

THE REMEMBRANCER.

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE
FOR
THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

“ Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you
always in remembrance of these things, though
ye know them. Yea, . . . I think it meet, . . .
to stir you up by putting you in remembrance ”
2nd Peter i. 12, 13.

VOLUME V.

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The Remembrancer.

THE TRUE SPIRIT OF WAITING FOR JESUS.

“It is not he who loves the coming of the Lord, who asserts that it is near; or he who asserts that it is not near: but he rather who, whether it be near or afar off, waits for it with the sincerity of faith, the firmness of hope, and the fervour of love.”

—AUGUSTINE.

“TO-DAY OR TO-MORROW.”

The dark stream of evil is flowing apace :
Awake, and be doing, ye children of grace.
Let us seek with compassion the souls that are lost,
Well knowing the price their redemption has cost.
While singing with rapture the Saviour's great
love,
And waiting for Him to translate us above,
“It may be to-morrow, or even to-night,”
Let loins be well girded, and lamps burning bright.

We're journeying on to the realms of the blest,
We're nearer each day to our heavenly rest ;
But when we reach home, and its regions of joy,
No labours of mercy our hands can employ :
No mourning ones *there* shall we meet to console,
No wand'ers to rescue, or sick ones make whole,
No weak ones to cherish, no lost ones to find—
These labours of love we shall all leave behind.

The house, and the land, and the wealth in the
chest,
Give plenty occasions for ministries blest ;

Let's use them to lessen the lone widow's grief,
 To fatherless children give welcome relief ;
 The doubting and fearful, to them let us bring
 Those tidings of mercy that cause us to sing.
 Then let us " to-morrow, and even to-day,"
 Be true to our mission while down here we stay.

Yes, let us with ardour the present redeem —
 Our joy and our glory to imitate Him,
 The Shepherd, who travail'd his lost sheep to save,
 And His blood for their ransom on Calvary gave.
Self was never His object ; Himself He denied ;
 For others, each moment, He liv'd and He died !
 We are left here to learn, and to copy His grace,
 While He in the heavens secures us our place.

Then, Lord, while my spirit so yearns to get home,
 I'd learn to be patient till Thou for us come ;
 E'en now is my spirit so happy in Thee,
 I can bear here to tarry till Thou call for me.
 In the patience of hope I will spend Thy delay,
 'T would be selfish to wish e'en to hasten the day,
 Assur'd Thy long-suffering alone stays the hour
 When the " Day of the Lord " shall display its
 dread power.

My Master ! I pray Thee to purge from my breast
 All hard, selfish pining for ease and for rest.
 Oh, make me delight in Thy service of love,
 My heart all responsive to Thy heart above !
 The time of my sojourn, how soon it may end !
 Instruct me more wisely its " twelve hours " to
 spend ;
 That be it " to-morrow, or be it to-night,"
 To win Thy approval be still my delight.

UNSELFISHNESS.

One thing impressed my mind most peculiarly when the Lord was first opening my eyes—I never found Christ doing a single thing for Himself. Here is an immense principle. There was not one act in all Christ's life done to serve or please Himself. An unbroken stream of blessed, perfect, unfailing love flowed from Him, no matter what the contradiction of sinners—one amazing and unwavering testimony of love, and sympathy, and help; but it was ever others, and not Himself, that were comforted, and nothing could weary it, nothing turn it aside. Now the world's whole principle is self, doing well for itself. (Psalm xlix. 18.) Men know that it is upon the energy of selfishness they have to depend. Every one that knows anything of the world knows this. Without it the world could not go on. What is the world's honour? Self. What its wealth? Self. What is advancement in the world? Self. They are but so many forms of the same thing; the principle that animates the individual man in each is the spirit of self-seeking. The business of the world is the seeking of self, and the pleasures of the world are selfish pleasures. They are troublesome pleasures too; for we cannot escape from a world where God has said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the ground," etc. Toil for self is irksome; but suppose a man finds out at length that the

busy seeking of self is trouble and weariness, & having procured the means of living without gives it up, what then? He just adopts another form of the same spirit of self and turns to selfish ease.

I am not now speaking of vice and gross sin (of course every one will allow that to be opposite to the spirit of Christ), but of the whole course of the world. Take the world's decent, moral man, and is he an "epistle of Christ"? Is there in him a single motive like Christ's? He may do the same things; he may be a carpenter as Christ was said to be (Mark vi. 3); but he has not one thought in common with Christ.

As to the outside, the world goes on with its religion and its philanthropy. It does good, builds its hospitals, feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, and the like; but its inward springs & action are not Christ's. Every motive that governed Christ all the way along is not that which governs men; and the motives which keep the world agoing are not those which were found in Christ at all.

The infidel owns Christ's moral beauty, and selfishness can take pleasure in unselfishness; but the Christian is to "put on Christ." He was about doing good all the day long; there was not a moment but He was ready as the servant in grace of the need of others. And do not let us suppose that this cost Him nothing. He had not where to lay His head; He hungered and was wearied;

and when He sat down, where was it? Under the scorching sun at the well's mouth, whilst His disciples went into the city to buy bread. And what then? He was as ready for the poor, vile sinner who came to Him as if He had not hungered, neither was faint and weary. He was never at ease. He was in all the trials and troubles that man is in as the consequences of sin, and see how He walked! He made bread for others; but He would not touch a stone to turn it into bread for Himself. As to the moral motives of the soul, the man of the world has no one principle in common with Christ. If then the worldling is to read in the Christian the character of Christ, it is evident the world cannot read it in *him*; he is not a Christian; he is not in the road to heaven at all, and every step he takes only conducts him farther and farther from the object in view. When a man is in a wrong road, the farther he goes in it the more he is astray.



“WHAT HAVE THEY SEEN IN THINE HOUSE?”

In view of the general character of what passes current for Christianity in the present day, we need constantly to be reminded that it is not a fair exterior that meets the eye of Him who looketh, not on the outward appearance, but, on the heart; nor will even the greatest accuracy in spiritual things be accepted by Him as a substitute for a

heart won and held by Christ Himself. How apt we are to make more of the place than of the Person (who makes the place what it is); more of the blessings than of the Blessor; and the soul is thus subtilly beguiled from its first simplicity, from its cleaving with purpose of heart unto the Lord ("thou hast left *thy first love*").

There is ever the tendency to drift into mere religiousness, and, "having the form," to relegate everything to the coming together into one place; coming together very often as those who—like clocks—require to be wound up for another week instead of being drawn by the power of irresistible attraction around Himself, to pour out of hearts. He has been causing to overflow throughout the week, what they can no longer contain in His presence. Even to Israel it was said, "None shall appear *before Me* empty" (Ex. xxiii. 15; xxxiv. 26; Deut. xvi. 16).

If we think of God manifest in the flesh, how was He so manifested? Was it not by, and in, *dwelling among us*; and, as it is put in that heart-touching word referring to His public ministry, "*All the time* that the Lord Jesus *went in and out* among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us," and this *has its voice to us*, has it not, beloved Saints of God? That is to say, in all the common places, as *we* speak, of every-day life, the going out and the coming in—yea—as we find it in the first Psalm, in every attitude of the body, whether

walking, standing or sitting, the life is to be the outcome of what the heart is finding its delight in. In the Psalm alluded to, the delight of the heart is in the law of Jehovah, consequently, the motions of the body—walking, standing, sitting—are in keeping with that in which the delight is. Nor is it a spasmodic enjoyment, confined to rare occasions, or only finding its expression in the great congregation, but “in His law doth he meditate *day and night*.” Hence—freshness is characteristic—“like a tree planted by the rivers of water,” and fruitfulness also, “that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” Ah! beloved! we can, it may be, accurately define what marks this present dispensation as to its distinctive privileges and blessings, in contrast with what preceded it, and all the while our hearts may be very far behind what this Psalm describes, viz., the heart’s delight and the heart’s meditation, day and night, affecting and determining the motions of the body, and resulting in freshness, fruitfulness, no signs of drought, and prosperity in “whatsoever he doeth;” for surely if my doings are the outcome of my delight of heart in Him, they cannot but prosper. (1 John iii. 22.)

It is not a heart delighting in its own state nor blessings, but in the revelation of God Himself. And what a revelation of Himself as the Father, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, has placed before the eyes of *our* hearts, in

which to delight, and upon which to meditate—as well we might—by day and by night! And how the Father addresses Himself to our hearts! He calls us *dear* children (Eph. v. 1). What affection! And as dear children we are to be imitators of Him, that thus the Father might be glorified by us. Thus He addresses His whole family, and tells us how to walk. But, I do not walk in order to have the Father call me His dear child, but because He has Himself placed me in that relationship; and that, not because of my behaviour, but, “having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, *according to the good pleasure of His will*” (Eph. i. 5). Thus He has a Father’s right to be heard in His family circle as a whole, and He has also His voice for each dear child, in whatever position such may be placed. He consequently looks into our dwellings, and there addresses the wives, the husbands, the children, the fathers, the servants, the masters, and again His whole family circle (Eph. v. and vi.).

In chap. v., having told us how to walk, He plainly intimates what is unbecoming and not to be once named among us; and, while we are all agreed that two of the things specified are of a gross character, yet we do well to note the company in which the third thing is placed, see third verse: “Fornication and all uncleanness or *covetousness*.” Read 4th and 5th verses likewise, and note that, while the first two ugly things are again mentioned in verse five, the third is also again

mentioned and commented upon, thus : " Nor covetous man, who is an idolater " (see also Col. iii. 5, " covetousness, which is idolatry "), that is to say, covetousness displaces God, and enthrones an idol in His place. Beloved, are we free from the spirit of this gross evil, the heinousness of which the Spirit of God here takes pains to put before us ; an evil which brought the first blot upon the church's history, through Ananias and Sapphira ; and with what has that first foul stain been followed up ? Remembering that it could once be written : " Neither said any that ought of the things which he possessed was his own " (Acts iv. 32), with what sorrow we read at a later day : " All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's " (Phil. ii. 21). And yet further, when the church's shame has become her boast, we hear : " I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. " " I sit a queen " (Rev. iii. 17 ; xviii. 7).

Again let me ask, do we consider ourselves as exempt from this common danger ?

Ah ! beware, remember that favoured King Hezekiah, of old, who " trusted in Jehovah, God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him, for he clave to Jehovah and departed not from following Him " (2 Kings xviii. 5, 6), and Jehovah wrought wondrously for His people and their king ; but, *left to himself in one matter* (see 2 Chron. xxxii. 31), where was this favoured one ?

What occasioned Jehovah's question through the lips of His prophet: "What have they seen in thine house?" Ah! what, but the fact that a king with such a record had fallen a prey to this heinous evil—covetousness, and Jehovah and Jehovah's house were forgotten and displaced by Hezekiah's house and its contents. Mark the prophet's question; not, what have they heard, but, what have they *seen* in thine house?

The One who addresses *us* as dear children would have us know and remember, that He is interested uninterruptedly in all our doings; noting (not as a detective standing on my doorstep, but) as a Father all who cross the threshold of my dwelling, and what is spread out before their eyes inside the house. It is a day of great swelling words, but He is seeking from us a life responsive to the relationship that He Himself hath established, and no loud professions from our lips belied by the life. What have they *seen*?

Too frequently have we spoken and acted as if all the wondrous truths made known to Gentile sinners, as we were, were merely to find their expression in our coming together; whereas in Eph. v., my Father tells me what He wants to be seen *in my house*, even the expression in the smallest details of life, and amid all its chafing, of that great mystery, "Christ and the Church." "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church."

HEZEKIAH.

“In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order ; for thou shalt die, and not live. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, saying, I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.”—(2 Kings xx. 1-3.)

HEZEKIAH'S HOUSE.

“And Hezekiah heard and showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious oint-

PAUL.

“According to my earnest expectation and hope; that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die gain. . . . Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ ; which is far better.” “Willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” — (Phil. i. 20, 21, 23 ; 2 Cor. v. 8.)

PAUL'S HOUSE.

“And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which

ment, and the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures."—(2 Kings xx. 13.)

concern the Lord Jesus Christ."—(Acts. xxviii. 30, 31.)



THE HOURS OF THE LORD JESUS,

"In reading the Gospels I am very much struck with the way in which every hour of the time of the Lord Jesus is filled up. There is no loitering in the path of the Blessed One through this world : no seeking (like we seek) for ease : life with Him is taken up with the untiring actions of love. He lives not for Himself : God and man have all His thought and all His care. If He seeks for solitude, it is to be alone with His Father. Does He seek for society : it is to be about His Father's business. By night or by day He is always the same. On the Mount of Olives, praying : in the temple, teaching : in the midst of sorrow, comforting : or where sickness is, healing : every act declares Him to be One who lives for others. He has a joy in God man cannot understand ; a care for man that only God could show. You never find Him acting for Himself. If hungry in the wilderness He works no miracle to supply His own need, but if others are hungering around Him, the compassions of His heart flow forth, and He feeds them by thousands."

THE INVISIBLE.

“The Lord has ways of weaning us from the visible and tangible, and bringing us to live upon the invisible and real. God blows out our candles, and makes us find our light in Him, to prepare us for that place in which they need no candle, for the glory of God is their light ; and where, strange to tell, they have no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. Oh that God would gradually lift us up above all the outward, above all the visible, and bring us more into the inward and unseen ! If you do not know anything about this, ask the Lord to teach you this riddle ; and if you do know it, ask Him to keep you to the life and walk of faith, and never may you be tempted to quit it for the way of sight and feeling.”

SERVICE AND COMMUNION.

“In connection with your work, dear brother, seek the Lord’s face, and lean on Him. When the body is not robust, one is in danger of doing it as a task, as an obligation, and the spirit becomes a little legal ; or one yields to weariness, and is discouraged before God. Work is a favour which is granted us. Be quite peaceful and happy in the sense of grace ; then go and pour out that peace to souls. This is true service, from which one returns very weary, it may be, in body, but sustained and happy ; one rests beneath God’s

wings, and takes up the service again till, the true rest comes. Our strength *is renewed* like the eagle's. Ever remember, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness.' May communion with God be your chief concern, and the sweet relationships in which we are placed with Him. All is well when we walk in them; then we discern and judge everything day by day, which hinders communion, and so the heart does not become hard nor the conscience blunted, and we really enjoy those communications of grace which give strength. Yes, seek above all personal communion with the Lord."



EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.

"I see in my late affliction no defeat from Satan in anywise. Contrary to that, I had been asking the Lord, and earnestly, for more practical separateness to Christ in heaven for myself and His people. And in taking from me to Himself her whom He had given me as a companion, and an ensample of unearthliness, I fancy I can see a lesson quite in harmony with the Father's love and ways. *So far as I walk in heaven I am not bereaved*; it is only when walking apart from the glory of Christ,—or when the weakness of the earthen vessel is in question, that there is a void and a vacuum for me to bring Christ in to fill. But He guides me afresh, and will lead me Himself whither He wills."

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from Vol. 4, page 236.)

Abimelech, or The Usurpation of Authority.

(Chap. ix.)

This chapter introduces us to such a sorrowful phase of declension, that, at first sight, it does not seem to contain a single refuge for faith. In chap. viii, we have seen the congregation of Israel wishing to confer authority on their leader ; here, a wolf usurps the Shepherd's place, and seizes upon the flock in order to devour it. It is the arbitrary authority of the evil servant, who, in the absence of his lord, began to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken (Matt. xxiv. 48, 49). This briefly reminds us of the principle of clericalism in the house of God and its pernicious encroachments. The wretched Abimelech was not a judge ; he sought a position still more exalted : he had himself proclaimed king (ver. 6), and took, in the midst of the people, the title assumed by those who rule over the nations. In thus openly arrogating to himself this title (ver. 2), he acted in the opposite way to a Judge who had been raised up of God (c. f. viii. 23). In order to usurp this place, he resorted to thoroughly human expedients. Through the brothers of his mother, the concubine of Gideon, he beguiled the men of Shechem under the guise of fraternity. They placed confidence in this traitor ; their moral state was

so low, that they even forgot the bond that united them to all Israel, and said of Abimelech: "He is *our* brother." Fraternity had lost, for them, its true meaning, and had come to be a name characterizing only a party.

The influence of this man was sustained by treasure taken from the house of a false god. The usurper appealed to the pockets of the people, and did not despise the unholy source from which the money came. This silver served to accomplish the devil's work. Baal's treasure took the place of Jehovah's power, and furnished the usurper with the means of persecuting and cutting off the posterity of faith, the family of God (ver. 5). One only, Jotham, the youngest of all Gideon's sons, a poor, insignificant creature, escaped, and succeeded in concealing himself.

Abimelech was successful; the evil spirit triumphed, but it will never be a spirit of peace among men. Intestine dissensions, treacheries, struggles for supremacy, vintages productive of drunken hilarity, drunkenness finding its vent in curses, the ambition of Gaal, the counsels of Ebed, the craft of Zebul, the violence of Abimelech—such were the disturbing elements which troubled the camp of Israel, when the testimony of God had left it. It became a scene of sorrow, of slaughter, and of hatred; but Jehovah, in His grace, caused a ray of light to shine in the midst of the darkness. *He does not leave Himself without testimony*; this we may reiterate with confidence, as we pass

through difficult times. And should there be, as here, only a single witness left for God in this world, may we be that one, that despised Jotham, the last of all, but standing steadfast for God. Preserved by the providential goodness of Jehovah, "he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim" (ver. 7). Moses, in the past, had decreed that six tribes should stand on Mount Ebal to curse, and six on Gerizim to bless. Joshua had remembered this when the people entered Canaan, but since then Israel had morally chosen Ebal, the place of cursing. Jotham chose Gerizim, the place of blessing, and *he stood there alone*. As God's witness, in face of the whole people, he lifted up his voice and spoke a fable in their ears, proclaiming the blessing of faith and also the consequences of the unfaithfulness of the people. Jotham is, in his own person, the representative of the blessings of the true Israel of God ; as to himself, feeble and persecuted, yet able to enjoy the favour of God and testify for Him, bearing fruit to His glory.

In his recital, three trees refuse to be promoted over the other trees. They depict, according to the word, the different characteristics of Israel under the blessing of Jehovah. The *olive tree* said : "Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees ?" (ver. 9). Oil answers to the unction and the power of the Holy Spirit by which God and men are honoured. The Israel of God can only realize this power, when in thorough

separation from the nation's and their principles. These latter set up kings over themselves (1 Sam. viii. 5), whilst Jehovah was the sole ruler of the people when faithful. The *fig tree* said: "Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?" (ver. 11), for Israel could only bear fruit when in separation from the nations. The *vine* said: "Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" New wine is the joy found in the mutual communion of men with God, and this enjoyment—the highest that could be desired—was lost to Israel when they adopted the spirit and ways of the nations.

What a lesson for us Christians! The world is to the church, what the nations were to Israel. If we yield to its solicitations, we abandon our oil, our fruit, our new wine—that is to say, our spiritual power, the works which God has prepared for us (Ephes. ii. 10), and the joy of communion. Oh! are we able to respond to all the offers of the world: Should I leave that which is my happiness and my strength, for fruitless turmoil, or to satisfy the lusts and ambitions of the heart of men? Jotham, like his father Gideon (viii. 23), appreciates these treasures of the Israel of God, and set himself apart on Gerizim, retaining his blessed position. In the presence of all this apostate people, he is the true and last bud of faith, the sole witness for God. What honour for the young and feeble son of Jerubbaal! Spurned by all, his lot was the

only enviable one, for he glorified God in this sorrowful world. May we too, like him, be found in the path of separation from evil. There we shall taste all that the trees of God-yield. He who has enjoyed these things exclaims: "Should I leave them?"

When Jotham had shown the people their folly, and foretold their judgment, he ran away and fled (ver. 21). He left the congregation of Israel, abandoning it to the chastisement which was already at the door. He went to Beer and dwelt there: "That is the well whereof Jehovah spake unto Moses, 'Gather the people together, and I will give them water,'" and which Israel celebrated in a song (Num. xxi. 16-18). Thus it is, that the faithful witnesses, in the midst of Christendom *already ripe for judgment, withdraw to Beer, the true gathering point, where is the fountain of living water* (c. f. Jer. ii. 13), the place also of songs and praises.

Tola and Jair.

(Chap. x. 1-5.)

The beginning of this chapter gives us a brief sketch of the history of two judges in Israel—Tola and Jair—both eminent men. The first was renowned for his descent, his ancestors being mentioned in Genesis amongst the sons of Israel who went down into Egypt—namely, Tola and Puah among the sons of Issachar (Gen. xlvi. 13; 1 Chron. viii. 1). The second was conspicuous for

his wealth, the number of his sons, his prosperity (c. f. chap. v. 10), and his cities. But, strange to say, nothing else is added. Their rule continued for nearly the same length of time. God made use of them, qualifying even Tola "to save Israel" by (Rev. Ver.), but He did not glorify Himself by them in any special way. This reminds us of 1 Cor. i. 26-29; "Not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things, which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence." God uses, in preference, weak vessels, and that is the reason why so many of the judges bear, in one way or another, the stamp of weakness. On the other hand, all the value of God's instruments consists in presenting the character of Christ. How difficult it would be for a man who was powerful, noble or rich, to reflect the traits of Him who, when here below, was found in the place of weakness, humiliation and poverty, that He might bring the grace of God to us. The judges who preceded them, being neither Tolas nor Jairs, were examples of humility, of forgetfulness of self, esteeming others better than themselves; and who, having nothing to lose, gave proof of spiritual energy which nothing could arrest and whose very weakness achieved a victory.

(To be continued, D.V.)

SATISFACTION.

"I shall be satisfied."—Ps. xvii. 15.

I shall be satisfied,
But not while here below,
Where every earthly cup of bliss,
Is wisely mix'd with woe.
When this frail form shall be
For ever laid aside,
And in His likeness I awake ;
I shall be satisfied.

"He . . . shall be satisfied."—Is. liii. 11.

He shall be satisfied,
When all He died to win,
By loving kindness gently drawn,
Are safely gather'd in.
When, in the glory bright,
He views His glorious bride,
Sees of the travail of His soul ;
He shall be satisfied.

"THY WORDS were found, and I did eat them ;
and THY WORD was unto me the joy and rejoicing
of mine heart : for I am called by THY NAME, O
Lord God of hosts."—Jer. xv. 16.

"For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept
MY WORD, and hast not denied MY NAME."—Rev.
iii. 8.

SANCTIFICATION.

I THESSALONIANS V. 23.

Let us examine a little into that which this passage teaches us with regard to sanctification. It is connected indeed with a nature, but it is linked with an object ; and it depends for its realization on the operation of another, namely, of God Himself ; and it is founded on a perfect work of reconciliation with God already accomplished. Inasmuch as it is founded on an accomplished reconciliation, into which we enter by the reception of a new nature, the Scriptures consider Christians as already perfectly sanctified in Christ. It is practically carried out by the operation of the Holy Ghost, who in imparting this nature separates us—as thus born again—entirely from the world. It is important to maintain this truth, and to stand very clearly and distinctly on this ground, otherwise practical sanctification soon becomes detached from a new nature received, and is but the amelioration of the natural man ; and then it is quite legal, a return—after reconciliation—into doubt and uncertainty ; because, though justified, the man is not accounted meet for heaven—this depends on progress ; so that *justification does not give peace with God*. Scripture says, “Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (1 Col. i. 12). Progress there is, but it is not in Scripture connected with meetness. The thief was meet for Paradise and

went there. Such views are an enfeebling, not to say destructive, of the work of redemption, that is, of its appreciation in our hearts by faith.

We *are* then sanctified (it is thus the Scripture most frequently speaks) by God the Father, by the blood and the offering of Christ, and by the Spirit—that is to say, we are set apart for God personally and for ever. In this point of view, justification is presented in the word as consequent upon sanctification, a thing into which we enter through it. Taken up as sinners in the world, we are set apart by the Holy Ghost to enjoy all the efficacy of the work of Christ, according to the counsels of the Father ; set apart by the communication of a new life, no doubt, but placed by this setting apart in the enjoyment of all that Christ has gained for us. I say again, it is very important to hold fast this truth, both for the glory of God, and for our own peace ; but the Spirit of God in this epistle does not speak of it in this point of view, but of the practical realization of the development of this life of separation from the world and from evil. He speaks of this divine development in the inner man, which makes sanctification a real and intelligent condition of soul, a state of practical communion with God, according to that nature and to the revelation of God with which it is connected.

In this respect we find indeed a principle of life which works in us—that which is called a subjective state ; but it is impossible to separate this operation in us from an object (man would be God

if it were so), nor consequently from a continual work of God in us that holds us in communion with that object, which is God Himself. Accordingly, it is through the truth by the word, whether at first in the communication of life, or in detail all along our path. "Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth" (John xvii. 17).

Man we know has degraded himself. He has enslaved himself to the lusts of the animal part of his being. But how? By departing from God. God does not sanctify man apart from the knowledge of Himself, leaving man still at a distance from Him ; but, while giving him a new nature which is capable of it, by giving to this nature (which cannot even exist without it) an object—Himself. He does not make man independent, as he wished to be ; the new man is the dependent man ; it is his perfection—Jesus Christ exemplified this in His life. The new man is a man dependent in his affections, who desires to be so, who delights in, and cannot be happy without, being so ; and whose dependence is on love, while still obedient as a dependent being ought to be.

Thus they who are sanctified possess a nature that is holy in its desires and its tastes. It is the divine nature in them, the life of Christ. But they do not cease to be men. They have God revealed in Christ for their object. Sanctification is developed in communion with God, and in affections which go back to Christ, and which wait for Him. But the new nature cannot reveal an object to

itself; and still less could it have its object by setting God aside at its will. It is dependent on God for the revelation of Himself. His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost whom He has given us; and the same Spirit takes of the things of Christ and communicates them to us. Thus we grow in the knowledge of God, being strengthened mightily by His Spirit in the inner man, that we may understand with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and know the love of Christ, and be filled unto the fulness of God. Thus, gazing with open face upon the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." We see by these passages, which might be multiplied, that we are dependent on an object, and that we are dependent on the strength of another. Love acts in order to work in us according to this need.

