not to make it, it is formed, it exists. How this has been forgotten. This one body is the first circle. "One body in Christ," as we have seen. Then

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism." "One Lord" excludes the many lords of the heathens. "One faith" excludes all schools of mere human thought. "One baptism" excludes the many

baptisms of the law. The believer professed discipleship to the one Lord, by one baptism.

“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” The unity of the Godhead excludes all idolatry. One Father excludes all so-called holy fathers: and what need of them? How Satan has sought, by the help of men, to deface and to deny the unity during the dark ages of departure from the truth, as held in the first years of the church. But does not the truth remain the same? Do not the facts remain the same? We must remember that these three circles of unity refer to the true church of God as seen in the beginning.

Can the eternal purpose of God fail or change, as to the church? Can the love of Christ cease to His church? “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.” (Eph. v. 25-27.) If you are in Christ all this is certain to you as a member of His body, the church. Is it not most blessed? You are, though all unworthy in yourself, yet in Christ you are the object of the Father’s love, even as Christ—the unchanging object of the love of Christ.

Just think, you are part of Himself, members of His body, the church for which He gave Himself to die, ever applying the water of the word. He says "I come quickly." As Eve was presented to Adam, the figure of Him that was to come, so surely shall the church, the heavenly Eve, be presented to Christ.

We will now inquire a little more fully as to what was the christian ministry in the first years of the church. We know how men are educated and ordained by men now for the various churches of men. Was it so in the beginning? Assuredly not, for there were no such churches then. There was the one body of Christ, the church. And we may now look at Ephesians iv. as to the ministry Christ gave for HIS church. Verse 8 is a quotation from Psalm lxviii. 18. And this is the ascension of Christ as man, victorious over the enemy. Hence, in the Psalm it is, "Thou hast received gifts in the man." (Margin.) That is, Christ has received gifts as man, having accomplished redemption and ascended up on high; so that true christian ministry dates from the ascension of Christ. That poor rebellious sinners can thus be used of Christ, is a proof of the complete efficacy of His redemption work. As man on this earth, He descended into death and the grave for us; and now, as ascended in victory over Satan and sin and death, He gave gifts in men.

Individuals are His gifts. "And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." These are not the sign-gifts of the Holy Ghost; but permanent gifts for the growth and edification of the body, the church. The apostles and prophets remain in their inspired writings, and, revelation being completed, we need no more.

There are two distinct gifts which remain, and are needed: the evangelist for the conversion of sinners, and adding to the building; and the pastor and teacher, which would mostly be the same gift, for building up, feeding, and nurturing the body of Christ as here below. These are the abiding gifts of Christ; but not for any denomination or national organisation, but "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And not only this ministry, but that ministry was so exercised that we "speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Such then was ministry in the beginning. If

a man was a gift from the ascended Christ, he was a gift for the body of Christ wherever he was. This did not hinder, but help and give opportunity for the manifestation of the Spirit, to be given to every man in the assembly used by Him. "Dividing to every man severally as he will." (Read 1 Cor. xii.) The Spirit does not now work by the gifts of healing and miracles, which were for signs and witness in the beginning; but all that is needed for the increase and edifying of the body of Christ remains. We have seen the specimen of church order and ministry in Acts xiii. Let us then remember that the same Holy Ghost still remains to the end. He is as really present now as then, but we do not own Him—imperceptibly man takes His place, and some Christians are not ashamed to elect a president to take the very place of the Lord and of the Holy Ghost. Who can conceive the loss this is to modern Christendom. Some are so ignorant of His real presence on earth, that they pray for Him to come; others regard Him only as an influence. But who owns Him as acting here for the Lord, who is as truly present and acting by the Spirit, as if we saw Him?

It may be asked, but if confusion comes in, and many are found to speak to no profit, must we not have order, and appoint a minister over the local assembly, so as to avoid confusion? Is not all this fully anticipated? What will not

man abuse? Very early in the first years this very confusion did actually come in at Corinth. Did the Holy Ghost appoint a minister over that assembly to correct the confusion? Never. No, the same order that we see in Acts xiii. 1-4 is directed to be carried out; "Let the prophets [such as speak to edification] speak two or three, and let the other judge. . . . For ye may all prophesy one by one that all may learn, and all may be comforted," &c. And Paul regards these things which he thus writes, as "the commandments of the Lord." Now if this was the order of ministry and worship alone pleasing to the Lord, the very order He set up by the Holy Ghost in the first years, has He ever altered His mind for the church?

We must admit that episcopacy, or a man-elected minister over an assembly, is the very opposite of the order of ministry here described in the beginning. Then when afterwards did Christ set up that episcopacy, or one-man ministry? Can a single text be found for it in the New Testament? Is it not a great mistake? Is there any wonder, then, that what men call the christian ministry is leading the church to idolatry and infidelity? Can that be christian ministry which is *not* of Christ? The Lord lead us back to His word.



LETTER FROM THE EAST.

BELOVED BROTHER,

Through the Lord's mercy and goodness, I have reached home again, after an absence of two months. Both my way out and my way back were made plain before me, although there was enough of trials in detail to give exercise of faith and patience ; yes, and to afford opportunity also for our gracious Lord to display His ways of grace and love, and His wonderful care that condescends to count the very hairs of our heads. If He did not send us trials by the way, could we ever know that care? Nature in us would be willing to serve, if all things were arranged so as to be agreeable, and even lead us to take some credit to ourselves from the very fact that circumstances and details all conspired to make us comfortable. It would seem to us that we were a kind of favourites with the Lord. But trials touch nature where it was not expecting, and, at least, shew us what we are and our need of mercy. Satan himself knows what nature is, even in a saint, and how prone we are to use God's blessings to foster in us a good opinion of ourselves. Hence he could say, "Doth Job fear God for nought," &c.

I thought one night when I was lying in the

hospital at Alexandria, ill with fever, that when I got a little better I should return home at once ; but the next day I was better, and my desire to see the brethren in the upper country regained its force, and I was happy in committing my way again to the Lord, who graciously enabled me to resume my journey much earlier than had seemed possible at one time, and when I finally reached the upper country, I was not very strong ; yet I was glad to be there, and felt that I was in my right place. It matters little how weak we are if the Lord give strength from day to day as need requires. The brethren there are united and walking in peace ; and their faith and love being fresh, they are more occupied with the Lord and His grace than with themselves. May this ever continue to be true of them and of us all. For occupation with ourselves collectively will always prove in the end as fruitless of good as self-occupation is to us individually. I suppose that if we talk much about brethren either good or bad, it is because we are occupied with brethren. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And, for my part, if I were asked to propose some very unprofitable subject, I would say, "Get occupied about ourselves collectively." We read "that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it." It is this that occupies the thoughts of the Father and Son, and is the object of the mission of the Holy Ghost to this earth ;

and our fellowship, to be true and happy, must rise to the height of God's counsels. If we separate ourselves, even in thought, from the whole church of God, it is really a sect we are thinking about and not the church. And then we must manage the matter for ourselves as best we can, for the Holy Ghost is not here to help us to think and talk about ourselves as a sect.

I am referring to the subject rather in its practical bearing, as it affects and tests our thoughts and feelings and prayers. It is not difficult to repeat as doctrine, "The feet in a narrow path where obedience to the word ever leads; but the heart expanded by grace so as to embrace all saints in the world;" but O how far short of this all of us come in both its aspects! The walk gets loose, and the heart narrows accordingly. And even where there is true piety and a good zeal, the sight of abounding evil may overcome us and, like one of old, we repeat the testimony to self: "And I, even I only am left." (1 Kings xix. 14.) Blessed man of God as Elijah certainly was, the sight of abounding evil had filled his heart with gloom and obscured the vision of faith. He was much nearer God a few days before, on the top of Carmel, when he repaired the broken-down altar of the Lord. "And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that

was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name." (1 Kings xviii. 30, 31.) He was in the very midst of a scene of unparalleled wickedness, but he spoke in grace to a fickle and half-hearted people, and there was a response in them, for it is said, "And all the people came near unto him." As the apostle says, "For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace."

Such are we all, that nothing but grace will touch and melt our hearts; and it is only as we feel our own need of it personally, that we apprehend its source and character, and can speak and act in it towards others. We see that Elijah then thought of the twelve tribes, but when He fled to Horeb he thought of himself only; and even made intercession to God against Israel. On Carmel he had power with God for others, and got fire and rain for them in answer to his prayers. But when his faith failed, his heart contracted into itself, and he instinctively betook himself where the fiery law had been issued, for that, rather than grace, was suited to the state of his gloomy heart. And let us observe well that he there neither asked nor got blessings for others, but was dealt with in a personal way, and had to hear of approaching judgment on the people which in heart he loved.

And after all, the grace of God had not exhausted itself. But the zealous prophet himself was to be set aside to make room for a successor, whose ministry was wonderfully characterised by grace.

Moses, too, the greatest of prophets, was set aside, and not allowed to complete his course, because he failed to glorify the Lord when the unthankful people forgot His presence and vexed His servant with their murmurings. He, too, forgot the Lord, and thought of himself. "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" He had been told to speak to the rock—a beautiful type of Christ, in unwearied grace, following His saints in the wilderness to bless them, even when they do not deserve anything but judgment. But Moses, in the vexation which arises from self-occupation, smote the rock twice with the rod. He would have government rather than grace, and so he got it; but it shut him, not Israel, out of Canaan. What a solemn warning it is to us all, especially if we occupy position as leaders to the church of God! Moses failed, as we so often do, to rise to the height of that grace which is superior to the evil it meets, and can conquer everything. How much nearer to God he was when he only thought of His goodness and glory in Exodus xxxii., and interceded for His forgetful and sinful people. Oh for enlargement of heart and an ever-deepening knowledge of grace and our own personal

need of it. Even when judgment is at the very door, grace grows more tender and importunate. It entreats and waits for a response with a patience that never belies its own nature, for it is divine. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." (Hos. xi. 8.) The prophet's expostulations in the last chapters remind us of the Lord's weeping over the beloved city. How many tears have we shed for the church of God? Much knowledge of the truth may enable us to speak and write about it, correctly enough it may be; but love alone will cause us to weep for it.

I sometimes say to myself, if those who know the church of God doctrinally do not embrace it practically in their affections, who is there beside them to love it, and speak and pray in that wideness of heart which alone suits the subject? One knows from experience how narrow the heart is, and how impossible it is for nature in us to love naughty, disobedient saints. But God has love for such, else He never would have loved me. It is natural for us to love them who love us, or who are, at least, of our way of thinking. But the publicans can do that. And I am astonished at myself sometimes to see how much I resemble them in this respect.

I find, dear brother, that thus far in my letter I have told you very little about my recent visit. I seem to be more inclined to dwell on the reflections which have resulted from it. I believe that I always get more profit for my own soul from a visit to the saints, especially those in Egypt, where God has vouchsafed to work very remarkably. I was able to visit nine or ten assemblies, and I saw, through the Lord's good orderings, many labouring brothers, a mutual joy to them and to me. The table was set up in one new place while I was there. It was a large christian village, into which no ray of gospel light had entered until about five months ago. A very simple labouring brother went there, and an awakening began. Some others had helped him from time to time; but he remained until some souls had got ready for fellowship. The entire village was awakened, and from two to three hundred came together night after night to hear the word. I spent three days there in company with some other labourers. There had been a little re-action on account of some of the head men of the village drawing back after they had professed conversion. The labouring brother there had been a little down on account of this; but those with me had more experience, and told him not to mind about it, that the Lord had only used those head men for a while, to encourage the others to come and

hear; and now that many had got blessing, these might go their way if they preferred darkness to light.

The place of meeting—two large booths made of cornstalks—was filled while we were there, the one with men, and the other with women. A good many of these had found blessing, also some children. This, I always say, is a good sign. But females here must, like Sarah, listen to the word of the Lord “behind,” in a tent of their own. (Gen. xviii. 9.) They like seclusion, nor do I see that the Lord regards them less on account of being hidden from the gaze of men. Perhaps western sisters think this a little strange. But this custom, at least, is good for labourers, who are sometimes a little spoiled by being noticed and run after by sisters. It is wholesome for us to be much in contact with men who are less governed by their feelings, and say “no” to us sometimes. Be this as it may, we had exceedingly happy meetings in our cornstalk shelters. There was the same freedom and heartiness in prayer and praise, under the Spirit’s guidance, which generally characterises all their meetings in that country. And the labourers who were with me remarked how fully we were all led out in ministry of the word, three or four of us speaking every night, some to saints and others to sinners, in happiest fellowship. And as for the hearers, had we gone on till midnight,

few of them would have stirred from their places.

I may remark, that while the brethren distinguish between the gifts, they do not decide beforehand what character a meeting must take; except the Lord's table which of necessity has its own character. That is, they do not say, To-night we are to have a gospel meeting, or a prayer-meeting, or some other kind of meeting. They meet in simplicity, and pray and sing, and then what the Lord gives they accept. The older assemblies get close dealings at times, and have to spend their time in silent exercise or in crying to the Lord; at other times they are happy, and praise much; at other whiles they are more occupied with the word. They say there must be fresh guidance every time, or else there will be little edification. I have never seen two of their meetings just alike. But dependence gives deep and varied exercises, to escape which we are in temptation to fall into grooves, and drop into systems—man's substitute for the Spirit of God.

In ministry I usually find myself led to address believers, but I should not like to feel myself bound to a particular line at a given meeting, for in the ministry to saints, I am often led to address the unconverted as far as I am able, and I do not think that the others lose anything by it. If I were an evangelist, it seems to me I should not like to feel bound to only hold gospel

meetings. I do not know that there are any evangelists who act thus; but I have sometimes thought that there may be a loss by attempting to decide beforehand just what character a meeting must take; especially when we take into consideration that our evangelising now is generally among nominal Christians, many of whom need rather to be better founded than to be called. At first it was to Jews and idolaters. Then again we are to remember that something of the pastoral gift is always manifested in a faithful evangelist. It has been observed that these two gifts may appear in the same person. And I quite believe it. Only the evangelist must be a man of God and walk with the Lord; and be characterised by a love of souls, rather than the desire of preaching. For example, the brother labouring in the place I have referred to, is rather an evangelist, but he cares for souls converted also, and had been used in both ways in some other places. But I do not think he has ever stopped to ask what he is, or whether he has any gift or not. Blessed simplicity! How near the Lord is to the simple, who are occupied with Him and His grace rather than with themselves.

He was a soldier and a policeman until two years ago. And when he got to know Christ as his portion, he began at once to seek others in grace. He could not preach what is called a

sermon, and yet the Lord uses him much; and if you go where he has laboured you find the proof of it, for there is fruit; and a fruitful ministry is always better than the critical acumen which can define and draw nice distinctions.

And now, dear brother, I must close this letter, already too long, I fear. The fever continued to hang about me, and occasionally returned, until I got back to the cool weather here, and then it left me. When the brethren saw how weak the poor body was, they consented to my returning this year earlier than usual. For this I was thankful, for it is happy when the Lord gives oneness of mind to those who love us and desire His glory in us; poor and feeble vessels as we are. Love to all saints with you.

Your brother in Christ,

B. F. PINKERTON.

Beyrout, Syria,

January 30th, 1889.

CORRESPONDENCE.

7. G. R., Yarmouth. 2 Corinthians v. 10 is not merely a question of reward for services; neither can it possibly be that the believer should be judged for his sins whether before or after his conversion. In that sense he shall not come into judgment. (John v. 24; Heb. ix. 27, 28.) In Christ he is even now justified from all things. (Acts xiii. 38, 39; Rom. iii. 24; iv. 24, 25; v. 1; viii. 1; &c.) All this is most

blessedly and eternally true. And further, before we, all believers, are manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, we shall be like Him. We shall see Him as He is, and we shall be glorified. Now, to be manifested is to be in the perfect light, yet in perfect love. And when we see, as He sees, all our sins and failures in the perfect light, then shall we know the perfect love that redeemed us, pardoned us, washed us in His precious blood; put our sins away for ever, never to be remembered against us, and never charged or reckoned to us. Yes; in the full blaze of perfect light, all manifested, nothing left concealed. This will shew out the infinite, perfect love of God in giving His Son for us.

It is most profitable for our own souls, to think on this now: it will produce a holy fear to sin, and in the deep sense of what His grace is, will not produce in us dread of that solemn scene. We, like the unrighteous, are sinners, have all sinned; in that sense there is no difference. We own this now, and we are manifested to God now. And knowing the terror of the Lord to the rejecters of pardon, we seek to persuade men. They will be judged for their sins when they stand before the judgment-seat. We are manifested as justified from our sins, and glorified with Christ. Shall we be afraid for all to come out to His praise? Ah, then will sin be seen as God sees it. Then will it be fully seen WHY He was forsaken of God when bearing the load of our sins. Then shall we fully know that He must needs have suffered and risen again. All this should not disturb our peace, and will not, if we know what the grace of God is to us.

It is a very solemn inquiry; may the Lord

use it in searching our inmost souls. Surely it will produce in us everlasting adoration and praise. What reward will be given will be for what He has wrought in us. All of self is sin. Oh the riches of the grace of God. When all is manifested we are presented unblameable in holiness. To Him all praise!

8. A. S., Ontario. You will read in some numbers of this magazine, in the articles on the sufferings of Christ, what scripture teaches on propitiation and substitution. Surely both were made at the same time by the one offering of Christ. (Heb. x.) In the types of the Old Testament there were many offerings, and at different times; but all pointed to the one offering, once offered, on the cross. Jesus finished the work which the Father gave Him to do. He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. At that moment the veil was rent from top to bottom, the atoning work was done. Propitiation is that aspect of the sacrifice of Christ that was shadowed forth in the mercy-seat. The blood was before the eye of God. In this sense He died for all. Such is the infinite value of the blood of Jesus that God in righteousness can proclaim mercy to all who meet Him there. And thus mercy and forgiveness is proclaimed to all. (Acts xiii. 38.) What followed on the day of atonement was substitution. All the sins and iniquities of Israel were transferred to the substitute—the goat. So, as the result of God's estimate of the blood of Christ, we further learn that He was delivered for *our* iniquities, and bare *our* sins in His body on the tree. This is always limited in scripture to believers. Search the scripture, and you will find it is so.

PRACTICAL GRACE.

IN Hebrews xii. two mountains are spoken of, one that speaks of *law*, and one that speaks of *grace*. And it is an important question for our souls, to which one of these mounts we are brought; for, in connection with one, we have to do with God as making *demands* upon us; while in connection with the other, we have to do with God as acting in *grace*. "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake :) but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, [and] to the general assembly, to the church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the

blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

God had spoken the law to Israel at Mount Sinai, and their responsibility was according to the just requirements of that law. In this they failed, and utterly broke down; and in the days of Eli, the ark—the only remaining link between Jehovah and His people—was taken by the Philistines. At the end of this career of failure, God came in in grace, and chose David the king, who, with his son Solomon, founded the temple on mount Sion. This was the expression of God’s grace to a failing people, when all was over on the ground of responsibility under the law.

And this is the grace according to which God had visited the Hebrew saints who accepted the Messiah. It is the same grace that has taken *us* up, and that goes on with us day by day. And on this principle only can we get on with God. God acts toward us in grace. This is an immense truth for our souls to grasp; for only as we lay hold of this can we realise the character of our relationships with God and with one another as Christians, and the principles that are to govern us in our ways with one another. Our sins have been purged through the blood of Christ. This is pure grace.

But is not holiness required? Without holiness no man can see the Lord, we are told in verse 14. Is this grace also? The *need* of holi-

ness surely is not grace; but if God's character and nature are such that none can be in His presence without holiness, He furnishes it to us in grace, blessed be His name! We have it not of, or in, ourselves; but He makes us "partakers of *his* holiness," even if He has to chasten us in order to break our wills, and bring us into that exercise of soul in which we can receive all from Him. All blessing flows down from Him in perfect grace, and our place before Him is that of subject receivers.

But now if God acts toward us on the principle of grace, we are to be imitators of Him, as dear children. Grace is the principle on which we are to act toward one another. Do we sufficiently realise this in our souls, so as practically to act according to divine principles? We find in the beginning of Hebrews xii., that we are in the race course, and weights are to be laid aside, and sin which entangles the feet; and then God comes in and helps us by chastening, making us partakers of His holiness. Now we are not alone in this path. There is a company—the whole company of God's people—moving on together toward Him who has finished the course of faith, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, but who will soon rise up to receive His own. With this company we have to do. It is not a mere selfish running where only one receives the prize. We all journey on

together, and, as in a flock of sheep, there are the weak and the lame, not to be left behind, but to be helped on. There are "hands that hang down," and there are "feeble knees." How are we to act toward such? The passage is plain: "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." This is not the terrible mount that burned with fire: it is the pure grace of God.

On the one hand, grace leads us to minister help to the weak and the faint. On the other hand, it will lead us to be watchful, taking heed to our own ways, lest the lame be turned out of the way. There *are* lame ones in the flock, and they do not get on well; but the whip would be no remedy for such. We must not act toward them on the principle of Pharaoh's taskmasters with the bondslave children of Israel. This is not God's way. He acts toward us in grace, and helps us in our infirmities; or if He chastens, when needs be, it is "that we might be partakers of his holiness." What should we think of a shepherd taking a whip to a poor, weak, lame sheep? Yet how often is this done among the flock of Christ! The whip instead of grace! Mount Sinai instead of Mount Sion. God's word is, "but let it rather be healed." It is not that holiness can be dispensed with,

and therefore it is written: "Follow peace with all, *and* holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Only let us remember, the whip and the burning mount will neither heal nor produce holiness. Grace only can do either; and so it is added, "looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God." If I lose in my soul the sense of that grace in which God is ever acting toward me, I shall fail in manifesting grace toward my brethren. And who can tell the loss and damage to the saints? Some root of bitterness springs up, and trouble arises, and many are thereby defiled. What sorrow is sometimes caused in the assembly of God, just because some one—a leader, it may be—has failed of the grace of God, and acted in the spirit of the law, rather than the Spirit of Christ! or some one, through greed of gain, has driven a hard bargain, or defrauded his brother! or some word has been unadvisedly spoken, and an evil seed has been sown in some heart, which springs up as a root of bitterness, producing trouble, which passes from tongue to tongue, thereby defiling many! Surely such conduct is most sad, utterly contrary to the Spirit of Christ; and if not unsparingly judged by those who so act, will bring down the hand of the Lord in discipline.

Oh to realise in our innermost soul that we are saved by grace, and stand in grace, and that it is grace every step of the way to the end! and to

realise that we are called to live, and act toward one another, in the power of the same grace in which God has acted, and ever acts, toward us.

A. H. R.



FIRST YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY.

IX.

THE DOCTRINES TAUGHT.

WE have already looked at the starting-point, THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, inspired in the full sense of God speaking to us, "Thus saith the Lord." It must be evident, then, that without this starting-point, we have no basis. If God has not spoken, all is blank uncertainty. But since God has spoken, we need no man, or church, to tell us, that what He has said is true. What then were the doctrines taught?

Let us begin with the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross. What was that death to the apostles, and the early church, as seen in their inspired writings? We read, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. xv. 3.) The more we meditate on these words, the more wonderful they seem. Think how those scriptures of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets bring before us this great fact, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. What victims had been offered in

sacrifice, from Abel downwards to the lamb that must be killed, ere Israel could be redeemed from Egypt! There was no escape from judgment and slavery until that lamb was killed. Then what blood had to be shed to make it possible for man to be kept in relation with Jehovah in the wilderness, and in the land! There was no approach to God but by blood.

The faith of Abraham was expressed in those wonderful words, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb." Yes, Jehovah Jireh, the Lord, will see, or provide. The faith of the early church was, that the Lord hath seen to it: God hath provided His Lamb. "Behold the Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world." Behold the living Person of the Son of God, God's Lamb. God has seen to man's deepest need: God has provided. The doctrine of the First Years of Christianity, all centred in Him, God's Lamb. Not man's Lamb; not man's providing, but the sent One of God. The Holy One was delivered for our offences, and was raised from the dead "for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Notice, all was divine certainty. The whole church of God had peace with God; and this peace was made by the very blood of Christ. "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself: by him,

I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight." (Col. i. 20-22.) Thus they HAD peace with God; and that peace was made by the blood of the cross. They had not one thing to do to make their peace with God. Jesus had made that peace by His own blood; they had been enemies, but they now were reconciled. What was the object of Jesus in dying, as to all believers? Through death to present all believers holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in His sight.

Such was the value of the atoning death of Christ to all believers in the First Years of Christianity, and such their knowledge of God. And they had such certainty as to the value of the redemption blood of Christ, that they could so peacefully give thanks. Just hear them. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Col. i. 12-14.) Oh, what precious certainty they had in those First Years! How seldom do we see anything like it now,

What a separate people they were from the dark, doubting, guilty world around them. They were meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love, in whom, in Christ, they had redemption. Sins were all forgiven. Ah, it was something worth while to be a Christian in those First Years. What completeness, was it not? As it is written, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."

In those years they had a very exalted conception of the glory of the Person of the Son of God, as giving infinite value to His atoning sacrifice. "Who being the brightness of his [God's] glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." (Heb. i. 3.)

That is the starting-point in the Hebrews—the finished work. He has done the work on the cross that puts away our sins for ever. The proof of this is clear. He sits, His work being done, on the right hand of the Majesty on high. There is very little notice taken of this in these last years. It is very important to remember this, when we think of priesthood, or of worship. God has seen to it, God has provided His Lamb. The work that puts away our sins is done. God

has accepted that work, and that Person who has done it to His own right hand. What rest to the soul this gave in those First Years.

Another thing was then revealed: that whilst the offerings of the law could never rend the veil, and bring poor sinful man into the presence of God, Christ having come, by the one offering of Himself on the cross, the veil was rent; sins were purged. The way into the holiest was then opened, and all this was eternal: not for a year, but for eternity. This is all opened up to us in Hebrews ix. For this purpose He appeared "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

No person bearing the name of Christ ever thought of questioning the purpose of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, the bearing the real judgment of God on sins. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. ix. 27, 28.) Thus the true doctrine of the First Years was this, That Christ came in the end of the world, or at the end of all the ages of the trial of man; that He undertook to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. This will be yet seen in the new heavens and the new earth, that He undertook and bore the judgment of divine wrath due to the sins of many: for this purpose He was offered, the sacrifice for sins,

When He appears a second time, there will be no question of sins for those who wait for Him.

All this is abundantly confirmed and applied in the next chapter, Hebrew x. God could never be satisfied with those many sacrifices of the law which could never purge the conscience from sins. The Son of God says, "Lo I come to do thy will, O God." The Son of God came, He offered Himself once the sacrifice for sins, and then in continuance sat down on the right hand of God. Now what was the effect of this one sacrifice to all believers as revealed in the First Years of Christianity? "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." This fact is of such immense importance, that we read further, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us," &c. It was very blessed when men believed this witness of the Holy Ghost; that God in infinite love had sent His Son, in the body prepared for Him, that He might put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; that the Son had done this, and that as to all charge of sins against the believer, the Holy Ghost was Himself a witness, that all believers separated to God by the death of His Son, were perfected for ever, or in continuance. Ah, when men no longer believed the witness of the Holy Ghost, then they invented masses, penances, fresh sprinklings, &c., until the witness of the Holy Ghost as to the efficacy of that one sacrifice was forgotten.

Oh the folly, with such scriptures before us, of again offering sacrifices for the living and the dead, that can never take away sins. If we would enjoy peace with God, we must turn away from all these inventions of men, and go back to that which was in the beginning. What folly it is if you are in the dark, to think you must have a priest as dark as yourself, to offer a mass. There was no such priest, and no such mass in the First Years of Christianity. No, then it was distinctly understood that God said, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." As many as were in the light had fellowship with one another. They knew the whole matter of sins was settled for ever, that the blood of God's dear Son cleansed them from all sin.

It is manifest from the very opening chapters of the history of the sons of fallen Adam, that there could be no approach to God most holy, but by the death of a Substitute. Thus Abel came before God through the death of the lamb. Thus did Noah worship God as he stepped out of the ark. Thus did Abraham also through the sacrifice on his altar. Thus only could Israel be redeemed from Egypt by the death of the lamb. It must be killed and its blood sprinkled. And thus for forty years was the lesson taught in sacrifices in the wilderness: that without the

shedding of blood was no remission. Yea, for fifteen hundred years this great truth was set forth in every sacrifice on the brazen altar, that death alone can put away sin. And yet all these sacrifices could not in themselves put away sins. All pointed forward to that one Sacrifice that puts away sins for ever.