Our setting apart for God which is complete (for it is by means of a nature that is purely of Himself, and in absolute responsibility to Him, for we are no longer our own, but are bought with a price and sanctified by the blood of Christ according to the will of God, who will have us for His own), places in a relationship, the development of which (by an increasing knowledge of God, who is the object of our new nature) is practical sanctification, wrought in us by the power of the Holy Ghost, the

witness in us of the love of God. He attaches the heart to God, ever revealing Him more and more, and at the same time unfolding the glory of Christ and all the divine qualities that were displayed in Him in human nature, thus forming ours as born of God.

Therefore it is that we have seen in this epistle that love, working in us, is the means of sanctification (chap. iii. 12, 13). It is the activity of the new nature, of the divine nature in us ; and that connected with the presence of God ; for he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God. And in this chap. v., the saints are commended to God Himself, that He may work it in them, while we are always set in view of the glorious objects of our faith in order to accomplish it.

We may here more particularly call the reader's attention to these objects. They are, God Himself, and the coming of Christ : on the one hand, communion with God ; on the other, waiting for Christ. It is most evident that communion with God is the practical position of the highest sanctification. He who knows that he shall see Jesus as He now is, and be like Him, purifies himself even as He is pure. By our communion with the God of peace we are wholly sanctified. If God is practically our all, we are altogether holy. (We are not speaking of any change in the flesh, which can neither be subjected to God, nor please Him.) The thought of Christ and His coming preserves us, practically, and in detail, and intelligently,

blameless. It is God Himself who thus preserves us, and who works in us to occupy our hearts and to cause us continually to grow.

But this point deserves yet a few more words. The freshness of Christian life in the Thessalonians made it, as it were, more objective ; so that these objects are prominent, and very distinctly recognized by the heart. We have already said that they are God the Father and the Lord Jesus. With reference to the communion of love with the saints as His crown and glory, he only speaks of the Lord Jesus. This has a special character of reward, although a reward in which love reigns. Jesus Himself had the joy that was set before Him as sustainment in His sufferings, a joy which thus was personal to Himself. The apostle also, as regarded his work and labour, waited with Christ for its fruit. Besides this case of the apostle (chap ii. 19), we find God Himself and Jesus as the objects before us, and the joy of communion with God—and this in the relationship of Father—and with Christ, whose glory and position we share through grace.

Thus it is only in the two epistles to the Thessalonians that we find the expression, “ To the church which is in God the Father.” The sphere of their communion is thus shown, founded on the relationship in which they found themselves with God Himself in the character of Father (1 Thes. i. 3, 9, 10 ; iii. 13 ; 2 Thes. ii. 16, 17 ; and here v. 23). It is important to remark, that the more vigorous and

living Christianity is, the more objective it is. It is but saying that God and the Lord Jesus have a greater place in our thoughts, and that we rest more really upon them. This epistle to the Thesalonians is the part of Scripture which instructs on this point ; and it is a means of judging many a fallacy in the heart, and of giving a great simplicity to our Christianity.



THE CLOSING STATE OF THE CHURCH.

LAODICEA. REV. III.

The closing state of things comes next—church, as to its place in the world, it yet is. It stands with its angel before Christ to be judged as such. He takes its works into consideration as such. But it has settled down into taking things quietly. It has not a name of excellence compared with Jezebel, but death. *The living elements have been concentrated in the Philadelphia state.* It would not renounce Christ, but would keep up profession, would sacrifice nothing for Him, it would keep the church's place and credit, yea, claim it largely on many grounds as a body ; but spiritual power, in *individual* association of heart with Christ or *trouble for Him, was gone.* Christ abhorred such a state. It was as luke-warm water, which would be spued out of His mouth. Such was the judgment unconditionally pronounced on the church of Laodicea. But as ever, till actual judgment

comes, God continues to work, if any man may have ears to hear. So in Jeremiah ; the plainest declaration that they would go to Babylon ; yet continual calls to repentance, and a statement of God's ways in this respect on repentance.

In Laodicea, all that they professed to hear, all that man could estimate the value of, was false and human. I do not mean mere outward riches, but all that could give a large pretension to wisdom and knowledge and learning, perhaps a fuller view of Christianity itself ; self-satisfaction in what was possessed ; this characterized the professing church in Laodicea, but utter poverty as to Christ, nothing of Him. A name to attach to learning and human thoughts, but of Him nothing. Hence His counsel was to buy of Him gold tried in the fire, true divine righteousness in Him never separated from life, for it is His nature ; and white raiment, the power of this association with Christ in what is displayed in man, living righteousness ; and to have that true intelligence of the Holy Ghost which makes us see, the unction of the Holy One. In a word, the divine gifts and power of Christianity *in contrast* with what man possesses as man, with that of which he can say "*gain to me*"—man's conscious possession of that which gives importance and value to man in his own mind. The relationships of Christ to the professing church here are remarkable. The Christian is a new man, a new creation in Christ, risen into a wholly new place, on the utter rejection and proved

insuperable evil of the first man—proved insuperable in the death of Christ. Man's business and Satan's business are to exalt and give place to the old.

It is not here in the world, not at any rate in his own eyes. The professing church goes decidedly back here into that out of which we are taken in Christ by faith. Hence, though this has still the name of the church, and professes to be Christian, it is really wholly in its own claimed moral place, though thinking itself wiser than ever, off the ground of Christianity, and on that of the world or natural man, which consequently comes on the scene in its own place; and the church closes. What was wholly wanting was what was divine and new in man. It was the first man enriched, even if Christ enriched him. That would be admitted. There was no divine righteousness; no specific Christian clothing—the righteous life, according to Christ, of a new nature to be had only in Him. The teaching of the Holy Ghost was wanting. Man's intelligence was wonderfully and wholly in place. The things counselled to be got make this character of the evil clear; they are specifically divine things connected with man's rejection, and acceptance in Christ alone, to be had only in Christ, and from Christ, and nowhere else; not an improvement of man, but what was divine found in, and obtained from, Him.

To this, and the fact of its being the closing state, all answers. Christ reveals Himself as the

“ Amen ” who secures every promise of God, now man has failed, even in the church. He is the faithful and true Witness in Himself. The witness of the church, as a witness of Him, is gone. He is the beginning of that new creation, of which indeed the church ought to have been a witness in the Holy Ghost ; but of which He in resurrection was the Head, the spring and manifestation ; all taking, in the *new* creation, its starting-point of existence from Him, its place under Him. Adam had such a place in the old, the image of Him that was to come ; Christ, in the new, of which the saints are the firstfruits. But here, the church, which in profession as founded on His resurrection had this character, having wholly failed and gone back in professed riches of human nature to the old, Christ comes forward as the beginning of it all, the One in whom it had its rise and its truth ; all the rest being wholly dependent on, and flowing from, Him. The *Amen* maintains the promises now to be fulfilled—the faithful and true Witness. One who had, and now would make fully good, the character of God, which man, His image, and the church, too, had failed to do. The beginning of the creation of God, one who, when God made all things new, as He was now about to do, was the *archee*, the *fons* and the *principium* of it all, the first in, and the first from, whom it all flowed.

The position He takes in respect of the church, shows the same relationship to it. He was practically outside it, looking at it as gone, though it

were not yet spued out of His mouth. It is a question, though He warned it yet, of individuals hearing His voice that they may escape—may have fellowship, and He with them. He has not given it up ; but it has become wholly human in its real state, as judged by Him ; so that He has to come in to the individual *if* he was anything to Him, or Christ to him : “ I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

The *whole* body of members of the professing church were *judged* to be *men* now, *not sons of God* or *Christians*, though judgment was not publicly executed, but Christ still acting in grace ; divine things (the only true ones) recommended, human things boasted in. *If* the individual heard Him who still called and knocked, though as outside at the door, He would have communion with him. The promises answer to the bringing in of the new order of things, not heavenly joys, still a share with Christ. As they listened in time, they would be on the throne in the kingdom. It was immense grace, but no more is promised ; not the tree of life, no hidden manna, no white raiment spoken of to the soul, to encourage it in faithfulness within ; they would not miss the kingdom. Blessed, surely, and wonderful grace, but *only just not shut out*.

This, of course, closed the church's history. The reader will remark that the instruction being moral, a state that is judged, promises ever precious, the warnings and exhortations are avail-

able to the saints at all times. The special application may be more or less seized. The words of Christ have power at all times for the heart and conscience ; and this is the force of the exhortation at the end to every church ; “ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.”



UTTER RUIN THE GROUND OF COMPLETE BLESSING.

I believe that which greatly keeps us from the strength of our joy, is our ignorance of the utter ruin of man. Not merely should we be acquainted with the evil into which the ruin has brought us, but also with the ruin itself. The moment that this ruin came into the world, everything went wrong. Not only has man gone wrong, but all his activities have gone wrong also.

Now, Christ has provided for us a way wherein the activities of the *new man* have their exercise. This is our own proper and peculiar portion—to have the mind of Christ, and to be brought into fellowship with God. But for the enjoyment of this, it is essential that we should be introduced into a knowledge of the *complete apostasy* of our own natural will. The purpose of God for His children is, that they should be associated with Him in *His own joy*, and to this end we must know Him. Now the main sorrow of Christ's life, was man's ignorance of God. God was never under-

stood, but the poor sinner understood Him much better than the self righteous Pharisee. Jesus came forth from the Father, having the knowledge of His mind, knowing that God loved the poor sinner ; not merely the sinner's joy in being blest, but God's joy in blessing him ; and this is the joy in which God would have us to be associated with Himself. Another most blessed truth is, that we should be associated with Christ in *His sufferings*, "That the trial of our faith, being much more precious than that of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter i. 7.)

The first departure of the believer from God, is a departure from the knowledge of his fulness in God and nearness to Him, his *conscious sonship with God*. If I am *one* with Christ, I must be *as* He is. If I have anything at all, it must be what *He has*—what He is. There is no medium between being nothing in ourselves and being everything in Christ.

If I have no title of my own, if I am nothing but wretchedness in myself, and have no natural understanding of God's good-will to man, where is my claim ? Therefore true humility is the knowing what I am *in Christ*. So the moment I say I am not *as* Christ, I lose the knowledge of my glory *in Him*, and I stoop down to the flesh. This we see in John, when he fell down and worshipped the angel. Here was that voluntary humility and

worshipping of angels which the Apostle warns us against. Had John remembered the glory he had in Christ he would not have done this, for "as He is, so are we in this world." (1 John iv: 17.)



ECCLESIASTES AND CANTICLES.

"The words of the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Eccles. i. 1.

"The song of songs, which is Solomon's." Cant. i. 1.

In Ecclesiastes we see a man capacitated to test everything under the sun. He is high and wealthy, endowed with wisdom, and has all under the sun at his disposal and command; and he uses his resources and capabilities, does great work and that of all sorts to find out the good that would satisfy. Nothing that is great, or expensive, or magnificent, is withheld from him. He walks the full and ample range of all human promises, and traffics in all the productions that spring up under the sun.

In the Canticles we see one that is as it were nobody; that has no memorial on the earth at all; that has nothing and is nothing. He may be an object of the least possible amount in the reckoning of the world. In palaces, and vineyards, and servants, and singers, and instruments, and wisdom, in all this and the like he is poor indeed. It is the contrast that strikes us in these two little writings. The one was king in Jerusalem, the other nobody.

But dissatisfaction attends the one as he travels the wide and rich domain of his kingly earthly resources ; deep and unspeakably precious delight and satisfaction are the portion of the other, in company with the one unchanging object. The one little ewe lamb does for the one what the flocks and herds of the other never did, never could bring.

All that she, whom we find in the Canticles, possesses, is her "Beloved." But He satisfies her, and it matters not how poor in all besides she may be, it matters not either *whence* she has Him, so that she has Him. There are the lovely gardens and there are the lofty mountains, there are the shade of the apple tree and the bed, and the vineyard, and withal the king's galleries. But it is evident throughout, that it is *Himself* that makes her *all in all*. This is the deep contrast. The king in Jerusalem has nothing in the midst of everything, the unnamed, unendowed soul in the Canticles has all in all !

Are the experiences of our souls in the same company with all this ? The grief of the one is, that everything has disappointed him ; the grief of the other is this, that she cannot make as much of her *one thing* as it deserves, having tasted its capacity to satisfy her. What a difference !

The flocks and the herds, I may again remember, left the rich man unsatisfied ; the one little ewe lamb as it lay in his bosom, taught the poor man that he wanted nothing else !

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 20.)

A Fresh Revival in Israel.

(Chap. x. 6-18.)

The peaceful times of Tola and Jair did not prevent the people from sinking lower and lower. The declension increased, and the evil became more pronounced. "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of Jehovah, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook Jehovah, and served not Him" (ver. 6). Never before had such an assemblage of false gods been seen in Israel. The people were wholly given over to idolatry. Ammon was raised up as the rod of Jehovah and oppressed Gilead eighteen years. He also passed over Jordan to fight against Judah and Benjamin. Then, under the pressure of circumstances, grace wrought in the *conscience* of the people. It is a remarkable fact, that, in proportion as apostasy approaches its final development, the awakenings in conscience became deeper. I do not say that they widened. We have but to call to mind the song of Deborah, which brought out in the clearest light all the *privileges* of the people of God. But Israel, at that time, had but a slight sense of their responsibility, the conscience of the people was

less aroused, and self judgment less marked. We find here, for the first time, divine light penetrating the conscience of the people, and leading them to judge themselves deeply (*c. f.* chap. vi. 7-10). "We have sinned against Thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim" (ver. 10). Then God reminds them of all His grace and His deliverances on former occasions, and of the number of the nations out of whose hand He had saved them, adding: "Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods"—driving home, like an arrow in their consciences, the word which their distress had wrung from them, and He closes with these words: "Wherefore I will deliver you no more (ver. 13). Israel, as a whole, could not be restored. This finds its counterpart in the history of the church.

On hearing these words, the children of Israel took a further step in the salutary path in which the Spirit of God was leading them. "We have sinned; do Thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto Thee." Confessing their sin, passing judgment upon themselves, and acknowledging the righteousness of God's judgment, they added: "Deliver us only, we pray Thee, this day" (ver. 15). They appealed to His grace. Could He turn a deaf ear to their cry? Impossible! Repentance led them to a fuller knowledge of Jehovah than they had ever had before.

This restoration would not have been real, had it not borne fruit. "And they put away the

strange gods from among them, and served Jehovah" (ver. 16); turning to God from idols they served the living and true God. Then Jehovah opened to them the treasures of the pity of His heart.

God wishes that this should be the character of revivals in the sorrowful days in which our lot is cast. It is well for souls to be acquainted with their privileges and heavenly position; but it is also necessary that a deep work in the conscience should accompany the revival, in order that fruits of true holiness, humble devotedness, complete consecration may be borne by Christians, and that without ostentation or putting themselves forward to speak of themselves, but, forsaking idols, to serve the Lord.

However blessed this day of revival was, one thing was painfully lacking—a knowledge of the fundamental truths which God had confided to His people. "And the people and princes of Gilead said one to another, *what man is he* that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? *he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead*" (ver. 18). They had no sense of the unity of the people. Gilead made of himself a party. The authority and guidance of the Spirit of God were but little known, for they said: "What man is he?" They had only another step to make—to choose for themselves; this step they took in vs. 4-11 of the following chapter. Not that Jephthah was not raised up of God, but Gilead took part in the

choice. How widely different was this from the call of Gideon, and how painfully characteristic of the last days of declension—this inter-meddling of man.

(*To be continued, D. V.*)



ROMANS VI. 22.—If we live unto God, there will be the knowledge of what good and evil is *in the eye of God*. Not only that you live to Christ as to outward devotedness, but you will get your heart withdrawn from the influence of the things which drew it formerly away from Him. Therefore, in plain, common life, O let God be everything ! Be not like one slipping and getting on, and slipping and getting on—as Christians often are—but be advancing quietly and steadily ; increasing in separation to God : then you will have “ fruit unto holiness,” yourselves being servants to God.



FRAGMENT.—How little can we say as Christ could, “ I live by every word of God,”—everything in His moral nature being the expression of that word.

Does everything in you so flow from God, that your minds are merely channels of His word ? *That* is *Christian* life. Is your life spent either in looking to God, or in coming forth from God ? *That* is *Christian* life. Or, how far are you going on merely holding your head just above water, that you may not be drowned, and may breathe the fresh air of heaven enough to preserve life ?

OBEDIENCE AND MANIFESTATION.

John xiv. 18-28.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.

It is striking here the way you get the settled knowledge of our place and position, and yet the ways of God with us are put conditionally on our love to Him. I get known life and perfect peace—"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." He also says, "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." That is not, "We love Him because He first loved us"—the work of grace; but here it is, "If a man love Me, My Father will love him." It is dealing with children; not a question of whether they are *children*, but *obedient* children; the Father's love dealing with His child, and chastening it if need be. A parent does not scourge his child when it is doing well, nor is he pleased with it when it is doing ill. We are under this fatherly government of God which depends on the conduct of the child. Jesus has committed us to Him. He said, "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me" (John xvii. 11). He keeps us as Father; but as "holy," He must have a walk that suits Him. We know we are in Christ, and Christ in us; then we ought to be manifesting Him in everything, and reckoning ourselves dead. We are in Him in the power of life before God, and at peace with the peace He gives and which He made

“through the blood of His cross.” We are loved too as He was loved (John xvii. 23). Then come the dealings of the Father with one in this state. The proof of love is obedience ; just as a child that loves his father obeys his father.

It is of all importance (if we know peace—the peace He has made—and what it is to be in Christ, and Christ in us), how far our souls are walking in this present enjoyment of the manifestation of Christ. When we are walking in obedience, the Holy Ghost is not grieved ; if not, He occupies me with myself. The effect of His presence is to make me find I have gone wrong. “Your feet are dirty,” He says. Of course anything gross comes to us at once, unless we have become hardened ; but I mean carelessness. If I am not grieving Him, He reveals the unsearchable riches of Christ to me, and that is the manifestation of Him. “Now ye are clean,” He says, “abide in Me,” and that in order to bear much fruit. The Father deals with us with respect to our walk. What a blessing to know He takes notice of everything about us. “He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous.” There is not a moment that He is not taking cognizance of our state ! Such a perfect settlement of our place with God, that the question is one wholly of walk and communion.

The question of acceptance should never arise ; it is settled. “Because I live, ye shall live also.” He must die before I can die. The question you have to occupy yourself with is, Am I joying in

God? Is Christ manifested to my soul? or, Is there anything in your soul, in your ways, that hinders His manifesting Himself to you? "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you." He comes to be with you spiritually, that you may enjoy His presence. Are you walking in such a way that you are enjoying His presence? Would the effect of His presence be to bring to light something in my soul that hinders the joy, or simply to enjoy the blessedness of it? Have we that character of obedience—the power of Christ's word—in our habits, ways, our dress, our houses, so that if Christ comes in we have only to sit down and enjoy Him? It is a very solemn question, if our hearts are not dulled to His love, whether our doings or our state are a hindrance to our enjoyment of Christ. Strength is wanting, of course, and discernment, to do His will; but these manifestations give a sense of the interest He has in us; and it is that by which all the things of this world—things that were all gain to us—are dung and dross, by the sense we get of what Christ is, and His blessedness. They have more than lost their power, they are offensive to the Spirit—*it is not Christ.*

The manifestation of Christ gives the consciousness too of what we shall have for ever. If Christ was everything to the disciples, and they felt they could not do without Him, what comfort they got from, "I will come to you"! The thing is, we get accustomed to live without Christ.

Look into your own heart and see if there is not, more or less, the habit of living without that full communion with Christ. It is *that* we have to watch against, if we desire to glorify Him, and live in the consciousness of the blessedness He has brought us to. It is what will be our everlasting joy. We have now the double joy of communion "with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" Just think what the force of that expression is!

I would desire for your hearts to have activity and diligence to get into this atmosphere. What is fellowship? Common thoughts and feelings and joys. If we have that with the Father, what a thing it is! His thoughts and feelings and joys will be the spring of ours. That is Christian blessedness; the Father and the Son, thus revealing Themselves in grace, bring in Their own thoughts and joys—and holiness to delight in them too—so that Their thoughts and ways become the spring of our feelings and actions.

If we get to enjoy this real manifestation of the Father and the Son, you will find—I do—that there is very little *power* to *keep* it. You who believe and trust and reckon on His love, do you find you can look up *steadfastly* into heaven? Stephen looked up *steadfastly*, He was full of the Holy Ghost. But it does not last long with us. I find I cannot look up *steadfastly*, it dies out, some thought or other comes in. There is not the positive living in that place where all else is judged. The Son is the revealer of these heavenly

things on which our affections are to be set ; but if I let my thoughts go to that which is not of God, He must judge it. If I am keeping Christ's word, the effect is this blessed revelation of the Father's thoughts and mind and joys, and that strengthens the heart and spirit, and gives us discernment of all that is in this poor world.

I would speak of the means of being sustained in the condition to enable us to enjoy these things ; and then a word on the occasion of our losing it.

Hebrews speaks of maintaining us in it. We are in a world where the tendency is to distract us from it. What we have to do is to deliver the testimony of Christ in the world. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the *Father*, but of the world" (1 John ii. 16). It does not say it is not of *God*. God made the world—not as it is *morally*—but He did not make sin. He made the trees ; but He did not create them for man to make money of. When I see these heavenly things we have spoken of, all this is dross and dung to me ; but it is a constant solicitation to our thoughts and senses, and tends to shut out the Father's world, where the Son is, and that, in things where there is no outward harm. Then I get the constant service of Christ. It is a question of communion, and there is grace constantly in exercise toward us. "We obtain mercy"—which we all need every moment—"and find grace to help in time of need." "He was in all points tempted like as we

are, apart from sin" (Heb. iv. 15, 16). But you cannot walk through the streets of London without the devil having something in every shop window to draw the heart from Christ, and *on purpose*. Christ was tempted; that was not lust. Satan tries to turn us aside from the way, and tests the fidelity of our inward hearts, if we will follow Christ. "*One thing I do*" (Phil. iii. 13). But Christ is always up there for us; and when temptation or difficulty comes, there is mercy, knowing our weakness and infirmities, and that there are trials in the path of faith. He understands all that; He was thoroughly put to the test; more than we can ever be; and He is perfectly cognizant of it all, not as a Jewish high priest who could not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but He was tempted in all points—sin apart, that He might understand it all and sympathize.

It is not a question of sins here. I have "no more conscience of sins," they are gone; nor of failure—if I make an idol of my child it is sin, though perfectly right to have the affection for it, and woe to him who has it not. The word of God comes as a sword and detects sin; but here it is access to God. (Heb. iv.) We come "boldly to the throne of grace." That I do not get in John, there it is fellowship with the Father and the Son; but then the moment I have an idle or an uncharitable thought, fellowship is gone; I have sinned, and if that goes on long, there comes

hardness of conscience. Then he says, "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father." Not a question of imputation, but of fellowship. "God is light," and in every detail, if any thought of that which is darkness is let into my mind, there can be no communion; but Christ is in activity to restore the communion. There is neither allowance nor imputation of sin; but I have not been obedient, I have let my old nature act, distractions have come in. If I have not kept His commandments, the effect of His presence is to awaken my conscience to whatever is not of God. I have not the abiding of the Father and the Son—the comfort of it in my soul—and then the effect of Their presence is to make me uncomfortable. Grace is there, not to prevent sins being known, or that righteousness fails; but in virtue of the righteousness of that propitiation, not to let this breach continue in the state of communion of my soul. Advocacy comes in; for there is nothing more dangerous than to get to do without communion. Supposing a child is in the delight of fellowship with his father, and sees a cloud on his father's face, he says directly, "What is the matter?" What would you think if he saw the cloud and did not trouble about it? If you get hardened, you are away from God, without finding it out! Do you find out if you lose the light of God's countenance on your soul? Are you so walking with God that you get the consciousness of it if you are not walking in the light of His countenance?—

or have you something creeping in that makes you go half a day—a whole day perhaps—without having His presence? Are you content with living without any communications from Christ? Why does He speak of coming to us and not leaving us comfortless? Because He loved us and knew what would be the joy of our souls!

Has that an echo in your soul? Has this fellowship with Him such an echo in your souls that the joy of your path down here is, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come again to you"? If the love of Christ has power in our souls, it will be so. Is it the *need* of our souls, because we have tasted His love? How can we manifest Christ, or be really effectual epistles of Christ, if our souls are not thus in communication with Him, and the flesh judged, enabling us to "bear about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal bodies"? (2 Cor. iv. 10.)

Only remember this, beloved friends, that "we are not our own, we are bought with a price" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). He has taken us up for eternal salvation; but He has taken our hearts up to be for *Christ*. Then it creates a want in our hearts, and He says, "I will manifest Myself unto him."

The Lord gave us to be so near Him, that the affections of Christ, which He has declared so abundantly to us, may have an echo in our hearts!



"THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED."

JOHN XIII. 23 ; XIX. 26 ; XX. 2 ; XXI. 7, 20

"I have been just feeling that I can fully enjoy the truth which these words convey. And I would cherish such an experience and ask the Lord to fix and enlarge it.