In the prophets they read of a person who should be wounded for transgressions, bruised for iniquities; a Person on whom Jehovah would lay iniquities: One whom the Lord should bruise. (See Isa. liii.) That Person they distinctly taught was Jesus, the Son of God. (Acts viii.) In a word, the one only foundation of the church of God, then was that "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins;" and that this redemption was not for a time only, but was eternal redemption. (Col. i. 14; Heb. ix. 12.) This great foundation truth runs through the Epistles. All believers then could say, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Soon all the redeemed will be gathered around the Lamb in the midst of the throne; yea, and all angelic hosts will say with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

Reader, are you quite sure you have that "redemption through his blood" here? Then you may be assured you will sing His everlasting praise there. But if not, to whom can you look for forgiveness of sins?

ENCOURAGEMENT AND WARNING.

THE children of God, so far as their acceptance is concerned, are as fit for heaven on the day they are saved as ever they will be; and why God does not take them there at once, when they believe, is doubtless because He requires them here for a time, associated with His purposes concerning the glory of His Son in this period of His Son's rejection. God fits His own as vessels to the accomplishing of these purposes, and would have us day by day *individually* walking, in communion with Himself and using every circumstance arising in our pathway as means whereby to glorify Him; for if we are wrong in our individual path, how can we be right corporately? If we go on with the Lord in the first, we shall be found proportionately in unison with Him in the second.

Furthermore, the Lord would have us make room for Him, so to speak, in our hearts, for we know there was no room for Him in this world, as is shewn by the "*manger*," the "*cross*," and the "*not where to lay his head*," and the world to-day is unchanged.

It is of vast importance, too, to know God's mind which He has so clearly revealed in His word to true hearts and simple minds.

Not less important is it to know how we are

to be kept suited vessels for Him, and in concert with His mind, in this day of increasing evil in which our lot is cast. God said to His *earthly* people Israel, in a former dispensation, in connection with what He was then doing, "take heed to thyself." And surely it is a word equally needful now for His *heavenly* people. Two things are essentially necessary, namely, *obedience* and *dependence*. Mere knowledge of God's word, human intelligence in the truth, long years of much-honoured service, experience, and the like, good as they may be in themselves, are utterly powerless to sustain and preserve God's people for Himself in a day like this. Nothing short of obedience to God's word and dependence upon Himself will suffice. Our blessed Lord was the only perfect exemplification of this, and it is very remarkable to see how successfully He met every temptation of Satan with quotations from the Book of Deuteronomy, which, as we know, contains special instruction for the saint's walk; and He left us an example that we should walk in His steps. Moreover, we have many examples in God's word, written for our learning, shewing how blessed it is to be characterised by *obedience* and *dependence*, and how solemnly disastrous it is to be found in an opposite path.

One should tread very softly indeed when referring to the failures of such an honoured

servant of God, for instance, as Barnabas, who laboured so intimately with the apostle Paul. Of course we could not say Paul was perfect, but we must admit that while he went on with God, Barnabas broke down under testing. Satan is ever on the alert to hinder souls and mar God's work, and whenever God is having a special testimony carried on, the enemy is on the extra watch to subvert it. When such a servant as Barnabas could be drawn aside in such a simple way, how it behoves us to take heed to ourselves. The foe knows our tendencies and is well acquainted with our weakest points, directing his attacks accordingly. What would answer his purpose with one saint would probably have no power whatever with another.

We read of Barnabas, in the Acts of the Apostles, that:

1. He introduced Paul to the other apostles at Jerusalem. (Chap. ix. 27.)

2. He was sent by the church to Antioch to exhort the saints to cleave unto the Lord. (Chap. xi. 22, 23.)

3. He was a man full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. (Chap. xi. 24.)

4. He went to seek Paul who had fled to Tarsus, and brought him to Antioch where he and Paul stayed a year together, with the church, when the disciples were first called Christians. (Chap. xi. 25, 26.)

5. He and Paul were sent by the elders with relief to the brethren in Judæa. (Chap. xi. 30.)

6. He and Paul were separated of the Holy Ghost to go to Cyprus, where God's power in the apostle Paul proved stronger than Satan's power in Elymas the sorcerer. (Chap. xiii. 2-11.)

7. He went with Paul after Paul had been stoned and supposed to be dead, to Derbe. (Chap. xiv. 19-20.)

8. He and Paul together went up to Jerusalem respecting Judaism being taught, and were received of the church, the apostles and elders; and all the multitude gave audience to them. (Chap. xv. 2, 4, 12.)

9. He and Paul, who had hazarded their lives, were then chosen with one accord by the apostles and elders with the whole church, to return to Antioch about the same matter, with others. (Chap. xv. 22, 25, 26.)

10. And when Paul simply proposed to Barnabas that they should visit their brethren in the cities where they had preached the word of the Lord, Barnabas wanted to take with them Mark, his relative; but because Paul thought it not good to do so on account of Mark having left the work in Pamphylia, Barnabas separated and sailed with Mark to Cyprus their native place; while it is said of Paul that he chose Silas, and departed, being *recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God*, and that they

went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches. (Chap. xv. 36, 41.)

It is solemn thus to note that there is but little mention made again of Barnabas. Mark did afterwards become profitable for the ministry, and Paul sent for him. In substance Paul remained in the current of God's mind, and Barnabas left it. Barnabas and Mark might have said of what had happened, that it was merely a personal quarrel between two servants of God, and so forth; but clearly it was that Barnabas at an unguarded moment sacrificed God's work for natural relationship, preferring to honour his nephew rather than uphold the honour of the One whose name he bore, and whose interests and testimony were in measure entrusted to him.

We do not learn from scripture that he ever got restored to anything approaching the same position of service and privilege, but we do know that another took his place. God, so to speak, must have our *obedience*, but He can get others to do our *work*. Barnabas thereby deprived himself of the privilege of witnessing soon afterwards with Paul in the prison at Philippi, and of being in the blessing at Thessalonica and other places. In these two cases, can we not hear a voice from God to us, of *encouragement* on the one hand and of *warning* on the other?

May God in His grace grant that we may!

and may all our hearts be directed into closer occupation with that blessed One who always did those things that pleased His Father in the perfection of dependence and obedience, and so be kept in communion with Himself, and in the current of His mind, and suited vessels to maintain that which is so dear to Himself during the little while of His absence, for His name's sake.

J. N.



“THERE IS A TIME TO DANCE.”

A FEW days ago, the editor received the following inquiry: “Is it sinful for a Christian to encourage dancing, or to take part in it when entertained by christian people, who practise it, arguing that it is a harmless recreation?”

It would further seem that this subject is a perplexing one to young Christians in this day. Beloved young readers, are you willing to turn with me to the word of God? Let us bear in mind that “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” (Rom. xiv. 23.) And faith can only act on the known will of God.

It may be said, But do we not find dancing in the scriptures? Yes, that is true, we do. “Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand: and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with *dances*. And Miriam answered them, Sing

ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously." (Ex. xv. 20.) This was the great joy of redemption from Egypt. Is it so when those called Christians, in this day, entertain their friends with dancing? Are their hearts filled with joy because God hath redeemed them? Do they sing to the Lord, because He hath triumphed gloriously? Do they think of the Lord, or dare they name His holy name at the dance? No; they never dance the dance of Miriam.

David "also danced before the Lord with all his might." (2 Samuel vi. 14.) But why did he dance? It was because the ark was brought into the city of David with gladness. The restoration of this symbol of Jehovah's presence filled the heart of David with gladness, and thus in its dispensation was a time to dance. Have we ever been filled with higher and holier joy, because the enjoyed presence of the Lord Himself has really been restored wherever two or three are gathered to Him? Does not David condemn us? Honestly, dear young friends, do you believe you are invited to dance with all your might before the Lord? Or is it not really that you may make yourselves as happy as you can be in Cain's world, and *forget* God? Is God in all their thoughts when they invite you to *dance*? You will not find a dance in modern Babylon that answers to Miriam's or David's.

Let us try another scripture. Israel had sinned exceedingly while Moses was away in the mount. (Ex. xxxii.) They had freely subscribed their gold, and fallen into idolatry. They had really turned after demons. “And they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” And they offered offerings, indeed, they imitated the worship of God. “And said, To-morrow is a feast to the Lord.” Read the full account. “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” And in verses 17 to 20 we learn they played at dancing till they shouted again. Was this a time to dance? Was this faith, or sin? Which?

Now is not this an exact picture of Christendom: of those very so-called Christians that invite you to sit down and eat and drink, and rise up and play at dancing? They have practically turned aside from the word of the Lord to the idolatry of paganism, and to the pagan festivals which they call feasts to the Lord. They sit down content in this world, to eat and to drink religiously, as many a one even takes the Lord’s supper. And then, as it was whilst Moses was *away* in the mount, so now, whilst Jesus, the once crucified, is away in heaven, they invite you to rise up and dance. Dear young souls, may God open your eyes.

But is there not a scripture which says there is a time to dance? There is, let us read it: “A

time to mourn, and a time to dance." (Eccles. iii. 4.) The question then is this—is it *now*, is *this* the time to dance?

If an enemy invaded these shores, and if disloyal men betrayed Her Majesty the Queen into their hands, and she was with the greatest possible cruelty and indignity banished from her dominions, would that be a time for loyal subjects to dance, or to mourn? When David was driven from his kingdom, did his loyal friend, Mephibosheth, dance? When the king returned: "Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace." (2 Sam. xix. 24.) What would David have thought of him if he had called his friends together to amuse themselves with play and dancing?

Dear young readers, do you profess to be loyal Christians? to belong to the king of glory, who for the present has been rejected, and mocked, and with the utmost possible cruelty has been rejected by this world, by Jew and Gentile—yea, who has been put to the most cruel and shameful death; and who is still hated and rejected by this world? And is this the time to mourn His absence, or to dance for joy with that world that hates your Lord?

That long-rejected Lord will soon return "in

flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (2 Thess. i. 8, 9.) That blessed Lord has told us, it shall be in that day as it was in the days of Noah and of Lot? Was it a time to dance when the angel had warned Lot? His daughters and sons-in-law may have been at an evening party having a harmless dance. Was that a time to dance? There was eating and drinking, and perhaps dancing: marrying and giving in marriage, when Noah had long warned the world of coming judgment; but the flood came at last. If it was not a time to dance then, is it now? A far greater judgment is at the very doors. Men did not believe it then, but it came. It will be so again.

Do you say, "Oh, but I am a Christian, and I expect the Lord to come first, and take me"? Do you look for the return of the Lord to take His church? And do you really believe that all who have heard and rejected the gospel—your very friends, it may be—that all these will be left behind for everlasting judgment, and can you amuse yourself and them with dancing? If you were sure the Lord would come to-morrow, would you spend to-night in dancing? Is not dancing a pleasure of that world lying in the wicked one?

Has not God said in His word, "Love not the world, neither the things in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"? (1 John ii. 15.) Oh, be not deceived; if you are really a Christian, then Jesus says, You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Do not let the devil deceive you by telling you that you can have both the pleasures of the world now and heaven at last. Are we not baptised unto His death? Do dead men dance? We are to reckon ourselves dead with Christ and alive to God in Him.

Well, if it is not a time to dance now, will it ever be so? Yes, indeed there will be a time to dance, even on this earth. Faith in the word of God sees a blessed time beyond the darkness, and the judgments about to be poured upon this poor guilty world. The ancient people of God to whom the promises were given, the children of Israel, shall be gathered to their own land. "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their king. Let them praise his name in the *dance*: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp." (Ps. cxlix. 2, 3.) "Praise him with the timbrel and *dance*." (Ps. cl. 4.) Oh what a change! The devil is the accepted god of this world now, and Jesus is rejected. It is a time to mourn. The Lord shall then be King in Zion. "For behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and

her people a joy.” “Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her.” “For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river.” (Read the context, Isa. lxxv., lxxvi.)

Yes, then will be the time to dance, for those who are spared to people the earth when Jesus, the Messiah, the King, shall reign in Zion. But notice the character of the dancing there. It is real joy in Christ, their King. It is with the heart filled with praise to Him. It is as if the body is thrilled with holy joy in the Lord, and expressed its joy in Him in the dance. Can you tell me where there is such dancing as this now? Is the name of Jesus ever named in the dance? Does the heart swell with praise to Him? There may be the mockery of mixing dancing with a form of family prayer, as there was around the golden calf.

In conclusion then, as dancing is not now in keeping with the time we live in—(Jesus having been murdered and rejected), so it cannot be of faith, and “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Is it possible for a Christian that is waiting for the Lord from heaven to be found dancing? We do not believe that the two things can exist together. May the Lord separate all that are His from this pleasure-loving world.

THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIM.

How lonely is the pilgrim's lot,
 By all around he seems forgot ;
 Though passing through a desert drear,
 What joy to know that God is near.

Nothing on earth can joy afford,
 But all is treasured in the Lord ;
 He looks beyond this vale of tears,
 To One who quells his many fears.

As days and seasons pass away,
 He's often heard to sigh and say,
 How sweet will be the rest above,
 Where all is peace and joy and love.

And though so isolated here,
 Not one will be a stranger there ;
 They bow before the eternal throne,
 And give to God the praise alone.

The new eternal song of love,
 That all will sing in courts above,
 Now cheers his heart and makes him say,
 My staff I'll leave and soar away.

The pilgrim's harp, on willows hung,
 Will soon to joyful tunes be strung ;
 No note of discord then will be,
 But joy through all eternity.

Why then should I so downcast be,
 Since there is such a home for me ?
 This groaning scene will soon be past,
 And every saint will meet at last.

Cheer up ! cheer up ! 'twill soon be o'er,
 And we shall meet on yonder shore ;
 With hands and hearts we'll there embrace,
 And sing for ever of His grace. E. G.

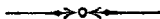
CORRESPONDENCE.

9. L. P., Barnstaple. What knowledge had the nations who lived before Christ of sin and of judgment; and how will they stand in the day of judgment? The oldest book now in existence, the Book of Job, throws great light on that question. It is evident, that in the earliest ages, God communicated to men the clearest knowledge of the atonement. (See chap. xxxiii. 23-33.) Notice the marginal reading. Yes, in the oldest book known, God declares that He hath found a Ransom, or Atonement, so that a man could say then, if he believed God, "I have sinned;" and "He hath delivered my soul from going down to the pit." Blessed is that man even now who can so speak. Was not this truth known to Abel, and rejected by Cain? It is the truth most disliked and rejected, to this day—for near 6000 years. Abraham and his spiritual seed, that is, all believers, believed God; and it, faith, was reckoned to them for righteousness, perhaps "the promise" was not dim to them. (See Heb. xi.) Surely all pointed forward to the death and resurrection of Christ.

10. A., Bristol. Your question is a very interesting one. A husband cannot force light on a wife, or a wife on a husband. It is a sad thing for a christian partner to be in fellowship with evil. Worldliness and false doctrine is rapidly spreading in sectarianism all around, and I do not see from the word how a partner can "*give his consent*" for identification with such evil. His path seems to me to be this: kindly to explain, with meekness and godly

fear, the way of truth which he believes to be pleasing to God; and, in the loving spirit of Christ, explain the evil of sectarianism; and say, Now whilst I cannot give my consent for you to do what I feel so contrary to the word of God (1 Cor. iii. 1-7, and many other scriptures), I do not want to force your conscience, but beg of you to search the word. Give any help you can, by tracts on what the church of God really is, according to scripture; and then say, I must in the things of God leave you to act for yourself, before Him. It is by a holy walk a wife or a husband will be won.

11. W. G. C., Ashford. The church is not spoken of in the Old Testament. It was the mystery kept hid, as stated in Ephesians iii. The Song of Solomon may be used in illustration and meditation. But you will notice it never rises up to the heavenly position of the church, the bride of the Lamb. It is more expressive of the yearnings of the Jewish remnant immediately before the coming of the Lord. Still scripture is manifold, and no doubt the Spirit may use, in rich blessing to the Christian, such portions as speak of His having brought us into His banqueting-house, and of His banner over us being love. But Christ is precious everywhere in the word of God, is He not? The Book of Ruth may be used in a similar way. The call of Rebecca. The creation of Eve. But no one could have seen the church in these until it was revealed, especially to Paul. Now the storms of darkness and tempest, like the destroying blizzard, are sweeping over the world. The Lord keep us holding fast the foundation truths of the word of God.



THE MIDNIGHT CRY.

MATTHEW XXV.

THE whole professing church went out to meet the bridegroom in the beginning. Then as to the return of the bridegroom, "all slumbered and slept." During this century there has been a considerable awakening, both as to the blessed Person of the Bridegroom and His coming again. Still the midnight state of Christendom's darkness may not yet have been reached.

At present the foolish virgins are saying, Peace and safety. And we read, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, THEN sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." It is further explained, concerning the wise virgins, who have oil in their vessels: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." (1 Thess. v. 1-10.) Surely all this throws great light, yea, is the explanation of the parable.

What do we find at this moment? A great many Christians have been awaked from sleep. They do not sleep as do others who profess to be Christians. The light of the Morning Star has

shone into their hearts. The Redeemer Bridegroom has been revealed to them, in all His yearning love for His bride. No longer is He the angry Judge to them. He assures them He will soon come and receive them to Himself. The Holy Ghost dwells in them; they have oil in their vessels. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." They are not in the darkness, but in the light; they are not asleep, but awake and watching. They know perfectly well *all* that is coming on this earth.

There is another company. Oh how many! These are in midnight darkness, or, rejecting the light, they are fast sinking into midnight darkness. So ignorant are they of all that is coming on this earth, that they are mixing with, yea, foremost in, this world's politics. They refuse to hear the voice of God in His word. They doubt and then deny that it is God's word. They will try to believe what man says; what God says they will not hear. Yet they profess to bear the holy name of Christ, but they have no oil in the vessel; no salvation, no peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; no redemption through His precious blood; no certainty for their poor dark souls, beyond death. Now mark, whilst these are asleep in darkness, dreaming of evolution and progress, peace and safety, it will be **SUDDEN DESTRUCTION**. At midnight there was a cry made.

If we think of the deepening darkness during the last ten years, that point of darkness—the end—cannot be far distant. Think how many thousands of professing Christians have, during those ten years, become leavened with infidelity; can we wonder that these are throwing in their lot with the men of lawlessness, of murder, and robbery, in Ireland; and conscience too fast asleep to be disturbed? Can this last long? Must not the crisis come? Oh, watchman, what of the night? How long to this world's deepest darkness? And still they say, Peace and safety!

But the sudden crash will come, the *sudden* destruction will come. Oh that we had a heart like Jesus, to weep as He wept over Jerusalem. In the days of Noah the flood came at last, after long waiting. When Lot had left Sodom, the fire and the brimstone fell. And this brings us to another aspect of the parable. We must remember that Matthew contains much instruction for the Jews, and does not speak of the rapture of the church. But we learn from other scriptures that the wise virgins, in the sense of true Christians, will be taken first, before the midnight crash of this poor deceived world, and hence before the judgment on those who bear the name of Christ—the empty vessels without oil. So that there is a time of separation, when those that are ready went in with Him to the

marriage, and the terrible judgment on those to whom the door was shut.

How sudden the alarm! how sudden the awakening to the awful reality! But too late! Oh, it may be that in one hour God shall speak, by what means the Spirit is pleased to use—He may raise up an Elias, or He may speak by a little paper like this. Or the distress of all nations may be so manifest as to awake the whole professing church, that sudden destruction is at the doors.

But contemplate the closing scene of this day of grace: the door shut; the church gone in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; the foolish multitude is given up to delusion that they all may be damned. "Sudden destruction cometh upon them." (2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.)

No doubt the midnight cry will awake all the true Christians, should any be still asleep, as at present many are, as fast asleep as in the middle ages of Christianity. It will be to their sad loss that they have refused to search the scriptures.

This is certain at the close. The Spirit and the bride say, Come. The whole redeemed bride of Christ shall be ready to meet the Bridegroom. Beloved reader, to which of these companies do you belong? To the sleepers without oil, or to those who wait ready to go in to the wedding? Oh for more waiting and longing to see the

Lord! He says, "I come quickly." It may be the midnight cry was given fifty years ago, and soon will come the midnight crash. There is still a little time to look to the lamp. How soon it may be for ever too late! Blessed to be a light-bearer waiting for the Lord. C. S.



FIRST YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY.

X.

THE DOCTRINES TAUGHT—THE RIGHT- EOUSNESS OF GOD.

"God is love." But the question was, How could God deal with a creature like man, whose very nature was hatred and rebellion against the blessed God, who loved him even in his enmity? The law had been given to Israel for fifteen hundred years, God's righteous rule for man—a law which brought out man's rebellious nature, in open transgression. The rest of the world had been given up to their own will and lusts, they having given up God and His truth, as set forth in His eternal power and Godhead. (Rom. i.)

The Gentile world had sunk to the lowest degradation, worshipping demons, and being led by them into every form of gross wickedness. Yet "God is love." Israel, on the other hand, was no better. With every privilege, having

the oracles of God, yet they did not keep the law; and, what was far worse, so blind were they that they were seeking to attain to righteousness by that very law which God had given to manifest man's sin in open transgression.

All this may be read as the distinct teaching of the Spirit of God in Romans and Galatians. Yet "God is love." However bad man may be, and he cannot be worse than he has proved himself to be in murdering the Son of God, yet "God is love." But then God is also a holy God; and "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom. i. 18.)

You say, Is this a proved fact? Surely we need no greater proof than the word of God: Thus it is written. The wrath of God is a fact--wrath against sin. Let us look at one fact in proof of this--the penalty of breaking the first command to man: "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," or "dying thou shalt die." At the moment you read this, there are not less than 3000 children of Adam within one hour of death. By sin came death, as it is written, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.) Yes; every day of this dying death--every twenty-four hours

—near 100,000 of the family of that man by whom sin entered, pass away in death, and many in great agony. Have you ever read of an infidel who escaped the doom of sin? Now if such a visible stream, such a terrible river of death and anguish flows from sin, and all along its course such suffering, and pain and anguish of mind and body, poverty, sickness, guilt, and wickedness, flowing from sin, even in this world—what may you and I expect if God deals with us, in righteous wrath, through all the ages of eternity? Can we count the number of our sins? Ah, well might He say, who bore them in His body on the tree: “They are more than the hairs of my head.”

And the doctrine in the first years of Christianity was this, that all were guilty, Jews and Gentiles—not a single exception. “There is none righteous, no, not one.” Every mouth stopped; all the world guilty before God. (Rom. iii. 9-20.) And still you say, “God is love.” Yes, and God from all eternity, from before the foundation of the world, has chosen a people that shall be holy, and without blame before Him in love. Now tell me, reader, how do you expect to attain to that happiness? just tell me, how do you, a guilty sinner, hope to be able to stand before God, justified from all things, accounted righteous? Perhaps you say, “By attending a place of worship: there I am taught the law of God:

indeed, it is hung up for my eyes to see it. There I am taught to keep that law. And I hope to so keep it, with the help of God, that I may at last attain to righteousness, so as to be able to enter heaven at last. Is not this the right way to heaven?" Millions expect the same as you do. It was this very way that led the Jews to reject the righteousness of God. Being ignorant of that they went about, just as now, to establish their own righteousness. See Romans ix. 31 to x. 4. Ah, those verses are dead against the fashionable religion of the whole world.

But the doctrine of the first years of Christianity was the very opposite of all this. It was plainly this: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified IN HIS SIGHT: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom. iii. 20.) Have you not found it so? How old are you—forty? And if sincere you have been trying to keep the law over thirty years, are you fit for heaven? Are you righteous *in His sight*? Are you awake? Is your conscience awake, or hardened? Look back! Look at the present—this day! Remember, God tells you, if you break one commandment you are guilty of all. You have longed to be holy, pure, sinless; but sins, sins, sins. . . . Have you ever been overwhelmed, not able to look up? But you say, "I am eighty years of age." Worse still, eighty years of sins instead

of forty. Ah, they stare upon you now every day of your life. Not a single day have you loved God with your whole heart. And with eternity before you, and all your efforts miserable failures, is it not enough to make you gasp? The most righteous thing you and I can do is to judge ourselves guilty before God. On the ground of any righteousness of our own we are lost. Past, present, or future, we have no hope of attaining to righteousness by works of law. We are undone.

Now for our question: with the wrath of God against sin before us, as we have seen, in Adam's transgression, and our own sins—with the absolute certainty that sin must be punished, as that stream of agony and death even in this world fully proves—how is God to be righteous in taking such ungodly sinners as we are, and declaring us justified from all things? How is His eternal love and infinite abhorrence of sin to be revealed, in perfect, consistent harmony?

What is the righteousness of God, as revealed in the first years of Christianity? Oh the importance of having again the gospel as then preached: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed." (Rom. i. 17 and context.)

This is fully explained in Romans iii. 21-26: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God,

which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe : for there is no difference : for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus : whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness : that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Mark, this is God's righteousness, apart from law, though surely witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ. We thus look by faith away from ourselves, and law, and every thing else, to Jesus Christ. And what we find there, is unto all and upon all them that believe. Let us fully own that all have sinned, you, I—all, and come short of the glory of God. God points us then to Jesus Christ, as the revelation of His own righteousness, and to the work of propitiation which He has wrought. God declares His righteousness, both for the remission of the sins of Old Testament believers, and also His, God's righteousness in justifying now "him which believeth in Jesus." This is a vital question for us. And mark it well, this is entirely of God: "Being justified freely by his grace." This is the free favour of God. By what means

is God righteous in doing this, accounting the believer righteous before Him *freely*? The answer is very simple: "Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

But you say, 'sin must be punished.' We have seen this verified, as to God's government in this world, by the black river of death, and in the judgment that is to follow; but how has God dealt with all believers' sins and iniquities? If they must be punished according to all that God is, has that been done? 'This is exactly how God has both commended His love to us, and revealed His inflexible righteousness. Yes, God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son for this very purpose. And we believe God, "that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences." Oh, behold, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, once delivered for our offences. Ah, He only knew what it was to be delivered to bear that wrath of God due to sin, as God sees it; to endure the punishment according to God's holiness, and abhorrence of sin. Such was God's love to us, that it pleased Him to bruise His Son in our stead. Yes, He who said, "Lo, I come to do thy will," sank beneath the dark billows of the wrath of God. Such was the price of our eternal redemption. And did God in righteousness accept the ransom price? This is the very thing we believe, that God raised Him

from the dead "for our justification," in view of our justification, for that very purpose. So that God is our righteous justifier. Who shall condemn?

Oh, reader, reject this redemption, and you must suffer in your own person the just wrath of God against your sins, throughout an unending eternity. But now, thus believing God, we are accounted righteous before Him, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. Thus God has acted in perfect consistency with Himself and toward all created beings. The sins of the believer have been borne, and sin judged on the infinite Person of the Son of God, according to the eternal purpose of God—according to all that God is in His holiness, majesty, and love.

It was this great truth, the righteousness of God revealed—displayed by the atoning death of the Son of God, proved by His resurrection and ascension to heaven, borne witness to by the descent of the Holy Ghost—that gave absolute peace with God, in the first years of Christianity. And, however men and demons have sought to deface it, yet it remains the same—the only safe foundation for the sinner's soul to rest upon. There is no other foundation on which my soul can rest. God has settled every question for me in absolute righteousness, so that now we can

say with certainty, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

God is thus revealed to us. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." There is nothing on our part but sins—no work of our own in this matter, all is free grace. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God reckoneth righteousness without works. Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin." (Rom. iv. 4-8.)

Do you know God thus as your Justifier? Are you this blessed man? Not of or by any works of your own; but freely by His free favour, through the redemption you have in Christ Jesus. Now if we see the kindness of God in making all this so plain to us, and His own righteousness in justifying us, all fear and doubt will be gone, and we shall do as they did in the first years of Christianity, as Paul says, "We also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." May it be so with the reader.



HOURS OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

THE apparent discrepancy between the accounts given by John, and Mark and Matthew, as to the hour of crucifixion of our blessed Lord, is full of deep interest. May we look at it with holy fear.

In Mark we read, "And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. . . . And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark xv. 25-34.) To this agree the words in Matthew: "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour," &c. (Matt. xxvii. 45, &c.) Whilst in John we read, "And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour," when Jesus was condemned by Pilate, and delivered by him to be mocked and crucified.

Now it is evident that the mode of reckoning time cannot be the same, otherwise it would make the trial three hours after the crucifixion. From the Jewish character of Matthew, and indeed Mark, they no doubt always used the Hebrew mode of reckoning time, or the Jewish mode of reckoning the hours from sunset to sunrise, about

six o'clock to six. So that the third hour would be our 9 a.m., the sixth hour 12 noon, and the ninth hour 3 p.m.

It is generally thought that John wrote his Gospel much later, even after the destruction of Jerusalem. And, supposing he used the common way of Roman time, which was the same as ours now, then we shall find all difficulty disappear. There was, it is true, the civil mode the Romans had of stating the hours of the day, which was like the Hebrew, from six to six. But the common people reckoned from midnight to noon, as we do to this day. And as the church of God was chiefly composed of the poor of this world, it is quite in keeping with the Gospel of John that common Roman time should be used.

Let us now trace the order of these solemn events, full of such deep interest to our souls. Oh how sad the malignant hatred to Jesus is seen to be in the very early hour of His trial: Satan, high priest, Herod, Pilate, all astir. We will use our mode of time. What a scene from about four o'clock to six must have taken place! Then *about* six o'clock a.m. of our time, our adorable Lord is condemned by Pilate, to satisfy the hatred of those He so loved; He the Lamb of God. Think of Him set forth for three hours. Read Mark xv. 15-22; Matt. xxvii. 26-34. Here we have the history of those three hours, from 6 a.m. to the third hour of Jewish time (9 a.m.)

The scourging of Jesus ; the Son of God delivered into the hands of cruel, brutal Roman soldiers ; and this scourging would take up some time. He is taken into the common hall. Every outrage is poured upon him. The stripping, the putting on the scarlet robe, the crown of thorns, the bowing of the knee in mockery and derision, the spitting upon Him—God manifest in flesh—the smiting of Him on the head. In the meantime the trial of the two thieves, for it was customary to execute the criminals immediately after trial. And no doubt the hatred to Jesus was such that the Holy One must be condemned first before the poor thieves. Then there was Pilate writing out the crimes and judgment. And lastly, the awful procession, when earth and hell, men and demons, followed Him to execution. See the Man of sorrows slowly bear His cross, and the preparations on Calvary's hill. All this would surely occupy some three hours. And thus we reach the Roman time of 9 a.m., the third hour of the Jews from six in the morning. Then took place the crucifixion. Then for three hours more He hung a spectacle for men—hearing, and in meekness bearing, their cruel mockings, from the third hour (9 a.m.) to the sixth hour (12 noon).

Then the scene closed to the eyes of men. Darkness covered the whole land. Then the dark billows of divine wrath, when no eye saw Him but the eye of God—His God. Then was

heard that bitter loud cry, "My God, my God, WHY hast thou forsaken me?" Truly those three hours were the centre of eternity. And oh, blessed Father, all this that Thou mightest have us redeemed sinners with Thee for ever. Blessed Jesus, then couldest Thou say, "It is finished," bowing Thy head in death. The veil was rent, the way into the holiest for man was opened for the vilest sinner, saved by such grace as this.

Thus we see all difficulty disappears. There must have been some hours between the condemnation of our Holy Substitute and the crucifixion. John was not writing specially for the Jews, who had rejected their Messiah, and therefore he uses the mode of reckoning time used by the common people in the Roman empire.

A question might arise: Is there any evidence in the Gospel of John, where hours of time are named, that he used nowhere the Hebrew mode from six o'clock to six? Let us briefly examine the several instances.

"They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour." There is nothing in the context to question that this means the common method, that is 10 a.m.; but everything favours that time. Had it been Jewish time (4 p.m.) they could scarcely be said to have abode that *day*. (John i., read vers. 35-42.)

John iv. 6, 7: "Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour." There is everything to favour the common time again, from five to six o'clock p.m. The end of a day's journey, and He who had not where to lay His head, remains weary at Sychar's well. Does not this throw some light on the journeyings of our Lord? The disciples had gone to the city to buy the evening repast. Oh, how oft did He retire on the lonely mountain in prayer to the Father, whilst the disciples slept. But that day's work was not yet done. That poor woman may have been the last to come to the well that day, but she is just in time to meet God, the Giver of the water of life. The shades of that eventful evening would be falling beneath Samaria's mountains, as, forgetting her water-pot, she enters the city, and proclaims the Saviour-Messiah. And at once the hearers came to Him.

The disciples seem hungry, and think more about eating than the salvation of a sinner. This looks more like six o'clock p.m. (after a weary day, the *usual* time of eating in the East) than twelve at noon, the Jewish sixth hour of the day, beneath a burning sun.

In John iv. 46-53, Jesus came to Cana of Galilee, and a certain nobleman, about fourteen miles away, at Capernaum, heard of Him. He came to Jesus, entreating Him to heal his son.

“Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth.” As he returned, his servants met him, and told him, “Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth.” Now it is evident that there was not time to travel fourteen miles from seven o’clock in the evening on the day that Jesus said, “Thy son liveth.” But had it been the Jewish time (1 p.m.) there would have been sufficient time to travel fourteen miles before dark, when in those parts it was both dangerous and unusual to travel. But reckoning common Roman time, it would be seven o’clock p.m., and therefore too late to return that night. The next day he returns, and on the way meets his servants. In this case, then, may we not say, John must, as at the crucifixion, have used Roman time?

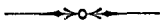
There is one other instance, at least—John xi. 9. Speaking of the day as the period when men walk, He says: “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world,” &c. This passage shews at least that there was a common habit of speaking of the twelve hours of the day, as we speak even now. Indeed, it was a simple fact used for illustration:

twelve hours of light and twelve hours of darkness, or day and night.

May the Lord make that which seemed difficult and contradictory to us, when we were in darkness, become real blessing to us now that He has, in the riches of His grace, made us light in Himself. When He says, "Let there be light," there is light, and it is very good.

There is another matter in connection with this subject I may, if the Lord will, take up at another time.

C. S.



A LETTER ON PROPITIATION.

DEAR BROTHER,

In thinking of your last letter, it occurred to me last night that I omitted to notice the point about propitiation. In my letter to you I gave "to make propitiation for the sins of the people" as the translation of Hebrews ii. 17. I find it so both in Mr. Darby's translation of the New Testament, and in the Revised Version. And I have looked at the meaning of the word both in Classical and New Testament Greek, and cannot find the use you make of it; that is, "to propitiate the sins." Used in connection with a *person* this might do, because you may propitiate a person, but not a *thing*, as sins. It is the word the publican uses in Luke xviii. 13, "God be *merciful* to me a sinner"—literally "*be propitiated* to me the sinner." In my New

Testament Lexicon the meaning is given, "to render propitious in respect to anything." This is the primary meaning; then by implication, "to expiate, make an atonement or expiation for." In the Classical Greek Lexicon the meaning is given, "to appease, to soothe; in Homer, always used of gods," "to make him [that is the god] propitious to one," &c. Used with the word *sin* it is given, "to expiate." Webster gives the meaning of the word "expiate," "To extinguish the guilt of a crime by sufferance of penalty, or some equivalent; to make satisfaction or reparation for; to atone for; as, to expiate a crime."

The propitiation of scripture was simply a propitiatory sacrifice offered to God with reference to sins, in order to render God propitious, or favourable, to the one who had committed the sins. This is the general force of the word, and is the meaning in Hebrews ii. 17. Christ offering Himself as a sacrifice was the propitiation. It was thus He *made propitiation* for the sins of the people. You object to the words "to make," but "to make propitiation for," is what the word means in connection with "sins." It was to God that propitiation had to be made with reference to our sins.* All the light I can get

* The throne of God became the mercy-seat, from which He could proclaim mercy, forgiveness, and justification to the whole world. And this in perfect righteousness.—ED.

confirms me in the thought that this is the right translation.

But perhaps you will ask, Was not God favourable to the sinner already, before Christ made propitiation? In one sense, yes. That is, God loved the world, and proved His love in sending His Son; but He could not *receive the sinner into favour* except *through* this propitiation. The wrath of God abides on the unbeliever (John iii. 36), and this is the opposite of being under favour. Again, "God is angry with the wicked every day." (Ps. vii. 11.) Yet God is *love*, and His love has gone out after a lost world. He commendeth His love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. But why did Christ die? Was it merely to shew God's love? Was it not to make propitiation? And was not this a necessity? Much as God loved us, He could not have us in His presence and favour with our sins on us. His love might have *forgiven*, but that would not have been *righteousness*, and would not have removed our guilt. But in order not only to *forgive*, but to *justify*, God dealt with our sins at the cross, when they were laid on Christ, and borne by Him; that is, Christ paid the full penalty of our guilt, and thus all was cleared, and God could justify us, the sins being gone in the blood shedding of Him who bore them. So being justified by faith, we have peace with God; nor is this all:

through our Lord Jesus Christ we have access into present favour, or grace, and in this favour we stand, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, while we glory in tribulations, not ashamed of the hope, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. God's love indeed acted toward us when we were in our sins—when we were enemies—but we were not in His favour then, and could only be brought into that favour according to divine righteousness. God loved, and gave, when we were guilty rebels. But there were two things that hindered our being in His presence and favour: we were in a state of moral death, and we were guilty. This double need God has met, because He desired to have us in His presence to enjoy His face and His favour, and as the companions and co-heirs of His Son; yea, and as His own dear children, and not as guilty rebels in a state of alienation and moral death, without a single affection answering to His love. How then did He get us there? Not by any movement on our part, for we did not want to be there; and if we had desired it, our guilt would have shut us out. 1 John iv. 9, 10 answers the question. God Himself meets the difficulty in sovereign, infinite love, yet consistently with righteousness and holiness. "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 to be the propitiation for our sins." Here then was life for the dead, and propitiation for the guilty; life in the incarnate Son of God, but made good to us through His death by which expiation of sins was also made. Wondrous love! It is the revelation of what God is. The love has been manifested—love acting out its own nature without anything in us to call it forth, save our guilty need; nay, there was everything to drive it back, had it been possible. "God is love." And we have seen and known the love as those who have been brought to Him; but life had to be possessed, and sins expiated, before we could either enjoy what God is, or be in His holy presence. And this could be only through the Mediator, God's only begotten Son, our Redeemer. God's love has been manifested in giving Him. He came to do God's will, and doing this will involved making propitiation for our sins. He was sent to do this. He *could* do it, and He only. He did His Father's will, and drank the cup. He paid the full penalty of our guilt. But oh, what a price! Who can estimate its value? Who can fathom the sorrows of Golgotha? Who can tell what passed through the holy soul of our Redeemer as He drank the cup—derided by enemies; forsaken by disciples; lover and friend far from

Him; "made sin," though sinless; iniquities, the sins of His people, laid on Him; the sword of Jehovah awaking and smiting; Jehovah bruising; the light gone; forsaken of God—oh! who can tell?

The sorrow, the agony, the horror of darkness, we shall never fathom, never know. Blessed be God, we shall know the *results for us* in eternal blessedness and glory, with and like Him who suffered thus for us, to make propitiation for our sins! And He shall have His eternal delight and joy in us too,—“shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” (Rev. i. 5, 6.)

I would add that where it is said He was “made sin” for us (2 Cor. v. 21), or sent “for sin” (Rom. viii. 3), it is a different thought from propitiation. Propitiation, though not limited to “sins,” is “for the whole world.” “Propitiation” and “substitution” both have reference to “sins.” The former expresses the God-ward aspect of Christ’s atoning work, and the latter expresses the man-ward aspect.

“Propitiation” is seen in the goat on which Jehovah’s lot fell, and whose blood was carried into the sanctuary, and put on and before the mercy-seat to meet the requirements of the throne

and majesty of Jehovah, and by which the sanctuary was cleansed.

“Substitution” is seen in the goat on whose head the high priest, as the representative of the people, laid his hands, confessing “over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel,” thus transferring them to the goat, as it is said, “putting them upon the head of the goat,” which, as a scape-goat, bore them away.

On the one hand Christ glorified God about our sins in the shedding of His blood. This is propitiation. On the other hand He confessed the sins of His people as His own and bore them away in death. This is substitution. His resurrection is the witness that the sins are gone, and that God has been glorified. He “was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father.” (Rom. vi. 4.) Propitiation is for “sins,” but in the passages just referred to it is not “sins,” but “sin.” In Romans viii. 3, it is distinctly stated, “To condemn *sin in the flesh*,” not “sins.” On the ground of propitiation we are pardoned. The sins are forgiven in virtue of the atonement, or satisfaction that Christ has rendered to God. But “*sin in the flesh*” is not forgiven, but “condemned” in the death of Christ. “Sin in the flesh,” is not what we have done. It is our *state*, but a state out of which springs incorrigible “enmity against God,” and insubjection to His law. (Rom. viii. 7), and therefore it cannot be

bettered, but only "condemned." God has condemned it in the sacrifice of Christ, and thus we personally escape condemnation. (Rom. viii. 1.) Christ's death, in which "sin in the flesh" was condemned, was for us, so that we can say we have died with Him. We account ourselves to have died unto sin, and to live unto God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. vi. 11.) This is our deliverance from "sin."

In every way Christ has glorified God, whether as to "sin," or as to "sins;" and thus our need has been fully met in a way suited to God's nature and character, God Himself having provided in His own Lamb the sacrifice that was needed according to the demands of His own righteous and holy majesty. This wondrous revelation of Himself to us in infinite grace—Love itself, and Light too—His whole nature as light and love shining out in Christ, and glorified in His death—sin put away according to what God is as Light, and Love having its own way in saving the guilty, and bringing many sons to glory—this will form the key note to our praise and worship in the scene where He will rest in His love, and we with Him, the objects of His eternal love and delight in Christ.

Even now we raise the song of praise.

Affectionately your brother in Christ,

A. H. R.



CORRESPONDENCE.

12. A Friend, Ireland. As to the rainbow before the days of Noah, or before the flood, we have no evidence in the word of God that it existed before the flood; at the same time there is no statement that it appeared then for the first time. We do not know the conditions of the atmosphere that existed from the time that sin came in—the fall of man—until God smelled the sweet savour of Noah's offering. Indeed, before the fall we read, "For the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground." (Gen. ii. 5, 6.) Now, however thick and heavy the mist, if the whole face of the ground was covered, there would be no rainbow. If no sunshine, then no rainbow. Man can only shew his ignorance and conceit by intruding into what is not revealed. If for the first time when Noah stepped into the new world, the sun shone out as the rain descended, and the covenant bow appeared—as the offering ascended—it would be a most striking figure of the gloom that settled on this earth through sin, and the future glory of God shining on man through the one offering of Christ.

As to scripture, it is silent about circumcision being practised before Abraham. He and his family were the first household separated to God from the nations of the world, when all had been lured into idolatry, and the worship of demons. Why need we intrude where scripture is silent? They had the seal of circumcision, believers now are sealed by the Holy Ghost.

FIRST YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY.

XI.

THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY.

WE shall better understand the wondrous character of the gospel of the glory, as preached in the First Years of Christianity, if we dwell briefly on the gospel of the kingdom, which preceded it, and which, when the church is gone to glory, will succeed it on earth.

In the preaching of John the Baptist, the heavens were only opened to one Person, the Son of God. He was the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased. The heavens were opened to Him, and on Him the Holy Spirit could descend. (Matt. iii. 16, 17.) John's testimony was the last and greatest of the prophets to Israel. It was the axe laid to the root of the trees—to all Jewish prejudices and self-righteousness, and was a solemn call to repentance and confession of sins; and finally he announced the Messiah. There was no opening into the heavens for sinners, but only for the one Man who came from heaven.

In the preaching also of Jesus to Israel, it was not the gospel of the glory, but of the kingdom. Several bright gleams shone forth: shall we say in the *prophetic* vision on the Mount, foreshadowing the coming glory? There were two men with Him in the glory. During His last

night before His death there were wondrous words from His lips, both to the disciples and to the Father. He spake not of Jerusalem, nor this earth, nor the kingdom on the earth, but of the Father's house, the many mansions, and of His going to prepare a place for them; and He said, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

And He said unto the Father, when about to be with Him, in the glory that He had with Him before the world was, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." (John xvii. 24.) Yet even after His resurrection the apostles did not understand this. They were still occupied with the promised kingdom to Israel. (Acts i. 6.)

It is also very remarkable, that during the forty days Jesus remained with them, we do not read that He spake *to them* about the church, or the gospel of the glory, "but being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." When the Holy Ghost had come down, Jesus having ascended up into heaven, and the new company of believers having been baptised by the Holy Ghost—the church being thus formed—the preaching even then was chiefly what characterises the kingdom. Very distinctly so in Acts iii. 17–21.

Peter unlocked the door, so to speak, by repentance and baptism into the kingdom of heaven—the kingdom on earth, whilst the King was away in heaven. The preaching went thus far, the apostles saying, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” (Acts v. 29–31.)

As yet the preaching is limited to Israel, and to the promises made to their fathers—very much, indeed, to the kingdom to be set up on this earth. Not a word yet of the gospel of the glory. Jesus was gone up into heaven, and He would come again. But the gospel preached did not reach up to heaven opened to man.

In Acts vii. there was an immense change. Israel, in the murder of Stephen, committed their final sin as a nation, in rejecting the Holy Ghost. All is now over with them *for the present*. All is over as to restoring the kingdom to them now; and at the same moment the heavens are opened to man, to the believing dying Stephen. Full of the Holy Ghost, he “looked up stedfastly into heaven, AND SAW THE GLORY of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” Alas, from that day they have stopped their ears,

From that moment, though the earth has rejected the Son of God, the heavens have remained open to man, to every one who believes. That day there stood near a young man, at whose feet were laid the clothes of the murderers. We shall hear of him again. That young man, Saul, was consenting unto his death; that young man was the chosen instrument to go to the nations and proclaim the gospel of the glory.

In Acts ix., xxii., xxvi. we have another most remarkable advance. This very young man, Saul, mad with persecuting rage, was on his way to Damascus, with authority from the chief priests to bring believers bound to Jerusalem. A stream of glory shines right down from heaven. He says, "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me." And he says, from that heavenly glory "I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" What amazement seized that young man! Heaven was opened, and the glory descends, comes down to man, to man the sinner, the enemy. And that voice from heaven, from the brightness of the glory, speaks to the sinner mad with persecuting rage, and asks a question, which implies that those believers whom this young man persecutes, are one with Himself, who speaks from the glory. Astonished

he asks, "Who art thou, Lord?" Who can this Lord of glory be? And he hears the wondrous reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

Now it was from the glorified Jesus, Saul received the commission to go forth as His chosen witness and heavenly messenger, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." You will see that this was greatly in advance of all that had gone before. The gospel of the kingdom of God to be set up on this earth, most true in its time, was altogether different from this gospel of the glory and the heavenly vision. Discipleship by repentance and baptism was most prominent as the entrance into the kingdom, in John's preaching, in the Lord's also, in Matthew and Mark. But Paul was not thus sent. Indeed, as we have said, his preaching was far in advance of that of the twelve, as seen up to Acts ix. He is sent from the vision of the heavenly glory to both Jews and Gentiles, to turn them from darkness to light. It was to take out a people for heaven, from the power of Satan unto God. And what he preached was not what man *must* do, but that Christ *must* suffer, and "be the first that should rise from the dead, and should SHEW

LIGHT unto the people, and to the Gentiles." And he could say, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

Now whilst the twelve preached Jesus as the crucified, dead, risen, and exalted Lord and Messiah, Paul at once proclaims Him the Son of God. There was now nothing more to be expected from man. It was no longer what he must do, but what Christ must have done who had appeared to him in heavenly glory. Thus he opened the scriptures: "opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." To him it was the Son of God who had thus died for him, who had been made sin for him, who had put away sins by the sacrifice of Himself, and had sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Could he doubt the perfection of that work which Christ must do, and had done? No, He who had once been crucified for him had appeared from heaven in brightest glory—in light beyond the Eastern noon-day sun. God had raised Him from the dead, who had been delivered for our offences, and raised Him for the very purpose of our justification. Thus he preached, and thus, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he wrote. This was his gospel of the glory. Let us hear him.

He says, "But if our gospel be hid, it is

hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not. So that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them Because it is the God who spoke, that out of darkness light should shine, who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 3-6. Lit. Translation.) Thus the gospel of the glory of Christ shines down from heaven on a lost and guilty world. All is darkness here. Man is darkness. Satan, the god of this world, has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving: he presents every form of false religion and dark superstition to hinder the rays of heavenly glory shining into the poor dark soul of man.

Has the radiancy of the glory of God in the love of Jesus Christ ever shone into your soul? Has that risen and glorified Jesus ever spoken direct to you? Can you say, I have heard His voice speaking to me? What a colour the heavenly vision gave to all the preachings of Paul, that once fiery young persecutor! When he preached forgiveness of sins to guilty sinners, it was straight from the glory. Nay, the inspired writings of Paul will be all fresh and new, and heavenly, if we read them as in the First Years of Christianity, in the warmth and

brightness of the heavenly vision. They will indeed be like a river of water of life, and light from the throne of glory, of God and the Lamb. Let us remember the power of that vision of the glory which attracted Paul from everything under the sun. May it be so with us.



THE PREPARATION DAY.

“BEHOLD THE MAN.”

“AND it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King.” (John xix. 14.)

We have seen that instead of the sixth hour presenting any difficulty, it was the most suited mode of stating time, the common time of the Roman Empire; just as the Jewish mode had been the most suitable for the Jews. Again, the seeker of difficulties may ask, How could this be the preparation of the passover, when Jesus and His disciples had eaten the passover many hours before?

Let us examine this. We read, “And when *the hour* was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.” And if we turn to Deuteronomy xvi., we have very special instruction as to the passover—the month, and the day, and the place. It was not to be in *any* place, “but at

the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt." Thus Jesus was at the place God had chosen for the sacrifice of the passover, and the month, the day, and the hour had come: the going down of the sun. The appointed hour had come. As to the chief priests and scribes they sought how they might kill Him. They knew not that He was the true passover Lamb. They understood not that the time had come that the passover must be killed. But when the hour was come He sat down with the apostles. Thirteen persons, within the prescribed number, according to Jewish history. They sat down on our Thursday, about six o'clock, at the going down of the sun: of Jewish time, that being evening, until six on Friday morning, our time.

Now when we remember the vast numbers that gathered to the appointed place, Jerusalem, and that there were only from ten to twenty to each lamb, the number of passover lambs must have been very great. (See Josephus, *Wars*, vi., ix. 3, and Book ii., chap. xiv. 3.) 56,000 lambs are said to have been sacrificed. And further, as the passover occupied some considerable time, it would seem that most of the night would be occupied before all had eaten it, only nothing must be left until the morning. There was a

division in the service of the supper before the lamb was eaten ; so that there is no contradiction or difficulty when we read, "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment : and it was early ; and they themselves went not in to the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled ; but that they might eat the passover." Thus it would appear they returned to finish the passover by eating the lamb at the very hour they delivered Jesus to the Gentile power to be tried and killed. (John xviii. 28.)

If we turn now to John xix. 14 we shall find a still more blessed explanation : one full of the deepest instruction for our hearts. You will notice it is not the preparation for the passover, but of the passover. And even after the crucifixion we read, "And now when the even was come, because it was *the preparation*, that is, the day before the sabbath." (Mark xv. 42.) "For that sabbath day was an high day." (John xix. 31.) That is, the sabbath of the passover week was of all sabbaths the highest type of eternal rest. For fifteen centuries *the preparation* day had pointed on to this day, on which let us now dwell. Jesus, the Lamb of God, had presented Himself at this very passover, when *the passover day* fell on the day before the sabbath. Alas ! the Jews understood it not. Do they who say they are Jews understand it any more now ?

The preparation day, then, commenced on the Thursday evening at sunset, and lasted until Friday evening sunset. But what was it, the preparation for? It was God's preparation day for man, poor, lost, guilty man, to be brought into eternal rest to Himself: the eternal sabbath based on redemption. This had long been foreshadowed in Deuteronomy v. 15: "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm: THEREFORE the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." The sabbath, or rest of creation, had long been lost, and now God set forth the sabbath of redemption, which never can be lost whilst God is faithful to the claims of the redemption-blood of His Lamb.

Oh that our eyes may be fastened on Him, the Lamb of God, during the twenty-four hours of this preparation day. In this year the passover day was the preparation day. When the hour was come at the beginning of this day (6 p.m. of our Thursday) He sat down. Let us hear His precious words. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." (Luke xxii. 15, 16.) Think what He had to endure that day to fulfil the passover, and prepare the sure

ground of our eternal rest. Yet such was His love to us, He could say, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before *I suffer.*" Thus began the preparation day. There was no more use for the thousands of dying lambs. No more use for their flesh, nor typical value in their blood. The material feast must cease, and the spiritual now be symbolised by the bread and wine. The Lamb of God presents Himself. "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." The blessed Lord well knew the way these words would be perverted to a literal meaning of His flesh and blood, and thus He uses a word to shew it was not literal: He does not say which shall be, but which *is*. Indeed, another word also: "This cup." Now the blood was not yet shed, and the *cup* was not His blood. Did He not clearly mean, that as the paschal lamb had been eaten by Israel, in *remembrance* of the temporal redemption from Egypt, so it is His blessed will that we should partake of the symbols of bread and wine in remembrance of Him and of our eternal redemption? Nay, He says, "Do this in remembrance of me." We shall find He finished the work of this preparation day, and left no

need of another sacrifice to bring men into the sabbath of eternal rest.

Let us turn to John for further details of the preparation day. Chapter xiii. Supper, the passover supper, being come, there was Judas, the devil having put into his heart to betray Him ; but Jesus knew His own, and loved them with a love that knows no end. "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments." This was probably at the usual break in the passover, before the lamb was eaten, when the head of the household catechised the younger children in the word. Did not the washing of their feet by water signify how He would ever, in love, apply the word ? What a precious lesson on the preparation day ! He will ever keep us suited to the rest into which we are brought. And thus He would have us serve each other.

He may have felt the first pang of suffering as He washed the feet of Judas ; for when He had sat down again we read, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, " Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." This produced great consternation. And well it might. And what a remembrance for Judas for ever and ever ! And what does the tender heart of Jesus still feel as He sees men reading the word, and enjoying every outward privilege of Christendom, and yet hastening on to where Judas went ? It will be terrible in hell to

remember a father's prayers and the constant reading of the word ; and a sister or a brother resting in the love of Jesus, as one disciple leaned on Jesus' bosom. Well may we look round the family, and ask, Lord, who is it? Are you quite certain, reader of these lines, the doom of Judas will never be yours? Oh, what did the blessed Jesus feel when He dipped the sop and gave it to Judas? It was all over for that man. Satan entered into him, he went out, "and it was night." And a night to his soul that will *never, never* know the break of day. No hope. What a warning on the preparation day!

And the bold and devoted Peter must learn this day, that he has *no strength*. It is not what Peter can do for the Lord on the preparation day, it must be the work of the Lord for him.

And it was on this preparation day that the veil was lifted up, and the heavenly place and home of the saints fully revealed for the first time. (John xiv. 1-3.) Jesus would be no longer the object of sight; but the object of faith, even as God. These poor disciples are lifted up, far above the promises to Israel, up to the Father's house with its many mansions. He says, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Is not all this revelation suited to be given on preparation day? If on that day

He would do the work that redeems us and prepares us for the place on high, then it was the fit time to tell them and us that He would go and prepare the place, and come and take us to Himself.

But if a Peter has no strength in the hour of temptation to stand for Christ, and Christ is no longer with us in bodily presence to sustain us, what is to become of us until He comes? He says, on this preparation day, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter [one to take entire charge of you], that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth." See how this is repeated so as to meet our need in every way. (John xiv. 16, 18, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7-14.) Nay, all the blessed instruction of John xiii., xiv., xv., xvi. And then the claims of Christ for us in chapter xvii. All this occupied after supper the evening of preparation day, and every word is needed for our souls. The great work, however, of the preparation day had not yet begun. Let us carefully notice each stage. The preparation day had advanced "when Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples." Let us go with Him into the garden, and witness the sorrows of our own dear Lord.



GLAD TIDINGS OF GOD.

GLAD tidings were announced to Abraham when it was said to him, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." Glad tidings were also announced when the angel proclaimed to the watching shepherds the birth of a Saviour, Christ the Lord, and the praises of the heavenly host rang through the heavens: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." In a fuller way still, glad tidings were preached after Jesus died, and rose, and ascended, as we have it in I Corinthians xv.: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve," &c. There is also the gospel, or glad tidings, of the glory of Christ, which Satan labours to obscure, as it is written: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of dark-

ness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 4-6.)