It is far from intimating that one is more interested than another in the grace or salvation of God, or loved with a more faithful or enduring love. But it does intimate that there may be a more personal attachment between the Master and some of His disciples, than between Him and others. All, I may say, sat at supper with Him, while only one leaned on His bosom. All continued with Him in His temptations, and are to receive the kingdom together, but only three were in the garden, or on the holy hill with Him. For there is more personal oneness of thought and feeling in some than in others, more of that which, as among ourselves, draws the willing heart along.

If I look at a brother whose way savours much of that which I know Jesus must delight in, being weak and self-renouncing and unaffectedly humble, and withal devoted and unworldly, I may remember John, and see that disciple whom Jesus loved reflected in my brother. But then, how happy is it to remember that John himself was but one of a company whom the same Jesus had chosen and called and bound to Himself for ever. Did John exclude Thomas or Bartholomew? Thomas or

Bartholomew, in the great evangelic sense, were as much to Christ as John. The one was not a whit a more accepted man than the others.

This is sure and blessed, as well as plain and simple. I may rejoice in it with all certainty. And if I have any love to Him who has called me to such assured and eternal blessedness, will I not rejoice in this, that He has an object in which He can take more delight than I must well know I and my way can afford Him?

Thus do I find reasons for enjoying that sentence, again and again repeated, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and for delighting also in the thought that such a truth finds its illustration among the saints now, as it did in the midst of the apostles in earlier days.

The love with which we have to do is too perfect to be *partial*. It does not act irregularly or carelessly. We are all the objects of it. Thomas is not neglected because John is thus loved. But because this love is *real*, it is moved in this way by a John. But when I see a John leaning on Jesus while I myself am at a distance, let me have grace to look still and to say, "It is good for me to be here." If I am not in the same experience, still it is blessed to enjoy the thought that another is there. Peter was gladdened by the vision of a glory in Moses and Elias, though it was all beyond him. So is my happy and thankful spirit to entertain the thought of my more heavenly brother pressing the bosom of our common Lord."

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 40.)

Jephthah and his Daughter.

(Chap. xi.)

In verses 1-11 the deliverer comes on the scene. He bears the stamp of infirmity, so often found throughout this book. Jephthah, the Gileadite, was "a mighty man of valour," but of impure origin, the son of an harlot, the remembrance of which could not fail to fill him with shame. Nevertheless God used him, yea much more than this, presents to us, through him, some of the characteristics of Christ. Let us remember that the history of believers is only of value in the measure in which a reflection of the Saviour is reproduced in them. There would be much to perplex and little to edify in the history of Jephthah, did we not seek therein what manifested God's character. The word of God which shows, on the one hand, the natural man, wholly estranged from God, describes to us, also, all the weaknesses and failings of men of faith such as Jephthah; but God gives us more than that in their history. He presents Christ to us, and it is this which makes them so interesting. We readily discover the faults of our brethren, but we should be more interested in the way God forms and fashions them, in order, spite of all, to raise up witnesses for Christ. Jephthah, whose origin was some-

what similar to that of Abimelech, presents a marked contrast to that ungodly man. Abimelech sought, from the outset, to exalt himself, and usurped the place of the legitimate family of Gideon. Jephthah, who—apart from his origin—was the eldest of the family, was rejected by his brethren : “Thou shalt not inherit in our father’s house ; for thou art the son of a strange woman ” (ver. 2). Does that not remind us of the words : “We will not have this man to reign over us !” (Luke xix. 14). “Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob ” (ver. 3). Jephthah allowed himself to be despoiled, humbled himself instead of lifting up his head among the wicked, gave up all his rights and went away to a strange country. But God knew how to find him and to bring him to the front again. The moment came, when those who had driven their deliverer away, were compelled to cast themselves as suppliants at his feet. “Did not ye hate me,” said Jephthah to the elders of Gilead, “and expel me from my father’s house?” (ver. 7) This very saviour whom they had derided, they were forced, as formerly were Joseph’s brethren, to acknowledge in the far country ; and, appealing to him in their distress, besought him to become their captain. Jephthah did not consent to take this title before victory (ver. 9). And so will it be with Christ, who will be publicly recognized as the Head of Israel by His triumph over their enemies. It is interesting to see in this man, despised by

the world yet enduring its scorn, a faint representation of the Messiah ; for we may say, that it was in representing Christ, that he was considered worthy to lead the people of God.

The children of Ammon were at that time, the sworn enemies of Israel. The worst adversaries of the people of God are always the descendants, according to the flesh, of believers. Midian, against whom Gideon fought, proceeded from Ishmael, the seed of Abraham according to the flesh ; Moab and the children of Ammon sprang from Lot ; Edom was the son of Isaac after the flesh. There were others, no doubt, such as Jabin under Barak, and the Philistines under Samson, but we maintain that our most determined enemies are the outcome of our failures or of the flesh in us. The bitterest opposition to the testimony and spiritual life of the church, springs from her own unfaithfulness under cover of the name of Christ. Her idolatrous ways, so foreign to divine life, in all their hatred and craft, will prove to be for the humiliation, chastisement and snare of God's people, to the very end.

The children of Ammon, taking advantage of the low condition of Israel to rise up against them, sought to despoil them of their lawful territory and privileges and to appropriate them to themselves. What had the people gained by bowing down before the idols of Ammon ? They had fallen under the judgment of God, and into the hands of the enemies of Jehovah. If we step on to the

world's platform, it robs us, causes us to lose the reality of our privileges, and takes them away. Dreadful confusion is the result. The world then says to us : My rights are as great as yours, I am as good a Christian as you are, for you show as much activity for the things of the world as I do. " Israel took away my land now therefore restore those lands again peaceably " (ver. 13). Such are the consequences of our unfaithfulness.

Under these circumstances a revival produces remarkable effects. Jephthah did not deny the low condition of the people, but, when he addressed the children of Ammon, he went back to the beginning of Israel's blessings (vs. 15-27). Far from agreeing to this state of things, in accepting the yoke which Ammon for eighteen years had placed upon the people, he took his stand upon Israel's original blessings, in the day when they went out of Egypt for the purpose of entering Canaan. He maintained the blessings, as the ones upon which the people had been established. We will proceed, said he, in accordance with the principles which God gave us at the beginning, and which are ours for ever. He saw the people, the family of God, as God had looked at them at the first, and said : " Our conflict is not with the children of Ammon, but with the Amorites." It is the same for the church. Her warfare is with the spiritual powers in heavenly places (Ephes. vi), just as Israel's was with the Canaanites. Our controversy is not with the religious mixtures, which are

the outcome of the flesh and which we neither recognize as friends or enemies, nor do we combat them unless they compel us to do so. Our language should be that of Jephthah : "We will keep the land which Jehovah hath given us" (ver. 24).

Jephthah having spoken thus, a fresh blessing was granted him : "Then the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Jephthah" (ver. 29). The power of God was found in the path which he was on. Not to conform to the ruin as though God could accept it, and to act on the principles which God committed to us at the beginning, is the path of power even when we are reduced to the number of two or three gathered together in His name.

"The Spirit of Jehovah came upon Jephthah." Alas ! how often it happens that the flesh manifests itself in us, as it did in him. He was not content with divine grace and power. Ignorant of the true character of God, he "vowed a vow unto Jehovah" (ver. 30), made an arrangement with God, on the footing of a mutual agreement ; and, binding himself before Him in a legal way, fell into Israel's error in the wilderness of Sinai. "If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be Jehovah's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (vs. 30, 31).

God, leaving Jephthah to the responsibility and consequences of his vow, did not manifest either

approval or disapproval of it. Heaven seemed closed to the voice of the leader of Israel. Nevertheless the Spirit of Jehovah accorded to him the victory.

Jephthah returned to Mizpeh, unto his house, and, behold his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances. "She was his only child" (ver. 34). These words remind us of more than one passage of Scripture. God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest" (Gen. xxii. 2). But Abraham offered up his son "by faith" at God's command, Jephthah offered his daughter by an act of his own will, which was simply a want of faith. The words "only," "only begotten," remind us again of a greater than Isaac. Like Jephthah in his earlier history, his daughter reproduced in a touching manner some traits of the character of Christ. When faith was lacking in the father, it shone out brightly in his poor child. This only daughter, devoted beforehand to the sacrifice by a rash vow (Christ, on the contrary, was that by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God), is seen submitting herself, instead of rebelling or blaming her father. "My father," said she, "if thou hast opened thy mouth unto Jehovah, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as Jehovah hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon" (ver. 36). She submitted on account of Jehovah, a faint reflection, doubtless, of

Him who said : " I come to do Thy will, O God." She counted her life as nothing, in view of the victory ; " forasmuch as Jehovah hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies," and for that consented to be sacrificed. No thought of herself detained her. Beautiful self-renunciation by faith which looked only to God ! She suffered besides in another way deeply painful for every woman of faith in Israel, whose desire was to be mother of a posterity which might become the lineage of the Messiah. But this only daughter consented to be cut off from the scene as a barren woman. " Let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows " (ver. 37). However beautiful this devotedness was, how infinitely did that of the Lord Jesus surpass it ! In view of salvation, He to whom everything belonged consented to be " cut off and have nothing " (Dan. ix. 26, margin). Abandoning all His prerogatives as Messiah, all His rights as Son of God and Son of man, he renounced His posterity in order to obtain a better victory which only He could achieve. He gave up His life, but " He shall see His seed " (Is. liii. 10), and Jehovah " will make His seed to endure for ever " (Ps. lxxxix. 29).

Truly, in this daughter of Israel was reproduced, very feebly no doubt, some of the perfection of Christ. Her simple faith shone out and she submitted to the will of God. She consented to be offered up for a burnt offering, like Him who was

sacrificed later on, not as she did to confirm the victory, but to obtain a better deliverance. Let us follow the example of Jephthah's daughter ; let us learn to forget ourselves in offering ourselves up to Him who was sacrificed for us, to die in faith not having received the promises," without obtaining any apparent result for our labour, but satisfied to have been the epistle of Christ among men, and His representatives, to the glory and honour of God !

(*To be continued, D. V.*)



EXTRACT — The nearness to Himself to which the Lord invites the soul—the intimacy with which He invests the heart of a believing sinner, it is most blessed for us to know. He does not deal with us in the style of a patron or benefactor : the world is full of that principle. “ *They that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.*” Luke xxii. 25. Man will be ready enough to confer benefits in the character of a benefactor or patron, occupying all the while the distant place of both conscious and confessed superiority, but this is not Jesus—He can say, “ *Not as the world giveth give I unto you.*”—He brings His dependant one very near to Him, He lets him know and feel that He is dealing with him as a kinsman rather than as a patron. But that makes all the difference in the world. I am bold to say that heaven depends upon this difference. The expected heaven of the

soul, and which in spirit it tastes now, depends on the Lord Jesus not acting with us on the principle of a patron, heaven would then be only a well-ordered world of human principles and benevolences, and what a thing that would be! Is it the condescendings of a great one that we see in Christ?—" *I am among you as one that serveth,*" says He. Is it the distant and courtly benevolence of a superior that we receive from Him? "*The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them,*" is not of that kind. He is, it is eternally true "*Master and Lord,*" and He would have us know Him such, but He sits at our table with us; as of old He could command Moses to take off his shoes in His presence, but speak to him face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend.

And was it not thus to perfection in the days of His flesh on earth? Every case, I may say, tells us so—it was never the style of a mere benefactor, the distance and elevation of a patron, "*He bore our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows.*" Just look at Him at Jacob's well. A woman was there who had the most exalted thoughts of Him. "I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ; when He is come, He will tell us all things."—This was her high and just sense of the Messiah, not knowing that He to whom she was thus speaking face to face, could say immediately in answer to her, "*I that speak unto thee am He,*" But where was He, the exalted Christ all this time? Sitting on one stone with her, talking with her as

they had met together by the side of a well, and where (in order to give her entire ease in His presence) He had asked her for a drink of water—was this patronage after the manner of men? Was this the distance and condescension of a superior? Was this heaven or the world, man or God? Condescension, or the world, will confer what favour you please, but will have the elevation of a superior, and the reserve of a dependant kept and honoured. But heaven, or love, acts not thus. Blessed, blessed, be God, Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, was kinsman to them He befriended, and as a kinsman He acted, and not as a patron. He seeks to bring us near—to invest our hearts with ease and confidence. He visits us, nay, He comes to us upon our invitation, as He went and dwelt two days with the Samaritans who came out and sought His company at the report of the woman of the well. He asks a favour from our hand, that we may take a favour from His without reserve—He will drink out of our pitcher while opening His eternal fountains for us, and eat of our kid at the tent door, while revealing eternal secrets to us. (Gen. xviii. John iv.)

And so it was (as another once observed) after He rose from the dead—He meets His disciples at the table again, gets the dinner ready for them, but tells them to help him to load the board. All this being still the way of love, and of heaven. He has now done with His sorrow and His humiliation in the world, it is true, but He has not done with this essential way of love—He is still the *kinsman* and not the *patron*. (John xxi. 8-14.)

OUR GOAL, HIS PURPOSE, OUR AIM.

OUR GOAL.

Not wanderers, but pilgrims here,
 For home we have in view,
 And soon we will be with the One,
 Who Holy is and True.

HIS PURPOSE.

And by His grace, and with Himself,
 In all His likeness too,
 Blameless, shall each redeem'd one stand,
 This is His end in view.

OUR AIM.

This purpose He has made us know,
 That all our journey through,
 Finding in Him all needed grace,
 His Holy will may do.



TRUE MEEKNESS AND HUMILITY.

(Read Psalm cxxxi., and 1 Sam. xvi., xvii.)

The happy confidence of the preceding Psalm is not to be condemned as presumption. Eliab may accuse David of naughtiness and pride of heart, but it is not so. Hope "in the Lord" may be bold; and such was David's then, and such is that of every poor sinner who has received the grace and salvation of the gospel.

This Psalm, therefore, strikingly and beautifully follows the preceding one. It was the feeling, possibly, of the really meek David, on turning

away from the reproach of Eliab (1 Sam. xvii. 28, 29). And this assured "hope in the Lord" is ever, when real and spiritual, combined with the quietness and subjection of a weaned child.

This allusion to David leads me for a moment to look at him in 1 Sam. xvi., xvii. We may call the time of those chapters the youth or spring-time of David's soul. And how beautifully simple, and how full of real moral dignity it is !

He was the neglected one of the family. But he was content to be so. He would readily tend the sheep in the field, while his more esteemed brothers remained at home to receive the guests, and do the honours of the house.

On the arrival of the prophet Samuel he is called in. But as scorn had not dejected him, distinctions do not elate him. As soon as the occasion is over, he is back again among the flocks.

He is then summoned to the court of the king to do a service which none but he could do. But again, when the service is done, he is in the wilderness with his few sheep, despised but contented (xvii. 15).

A third time he is called for. He has to go to the *camp*, as before to the *court*. But after achieving the greatest feats, he is willing to be still unknown, and without thought of resentment tells who he was to those whose ignorance of him was itself a kind of slight or indignity (xvii. 55-58).

What beauty, what true elevation of soul ! And what was the secret of all this ? *He found*

his satisfaction in Christ. The sheepfold was as important to him as the court or the camp, because “the Lord was with him.” He did not live by excitement, nor pine under neglect. He let the world know that he was independent of what they could either give him or make him. Blessed attainment ! It may remind us of those affectionate words in the little hymn—

“Content with beholding His face,
My all to His pleasure resign’d,
No changes of season or place
Could make any change in my mind.
When blest with a sense of His love,
A palace a toy would appear ;
And prisons would palaces prove
If JESUS would dwell with me there.”



THE TWO TRIBES AND A HALF.

NUM. XXXII., JOS. I. and XXII.

The history of the Two Tribes and a Half has its own instruction for us, and illustrates a peculiar character of mind and will among the saints of God. They do not stand with the Lot of the days of Abraham, though in some respects they remind us of him.

It is wonderful what a variety of moral character and of Christian experience finds itself before the soul in the histories of Scripture. The soul reads itself there fully ; the workings of nature not only in man, but in the renewed man, its conflicts and

its strength, giving us to see so much that we know in ourselves ; and, at times, the lights and shades as well as the distinctive features are to be traced.

The Two Tribes and a Half are not Lot, but there is that in them which tells us of him, Like him, their own distinct, independent history begins with their eyeing the well watered plains which were good for their cattle in the wilderness side of Jordan. They think of their cattle rather than the call of God, and the pilgrimage of their brethren. Had their hearts been full of Christ, they would not have seen anything till they had crossed the river. Abraham, their father, had never been on that side of the river ; nor did their expectation when called out of Egypt stop short of the other side. Neither had Moses said anything about those plains, in the land of Gilead. But they had cattle, and those plains were suitable to their cattle, and they sue for an inheritance ere they reach the land which had been their expectation when they set out. This was all. They had no thought whatever of revolting ; of sacrificing the portion of true Israelites, but their cattle drew their eyes to the goodly plains of Gilead, and they were for *possessing them, though they would do so as Israelites.*

How natural ! How common ! In moral power they come short of the call of God, though they hold to the hope of that calling, and claimed fellowship only with those who were the objects of it. They were not in power a *risen* people ;

though in faith one with such. They were careful to declare and hold to their alliance with the Tribes who were to pass the Jordan, though they remained on the wilderness side of it themselves. I do not regard them, like Lot, a people of mixed principles, who had deliberately formed their lives by something inconsistent with the call of God, but rather as a generation, who, owning all that obey it and refusing all thought of having any other, are not found in the moral power of it.

Again I say : How common ! This is a large generation. We know ourselves too well to ask, is there such a people ?

Moses at once is made uneasy by this movement on the part of Reuben and Gad and the Half Tribe of Manasseh. He expressed this uneasiness with much force. He tells them that they bring to his remembrance the conduct of the spies whom he had sent out years before from Kadesh-Barnea, and whose ways had discouraged their brethren, and occasioned the forty years' pilgrimage in the wilderness. There was something so unlike the call of Israel from Egypt in the hope of Canaan, in all these suggestions on the part of these Tribes that Moses at once thus resents it : and it is bad that this is produced in the soul of a Moses ; when the first instinctive feelings and thoughts of a saint, who is walking in the power of the resurrection of Christ, are alarmed and wounded by what is seen in a brother. And yet how common ! Many a Moses now-a-days is called in spirit to

challenge what offends, as being not in keeping with the calling of the saints, For many a thing gets its sanction or its excuse from the heart of a saint that cannot stand before the judgment of faith.

Reuben, Gad and Manasseh have to explain themselves, and to give fresh pledges to Moses that they by no means separate themselves from the fellowship and interests of their brethren ; and they do this with zeal, and with integrity too. In this they were not with Lot. Lot's conduct separated him, for the rest of the journey, from Abraham. But not so these Tribes. With zeal they assert their purpose to be still with their brethren. Nay, they would by no means have taken the Eastern Gilead, had this produced a forfeiture of their identity with those who were to be in the Western Canaan. They are to give pledges too, that they will be foremost in the action which still remains on the behalf of their brethren's inheritance. By no means do they contemplate anything like the loss of fellowship with them ; in this they are above Lot. But still they have stopped short of Canaan. They are not in the full power of the Canaan-calling—not, in the thoughts of the man of God, a dead and risen people ; for they are pausing (ere the promised inheritance be reached), for the sake of their cattle, in the wilderness.

Moses, however, does not let them go, as Abraham let Lot go. They are not to be treated in

that way, neither does the judgment of God light on them, as on the unbelieving spies who brought up an evil report of the land. They do not belong to such generations, though their way may savour of such. Moses cannot lose sight of them because they propose to feed their cattle in the plains of Gilead, while they thus with zeal assert their purposed fellowship with their brethren. They are his, and he is theirs still, I may say ; and they hold on together, unlike Lot and Abraham, who never met after Lot became a citizen of the world ; practically forgetful so far, of the calling of God.

This is so ; but still Moses has to eye them and remember them, and keep his thoughts somewhat anxiously and uneasily occupied about them. And this is not the best witness for a saint. Happy when the Holy Ghost can have us and our state also, to lead us still onward, and feed us still in the knowledge and with the things of Jesus.

Lot and Abraham never met after the way of the world had drawn Lot into it Jonathan and David, now and again, and in their affections there is communion between them true and warm. Obadiah and Elijah met only once, and it is but a poor meeting ; "*Reserve*" marking the way of Elijah ; and "*Effort*" that of Obadiah ; for they were not kindred spirits. The leathern girdle of the prophet but ill-assorting with the livery of Ahab ; but the Two Tribes and a Half are above these. They are still the companions of their brethren, and will not think of anything else ; and

Moses admits their title without reserve. Their desire to have their portion in Gilead makes no difference as to this. But still they do not go through and through ; they do not measure *the whole* of the wilderness, but they linger ; and the thought of their cattle being suited in the fields of Gilead attracts them, and there they find an object, though they still accompany the camp.

What shades of difference there are in these different illustrations ; what different classes of the people of God ; yea, and what difference in the same class do we meet here. Lot and Jonathan and Obadiah are of one class ; men of mixed principles, as the expression is ; men whose lives are formed by such every day habits as cannot combine with the pilgrim character ; or the suffering-witnessing-character to which the call of God leads. Sodom, as Lot's place, Saul's court as Jonathan's, and the palace of Ahab, King of Israel, at Jezreel, as Obadiah's ; when Abraham dwelt in a tent, David in a den or cave of the earth, and Elijah with the provisions of God at Cherith or Sarepta. And yet Jonathan was not Lot or Obadiah personally, though we have to set them all in one class. Neither was Obadiah, Lot exactly ; and as between them as a class and such dead and risen men as Moses and Joshua, we have to bring in the Reubenites, Gadites, and Half Tribe of Manasseh, a generation who will by no means admit the thought of their separating themselves from full companionship with the call of

God ; but who, nevertheless, exhibit in moral action that which is not according to the full measure of that call. And this is indeed a common case—nay, this is *the* common case among the saints. We know it ourselves ; we own the call, we witness it, we speak of Canaan, of death and resurrection, of hopes and inheritance beyond the river ; but nature, and present ease, and present desires, the bleating of the flock, and the lowing of the oxen, as they feed in the plains of Gilead, lead to much which makes the more single eye of a Moses, and the more fixed and single purpose of a Caleb or of a Joshua to wonder and enquire (See Num. xxxii).

Joshua, who has the spirit of Moses has them in some anxious and uneasy remembrance, like Moses ; and he addresses a word of special admonition to them when he tells the conduct of affairs under the Lord, and for Israel. For they are still, being the Tribes, on the wilderness side of Jordan, the occasion of this fear and uneasiness to the more simple and devoted mind of a full-hearted, single-eyed servant of Christ (Joshua i).

There remains, however, another sight of them still in the progress of the history, and one which has its own striking moral features. I mean in Joshua xxii

The ark had gone over. The feet of the priests bearing it had divided the waters of Jordan, and the ark had gone over conducting and shielding the Israel of God. And it is true that our Tribes

of Reuben, and Gad, and Half-Manasseh had gone over with them; but the ark and Israel had *remained* there—that's the difference. The two Tribes and a Half return, but the ark remains. The place that becomes a ransomed people, a dead and risen people, is left, and they return to *settle* where Israel had but *wandered*.

Joshua, like Moses, instinctively feels all this, and warns them, and exhorts them on their departure. And as soon as they reach the place they had chosen *they* begin to feel it also. They are not fully at ease and there is something specially significant in that. They raise an altar—the heart of an Israelite in the land of Gilead would do just the same at this day. They are uneasy—Jehoshaphat was uneasy, when he found himself in the court of Ahab, and asked for a prophet of the Lord. The renewed mind speaks that language in a foreign land. They raised the altar, and called it “ED,” or a witness—a witness that Israel's God was their God. But why all this? Had they remained in Canaan, where the ark and tabernacle of God were, they would not have needed this. But they were not there, Shiloh was not in view, nor could their souls carry the sense of it, that Shiloh was the common centre with all their brethren. They had to give themselves some artificial help, to give their souls a crutch, if I may so speak, to aid the confidence and the joy of their hearts; that as Israelites, they had fellowship and common interests and calling with their brethren.

All this is very full of meaning, and is constantly experienced to this day. Some witness of our belonging to the Israel of God is needed and craved by the soul, when we get into a position in the earth which the call of God does not fully justify. The countenance of others—the restless examinations of our own state—reasonings with ourselves—remembrance it may be, of better days with the soul—something that is as artificial and of our own device as the altar of ED, and which would have been as unneeded too as that, had the soul been more simple and faithful.

All this is still known, and is all figured here—it is the writing on this pillar on the eastern side of Jordan. And a wonderful pillar it thus is. Lot's wife, the pillar of salt, had a writing upon it which the Divine Master Himself has read for us; and I doubt not, so has this pillar of Ed, which the Holy Ghost would fain teach us to read, that we may be warned to know what uneasiness and doubt accompanies the soul that has retreated to find a *settlement* there, where the saints are and have been *strangers*. This altar witnessed both *for* and *against* these Israelites. It was just what Jehoshaphat's uneasiness was when he found himself with Ahab and the prophets of Baal. It is just what a saint's uneasiness here is when he finds himself involved in a world that he ought to have left. For all this bespeaks the saintly or renewed mind, but in such exercises and experiences as the grace of God has caused it.

Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, are challenged the second time—by Joshua here, as by Moses before ; because of their pillar here, because of their seeking the plains of Gilead before.

This is all natural, as common as Christian fellowship is, but all more or less painful and troublesome now-a-days as it was then. A great stir is made among the tribes ; and a great assemblage is formed to enquire into this further.

Something appeared in the eye of those who were on the other side of the river, which alarmed them as Israelites, as worshippers of Jehovah. It looked to be something which the common call of God could not allow for a moment—it must at least be explained. What a living picture this is ! Are we not at home here ? Do we not scan this spot well ? The calling and the election of those eastern borderers were not made sure to their brethren who were living in the place of the Ark of God. They have to enquire and inspect their condition ; and whatever the result of such inspection may be, the need of such a process is but a poor thing at best.

I believe the first Epistle to the Corinthians is very much an Eleazar crossing the river to look after a pillar. There were things at Corinth which alarmed Paul. They seemed to be reigning as kings in the earth ; his ministry in the meekness and gentleness of Christ was getting despised. The world was fashioning the hearts of saints there ; and people were valued because of their

place in the world. "The princes of this world," the men of the schools, or the ways of the schools, were regaining their place, and saints were returning to *settle* where they ought to be *unknown* and *strangers*. Paul, in the zeal of Joshua xxii., had to cross the river; and whatever the discovery may be, the action is a painful one, and the need of it a sad one in the history of the church.

The tribes may satisfy Eleazar more than the Corinthians did Paul; all these varieties are known at this hour; but there is this common sorrow and humbling, that the call and election is not made sure; and we have either to take journeys, or to occasion journeys, to have our own ways, and Eds, and altars, as brethren, read; instead of reading to all the secrets of God's altar and tabernacle at Shiloh!



EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.

"The moral activities that are abroad are surely immense, and the pressure upon the social system of influences full of deceivableness, I suppose, is beyond all precedent. It is desirable to keep the soul increasingly alive to the fact that the path of the Church is a narrow and peculiar one. Even her virtues must have a *peculiar* material in them. Her common honesty, her good deeds, too, her secular labours, her fruitfulness, purity, and the like are to be peculiar in their functions and their springs. Her discipline does not act after the pattern of the mere

moral sense of man. Society, as another has observed, would disclaim the offence contemplated in 1 Cor. v.; but society would never deal with it as the Church is there called to deal with it. Society, for instance, would never put covetousness or extortion in company with it; but the saint is instructed to do so. The moral sense of man would there make distinctions, when the pure element of the house of God resents all alike as unworthy of it.

“ This is ‘ fine gold,’ dear brother—gold refined again and again. Even the morals of the Church are to be of another quality from those of men. What sanctions are brought in in 1 Cor. v., vi., as to the common matters of life ! If the saint be to abstain from fornication, it is because his body is *a temple*—‘ the temple of the Holy Ghost ;’ if he be to refuse the judgment of others in the affairs of this life, in their more ordinary ways of right and wrong, of debit and credit, it is because he himself is destined to be a judge in the seat of the world to come, even from a throne of glory. Is not this ‘ *fine gold*’ ? Does not such sanction make morals *divine* ? What, in the world’s morality, is like this ? And I ask further, is not the need of this divine or peculiar agency, to the effecting of any moral results, intimated in Luke xi. 21–27 ? If it be not the *Stronger Man* possessing himself of the house, is anything done for God ? If it be merely the unclean spirit going out, the end of the history of the house is, that it becomes more fitted for deeper evil. The emptied state, even ac-

accompanied by sweeping and ornamenting, is only a preparation for a worse condition ; and nothing is done for God but when the Stronger enters the house. No instrument of garnishing *according to God*, but Christ. And in the remembrance of these verses, dear brother, ask yourself what is doing in and for the house of Christendom at this moment. Is not many a broom, many a brush, sweeping it and painting it? Is this making it God's house, or getting it ready to be the house of the full energy—the seven-fold energy—of the enemy ?”



MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 58)

Strife between Brethren.

(Chap. xii. 1-6.)

Chapter xii is a picture of one of the gravest symptoms of ruin : contention and open war between brethren. Formerly, when the people had not left their first love, or when their leader evinced more spiritual power, this calamity had been averted. The constant design of Satan is to disunite the children of God. He knows that our strength consists in being gathered around a common centre ; and, not being able to destroy this essential unity which God has established, he seeks to destroy that which has been committed to our responsibility—its manifestation. Now we

know how completely he has succeeded in his design. The wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep.

In the book of Joshua, characterized by the power of the Holy Spirit with Israel, this effort was baffled at the time of the controversy caused by the setting up of the altar, *Ed* (Jos. xxii). Thanks to the energy of the tribes and to the zeal of Phinehas, the introduction of sectarian principles was avoided. When divine principles are at stake we must not fail to stand in the breach, at the risk of war between brethren. The maintenance of Israel's unity, as God had established it, had more value for the saints at that time, than courteous relationships between brethren.

Later, in the book of Judges (viii. 1), when Ephraim began to chide with Gideon, the conflict was quieted through the humility of the latter who deemed the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer. In chap. viii, and still more in the chapter we are considering, it is no longer a question of defending principles. The discontent of Ephraim proceeded from a sense of his own importance. He had been pacified on the former occasion by the humility of Gideon, but, conscience not having been reached and there having been no self-judgment, he renewed against Jephthah the same accusations. A fault in our career as Christians left unjudged will reappear sooner or later in similar circumstances. Here the state of Ephraim had grown worse, for while on the previous occasion he had gleaned, on

the present one, waiting for some incentive from without, he had done nothing. This did not, however, make him the less jealous of the results which the energy of faith in his brethren had produced. It is the same in the present day, and we are all in danger of falling into this snare. The church, instead of being a witness for Christ, has gone back to the world ; it is a time when God takes for witnesses the weakest, the poorest, and those least qualified among His people. In acting through them, God would confound the " mighty " or the " noble " (see 1 Cor. 1), in whose eyes there is nothing important except what emanates from themselves. Unable to humble themselves, or to rejoice in what God has done by the instrumentality of others, they despise all that does not come within the circle formed by their own worldliness. If the work goes on they express their jealousy, if it still extends they become enemies and proceed from hatred to threats : " We will burn thine house upon thee with fire " (ver. 1).

In Deborah's day, Ephraim was the first ; under Jephthah, God accounted him as nothing. All that he could now draw from his former blessings was the remembrance of his importance and the desire to make the most of it. Alas ! on the other hand, we no longer find on the part of Jephthah the disinterestedness or humility of a Gideon. He answered the flesh by the flesh, his own wounded feelings clashing with the egotism of Ephraim. In his defence he made self prominent. "*I and my*

PEOPLE were at great strife with the children of Ammon ; and when *I* called you, ye delivered *me* not out of their hands. And when *I* saw that ye delivered *me* not, *I* put *my* life in *my* hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and Jehovah delivered them into *my* hand : wherefore then are ye come up unto *me* this day, to fight against *me* ? ” (vs. 2, 3). Jephthah talked of himself, thought about his disputed worth, fell into the snare that Satan had set for him and formed a party, when just before, having identified himself with the people, he had proclaimed their unity in the presence of the children of Ammon (chap. xi. 12, 23, 27). But now, “ my people ” meant Gilead as opposed to Ephraim.

Words intensified the quarrel. “ The men of Gilead smote Ephraim, *because they said*, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites ” (ver. 4). There was not a single principle involved in this struggle. On all sides it was but jealousy, personal importance and angry words exchanged by irritated hearts ; and so a fratricidal war broke out in the midst of Israel, brought about by their own hand. At the passages of Jordan they are known, for the purpose of killing one another, by a Shibboleth, a formula used for the name of Jehovah, and which had nothing to do with the truth of God. And there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

Let us be on our guard against such snares, for

if there be one thing which especially belongs to a time of ruin, it is strife in the family of God. Let us have our hearts enlarged as to the work of God in this world. When entrusted to other hands than ours, it should have the same importance and value for us, as though it were done by ourselves. Paul, in chains at Rome, writing to the Philippians, rejoiced that Christ was preached even by those who were adding affliction to his bonds. Let us not give any importance whatever to *our* work, but like Gideon leave the vintage of Abiezer unestimated. A season of quietness is no guarantee against these dangers. At the beginning of the church's history (Acts vi. 1-6), there arose murmurings and jealousies between the Grecians and the Hebrews, to appease which needed more than the humility of a Gideon, requiring even the great wisdom of the apostles. They handed over to others the care of serving tables, relinquishing an authority which would have given them prominence in the administration of the assembly, in order to continue in prayer and to give themselves wholly to the ministry of the word. By such acts as these, consciences are reached and Satan's devices against the testimony defeated.

Ibzan, Elon and Abdon.

(Chap. xii. 7-15.)

After Jephthah, under the reign of three judges, Israel enjoyed the peace which had been acquired.

One of these judges sprang from Judah, another from Zebulon, and the third from Ephraim. They were not called on to fight, but to maintain the people in the condition in which victory had placed them. Possibly they had not the energy of a Jair (chap. x. 1-5), who "arose," as the word tells us, but, like him, two of these judges were men of great wealth. Periods of outward prosperity are not the most profitable for the people of God. The personal importance of the judges comes out, but not the condition of Israel. Who they were, and what they did, is known, but not anything of what was going on in the heart and conscience of the people. And so no sooner was the last of these judges dead, than Israel relapsed into their previous condition (chap. xiii. 1). There are certain occasions when we have to "overcome," others when we have to "stand" (Ephes. vi. 13). How do we employ the corresponding days of peace which the Lord permits us to have? To strengthen ourselves in the truths God has given us, or to go to sleep amid comfortable surroundings, only to be unexpectedly awoke when Satan returns to the charge, and to find ourselves powerless in the presence of the enemy? Those who are not fed are not able to fight. Let us use the times of prosperity in growing in our personal knowledge of the Lord and in walking in communion with Him. We shall thus be strengthened to resist fresh attacks, and avoid falling into bondage more cruel than that from which we have escaped.

(To be continued, D. V.)

A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER.

In this epistle, the apostle, under the Holy Ghost, anticipates the moral corruption which was to overspread Christendom. Language and figures are largely employed to set forth this awful anticipation or prophecy ; and surely our observations may well and fully vindicate the Spirit's forebodings. For what we know of such corruptions may lead us to say, that language or figures borrowed from Balaam, or from Sodom, or from the fallen angels, from the dog, or from the sow, are not too awful for the reality.

But *pollution* suggests *judgment*. In a divine sense, in the reckoning of God, in righteousness or holiness, there is a necessary connection between them. Accordingly, this same epistle contemplates judgment as well as moral corruption. This we see in chap. iii., following, as of course it does, chap. ii.

These are the apostle's materials, or principal objects, in these chapters—moral corruption in chap. ii., judgment in chap. iii. Glory, or the dwelling-place of righteousness, is seen only in the distance ; and I may, therefore, speak thus : moral pollution occupies the foreground, divine judgments the mean or middle place, and glory shines faintly afar off.

But this being so, the apostle has a practical purpose. It is this, I doubt not—to set the saints

to that cultivation of holiness, that living exercise of their souls in the power of godliness, which will keep them apart from this evil condition which he is foreboding. This is seen in chap. i.

He tells them, at the very beginning, that full provision was made to this end—full provision for this husbandry, to which he is about to set them.

He tells them, that divine power had given and secured to them all that pertained to, or was needful for, not only life, but *godliness*, and that the promises, exceeding great and precious as they were, had a *purifying* virtue in them ; that by them the saints would be made partakers of divine nature, as a people who had escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. All this he tells them at the outset, and this at once bespeaks his practical purpose in writing to them, setting forth their provisions in God, and His power and His promises, not for salvation or joy (though that be true, as we know), but for *godliness*. The promises are looked at in their *cleansing* virtue. It is, as I may say, the *washing* of water by the word that Peter here contemplates and speaks of, as Paul does in another place (Eph. v. 26).

And having thus declared our provisions in God and His word for the ends of godliness, He puts us upon the husbandry of godliness. He tells us of *fruitfulness*—fruitfulness which will be known in the cultivation and production of those graces and virtues which give real, intrinsic character to the saints, those habits, and tempers, and

properties of the soul, the inner man, which we know with God are of great price.

And there is a difference, we may observe, between *service* and *fruitfulness*. Service is something more manifested, fruitfulness may be very hidden. The hand, or the foot, or the tongue may serve ; and so they should. Tipped with the blood and the oil, they are to be instruments in the hand of the divine Master of the house, and to be as servants there ; but it is in the deeper places of the affections, the secrets of the soul, that the husbandry of the saints, in the power of the Spirit and the truth, is to be yielding fruit to God. Herbs, meet for Him by whom the soul is dressed, are to spring and grow there, fragrant, and beautiful, such as bespeak the virtue of that rain that has visited it from heaven (Heb. vi. 7).

But still further—in proof how Peter is keeping practical godliness in view—he not only gives the promises, as we have seen, in connection with that, but other things and objects also. Thus, looking at the distant glory, he sees it under this character, the *dwelling-place of righteousness* (iii. 13). It is not its brightness or its joy he anticipates, but its *purity*. He calls the Mount of Transfiguration the *holy* hill (i. 18). And this being so, the place to which the saints are tending being *holy*—being the dwelling of righteousness, he tells them that if they be, as he exhorts them, cultivating godliness—if their husbandry be spent on virtue, knowledge, temperance,

patience, charity, and the like, then they will have an *abundant* entrance into that kingdom. And this is a very simple and sure thought. If the place we are to enter, when the journey is over, be a clean place, a holy hill, a dwelling of righteousness; and if, while we are on the road, we be cherishing the holy, the clean, the righteous mind, surely our entrance will be the more *easy* and *natural*, and thus abundant. This will be so, because we have been already (in the spirit of our minds, or in character) in the place we are approaching. We know it already, in the great moral sense. We may not have had one ray of its brightness or glory along the road that has led us to it, but we have been exercised in its virtue—we have been in moral consistency with it. We have not had its *scenery* yet, but we have already breathed its *atmosphere*; and that ensures an easy, a natural, or an abundant entrance.

And I may add this, that as we see, in chaps. ii. and iii., corruption ending in judgment, so in chap. i. we see the path of the saints—of those who walk in the practical power of their holy calling—ending in a happy, abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom.

Yes; and this moral we may draw from this. How should the path savour of the place it leads to! Are we on our way to One who was rejected here? How fit that we should not refuse to be rejected with Him. Are we on our way to join the Conqueror of the world? How fit that

we should cherish that faith that overcometh the world. Are we soon to see Him who loved us so as to die for us? How right that we should cultivate love one to another. And, according to the suggestions of this epistle, are we tending to the dwelling of righteousness? How does it become us to grow in grace, and to be adding to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and the like.

How sweet and appropriate the conclusion of the epistle: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both *now* and for ever. Amen."



THE GLORY OF THAT LIGHT.

Nothing but the apprehension of Christ Himself, Christ in glory, can detach us from this present scene, or blind us to its beauty and fascination. This is strikingly illustrated in the apostle's account of his conversion. On his way to Damascus, armed with worldly authority against the saints of God, and filled with bitter enmity against the name of Jesus, "suddenly," he says, "there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And He said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw

indeed the light, and were afraid ; but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord ? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus ; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. *And when I could not see for the glory of that light*, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus." (Acts xxii. 6-11). A complete revolution has been affected. The one who had been animated by the most deadly hatred, both against Christ and His people, is now transformed into a willing slave. "What shall I do, Lord ?" expresses his changed condition, as well as the after attitude of his whole life. Besides this, we learn that he could not see for the glory of the light that had flashed upon him ; and while this is to be understood as a matter of fact physically, it yet symbolises the spiritual effect upon the apostle of the revelation to him of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Trace out his pathway from this moment, and it will be seen that thenceforward he has no eye for anything but Christ ; that the vision of his soul is filled with this one blessed, glorious object. Everything that had hitherto engaged and occupied him, everything to which he had clung, and everything which he had cherished, now lost their attractions,, faded into dimness and nothingness before the surpassing beauty and glory of the One who appeared to him when on his way to Damascus. All his precious things

were seen to be but wretched tinsel by the side of the fine gold—divine righteousness—which he beheld in a glorified Christ. As he himself tells us : “ What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ ” [have Christ as my gain]. (Phil. iii. 7, 8.) The estimate he formed at first, was the abiding estimate of his life. Christ was all to him, and he wanted nothing beside.

The history of the apostle therefore teaches most important lessons. First, as has been said, that nothing but Christ Himself can emancipate us from the power of present things. Many a soul is held in helpless bondage, from ignorance of this truth. They desire to be freed from the influence and power of this scene, and they groan and struggle in their captivity, sighing for a deliverance that never comes. The reason is, that they begin the wrong way. Instead of looking to Christ, and being occupied with Him, they look to themselves, and are occupied with their circumstances. The consequence is, they become more enfeebled and powerless every day ; whereas, if they but accepted the truth of their own utter helplessness, and directed their gaze to Christ, instead of crying, “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me ? ” they would soon shout, in the joyous notes of victory, “ I thank God that I am delivered through

Jesus Christ our Lord." It is said of the Thesalonians, for example, that they turned to God from idols. (1 Thess. i. 9.) If they had sought to turn themselves from idols to God, they would have remained idolators until the day of their death. But looking first to God, who was presented to them in the gospel of His grace in Christ, they were drawn by His mighty power out from unde the thralldom of Satan in the worship of false gods. Levi is another example of the same thing. Sitting at the receipt of custom, the Lord Jesus presents Himself to him, with the word, "Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him." (Luke v. 27, 28.) The attractions of Christ drew him away from all his associations, from all that might naturally have detained him, and constrained him to be, from that day forward, His devoted disciple. This is the secret of all deliverance for the soul. If the eye but be directed to, and fastened upon Christ, nothing can keep us. There is power in Him to emancipate the most abject and helpless ; but the condition of its reception is to be occupied with Him. Whoever would therefore be lifted above his circumstances, and follow Christ in the joyous sense of liberty, must ever maintain the attitude of beholding the glory that is displayed in His unveiled face (2 Cor. iii 18).

Together with deliverance from the power of this scene, in the way described, there will come another thing : viz., insensibility to its attraction. He was blind to all but the beauty of Christ. The

light of day extinguishes all lesser lights ; and the light of the glory, by the very outshining of its splendours, eclipses and extinguishes the brightest glories of earth. And just as when we have been gazing at the sun, we cannot for a time see clearly the objects of earth, so when we have been beholding the glory of the Lord, our eyes are dimmed for the things of this world. If therefore we are sensible of its fascinations, it is a sure sign that Christ has not been the constant object of our souls ; and, at the same time, it is a warning to us of the danger of allowing anything to come into competition with Himself. When, Peter, in his forgetfulness on the mount of transfiguration, said to the Lord, " Let us make here three tabernacles ; one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias," " a bright cloud overshadowed them ; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." God will have no competitors with His beloved Son ; and thus " when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only " (Matt. xvii. 4-9). Christ therefore should be our only object, and in gazing at Him we not only have fellowship with the Father, but we also find deliverance from the scene, and the attractions of the scene, through which we are passing.

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

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 80.)

CHAPTERS XIII.-XVI.

NAZARITESHIP.

These chapters form a new division in the book of Judges. From chapter iii. to chapter xii. we have seen a series of deliverances wrought by instruments raised up of God. It was a period of *revivals*. The part with which we are about to be occupied has a special character.

Again did Israel fall: "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of Jehovah; and Jehovah delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years" (Chap xiii. 1). God does not give us any particulars of this fresh declension, but we discern His estimate of it, by the weight of the rod He laid upon His people; and the Philistines were the chastisement. Nothing more clearly indicates the state of Israel than this fact. Hitherto the subjection had been to outside enemies; or to Jabin, chief of the former possessors of the land; or to the nations which had sprung from Israel after the flesh and who attacked them on their borders. Here we find the enemy established within the confines of Israel and committing ravages. The Philistines ruled over the people and reduced them to a state of servitude. There is hardly any difference, morally, between those times and the present. The unfaithfulness of the church has long since brought about this last

form of evil. That which was once outside the house of God now rules within ; those described in the first chapter of Romans have taken up their abode there, and impart their own characteristics to the people of God (*cf.* Rom. i.; 2 Tim. iii. 1-5). This mixture is what is called Christendom.

Now what is the resource of the Lord's people at such a time? One word answers the question, namely, *Nazariteship*. We should be characterized at the present time by complete separation, and by a true and whole-hearted consecration to God.

Before entering upon the history of Samson, let us look a little at this important subject. Under the law, when all was outwardly in order, *Nazariteship* was of *temporary* duration (Numb. vi.); in a time of ruin it became *perpetual*, as we see in the example before us. Samson was a Nazarite from his mother's womb. This permanent character of Nazariteship reappeared in Samuel, judge and prophet (1 Sam. i., ii.), but ceased with David, type of the royal grace, and Solomon, type of the royal glory of Christ. Then came the ruin of the people under human responsible royalty, as had been the case in the time of the judges under the more direct government of God. After this ruin of the people and of the royalty was complete, Israel was delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, and a remnant of Judah was restored to await the Messiah.

The house was doubtless swept, but the people

were lifeless. John the Baptist was raised up with a permanent Nazariteship (Luke i. 15), when the ruin was fully manifested, though not yet headed up by the rejection of Christ, and when judgment (but a Saviour also) was at the door. Announced by John the Baptist, Jesus appeared, the true Joseph—a Nazarite among His brethren—but without the *signs* of earthly Nazariteship, because He was Himself the reality of this type. This of itself strikingly proclaimed the ruin of the people. At the end of His course the Lord entered upon a second and *heavenly* phase of His Nazariteship. He sanctified Himself in heaven for His disciples, the true Nazarite, separated from sinners and seated at the right hand of God, leaving His own here below to represent His Nazariteship. The world having been by the cross convicted of sin, ruined and judged, the disciples, then the church, became heavenly Nazarites in perpetuity in the midst of the world. We shall see, as we go through the history of Samson, how the church itself has answered to this calling.

There is another important thing to notice. That which under the law was the provision for a few, is, under grace, the portion of all. Priesthood, which belonged to only one family out of the Levites, has become the universal privilege of all the children of God (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9). There was a still less numerous class in Israel, that of the Nazarites, composed of a few isolated men and women (not to speak of the Rechabites—Jer.

xxxv.—in the days of the prophets), which gives the characteristics belonging now to all the saints. We have indicated the reason, it is that separation to God is necessarily the mark of witnesses that have to do with man in his ruined condition, with the world on the eve of judgment. This truth of Nazariteship in its universal and permanent character fills the New Testament and shines out on every page of the Holy Book for those who have eyes to see. It is of immense practical importance.

Under the law, a Nazarite, whether man or woman, was separated to the service of God, during a fixed period of time. This separation consisted in three things (Numb. vi. 1-9), which touched figuratively the most necessary and most important elements of human life. *Sociability* belongs to the nature and the very existence of man. Now the Nazarite had to abstain from wine and strong drink. It is said of wine (Judges ix. 13), that it “cheereth *God and Man*.” This joy of sociable men they could have shared together with God, but sin had entered by man, and God could no longer rejoice with him. He who devoted himself to the service of God could no longer find his joy in the society of his fellows, for God has nothing in common with the joy of sinners. The servant of the Lord may not seek friends in the world, sit down at their banquets, nor share their pleasures, for God is not there; and the more distinctly the ruin is seen, the more

is this fact brought home to us. Christians fail much as to this. They have "worldly friends" and cultivate their society, not for the purpose of putting the Gospel before them, but for self-gratification. Alas! how little do we resemble Paul, when he said: "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh" (2 Cor. v. 16). From this point of view, as from every other, the Lord was a perfect Nazarite, a stranger to all the joys of sociable man. He even said to His disciples, at that meeting which He had ardently desired, when, with death before Him, He might have tasted with them for a moment earthly joy: "Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark xiv. 25). The day is coming when the wine which cheereth God and man will be drunk new in a scene purified from sin, in which the true servant will be able to take part without restriction. The word of God insists upon the importance of this separation: "He shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried; . . . he shall eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk" (Numb. vi. 3, 4). Do we take heed to this, my brethren? Do we deny ourselves what may minister, even remotely, to the joy of the heart of the natural man? How are we carrying out our Nazariteship? But perhaps you will say, how is it possible to do so in

such an absolute way? This we find in *being heavenly in character*. Ours is a heavenly Nazarite-ship. Separation under Judaism was a material one; under Christianity it becomes spiritual and heavenly. The Lord to whom we belong, is separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. He has two means of separating us with Himself and like Himself. The first, the word of God, puts us in connection with the Father in heaven; the second, His own person—Himself—a Christ set apart for us in heaven, in order to indicate and establish the fact that our relationships, our ties and our affections are henceforth heavenly, in the midst of a judged world which has rejected Christ.

A second thing characterized the Nazarite: "All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head; until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto Jehovah, he shall be holy, and let the locks of the hair of his head grow" (Numb. vi. 5). Besides sociability, there is a second characteristic which touches man to the very core. He is a selfish being, with an independent will, and for whom there is nothing of more importance than self, his dignity, and all that attaches thereto. Now long hair separated the Nazarite, in figure, from all that, being at the same time the token of *dependence* and *dishonour* (1 Cor. xi.). The long hair of the Nazarite proclaimed openly, that he had abandoned his dignity and personal rights as a man, in order to

devote himself to the service of God. That which was glory for the woman was shame for him. He relinquished his personality under this veil. He who was born to this dignity neglected it, he who was appointed to rule submitted himself to the Lord as a wife to her husband. Without this dependence there can be neither service for God nor power for it. That which was a sign of weakness for the Nazarite, became the source of his strength. Moreover, his devotedness to the Lord found expression in forgetfulness of self leading him to neglect himself in order that he might fulfil his service more perfectly.