What was announced to Abraham was something to take place in the *future*. It was not an accomplished fact. It was something he could look forward to as a *hope*—a *sure* hope, no doubt, but only a hope. To *us*—to *you*, reader—something better is announced. It is the blessed fact of a *present* salvation, through Him who died on the cross, and who rose again for our justification. The facts announced in the gospel of our salvation are :—

1. Christ died for our sins.
2. He was buried.
3. He rose again the third day.
4. He was seen by many witnesses after His resurrection.
5. He is now a Man in the glory of God.

Blessed facts announced to those who are lost! facts of eternal importance to every ruined child of Adam!

Reader, are you a child of Adam? Then know that these are facts which deeply concern you for time and eternity. Let me ask you to look at that blessed, lowly, obedient Man, who walked down here among men thirty-three years, in absolute grace and goodness and love. Look at Him as disease of every kind vanishes at His touch, and demon-tormentors of wretched

men leave their victims at His command! Look at Him as poor sin-laden wretches come into His presence, and find in Him One who has power on earth to forgive sins! Who is this blessed One? this Friend of sinners? It is the eternal Son of God. Hear the Father's voice saluting Him, as the heavens open over Him at His baptism in Jordan: "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Here, then, we have God's well beloved Son down here among men, the perfect expression of all that God is. He was "the exact expression of his substance," the One who, made flesh, came, full of grace and truth, to present God to men, and of whom the apostle could say, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." But now that blessed One has gone back to the Father, and is now in the glory of God, the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. He has gone back as *Man*, and is now a Man—the *God-man*—in the glory of God. In Him man has got a place in the presence of God, according to divine righteousness. Is there no good news in this for poor sinners, shut out from God's presence because of sin? Is it nothing to know that there is now really a Man in the glory of God? Sinner, it is this that opens the door of hope for guilty man. It is Christ having gone in there as Man that has opened the way for you also to enter in.

But wait a little. We have said that Christ the Son of God has gone back to the Father. How did He go? What road did He take? He went by the way of death and resurrection. He passed through death's dark, raging river, and dried up its waters of judgment, that others might pass over. That One, at whose word all diseases vanished, and whose authority demons were forced to own, must die upon the cross, or the door of mercy must be closed for ever against the guilty. Look at the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the Creator of the universe, as He hangs upon that middle cross between two thieves! Why did He hang there? Why did He give Himself up to be crucified and slain by wicked men? Were not legions of demons subject to His word, and had He no power to save His own life from those who sought it? Why did He cry out on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Why did God allow Satan to lead on the world against Him at the cross, and why was His hand against His own Fellow, and His face hidden from Him who had ever been His delight? Why did darkness envelope Him, and the waves of divine wrath close over His soul in that hour of unparalleled sorrow and anguish? Was it an accident? Was there some mistake? Listen to God's answer: "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God

in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) He "died for our sins." He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He suffered once for sins, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." He took the place of His guilty people, and bore their sins in God's presence, draining for them the bitter cup of God's judgment, in order that they might be saved, and drink the cup of eternal joy and blessing as His companions in glory. Oh! what a Saviour!

And now, my reader, let me ask you a plain question. Have you in God's presence bowed to the fact that you are a lost sinner?—not merely a sinner, but a *lost* sinner—one whose wretched case nothing could meet but God's spotless Lamb, going to that cross to bear your sins there? You say, Yes. Then know assuredly that Christ's death applies itself to you, and gives you full clearance from guilt in the presence of God. Look up into the glory of God, and behold that Man there! He is there because He has most perfectly met the whole question of sin which shut you out from God. He has glorified God as to sin, and God has opened the heavens to receive Him, and to receive in Him all who believe in His name. Do you believe in Him? Then your sins are gone, and you are one with Christ in glory. Gaze into His blessed face there! Behold the glory of the Lord! Let your eye ever rest there! Beholding, you will

be changed into the same image from glory to glory. And, what is more blessed still, you will soon be there with Him, and with all the ransomed of His blood. Blessed, glorious prospect! Surely it is *glad tidings* to a poor, lost sinner to hear from God Himself that there is absolute and eternal forgiveness of sins, simply through faith in the name of Jesus, and that he who believes is one with Christ—one with that accepted Man in the glory of God.

But what I would especially press here is that these glad tidings are *the glad tidings* OF GOD. They came from One whose very name, whose very being, is LOVE. GOD IS LOVE. The blessed Lord Jesus was the expression of this down here among men: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Behold the eternal Word made flesh, the only-begotten Son of the Father, dwelling among men, full of grace and truth! "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH. Do you want to see Him? Do you want to know Him? "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. v. 19.) Look at the Lord Jesus in His ministry down here—His ministry of grace and love. "Grace and truth came by

Jesus Christ." Himself the Truth, the Light, the poor sinner was manifested in His presence a loathsome picture, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores; a mass of corruption, ruined by sin, and covered with guilt. But oh, amazing grace! *God was not imputing sins.* He sent not His Son to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved. The sinner's terrible ruin and need were brought out in His presence; but it was in the presence of One who was able to meet the sinner's utmost need. He could touch the unclean without being defiled. Himself the mighty God, the power of evil vanished at His touch. And He was the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. O sinner, behold Him! One real, true look of faith will bring life and salvation, and dispel every doubt and fear. Satan has perhaps filled your heart with wicked thoughts about God, destroying all your confidence. Do not, I pray you, take Satan's thoughts about God. Satan is a liar from the beginning. If you want the truth, look at Christ. The truth, as well as grace, came by Him. He was God—God manifest in the flesh. Look then at Him, and you will see what God is. The deaf, the dumb, the halt, the maimed, the lame, the blind, the afflicted, the sorrow-tossed, and the sin-laden, came to Him for help. Was ever one of these needy ones sent away without help?

Not one. And now look at Him on the cross. Why was He there? He hung there for the guilty. God gave Him up to that. He spared not His Son. He gave Him up to that bitter death of darkness and indescribable sorrow. Why was it, sinner? Did God delight in the sufferings of His Son? Ah! no, surely not. But there was no other way by which He could get *you* and *me*, and lost men everywhere, into His own presence, to enjoy His love, and dwell with Him in eternal blessedness and glory. Surely God *is* love, and Satan, with all his lies, cannot hide it from those who gaze upon the Lord Jesus, His blessed Son, on the cross, giving His life a ransom for all.

Let me say to you again, poor, needy, anxious soul, in the words of scripture, "God is love." God gave His Son for *you*. God made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. God raised Him again from the dead, as the everlasting Witness that His work on the cross was finished, and that divine justice was satisfied. He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. He has gone into "the holy place"—the presence of God—"by his own blood." And to-day—this day of grace—God announces from a blood-sprinkled throne, unconditional forgiveness to every one who believes; and not forgiveness

only, but eternal acceptance in His beloved Son. The tidings are GOD'S *glad tidings* to LOST MEN. Reader, have you taken the place of being LOST? Then be assured the good news is for *you*, for Christ came to *seek* and to *save* that which was *lost*. The gospel applies itself fully to those who in truth plead guilty before God, the Saviour-God.



FELLOWSHIP.

“THEN drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

“What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

“Either what woman having ten pieces of

silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek *diligently till she find it*? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

How often we repeat the words, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us."

In the above precious scripture we have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in seeking the lost sheep, the lost sinner "UNTIL HE FIND;" and in the figure of the woman sweeping the house until she find; but there is one word most striking, she seeks it "*diligently*" until she find it. Then the joy in each case: the joy of God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, and God the Father, filling the courts of heaven with joy over one sinner that repenteth.

Beloved fellow Christians, what fellowship have we with all this? Are we not rather more like a man in the wilderness who diligently seeks a nice green tree, with soft grass beneath, where he may sit in selfish comfort beneath the shade? A few nice friends will make it all the more comfortable.

Now, whilst no one can hold divine sovereignty more strongly than I do, yet have we not sat

beneath the green tree of selfish comfort, and said, "If the lost sheep in the wilderness are to be found, they will come just here"? Is that fellowship with the Holy Ghost or with the Shepherd-Son of God in seeking DILIGENTLY? Surely it is blessed to sit beneath His shadow with great delight; but He says, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." If we know what it is to lie down in the green pastures by His peaceful side, yet what about that poor wanderer, His lost sheep, far away from the flock? What about the lost ones yet amongst the millions that have never heard the name of Jesus?

Did you in all your life ever seek the lost one diligently until you have found it? And when you hear of the conversion of a sinner, the deep repentance of a prodigal, does it give you any joy? Would you not *far rather* go and hear a lecture from some noted servant of Christ (and not always that), than go with Jesus to seek the lost sheep until you find it? Do you pray much for the Sunday school? Do you go there and seek diligently for a lamb, and have you much joy in bringing that dear lamb to the Shepherd's bosom? and in the infirmaries, the workhouses, the streets, the lanes? The Holy Spirit has touched the hearts of a band, chiefly of poor men, in going through the remote villages, yes, and towns too, with tracts. How gladly these receive a parcel of tracts, and how diligently

they lend, or give them. Many a lost one is thus found, and many a sheep of Christ gets fed who finds no other food; and, aroused by the tracts to the value of the word of God, in many a lonely spot they learn to lie down in the green pastures. Oh think of the Shepherd coming to seek the lost sinner! And has He given us the Spirit, who seeks diligently till He find the lost, to do His very work during His absence? And honestly, are we not asleep instead of seeking diligently?

And He says, "I come quickly." Oh, what a change if the saints of God were to awake, and seek diligently the lost ones, and seek until we found them. The Holy Ghost has given us this precious parable of the Lord, and He can guide us where to use the truth. The floor of Christendom itself is covered with dust and rubbish: never mind, do not be weary, *sweep, sweep* until you find the lost one.

Awake, my brethren, awake, let us have more of the joy of heaven. Rub your eyes, and say, Is it nothing to me that a sinner has been brought to repentance! Is the love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to the poor lost, degraded, guilty sinner, and the joy of his being saved—is this nothing to me?

If you look the world over you will find wherever a true follower of Christ is in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, with the Father and the Son,

in seeking the lost sheep *diligently* until he find it, that there is blessing. And, on the other hand, can we wonder if we are utter strangers to this joy of the Lord, that there is, and must be, utter barrenness and fruitless occupiers of the ground?

The Lord speak by His own word to our souls.

C. S.



THE BOOK OF GOD.

I LOVE the sacred Book of God,
 No other can its place supply:
 It points me to the saints' abode,
 It gives me wings and bids me fly.

Sweet Book! in which my eyes discern
 The image of my absent Lord;
 From thine instructive page I learn
 The joys His presence will afford.

In thee I read my title clear
 To mansions that will ne'er decay;
 My Lord! oh! when will He appear,
 And bear His prisoner far away?

Then shall I need thy light no more,
 To shew me whom I have believed;
 When I have reach'd the heavenly shore
 The Lord Himself will stand reveal'd.

When 'midst the throng celestial placed,
 The bright ORIGINAL I see,
 From which the sacred page was traced
 Sweet book!—I've no more need of thee.

But while I'm here, thou shalt supply
 His place and tell me of His love;
 I'll read with faith's discerning eye,
 And get a taste of joys above. T. S. B. R.

FIRST YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY.

XII.

FACTS AND FRUITS OF PAUL'S GOSPEL.

WHAT did Paul preach? What produced such marvellous results? Did he preach what man must do? Or did he preach what Christ had done? Did he preach baptism as a means of regeneration, or of salvation? No; baptism had no place in the gospel he preached. (1 Cor. i. 17.) Did he preach that all men were under the law, and that they must be justified by either keeping the law, or by some one keeping it for them, any way that they must be justified on the principle of the law? No; we do not find such a thought.

Let us keep close to the facts—his preaching as commissioned from the heavenly vision, by the Lord Himself, and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in his epistles. You will notice in his manner of preaching that there was not one word of what man was required to do. Men were treated as *lost*, and Paul had a message from God for them: "Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." Not a word about all men being under the law and that Christ must needs keep it for them. The very Jews of

the synagogue, who were seeking to be justified by keeping the law, needed an entire change of mind, repentance ; and the facts that Paul preached produced that repentance. The mass of them rejected this gospel and these facts with scorn, just as those now who say they are Jews, that is under law, and are not, will reject these facts of the gospel, which were told out in the first days of Christianity.

Study these three facts : 1st fact, " Christ must needs have suffered." 2nd fact, " And risen again from the dead." And the 3rd fact, " That this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." These three facts formed the base or foundation of all Paul's preaching. And they were not hearsay facts : he had not been taught them by others. But he had seen this very crucified Jesus in that heavenly vision of glory above all created light.

It is no little privilege to have the true gospel thus direct from the man who received it in the heavenly vision—a man who could not be mistaken. In 1 Corinthians xv. he gives an account of the gospel he preached to them : it is as ever the same : " How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures ; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." And that others as well as himself had seen Him after His resurrection : " So we preach, and so ye be-

lieved." If Christ was not risen, then he was a false witness, and they had believed in vain, and were still in their sins.

These were not doctrines, properly speaking, or much less theories, but simple facts. All else in the world were doctrines and theories of men. Here were facts that fully revealed the righteous character of God; that met all God's claims on the guilty sinner, and gave him the absolute assurance that all was met and settled to the glory of God; for the full glory of God shone in the face of His beloved Son, the Man who had done it all; and who declared, in the plainest terms, that all who believed God were reckoned righteous before Him. All this was clearer and brighter than the Eastern noon-day sun.

Now, is not this just what man needs to know with certainty, so that he may have perfect peace with God, in the full radiance of His glory? Perhaps nothing has more tended to hide this clear gospel of the First Years of Christianity than the Galatian heresy, the determination to put all men under law. Not the openly giving up of Christ, but making our justification to depend partly on Christ, and partly on law. Even Peter utterly failed in this matter, and the beloved Barnabas was carried away with the dissimulation.

The Spirit of God, by the Apostle Paul, takes this ground, that since Christ "gave himself for

our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God our Father," then to mix up the law, that is, the principle of what we ought to do to God, would be quite a different gospel from the gospel given to him. (Gal. i. 4-12.)

And Paul shews the real folly of this, for the Jews who were under the law had to give it up, "That we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by works of the law shall no flesh be justified." To do it would be to build again the things which he had destroyed. As to himself, as a responsible man once under the law, he was dead, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ." Now a dead crucified man is not under law, but is dead to it. He says: "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

No, nothing could be more sad or foolish than the giving up the truth, as held by Paul and set forth in this epistle. It has leavened all Christendom, and brought in the utmost confusion. Sometimes the soul believes God, and then is happy; then seeks to attain to a little more righteous-

ness by *the law as a rule of life!* and then, is almost in despair. Where is there one who has not suffered by this confusion? Are you perplexed, and say: "Why, I have been taught from my childhood that all men, Jews or Gentiles, were under the law, and all had transgressed it, and all were under its curse, and that even the believer is put under it again, as the rule of life?" Yes, this is exactly what men teach now. Is it what Paul taught in the First Years of Christianity?

As this letter to the Galatians was one of the very first of the first years, do prayerfully read on. What do you find in chapter iii.? He tells us that Abraham was justified long before the law was given. He believed God, and IT (faith) was reckoned to him for righteousness. He tells us: "*As many* as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." Then if all are now of the works of the law, all are still under the curse. He tells us that the law is not of faith. Speaking of Jews, who had been under it, he says: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He tells us that the covenant confirmed of God in Christ, which He promised to Abraham, was 430 years before the law. He explains why the law was given. It served to bring out transgressions; that it was a schoolmaster until Christ.

In chapter iv. there is the most marked dis-

inction betwixt those under law, and those under grace: the one in bondage, the other in the liberty of sons. And under the allegory of Agar and Sarah, or Ishmael and Isaac, the two principles of law and grace cannot go on together. Ishmael must be cast out. Oh, how we, like Abraham, plead that he might live. How we struggle that the flesh under law might live, when God tells us to reckon it dead. It seems so desirable that there might be some good found in us, and the work of Christ to make up the deficiency. To take this ground is to be in bondage. Ah, you know this, though you thus cleave to and plead for Ishmael. Oh that my old "I" could live and be better. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Read every word that follows in chapter v. Remember, if you take the ground of the law, "Christ shall profit you nothing."

What solemn warnings follow, and how little heeded. The only power for a holy walk, and we need no other power, is this, the power of the Holy Ghost. And notice this mark: "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Then also you find the great truth, that neither the law, circumcision, nor lawlessness, uncircumcision, availeth anything, but a new creature. A truth of the utmost importance! Man must be born wholly anew. The law only brings out the

sin in his nature in open transgression. This is most fully brought out in the larger letter on this subject, the Epistle to the Romans. Oh, that we could go back to the first years, and read that epistle as the very words of God. All are proved guilty: both the Gentiles, which have not the law; and the Jews, which had the law. For until the law, that is, until the time that it was given, from Adam to Moses, sin was in the world, though not reckoned as transgression.

And there is no thought in that epistle of man being justified on the principle of law. This was impossible, since man was guilty. Why should we seek to be wiser than God? He deals with the facts of man's condition. The fact was, the Gentiles without law were guilty of the grossest sins, and the Jews under the law were no better. So that the glad tidings could not be in any way what man was to God, for he was only guilty and under judgment, and had no strength to be better. God could not be righteous then in justifying the guilty on the principle of law.

Then shone out the righteousness of God in justifying the sinner, entirely apart from law, exactly as Paul had received the gospel of the heavenly vision. Jesus must suffer the atoning death of the cross. He must die for our sins. He must be delivered for our offences, whether Jews or Gentiles. He must rise again—yes, God raised Him again for our justification. Now

what had the law to do with this, or to say to this, except in the types of the sacrifices? You will thus see that both the righteousness of God in justifying, and our eternal salvation, rest not on what we must do, or law; but solely on what Jesus must do, and what He has done—done once for all, never to be repeated.

For God, who raised Him from the dead, had been glorified by His death and suffering wrath for our sins. So that God could in perfect righteousness raise Him from the dead, for the express purpose of our justification. And as the work of Christ can never lose its value for us, we see the everlasting proof of this—Jesus in the glory. The very Jesus who took the entire responsibility of our guilt and sins, is without spot in the presence of God for us. So that we are in the perfect righteousness of God, justified from all things, and for ever. And for ever we have peace with God. Jesus must suffer, and rise again. Jesus has suffered, and risen again. This being the case, the effect of believing God in all this must be immediate forgiveness, and justification from all things. Such always was the case in the First Years of Christianity. And why not now? Repeat this verse until God gives you to rest in the certainty of His word: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."



THE PREPARATION DAY.

II.

As Jesus crossed the Cedron and entered the garden of Gethsemane for the last time, in the dark night of that preparation day, no human heart could sympathise with Him. No, to all His disciples it was the day of deepest disappointment. None knew the Father but the Son. None knew what was in the heart of God our Father but He. God is love, and God had sent His Son that man might be brought into the eternal sabbath of rest. This was the purpose of God; and this was the preparation day, fore-ordained from all eternity, in which that work should be accomplished; yes, finished that very day. A work that should rend the veil, and remove every obstacle, should open the way for you and me and every guilty sinner that believes God into His own eternal rest—a sabbath that can never be broken—eternal rest based entirely on the work accomplished on that preparation day.

Never was there a day like this before; never can there be another like it throughout the ages of eternity. Every promise, and every sacrifice; yea, all the dealings of God with man had reference to this preparation day. All this was known to Jesus. And when they had sung a psalm they went out and went into the Mount of

Olives. Now what was it that pressed upon the heart of Jesus? What was there so terrible before His soul? He said unto them, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." (Matt. xxvi. 31.) It was not merely what He was about to endure in all the mocking, and cruel torment, that men could inflict; but, as the shepherd, though equal with God—His fellow, yet He must be smitten by Jehovah. Oh, think of the holy, holy, holy Son being made a curse beneath the smiting of Jehovah. Must this be accomplished on the preparation day? He would need and would look for sympathy, but all would forsake Him. And all to bring us into rest. How tenderly He said, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." Oh, look at Him there, "And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." What a cry that the cup might pass from Him! And what subjection to the Father's will. The Lamb must be killed. He gave Himself up.

None but the Father knew how He loved the church, when He thus gave Himself up for it. Deep was the sorrow and anguish of His heart when He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. Hear Him: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and

watch with me." In Matthew it is, when He had gone a little way from them, He "fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." In Mark, He said: "Abba, Father." My Father, Abba Father. He appeals to all the endearing affection of that eternal relationship. But He could not be heard. He said: "Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man: a reproach of men, and despised of the people." (Ps. xxii. 4-6.) Oh, the depths into which our precious holy Jesus sank on that preparation day! But there was no other way by which the guilty sinner could be brought into the sabbath of God.

And what was the sympathy of His chosen three? He found them asleep, for their eyes were heavy. But nothing changed His changeless love. Three times did He thus go and cry to the Father, His Father. Three times did He return to find His most devoted disciples asleep. Yes, such is even devotedness, when put to the test. And if such is devotedness, what is mere profession?

A little noise is heard in the garden. The dreadful cup must be drunk. Here comes a very apostle of profession, at the head of a band of

men, with swords and staves, from the religious authorities of Israel. Hear what he says: "Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him," or covered Him with kisses. Such is man, whether it be a devoted disciple, or a false apostle. Jesus, blessed Jesus, thou must do the whole work alone on that preparation day!

In John, at this trying hour, the Godhead shone out for a moment: as "Jesus said unto them, *I am* he, they went backward and fell to the ground." And now the last act of Jesus before He was bound was to heal His enemy's ear. Peter could sleep when he ought to have been watching, and he would fight when the hour had arrived to be yielding. But Jesus was perfect in His deepest humiliation. He who had made all things gives Himself up to be bound.

We now enter on another stage of sufferings of Jesus on the preparation day. He is bound by His own people, and they take Him, the holy, holy One, as a criminal. They led Him first to Annas, father-in-law to Caiaphas the high priest. We have not much account of what He suffered before him. We read that he sent Him bound unto Caiaphas, the high priest. (John xviii. 13-24.)

Now mark the sufferings of Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, before His own high priest.

What He suffered at his hands was as the Captain of our salvation. Just an example of what His followers have ever had to suffer if the pretended priesthood have had the power, whatever the name by which that priesthood was known. Surely no just charge could be made against the pure and spotless One. And the priest tried to entangle Him in His words. "Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them," &c. (John xviii. 19-21.)

What a revelation of man: "Now the chief priests and elders, and all the council sought false witness against Jesus to put him to death." (Matt. xxvi. 59.) How often have the priests of Rome, pagan and papal, done the same thing. What parallels we might give from the history of God's real saints. Mark, the sole object of the Jewish sanhedrim was the death of the Holy One, Jesus.

No false witnesses could be found to agree. Driven to the last extremity, the high priest adjures Him by the living God, that He should tell them whether He was the Christ the Son of God. How blessed the answer of Him who is the truth. "Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right

hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." The high priest ought to have known that the Messiah would come exactly in this manner, as may be seen in Daniel vii. 9-14; Micah v. 1-3. The word of God was perfectly clear, and the Christ of God stood before him; but he knew it not. All was blasphemy to the high priest. And what was the thought of chief priests, elders, and sanhedrim? "They answered and said, He is guilty of death." (Matt. xxvi. 66.) All that He had said was the exact truth. Man has no heart for the truth.

Mark well how religious man treated the Lord of glory. "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands (or with rods)." This gave much torment and extreme suffering. Ah, what would be said in our day if a highwayman was treated as they treated the Holy Son of God, against whom no charge of sin could be brought?

We read further in Luke xxii. that "the men that held Jesus mocked him and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?" And in the midst of all this unparalleled outrage and inhuman cruelty, and anguish, and suffering, was there no human heart to pity or sympathise? No; as we read in Psalm cxlii. 4, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that

would know me ; refuge failed me ; no man cared for my soul." But what of Peter who really in his heart loved Jesus ; Peter, who sincerely thought and said he would die for Jesus. What was he doing when Jesus was blindfolded and cruelly smitten by brutal Jews. Hush, whilst we tell it ; he was denying Jesus, with cursing and swearing. Can we desire a greater proof that we cannot trust in ourselves, or our love, or our promises ? We have now seen in this first trial of Jesus, what the man under law is with all his privileges. The Jew stands thus before us on the preparation day ; he had every possible privilege : the oracles of God and His prophets had foretold these sufferings of the Messiah. Never in the history of the Jew had he made greater professions of zeal for the religion of his fathers. The law commanded him to love God with all his heart. And now God incarnate, visible in humanity, humbled, in love to man, love to them : Jesus was delivered up into his hands. And the full character of the most favoured man was fully revealed. What is in man came out in all its envy, malice, and hatred, against the Son of God. The chief priests seem to have been the worst. How strange, the greater the pretensions, and the more highly esteemed amongst men, the greater the wickedness and hatred to God.

Thus the midnight hours of the preparation

day passed on. Deeper sorrows yet awaited our adorable Lord. Let us trace them ; for all hearts must be tested on this preparation day. The whole multitude now arise and lead Him bound, again to tramp the dark streets of Jerusalem. They are taking him to Pilate. They are determined He shall be given up to the Gentile power. They long that He shall die the most cruel and shameful death. Let us follow, and see if the Gentile is better than the Jew.



LAW OR GRACE, WHICH ?

1. In God's dealings with men He made a marked distinction between Jew and Gentile. (See Rom. ii. 9, 10.) Of the Gentile He says: "As many as have sinned *without law*:" of the Jew: "As many as have sinned *in the law*." (Ver. 12.) Verse 14 states distinctly that "the Gentiles have not the law." The Jew, on the contrary, "rested in the law" (ver. 17); "knew God's will" (ver. 18); "had the form of knowledge and of truth in the law" (ver. 20); and "with the letter and circumcision transgressed the law." (Ver. 27.) This is in contrast to "without law." (Ver. 12.) Note a cognate word in 1 John iii. 4, revised version, is translated correctly "lawlessness," so that this would be "lawless."

To the Jews "were committed the oracles of

God" (chap. iii. 2), that is, the Old Testament scriptures, including the law; and the Gentiles have been proved guilty before God by His testimonies to them, that is, in creation (chap. i. 19-23, "therefore without excuse,") and conscience. (Chap. ii. 15.) The Jews are proved guilty before Him by their own law. (Chap. iii. 10-18.) "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law" (ver. 19), clearly distinguishing between the two classes, Jew and Gentile, as does also chapter ii. 6-16. If both were under law there would be no sense in these scriptures, nor in the argument of chapter iv., where the Jews are called "they which are of the law" (ver. 14) in contrast to Gentiles which "have not the law." (Chap. ii. 14.) Chapter ix. again: "Israelites, to whom pertaineth . . . the giving of the law" (ver. 4); verses 30, 31 contrast Gentiles and Israel, the latter as having "followed after the law of righteousness."

Galatians iv. 4, 5: "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law."

Note.—See also Exodus xxv. 2; Deut. xxvii. 10, 14, 26; xxxii. 2-4, 10; Joshua xxii. 5; 2 Kings xvii. 13, 34, 37; xxi. 8; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 8; Neh. viii. 1; Ps. lxxviii. 5; Mal. iv. 4—"The law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms"; John vii. 19, 51; viii. 5, 17; x. 34; xv. 25; xviii. 31; xix. 7; Acts vii. 53; xviii. 15; xxiv. 6.

2. Romans iii. 20-22: "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; but now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ." (N.B. Not by the law-keeping of Christ in whole or in part.) Verses 24, 25: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood [not in his law-keeping] to declare his righteousness," &c. Verse 30: "It is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." In what? "His blood." (Ver. 25.)

Chapter v. 1: "Being justified by faith." "On him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Chap. iv. 24, 25.)