Yet a third thing characterized him : " All the days that he separateth himself unto Jehovah he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die ; because the consecration of his God is upon his head " (Numb. vi. 6, 7). The third characteristic belongs to man since the fall, and is inherent in his being, that is sin, proved by its consequence—death. This was what it was the duty of the Nazarite to avoid at all cost. The strongest ties, those of the family, must not be taken into consideration, when setting himself apart for the service of God was in question. How little do we understand this ! There are many Christians who say : " Suffer me first to go and bury my father." Others say : " I cannot, my relations would not allow it." Such are not Nazarites. But

it was not only family ties which the Nazarite should set aside *when it was a question of service*, and which he should disclaim after the example of the perfect Nazarite: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." "Who is my mother and who are my brethren?" (John ii. 4; Matt. xii. 48). The Nazarite should keep himself from all sin, from all defilement. The law made no provision for wilful sin, whilst it is to such that grace more particularly addresses itself. One wilful sin alone, the renouncing of Christianity, is beyond the resources of grace (Heb. x. 26). The law had its resources except for wilful sin. First: In the *daily life* of the Israelite, for sin through ignorance, and for trespass (Lev. iv., v.). Second: In his *walk*, for sin through lack of vigilance or through inadvertence (Numb. xix). Third: In his *service*, for sin arising from negligence, and for sin unforeseen and which it would appear impossible for a man to avoid. "And if any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration" (Numb. vi. 9). This was an involuntary case and impossible to have foreseen, yet it was sin, and the more so because it was a question of a particularly important and honoured service. How this speaks to our consciences! Our Nazariteship involves the most absolute separation from the defilements of this world. Nowhere in this chapter does God suppose that the Nazarite would deliberately drink wine,

cut his hair, or touch a dead body. It is the same for us—God does not suppose that we *must* sin, and He acts towards us on this principle.

The three marks of Nazariteship, of which we have spoken, were only the external characteristics of this calling, however important they may have been as such, an importance easily forgotten. They were the result of a *vow*, of consecration to the service of Jehovah, of inward separation of heart to Him. “When either man or woman shall *separate* themselves to *vow* a *vow* of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto Jehovah” (Numb. vi. 2). I press this point, as of the utmost importance. A *vow* was a *decision* to serve God unreservedly in a certain manner, thus devoting oneself to the service of Jehovah. This devotedness to Christ is the foundation of Christian Nazariteship. If it is not there we expose ourselves to a serious fall. One may be a Nazarite in an outward sort of way, may possess even, as Samson, the great power that accompanies Nazariteship, and not be separated in heart. Doubtless, this side which was wholly external under the law is no longer so in Christianity; for one may be now a member of a temperance society without being a Nazarite. For the Christian, a *testimony* borne before the world answers to these outward signs; a testimony which separates us from its defilements as well as from its joys, and causes us to walk openly in a path of dependence, taking the word of God for guidance. Now, we

may make a profession of these things, may walk outwardly in the path of Nazariteship, and, all the while, have divided and unsanctified hearts. Such a course would end, as with Samson, in a defeat; and if it did not come to that, we should at any rate lose the blessing which flows from whole-hearted consecration in the Lord's service. In Lev. vii. the feast of the peace offering lasted two days for him who had made a vow, and only one day when it was thanksgiving for blessings received. The effect of renouncing all that the world could offer is seen in the worship of Abraham in Gen. xii. and xiii. He built there three altars: that at Sichem, the altar of *obedience*, to Jehovah who had appeared unto him; that at Bethel, the altar of the *pilgrim*, to the name of Jehovah; that at Hebron, the altar of *renunciation*, unto Jehovah Himself, and it was there that the patriarch realized the divine blessings in all their extent.

But to return to the Nazarite. It is interesting to note what he had to do, when he had "defiled the head of his consecration" (Numb. vi. 9-11). One of these acts corresponded to the loss of his external Nazariteship, the other to the violation of his vow, his inward consecration. He had to shave his head. This was the public acknowledgment that he had failed, and also the avowal that the power of his Nazariteship had left him. The repentant Nazarite was not like Samson who "wist not that Jehovah was departed from him."

He acknowledged it, proclaiming, so to speak, that he was no longer qualified for service. Then he had to offer "two turtle doves or two young pigeons," the sacrifice of one who "was not able to bring a lamb." This was an acknowledgement of his incapacity, of his worthlessness as a servant, and at the same time of the value of the blood offered for his purification. We should note these things carefully and not assume an appearance of spiritual power when we have lost communion with the Lord, but confess with humiliation our sin before God, when we have failed in the responsibility of our service.

Let us persevere in this service without growing weary, and not allow anything to interfere with it. The time came for the Nazarite when the days of his separation were fulfilled, then he offered *all the sacrifices*. This day will dawn for us also, when the Lord will come and His sacrifice will have borne its full results, sin abolished, death destroyed, and Satan bruised for ever under our feet. Then we shall shave the head of our Nazariteship (Numb. vi. 18); then the power of the Holy Spirit will no longer be employed in strengthening us for separation from all evil in our service; then we shall "take the hair of the head of our separation, and put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings," for our whole energy will be taken up with the joy of uninterrupted communion, and the scene of the new world will be, like ourselves, perfectly conformed to the mind and heart of God.

(*To be continued, D. V.*)

“CHRISTIANOS AD LEONES.”

[“The Christians to the lions” was the cry of the heathen populace in the days of the Roman emperors, when being thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre was a common punishment.]

’Tis bright, all bright before me, and the hours
Hasten me on to the eternal brightness,
The blest inheritance of the saints in light.
Sorrow is all behind me, and the beams
Of the fast coming day upon my soul
Kiss into glory all the clouds that hung
Once heavily o’er my path. How all is changed !
They linger now about me but to catch
And to throw back the dawn in radiance
Like to the rainbow glory round the throne.

O world, poor world, that didst not know thy Lord,
Nor value heaven’s treasures in His hand,
Nor know the love that brought Him down to thee
Abased and emptied of the form of God !
That didst misdeem the lowliness of grace,
Which, saving others, could not save itself !
The Cross of shame, the Cross thou gavest Him,
Thou knewest not must be transformed when He,
The Holy One, hung on it ; knewest not
That death with all things else must own the One
Whom only man rejected,—that His death
Was but thy sentence, and His cross *thy* cross.

Poor world, that ne’er shall see such sight again,
The only glory and the only joy
Amid thy shadows is the lonely path
Of One who had not where to lay His head,
Of One who has ennobled poverty,
Made joy of sorrow and endear’d rejection.
Come to be with us, come not to be served,
But in the blest necessity of love
To serve even unto death, to serve for ever,

And link us with Himself in blessedness,
The fruit of His own solitary toil.

O Son of God, yet Son of man forever !
Thy tree of life is in these dark death-waters,
And Marah is not Marah ! we can drink, —
Yes, we, poor shrinking tremblers, we can drink,
Of any cup Thy lips have pressed, and whence
Thou hast drained all the bitterness. Death is gone,
Behind me in thy Cross ; sin gone, wrath gone ;
There is no wrath for me and no forsaking,
For that was Thine ; but mine the Father's arms,
Those arms that shut out trouble evermore,
And shut me in to rest and joy and peace,
Where He, my Father-God, in His own love
Rests and rejoices in His lost one found.

Can there be sorrow that Thy path is mine ?
That the disciple should be as his Lord ?
What shadow could be dark beside the darkness
That hung its noon-day shroud about the Cross ?
What have I lost, but loss ?
And if I have seen all my treasures landed
Though by rough hands, upon the sunlit shore
Which beckons me e'en now,—*they* are not lost,
But laid up where can be no bankruptcy,
To give me welcome home ! and there's no check,
No weight to hinder in the eager race,
I run not wearily, but still most glad
That the end draweth near.

One only step,—
One step and then ! . . . Why, farewell, Cæsar's prison ;
Welcome the city of the jasper walls ;
Welcome the portals of my Father's house ;
Welcome the " ever " of my Saviour's presence ;
Farewell the passing ; welcome the enduring ;
Dying alone to death !—One little hour !
The beasts shall have their prey, and I my joy.



" LOSS."

I think many fail to see just what the apostle means, when he says in Phillipians iii., that he

counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. "Counting" is faith; and faith is the God-opened eye, which simply realizes things as they are. It does not colour them. A good eye imparts nothing to the object it takes in, but only realizes it as it is, adding nothing, subtracting nothing.

The apostle was not magnanimously giving up what had real value in it. It was not even a generous self-abandonment, which does not count the cost of what it does. He *had* counted; and his quiet, calm, deliberate estimate is here recorded. Pursuing what he saw alone to have value, he says, "Yea, doubtless, and I do count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ [or "have Christ for my gain"], and be found in Him."

This is not "sacrifice," as people speak; for to make that, there must be worth (at least, in our eyes) in the thing we sacrifice. The apostle's deliberate conviction was that in his pursuit—entire, absorbing pursuit as it was—of Christ there was none. And this is the estimate which eternity will confirm; as the apostle's abundant experience—for *he* was no mere theorist—had already confirmed. To occupy himself with it would be loss indeed.

THE DISMISSAL OF HAGAR.

GEN. xvi., xxi.

When Hagar was driven from the house of Abram by Sarah, the angel of the Lord met her, and told her to return and submit herself under the hand of her mistress. For it was very wrong in her to have acted in her mistress's house as if she had been the principal person there. She was a mother, it is true, and Sarah was still without a child. Nevertheless, she was but a servant ; and acting in any other character, she entirely forgot her place. The angel, therefore, reproved her, ordered her to go back, and charged her, while she remained in Abram's house, to be in subjection to Sarah (Gen. xvi.).

This is a mystery. During the age of the law, two elements were found together—that of *law*, and that of *grace*. There were the demands of righteousness, addressing themselves to man, and there were “the shadow of good things to come,” the witnesses of grace, revealing God in Christ. The Jew who made the law the principal of the two, mistook God's mind ; the Jew who used it subordinately, having his soul nourished by the tokens and witnesses of grace, was, so far, a Jew after God's own heart.

This right-minded Jew is seen, for instance, in Nehemiah (see Neh. viii.). The law was read on the first day of the seventh month ; that day (as Lev. xxiii. 24 teaches us) in the Jewish year

which witnessed grace or revival. The two elements were, therefore, on that occasion, brought into collision. At the hearing of the law the congregation weep. But Nehemiah tells them not to weep, but to rejoice ; and he tells them to do this on the authority of that day, the first day of the seventh month. And they do so, making the witness of grace principal, and using the law subordinately.

This was according to God.

In due time the Lord comes ; and, in the course of His ministry, He settles the question, or rather verifies the decision already made, between these two contending elements (see Matt. xii. 5, 6). The Sabbath represents the rights and demands of the law, the priests in the temple witness the ways and provisions of grace. The Lord declares how the Sabbath had to yield to the Temple, whenever their rights interfered with each other. And this was as though He were the angel of Gen. xvi., telling Hagar to be under the hand of Sarah, while she remained in the house of Abram.

The apostle in Rom. ii., I judge, teaches the same ; for he rebukes the Jew for making his boast of the law, not knowing the " goodness," i.e., the grace of God, in leading him to repentance. In the apostle's thought (of the Spirit surely), the Jew who was then refusing Christ and the gospel, was making the law *principal*, instead of using it as the servant of grace. He was resting in the law, ignorant of the riches of divine " goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering."

But we are to go further with the history and with the mystery of Hagar. In process of time, one of the conflicting parties in the house of Abraham has to leave it, as we say, for good. Hagar is dismissed a second time, and there is then no angel or angel's voice bidding her to go back. Sarah had now become a mother; and her son, the son of the freewoman, must occupy and fill the house all alone (chap. xxi.)

And this is a mystery also.

In this present age—in these days of the risen, glorified Jesus, when the Spirit has been given to the elect on the title of all their sins being forgiven and Jesus ascended—the law is not to appear. It has been nailed to the cross. We are dead to that wherein we were held (Rom. vii. 6, margin). The handwriting of ordinances has been blotted out (Col. ii. 14). The light and glory of the work of Christ must fill the house of God with one simple, bright, and gladdening element. Hagar has left Abraham's house, and left it for ever.

And as the Lord, in Matt. xii., was like the angel telling Hagar, that while she remained in the house she was to be subject to her mistress, so the apostle, in the epistle to the Galatians, is like Sarah insisting on Hagar quitting the house for ever. For it is now, in this age of a glorified Christ and of a given Spirit, no longer a mistress and a servant dwelling together under one roof, but a mother and her child, the freewoman and the heir. Scripture spoke in Sarah, as Gal. iv.

tells us. It was the Holy Ghost who gave the word. And whether we look at the zeal of Sarah in Gen. xxi., or the earnestness of Paul in Galatians, we learn the precious secret of the heart of God, that He will have His elect in the adoption and liberty of *children*. Relationship, as well as redemption, is of the grace in which we stand.



GOD SEEING US, AND OUR SEEING GOD.

(HEBREWS XI. 27.)

“For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.”

If you compare this with an expression in Genesis xvi., I think the force of both is made much more distinct. “And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after Him that seeth me?” In the one case Moses sees God; in the other, although Hagar looks after Him, it was God that saw her. We are apt in everything to look at the lower end of the truth, to content ourselves with the scantiest portion that can sustain us.

Now Hagar did not really go beyond this. She was the bond woman; she knew nothing of the liberty of grace. She might look after God, but what she reached was this, “Thou God seest me.” Now the simple consciousness that God sees us, never goes beyond the knowledge either that He is a Judge, noticing our ways to deal with them, or, at most, that He is a guardian to protect in

the hour of difficulty and danger. But love, liberty, rest, joy in God, are never known through the bare truth that God sees us. No one denies it to be a truth ; but what I must maintain is, that, as believers, we are entitled to the further and more precious privilege of seeing God, of seeing Him who is invisible. This was, in the principle of it, what sustained the heart of Moses. Hagar did not endure. She ran away ; she was protected, she was brought back, she was finally expelled from the house of Abraham and Sarah, and the child of flesh along with her. It was the bondage of the law that was set forth by her. Now the law does bring out this—that is to say, God seeing man, God occupying Himself with man, God dealing with man, God judging man, yet God, it may be, showing mercy to man, as we see in Exodus xxxiv. But communion with God there never is nor can be, till there is the consciousness that grace reigns. Not that the law is weakened, dissolved, or destroyed ; not that its authority is touched. It is not so that God brings us into the place of liberty ; that would be to set the ways of God against His sovereign grace. But the believer is brought out of the region where law applies—out of the scene of death, and darkness, and bondage, into the place of light ; he is brought to God. There is no law in the presence of God. Law deals with the flesh in the world. If I am in the place of flesh and of the world, I must be under law or I shall be lawless. The Christian

is neither the one nor the other ; but he is brought in peace, by the grace of God, unto God. He endures, not because God sees him, but because he sees God. He endures “as seeing Him ‘who is invisible.” He endures, he knows God in Christ, he has rest in His presence, for he knows Him whom He has sent, and “herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” This is what He has done and what law could not do, for it has no propitiation to give. It may demand, but it has nothing to give ; it waits to receive, and it receives the deeds, alas ! of darkness, of fear, of feebleness ; it can only receive whatever poor man’s conscience may offer, trying to make his peace with God. But grace makes the peace by a gift of His own love, gives the peace that it has made through the blood of Christ’s cross, and brings into the consciousness of the love of Him who has suffered all for us. And therefore, instead of our being afraid of Him and avoiding Him, instead of its being a sort of guess-like way of wondering, doubting where it may end, fearing what it may bring, *endurance* is the word for us.

This is the portion of the Christian, this is what characterizes him. It is enduring “as seeing Him who is invisible.” We know in Whom we have believed ; we know that we have eternal life. “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." We endure "as seeing Him who is invisible." And so it is all the way through. The new life is fed, nourished and strengthened by faith, "while we look not at the things which are seen"—such are the things which flesh has to do with and law deals with. But we look not at these things, but "at the things which are not seen ; for the things that are seen are temporal ; but the things that are not seen are eternal." So, again, to the life itself. The law dealt with a man as long as he lived. We begin with the confession that we are dead ; and now we live in an eternal life. "And the life that I now live in the flesh"—not merely in heaven, but in this world—is "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." There is no uncertainty here ; whatever may be the practical testimony we bear to Him, there is no weakness nor failure in Him who is our life. There is endurance, but for us it is seeing Him who is invisible.

The Lord strengthen our faith !



THE LORD JESUS IN JOHN XI., XII.

These chapters show us in what different channels the Lord's thoughts flowed from those of the heart of man. His ideas, so to speak, of *misery* and of *happiness*, were so different from what man's naturally are.

The eleventh chapter opens with a scene of human misery. The dear family at Bethany are visited with sickness, and the voice of health and thanksgiving in their dwelling has to yield to mourning, lamentation, and woe. But He, who of all had the largest and tenderest sympathies, is the calmest among them; for He carried with Him that foresight of resurrection, which made Him look beyond the chamber of sickness and the grave of death.

When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He abode two days longer in the place where He was; but when that sickness ends in death, He begins His journey in the full and bright prospect of resurrection. And this makes His journey steady and undisturbed; and, as He approaches the scene of sorrow, His action is still the same. He replies again and again to the passion of Martha's soul, from that place where the knowledge of a power that was beyond that of death had, in all serenity, seated Him. And though He has to move still onward, there is no haste. For on Mary's arrival, He is still in the same place where Martha had met Him. And the issue, as I need not say, comes in due season to vindicate this stillness of His heart and this apparent tardiness of His journey.

Thus it was with Jesus here. The path of Jesus was *His own*. When man was bowed down in sorrow at the thought of death, He was lifted up in the sunshine of resurrection.

But the sense of resurrection, though it gave this peculiar current to the thoughts of Jesus, left His heart still alive to the sorrows of others. For His was not *indifference*, but *elevation*. And such is the way of faith always. Jesus weeps with the weeping of Mary and her company. His whole soul was in the sunshine of those deathless regions which lay far away from the tomb of Bethany; but it could visit the valley of tears, and weep there with those that wept.

But, again. When man was lifted up in the expectation of something good and brilliant in the earth, His soul was full of the holy certainty that death awaits all here, however promising or pleasurable; and that honour and prosperity must be hoped for only in other and higher regions. The twelfth chapter shows us this.

When they heard of the raising of Lazarus, much people flocked together from Bethany to Jerusalem, and at once hailed Him as the King of Israel. They would fain go up with Him to the Feast of Tabernacles, and antedate the age of glory, seating Him in the honours and joys of the kingdom. The Greeks also take their place with Israel in such an hour. Through Philip, as taking hold of the skirt of a Jew (Zech. viii.), they would see Jesus and worship. But in the midst of all this, Jesus Himself sits solitary. He knows that earth is not the place for all this festivation and keeping of holy day. His spirit muses on death, while their thoughts are full of a kingdom with its

attendant honours and pleasures. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone."

Such was the peculiar path of the spirit of Jesus. *Resurrection was everything to Him.* It was His relief amid the sorrows of life, and His object amid the promises and prospects of the world. It gave His soul a calm sunshine when dark and heavy clouds had gathered over Bethany; it moderated and separated His affections when the brilliant glare of a festive day was lighting up the way from thence to Jerusalem. The thought of it sanctified His mind equally amid grief and enjoyments around. Resurrection was everything to Him. It made Him a perfect pattern of that fine principle of the Spirit of God: "Let him that weepeth be as though he wept not, and he that rejoiceth as though he rejoiced not."

O for a little more of the same mind in us, beloved! A little more of this elevation above the passing conditions and circumstances of life!

May the faith and hope of the Gospel, through the working of the indwelling Spirit, form the happiness and prospects of our hearts!



MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 100.)

A Remnant.

(Chapter XIII.)

The people having relapsed into unfaithfulness, were in subjection to enemies within—to the

Philistines, who were established in Israel's territory. It was the last stage in the history of declension. The children of Israel no longer cried to Jehovah; submitting to this state of things, they did not even wish to be delivered from it (chap. xv. 11), and, for the sake of living quietly in their state of servitude, sought to get rid of their liberator. The time of total apostasy was at hand.

In the midst of this irremediable state of things, God separated a godly *remnant*, and addressed his communications to them. Manoah and his wife feared Jehovah, listened to His voice and spake to one another (*cf.* Mal. iii 16), a striking type of the remnant—of the Marys, and Elizabeths, and Annas, and Zacharias, and Simeons—that waited for the true Messiah, the Saviour of Israel; type also of the future remnant, who, passing through the tribulation, will follow the paths of righteousness, waiting for the coming of their King.

Samson, the deliverer of Israel, found at his birth, not a people that welcomed him, but this godly couple who believed in his mission. The Lord, rejected by the people from the time of His arrival on the scene, found only a few faithful souls with whom He could enter into association, those excellent of the earth mentioned in Ps. xvi, in whom He found His delight. Times of irremediable ruin are then the times of remnants; this, consequently, applies to the present period of the

church—a period foretold by the Sovereign Prophet to His disciples, when He spoke to them of an assembly reduced to two or three gathered to the true centre, to the name of Christ, during His absence. This period is mentioned in Revelation, when—in presence of the idolatry of Thyatira, the deadness of Sardis, and the nauseating lukewarmness of Laodicea—the approbation of Him that is holy, of Him that is true, is pronounced upon the feeble separated remnant of Philadelphia.

That which characterizes a remnant at all times is *Nazariteship*, entire “separation unto the Lord.” The angel of Jehovah appearing unto the wife of Manoah, said to her : “Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not ; but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing ” (vs. 3, 4). This woman had to take upon herself nazariteship, because she was the vessel chosen of God to present to the people the promised deliverer. “For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son ; and no razor shall come on his head ; for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb ; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines ” (ver. 5). The *nazariteship* of Samson involved that of his mother. In order to do honour to the deliverer of Israel, it was needful for his witnesses to bear before the eyes of all, the impress of his own character. This is true at all times. If we do not manifest Christ down here

in His character of entire separation to God, we are not *witnesses* for our Saviour. Christ having come, permanent nazariteship should characterize the saints as it does the Lord ; and the more the ruin increases, the more apparent will this become. The second epistle of Timothy, which tells us of the last days, is full of the characteristics of nazariteship. In chap. ii. 19, it is the Nazarite withdrawing from iniquity ; in chap. ii. 21, it is his purifying himself for God ; in chap. iii. 10, 11, and iv. 5-7, it is, as the servant of God, walking in forgetfulness of self and in absolute dependence on the Lord. Is it not the Nazarite who speaks in 2 Cor. iv. 7-12 ? In chap. vi.-vii. 1, of this same epistle we again find the principal traits of nazariteship ; reproach and self-forgetfulness in vs. 4-10 ; separation from all association with the world in vs. 14, 15 ; cleansing from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit in chap. vii. 1. Quotations might be multiplied. What it is important to establish is, that there is for us, neither walk, nor testimony, nor service, without nazariteship ; that is to say, without devotedness and separation to God.

In ver. 6, Manoah's wife told her husband about the angel's visit : " A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible ; but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name." This poor woman had but little intelligence ; she knew neither whence the angel came nor who he

was, nor did she ask him, proving how slight was her acquaintance with God. Far from giving her confidence, the presence of the God of promises frightened her, for she only saw the countenance of the angel to be "very terrible." Manoah himself, a man of sincere piety, had little understanding, but he desired more. He wished to know "what to do unto the child" (ver. 8), then, "what shall he do" (ver. 12, margin). Instead of answering his questions, the angel of Jehovah said to him: "Of all that I said unto *the woman* let her beware. *She* may not eat of anything that cometh of the vine, neither let *her* drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; all that I commanded *her* let *her* observe" (vs. 13, 14). Why? Because knowledge is not the first thing that God requires. Neither it, nor even true piety, such as was found in Manoah and his wife, is sufficient to keep us in the midst of the ruin. That which was needed for them *before knowledge* was true *personal separation* to God, a separation which had as its pattern and measure the nazariteship of him who was about to appear.

Other truths too—the portion of Christ's witnesses in a day of declension—are revealed to us here. "Manoah said unto the angel of Jehovah, What is thy name And the angel of Jehovah said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is *wonderful* (margin). So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered them upon a rock unto Jehovah; and the

angel did *wonderously* ; and Manoah and his wife looked on " (vs. 17-19).

In reviewing the history of the different epochs of this book, we find that to each revival there are certain corresponding principles which characterize it. The times of Othniel, Ehud, Barak, Gideon and Jephthah, each furnishes us with some new principle ; but God reserves the most precious truths of all for the last days of ruin, hidden until then and wonderful. How worthy of the God of love is such a way of acting ! Knowing the difficulties of His own in the midst of increasing unfaithfulness and wishing to attract their hearts in the midst of this darkness, He brings to light and confides to His witnesses truths more and more glorious.

The starting point of these truths is *the sacrifice*. Manoah, more intelligent than Gideon (*cf.* chap. vi. 19), took the kid with the meat offering, and offered them upon a rock unto Jehovah. The cross is the foundation of all our knowledge as children of God. Manoah was desirous of knowing many things which Jehovah could not reveal to him before the sacrifice. But this foundation once laid, the angel did *wonderously*, which doubtless was revealed, in a manner still obscure and symbolical, to the eyes of this poor remnant who were waiting for a Saviour. " For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of Jehovah ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his

wife looked on " (ver. 20). They found in the fire of the sacrifice a new way, not opened up hitherto, a way for the representative of Jehovah to ascend to Him ; and, their gaze fixed on the angel, they saw a glorious person, whose dwelling place they knew now that he had disappeared from before their eyes. Then only, " Manoah knew that it was an angel of Jehovah." (ver. 21). The heart and the interests of this poor remnant were at that moment withdrawn from this world, and followed the angel, ascending with him to heaven. These simple believers could thenceforth speak of a *path* which led to heaven, and of a *person* who was there, who had become their object while they were still here below.

In this wonderful act another thing was revealed, not for Manoah, but *for us*: the future character of this nazariteship of which the angel had spoken to them. It is now heavenly, as we have above remarked. The angel in parting from them went up into heaven. The Lord Jesus, rejected by the world, said : " For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth " (John xvii. 19). Set apart in heaven, He attracts us after, and fixes our eyes upon, Himself ; in order that the heavenly character of the One whom the world has rejected may be reproduced in us here below. In presence of this revelation, so instructive for us, but of which Manoah and his wife had but a faint glimpse, they " fell on their faces to the ground " (ver. 20).

And shall not we, in the midst of increasing darkness, adore in fuller measure, the God who has revealed to us, not only a heavenly and glorified Christ, but our place in Him, and has given Him to us as an object that we may reflect Him more perfectly in this world? Such are the blessings given to fill our hearts with joy and gratitude. How many Christians there are, who, seeking a place in the world, walk down here with bowed heads as they see the state of things around them, and vex their souls from day to day, as just Lot did of old—but such is not our part; we are not called to be Lots, nor to act like him down here. Our portion is with Abraham, the friend of God, who was not disheartened by the ruin. As a Nazarite he kept his place on his high mountain, his eyes fixed—not on Sodom, but—on the city which hath foundations. Jesus said of him: “Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it and was glad” (John viii. 56). Ah! rather than be discouraged, let us praise God, and thank Him for the heavenly treasure He has given us in Christ.

Like so many Christians of the present day, Manoah was filled with fear when he found himself in the presence of God. “He said to his wife, we shall surely die, because we have seen God” (ver. 22). His companion was a true helpmeet for him. Is there any room for fear, said she, when God has accepted our offering? The love of God, proved to us at the cross, is the positive guarantee for everything else. “He that spareth not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. viii. 32.)

(To be continued, D.V.)

THE BOOK.

"The Book!" Oh, Book of Books! Oh, Word of Words!
The only Book whose title is "*The Lord's.*"
Thy theme, "the Truth," "the Light," "the Life." "the Way,"

That leads from darkness to eternal day;
Thy mission, as thy subject, all divine,
Like heaven's bright sun, on every land to shine,
Where'er the guilty sons of Adam dwell,
Wherever reigns the power of death and hell:
To chase the darkness, and dispel the gloom,
To tell the victory o'er the yawning tomb,
Of the vast ransom for redemption paid,
The full, the rich atonement Jesus made,
When, bearing sin upon the accursed tree,
He died, from guilt and judgment, man to free.

"The Book," that opens heaven to our sight,
Reveals the Son of Man in glory bright,
At God's right hand exalted, till the day
He comes to take His Church from earth away,
To share His kingdom, and enjoy His love
Forever in His Father's house above.
"The Book," oh, blessed Book! what thousands there
Have found relief from anguish and despair!
The lost it tells of pardon full and free,
For such as I am, and for such as thee:
The pilgrim reads of heaven's bright repose,
And, full of hope, forgets his daily woes:
The tempted, suited promises console;
And pastures green refresh the hungry soul.
The mourner, streams of richest comfort finds;
Wisdom divine illumines inquiring minds,
That, with a childlike meekness, at the feet
Of Jesus sit, to learn its lessons sweet.
What secrets hidden lie in every page;
What light it throws on every bygone age!
The future there, from mortal eye concealed,
Is to the servants of the Lord revealed.

Oh, how refreshing, to the heart that sighs
O'er all th' unnumbered woes that meet the eyes,
And cause the sympathetic tear to flow
For all that sin and death have brought below,
To search this blessed Book! for there we see
Grace reigns supreme to set the captive free,
Its mission, wide as human sin and need;

THE UNITY AND PERFECTION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

“ And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke xxiv. 27.”

The Lord's wisdom in dealing with the Sadducees of His day, may well be our pattern in dealing with a like generation in this day. “ Ye do err,” said He to them, “ not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God ” (Matt. xxii). They presented a difficulty, as they judged it to be, an insurmountable difficulty ; but it was no such thing to Him. Scripture He bowed to, and the power of God He asserted. Scripture was His rule of thought and judgment ; and He could rest in the power of God as that which would make every jot and tittle of it good.

This was His answer to them at once, His immediate rebuke of them. And it was enough. His Spirit afterwards in the apostle would commend the saints to God, and to the word of His grace ; so now, would He Himself lean on God and His word. It was enough for Him that God had spoken (see Acts xx. 32).

But after this, He shews these Sadducees, that the difficulty they suggested was simply an imagination of their own, and not a part of the Scripture, or the revelation of God. And then, in closing with them, He exposes their unbelief by the light of Scripture, rebuking their denial of

resurrection by a passage taken from Ex. iii.—thus again honouring Scripture as the authoritative rule of all our thoughts.

But this only as I pass on to my present subject, the fact that quotations from the Old Testament are largely found in the New. These *quotations* from the Old Testament, cited, as they are, in all parts of the New, with many and many a glance, or tacit unexpressed reference, link all the parts of the sacred volume together, giving it a character of unity and completeness. The *contents* of the volume do the same—they also give unity and completeness to it; for they constitute a history (with incidental matters by the way), a series of events which stretch from the beginning to the end, from the creation to the kingdom. And *prophecies* in the Old Testament of events in the New act in the same way as quotations in the New of passages in the Old. And thus, as in the mouth of several witnesses of the highest dignity, we have the oneness and the consistency, the unity and completeness of the Book from first to last fully set forth and established.

But this simple fact tells us, further, that all the parts of this wondrous volume are the breathing of one and the same Spirit; and again, the contents themselves speak the same. The moral glories which so brightly, so abundantly and so variously, shine in them witness that God is their source. This constitutes the “self-evidencing light and power of the Holy Scriptures,” as

another has expressed it. And thus the divine *Original* of the book, as well as its divine *Unity* and *consistency* is established; and we hold these truths in the face of all the insult that is put upon them by unreasonable and wicked men. Oppositions of criticism, falsely so called, like angry waves on the sea-shore. God Himself has set the bounds—and they only return upon themselves, foaming out their own shame.

In the progress of the New Testament Scriptures, the Lord and the Holy Ghost, each in His several way and season, use the Scriptures of the Old.

As to the Lord, we may find Him doing this in various ways.

1. He observes them obediently, ordering His life and behaviour, and forming His character (if I may so speak), by them, and according to them.

2. He uses them as His weapons of war or shield of defence, when assailed by the Tempter, or by the men of the world.

3. He avers and avows their divine authority and original, and their indestructible character, and that too, in every jot and tittle of them.

4. He treats them as authoritative and commanding, when He teaches His disciples, or reasons with gainsayers.

5. He fulfils them.*

* This, among other illustrations of it, is finely seen in John xix. 28-30, where the Lord seems as though He were calling Scripture to mind; and first recollecting that one very short passage of it had not been fulfilled, He refuses to withdraw Himself from the scene of suffering till it was—and then, all being accomplished as was written, just said—"It is finished," and gave up the ghost.

In such ways as these, the Lord honours the Scriptures of the Old Testament. What a sight ! What a precious fact ! How blessed to see Him in such relationship to the word of God ; for that word is to ourselves the warrant and witness of all the confidence and liberty and peace we know before God !

We read the 119th Psalm with delight, there tracing *a saint's* relation to Scripture ; and we know it to be edifying to mark the breathings of the soul under the drawings and teachings and inspirings of the Holy Ghost. But it is a still more affecting, a more edifying thing, to trace and mark, through the four Evangelists, the relations to the same Scriptures into which the *Lord Jesus* puts Himself.

Then, when the ministry of the Lord is over, when the Son has returned to heaven, and the Spirit comes down, He is seen (as in the apostles whom He fills to write the Epistles) to do the same service for us ; and in His way to put Himself in connection with the Old Testament Scriptures, as the Lord had just been doing. For in all the Epistles, as I may say, we get quotations from them.

And here let me add, there is no limit to this. These quotations are found in every part of the New Testament, and are taken from every part of the Old. They are found in Matthew, and on to the Apocalypse, and are taken from Genesis to Malachi. And this is done very largely ; so that in the structure of the divine volume, we have

nothing less than the closest, fullest and most intricate interweaving of all parts of it together, to the end, too, returning to the beginning, and the beginning anticipating the end. So that, in a sense, we are in all parts of it, when we are in any part of it, though the variety of its communications is infinite. It reminds me of the figure of the body and its members, used by the apostle to set forth Christ (1 Cor. xii.). There are many members, but one body. There are many books, but one Scripture, one volume. All are equally divine workmanship, though all may not be of equal value to the soul. The foot is not the hand, nor the ear the eye. But God has set them together in one body—as in the heavens, He has set stars and constellations together, though one may differ from another in glory.

But to pursue the same figure of the body and the members, we do boldly say, one part of the volume cannot be touched without all feeling it and resenting it. "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;" God has so tempered it all together. If Moses be insulted, Paul feels it; if Daniel or Zechariah be questioned, John and Peter will resent it. Yea, and I may go further in the same analogy, and say, the uncomely parts have been given more abundant honour. The shortest piece in the whole volume is made to be heard in the conclusion of the finest, and most elaborate and most weighty argument we find in it. Psalm cxvii. is brought forth as a special

witness in Romans xv. And the book of Proverbs, dealing as it does with common, practical, every day life, is honoured by being made as rich and blessed a witness to the Christ of God in His mysterious glories, as we get in any part of the whole Scripture (Chap. viii).

Yea and I will take on me to say this further. As all other parts of the volume, like members of onebody, will resent trespass and wrong done to any part, so will the Spirit say of God and of the Scriptures, as He says of God and of His people, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye." The Scripture is His handiwork; and God will make a quarrel of Scripture His own quarrel. If He will awake in due time, to the controversy of His temple or His covenant, or His Zion, so will He most assuredly to the controversy of His word. He has magnified His word above all His name (Ps. cxxxviii. 2). "He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words," says the Lord Jesus, "hath one that judgeth him" (John xii. 48).

And again let me speak, as I stand in presence of God and His oracles; Scripture links itself with Eternity in ways that are divine, like everything else in it. If we have quotations in the New Testament of passages in the Old, so have we, in both Old and New, references to the eternity that is *past*. And if we have foretellings in the Old Testament of events in the New, so have we, in both Old and New, the foretelling of the eternity that is *to come*. Scripture, as I may speak, retires behind

the borders of time, and discloses the secrets and counsels of the past Eternity, unsealing "the volume of the book," and disclosing predestinations formed and settled in Christ ere worlds began ; and Scripture passes beyond the borders of time, and is in the scenes and glories of the Eternity that is to come, giving us to hear every tongue confessing "JESUS to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 11), and many many kindred voices, and to see many many kindred glories. And happy for us, that it links itself with *time* as well as with *Eternity*. It goes before us to shew us the way all through the confusion and corruption that is abroad, to the last moment of the dispensation. All is anticipated ; so that we need not be stumbled by anything, however saddened and ashamed we may be. "Great peace have all they that love Thy law, and nothing shall *offend* them" (Ps. cxix. 165). We need not be afraid with any amazement since we have it. The confusion and corruption may be infinite, strange indeed in their changeful forms, and deep in their insolent wickedness ; but Scripture has prepared us for all, superstitious vanities and infidel insolence. The tare-field was spread out on the page of Scripture ere it stretched itself out in the defiled plains of Christendom. The unmerciful fellow-servant is seen in Matthew xviii., ere he is seen in the wars and controversies of Christendom. God in His word has not forecast the shadow of *uncertain* evils.

It is indeed marvellous, and yet not marvellous because it is divine. The Spirit of Him who knows the end from the beginning can account for it, but nothing else can. The Book itself, as another has said, is a greater miracle than any which it records.

And I would now end with a word about quotations, as it was with them I began.

These citations out of His own writings by God Himself, first in the Person of the Son, and then in the Person of the Holy Ghost, are beautiful in this character ; God is *sealing* what once He *wrote* : at the beginning He sent forth those writings as from Himself, being the source of them ; so now, after they have come forth, and been embodied in human forms as in all languages of the nations, and been seated in the midst of the human family, He comes forth to accredit them there Himself as with His own sign manual. God has both written them and sealed them, and we receive them as from Him, and in our way of responsive faith and worship, "set to our seal that God is true" (John iii. 33). "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever ; for they are the rejoicing of my heart" (Ps. cxix. 111). Surely these things are so.

To notice, with some care, the quotations themselves, as they meet us while we pursue our way from Matthew to the Apocalypse, is an edifying exercise of the soul. It helps directly to let us into fuller light as to the Old Testament oracles, giving us nothing less than God's own key for un-

locking the treasures that are there. And this exercise has also another direct effect—it binds all the parts, however distant, of the one volume together *under our eye*, and it serves to present the whole as one complete and perfect piece of workmanship in full consistency with itself throughout. The light is one, though it may be that of the Patriarchal 'dawn, of the Levitical or Mosaic morning, of the prophetic fore-noon, of the Gospel Meridian or noon-tide, and then of the Apocalyptic evening hour with its shadows, just before the solemn night of judgment which is to precede the second morning, the morning of millennial Glory. But this indeed it is. In Scripture, from beginning to end, we are in the light of God, from the first morning of creation to the second morning of the kingdom ; having passed our own noon and evening hours, and also the season of the world's mid-night.



ON THE STUDY OF THE WORD OF GOD.

(EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.)

It is of the utmost importance that you, and every one of us, study the word systematically. You could not do better—above all things seeking direct communion with God—than to devote the first-fruits of your time to a regular study of the Scriptures. Desiring the Spirit apart from the word is a false pretention to power, outside the place of obedience and heart-subjection. As regards the guidance of the Spirit and the method to follow, I see both in the apostle, but in the highest form : “Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God ; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause” (2 Cor. v. 13). There is a power which takes us, so to speak, out of ourselves, God being there

in divine energy ; but there is likewise an activity of love, which also is divine. The apostle, through the Holy Spirit, was in power in the presence of God, but the love of God acting in him made him think of others. These are two blessed ways of being delivered from oneself. " Sober for your cause " is the method—loves consideration for others.

As to reading itself, Scripture is explicit : " Be diligent in these things ; give thyself wholly to them ; that thy progress may be manifest unto all " (1 Tim. iv. 15—*Rev. Ver.*). I see two ways of reading the Scriptures : to place, through grace, my heart and conscience before them so that they may act upon me as being subject to them ; and to study them in order to lay hold of their import, the relation to each other of the different parts, and their depth. The first thing is to be filled with them, then, in communion, to draw forth from these treasures ; and finally, when there is reality, to allow scope for the free action of the Holy Spirit. Scripture distinctly speaks of order and of method, and also of the free action of the Holy Spirit. Almost the whole of the first epistle to Timothy shows methodic direction ; only now, that outward order has become the power of evil, and Christians find themselves as individuals in it, power has become the main thing—God being thus manifested ; and, all the Lord's people not being gathered in a scriptural way, the general order cannot be there. Thus it is that the faith of the believer is put to the test. But this does not do away with the general principle of order, and still less with individual order and method.



EXTRACT.—It was during the winter of 1804 that Dr. Chalmers delivered his four celebrated lectures in the University of Edinburgh on Predestination, and wound up his series by a fifth on the pulpit treatment of the subject. In this lecture, he warned his students most faithfully against the danger into which they might be tempted in dealing with such a sublime mystery. He said, "Gentlemen, we have entered on this great mystery with regret, and we leave it without a sigh. The subject which we have been treating professionally from the rostrum you will be called upon to treat ministerially from the

pulpit, but remember that the provinces are wide apart. We are dealing with the heads of our alumni; you have to deal with hearts of sinners. Give me a band of men who never walked, as you have done, the halls of a University, whose only library is the inspired oracles of God, whose only tutor is the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and let them loose on some wild moral territory, and they will do more ten to one, than our college-trained clergy, who must utter every truth and shape every gospel enunciation according to the rule and square of a rigid orthodoxy."



MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 120.)

The Serpent and The Lion. The Feast.

(Chapter XIV.)

We have seen what nazariteship is. The history of Samson shows us, that in it lies our *spiritual power*.

Christ only has fully made good His nazariteship, an absolute moral separation, throughout the whole of His life down here, and it is still the case in heaven where He abides the true Nazarite "separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26).

Samson, the Nazarite, is hardly a type of Christ except as to his mission (chap. xiii. 5). He is really, rather the type of the testimony which the church of God renders in separation from the world, in the power of the Spirit and in communion with the Lord. The history of this man of God,

although abounding in acts of power, is notwithstanding one of the most sorrowful recitals contained in the word. Samson (the church likewise, founded on an ascended Christ) should have been a true representative of separation to God. Alas ! he was nothing of the sort. In comparing his nazariteship with that of Christ, how striking does the deficiency of Samson's appear !

Christ, the true Nazarite, encountered Satan in two characters : in the desert, as the serpent subtle and enticing ; and, at the end of His course, as the roaring lion that rends and devours.

In the desert, the Lord met the wiles of the enemy, with the word of God and entire dependence upon Him, and gained the victory. Samson, at the beginning of his career, encountered the serpent, who sought to entice him by means of one of the daughters of the Philistines. Twice is it said that "she pleased him well" (vs. 3, 7). From that time he formed the intention of uniting himself to this woman who belonged to the race of Israel's oppressors. It is just the same with the individual or with the church when in conflict with the deceiver ; Satan, who had nothing in Christ (John xiv. 30), easily finds a response in our hearts. By means of the eyes, our hearts are lured to the object presented by him and find pleasure in acquiring it. It does not necessarily follow that we *must* fall. If such objects are attractive to our eyes, grace and the word which reveals this grace to us are able to keep us. Not-

withstanding the tendencies of his heart, Samson, kept by the providential grace of God, never married the daughter of the Philistines.

The desire of Samson shewed that the word of God had not its right weight with him. His parents, knowing much less of the counsels, but more of the word, of God than he did, said to him : " Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines ?" (ver. 3.) The word of God was indeed explicit on this point : " Neither shalt thou make marriages with them ; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son, for they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods" (Deut. vii. 3, 4). Why did not Samson take heed to this ? Christ, the perfect Nazarite, recognized the absolute authority of the Scriptures and fed upon every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. The word of God not having its right weight with Samson, he started on a downward path which could only lead to a fall. In the life of Samson, three women mark the three stages which led to the loss of his nazariteship. The first *was pleasing to his eyes* ; he formed a *passing connection* with the second (chap. xvi. 1), and he *loved* the third (chap. xvi. 4). When his affections were engaged, the last hour of his nazariteship had sounded.

Nevertheless Samson was not devoid of affection for Jehovah and His people. It is said, " But

his father and his mother knew not that it was of Jehovah, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines" (ver. 4). The domination of the latter was hateful to him. He was looking for a favourable opportunity to strike the blow which should break the yoke weighing upon the children of Israel. But Samson was not single-eyed ; he brought a divided heart to the work. Trying to reconcile pleasing his own eyes with his hatred against the enemy of his people, he was holding out his left hand to the world and at the same time wanting to fight it with his right. Yet God took note of what there was for Him in this divided heart. " It was of the Lord " who could use even the weaknesses of Samson to accomplish His purposes of grace towards His people.

This proneness to seek in the world that which " pleases the eyes," led Samson into endless difficulties from which only the power of God could deliver him. There are many instances in the word where a *first* look turned toward the world involves the believer in irreparable trouble. We have to watch against that with fear and trembling, for we can never foretell what abyss a single lust may open for us. Such was the case with Adam, with Noah, with Lot, with David. Grace can keep us, but it will not do to trifle with it, nor to imagine that we can use it as a cloak to cover our lusts or to excuse our sins. Let us rely on it in order to be sustained and preserved from falling, and if we have been so unhappy as to have

abandoned for an instant this support, let us quickly return to it for restoration and for the recovery of our lost communion.

Samson was on slippery ground. His eyes were enamoured, and he desired to take this woman for his wife ; for alliance with the world follows the lust of the eyes. Then he made a feast (ver. 10), and seated himself at it, guarding no doubt the external marks of his nazariteship, for we are not told that he drank wine with the Philistines ; yet this repast had a sorrowful termination for him.

Before going any further let us take into consideration what preceded the feast in Samson's history. We have already said that Satan not only presents himself as a serpent, but also as a roaring lion. It was in this character that the Lord Jesus met him in Gethsemane and at the cross. Nothing is more terrifying than the roar of the lion. Satan sought to frighten the holy soul of Christ in order to make Him abandon the divine path which led down to the sacrifice. In the power of the Holy Spirit and in perfect dependence on His Father, the Lord withstood him in the garden of the Mount of Olives. At the cross, where he opened his mouth against Christ "as a ravening and a roaring lion" (Ps. xxii. 13), the Lord in "the weakness of God" (see 1 Cor. i. 25), overcame "the strong man," and, through death, nullified his power (Heb. ii. 14). In just the same form does Satan present himself to the children of God. "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walk-

eth about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. v. 8). If he does not succeed in beguiling us, he tries to frighten us. Samson was now confronted by the young lion, coming up against him from the country of the Philistines, and here his nazarite-ship was manifested in its full power, which is that of the Spirit of God. "And the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, *and he had nothing in his hand*" (ver. 6). Such is the way that we have to act when meeting Satan. We should not spare him in the least, for if we do he will return to the charge. We must, in our struggle, rend him as we would rend a kid. He can do nothing to us so long as we resist him fearlessly (see James iv. 7 ; 1 Pet. v. 9) ; for, weaponless (if we may so speak), Jesus has already overcome him for us at the cross.

Later on, Samson, passing by the same road, turned aside to see the carcase of the lion, and found in it "a swarm of bees and honey ;" he ate some of it as he went along, and gave some to his parents. As the fruit of Christ's victory on the cross, all heavenly blessings have been placed in our hands, and these blessings are taken from the spoil of the defeated enemy. And if we, obtaining a victory over him (henceforth rendered easy), treat him as a vanquished foe, our souls will be filled with strength and sweetness. We shall be able to impart of what we have got to others ; but, like Samson who ate as he went along, our own souls will have first been fed. Let us never treat Satan as a friend ; if we do, we shall come away from such a meeting beaten and enfeebled, embittered and famished.

The victory of Samson over the lion of Timnath

was not only a proof of strength ; it was a *secret* between him and God. When his eyes were attracted to the daughter of the Philistines, he told his parents of it ; concerning his victory he told no one. The life of Samson abounded with secrets and at the same time with acts of power. Even his nazariteship was a secret, a link, unknown to any, between his own soul and Jehovah. This link is for us *communion*. We meet with four secrets in this chapter. Samson had not divulged his intentions to his parents, nor the part that Jehovah had in these things (ver. 4) ; he had not told them of his victory (ver. 6), nor the place whence he had procured the honey (ver. 9), nor his riddle (ver. 16). All that, kept unbroken between his soul and God, was for him the only means of following a path of blessing in the midst of this world.

Let us return to Samson's feast. He put forth his riddle to the Philistines, rightly supposing that they would understand nothing about it ; indeed, had it not been for the feast, he would not have been in danger of betraying himself. But the enemy succeeded in robbing him of that which he had so carefully concealed. The world has an insidious effect upon us, leading to loss of our communion with God. If our hearts, like Samson's, in any way cling to what the world may present to us, it will not be long before we lose our communion. Absence of communion does not at first imply loss of strength ; it is, however, the road which leads to it ; for, as long as nazariteship exists, even externally, strength will not be lacking, as Samson proved to the Philistines in the matter of the thirty changes of garments. But did this man of God have much peace and joy during the days of the feast ? On the contrary,

it was a struggle with tears, care and pressure (ver. 17). He was betrayed by the very woman of his choice. One can scarcely conceive that association with the world would produce the bad results which, as a matter of fact, it does. Samson would never have thought that his thirty companions, aided by his wife, would lay traps to plunder him, for the thirty changes of garments by right belonged to him. Satan may separate us from communion with the Lord, may make us unhappy; he may also hinder our being witnesses here below, but, thanks be to God, he cannot pluck us out of the hand of Christ.

The grace of God preserved Samson from the final consequences of his error, and delivered him from an alliance which God could not approve of. The Spirit of Jehovah having come upon him he performed mighty deeds. "And his anger was kindled" (ver. 19). Samson was a man of a very selfish character and was guided in his action by the sense of the wrong that had been done him. Nevertheless he was victorious over the enemies of Jehovah, and kept for himself none of their spoil, it went back to the world, from whence it had been taken. Then he quitted the scene of so much unhappiness and "went up to his father's house," which he never should have left to *settle* among the Philistines. May we profit by this lesson; and if, in our intercourse with the world, we have passed through painful experiences, let us hasten to return to the Father's house (which we never should have left, even in thought), where He dwells whose communion is the source of our peace and happiness all our pilgrimage way, till that moment comes when we shall enter forever into that house—our eternal dwelling-place!

(To be continued, D, V.)

CHRIST IN HEAVEN, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT SENT DOWN.

Acts ii. 22-36.

(Notes of a lecture.)

This passage brings very definitely before us (Christ having been exalted as man by, and to, the right hand of God) how, consequently, the disciples received the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. This runs through all the instruction given here. The place of Christ, having finished redemption, is to sit now at the right hand of God, "expecting till His enemies be made His footstool" (Heb. x. 13). He has not yet taken His own throne; He is seated on the Father's throne. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. iii. 21). Thence He will "come again," as He says in John xiv., and receive us unto Himself.

Christianity is not the accomplishment of promise. Of the earthly part the Jews were the centre. But God meanwhile "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephes. i. 3); and then, till Christ comes again, He is sitting on the throne of the Father, and has sent the Holy Ghost down.

The Christian is one in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, between the accomplishment of redemption by Christ and His coming again. The thought

and purpose of God about us is that we should "be conformed to the image of His Son." The Holy Ghost is given to dwell in us meanwhile, to dwell in us individually—collectively too, but I speak *now of the individual aspect*. That is what the Christian is : Christ is his life, his righteousness ; it is a ministration of righteousness and of the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 8, 9). "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9); it does not say, "if he is not converted," though that would be true, of course. You see so many saints everywhere who are not settled in their relationship with God ; the present power for this is the Holy Ghost come down.