Note.—Chapter v. 18, 19, have nothing to do with the question of imputed righteousness, for the law was not against sin, that is the "original sin" of our nature, but was "added because of transgressions." (Gal. iii. 19.) Now Romans v. 18, 19 refer to *sin*: ("as by one man sin entered into the world," ver. 12), and shew how God dealt with that, even by "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and by a sacrifice for sin [margin] condemned sin in the flesh." (Chap. viii. 3.) This is the one righteous act referred to in verse 18, bringing in "justi-

fication of life" for all men (contrasted with the one offence of Adam which brought condemnation upon all men); but it is those only which believe who receive it, and are constituted righteous, that is, stand in righteousness with Him, being connected with Christ as Head of the new race. In verse 19 the obedience of the one by which many are constituted righteous is His "obedience unto death even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8), in contrast with the disobedience of the one—Adam's act in Eden—by which many were constituted sinners by nature, that is, those connected with him as head of the fallen race. The teaching of Galatians is equally clear upon this point. Chapter ii. 16: "A man is *not* justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ," not in His law-keeping, but in His blood-shedding; "for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," neither our works of the law nor His, for whose-ever they are, they are "works of the law," and not "without" or "apart from the law." And the apostle concludes his argument in verse 21, by saying: "If righteousness come by the law [whoever keeps it, we or He] then Christ is dead in vain."

Moreover in the nature of things one man's law-keeping could not be imputed to another who was a law breaker. "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments; which if

a man do, he shall live in them." (Lev. xviii. 5.) The man who did keep them should live in them, not some one else, or millions of others. "And it shall be *our* righteousness if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us" (Deut. vi. 25), that is, the righteousness would belong to the person who did the commandments, not to others. And further, according to this scripture this would be "our" righteousness, *i.e.*, human righteousness, the righteousness of man as such. What the apostle calls "mine own righteousness" (Phil. iii. 9), law-keeping righteousness, or human righteousness. Not divine, not "the righteousness which is of God by faith." Not the law-keeping righteousness of Christ as a man imputed to us—the law could not be addressed to Him as God. So that though Christ as man kept the law, yet that human righteousness is not at all what is meant by "the righteousness of God," which is what God has done in our redemption through Jesus Christ.

But now the righteousness of God is manifested, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe. (Rom. iii. 21, 22.) "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," (Rom. x. 4), that is, He bore its penalty for those who were under it, and

ended the possibility of obtaining righteousness from that source for all.

3. The Gentiles never having been under the law ("without law," Rom. ii. 12), it follows that Christians from among the Gentiles must have been put under it since the cross by a distinct divine enactment, if they are under law now. But there is no such thing to be found in the New Testament. On the contrary, when Judaizing teachers of the sect of the Pharisees insisted that it was needful to circumcise the Gentiles and to command them to keep the law of Moses, (Acts xv. 5), Peter asked: "Why tempt ye God to *put a yoke* upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we *were* able to bear?" (Ver. 10.) So far from the Gentiles being put under the law, Jewish believers were delivered from it, God "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Col. ii. 14.) "For I through the law [that is, through Christ bearing the penalty of the broken law, death] am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." (Gal. ii. 19.) "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made," that is Christ. (Gal. iii. 19.) "But before faith came we were kept under the law. . . . Wherefore the law *was* our schoolmaster unto Christ,

. . . but after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster." (Verses 23-25.) "We, when we were children, were in bondage. . . . but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. . . . Wherefore thou art no more a servant but a son." (Chap. iv. 3, 4, 5, 7.) The three foregoing passages shew the duration of the law, and when its jurisdiction came to an end (Rom. x. 4.) Jerusalem which now is is in bondage with her children. "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." (Gal. iv. 25, 26.) "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Chap. v. 1.) And if those who "are justified by the law are fallen from grace" (ver. 4), assuredly those who take the law as a "rule of life" are departed from grace.

It all arises from not seeing and believing that we have died with Christ—died to sin, died to the law, died to the world. Laws are not made to control dead men. The Holy Ghost is the power of the new resurrection life of the believer, and hence the injunction: "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." (Ver. 16.) "But if ye be led of the Spirit [that is the rule or line followed] ye are not under the law." (Ver. 18.) Why add more? God emphati-

cally states ye are not under the law, here and in Romans vi. 14. In the latter because we have died with Christ; in the former because we are alive in the Spirit. As long as man was alive under the law sin had dominion over him (Rom. vi. 14), and people want Christians to go back under that which never gave power against sin, but left a man under its power. The law was never given to give power against sin; all it did was to forbid and to condemn; it even set sin in motion through the flesh suggesting the thing forbidden. (Rom. vii. 5.) Moreover "the law is not made for a righteous man" (1 Tim. i. 9), and the Christian is constituted righteous. (Rom. v. 19.)

Maintaining that the believer is under law is a sad proof how thoroughly Judaized the professing church is. Grace *teaches*, the jurisdiction of the "schoolmaster" having ended. Grace teaches "us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." (Titus ii. 12.)

From the above we gather—

1st. That the Gentiles were never under the law.

2nd. That "the righteousness of God" is apart from the law.

3rd. That the believer is not under the law as a rule of life.

NEWS FROM JAPAN.

UP to the present time I have been unable to learn anything of the young Japanese you met in England, but the Lord, doubtless, if He will, will bring us together. I look to Him for it. I have now been living for some time at *Tokyo*, as it is the *native* capital, and very different in character to Yokohama, which is quite Westernized. I am also told, too, there would be no difficulty in having tracts translated, and the cost would not be very great; probably a small book, as the "Coming of the Lord," would cost about 3s. to 4s. a hundred. A larger one would be a little more. You may have heard how much I have to be thankful to the Lord for. The teacher with whom I have been studying Japanese has been rejoiced at having the word of the Lord opened out to him. He had been a simple-hearted Christian for some time, but felt almost alone because of the lukewarmness and mere profession around him. And the many things the Lord has shewn him in the word has been a real deliverance to his soul. While the simplicity of his confidence in the word, together with an open and unprejudiced mind, have enabled him, in the Lord's grace, to accept the deepest truths with a readiness with which I have often marvelled. And it has not been lightly, as he has, or does even now, *suffer* for

standing for what God has given him through His word. I have seen evidences of how *in heart*, too, he realised his portion is ALL in heaven.

As the state of the country, more especially as seen in Tokyo, comes before me, there is truly seen the largest need for ministering Christ. Coming in contact with the one or two truly converted Christians that I have, I have been struck with the terrible bondage the preaching of those in the various denominations has put them in. When they accept Christ, they have to accept also a *system* in which there is the most arbitrary hierarchy. This is truly *felt* by them. The missionary is altogether in another order of things to themselves. But worse than that, they, when there has been the Spirit's work, have been taught to value the Bible as the word of God—(although amongst the missionaries there is the most wicked latitudinarianism)—but this is *never* opened out to them. All they are given for food are the various services! Thank God, there are the exceptions to this state of things, in the one or two missionaries really desiring to make known the glad tidings; but excepting these, the above is only too sadly a true picture of what is at once seen and felt to be the state of things which bears the name of Christ. It will be easy to apprehend that the fact that all Christ's are *brethren*, redeemed by the same precious blood, is like a new revela-

tion to them—where before the thought of a *Christian* was one who was recognised as a member of a church, and thus the soul fettered to this *world* and man's organisation. The test thus made to the heart is *Christ*, and this is the same for all. With my teacher I marked at once how the heart, when separated from the system to which he was connected, *at once* sought Christ *where He was*, and since that time he continually speaks of "*being free*" for Christ. There is such a sweet simplicity in the personal love for a personal Saviour, where God's grace has rescued a soul from heathen darkness, that is little realised amidst the endless questions and hackneyed theology of Christendom. Salvation is a real thing with them, while they know a mere professor with the quickest perception.

Besides all this, there is a feeling that the word of God contains more than they understand or has been explained to them. The other day the Lord in a marvellous way brought me to know a dear old christian man who had been saved *twenty* years before, and *whose friend* told me he had been "*expecting* a preacher like me, because he had difficulties about the various sects, when the Bible taught the church of Christ should be one" (using *these very words*—the friend was able to speak English).

Although what is heard in England of the character of Japanese Christianity, its dislike

for sectarianism, I doubt not, is but the imitation of Satan, in the pride of this nation to throw off all bondage of the west. But underneath there are the sure evidences that God has been working most deeply by His Spirit, effecting true confidence in Himself, so that the liberty the soul has been brought into feels at once the yoke which is sought to be placed upon it. Besides, I do not think Satan often *imitates* unless there is the *true* work he would seek to hide from view, otherwise it is bringing God's work, even if in imitation, into prominence.

I have felt it of the Lord to keep me from getting much engaged in active work until I can speak the language. But there is so much that can be brought before Him with real confidence of heart, indeed it assures us in a special way when we in truth count upon God *alone to act*. And I need not say how much prayer is needed and asked, not only for His work here, but for His servant. Indeed my heart often trembles at the vastness and "whiteness unto harvest" of the field; but we know our sufficiency is of God, and more *for our heart*, before the dawn of another day our eyes may at last be beholding HIM whose present *love* so fills the heart, as we realize it comes from that living Saviour who LOVES us, and has washed us from our sins. With much love in the Lord.

To C. S.

HERBERT G. BRAND.

CORRESPONDENCE.

13. Jephthah, Ashford. "Abba" is a Syriac and Chaldee word, and signifies "Father." It only occurs three times in the New Testament: Mark xiv. 36; Romans viii. 15; Galatians iv. 6, and in each case is followed by the Greek word for father. No doubt this is very peculiar. The Greek word may have been added as explaining Abba: but it seems like a part of the address to the Father. It is never found in the Old Testament; but it is worthy of remark, that the Hebrew word for father (abh) is expressive of affection. Thus Abba in Syriac may have been the Syriac form of the same word, and in this sense would well accord with each of the three places where it is used.

This would add great force to the precious prayer of our Lord in Mark xiv. 36. The deep sense He had of the eternal love of the Father. And so in Romans viii. 15. The spirit of adoption does not merely enable us to cry Father in the ordinary way; but as having the same sense of the unchanging affection of the Father that Jesus had. And this would quite agree with Galatians iv. 6: "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father." To this also agree the words of Jesus, Matt. xi.: "And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Beloved reader, has the Son thus revealed the Father to you, so that you can by the Spirit cry Abba Father, in the blessed sense of His eternal love?

FIRST YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY.

XIII.

THE EFFECTS OF THE GOSPEL.

WE have dwelt on the facts of the Gospel in Acts xvii., so very contrary to all human plans and theology. As Paul opened the scriptures, it was not to shew what man must do, as in the law of old, but what Christ must needs do: that Christ must needs suffer, and rise again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom he preached is Christ. Let us now see what was the effect of this singular preaching. Did you ever hear preaching of this kind—not a word about what you must do, but all about what Jesus has done?

Let us go back to those early years when Paul, fresh from the heavenly vision, having seen the glorified Jesus, who must, and had died for his sins according to the scriptures. No doubt the certainty in his own soul carried great weight with it. He was sure he had the authority of God.

Three poor men arrive in the rich, populous, wicked heathen city of Thessalonica. They had been treated as dangerous vagabonds at another city, and were sore with stripes; and so poor and friendless they seem, that they have to labour night and day to get bread.

They had no authority from man nor from the

Roman state. They were the disciples of a Man who had been executed in the most degraded and cruel manner. There was a Jews' meeting room, or synagogue, in that city in those days, in which the law of God was read. There was often speaking in that synagogue, but always teaching what man was to do to attain to righteousness; not one speaker or hearer had ever been known to attain to righteousness before God.

For three sabbath days these poor men went into that synagogue. Never had such preaching been heard in that city before. It was a strange contrast to all that had ever been heard there. It was not what they must do, as we have seen, not one word of the kind; yet it was just the thing needed. Many felt they needed salvation first, and fruits would follow. All that is said, however, is that they believed the preaching, and consorted with Paul and Silas—a great multitude. These poor men soon had to flee for their lives as usual from the cruel hatred of the Jews, who could not endure such doctrine. They would rather seek after righteousness by their own works.

God ordered that an inspired letter was sent by these poor men to all these believers, as soon as they had heard from them. And as this is just a sample of the effect of the preaching of Paul, and others with him, in the First Years of

Christianity, it is a great privilege to have such an inspired letter, shewing the immediate effects of the true gospel in those days. This assembly at Thessalonica does not seem to have had any further human help until Timothy was sent to see how they did. (1 Thess. iii. 2.)

So that all we read of are the effects of a few weeks' preaching in a heathen city, given up to demon worship. We shall also find in this letter a good outline of the teaching of the apostle to such as are saved.

The first thing that strikes one is, that all these believers are at once brought into the position of the assembly in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. This assembly was gathered out from Jews and Gentiles by these few weeks' preaching. This, as we see elsewhere, was the work of the Holy Ghost. There are no jarring sects or parties, but the one assembly in that city, and in such a blessed relationship in the Father and in Jesus Christ. And their condition was such that Paul could give thanks to God always for them all, making mention of them in his prayers.

And what was the effect of this singular preaching as to good works? He says: "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." It must be right seed that produced

such fruit as this. There could be no uncertainty as to their election of God. For the gospel he preached, so different from anything ever heard before, was not "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Now this is never the case where a mixture of law and grace is preached, but it is always a vague hope, and all is uncertainty. No such uncertainty accompanied the true gospel in those first years. The full assurance of salvation in the power of the Holy Ghost always leads the happy believer to long to make it known to others.

Thus, though the apostle had to leave them, yet the word of the Lord sounded out from them over a larger district than all Yorkshire. And mark another effect. These poor heathens were turned to God, from idols, "to serve the living and the true God." Was not this wonderful? Did not God set His seal to His gospel in this marvellous result?

But were there no worldly advantages held out to these first Christians? Not a single earthly advantage, but the very opposite. It was "to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." They, as everywhere, received the word in much affliction and persecution, and with only one hope before them, the return of the Lord Jesus, the coming of the

Lord. Nay, Paul himself had no other hope, as he says: "For 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?"

Oh, those first years: how different from these last days! One marked difference was this: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God," &c. Is it not generally the opposite of this now? Doctrines are believed, because certain men teach them. What should we think of a child, if a father sent him a letter, and he said, "I will believe it if the servants say it is so"?

Let it not be supposed from the gospel preached—of salvation entirely through what Christ had done—that when these hearers were born again, were saved, were justified for ever from all things, that they were not then taught to walk as children of God. No, Paul says: "As ye know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." As he says elsewhere: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works," &c. (Titus iii. 8.) The order is this: first, the

grace of God bringeth salvation to all men; secondly, this teaches us to lead a holy life; and thirdly, to look for the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord. See Titus ii. 11, 12, 13. How simple this was in the first years.

Such was the order, and such the effect in Thessalonica. First, the free sovereign favour of God, bringing salvation: all accomplished by Christ, not a word of doing or law-keeping. Secondly, they were, when saved, exhorted to walk worthy of God, who hath called them unto His kingdom and glory. And thirdly, they were separated to God to wait for Jesus from heaven. And the power of the truth was so great that it spread in all directions.

The more we study this epistle to these young converts from Jews and Gentiles, the more wonderful we see the effects of the gospel Paul preached. Just a few weeks' preaching, and a multitude of believers was the result, and every one of them in holy separation to Christ. Is there any town or city now on this earth, that answers to this? With all the vast machinery and privileges of these last days, can we find even a village where ALL the believers are separated, gathered to Christ; with no sect or party in it, but all under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, all enjoying the full assurance of faith, all waiting for Jesus from heaven? Where shall we look for the Christianity of these first

years? How many cities may be found where there is not one believer really separated to the name and Person of Christ, and not one really waiting for Him from heaven; where it would be difficult to find anything that really answers to the first years? We must own the truth of this.

The Holy Ghost has not left on record the manner or order of their meetings for worship or teaching. We may, however, learn from Acts xvii. that soon after their conversion, Paul and his companions had to escape by night. (Ver. 10.) Neither do they seem to have had the least help from any other servants of the risen Christ, except the visit of Timothy. (1 Thess. iii. 1, 2.) Yet there were those amongst themselves "which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." And they were to esteem them very highly. And they were enabled to edify one another. (Chap. v. 11-14.) We shall find this in keeping with other epistles we may shortly notice.

Thus though we have not an exact description of a meeting for worship and edification, yet they had both, without the arrangements of modern Christendom. And it would be a most important inquiry, to examine the Acts and the epistles, to see what we can learn as to the way in which the assemblies came together in the First Years of Christianity. Have you ever done this, beloved reader? We are so liable to

take for granted that what each of us has been brought up in is the right and scriptural thing, without ever comparing it with the word of God. At present our inquiry is more connected with the effect of a full unconditional gospel such as Paul the apostle preached. We have seen the effect to be marvellous.



GLAD TIDINGS OF GOD.

CONCERNING HIS SON.

THE history of man under trial as a child of Adam has closed in death. "If one died for all, then were all dead." (2 Cor. v. 14.) The cross was the sad proof that all were "dead in trespasses and sins." In every way man has been tested—without law, under law, by priesthood, by kings, by prophets. What was the result? He was lawless, a lawbreaker, sacrilegious, idolatrous, a murderer of the prophets. A final test was given. "Last of all he sent unto them his Son, saying, They will reverence my Son." Instead of reverencing, they murdered Him. God was manifest in the flesh; but man hated God, and, being unable to endure His presence, sought to put Him out of the scene. "God is *Light*;" but man was full of darkness, and could not bear the light. Men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. "God is *Love*;" but man's proud self-righteous heart turned

away from the grace which had its spring in that love. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" but the world refused all proposals of peace. During a ministry of more than three years Christ was presenting God to man in grace. God Himself was in Christ among His own creatures, pleading with them, beseeching, as it were, that they should be reconciled. But man would not be reconciled; his heart was cold in moral death. There must be redemption and new creation, else man's heart could not be turned back to God. God's Christ was rejected, and a murderer chosen—NOT THIS MAN, BUT BARABBAS! This was the end. Christ went to the cross, and died for all; and the solemn verdict God has written against man in the death of His Son on the cross is—DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND IN SINS! Awful state into which man has fallen! Oh, sinner, ponder it deeply. Is this your state before God? Has sin shut you up in the prison-house of death? Has death closed his awful door upon you, and bound you as his captive? Oh! remember this is the state of every unsaved sinner. God has spoken it. "Dead in trespasses and sins" are the words He utters. What do you say? What is the answer of your heart and conscience? Do you bow to the truth of God? Are you vainly hoping to better yourself? Or do you bow to the solemn truth of that word by which God describes your

moral state—DEAD? Do you think to find your way back to God as best you can? or do you bow to the truth of that word by which God describes the condition of the prodigal in the far-off country—LOST? Do you indeed own the truth of these two words—DEAD, LOST?

Now let me tell you why I am pressing this question. It is that you may cease to have any confidence in yourself; for if God says you are lost and dead, what can you do? There is but one answer—nothing. Is there no hope then? Yes, but not in yourself. God announces glad tidings; but they are not concerning the sinner. God has but one verdict concerning the sinner—dead in trespasses and sins. No good news in this! But there *are* glad tidings, and God Himself announces them. They are CONCERNING HIS SON. When man's ruin was thoroughly brought out, God's Son wrought deliverance, and the glad tidings of God are concerning Him, "concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. i. 3, 4.)

Let me, then, dear reader, ask you to cease all confidence in self, and turn your eye wholly to this blessed Person, the Son of God. He is the only One who can save the "lost," or quicken the "dead." And He is the One whom God has

sent for this very purpose. He is worthy of your confidence. He is able to meet all your need. He has already done everything for the sinner's deliverance. Nothing remains. The Saviour's work for the sinner is done, and He has gone on high, having accomplished redemption, and risen from the dead, victorious over all the power of evil.

Look, sinner, at that mighty Saviour. There is life in a look. Look, and live. Look at Him in His spotless life down here; look at Him in His death on the cross; look at Him in His resurrection; look at Him now as He sits in triumph at God's right hand in glory!

(1.) Look at Him in His life on earth. He was in the midst of a scene of universal ruin and death, and the mighty power of sin was pressing Him on every hand; yet, amid all this, He was the "holy, harmless, and undefiled" One. He knew no sin. Not only so, but He was One in whom there was a power before which the effects of sin disappeared. Disease of every kind vanished at His touch. He touched the bier where lay the dead, and at His word the dead sat up, and began to speak. At the grave of Lazarus, too, He stood as the resurrection and the life, and at His command he who had been dead four days came forth from the grave. Such was He in His life, the One who lived by the Spirit in the perfection of divine holiness, proof against

any taint of sin, and before whom the power of evil was forced to give way at every step. He was in the midst of a scene of death, but He was the resurrection and the life, and hence He could say, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." (John v. 24, 25.)

(2.) Look at Him on the cross. There He meets not only the effects of sin, such as disease and physical death, but sin itself as that which has dishonoured God, and ruined man. He was "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world," and He was "the Son of the living God" who came to destroy the works of the devil, and deliver those whom he had ruined through sin. He entered the dark chamber of death for the deliverance of those whom sin had bound there in hopeless ruin. In the power of the life of God He entered those gloomy chambers and grappled with the foe in his last stronghold, and took from him who had the power of death, the keys of death and hell. Accordingly when Peter confessed Him "Son of the living God," He said, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And why should not the gates of

hell—the powers of the unseen world—prevail against His assembly? Just because that power was no longer wielded by Satan. All was now in the hand of “Christ, the Son of the living God,” who in death had grappled with death, and destroyed him who had the power of death. Though He passed through death, it was in the power of a life which death could not touch, and in resurrection He became the foundation, the living Rock, beyond the power of death, on which He raised a temple of living stones, a living sanctuary for God and the display of His glory, which He calls “My assembly.”

“His be the Victor's name
Who fought the fight alone ;
Triumphant saints no honour claim,
His conquest was their own.

“By weakness and defeat
He won the mead and crown,
Trod all our foes beneath His feet
By being trodden down.

“Bless, bless the Conqueror slain,
Slain in His victory :
Who lived, who died, who lives again,
For thee, His Church, for thee !”

(3.) Look at Him in His resurrection. This is the *proof* of His power and triumph over sin and death, and proof, moreover, that God had been glorified in His death, for He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father. (Rom. vi. 4.)

God who made Him to be sin for us, and who delivered Him up for our offences, raised Him up again from the dead. This was proof that God was satisfied and glorified in His death. On the other hand the Son of God had power to lay down His life, and He had power to take it again. He entered in at death's door, and destroyed Satan's power. He fought the battle, won the victory, took the keys of death, opened the door, and came forth, "declared to be the Son of God *with power*, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Thus resurrection was the proof of His victory over sin, death, and Satan's power. No man had ever entered death's door, and come out again in his own power. Here is One who did. He brought Lazarus forth, too; and thus He was declared Son of God with power.

(4.) And now look at Him as the One now seated in the glory of God. He has taken His seat in heavenly glory, and this, too, when He had purged our sins, and overthrown our enemies in the depths of the sea of judgment. He ascended leading captivity captive; and thus He has opened a pathway out from the very chambers of death up into the glory of God!—a pathway for the sinner—for every one who believes in His name.

This, dear reader, is the One concerning whom God has announced *glad tidings*. And is it

nothing to know God has announced *such* a Saviour in His glad tidings to ruined man? Have you heard "the glad tidings of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ?" Do you believe on the name of the Son of God? Have your eyes been opened to see that One who descended into death, who rose again, and is now seated in glory? Have you heard Him saying, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life?" Have you heard this word of His? It is life to Him who hears. "Hear, and thy soul shall live." Believe God when He announces His Son as the Saviour of the lost; and if you believe, know assuredly that the Son of God has taken up your cause. He has gone into the prison-house of death to release you, He has borne your guilt, He has triumphed over death for you, He has struck off your chains, He has opened the door and He bids you go free. Yes more, He has gone into the presence of God for you, and has linked you with Himself there. He has not only delivered you from death, but He has made glory sure. He has not only opened the gates of death, but He has opened the gates of heaven. He is not restoring man to the place from which he fell, but He has opened heaven for him, the paradise of God. He has gone down to man in his ruin, laid hold of him (He took hold on the seed of Abra-

ham, that is those who believe—Heb. ii. 16), and borne him up into the glory of God, for He Himself is Man, the Leader of a chosen race, and is now in the glory of God the expression of the place God has given to man. In Him man stands accepted in the presence of God—accepted in the perfection of His Person and work. Heaven is no longer closed against man; He has opened it, and in Him man has entered in. Every one who believes is one with Him in His heavenly position. He is the measure of the believer's acceptance; He presents man to God in Himself; and He is the pattern according to which He is going to fashion every one He receives to dwell with Him in that glory! What a Saviour! What a salvation! What a hope! Out of the prison-house of death, and up into the glory and paradise of God! Such are God's glad tidings to the sinner concerning His Son Jesus Christ. Do you believe? Then all is yours.



THE PREPARATION DAY.

III.

It is now approaching morning on the preparation day. Remember how Jesus had been beaten, spit upon, and mocked at His trial before the high priest. "And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and

bound Jesus, and *carried him away*, and delivered him to Pilate." (Mark xv. 1.) The Jews could convict Him of no sin, and Pilate can find *no fault in Him*. He fully declares this. He is greatly puzzled. He knows well that for envy the Jews had delivered Him to him.

Oh, what a sight! The weary, bruised, beaten Jesus! There He stands: see how His blessed face has been smitten. And there stand the multitude of the Jews, fiercely accusing the Prisoner, who created the universe. Yes, the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And in their cruel hatred they could only belch out lies against the Holy One. "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar," &c. And when the Roman governor declared he could find no fault in Him, they were the more fierce.

Pilate, hearing He was from Galilee, seeks to escape from his difficulty by sending Him to Herod, who happened to be in Jerusalem at this time. Yes, every possible insult must be heaped upon the Lamb of God. He must be led again through the dark streets of Jerusalem to stand before the wicked Idumean Herod—the voluptuous, cruel murderer. And this wicked man was glad, and hoped to have his curiosity gratified. Not a single word of complaint, even now, escapes the holy lips of Jesus. "He

answered him nothing." Blessed Jesus, may we learn of Thee!

And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. They followed Him like bloodhounds on this preparation day. Yes, they accused Him, their Messiah, to the murderer Herod. They had blindfolded Him, and beaten Him with rods, and in the face. And is there any pity in the heart of Herod? Just as much as the true followers of Jesus have found, and may again find, in the dungeons of the Inquisition. "Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate."

Thus, O Jerusalem, was thy Jehovah, King, and Lord, dragged and mocked by the cruel crowd through thy dark streets. Not a word of pity, or a look of sympathy for Him, who came to do the Father's will.

Pilate felt the deep wickedness of the chief priests and rulers of the people. Again he tries to set Him free. He says, "I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him." (Luke xxiii.) Herod, too, had pronounced no sentence of death on Him. The struggle to release Him was made still greater by a message from his wife. This poor Gentile alone pleads for Jesus with Pilate her husband. She says: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man;

for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." (Matt. xxvii. 19.)

Pilate tried hard to escape the evident guilt of giving up "that just man" by using his privilege of releasing one prisoner at the feast of passover. But no, the Lamb must die on this passover day. The chief priests demand His death, and deliberately prefer a murderer and a robber to the holy and the just One of God—the Lamb without spot. They demand that Jesus shall be crucified. And now Pilate joins them in their wickedness. No evil could they lay to His charge, "But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." Then the bold words from the Jews were uttered: "His blood be on us, and on our children."

And what did this representative of the Gentile power then do, convinced, judge as he was, that there was no fault in Jesus? He deliberately released the robber and murderer. And then what? Was there a little respite now? Was the bruised and beaten prisoner, the declared just one, allowed to rest His weary body awhile? The first thing done was to inflict the cruel torment of the Roman lash—a torment under which prisoners often died. Pilate has Him stripped

and scourged. How that back was torn with the cruel lash!

Isaiah, more than 600 years before, had described this scene. He who clothes the heavens said, "I was not rebellious, neither turned away back: I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." (Is. l. 6.) "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." (Is. liii. 7.) Yes, He loved the church and gave Himself for it. Oh, look at that bleeding, bruised Lamb of God, silently suffering all the cruel agony that man could inflict!

How long they tare His back we are not told. Surely this was enough! No. He was now given up to the brutal Roman soldiers. The whole Gentile band was called together. And after all that He had suffered at the hands of His own people the Jews, was there no pity, no relaxation in the cruel torture? No, none! The first twelve hours of the preparation day had about closed (John xix. 14) and the first of the measured three hours began with the scourging, about the sixth hour of Roman time: and lasted until the third hour of Jewish time (9 A.M.) when He was crucified.

What took place during these three hours?

The awful scourging. This may have been nearly unto death. But all was borne in holy silence, the silence of undying love. No tender hand to wash and dress those bleeding wounds. They took Jesus after the awful torture into the common hall. Patiently He bore the pain as they stripped Him there. "And put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews!" Oh, hold! is not this enough? No, no. "And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head." And when they, the Gentiles, had had their fill of cruel torture and mockery, then Pilate must add one more act of deep degradation. At this very time when the soldiers were wearied out with their mockery, and beating Him with their hands; whilst Jesus was wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, "Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, "BEHOLD THE MAN!"