The coming of the Lord Jesus is not simply a little bit of knowledge which we may add to the rest, but it is the hope of the Christian. If we die we go to Him, but what is held out to us is that the Christian is waiting for Christ "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. 28). If we die we go up to Him, and blessed truth it is too ; but that Christ shall come, this is the hope of the Christian—the only full hope. "To depart and, to be with Christ, which is far better," true, but this is not the purpose of God for us ; the purpose of God is that we shall be like Christ (Rom. viii. 29, 30). I would not be like Christ with my body in the grave, and my spirit in paradise : the expectation of the

Lord's coming makes the *Person* of Christ to be so much before the soul. I am going to see Him and to be like Him. Scripture does not talk of going to heaven ; " Absent from the body, present *with the Lord*" (2 Cor. v. 8). " To depart and be *with Christ*, which is far better " (Phil. i. 23) ; always, the thought is *going to Christ*. What we all want personally, is, that Christ should have a larger place in the heart : " Rooted and built up in Him " ; " To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." " Christ is all," and He is " in all " as the power of life ; having become our life, He is before our souls to fill them.

Christ is the motive for the Christian for whatever he does, whether he eats or drinks ; and his desires are never satisfied, and never can be, till he be with, and like, Christ. Therefore, he is always waiting for Him. The Thessalonians were converted " to wait for His Son from heaven " (1 Thess. i. 10). The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, instead of being a little bit of prophetic knowledge, is interwoven with all the thoughts and condition of the Christian. Grace has appeared teaching us (Titus ii. 11, 12), and the grace that has appeared is the grace that saves. When the Lord went up on high the Holy Ghost came down, and through the Holy Ghost we have not only the knowledge but the fruits of the place He has given us. The seal of the Holy Ghost is put upon us ; the presence of the Holy Ghost is that which gives the full knowledge of our place and

blessedness. Redemption, which brings us to God, is finished ; we are exercised afterwards—all that goes on, but our relationship is never in question. I believe the government of God is most important when we are children. “ He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous ” (Job xxxvi. 7). This is most important and blessed in its place ; but the great thing is, first of all, to have a right apprehension of the place where God has put us. The very names of God go along with this. To the patriarchs He was “ God Almighty,” when they were strangers and pilgrims ; to Abraham He said, “ I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward ” (Gen. xv.). To Israel He had given promises, and He takes the name of Jehovah, the name of One who, having given promises, never rests until they are fulfilled. Then, in the Revelation, He speaks of Himself as the One “ who is, and who was, and who is to come ” (Rev. i. 8). All that was concerned, in a certain sense, with this world ; but it is not so with us. We are called to suffer with Christ (because Christ has been rejected), and this with the full knowledge of redemption. “ And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them ” (John xvii. 26). God has another name, “ Most High.” You never find the name “ Father ” from Psalm i. to cl. “ And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ,

whom Thou hast sent " (John xvii. 3). " Life and incorruptibility " have been brought " to light through the gospel " (2 Tim. i. 10). The name " Almighty " did not carry eternal life. " Jehovah " fulfilled promises, but the giving of eternal life was not connected with that name ; but the Father sent the Son, " that we might live through Him " (1 John iv. 9). " 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. 2). " And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son " (1 John v. 11). When we receive the Son, we get into the place of children ; it is the force of the expression : " But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God " (John i. 12. *Rev. Ver.*) The Son is there, and we are associated with Him completely and fully. In Matthew iii. the Holy Ghost comes down upon Him, and the Father's voice says, " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." There was the full revelation of the Trinity (and this is what we have in Christianity) ; we have the Son as man, the Holy Ghost coming down in bodily shape like a dove, and the Father's voice, in that wondrous scene of Christ taking His place publicly as man. " I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God " (John i. 34).

The Old Testament saints were quickened surely ; but if you take Galatians iv., you find they

were not in the condition of sons, "The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all" (ver. 1). "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (ver. 6). That had not been the case before ; they had been ordered to do this and that under the law.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat falleth into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24). He was totally alone, a true man in His relationship with God ; even when He declared His Father's name to His disciples, they did not understand a bit of it. Then you see redemption brings us into this place.

Let me turn back to the basis of all this. Here I am a child of Adam, with an evil nature and sins ; Christ bore my sins, and that is all perfectly settled for ever—if it is not, it never can be ; but it is "once for all," and "for ever" (Heb. x. 10 and 14) ; there is no other application as regards the putting away of my sins in God's sight. He does not impute them for the simple blessed reason that Christ has borne them, and He is sitting at the right hand of God, because it is done. Many a true honest soul sees only past sins put away, but what about sinning afterwards ? Go to some, and they will send you back to your baptism, while others go back to the blood. "For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, . . . can never with those sacrifices which they offered year

by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect" (Heb. x. 1); "In which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience" (Heb. ix. 9). If I go into God's presence, I have not the most distant thought that He imputes anything to me as guilt; that is what is wanting in so many souls: "Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of *sins*" (Heb. x. 2). He does not say sin; the old stock is there. "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of *sins* every year" (Heb. x. 3). I go into the presence of God now, and I see Christ *sitting*, because by one offering He has settled everything—"And every priest *standeth* daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever *sat down* on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" (Heb. x. 11-13). He *sits* at God's right hand, because He has finished that work perfectly: "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (ver. 14). He has set them apart to God, and He has perfected for ever their consciences.

"The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing" (Heb. ix. 8). Now we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. x.

19). The thing is done ; it was prophesied of before, but now it is done. " For ever " here means, uninterruptedly. If I come to God, Christ is always there, and my conscience is always perfect. I may go and humble myself in the dust if I have dishonoured Christ ; it is in the holiest that I learn how bad sin is. I could not be before God in the light until the veil was rent, but " by one offering " Christ has perfected my conscience. When I go to God I find Christ, who bore my sins, sitting at the right hand of God because He has done it. This will make me see sin a great deal more than anything else. I have got a new nature, and I am in the light as God is in the light.

This turns the question from righteousness to holiness. So long as I am connecting it with a question of acceptance, it is righteousness that I want : suppose righteousness is settled, then I abhor the sin because it is sin, for itself. " Well, but," you say, " without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." That is quite true, but you are looking for righteousness, not holiness. The clearance in that way is absolute ; but there is another thing which gives my soul its place before God. Not only Christ died for my sins, but I died with Christ ; the tree is bad, not only the fruit : then I reckon myself dead. In the first part of Romans (*i. e.*, up to chap. v. 11) we get nothing about experience. Suppose I owed £100 and that it was paid for me, no experience would be in question ; but suppose I say to you, " You are

dead to sin," perhaps you would say, "Indeed I am not; it was working in me this morning." Till you are clear about that, you are not settled in your place. The old tree has been cut down and grafted with Christ. In Romans vi., I reckon myself dead: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin" (ver. 11); in Colossians iii. 3, we get, "For ye are dead;" and in 2 Corinthians iv. 10, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." We find God's estimate and faith's estimate; and in Galatians ii. 19 we have the summary of the whole thing, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." When I find a nature working in me contrary to Christ, I say it has been crucified with Christ, and I do not own it. "What the law could not do . . . God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3). He has forgiven the sins and condemned the tree that produced them, but the tree that was condemned has died with Christ.

I have to learn thus, by the power of the Spirit of God, not merely that what the old tree produced has been blotted out, but that Christ is my life; "I am crucified with Christ," and sin in the flesh has been condemned. Where? Where you died with Christ; when Christ was there for sin, sin in the flesh was condemned, not forgiven; it died, for faith, where it was condemned. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me

from the body of this death ! I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord " (Rom. vii. 24, 25). Looked at as in the old man, I died with Christ. When we believe in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, we get the sealing of God (Ephes. i. 13). Because the blood of Christ is upon me, then the Holy Ghost comes and dwells in me. In Acts x., we find that on faith in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, they received the forgiveness of their sins, and then the Holy Ghost came on them. As in the figure in the Old Testament, we are washed, sprinkled with blood, and then anointed with oil. The Holy Ghost comes, then I know where I am, that my standing is in Christ : " There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus " (Rom. viii. 1). " In Christ " is my standing before God ; the Holy Ghost is the present power of it all ; the work is Christ's.

I get the other point, knowledge of salvation, and knowledge that I am not a child of Adam but a child of God. " To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins " (Luke i. 77). " Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world ; " " The same is He which baptizeth in the Holy Ghost " (John i. 29, 33). He could not baptize with the Holy Ghost till He had died, and was risen and glorified. I know the place I have got into ; the treasure is in an earthen vessel, but I have got the knowledge of salvation. " Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty " (2 Cor. iii. 17). It is that which

enables me to say with truth, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." There I get the accomplishment of redemption, and Christ sitting at God's right hand, and the purpose of God ; as the blood on the lintel and door-posts made the Israelites free, and they were brought out of Egypt^t and through the Red Sea, out of an old place into a new (Ex. xii. and xiv.), so that Moses could sing, "Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation" (Ex. xv. 13) ; "Thou shalt bring them in" (verse 15). I get these two things, complete redemption is one ; the other I have not got yet : Christ has entered as our forerunner, I have not entered yet, but the Holy Ghost is "the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephes. i. 14). Christ "endured the cross, and despised the shame," and He is set down as man at the right hand of God. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. "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" (Rom. v. 1, 2). I know by the Holy Ghost that I am in divine favour. We have these three things.

1. We are justified, and have peace with God
2. We stand in present grace, in divine favour.
3. When Christ comes again, we shall be in glory with him, "That the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and has loved them, as Thou hast loved Me" (John xvii. 23). It is "That the

world may *know*," not believe ; this ought to be now, but it is very far from it. When it sees us in glory, it cannot help knowing ; when we appear in the same glory with Christ, people will think, " Why these people that we trampled under foot are in the same glory with Christ ! " *We* do not wait for that ; the world will know when we are in the same glory with Christ, but now we know by the Holy Ghost, " That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them " (John xvii. 26). Beloved friends, just think of that ; your hearts ought to have the consciousness that He loved you as He loved Jesus ! A child might say, " I am a foolish child, I think little about my mother ; " but he has no uncertainty about his mother's love to him. We never apprehend all God's love to us ; still we know we are children and sons. It is no uncertain place ; I know I am loved as Christ is loved ; we have poor wretched hearts, that is quite true. A true child does not measure its mother's love ; and I am sure it could not, but it knows and is in it.

We have got " the adoption of sons. " " Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father " (Gal. iv. 6). I have got the consciousness of it ; I know my place. We know God as our Father. The soul that has the Spirit of God dwelling in him knows not only the clearing of sins of the old man, but that he is in the second Man ; and, knowing it, he cries, " Abba, Father. " For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one ; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren " (Heb. ii. 11). They are " all of one, " one set, as it were. What is my life ?

Christ. What is my righteousness? Christ. He is not one with the unconverted world; there is no union in incarnation (see John xii. 24). He stood for us at the cross, but He has united us with Himself in glory. If I take the Father's relationship with Christ as man, He is not ashamed to call us brethren. In Psalm xxii., He says: "Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare Thy name unto My brethren." His work was finished; as soon as that was done, He comes out in resurrection, past the power of death and Satan, and He sends this message to His disciples: "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God and your God" (John xx. 17). He had never said that before, though He called them "sister" and "mother" and "brother" in a general way. Beloved brethren, what we want is to see how Christ has united us to Himself, to see the way God has brought us into the place of the second Man, as sin brought us into the place of the first man.

One point more, our connection with Christ: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter"; "At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you" (John xiv. 16, 20). Ah, it is a terrible thing that saints are so far from Scriptural ground as to say that we cannot know! We are "in Christ" (Rom. viii. 1); "accepted in the beloved" (Ephes. i. 6); and we "have received the Spirit of adoption" (Rom. viii. 15). One thing more, besides the point I am on; Christ is in us. You cannot live on in sin, you are dead; that is where Christian responsibility is, not in connection with his acceptance ("By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous"). I know He is in me, having bought me at all cost, and there I see re-

sponsibility. I get the two things in Rom. viii. "No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," and "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." You have been delivered, you have redemption in Christ, and you have been sealed with the Holy Ghost. I own nothing as life in the Christian but Christ; the whole of our lives should be the expression of Christ, and nothing else; our "speech alway with grace, seasoned with salt" (Col. iv. 6). Only one other thing, beloved friends: God is love, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts; therefore we get, "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in Him" (1 John iv. 16). We have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, so our bodies are temples: God is there in the perfection of His own nature; we have to watch not to grieve such a guest. It is through the Holy Ghost that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts (Rom. v. 5); that is the key to everything. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also" (ver. 3); it is the key to everything; I want it, and He sent it. Christ is *sitting at the right hand of God, and the Holy Ghost comes down, giving us the consciousness of the present relationship in which we are to walk.*

"Be ye therefore followers ("imitators") of God, as dear children" (Ephes. v. 1). How are we to imitate God? Was not Christ, God? I earnestly desire that all our hearts may get hold, through the power of the Spirit of God, of the place we are brought into, that we may have the consciousness of this, the knowledge of it through the Holy Ghost until we go to be with Him. The Lord give you to have this consciousness. Why, beloved, to think of the Father's love at work, and the Son of God having gone down to death for you, it is not much to expect!

The Lord give us to feel what we owe Him, that our whole desire may be to glorify Him.

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 140.)

Victories.

(Chapter XV.)

Chapters xiv and xv form really a single narrative, and before going further, I would like to return to the consideration of two or three points common to both.

The first is, that God always works out His ways, and that too through a multitude of circumstances that are far from answering to His thoughts. Yea, further, He uses these very circumstances to make good His purposes, which are, in the case we are considering, the deliverance of Israel by an instrument moulded by Him with this end in view; and this explains the words, "It was of the Lord" (chap. xiv. 4). God brings about His ways, not only by means of things that He approves of, but also by making, our very faults, His discipline, the opposition of Satan and of the world, in a word, everything to conduce to the desired result. Unfaithfulness on our part does not disturb the ways of God. This is seen, in a remarkable manner, all through the life of Samson, and can be verified in the history of the Church. These ways of God all culminate in victory and in the blessings consequent thereon. How encouraging to prove it! Very often, to our confusion, *our own* ways come to nothing. Witness Samson, who did not take the daughter of the Philistine as his wife. Frequently do the children of God find

themselves unable to proceed farther in the path they are upon, because of some divine obstacle blocking up the way, and they are forced to retrace their steps with humiliation. At other times, our course, which should have been continued in the power of service, is suddenly interrupted without return to the point of deviation being possible. Samson again furnishes us with the proof. Nothing like this ever occurs in the ways of *God*. They overrule our ways. It was by the death of a blind Samson that Jehovah achieved the greatest victory. A Moses, whose way was stopped before entering the land of promise, was forthcoming on the holy mount in the same glory as Christ.

The second point is, that mixed as Samson's motives were, "he sought an occasion" in a time of ruin (chap. xiv. 4). And wherefore? To deliver Israel by smiting the enemy that held them in bondage. May this motive be ours also. "Redeeming the time" (seizing opportunities), says the apostle, "because the days are evil" (Eph. v. 16). May we then, Nazarites ourselves, have our hearts filled with tender pity for our brethren who are still in bondage, under the world's yoke, and seek occasion, in love and the energy of the Spirit, to deliver them from it. These two chapters strikingly illustrate the fact that Samson sought an occasion against the Philistines, and that the intensity of his desire enabled him to find it, and that too when the slothful and indifferent, meeting an obstacle in their path, would have turned back.

A third expression constantly occurs in these chapters: "The Spirit of Jehovah came upon him" (chap. xiii. 25; xiv. 6, 19; xv. 14). When we see these words we may be sure that the conflict is entirely according to God and without mix-

ture. We likewise may achieve such victories, not by being dependent upon a temporary action of the Holy Spirit coming upon us from without, but because we have, in virtue of redemption, been *sealed* by the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of power. Nevertheless, it is important to remark that we cannot estimate the *moral* worth of a man of God by the greatness of his gift. Nowhere in the Scripture do we find a stronger man than Samson, nor one weaker morally. The New Testament gives us a similar example in the Assembly at Corinth, which came behind in no gift of power, and yet permitted every sort of moral evil in their midst. Samson was a Nazarite, upon whom the Spirit of God often came, but he was also a man whose heart had never been judged, and so his state was not in keeping with the gift he exercised. Not once, from the beginning to the end of his career, did he hesitate following the path of his lusts; going, without a struggle, wherever his heart led him. Notwithstanding the power of the Spirit, he was a carnal man. When he visited his wife with a kid, his kindness was carnal; when the world proposed giving him another woman, which he did not care for, in exchange for the one he so earnestly desired, his anger was carnal. Yet thus it ever is that the world treats us, to our loss and shame, when we have desired anything from it. That which it gives, after so many fine promises, has no value to the child of God, and cannot satisfy him. In the matter of the three hundred foxes, the Spirit of Jehovah did not come upon him, for, as I have already said, his anger was carnal. He wanted to "*do a displeasure*" to the Philistines, by attacking them in their outward circumstances; and, with a view to this, resorted to a device which does not

at all seem to be according to the mind of God. The enraged Philistines went up and burnt his wife, who was their accomplice, and her father.

Samson found in their vengeance (ver. 7) a fresh opportunity for doing the work of God. Here again we find much mixture: "Yet will I be avenged of you," and it is not added that the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him; but if He did not openly appear, God was behind the scene, and, in spite of all, it was a deliverance for the people. "And he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam." It must necessarily be the case, that the believer finds himself isolated, when he takes sides with God against the world, and Samson understood this. Those who would be witnesses for Christ in a day of ruin must expect to be set aside, and this, too, alas! by the people of God.

The three thousand men of Judah, the stillness of whose servitude was disturbed by Samson's testimony, consent to help the world which wishes to get rid of him; preferring the yoke of the Philistines to the difficulties and risks arising from this testimony. No where in the book of Judges do we find a lower moral state than this. Not only does Israel no longer cry to Jehovah, but *they do not wish* to be delivered. The man of God, their rightful deliverer, was an incumbrance to them. The Philistines said: "We are come up, to do to him as he hath done to us" (ver. 10). Judah said: "What is this that thou hast done unto *us*?" (ver. 11). In thus identifying themselves with the enemy who enslaved them, Judah was no longer Judah, but morally exchanged their name for that of the Philistines. Fellowship between them was complete; both were enemies of the testimony, though Judah was far the worse, preferring slav-

ery to the unhindered power of the Spirit of God, of which Samson was the instrument.

Samson allowed them to bind him, and this finds its counterpart in the history of Christendom. The people of God have acted towards the Holy Ghost in a similar manner that Judah did to Samson. His power disturbed them ; and not wanting the liberty of the Spirit, they have hindered His action, fettering Him, as it were, with their new methods, like the new cords with which Judah bound their liberator, saying to him all the time : " Surely we will not kill thee." Samson could have acted very differently, for these worthless fetters were to him like so many spider's webs, as he proved later on. The strong man laughed at their new cords, but he consented to be bound. What a responsibility for the three thousand men of Judah who had such a slight appreciation of the gift that God had given them ! What shame for them ! Surely there was no shame for Samson. If anything casts merited reproach upon the Christians that are linked with the world, it is the restraint put upon the free working of the Holy Spirit among them, because His action embarrasses them, and they are at a loss what to do.

But, at a given moment, the power of the Spirit bursts all bonds. " The Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands" (ver. 14). Then God made use of a bone cast away in the fields, the worthless jawbone of an ass, to gain a signal victory, and the place was called Ramath-lehi, from the name of the despicable instrument used in the combat. Such instruments are we in the hands of the Spirit of God (see 1 Cor. i. 27-29), but it pleases the Lord to associate our names

with His victory, as if the jawbone of an ass had slain "heaps upon heaps."

After his victory Samson "was sore athirst" (ver. 18). The activity of the believer is not all; conflict does not quench the thirst. Something was necessary for Samson to meet his personal need, otherwise, as he said, "I shall die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised." If we do not wish to lose the results of conflict, we must use the word of God for our refreshment, and not only for combat. In his extremity, Samson called on Jehovah, who showed him a refreshing spring flowing out of a rock cleft by God's hand. The rock everywhere and always is Christ. "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink" (John vii. 37). Let us get back into Christ's presence after conflict. His word will refresh us. Samson was alive to the dangers which closely attend victory. The fact that God had "given this great deliverance into the hand of His servant" would be very likely to make us "fall into the hands of the uncircumcised," if the soul does not at once seek shelter, refreshment and strength by the waters of grace, of which Christ is the dispenser. In that day of blessing, Samson was characterized by these two things: a great activity in conflict for others, and, as to himself, a humble dependence upon God, which enabled him to avail himself of the resources in Christ.

The first part of Samson's history closes with these words: "And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years" (ver. 20). It contains, notwithstanding all the failures which we have pointed out, God's approbation of the public career of His servant. The ensuing chapter shows us the loss of his nazariteship.

(To be continued, D.V.)

OH ! LORD, OUR HEARTS ARE WAITING.

Oh ! Lord, our hearts are waiting,
 Th' archangel's heaven sent cry,
 Which wakes the saints now sleeping,
 And to Thee brings them nigh.
 When we, with them ascending,
 Shall meet Thee in the air,
 To gaze upon Thy glory,
 And all Thy likeness bear.

Oh ! hour, for which in patience,
 Thou'st waited through the night,
 Whilst we, Thy saints, were gather'd,
 And brought into the light ;
 Then, then, the Church completed,
 God makes no more delay.
 Oh ! Lord, with shouts of triumph,
 We pass into the day.

Oh ! hour of richest blessing—
 When brought to Thee so nigh,
 To be Thy joy for ever,
 We share Thy throne on high ;
 To rest in all that brightness,
 And ever there abide ;
 To find Thy heart delighting
 In us Thy ransom'd bride.

Oh ! blessed, coming Saviour,
 Speak then the joyous word,
 To which, our hearts responding,
 “ For ever with the Lord.”
 For ever with Thee, Saviour—
 For evermore shall be—
 In deepest, fullest blessing
 For ever *one* with Thee,

FAITHFULNESS, AND WAITING FOR CHRIST.

Let me ask the Christian soul a question. Are the claims of the Lord Jesus on you of deep and *paramount importance in your eyes?* In proposing such a question, I do so to those who profess to love and own Christ as their *Lord*; who, having taken their true place before God as poor lost sinners, are resting by faith on the work of Him who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification, and so have peace with God, and are standing in His favour (Rom. iv. 24; v. 1). Are these claims of sufficient weight that you would seek to know His mind and will, even if it were to break the most cherished associations of your heart? And, knowing His mind and will, are you seeking for grace to walk therein? I feel this a deeply solemn question in the present day—a day of the highest sounding profession, with so little conscience or life toward God. Religiousness is putting forth her fairest and most seductive forms, seeking the aid of science, and poetry, and art to deck herself withal. Holding in her hand a cup of abominations which stupefies the senses and lulls to sleep the conscience. And even where she is not putting on the outward adorning, she practices other deceits. Those whose senses would not be ensnared by the outward adorning, are ensnared by the specious arguments of expediency, and a round of evangelical activity—works perfect, it may be, before men,

but not before God (Rev. iii. 2). She is suiting herself more and more to natural, unrenewed man ; and under the name of Christ, she turns away her eye from Christ, and boasts that she is “ rich and increased with goods, and has need of nothing ” (Rev. iii. 17). “ The form of godliness without the power ” (2 Tim. iii. 5), surely is the condition of things around us. The Lordship of Christ is ignored. The presence of the Holy Ghost is either denied in words, or, what is even worse, professed to be acknowledged in words, and completely denied in practice. This is truly solemn. One of the very vital, central truths of Christianity, and of the church of God—that which marks off, in a clear line, this dispensation from all that went before or which follows, denied ; and the whole merged into a heap of confusion, out of which souls can hardly find a clue, and are “ ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth ” (2 Tim. iii. 7). However, “ the foundation of God stands sure,” and whatever man’s unfaithfulness has been, God’s principles do not alter. And the responsibility of His people never alters. While it is their blessing to know that “ The Lord knoweth them that are His,” still their responsibility is, “ Let every one that nameth the name of Christ (“ the Lord ” is the correct reading) depart from iniquity ; ” iniquity connected with the great house and its corruptions (2 Tim. ii. 19, etc.). The Christian is to purge himself from the vessels to dishonour, that he may be a vessel unto honour,

sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work. He must not, as we have before touched upon, rest satisfied with the corruption, nor need he try to repair the injury that has been done ; that will never be repaired till the professing mass meets its end in judgment. His path is a plain one—"Depart from iniquity ;" "Purge himself from the vessels to dishonour." And now comes his personal walk of holiness. He is to "flee also youthful lusts," and then in his walk in the company with others, to "follow righteousness, faith, peace, charity ("love") *with them* that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." This is the principle—a plain one—separation *from* evil, and *to* God, in the midst of it. May He who alone can do so, give subjection to His word to those whose eyes fall upon these pages, and a growing separation and deepening subjection, as they go on their pathway, to those who by grace have learned in their measure to walk therein. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me," and "if a man love Me, he will keep my words" (John xiv). This is characteristic of Christianity. It is intelligent obedience rendered to a *Person*, not to a *law*. Of old God was hidden behind the veil, "dwelling in the thick darkness" (1 Kings viii. 12). He sent forth His claims to men in the law ; and although He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," still it did not reveal a *person* to attract

the heart. That time has passed away. Christ has come, and "by *Him* we believe in God" (1 Pet. i.). Each believer can say with Paul, He "loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii.). And now we owe Him the love of our hearts and the obedience of our lives—One, whose love "constraineth us" to "live henceforth not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us, and rose again" (2 Cor. v.). It is a *Person* we are thus called upon to live for and to love; One who has sanctified us unto obedience such as that which characterized Himself (1 Pet. i. 2); surrendering self, life, all, for those who hated Him. The law proposed that a man should love his neighbour "*as himself.*" The obedience of Christ was the entire *surrendering of self* for His enemies.