Behold the man! Ah, behold the Lamb of God! See the blood drop from His holy crowned brow! Yet this is He who shall come in glory and shew that nation his wounded hands. And

is there no melting of the Jewish hearts to Him? Was ever sorrow like His sorrow? No, the very priests cried out again, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate at last delivers Him up to them.

There was no rest for Jesus on the preparation day. The soldiers spit on Him, and smite Him on the head, and then take the robe from off Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. Oh, what He went through during these three hours from His condemnation to the cross! His perfectly tender human heart needed sympathy; but lover and friend were far from Him.

It was customary to compel the malefactor to bear his own cross to the place of execution. From John we learn this was carried out on Jesus. After all the beating, scourging, smiting on the head, and torture, we read, "And he bearing his cross went forth." (John xix. 17.) In Luke xxiii. we read, "And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus." Was this pity to Him in His extreme weakness? No, from all we have seen they may have feared He would die on the way, and so they might lose the Satanic gratification of witnessing His torture on the cross.

Oh, look at that last procession on the preparation day. All that was past was as nothing to

what was before Him, yet to come. He was about to drink the dreadful cup of wrath due to millions of souls. Let us look at the procession in Luke xxiii. 27. It is now approaching nine o'clock A.M. A great company of people follow Him. "And of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." His tender heart was occupied with the terrible judgments so soon to fall on them and their city. What love! God is love.

One other indignity must be added, that the words of Isaiah might be fulfilled, "And he was numbered with the transgressors." (Is. liii. 12.) "And there were also two other malefactors, led with him to be put to death." What a sight! He who was God, walking with two thieves, to that place where the great work of the preparation day must be accomplished, that shall bring lost sinners into the sabbath, the rest of God. The procession halts at the place of a skull, Calvary. "There they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left." This is at the third hour of Jewish time, or 9 o'clock A.M. The cross was not merely an instrument of death, but of *torture* and death, the most prolonged and painful torture. The six hours' torture are divided into two distinct parts. Let us inquire what took place in each.

NEWS FROM THE EAST.

Beyrout, Syria,

July 1st, 1889.

DEAR BROTHER,—I will give you a line or two to tell you that we are all well, through mercy, and getting on our way in peace, although, as you know, a summer here is no light thing.

Just now we have with us another brother from Mesopotamia. He has been one with us in spirit for six or seven years, and corresponded with us, but has not before had the opportunity of breaking bread in fellowship. He has come, or rather the Lord brought him, a long journey, and we are very thankful. He gives a good account of the blessing which many souls in those parts have got through reading the books, and I have no doubt that the time is near for us to seek to see them, and help them by oral ministry. This brother will start back next week, taking a mule's load of books with him for use as the Lord directs. He goes by way of Damascus, and thence north, visiting many places by the way. But we have a large field before us. He himself has been a schoolmaster and preacher, and for many years has had acquaintance with many persons and places. He is now elderly (about my own age), quiet and intelligent, with a good deal of gift as a pioneer. He has faith and love for souls.

And now the question before us is to seek strength and energy to follow the Lord as He is working, and visit souls in these northern parts. This brother speaks three or four different languages, although the Arabic is used in most of the parts immediately before us. But there we

begin to meet the Nestorians, whose language is Chaldaic, which this brother knows. Turkish speaking Christians are also found there, and he speaks Turkish; some of the descendants of the ancient Medes are also there, called Kurds, of whom some are Christians, and their language is Kurdish, which he speaks also. Armenians also adjoin them. Well, thank God, it seems all clear for us to go on where He is working. It may be His will for some of us to go about the last of September. The brother here who went two months ago visiting some of the assemblies in Egypt, will be on his way home this week, having visited those assemblies that were specially on our hearts, and it seems has been blest and refreshed. It may be the Lord is preparing him for the north. He would do well in giving them a clear gospel, and also helping any who gather to get on their way. Also the other young brother from here, who is off in ministry in Damascus, would do well in the north country, as he has a nice gift and clear knowledge of the word. Now, whether either of these or both may be led of the Lord to go north, I do not know, but I feel it is possible. And also that He may enable me to go also. It would be better if I could go with them at first. Perhaps an absence of three months would suffice for me. The others, if led, might remain. *The door is open* for a clear gospel, and some are far enough to desire to break bread, a few at two places. Still it is the primary needs of souls that press upon me. The poor Yezedees or devil worshippers are also there, and this brother knows them. There are also several of the Christian sects, especially the Syreachs who are

Jacobites, like the Copts, are simple and accessible. Also the Nestorians, who allow of no pictures or images in their churches.

The word from upper Egypt is that the work goes on with much blessing in many places. But I do not give details to-day. We do not think less for Egypt, although we are now caring more for regions north. In fact, the Lord Himself has brought these brethren so as to encourage us, and to assure us that He has gone on before. Much love to all saints with you. Your brother
in Christ, B. F. PINKERTON.

Beloved brethren, God is answering many prayers; let us not cease to pray. He is opening doors in these ancient lands. Long have I felt deep interest in these very Yezedees, and had a strong conviction that God in the riches of His grace would bless even these very Yezedees. Oh, let us cry to God to grant a deep wave of blessing there as in Egypt. How remarkably He openeth and no man shutteth. May we all be stirred up to more sympathy and prayer. And may He sustain our beloved brother in this long and dangerous journey. Blessed to be in such a work in the company and fellowship of Him who said: "Go ye into all the world and preach the glad tidings to every creature," and again, "Feed the church of God." Many of that flock are in those dark and cruel lands. The Lord preserve His dear servants. C. S.



CORRESPONDENCE.

14. C M. H., Tottenham. In reference to the remark on page 181 of July last, as to Judas, it may throw some light on this question to remember that the closing act as to eating the passover was this—the Jews took a piece of unleavened bread, with bitter herbs, and dipped them in the thick sauce, and ate them. In Matthew xxvi. Jesus announced His betrayal as they were eating the passover. It would seem to be at the moment of dipping the morsel with Him in the dish. In verse 25, Judas asks the question, Master, is it I? “He said unto him, Thou hast said.” We then hear no more of Judas until he comes with the armed band, in dark Gethsemane. The institution of the Lord’s supper begins with the words, “And as they were eating,” &c. (Ver. 26.) In John xiii. 20–30 we learn that it was at this moment Judas went immediately out. (Ver. 30.) It is, however, remarkable that the Lord’s supper is not named in John. Well did the Holy Ghost know that that supper would become an object of idolatrous worship, like the brazen serpent of old. It is, however, evident (verses 10, 11) that Jesus washed the feet of Judas. Judas was not clean, he was not born again. “For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.” And this seems to have filled Him with grief of heart. He “said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.”

Mark is very similar to Matthew as to Judas, xiv. 18–21: “It is one of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish,” and verse 21 closes as to Judas, until he appears in the garden; and verse 22 gives the institution of the supper

of the Lord. Thus in Matthew, Mark, and John we find Judas at the passover, but we do not find him at the Lord's supper. In Luke there seems to be some difficulty—xxii. 15-23. But is not there quite a difference in Luke? There is very little as to the distinction betwixt the passover and the institution of the Lord's supper. It is Jesus Himself taking the place of the passover. It seems to be the moral instruction He gave during the passover rather than the distinctive order of the events that took place. Thus I see no reason why verse 21 may not refer to the *passover table*. From a study of the four Gospels, I conclude that Jesus washed the feet of Judas, and that Judas was present at the passover, and that he went out immediately before the institution of the Lord's supper. How solemn the warning!

NOTE.—If the Lord will, one or two brethren purpose visiting South America this winter to minister the word of God's grace. Any who are the subjects of prayer to the readers of this magazine might be visited by them, if the addresses are sent to H. T., care of Mr. Morrish. They ask also prayer for this service, when the time comes.

NOTE.—Respecting the poetry in the July number, "I love the sacred book of God," the editor has been informed that wrong initials have been sent for this poem. It is one of Thomas Kelly's hymns, published in Dublin in 1826. It was sent from America.

FIRST YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY.

XIV.

THE ORDER OF PREACHING, WORSHIP, AND EDIFICATION.

FIRST, as to preaching the word. This evidently varied according to circumstances. The first day, the Pentecost, was ushered in by the descent of the Holy Ghost. A vast multitude was called together by the rushing sound from heaven. The assembly of God on earth was formed by the Holy Ghost. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spoke with miraculous power. Peter was then used to preach the crucified and risen Christ. The result is a new company is formed at Jerusalem. That company is called the church, or more properly translated, "the assembly." The word thus translated always means an assembly. It is so used to describe the nation of Israel in the wilderness. (Acts vii. 38.) It is the same word in the Greek, used to describe a crowd in the theatre at Ephesus (Acts xix. 32, 39, 41), only there it is properly translated—assembly.

But what is this new company called "the church," or "the assembly"? That it is a new company is clear. "Give none offence, neither to

the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." (1 Cor. x. 32.)

Does this company, "the church of God," ever appear in scripture before Pentecost? (Acts ii.) Never, except in two passages, and there as a future thing. Matthew xvi. 18, xviii. 17: "I will build my church," "Tell it unto the church." Peter preached at Pentecost, but the Lord by the Holy Ghost formed this new assembly. It was not that He formed what we see now, hundreds of sects, or denominations. He did not form the Greek, or Roman, or Anglican churches, &c., but "the church of God." It is of immense interest to inquire what this was, and what it is. Did you ever do this?

It was composed of all saved persons. "The Lord added [together, or] to the church daily such as should be saved." This new company then was composed of such as should be saved. The true church of Christ was only composed of the saved, or such as were being saved. All that were saved were added together, and formed the assembly of Christ. To this agree the words of Paul, "Unto the assembly of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling," &c., and again, "Unto the assembly of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia."

Compare 1 Thessalonians i. 1, and 2 Thessalonians i. 1. Thus it is most certain that no

person belonged to the church of God, in the First Years of Christianity, except the holy ones, the sanctified in Christ Jesus. Be not deceived, if this is not your case, you have no part nor lot in the church of God, be you pope, emperor, king, or bishop.

This church is also the body of Christ, "and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i. 22, 23.) And mark, this body is not a body of Christians organised by men. "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body." (1 Cor. xii. 12.) This body, this one body, is composed of all true saved believers, and is formed by the Holy Ghost. Dear fellow believers, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Such is the church, the body of Christ. "And God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healings," &c. (1 Cor. xii. 28.)

Mark, this is all of God. He set what He pleased in the church, and what He pleases still remains. Do not be too sure that what you call the church is the church of God, but search the scriptures. Only of this be sure, that if you are not saved and made meet for the inheritance of

the saints in light, whatever other church you may belong to, you do not at present belong to the church of God.

Now as to the preaching and ministry of the word of God in the First Days of Christianity, we must notice the difference between individual responsibility to Christ, and ministry in the assembly. Individually they had the guidance of the Holy Ghost as to where they should go, as Paul in Acts xiii. He and Barnabas were sent by the Holy Ghost. And they had the fellowship of the assembly at Antioch. And we find them preaching Christ, and declaring the glad tidings at Antioch in Pisidia. Then Paul and Silas are directed to Philippi, by the river side. See the same guidance at Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth. In Ephesus we find Paul for two years daily in the school of one Tyrannus (Acts xix.)

So that it is evident the evangelist or teacher is responsible as guided by the Holy Ghost to preach the word wherever the Spirit opens a door for him. These should also be commended and helped on in their work by the assembly. (3 John.)

It is, however, astonishing how little we find as to the assemblies' meetings for worship and edification, that answers to modern Christendom. Suppose you look through the Acts and the epistles, do you find anything in the least like

the mass? Is there any priest to offer a sacrifice for the living or the dead? It could not possibly be, since all the worshippers were for ever perfected by the one sacrifice of Christ, and there is no more sacrifice for sin. (Heb. x. 1-18.) To break bread in remembrance of that death through which they had redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, was done by the disciples on the first day of the week. (Acts xx. 7.) To offer another sacrifice would be to deny the eternal efficacy of the one sacrifice which had been offered. Do you find the disciples ever did this?

That all true believers were worshipping priests is evident. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." (Heb. xiii. 15.) "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter ii. 5.)

What kind of places of worship had they? Had they churches, or chapels, or temples? Had they consecrated bells, or buildings? These abound now, but do we find a trace of such in the New Testament? Not a trace. We find them in an upper chamber in Acts xx. 8. Wherever the saints were gathered together to Christ, there was, and there only, the true church or assembly. Was it not so?

Worship was spiritual—in spirit and in truth,

and in the holiest. (Heb. x. 19.) This was the very immediate presence of God, the third heavens. The tabernacle or place of worship of Israel was a figure of this. There is the atmosphere; the starry heavens; and the dwelling place of God, the third heavens, the holiest. And in spirit the whole church had holy boldness there as worshippers. But as to buildings, so-called places of worship, we do not find one even in imperial Rome. Read the last chapter in the Epistle to the Romans, and all must admit that all we find are assemblies in houses. Thus the place was nothing. The Father had found worshippers to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

But when gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus, do we find the order of worship and ministry described in the word of God?

Concerning this matter, we find the Holy Ghost present. (Acts xiii. 1-4.) And whatever the diversity of gifts present, "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." (1 Cor. xii. 7.) Mark, this is in the assembly. But no man could take the place of the Spirit of God, and no man could take the place of the Lord. But if confusion took place, did they not appoint a man as the minister over the assembly? We never find such a thing. Confusion had come in 1 Corinthians xiv. Do we read that one man therefore must take the lead or the whole service? No, we read, "Let the prophets speak

two or three, and let the other judge." Read to the end of the chapter I Corinthians xiv. 29-40. It is quite true that human arrangements have set all this aside. But such was the Christianity of the First Years. The presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost was a reality. And Paul says, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (Ver. 37.)

Now whatever men may set up, it is most certain that when the assembly is gathered together for worship and edification, it is the will of the Lord that there should be this holy liberty, for two or three to be used of the Holy Ghost in ministry. Surely we have lost that deep sense of the Lord's presence which was in the assemblies in the early days of Christianity. A mere imitation, however, of this true order of ministry in the assembly, without real heart subjection to the Holy Ghost ever present, would be utterly powerless, and would soon degenerate into radicalism or self-will.

If, on the other hand, human pretensions have usurped the place of the Spirit, and human organisation has entirely displaced scriptural primitive order, let us not boast, but humble ourselves, and ever remember the apostolic commendation is to God and the word of His grace, and not to any party or denomination of men,

And though Christendom has ceased to walk according to the commands of Christ, yet we are warranted in expecting to find some who desire to own Him who is the holy and the true. To such Jesus still says, "I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and HAST KEPT MY WORD, and hast not denied my name." And further, to such He says, "I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Rev. iii. 7-13.)

Beloved reader, is the Lord's word nothing to you? Is it quite enough for you to go on with the stream of modern profession? Is it nothing to you what name you bear in Babylon? Or, whilst conscious of much failure, is it the desire of your heart to answer to what the Lord so graciously approves in the above scripture, indeed in all scripture?

May the Lord use these few remarks on the First Days of Christianity to stir up our hearts, to seek to walk so as to have the testimony that what we do in these last days of Christendom may be pleasing in His sight.

Many of the readers may say: Would it not be most profitable to look into the scriptures for an answer to this question—

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

We will look to the Lord to enable us to do so.

C. S.

THE PREPARATION DAY.

IV.

WE have traced the holy sufferer through the hours of the preparation day until the third hour, or nine o'clock A.M. In the seventh journey He halted at the place of crucifixion. We read the words, but how little can we realise the depth of degradation to the holy, holy Son of God. Let us meditate on what took place during the first three hours on the cross, until twelve at noon. What is crucifixion? At first it was an instrument of death, shameful and cruel. The poor criminal was stripped naked, a sharp stake was placed in the ground with the point upwards. This was driven through the body of the living prisoner, upwards to the heart, and there he was impaled to die! But this was a merciful death compared to the mode used in the days of our Lord.

A hole was dug in the ground to receive the beam of wood. The feet were nailed to that wood and the body laid in awful agony on the same, and the hands nailed to the cross part at the top. Then think of the torture of the body as the cross was lifted up, and let fall in the hole prepared. It was at this supreme moment of untold pain that Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." For three hours He hung there on that shameful

cross, brutal soldiers mocking Him, rulers deriding Him. Oh, behold Him there crucified between two thieves. "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors." And there the unfeeling crowd pass by, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ah thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross." The priests, yes, the chief of them, joined in the mockery. The very thieves reviled Him. (Mark xv. 25-32.) Oh, for three hours they sat down and watched Him endure the torture of the cross.

But what was the inward experience of our adorable Lord, as He hung there in cruel suffering? He tells how the fathers had trusted in God, and were delivered, "But I am a worm, and no man . . . and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him seeing he delighted in him." Oh, read the unheard sighs of Jesus in Psalm xxii. Was ever sorrow like His sorrow? In the midst of all the cruel mockery, only one voice was heard that owned Him Saviour, Lord. One of the reviling thieves was given to Him, as He hung there on the cross. He had heard those gracious words, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Faith was given to

the dying thief: precious grace. May we not also still pray, Father, forgive the living thieves all around in this day, who are robbing Jesus of His glory as the Saviour of sinners, and the giver of eternal life, yea, denying His divinity and atonement for sins—for they know not what they do. But oh, wretched men, beware lest your doom be not that of the dying thief, but that of Judas. For surely the man that pretends to be a minister of Christ, and is a betrayer of the scriptures into the hands of the infidels, is more like Judas than like the dying thief.

Oh, how full the answer of Thy heart, blessed Jesus, to the faith of the tortured dying thief: "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Yes, he was justly put out of this sinful world, but in grace he was to be with Thee in the paradise of God.

It would appear to have been about noon when Jesus thus spoke to the converted thief, the sixth hour of Jewish time. (Luke xxiii. 43, 44.) "And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour." (Mark xv. 33.)

And why is there so little said in the Gospels as to what the holy, holy Lord suffered during those three last hours? Surely it is because it cannot be told. It can only be known to God what Jesus then suffered for us, for our redemption. We only hear the final bitter cry, "My

God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Darkness covered Him from every eye but the eye of God. Oh, think of Him being made sin for us; of all God's billows rolling over His soul; of all our sins, dear fellow believer, laid on Him—delivered for our offences, bearing our iniquities—the infinite wrath of God, which could only be borne by the infinite One.

And now He cries, with a loud voice, "IT IS FINISHED, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost." (John xix. 30.) Nothing now remained, but to take down the precious body and lay it in the sepulchre. The great work of the preparation day is finished. Every scripture is fulfilled; all the shadows of the law pass away. The one atoning sacrifice has been offered. Will God accept it? What was the preparation for? The sabbath of the passover week, the sabbath or rest of redemption. As we have seen, God gave the sabbath to Israel because they were redeemed, as a shadow of this rest, or sabbath, to come. Well, let us see what took place. The body of Jesus is laid in the sepulchre at the close of the preparation day. The great stone was laid on the mouth of the sepulchre.

Did God raise Him from the dead on the Jewish sabbath, and thus restore man to rest under the sabbath of the law? No; Jesus lay in the sepulchre all through the sabbath given to Israel. The eternal sabbath of rest for man

must be entirely new—the rest of the new creation. We cannot express in words how entirely all was changed, and all the effect of the work accomplished on the preparation day. When that work was finished the veil was rent. The way of approach to God was opened—opened also was the way for God to come out to man in richest, fullest grace. But this must be by first raising Jesus from the dead. He must be the first-fruits of them that slept. If He be not risen, all He suffered was in vain, as is fully shewn in 1 Corinthians xv. “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.” Oh, what a first day of the week was that, when God raised Christ from the dead! Could He have given a greater proof that He accepted the work done on the preparation day? The grave clothes were laid peacefully aside, “and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.” How little the disciples understood what had been accomplished on that preparation day! “For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.”

What were the first words Jesus spoke to His disciples when He was risen from the dead? “Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the

Lord." Yes, He had made peace by His own blood on the preparation day. He shewed them His hands and His side. The work was done. It is finished. They heard Him speak unto them. We also are assured by the inspired word that righteousness is reckoned unto us, "if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. iv. 24, 25; v. 1, 2.)

What a sabbath of rest, entirely through the work accomplished on the preparation day! Now, if you saw Jesus, if He appeared to you, and you looked at His wounded side and wounded hands, and He were to speak to you with His voice, "Peace unto you," just as He did to His disciples, would not that make you perfectly happy? Well, He says, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Do you believe He died for your sins according to the scriptures? Do you believe that God raised Him from the dead for the purpose of your justification? And believing this, do you know that you are reckoned righteous, or justified from all things before God? Then He says, being justified by faith you have peace with God—and all

through our Lord Jesus Christ : yes, through the work He finished on the preparation day.

The redemption from Egypt was temporal, and the sabbath given to them also was temporal, for a time : has been lost, and passed away. But the redemption effected by Jesus on the preparation day is eternal, not for a time, and can never be lost. It does not depend on what we shall do, but on what He has done. The efficacy of His work, like His person, is ever the same, "having obtained eternal redemption for us;" our sabbath of peace and rest is eternal also. Soon we shall enjoy it in all its fulness in His presence, where all is peace and rest for ever.

Such is the everlasting portion of him that believeth. And do not forget, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God ABIDETH on him." (John iii. 36.) Which is before you? An eternity of the blessed sabbath of the rest of God, or an eternity with His wrath, ever, ever, abiding on you: where "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night." (Rev. xiv. 10, 11.) If we think of what this sabbath of rest cost Jesus on the preparation day, and of what God says as to the result of rejecting it, how is it that man can go on with this question unsettled? ETERNAL REST; or no rest day nor night—torment for ever and ever? Do ask yourself, reader, how it will be with

your soul? How is it with you now? Have you ceased from all works for salvation, and entered into the rest of God? In this matter be most careful, neither to carry a burden, nor do a work. See Jeremiah xvii. 21, 22.

All this is individual. On another occasion we may look at the first great and eternal purpose of God in the work accomplished on the preparation day. C. S.



THE GOSPEL, THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.” (Rom. i. 16, 17.) Such were the words of one who knew, in his own soul, the power by which God had wrought in him through the gospel, a gospel not received from man, but taught to him by the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal. i.) Look at him as he goes on his way to Damascus, with authority from the high priest of the Jews, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ! The eye of the Lord is upon him, and his career of wicked persecution must come to an end. Suddenly a light from heaven, brighter than the noonday sun, bursts upon him

in his murderous path, and the proud, persecuting Saul of Tarsus lies upon the ground, a poor, broken sinner, ready to obey the voice of Him who had been the object of his bitter hatred.

This was *the power of God*. By this power the proud persecutor was humbled and broken to pieces in the presence of Jesus of Nazareth, and led to own the despised Nazarene as his Saviour and Lord. And the Lord Jesus now became the one great object of his life. For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, he suffered the loss of all things, and "Christ and him crucified" became his theme. It was the power of God, through the truth of the gospel, that wrought this wonderful change. Paul had now learned the humbling truth, that man at his very best estate was lost—man, not the Gentiles only, but the Jews; not the publicans and sinners among the Jews, but the best and strictest of the religious Pharisees. He learned, moreover, that, "If One died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again." "All were dead"—"dead in trespasses and sins." What but the power of God could avail for such? Who but God could quicken the dead? None. Now this power of God was manifested in His Son Jesus Christ, who died and rose again; who, through death, destroyed Him who had the

power of death, and ascended on high, leading captivity captive. By grace, Saul of Tarsus was brought to the knowledge of this great Deliverer; and he, who before was a blasphemer and persecutor, now proclaimed God's great salvation through Jesus the Saviour. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." (1 Tim. i. 15.) Such were the words of this saved persecutor. Blessed words! Worthy of *all* acceptation! "Christ Jesus came into the world;" this was grace. He came "to save sinners;" for this *power* was needed as well as grace. The glad tidings were worthy of all acceptation, for He had saved the chief of sinners. If the *chief* was saved, who need despair? If he found grace, surely there must be grace for all. If the power of God could save him, surely it was enough for any, or for all. And this is what the apostle would have us learn from his own conversion, as he says in 1 Timothy i., "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life." This bold, blaspheming persecutor, this chief of sinners, was the one in whom it pleased God that Jesus Christ should shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern—a pattern to others of the mighty grace that wrought in him unto

salvation. He found mercy. He was saved by grace. The power of God wrought in him effectually, and not only saved him, but transformed him from a blaspheming persecutor into a bold and self-sacrificing servant of Jesus Christ, who counted not his life dear, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Such was the power of God as it wrought in the apostle Paul.

Salvation is by grace, but there is in it also the operation of divine power. "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The same power that wrought in raising up Christ from the dead, and setting Him at God's right hand in the heavenly places, also operates in those who believe in Jesus; quickening them with Christ, raising them up, and seating them in the heavenly places in Him. If the sinner is *dead* in trespasses and sins, he not only needs atonement to meet the question of his sins and guilt, but he needs also divine power to bring him out of the state of death. This power is through the gospel. The *dead* hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear, live. "He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life."

Have you heard the voice of the Son of God? If you have heard that voice, you have life. The

precious blood-shedding of Christ is the basis of all your blessing; but you have heard the voice of the Son of God, the eternal Word, and it has proved an almighty power to bring you out of death into life.

The cross is the basis of all. There the blood of atonement was shed; and God's claims about sin were all met. God was glorified in the death of Christ, His Son. This was the basis; and on this ground God raised up Jesus from the dead, the witness of accomplished redemption, of Satan's defeat, and of everlasting triumph over sin, death, and hell. The resurrection of Christ was God's power put forth as His righteous answer to the work of Christ on the cross; and this same power works in the sinner who believes in Jesus. The grace of God revealed in the gospel, meets the sinner in his extreme need—ruined beyond recovery—cold in the death of sin—not a pulsation in the heart toward God—and not only gives him perfect clearance from guilt, but also everlasting life, and everlasting deliverance from the power of death. It delivers from the whole position and state into which the sinner had been plunged by sin. It brings him out of a state of moral death, delivers from the dominion of sin, and sets him free to walk in the presence of God, and in communion with Him, in the power of a new life, and in the energy of the Spirit of God, by which he has been quickened

and sealed, and by which he cries, "Abba Father." Not only so, but it reveals heaven opened, and Jesus entered in, a Man in the glory of God; in whom he too, a believing sinner, saved by grace, has been brought to God, and has found a place in God's infinite delights in His own Son, the heaven's Beloved One.

And then, all this is in the righteousness of God. Were it not righteous the power of God could not be put forth. Grace reigns through righteousness. All is in virtue of the precious work and sacrifice of Christ. God puts value on the blood of Christ; and according to that value He acts for the sinner in grace. It is righteous to do so. And it is righteousness *of God*. It has its source in Him, and is according to His nature. The gospel reveals it. Precious revelation! May your heart and mine prize it. It is ours at an immense cost. But it is just like God to bestow it, for God is love! Love is the very essence of His being—love infinite as His being, that springs up unbidden, and flows forth in rivers of mercy. Yet that love was barred by sin. Sin was in the way of its reaching the sinner, so as to deliver. Righteousness and holiness forbade its bringing salvation to the sinner without the removal of sin. But love was not to be baffled. God gave His Son—His only begotten. The eternal Word was made flesh. The Lamb of God came to take away sin, so that the sinner might

be saved consistently with the claims of divine holiness, and thus divine love had its own way. "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 to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 9, 10.) Thus God provided the sacrifice by which He was glorified in the putting away of sin. God's throne was vindicated in the blood-shedding of Jesus, and now love is free to flow on in its course in rivers of mercy to the lost and the perishing, according to divine righteousness. It reaches the sinner just where he is in his misery and ruin, lifts him out of his shame, and gives him a standing in righteousness before God. And this is not man's righteousness, but God's. It is not what man has wrought for God, but what God gives to man. What a righteousness for a poor sinner! Righteousness bestowed freely in God's unspeakable love! Reader, do you stand before God in His righteousness? If so, you are divinely complete—clothed in the "best robe." More as to righteousness you could not have, nor desire to have; nor could God give more, or ask for more; it is His own, perfect, divine. And it is just what is suited to the presence of God; for its blessed expression is found in His glorified Son in whom is all His delight. God is bringing

sinner to Himself, but He is bringing them there according to His own nature, and in a way consistently with His own character. He is filling His table with guests, but He will have them worthy of Himself. He is finding His joy and delight in man brought into His presence and glory, but brought there according to His own perfection, in His own nature, in His own likeness, to be partakers of His own everlasting joy. For this divine righteousness alone is suitable. This righteousness the gospel reveals. It is God's righteousness revealed on the principle of faith. The sinner does not merit it. It is given freely. All is grace. Works have no place. It is on the principle of faith, not of works. And it is revealed to faith. It is not only by faith, or on that principle, but it is *to* faith: it applies itself wherever faith exists. It applies to all—Jew or Gentile—who believe. The sinner, no matter of what nation, no matter what his circumstances, no matter how deep his guilt, the moment he owns his guilt before God, and believes the gospel of His grace, gets a standing in divine righteousness in His holy presence. The gospel is the power of God by which he is saved, and brought into the consciousness of God's unfathomable love, and of his standing in divine righteousness in the presence of God, where His love is shed on all around.

Reader, have you known this power? Are

you saved? Can you say you stand in the presence of God in divine righteousness, saved from guilt, from wrath, from the dominion of sin, a possessor of eternal life, a partaker of the divine nature, meet for God's presence for ever, and a sharer of the everlasting joy of that place? Then you have known the gospel as the power of God unto salvation. You may yet learn to know it in a deeper way, but you know it, and it is the spring of "joy unspeakable and full of glory"—joy divine, unfading, eternal.



JESUS IN THE MIDST.

John xix. 18.

THREE crosses stood!

A mocking crowd, who taunt and jeer,
A few whom grace had taught to fear,
The priests and rulers filled with pride,
A dying thief on either side,
And Jesus in the midst.

Matthew xviii. 20.

A feeble few!

But owning only Christ as Lord,
And cleaving firmly to His word,
In simple faith the promise claim,
That those who gather to His name
Have Jesus in the midst.

Revelation v. 6.

A heavenly scene!

Unnumbered hosts around the throne
Own He is worthy, He alone,
The centre of that heavenly throng,
The object of the ransomed's song,
Is Jesus in the midst.

CORRESPONDENCE.

15. L. B., Brighton. 2 Corinthians i. 21, 22, as you say, speaks for itself as to its being God "which establisheth us." Then there are three other things stated. "And hath anointed us." If we compare this with 1 John ii. 27, anointing is the teaching of the Spirit, or spiritual intelligence communicated to us—spiritual discernment, as in 1 Corinthians ii. 10-15. The natural man receiveth not this anointing: he has not the discernment of the Spirit.

"Who hath also sealed us:" the gift of the Holy Spirit after we have believed, as God's witness that we are His. (Eph. i. 13.) In the days of the apostles, the gift of the Holy Ghost was very manifest. (Acts ii. 3, 4; x. 44-46; xix. 6.) And though we have not the gifts that accompanied then, yet the seal of the Spirit should be far more manifest now than it is in all our ways. "The earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." This is the ever-abiding indwelling of the Spirit, the Comforter, that He may abide with us for ever, even the Spirit of truth. (John xiv. 16, 17): "which is the earnest of our inheritance," &c. All four aspects of the Spirit's presence and operations are equally needed and blessed.

16. P. B., St. Austell. Revelation xiv. 6, 7. This chapter is a brief synopsis of events. "Angel" in this book frequently denotes a heavenly messenger of God, chiefly to execute judgment. In these verses the messenger announces the everlasting glad tidings. Flying in the midst of heaven, having this gospel to preach to all nations, seems to indicate the great rapidity with which

this gospel will spread over all the earth. The gospel of the church or assembly is only for a time, the period of gathering the church. That has ceased in the Revelation after the third chapter. This gospel refers more to the power of the Lord: compare the song of chapter xv. It will be glad tidings to the suffering remnant that God is immediately about to interfere in judgment on the wicked. This calls forth worship. God did act thus of old before the church was, and will so act again when it is gone. Then Babylon falls, judged for ever. But oh, how solemn the fact that this Babylon is the proud Christendom around us, fast ripening for everlasting judgment! All is in contrast with the present time. Here we suffer, then we shall be in glory for ever with the Lord. May He keep us from seeking to satisfy curiosity, but rather to profit our souls in all this.

17. A. M. S., Bexhill-on-Sea. "The spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. xii. 20-23) looks forward to the future kingdom and glory of God, in contrast with Judaism and Sinai. Thus these are the spirits of Old Testament saints, in distinction from the church of the firstborn. (Ver. 23.)

1 Peter iii. 19: "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." This is evidently Christ in spirit preaching in Noah, at the flood, to those who were disobedient. Those now are spirits in prison, yes, in that prison in which the rich man lifted up his eyes, being in torment. (Luke xvi.) These are part of the dead, who will stand before the great white throne and receive the doom of the lake of fire. And let us not forget, that as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when the Son of man cometh.

18. H. T., Chesapeake Bay. It is quite true there is a striking difference betwixt the first marching orders as given by our Lord in Luke ix. 3-5 and x. 4, and the marching orders as given in Luke xxii. 35, 36. Indeed the latter is a reversal of the former. Yet both are perfectly consistent. In the former both the twelve and the seventy were sent to the cities and towns of Israel, to announce the glad tidings of the kingdom, and these were regarded as yet in relation to God. But in the latter case all such relation was cut off by the rejection of Jesus. It must be all free grace now, or immediate judgment. Whilst the relation of Israel continued the marching orders were to take no purse or scrip, but to acknowledge the relationship of Israel by partaking of hospitality. After the immense change as to Israel, the marching orders were to go to the whole world with the glad tidings of a giving God; but now they were to take their purse, and indeed "for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." (3 John 7.) It is thus doubtful whether the person you name in Morocco is in this matter subject to the word of the Lord.

19. H. L., Rochdale. You are right, the atoning death of Christ is being set aside in every possible way by the teachers of this day. I do, indeed, pity the young men who are being taught "that the word of God tells men they have to keep the ten commandments in order to be saved." I would beg of such young men to read the Epistle to the Galatians. Surely it needs no comment of man. It is the fullest and clearest statement of the word of God, that "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Let

the young men repeat those words of God over and over again. But read every verse in the fear of the Lord. And let them read Romans iii. There they will find that they are all guilty, and it is too late, for those who are proved guilty, to be saved by keeping the law. To attempt it is to reject Christ, and to trample under foot His precious blood. Let them read what God says of Israel, who tried to be saved by keeping the law. (Rom. ix. 31 to x. 3.) And then read what is said of Christ. Tell these young men that their teacher is like one of these Jews, and is deceiving them, to their everlasting ruin. May God have mercy on this poor man. We hear his eyes have been opened.

20. W. M., Spaldwick. You will notice that the circumstances of Acts v. 13, 14, and these last days are very different. At that moment the Lord had put forth His power in a most solemn manner: and great fear came upon all the church. Now, as is described in 2 Timothy iii.; 2 Peter ii., and Jude, evil men and seducers have crept in, and it requires the greatest care and watchfulness to preserve ourselves, as described in 2 Timothy ii. 20-22. It would therefore be most unscriptural now to throw open the door for any one to come to the Lord's Table that liked, without the usual godly care. Ephesians ii. 19 refers to the true building of God, the holy temple of the Lord. It is not the great house of 2 Timothy; the whole church of God is that holy temple. A few gathered together represent the whole; though, as a fact, the church of God, composed of all saved persons now on earth, is sadly divided and scattered abroad.

GOD'S GLAD TIDINGS.

THE WRATH OF GOD FROM HEAVEN.

It may be asked: "Why speak of God's wrath in connection with glad tidings?" Just this: it is the fact that God's wrath against sin has been revealed that makes the revelation of God's righteousness necessary. God's righteousness revealed in the gospel is the door of escape from infinite and eternal wrath, for it is by God's righteousness that the sinner is justified through faith in the Lord Jesus. The gospel addresses itself to those who are exposed to divine wrath, and hence the necessity of speaking of the revelation of wrath, in order that those who are under it may be awakened to a sense of their danger, and see their need of deliverance which the gospel brings.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom. i. 18.) In these words the truth comes out as to what the nature of God is toward sin. His nature is against it. He can deal with it only in unsparing judgment. He cannot pass it by. His wrath from heaven is revealed against it, revealed alike against all ungodliness in the Gentiles, and unrighteousness in the Jews,

who had the truth, but held it in unrighteousness. The moment sin, in whatever form, no matter where or in whom, is brought face to face with God, His holy nature can only be against it. And it is because Jews and Gentiles—all men—are alike involved in sin, against which the wrath of God from heaven is revealed, that the righteousness of God, on the ground of the blood-shedding of Jesus, is revealed in the gospel on the principle of faith, and to faith, thus opening the door of salvation to all who believe.

Let us look a little at the expression, "wrath of God revealed from heaven." Again and again in the Old Testament we see God's wrath, but never, I think, the same as here. We see His wrath in sending the flood and destroying the world of the ungodly; again, when He confounded the tongues at Babel; again, when He delivered Israel, and the hosts of Pharaoh were swallowed up in the sea; again, when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and all pertaining to them, went down alive into the pit; and the two hundred and fifty princes were consumed by fire coming out from the presence of the Lord. And so we might go on and state a multitude of cases of a similar character. But all these were only the display of God's governmental wrath in His ways and dealings with men in this world. When evil became bold and

defiant, God dealt with it in His government, putting a check upon it by earthly judgments.

But now it is no longer a question of God's government on the earth: it is a question of His nature, for God is now acting according to what He is, and not merely putting a check upon evil in a governmental way. Of old, God dwelt in the thick darkness. His hand was seen in His governmental ways and dealings with men, but He had not revealed Himself in the fulness of what He is in His own nature and character. But now God is revealed. He no longer dwells in thick darkness. The veil is rent. The whole truth has come out. We see this in the cross. There we see what God is, and in the light of His presence we see what man is, and what sin is. We see what He is in His nature toward sin, and what He is toward the guilty sinner who bows to His truth. By the cross the truth is revealed that "God is love" in providing a sacrifice for the guilty. But the same cross also shews that the only thing in His nature toward sin is wrath. And here it is not merely governmental wrath displayed in earthly dealings with men, but it is wrath according to what He is in His holy nature against sin—wrath from heaven. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven," &c.

But how is this seen in the cross? It is seen in the cross, because God there had to say to sin according to His own majesty, and the holiness

of His own nature. When Christ was made sin on the cross, God forsook Him, and the sword awoke against Him who was Jehovah's Fellow. There never was anything like it before, nor will there ever be again. At the river Jordan, the heaven opened upon Him, God anointed Him with His Spirit, and proclaimed His delight in Him; tempted in the wilderness, and an hungered, an angel ministered to Him; on the mount of transfiguration, the voice of God from the glory-cloud declared Him His beloved Son; in Gethsemane, sweating as it were great drops of blood, in view of drinking the dreadful cup, an angel strengthened Him. Thus all along the earthly path of ministry, and up to the hour when He was made sin on the cross, He was in the enjoyment of uninterrupted communion with God, His Father. On the cross all was changed. There all was darkness—waves from beneath, and waves from above—unmingled wrath and judgment His portion, and His cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" More than anything else this shews what sin is as measured and dealt with by God. In His nature there is absolutely nothing but wrath toward sin.

"Wrath of God revealed from heaven" does not mean God's dealing with sin on the cross: it is not wrath executed, but wrath revealed. He will execute wrath by-and-by—divine, eternal

wrath—upon the wicked; but this is not what we have in Romans i. 18. Here it is the statement of a truth that has come to light—a truth that we read in the light of the cross. Now that He has dealt with sin on the cross, we can say that His nature, as against sin, has been revealed. It is wrath from heaven.

This, dear reader, is a most solemn truth, for if now wrath of God is revealed from heaven against sin, what are you and I to expect, if we have to say to God about our sins? Christ, bearing not His own sins but the sins of others, met with unmingled judgment and wrath. If we have to meet God in our sins, can we expect less? If God's Son had to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" surely that, too, must be our wail for ever in the lake of fire, if we have to bear our own sins, for we can never expiate our guilt. What think you, reader? If you are an unbeliever, you are covered with guilt, and have no righteousness. And you must meet God, and meet Him, too, according to His own nature. His wrath is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness. How then will you meet Him? It is because the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sin, and the sinner *needs* justification that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. And this righteousness is revealed, not to any special class or nation, but to faith.

Hence it avails for you, if you believe the gospel. The precious blood of Jesus is the basis of it. Through faith in that blood the sinner obtains forgiveness of sins, and God justifies him in righteousness. The moment the perishing sinner believes in Jesus, the same righteous hand that administered the stroke of justice to his Substitute is on his side. And if God be for us, who can be against us? O sinner, linger not. Take shelter by faith under the blood of Jesus, and righteousness will take the place of wrath. Believe in Jesus, and God is on your side. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii. 36.)



WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

THE word "church" is used in so many ways that it is difficult for many to understand what the church of God really is, as spoken of in scripture. "Feed the church of God." (Acts xx. 28.) "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." (1 Cor. x. 32.) Thus in the New Testament there are three classes on this earth: the Jewish nation, the Gentile world, and the church of God.

Do we ever find these three classes in the

Old Testament? Never; neither in Moses, the Psalms, nor the prophets. Is that a fact? It is. Then what did Stephen refer to when he spake of "the church in the wilderness"? (Acts vii. 38.) If you read the context, you will see that it was the children of Israel, or the nation of Israel gathered out of Egypt in the wilderness. It was one of the two things then on earth, and not the third thing, called in the New Testament "the church of God." That is quite clear.

I should like to ask, When was it first named in scripture? It was *first* named by the Lord Jesus in Matthew xvi.; but as a future thing. He said, "Upon this rock I *will* build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It is generally supposed that all saved persons, all believers, from the very first, say from Abel downwards, belong to the church. Do we not read of the Jewish church? Yes, but not in scripture. Only in the books of men who are guided by custom, and who do not examine scripture for what they say.

Then again we hear and read of the church of Rome, church of England, Wesleyan, and Presbyterian church, &c. Is this a correct way of speaking? Well, men understand what they mean. But our Lord did not mean any of these when He said, "I will build *my* church." No, He did not say, "I will build the church of Rome, or any of the churches that men have

built. If any one of these was "*the church*" that would exclude all other believers in the other churches from being saved, as "*the church*" is also the "*one body*," and also the bride of Christ. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.) "There is one body." (Eph. iv. 4.) Who are meant by those that are baptised by the one Spirit into this one body, the church of God? "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." (1 Cor. i. 2.) Is it not evident from these scriptures that all true Christians form the one body of Christ, the Church of God? So that if Christ meant any of those bodies of men which claim to be the one body, the church of God; or, to put it very plainly, if Christ meant that He would build the church of Rome, and that therefore it is the church of God, this would undoubtedly prove that all outside the church of Rome are not Christians at all.

These remarks would be equally applicable to any other church which assumed the position of

being the church of God. As the church is the *one* body of Christ, you cannot be a saved Christian if you are outside that *one* body.

Would it not then be foolish work to spend our time in trying to prove which of the many churches of Christendom is the true church, since to do so would also prove that all other true Christians were not members of the body of Christ? This is not our object, but simply to inquire what is the church, the one body of Christ, who is the Head of the body, in heaven.

What is God's thought of the church? We have already said that the church is not once named in the Old Testament: was it, then, an afterthought of God, on the rejection of the Messiah by Israel? Far from this: we shall find that it was the first great purpose of God in giving His Son to accomplish redemption. And though this His purpose was never revealed, but kept hid for ages, yet we have most striking types of the church, the bride of Christ, in the Old Testament. We will take three of these types or pictures of the church, the bride of Christ. No doubt the Holy Spirit will teach us by these pictures, and help us to understand the New Testament scriptures better.

The first will illustrate the work of our God and Father; the second, the work of the Holy Ghost in gathering this bride; and the third

will bring before us the Bridegroom Himself, and very precious details as to how the bride is redeemed and brought to Himself. We refer to Eve, Rebecca, and Ruth. Bear in mind, that we do not seek to prove the doctrine of the church by these types, but use them to help us to understand the doctrine as taught in the Acts and the Epistles.

First, then, as to Eve. In Genesis ii. we have the first Adam as a figure of Him that was to come. God placed him in paradise, the garden of Eden. "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." How wonderfully this reveals the thought of God in eternity: His purpose that the Last Adam, now in the paradise of God, should not be alone. We then see how God formed the creatures, and brought them unto Adam, and how Adam gave them their names. But there was not a help meet for him in paradise; not one suited to him; not one like him; not one of the same nature that corresponded to him. The animals were with him in paradise, companions we may say; but there was no real correspondence. No creature was of his nature meet for him; no creature meet to be ONE with Adam.

Mark, this was absolutely the case until "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and

closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man." It is quite true we could not have seen this hidden type of Christ and the church, if the Holy Ghost had not revealed it in Ephesians v. 30. Now all is clear.

There was no Eve until Adam had been laid in the figure of death: the deep sleep. Until then he was alone, though in the midst of all creation. The Lord Jesus tells us the very same thing: speaking of Himself, He says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii. 24.) He was there with His disciples, or in heaven in the midst of angelic hosts; but, as to His nature, He was and must be for ever alone, unless He die, and be raised from the dead.

The moment Eve saw Adam she was like him, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. It will be so with the second Eve, the *one* bride of Christ: when she shall be presented to Him she will be glorious; yea, the moment we see Him, we shall be like Him. (Eph. v. 27; 1 John iii. 2.) There was no Eve until Adam in figure died and rose again. Then she corresponded perfectly to Adam: was part of himself. There was only *one* meet to be so. And the New Testament carries all this out fully as to the

church, the bride of Christ. To faith all is now sure; but the presentation in the perfect likeness of Christ has not yet come. Surely all this should prepare us to find something marvellously new and different when Christ, the last Adam, had died, and had risen from the dead. And that something is new; that new creation is the church of God, one with Christ, the Head in heaven. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be *one* flesh." Thus was Eve meet to be Adam's companion and a help meet in the paradise of Eden. And all this was the work of God, according to His own purpose.

And is it so, are all believers, according to the purpose of God, made meet for the paradise of God? Yes, we can all give "thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. i. 12.) As this is the first figure of the church, it is well to note how all is of God. And this answers to Ephesians i., ii.

Just as Eve was one with Adam, blest in and with him with every blessing in the earthly paradise, it was God who thus blessed her, and thus placed her the one bride of Adam, who had been dead in figure and was alive again: all was of God—so now of all the saints of God; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all

spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. But all, all is of God. Did God raise Adam from his deep sleep? Then "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies. . . . And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i. 19-23.)

And then the same blessed God hath raised us up from the dead: "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," &c. (Eph. ii. 5, 6.)

Yes, the first thought of God in giving His Son, was that He might not remain alone, the Man in the glory of the heavenly paradise; but that He should have a bride, the church, in His own perfect likeness. Sins and sin for ever passed away, she should share in His glory for ever with and like Him—having His own sinless perfection, His own very nature. Oh what will it be to be the companion of the last Adam in eternal glory, in every way correspond-

ing to Him, as Eve to Adam! No other creature in the universe is to have or can have this place. We will next go on in our meditations to the second figure or picture of the bride of Christ. Can you, reader, recognise the hand of God (as in the picture we have looked at for a moment), in your new creation? Then dwell on the purpose of God as to your eternal future.



IN THE FIELD.

LUKE XV.

ALTHOUGH *outwardly* near, as his father owns ("son, thou art ever *with* me," ver. 31), the elder son was as far off *morally*, "in the field" as the younger son had been in the "far country." For "the field is the world." (Matt. xiii. 38.) "He drew nigh to the house" (ver. 25), so nigh that "he heard music and dancing," the sounds of the merry-making of the father over his son, who was dead and is alive again; was lost and is found. (ver. 24.) Picture of God's joy—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, uniting to rejoice in what their united action had effected, the Son "come to seek and to save that which was lost" (chap. xix. 10), the Holy Ghost to find (ver. 8), and the Father to receive the penitent. (Ver. 20.) As they say, "Let *us* eat and be merry," that is, let us have communion and joy on the happy result of our labours.

Though the elder son is so nigh as to hear the

sound of all this, and though he is informed of its meaning (verses 26, 27), he will not join in his father's joy. Not only had he no heart for that which so gladdened his father's heart, but he resents it: "he was angry and would not go in" (ver. 28). How different with the other in his destitution: for, as another has said, "he was hungry and could not stop out, while the elder was angry and would not go in."

And thus it is ever with the worldling, whether a religious professor or an irreligious profligate. He hates grace. The elder son *resents* it when manifested to his confessedly (ver. 21) unworthy brother. (Verses 28, 30.) The younger son *abuses* the grace shewn him by his father in dividing to him his living. (Ver. 12.)

And where art thou, and what art thou, my reader? Have you ever answered for yourself God's first two great questions to man (Gen. iii. 9; iv. 10), the two great questions He asks of all, and would ask of you? If not, answer for thyself now to Him. The first, "*Where art thou?*" Away from God, in the world which is at enmity with Him (Jas. iv. 4), and hiding from Him. Be assured He will have thee dragged from out thy hiding place in the day of judgment, when neither rocks nor mountains shall suffice to hide thee "from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; [when] the great day of his wrath is come; and who

shall be able to stand?" (Rev. vi. 12-17, xx. 11-15.) Come forth now therefore, and whether thou art an empty professor (like him of Matt. xxii. 11), or a needy profligate, thou wilt find that God has a covering for thee in grace; a perfect covering, the best robe (ver. 22), His own righteousness (Rom. iv. 5-22, v. 2): even as He had for thy first parents when they came forth from their lurking place (Gen. iii. 21), and that on the ground of blood shedding for thee of the precious blood of Jesus which cleanses from all sin. (1 John i. 7.) The second question, "What hast thou done?" You know you have not served God and kept His commandments. (Ver. 29.) Empty hypocritical profession will not avail thee in that day of which we have spoken. Own the truth, confess thy sin, for "if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive," &c., (1 John i. 9); and give Him the joy of making merry over thee, and have for thyself that joy which finds but its commencement here. "And they began TO BE MERRY." (Ver. 24.)

"Therefore came his father out and entreated him." I am at a loss which to admire most, the "compassion" which impelled the father to run and kiss the younger son while he was yet a great way off (the same word in the original as "far" in "far country," which shews how far the father hastened to meet him), or the desire after him which drew the father out to entreat the

elder son. And can it be that you, my reader, are untouched by such varied grace?—"the grace of God that bringeth salvation [which] hath appeared to all men" (Titus ii. 11)—the grace of God which has brought Him into this world, as the whole parable (ver. 3) of Luke xv. shews, to "receive sinners and eat with them"? Nay more, to seek and to entreat them, that He may find His joy in bringing salvation to them, and bringing them into it. "Eating with them" (ver. 2), making them at home in His company, and finding His joy in theirs—His "delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. viii. 31), that is, wisdom's, the Son of God, who—

"Dwells in His bosom, knoweth all

That in that bosom lies,

And came to earth to make it known

That we might share His joys."

Can it be, I say, that you are untouched by the richness of such grace? Mark that father! The servant has returned and told him of his son's demeanour when he heard the cause of the merriment—that "he was angry and would not go in." Or mayhap he had seen it all himself through the window. "My elder son!" he may have said to himself as he saw him approach, "I had forgotten thee in the joy of receiving my younger, my Benjamin. Glad I am to see thou hast not forgotten the way to thy old father's house, and thou shalt share my joy—'thou [that]

art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.' How glad wilt thou be to give thy old father the joy of sharing it with thy long lost, new found, brother. It was right, it was meet, that we should make merry and be glad. (Ver. 32.) But, ah! what do I see? Anger bespreads his face, while compassion and joy fill my heart. But that shall not kindle my wrath and resentment. I will go forth to my first-born, even as I have been forth for my last!"

"What grace! What matchless grace!
 Oh, lovely attitude! He stands
 With open heart, and outstretched hands.
 Oh! matchless kindness, and He shews
 His matchless kindness to His foes."

And is it possible that thou, my reader, hast treated God so? In self-righteous satisfaction, despising grace, and such as feel they have no goodness of their own, only sins and unworthiness, dost thou hold aloof from Him who receiveth sinners and communes (eats) with them? Dost thou fancy thyself aught else, and that He can deal with thee on any other principle than that of grace, of free sovereign grace, of undeserved favour? Then know thou that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and that, He justifies "freely [undeservedly] by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii. 23, 24), and thus alone.

"Open the door, He'll enter in,
 And sup with you and you with Him."

“ BEFORE HIM IN LOVE.”

LUKE XV. EPHESIANS i. ii. 1 JOHN i.

My Father and my God !
 Joy, life eternal, I “ to-day ” begin !
 Thou sawest me, afar from Thine abode ;
 Thou hadst compassion, Thou hast brought me in.

’Tis one complete surprise,—
 Since I, all guilty, desolate, undone,—
 Came to myself, and said, “ I will arise,”
 And groaned “ Unworthy to be called Thy son.”

Wrapt to my Father’s heart,
 I felt His kiss, ere I could speak my shame :
 ’Twas love wrought out its own amazing part :
 He ran ; my dread, my distance, He o’ercame.

Thou didst command the robe ;
 Didst tell Thy servants to bring forth “ the best ;”
 The ring, the shoes,—Thy gifts upon the road,
 Prepared me, home returning, for Thy rest.

Oh, it is holy ground !
 Nought that defiles can ever touch me more,
 Thy lost one, once the prodigal, is FOUND.
 My dark distrust, the famine time, is o’er.

Now is the banquet spread ;
 The fatted calf, reserved for me, is killed.
 I, perishing erewhile for lack of bread,
 Sit at Thy feast : my cup by Thee o’erfilled.

Thy very heaven I share,
 Where sons, at home, made glad in Thy delight,
 With music and with dancing, now declare,
 Thee, in Thy grace, Thy glory, LOVE and LIGHT !

DIVINE CERTAINTIES.

THE epistle to the Ephesians is a wondrous treasury of certainties. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, WHO HATH blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places [or in the heavenlies] in Christ." There is no effort here or attainment of our own. It is all of God, *who hath* thus blessed us. This is true of all the holy ones at Ephesus, and of all the faithful in Christ Jesus. Do you really believe that this is true of you? that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has thus blest you? that in Christ you are for ever blest? We may not know it, we may not enjoy this rich sovereign grace; but it is true. It is of God, and what is of God cannot fail—cannot cease or change, for He changeth not.

"According as HE HATH chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." This is very strong consolation, that God, as God, *hath* thus blest us in Christ according to His eternal purpose. It is not as we have chosen Him, but according as *He hath* chosen us; and that not after we believed, but before the foundation of the world. Geologists may talk about a few millions of years of this world's history as seen in the crust of the earth; but long before anything they know about (for it is little they

know about that eternity in which God created the heavens and the earth), before the foundations of the earth, however far back in eternity that may be, oh think, holy believer, thou wast chosen in Christ.

And what was God's purpose in this choice? "That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." He said, as it were, I see that family of fallen Adam, dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath; but I will have them before me in Christ, holy and unblamable in love. And *He hath* thus blest us. This is one of the certainties before God in Christ.

Still more so as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, "*having* predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will"—not only before Him as God, but to Himself as children, in all the affection of eternal love to Himself. He would have a family so near Himself—nearer than any created beings, however mighty in power and wisdom. Yes, the Father predestined a family nearer to Himself than angelic hosts. Such is His eternal love to us.

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein HE HATH made us accepted in the beloved," or "brought us into favour in the beloved." Yes, *He hath* done it. It is all of His free favour, that He hath brought us into favour in the beloved. Nothing can go beyond this, in

the same unchanging, unclouded favour as the beloved Son. Let us not read this as a something to be reached, to be attained by experience, for the Father *hath* brought us into this favour. Boundless, unchanging favour! Well may we, with the Spirit, say, "To the praise of the glory of his grace."

But what of our sins, and the wrath justly due to us? Has God really made a provision according to His own righteous demands, so that we may with certainty know that all is settled, and every barrier removed, so that we really are in this boundless favour? Yes, all is of God, all in Christ. "In whom WE HAVE redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein *he hath* abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." Yes, fearful as have been our sins, overwhelming the sense of sin and guilt, enemies by wicked works, children of wrath as others, dead in trespasses and sins, utterly guilty, subject to the righteous judgment of a holy God—all true and all known to God. Yet in the riches of His grace He has abounded over all. How has He abounded in free favour to sinners so guilty, so vile? "In whom," in Christ, "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."

Mark it is in Christ, not in ourselves or anything we have done, or can do. It is in whom *we have* redemption through His blood. Through

His infinite atonement we have eternal redemption and forgiveness of sins according to the value of that precious blood in the sight of God. Sins are all forgiven; we are brought to God. Jesus took our place and guilt on the cross, and we are now in Him, in His place in the glory. And God ever must own the righteous claims of Christ for us there. Let us not forget that God provided the Lamb, the ransom Lamb. In that Lamb God has abounded in grace to us over all our sins, and *we have* this wondrous redemption with all its eternal results.

But you say, I cannot feel all this? It is not what we feel, but what God says. Does not God say all this? Is not this the word of God our Father to us His children? Do you say, "I cannot believe in such free, unmerited favour to me. I am afraid it cannot be true to me?" Take care what you say. We read, when, this short parenthesis of time is passed and eternity rolls on again: "But the fearful and unbelieving . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (Rev. xxi. 8.) In that same eternity, when the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, "I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe

away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Do you believe God? Then every word we have read to you is a divine certainty to your soul. Are you fearful and unbelieving? Then here is the end of your journey across time. In either case the certainty is the same, based on the word of God. We may deceive ourselves. God will not deceive us. Do you say, "I have never deserved such blessings, such certainties as we read in Ephesians i. What have I done to merit, or to attain to such certainties?" What had the poor heathens at Ephesus done to merit these amazing blessings? or, indeed, what had the religious Jews done who murdered the Son of God? Oh, it was "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins. . . . For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." Yes, it is what God has done, not what we have done. Even works are all of God. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." God hath not ordained works now by which we may be saved, but He hath ordained works for those who are saved, that *we* should walk in them.

Perhaps you say, "I should like to know how these Ephesians were brought into these wondrous blessings?" You will notice that all these high blessings are in Christ. Now read: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." (Chap. i. 13.) Have you heard the gospel, the glad tidings of your salvation, free forgiveness of sins through the atoning death of Christ; of justification from all things in Him risen from the dead; of full and eternal salvation from the guilt and power of sin? Have you believed these glad tidings; not assenting to them as general truths, but as God speaking to you, your very salvation? Now, if you have believed them, after believing ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Yes, sealing follows believing. If you through grace have believed God, then God hath sealed you as His, until the redemption of the purchased possession. Then all is yours: let us look over your certainties.

It is a present thing. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ *hath* blessed you with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. All is yours that the God of all grace gives you. *He hath* chosen you in Him before the foundation of the world, that you should be holy and without blame before Him in love. *He*

hath brought you to Himself as a child, having predestined you unto this very place of unspeakable blessing. *He hath* brought you into favour in the beloved—into the same unclouded favour as His beloved Son. Is not this to the praise of the glory of His grace? You have redemption in Him through His blood—not a temporal redemption, like Israel from Egypt, but eternal. The forgiveness of sins is not merely the forgiveness of past sins, great as is that blessing—so vast is the riches of His grace, so truly infinite the value of the redemption price, the blood of Jesus—so really were all our sins reckoned to Him on the cross, that God will not, cannot in righteousness, impute sin to us. The whole question of sin, and sins, and guilt is settled for ever. And you have this blessedness on the certainty of the word of God. Mark, “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” It is all of God, and *we have it*.

If you hope to have it, then plainly you have not got it. As I said to an old man of eighty just now, “If you hope for a hat to cover your head in the cold, then you have not got it. If it is on your head you cannot hope for it.” Blessed be God, His righteousness is not only unto all, but upon all that believe. Thank God for the certainties of His word.

C. S.



THE LORD'S TABLE.

BY THE LATE A. P. C.

GATHERED to Thy Name, Lord Jesus,
 In the enjoyment of Thy love,
 Where Thy presence is assured us,
 We do here its blessing prove.

Gathered to Thy Name, Lord Jesus,
 Thou art God's Anointed One,
 Here the Father's voice assures us,
 This is My beloved Son !

Gathered to Thy Name, Lord Jesus,
 We confess we're in the Son ;
 Of Thy body fellow-members,
 By the Spirit joined in one.

Gathered to Thy Name, Lord Jesus,
 Resurrection songs we sing,
 Where Thy holy priesthood gathers,
 Where Thy saints their praises bring.

Gathered to Thy Name, Lord Jesus,
 We are ransomed by Thy blood ;
 'Tis Thy precious death that freed us,
 From our sin's accursèd load.

Gathered to Thy Name, Lord Jesus,
 At Thy table is our place,
 Where we break the bread before us,
 Drink the cup that speaks Thy grace.

Gathered to Thy Name, Lord Jesus,
 We remember here Thy love ;
 Love that gave Himself to save us,
 Now enthroned with God above.

Gathered to Thy Name, Lord Jesus,
We expect Thee soon to come ;
Here we wait for Thee to fetch us
Hence, to our dear Father's home.

EXTRACT FROM THE EAST.

“ ALL things are now quite clear for my journey north (Mesopotamia, &c.), and I have appointed the 4th of November, the Lord willing, to start. I have to wait for some rain to cool the air and moisten the parched face of the earth. All is quite clear and happy before the Lord. He has also provided me a suitable companion—the one I had in mind from the first ; I mean the young brother now labouring in and around Damascus. He wrote to me this week that he is free and happy to go, in fact has been for some time exercised about going north to labour.

Yesterday I had good letters from Mesopotamia, shewing that a very great many are awakened and anxious to hear the word. The brother from there who was here and returned, wrote me that since his return home his house has scarcely been free from visitors from this place and elsewhere, who are all deeply interested to hear. As I have said to you before, it is the primary need of souls that presses upon me, although I am sure that there will be gathering power also.”

B. F. PINKERTON.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH ?

II.

WE will now turn to our second illustration of the church, the bride of Christ.

REBECCA. GENESIS XXII. TO XXIV.

If we turn to this inspired account, we notice that Isaac had no bride until after that remarkable event in his history, his being offered up on the altar, and his being received in figure from the dead. It is written of Abraham, after he had offered up his only begotten son, that he accounted that "God was able to raise him up, even from the dead ; from whence also he received him in a figure." (Heb. xi. 19.) Until this event, until in figure Isaac was raised from the dead, we do not hear of the bride of Isaac. This in our illustration then is the foundation of all that follows. "God will provide himself a lamb."

Was not this so in the great antitype ? When God gave up His only begotten Son unto the actual death of the cross, and until that work was finished on the cross, and God had raised up His Son from the dead, until then we have not one word of the church, the bride of Christ, as an existing thing. So far then the illustration is in keeping with the New Testament account of the formation of the church.

Then, in the account in Genesis, it is after the

receiving of Isaac from the dead, that Sarah dies, and is buried. It was after the death and resurrection of Jesus that the Jews were set aside and for a time buried among the nations.

But still more striking is the fact, that after the death and resurrection of Isaac, the father, Abraham, and the risen son, Isaac, send the third person, the steward of the household, from Canaan (figure of heaven) for the specific purpose of fetching the bride, Rebecca, for Isaac the son. Could anything be more striking as a figure? It was after Jesus, the heavenly Bridegroom, had died, and was risen from the dead, and had ascended up to heaven, that the Father and the Son sent the Holy Ghost from heaven to this world,—the Jews having rejected the Saviour-Messiah, and all the promises to Israel for a time being set aside, buried, as it were, for the present. Oh, that this were understood. The specific object of the descent of the Holy Ghost, as we shall see when we come to the Acts and Epistles, was to form the bride, and take her to meet the Bridegroom. Let us look at this picture.

Eliezer then is a figure of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven. He comes, sent of the father, Abraham, for a bride for Isaac. He does not come for all Mesopotamia. And at this time Jesus does not ask for the whole world, but for those whom the Father hath given Him, and who will compose the bride.

Mark, he comes in pure grace, giving freely his gifts, but giving first to the bride. Like Jesus at the well, he desires a drink of water from this stranger. For the Holy Spirit, as the Shepherd, also has joy in finding the lost one. (Luke xv.) But he brings all to her: the jewels for the forehead, and the bracelets for the hands. And not as the world, he giveth all first. Such is the way of the Holy Spirit in taking of the things that are Christ's. It is the righteousness of God *unto* all, and the jewel upon the forehead of every one that believeth, and where the righteousness of God is on the forehead, everlasting love clasps the hands. This free favour touches the heart of Rebecca. There is room enough for the camels to lodge in.

It is free favour, everlasting love, that opens the heart to Christ, and the Spirit then dwells there for ever. The heart is won for Christ. Mark this second type brings out the work of the Spirit in fetching the bride. Precious lessons for every servant of Christ. It is ours to seek this divine guidance, and when we have found it, to bow and worship. And now he brings out "Jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and GAVE them to Rebecca; he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things." Yes, the Gospel of the Holy Ghost is all *giving*. Every other gospel is asking something from man, who finds he has nothing to give,

Which gospel do you hear? Giving in pure free favour, like our picture here; or asking like the law, and giving nothing? But thus the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ for the bride. The precious realities of redemption are figured by jewels of silver, and divine righteousness by the figure of gold. All is from the risen Son, the heavenly bridegroom. But when thus clothed, and made meet to be the bride of Isaac, is there nothing more? no question of responsibility for the bride? Yes, there is the question of all questions: "Wilt thou go?" Have we heard that question? The Holy Ghost will never ask you that question until He has shewn you and given you all that makes you perfectly meet to be the bride of Christ. Ah, then your heart longs to be gone. "Yes," she said, "I will go." "And the servant took Rebecca and went his way." Yes, she is gone from all she held dear in that land of idolaters. SHE IS GONE to meet the bridegroom. She sits on the camel with her back on her former home and her face toward the bridegroom and her future home. Which way do you sit, my reader? Is your back on all you once held dear in a sinful world? Is your face toward your waiting Bridegroom and your eternal home above? The true attitude of the church is to go out to meet Him she loves. This was her first love. Yes, she turned her back on all below, to meet Him she loved. The journey

was long, in dependence, at every step, on the guide who came to fetch her.

But the next event, after she left her old home, was "Isaac came," "and Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming." And to this agree the words of Jesus, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Yes, as Isaac came out in the fields of Canaan to meditate, so Jesus is now meditating in the fields of glory. Oh that the bride may now lift up her eyes and see Him, as Rebecca lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac. May we, like her, dwell on all the Spirit has to tell us of the Man that cometh out to meet us. Oh yes, we will ask the Spirit to tell us more and more of the Man that cometh out to meet us. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we who 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." (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.)

Yes, as the call of Rebecca brings before us the work of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, to form and fetch the bride to meet and be for ever with the Lord, this lovely picture will enable

us to detect all that counterfeits His blessed work.

Let us try it. Here comes a very large company, led by a wonderful person. You will find his name and character in 2 Corinthians xi. 14, and his company in verse 15. But how is this? They are all going the wrong way. They have all their backs on the coming of the Lord. They all say in their hearts, "My Lord delayeth his coming." They are full of hatred to Rebecca, and would like to smite her. They say, "We are the church, and all that do not belong to us are damned, or shall be, both in this world and the next, so soon as we have power."

Well, they seem very much in earnest; they seem to have an object before them. If it is not Christ coming from heaven to meet them, what is it? Ah, if you could but get it out of them you would not forget it.

Ask one or two. Well, try this one—the Rev. So-and-so. Kindly excuse me, do you not profess to be a Christian, and this company with you, does it not bear the name of being "the church, the bride of Christ?" "Yes, quite so. And we are the only church; all others are heretics, and will be lost for ever." This is strange. Did not the church of Christ in the beginning go out to meet Him? And you are going the wrong way, with your backs to the coming of the Lord, and your faces on what?

How many would say, if they spoke up, "I have no time to think about such things as the coming of the Lord, I am seeking a good living in the world. We want possession of all Mesopotamia, and divide it into parishes for priests."

And here comes another. He might say, "I am not so foolish as to give up the world. I delight in tennis, football, and all the dancing and carousing of Mesopotamia." Poor things! When they think of eternity, they need a good amount of what they call pleasure to make up for the awful despair of eternity.

To another, the one like an angel of light is whispering, "What, give up Mesopotamia, my beautiful world? (2 Cor. iv. 4.) Come and join me in my politics, and let your hope be the improvement of Mesopotamia!"

Far more than this is true of that company who assume to be the only church on earth, but alas, they are travelling the wrong way. But what a test for the writer, and every reader of these lines! Are we being led by Satan, or by the Holy Ghost? Is the world your object, or mine? Or is the object of our hearts the Bridegroom of the church? Have we received the free-grace gifts of the Holy Ghost? Christ our redemption; Christ our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, our all? Have we been won to Christ? Have we said, "I will go?" What have we gone out from to meet the Lord?

Is He, the coming One, the object of our hearts?

Before we look at our third picture, let us meditate on this question: Which way are we travelling? If not to meet the Lord, our name is not Rebecca. In this picture then we see that the purpose of the Father, and the work of the Holy Ghost during this time, is to gather and present the bride to the risen Son. This alone is the present work of the Spirit.

RUTH.

We have looked at the creation of Eve as illustrating the purpose and work of God, in the new creation of the church, the bride of Christ.

We have also seen the work of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to form the church, the bride of Christ, in the call of Rebecca.

Now we would behold the Bridegroom-Redeemer in the Book of Ruth—the attractions of Christ, and the way the desolate stranger is drawn to Him and becomes the redeemed bride.

We get also the exercises of heart through which each soul passes, more or less, that is brought to Christ. Just as each, whether Jew or Gentile, is found dead in sins, children of wrath in Ephesians ii.—yes, each of those raised up with Christ to occupy the place of highest blessings in Him in the heavenlies—so it is in our picture. Ruth is one of a people outside, under the curse

according to the law. (See Deut. xxiii. 3-6.) Just as in Ephesians ii. 12, "Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

Such is our condition by nature. Such was the position of Ruth, the Moabitess. And death was written upon her. All hope was gone as to her husband, he was dead, and his brother was dead; Elimelech their father also was dead. This is the place where grace finds her. For from first to last "by grace ye are saved." God can use whom He pleases in that work of grace.

She who was "Naomi" (pleasing) in the land of Jehovah, has become "Mara" (bitter) when away from her God, and is stirred, for she hears of blessing when in the land of Moab far away, "how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her." Thus the work of grace begins apparently in both Ruth and Orpah. And so it is, often the work seems to begin in two persons, and they travel on together for a time. And there is the same outward love for a time to the feeble messenger of that grace. Thus it was with Orpah as well as Ruth. Orpah wept and kissed Naomi, and then went back to her demon gods. 1 Corinthians x. 20, "I say that the

things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils [demons] and not to God."

How many Orpahs have we known, who once professed to have left the world, and started for the heavenly journey? Such have sacrificed themselves and their children to the worship of fashion and pleasure. Not so where there is a real work of grace: "Ruth clave unto her." She says, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God," &c. However little knowledge, there is and must be uncompromising decision for Christ.

Nothing could more strikingly illustrate the soul's first meeting with Christ than Ruth ii. She gleans in the field of the bridegroom, the kinsman-redeemer. What grace he shews her! She is welcome when thirsty to drink, and at meal times to come and eat; and handfuls are dropped on purpose for her. Still she was only a gleaner. Many remain in the fields of our Boaz, happy to get blessing, and sharing those blessings with others, as Ruth did with Naomi, and never seem to reach the true ground of rest.* "Shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" said Naomi to Ruth.

We notice, that the only way to find rest, is to seek it at the feet of the Redeemer-kinsman, as

* Many more of these details may be seen in a tract, "Ruth," to be had of G. Morrish, London.

seen in chapter iii. We must know Him as the Redeemer-Bridegroom ; just as Ruth took that place at the feet of Boaz in his sleep, picture of the death of Christ. Spread thy sheltering protection over me, for thou art One that hath right to redeem. There was another relation before Boaz, and Ruth had to wait until the morning. Yes, we must be brought to the death, the cross of Christ. But mark it is not there we find rest, the rest of redemption. If the morning of the resurrection of Christ had never broken the silence of the tomb, we could never have found eternal rest. He must rise again, or there can be no redeemed bride. We must call attention to this point in this beautiful illustration. The church as such had no actual existence until Jesus arose from the dead. Ruth has not to glean now, but to sit still, "for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day."

Chapter iv. is the question who is to be your husband and redeemer ? Man, as represented in Israel, was placed under law, as the old husband. That relationship existed. The question then was, could the law bring man into resurrection-redemption ? It could not. It could go no further than the land, that is, the government of God in this world. It could not redeem the guilty. The first kinsman could not redeem Ruth, one of the accursed race, and give her a place in resurrection. Very strikingly is all this

brought out in this chapter. He must relinquish all claim and pretension, "So he drew off his shoe." What he could not do, Boaz did; he says, "Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance."

In like manner, what the law could not do Christ has done; as it is written, "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," &c. Oh what love was this, the eternal Son, the creator of all things, to humble Himself so low as to become the Redeemer-kinsman of poor lost sinners under the curse of sin, to pay the purchase of their redemption; and, as risen from the dead, to take them into everlasting oneness with Himself as His body and His bride.

Very briefly let us now see how all these pictures or types of the church have been fulfilled in the church, the bride of Christ. In Ephesians we see the church as the workmanship of God, according to His own purpose, which answered to the creation of Eve. God raised Christ from the dead. The new creation of the church was consequent on His death and resurrection. The church is to be presented to Christ, the last Adam, and be joint heir with Him over all things in the paradise of God in the heavenlies.

Then after the death and resurrection of Christ the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven to form the church. This work of the Spirit is going on still, and will go on until that moment when the church complete is presented to Christ, as Rebecca was to Isaac. The day of Pentecost was the first day of the work of the Holy Ghost in forming the church; and soon the last will have arrived. See the Acts for the full account of the formation of the church. And though the Satanic counterfeit goes on to Babylon's apostasy, yet the work, guidance, and care of the Holy Spirit never ceases; and daily now, as at the beginning, such as are saved are added to the Lord, as truly as on the day of Pentecost. And as the church or assembly included all who were saved then, so now it is quite true there is no salvation outside the pale of the true church, simply for this good reason, that all that are truly saved are baptised into the one body, the church. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are WE ALL baptised into one body," &c. (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.) The Holy Ghost never makes or baptises different bodies of Christians. For it is as true that there is but one body, as it is that there is one Spirit. Christ is the head of His body the church. "And there is one body." (Eph. iv. 4-6.) The Lord grant that

we may hold this important truth firm to the end. For whatever is not truth is not of God, but of the father of lies.

There was one Eve, one Rebecca, one Ruth. In each figure, is only one. One bridegroom, Boaz; one redeemed bride, Ruth. There were different local assemblies, but only the one assembly, the body of Christ. All believers formed that one assembly. All believers now form the one church or assembly of God. That one assembly is about to be caught up to meet the Lord, and to be for ever with Him, and all the varied imitations of men or Satan will be left behind. The blessed hope of the church may be seen in 1 Thessalonians iv. 15-18, and the judgments that will follow in chapter v. 2, 3: "And they shall not escape." "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. (2 Thess. i. 7, 8.)

How terrible the judgments about to be poured on apostate Christendom as revealed to us in Revelation xvii., xviii. Then, when the great harlot is for ever judged, the bride of the Lamb will be the true second Eve, the Rebecca, the Ruth. Then will be heard the voice of the great multitude in heaven, saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made

herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white : for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." (Rev. xix. 7, 8.) Read also the description given of her in chapter xxi. 9 to end. "Having the glory of God, and her light [or shining] was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Such is the sure destiny of the church of God, them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling. The church of God is composed only of such. All pretensions as to being the true church will soon be tested. May every reader of these few lines be tested NOW. Rest not, beloved reader, until you are quite sure you belong to the redeemed church of God—until you know that *you have* redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins. To-morrow may be too late ; the church may be gone to be for ever with the Lord, and you, if unsaved, for ever left, shut out. Oh think of those words, " Too late !" What infinite mercy that it is not too late yet. " And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Oh the precious grace that invites you so sweetly, even unto the last moment. Have you tried the pleasures of this world, its sins, fashions, and its follies—and still you thirst ? Oh come to Jesus, come now. He says, " And

let him that is athirst come." Do not say, "I am too bad for such scenes of glory and holiness." No, He says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." He is the truth—He will not deceive you. Oh, come. And to you who have come, can you look up to Jesus in the heavens and say, Come? Who can say that He will not come the day you read these words—nay, even before they are in print? C. S.



I . . . ME : . . . MY.

(LUKE XV. 29-32.)

I is the centre, *me* the subject, and *my* the circle of the human heart. *Self* and its interests in a word. And nowhere does this come out more plainly than in the self-righteous. Note this elder son. How does he address himself to his father—"Father, I have sinned"? Far otherwise. "And he answering, said to his father, Lo these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." If in the younger son we have a divinely drawn portrait of the sinner—such as "drew near unto him . . . for to hear him" (ver. 1); in the elder son we have as unmistakably the portrait of the murmuring Pharisees and scribes. (Ver. 2.) "But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy

living with harlots" (he murmured) "thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." (Ver. 30.) There is nothing which self-righteousness resents so much as grace, for grace gives it no place. His father had never rewarded the many years of self-imposed and self-extolled service of this elder son with so much as a kid, and now, "as soon as this thy son"—as if he was not his own brother—"is come, who has utterly disgraced the family name, and dissipated its resources," he would say, "thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." How galling to his self-esteem. "As soon," without waiting to take *my* merits into consideration, "as your harlot-associate of a son came, you killed for him the best beast in the stall"—that always reserved for an honoured guest. Share it with his father in such company "he would not." No, it was not his father's company, and what gave *him* pleasure that he cared for, any more than the younger son had done when he betook himself to the far country, and to the lowest of company to be found even there. His words—"Thou never gavest me a kid that *I* might make merry with *my* friends"—shew it. Though he was "ever with his father" as to position, his heart was as far away from his father as was the younger son's in the far country, and much more difficult to recover.

And thus it ever is with the formalist. He uses religion as a means of benefiting himself,

and to enable him to go on at a distance from God, while his religion quiets his conscience.

The writer's mother once, in giving away tracts, offered one to a Catholic priest, not having noticed what he was in the passing stream. The priest drew back, exclaiming, "I *have* a religion." "Thank God, I have Christ!" was her reply. And, thank God, the young priest found Him too; for coming up to my mother some years after, he reminded her of the above brief conversation, and told her he had never been able to shake off the effect of her words, till he had sought and found Christ too.

How great a contrast to the mere formalist is the true Christian. His language is—"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.) When the soul has tasted that the Lord is gracious, it can say, "the Son of God loved me, and gave himself for me," then only it can say, and that with joy, "not I, but Christ," and finds in Him its object, lives "by the faith of the Son of God," that is, finds its centre in Him, its subject in His love ("Who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*"), and finds its circle in His interests, responds to His call, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost."

"It was meet that we should make merry and be glad." Thus closes this wonderful scene—the most wonderful picture that was ever painted. What

is its subject, do you ask? God laying Himself out to recover wanderers—those that are at a distance from Himself, either in immorality, or in cold self-satisfied morality. “Yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him.” (2 Sam. xiv. 14.) And if it were not so “we must needs die,” die in our sins, die in our ruin and wretchedness, in our lost condition, and distant position. That position of distance to be fixed for all eternity, as it will be for those who hold out to the last against all His endeavours and entreaties, as we read in chapter xvi. in the case of the “rich man.” Yes, my reader, it is solemnly and sadly true, that if you refuse to go into the house, like the elder son in chapter xv., you will have to be turned into the hell so graphically but terribly described in chapter xvi. For “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”

And are you of the sect of modern Sadducees, or of their dupes who deny that there is such a place as *hell*? Allow me to ask you who knows best, they or you, or the Son of God? The One who came from the unseen world into ours that He might lift its curtain for us, and make us know the certainty of heaven and hell, the end of good and evil; and that He might deliver us, at the cost of bearing our judgment from the hand of a holy God; that He might deliver us from the torment of the one, and introduce us

into the bliss of the other. "A picture," do you say? with the short-sighted logic of all such cavillers. Granted; but a picture of what? "Eastern imagery?" Granted; but of what? Pictures portray something. Imagery represents something real, not that which has no existence. And the picture of Luke xvi. 19-31 portrays an awful and endless reality, that we might escape it. Oh, be warned! Thank God you are not yet in that state of torment, where so much as a drop of water to cool your tongue will be denied. (Ver. 24.) You may be where you are perishing with hunger (chap. xv. 17), and thank God if you feel it. But you are still where the fulness of the Father's house is offered, bread enough and to spare even for a hired servant. "The fatted calf" with "music and dancing," all the delights of heaven for a prodigal or professor; and the best robe, the ring, the shoes, to fit you for the house, to remind you of your Father's love, and to give you a standing in His favour, as well as His embrace and kiss.

And not only is Luke xv. a picture of God's grace in recovering the sinner, but of His joy in receiving him.

What a drama is being enacted on the vast stage of this world. And the chief actors—who are they? Wonder of wonders, God in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all engaged in the work of each individual sinner's

salvation and reception. And what a scene is that on which the curtain falls at the close. (Vers. 25-32.) On God entreating and man refusing—self-righteous man, too. And soon, how soon, the curtain will fall on this vast drama—God still beseeching (2 Cor. v. 20), man still refusing. Christ coming again from heaven will close it; all neglectors, refusers, and rejectors being for ever shut out. (Luke xiii. 25-30.) And the last word is, "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

W. G. B.

THE CLOSE OF ANOTHER YEAR.

YES, another year will soon have passed away for ever. What a year! How rapid the increase of evil! How have we spent this year? Soon our course will be run. How shall we each one be able to say, "I have finished my course." The apostle could say, when speaking of his warfare in the gospel, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy; and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." (Acts xx. 24, 25.)

He seems to have been aware that his active

warfare service was drawing to a close. A little later on he could say, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.)

Paul may have referred to a remarkable scripture in the Old Testament. Numbers viii. 24, 25 : "This is it that belongeth unto the Levites : from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait [or war the warfare] upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. And from the age of fifty years, they shall cease from the warfare of the service and shall serve no more." Thus their course of warfare service was from twenty-five to fifty years of age. And of that warfare service they shall serve no more.

"But shall minister WITH THEIR BRETHREN in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service. Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge." (Ver. 26.) Thus we have both the individual warfare service, and the ministry with their brethren. How is it we have so lost the beautiful teaching of these types written for our instruction ? Is it not because the distinction between individual service and responsibility has become almost everything ? And the precious ministry *with* our brethren in the sanctuary almost ignored ?

An aged servant of Christ may find that his strength fails; he is no longer able to war the warfare. He says, I have finished my course, I can no longer get about; if he tries, he breaks down. He can no longer, it may be, preach the gospel, or lecture. Well, he has finished his course. Many who may have seen him in the warfare for long years will see his face no more. But should he be discouraged or distressed? Surely there is immense comfort in this precious ministry with his brethren in the sanctuary. (Ver. 26.) This ministry may also close, or it may go on until that blessed moment, the coming of the Lord. Every servant of Christ may now wait expecting to see his Lord.

In the beginning there was both the hard warfare service, and the ministry, when the assembly were gathered together in the sanctuary of His blessed presence. We find as to "the ministry" that "the prophets might speak two or three." And some of us remember the times of refreshing, when the children of God gathered in real dependence on the Holy Ghost, and it was so. Blessed seasons. Shall we give up this ministering *with* our brethren in the sanctuary? It will be sad for us if we do. But have we not too much done so? I beg my brethren to ponder these things. And we have seen, as in Paul's case, how the Lord can find ways and means of using His aged servant, even if he be in a prison.

When his active course was finished, how blessed "the ministry" to the whole church of God, though a chained prisoner at Rome. And another in his day, when shut up by the priests in Bedford prison, was used in sending out his Pilgrim, which has been made a blessing to thousands.

It is very precious for an aged and infirm servant of the Lord, to experience His care and love even when He says, "There, now, as to your warfare which has been so dear to you, you shall so serve no more. But I give you a little space now, for ministry *with* your brethren. And it may be till I come." Oh, what depths of special sovereign mercy if the aged servant can in any little measure repeat the words of Paul. (Acts xx. 26-35 ; 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.)

Precious Lord, how blessed to minister, to serve, with Thy brethren, until we see Thy face ! And if taken before to say to beloved fellow labourers, "Feed the church of God." Yes, the whole church of God. C. S.

ERRATUM.

Page 247, line 16, *read* other, malefactors, led