The Lord Jesus appealed in His day to the Jews (Luke xii. 54-57) to discern the signs of the times, even by the force of natural conscience, and to judge what was right. His word should find an echo in many a Christian heart now that has sunk down to sleep amongst the dead (Eph. v. 14). Everything around us in the present day—religion, the state of men, nations, powers, kingdoms—are each, gradually and perceptibly, taking their places for the closing scenes of judgment (which introduces the Kingdom).

The Christian, instructed beforehand of these things, can watch them calmly and quietly, awaiting the coming of His Lord. He knows that his calling is a heavenly one, where judgments

cannot come. The coming of the Lord, the Son of God, for His people, is the one boundary or horizon of his hopes. His actions and service and plans and sojourn here are arranged in view of that event ; and if called to serve his Lord and Master here, he does so in the sense that he serves as in the last days. May a deepening sense of this fill the souls of His people ; and may this their proper hope, ere the day dawn, be formed in their hearts, and serve to direct their ways.



“WILT THOU GO WITH THIS MAN?”

GENESIS XXII. TO XXIV.

Few who have read the twenty-second chapter of the book of Genesis with any amount of spiritual intelligence, have failed to see, in the scene described there, a figure of the death and resurrection of Christ. Abraham, at the bidding of God, binding his son Isaac a sacrifice, and preparing to offer him up as a burnt-offering to the Lord. The Lord staying his hand, which grasped the uplifted knife, and pointing to the ram caught in the thicket, the substitute of His own providing. And then Abraham receiving his son as from the dead in a figure (Heb. xi. 19).

All this speaks, to the heart renewed by grace, of the wondrous story of the death and resurrection of God's Lamb, and the complete and perfect settlement of the question of sin which was

wrought thereby. But when we read chapter xxiii., we find something more. We read of the death and burial of Sarah, Isaac's mother ; and of his father Abraham having no portion in the land of Canaan, but must even buy a sepulchre ; and is a stranger and a sojourner there. This sequence of events, interpreted in the light of the New Testament, affords special delight to the soul. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus is followed by the setting aside, for the time, of His nation Israel, figured in the death of Sarah, the mother of Isaac. And the result of all this, that the Jew, instead of being restored to his land under the Messiah, is a wanderer in the earth, having now no portion in the land promised to the fathers.

But when we open chapter xxiv., a story of wondrous exactitude and beauty unfolds itself to us. Isaac was dead and risen in a figure, and the parent stem is set aside. And now Abraham, Isaac's father, desires to get a bride for his son, a son who cannot return to the land of his people. And Abraham sent his servant, who ruled over his house, charged with this errand, to get a wife for his son Isaac. This wife for his son must be brought to him, for his son cannot return thither again : " Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again " (ver. 6).

So when Christ died and rose, and Israel (to whom the promises would have been fulfilled had they received Him) were set aside, and became

wanderers, without a portion in their land, it was then we find for the first time the wondrous purpose of God, His "eternal purpose," revealed. And His purpose was that His only Son, JESUS, should have a "bride;" one to share with Him His throne of heavenly glory, and to be joint possessor, with and in Him, of all that the Father had bestowed. As long as Israel were the objects of the Lord's dealings, this could not be. *Then* He had an earthly nation, the centre and platform, we may say, of all His dealings with the world. But *now*, once they had refused Him and the kingdom He had prepared, He has an earthly people no more for a time. And so, when Christ is hidden in the heavens, and glorified there, the Holy Ghost has come from heaven, charged by God as it were, with this wondrous mission, to gather out of Jew and Gentile a bride for His Son.

Of this wondrous mission the Lord Jesus speaks to His disciples when He was going away: "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of [or rather "from"] Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you. *All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you*" (John xvi. 13 15). Just as Abraham's servant, explaining his errand, says, "And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly,

and he is become great ; and He hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and manservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old ; *and unto him hath He given all that he hath*" (vs. 35, 36). So we read also in John iii. 35, "The Father loveth the Son, *and hath given all things into His hand.*" Abraham's servant took some of his master's treasures and put them upon this chosen one, tokens of the grace of him for whom she was sought. "The man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold" (ver. 22). Thus the Holy Spirit takes of the treasures of "wisdom and knowledge," and of the "unsearchable riches of Christ," and makes them known to the Church, espousing her as a "chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 2).

And now, when the espoused one is to begin her long wilderness journey in the charge of him who came for her, the servant "brings forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and *gave* them to Rebekah." And thus we find that when Christ ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, He gave gifts unto men. And the Holy Ghost, the Church's Guide and Companion, takes up these gifts of Christ (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher), and uses them to strengthen her heart and guide her feet, and train her according to the heart of Him who will at

last, "present her to Himself glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. v. 27).

But now the world tries to prevent her from going on to meet her Lord. Rebekah's family says, "Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go." They would like to have her stay with them, and not separate herself to Isaac, obedient to the call of Abraham's servant. And so does the world. It likes not the thought that the Church is a heavenly bride, "espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ," because, if she walks in the power of her calling, she *cannot* sink down to its level, and, as it were, sanction its ways by her presence in its midst. She knows that her Bridegroom has nothing to do with the world now; that He has been here, and that He tried if it would receive Him, and that it only rejected Him and cast Him out. Thather heavenly Guide has told her of His charge, "Beware, thou, that thou bring not my son thither again." She knows in her heart that *He* has no portion here, and therefore *she* can have none but the gifts and graces which He bestows.

She decides the great question herself: "We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth." *Wilt thou go with this man?* And she said, "*I will go.*" Thus would the Church, if guided by the Spirit of God, ever reply. There would be no hesitation in her answer if she followed and was led by her heavenly Guide. There would be no indecision, no turning back, thinking of what she

had left behind. There would be no divided heart in her, but where her treasure is there would her heart be also.

“And Rebekah arose, and followed the man; and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.” She was “forgetting those things that were behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before.” Her heart would ever be saying: “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling [or rather, ‘calling on high’] of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. iii. 13, 14). How sad if, instead of this, she was turning behind her, and longing after that which she had left behind.

But now we have the end of the wilderness journey brought before us in our beautiful Scripture.

“And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi (the well of Him that liyeth and seeth me—Gen. xvi.); and he *lifted up his eyes and saw*. And Rebekah *lifted up her eyes*, and when *she saw* Isaac”—the journey was over, the wilderness was past, hope was changed to fruition, faith was changed to sight. The toil of the wilderness world, dear fellow-believer, is nearly over. We know not that before you read these pages the Church’s Bridegroom will have come. We know not if, even as the lines are penned, He may not have left His Father’s throne, to descend and meet His people in the air (1 Thes. iv.). The Holy Ghost has, as Christ promised, abode with the Church for ever. He has been with

her all through, though she has been unfaithful to Christ. He has awakened her hopes, and enabled her to *lift up her eyes and see* Him by faith, and has put into her mouth that longing, inviting word, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come," in response to the voice of Him who has just told her, "I am . . . the bright and morning Star" (Rev. xxii. 16, 17).

And now, dear reader, can you not for yourself realize in some little measure the testimony of the Comforter, the Church's Guide in her wilderness journey? Surely, if ever He leads the heart to look behind, He can only lead it to *one object*, the death of the true Isaac, even Christ. He can point to that and unfold its varied excellencies, and glories, and wondrous efficacy, and its result, which is the believer's portion; as that through which his Lord has gone to the throne of His glory, through which he has redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He can unfold how the glory of God has been established through it. But He never can, never does, lead to a doubting thought, an unbelieving fear. Nor can he ever lead the soul to earthly things, rather to those that are heavenly—to the riches, and glories, and Person of Him with whom He fills the heart.

I ask you then, "*Wilt thou go with this man?*" Will you suffer Him (the blessed Spirit) to lead and guide you with unhindered, ungrieved power? Think on your association with the world if you are not separate from it, and above all, with the

so-called religious world ; and think of your walk and ways, and answer this question, as before Him who sees the heart, “ Are you grieving and hindering the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption ? ” (Eph. iv. 30); or, are you “ led of the Spirit ? ” (Gal. v. 18). Are the accents of your heart even now, “ *I will go ?* ” And remember this, “ Our conversation [or ‘ citizenship ’] is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body [or ‘ body of humiliation ’], that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body [or ‘ body of glory ’], according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself ” (Phil. iii. 20, 21).



THE CHURCH CALLED AWAY.

“ Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. ”—Cant. ii. 13.

Bride of the Lamb, rejoice ! rejoice !

Thy midnight-watch is past,
True to His promise, lo, 'tis He !
The Saviour comes at last.

His heart, amid the blest repose
And glories of the throne,
With love's unwearied care, hath made
Thy sorrows all its own.

Through days and nights of suff'ring taught
For human woe to feel,

He, only, with unerring skill,
Thy wounded heart could heal.

And now, at length, behold, He comes
To cla'm thee from above,
In answer to the ceaseless call,
And deep dè'sire of love.

Go, then, thou lov'd and blessed one,
Thou drooping mourner, rise !
Go—for He calls thee now to share
His dwelling in the skies.

For thee, His royal bride—for thee,
His brightest glories shine :
And, happier still, His changeless heart,
With all its love, is thine.



MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 160.)

Defeat and Restoration.

(Chapter XVI.)

We now enter upon a new period in Samson's history, characterized by the loss of his nazarite-ship and by his restoration. Verse 31 of our chapter, compared with verse 20 of chapter xv., marks outwardly this division. In chapter xv., God had preserved His servant in spite of himself, in a definite engagement with a woman who served other gods. But that did not rectify the natural tendency of his heart. And the first verse of this chapter shows us where this tendency led

him. He had courted the idolatrous world, and now he goes after the defiled world, not fearing temporary association with it. A worldly propensity unjudged leads us necessarily to more serious falls. Thus it was, in the history of the church, that Pergamos led to Thyatira. Samson's connection with this woman was but a passing one, and he did not lose his strength there, for the secret between himself and God still continued. Waylaid all night, at the gate of the city, by his mortal enemies, he arose from his slumber, "and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron" (ver. 3). More than once does the history of Samson remind us of that of Christ; as, for instance, his victory over the lion of Timnath, and again in the achievement of the gates of Gaza. Like Samson, the Lord awaking from the sleep of death, has brought to nought the machinations of the enemy in breaking the gates of his terrible fortress. He has led into captivity that which held us captives; and, ascended on high, He has displayed the trophies of His victory. Death, the citadel of Satan, having no longer doors to hold us, has become for us a passage;* no bolt could imprison Christ there, no power is able to keep us there. The "hill that is before Hebron," the place of the

* "Hebron" means "a passage."

risen Man who passed through death,† is a sure guarantee to us.

We have said more than once, that there is not a man of God who is not called to manifest, and who does not, in fact, manifest some traits of the person of the Saviour. Ah ! how beautiful it would have been to have seen Samson a worthy representative of Christ in his victory over death, as he was in his victory over the ravaging lion ! Whence went forth this strong man with the gates of Gaza on his shoulders ? For whom did he fight ? Who had placed him in this extremity ? In all these things, his history presents the most complete contrast to that of our adorable Saviour.

Let us pay attention to a still more humiliating recital (vs. 4-21). Samson, who had hitherto only formed a passing connection with evil, now went further. The daughter of the Philistines had been pleasing to his eye ; the woman of Gaza had ensnared him for a moment ; Delilah *took possession of his affections*. “ *He loved a woman in the valley of Sorek* ” (ver. 4). This is the termination of the path of the child of God who gives way to, instead of judging, the first movements of his natural heart. Samson had hitherto guarded his intimate and secret relationship with God, in spite of everything. He possessed something which the world could not understand, and to the source of which it could not rise. His strength remained an

†We have remarked elsewhere (Meditations on the Book of Joshua) that Hebron is always in Scripture the place of death.

enigma to his enemies ; no doubt they saw the effect of it, but directed against themselves, and that made them all the more eager to wrest the secret of it from him, in order to find out what weapons to use against this servant of Jehovah. Doubtless, also, his long hair, a garb not common to all, was a public avowal of separation to God. But had his secret not been betrayed, the world would never have imagined that what was typical of dependence and of self-forgetfulness, was for the Nazarite a source of strength.

Samson loved Delilah. His heart was divided, and God could not go on with this. It is impossible for our affections to go out to the world and likewise to God. "No servant can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other" (Luke xvi. 13). In loving Delilah, Samson as much as said that he hated and despised God ; when, in actual fact, he belonged to Him. This woman's influence over him increased more and more. "How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me?" (ver. 15). From that time his *heart* was taken captive, and it was not long ere he surrendered the whole of his secret. Three times—the seven green withs that never were dried, the new ropes that never were occupied, and the seven locks of his head woven with the web—had not been able to quench the power of the Spirit. God still sustained His poor, unfaithful servant. But

when his secret was divulged, the mark of his dependence removed, the bond of communion between his soul and God abolished, what remained for him? All his strength had vanished. The past experiences of God's deliverances, in spite of his moral bondage, only served to deceive him and to lull him into security. Three times he had extricated himself at a critical moment. Why not a fourth? The blinded heart said to itself: "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself." But, with communion lost, intelligence of the thoughts of God was wholly lacking. "He wist not that Jehovah had departed from him" (ver. 20).

Not that Samson was very happy under the yoke of Delilah. "She pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death" (ver. 16). That was all he got from what had most attracted him! He would gladly have refused but was no longer capable of doing so. A man of the world may find his joy in the world; a believer, never. At bottom, the heart of Samson was in a measure with God and the Israel of God. From that fact sprang all this conflict, struggle, vexation and misery. Our conscience speaks and we have no real rest, our joy is embittered. At last he took the final step, and "told her all his heart" (ver. 17). That was followed by *sleep*: "She made him sleep upon her knees" (ver. 19). The soul loses all sense of its relationship with God, and falls into heavy slum-

ber in the dense atmosphere of corruption. Then the enemy in ambush, watching for this moment, advanced, bound the strong man, put out his eyes, and treated him as one of their most wretched slaves. A condition, alas, worse than sleep! Samson is now only a poor blind slave, the sport of the enemies of Jehovah. Let us not be mistaken as to this, that the enemy was more hostile to God than to Samson, for the vanquished Nazarite became apparently the witness of the victory of the false god Dagon over the true God. The lack of reality in Christians is the world's most powerful weapon against Christ. In despising the unfaithful believer, it is really Him which the world finds the opportunity of despising.

Thank God, the history of the last of the judges does not close with this defeat. God will have the final victory in spite of the unfaithfulness of His witnesses. Samson recovered his nazarite-ship in this state of bitter humiliation. "Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven" (ver. 22). Samson was not a man of prayer. Only twice in all his history do we hear him addressing God (xv. 18; xi. 28). Here, whilst his enemies were celebrating their triumph, Samson cried to Jehovah. For my own part I appreciate in a man of God an end brighter than the commencement, though, doubtless, this is not what is highest. The path of Christ, the perfect Man, was one of perfect evenness and uniformity in the very many varied circumstances through

which He had to pass, and it is thus that we see Him in Psalm xvi., and in the Gospels. And yet to end like Samson, whose life presented so many contrasts ; to end like Jacob, whose course, full of schemes and human devices, closed with the glorious vision of Israel's future and by worship which recognized in Joseph the type of the promised Messiah ; to end like that was far better than to terminate his career like Solomon, in idolatry, after a magnificent reign of wisdom and power. Yes, Samson's end was a splendid victory. " The dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life " (ver. 30).

May we profit by this history, and not require such experience of ourselves, either by a bad beginning or a bad ending. Paul, a man subject to like infirmities as ourselves, avoided both, although weakness was manifest in his walk on more than one occasion. Let us learn to regulate our steps by those of our sinless Model ; that was the strength of the apostle, and it will be ours. Then will God say of us : " They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God " (Ps. lxxxiv. 7).

(To be continued, D.V.)



" Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."—Eph. vi. 11.

" Be sober, be vigilant ; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,"—1 Pet. v. 8.

THE BIBLE AND THE CONSCIENCE.

(*Extracted.*)

That every man has a conscience, is a truth of the last importance. God has taken care that man, falling into sin, should, in and with the sin, acquire the knowledge of good and evil—a profound and admirable ordering of divine wisdom, as it was impossible he could have that knowledge before. The knowledge of good and evil, in One necessarily above all evil in nature, is the sphere of, and inseparable from, holiness. In man this is impossible. He is in innocence, or with a conscience in sin. But then, if conscience come with sin, while in itself it is the knowledge of good and evil (*i. e.*, of the difference of right and wrong), it may be deadened, perverted; it gives no motives more than approval and disapproval, no power, no living object, save as fear of judgment may come in.

To man in this state, a revelation from God is made from the beginning, a promise of deliverance *in another* than himself; the all-important principle we have seen of the mind being taken out of self—affection, thankfulness, adoration of heart introduced in contrast with judgment, while the truth of judgment is owned, law confirmed, but deliverance given from it. But God gives a full revelation as to the whole of His relationships with man, in responsibility, and in grace. That is, He either puts Himself in relationship, or shows a relationship which exists, with the being who has the con-

science. We must consider it in both these lights. The latter is law, the former grace. Both were already seen in Paradise. In and out of Christianity, men have sought to reconcile them: out of Christ they never can. But there they were, responsibility and life—a command (not knowledge of right and wrong, but a command), and free communication of life; responsibility, and giving of life. Man took of the first tree, and never ate of the second. He goes out a sinner, with death on him, and judgment before him—the promise of a Deliverer, but in another; no promise *to* him (for he was in sin), but *for* him; the seed of the woman, which Adam specifically was not. The first creature, man, flesh was no longer in communion, or heir—he was lost. Then came God's witness to men, and temporal judgment of the world on that footing, *i.e.*, the flood; then promise unconditional, again confirmed *to* the seed, to that one only, as Paul says, and as is strictly and profoundly true. (Gen. xxii.) No question of responsibility is raised; God would bless all nations in the promised Seed. But could the question of righteousness be left as indifferent? Impossible. It is raised by law—obedience and blessing, disobedience and the curse. This is broken, before it is formally given, in its first and chiefest link—that which bound man immediately to God. They made other gods—turned their glory into the similitude of a calf eating hay. Then, after various dealings in mercy, the work of God comes, not dealing *with* the responsibility of men, but recognizing it (grace, which brings salvation, sealing

the truth of all the previous responsibility, for otherwise salvation were not needed, but going on another ground and meeting the case). Christ takes the effect of the broken responsibility on Himself, dies for sin, and is the source of life, and that according to righteousness. The whole question of the two trees of Paradise, life-giving and good and evil, and man's ruin in this, is settled for those who receive Christ for ever, with the largest, yea, a perfect revelation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in all His riches and ways. Two points come before us here : how are we to view the Bible, even the doctrinal parts of it ? and is conscience to be between us and the Bible as supreme interpreter ?

The whole question is, Is there a revelation ? Is anything heavenly to come within the scope of man's thoughts ? Has God to be known, or merely right and wrong discerned ? And if He has to be known, must He not reveal Himself ?

Now I say, if we are to be blessed, God must be known. If I am away from God in sin, and so the Scripture treats man, and conscience cannot deny it, doing right and wrong cannot be settled but by returning to God. If a child has wickedly abandoned his father's house, he may leave off particular faults, but he can never be right till he returns and submits to his father. But the true knowledge of God is lost, and the more man reasons in sin, the more it is lost. God must be good : I can say that, when once He has been revealed, for heathens did not know this as truth, though instinct looked for it—wants looked for it. They did not in their notion of God rise above the passions of men. When they did rise above them, they held that God could not have anything to say to men. But now God has been revealed ; and even

the poorest man knows God must be good. But if I begin to reason, what do I see? An innocent child, perishing in agony, the mass of the world degraded to the lowest degree by heathenism—how is He then good? An infinitesimal part of the race, for centuries, alone knowing the unity of the Godhead, and they almost worse than their neighbours; sin having power over myself, brutality in families, wars, tumults, and miseries—how is He good? If I say, Ah! but that is fallen man, departed from God. Then I ask, how then can he be received back again? I cannot with any sense deny that he is a sinner, and if God did not make him bad, he is fallen. The cravings of nature prove he is. How can he be back with God, whom I must then think to be holy and pure?

A revelation from God, and of God, is the first necessity of my nature as a fallen being. I get both in Christ. “He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God.” I set to my seal, on believing Him, that God is true; but then it is not only the word received from above (that a prophet, that John, had, and spoke of earthly things, moved in the sphere in which God dealt with man as a creature on earth responsible to God); but He came Himself from above. God spoke in the Son; His words were in a personal and complete way, though a man, the words of God. They were spoken by the Lord. Now, he that receives His testimony sets to his seal that God is true. And note how this is stated. No one is ascended into heaven, but He who is come down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven, and what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth. Oh what a blessing is here, which none else can give, for none else has gone up to heaven to tell us what is there! In this poor dis-

tracted, sin-beset world, I have the sweet and holy ways and divine objects of heaven brought down to my heart, by One who is the centre of its glory and delights, and come to bring them to me in love, yet without leaving it.

If it be said that there is a conscience which must and does judge what is before it (*e. g.* a God not good and not holy), I answer how long has this been the case with man? Did ever conscience make a difficulty, when a revelation had not been given? Was there ever such a thing as a holy God thought of, or the need of holiness in God dreamt of, in any religion but a revealed one? We may find partial traces of goodness as to human need and deliverance from tyranny in India, in the avatars of Vishnoo, in that otherwise monstrous idolatry. But all idolatry everywhere proves that the notion that goodness and holiness were required in a divine being by the conscience of man is utterly false. The gods were the reproduction of men's passions with a superior degree of power. *When* revelation was given, and redemption was made known by God, then holiness and goodness were made known and estimated, but nowhere else. That is, instead of the conscience being between us and the Bible or a positive revelation, there must be a revelation between God and us and our conscience, or if you please, between God and us, in order that the conscience may feel that God must be good and holy to be God at all. When the revelation has been given, the conscience recognizes it, *but never before*.

Now this is essential and conclusive on the question before us, and shows us that conscience within is wholly incapable of judging. But there is a conscience, and when a divine revelation of light comes to it from God, it is susceptible of im-

pressions from it, so as to have a right judgment, but never without, as to what is divine. Modern infidels are reasoning from the effect of divine light, to deny its necessity. As when light comes in, the eye can see ; with none it cannot, and would never know it could. Scripture is true : when men had the knowledge of God, they did not *discern to retain* God in their knowledge.

Men have not weighed these facts, or rather, have not thought of them ; but they are true, and they certainly put the pretensions of infidelity and of man's mind in a very peculiar light. They are really vaunting themselves as competent to judge Christianity ; whereas the only light they have to judge it by, they have got from it, or from Judaism. Without it man's mind sunk into the grossest idolatry and moral degradation. A revelation alone enabled them, by revealing what God really is, and so forming their understandings to judge of what He ought to be. There is another point strikes me. How little their themes bear the test of history and facts. They make boast of philosophy, but it is well known that up to Socrates, it was little but Cosmogony, and Plato's morality was communism, and his theology demonism, perhaps metempsychosis. This argument from conscience is what they are least able to meet, for one was conscious that an unholy God, or one that was not good, could not have been borne for a moment.

And it is less possible, because men have a revelation. It is their great theme abroad. But it is useful to meet infidels on their own ground—I mean *on its untenableness*. If God is simply good, and the fall and redemption are not God's truth, explain to me the state of this world, three-quarters heathen, and of the other, a great part Mussul-

man or Papist, and every kind of misery and degradation dominant, and selfishness the dominant spring of all its activities, where lusts and passions are not so. If man be not fallen, where is God's goodness? And if God be not good, what is? Christianity tells me man is fallen, and reveals to me God in goodness in the midst of the misery, and redemption as an issue out of it : and the history of man, not succeeding generations sacrificed to rationalists' theories of progress of the fifty-ninth century ; but revelations of this goodness and deliverance for faith to lay hold of from the day of man's fall, though the time was not come to accomplish the thing promised. And allow me to ask you, if man be so competent, how comes it there is so much difficulty, and conflict, and uncertainty? Why is there so much difficulty in finding out God? Why any question of discovering Him, if men have not lost Him? Why did men believe in Jupiter, or Siva, etc., or Odin King of men, or Ormuzd and Ahriman, or Khem, or a host of others, which it is useless for me to follow?

Why have they such difficulty, when it is owned God must be good and holy, in coming to Him and walking with Him? No; it is evident man has got away from God, many horribly, degradingly; and the fairest of Eve's daughters caring more for a pretty ribbon, and of her sons for gold or a title, than all which God presents to them, to win their hearts in the Son of God's sufferings, and offering up Himself in grace for them. No; man is fallen, has lost the sense of what God is, and of His love—has not his heart's delight in that which God is, or what is supremely good. Nothing proves it more than his not finding it out. God has given a conscience; but it does not judge

the word: the word of God judges it. In one sense, every man must judge; but his judgment reveals him in the presence of the word. A man's judgment of other things always reveals his own state. He is certainly lost, condemned, if he does not receive the word. God speaks, and gives adequate witness of who He is. "He that believeth not is condemned already." Light is come into the world. If men prefer darkness, it is not their conscience. Their will must be at work.

I ask, is man bound to receive the love of God or not? There He is to test every man's soul by His reception, or the contrary. It does test the soul. He has a right to judge, you tell me. If he does not receive Him he proves himself bad, bad in will. He has to judge; but if he rejects what is perfect in goodness, his own state is shown. He is judged by his approval or disapproval of what is there, because perfection, because God manifest in the flesh, is there—because God is speaking, woe to him who does not hearken. Yes, he has to judge. It is not his right: he is a lost creature; but he is tested by it—it is his responsibility. How he can meet it, I do not enquire here. I believe the grace of God is needed; but there is God speaking—speaking in grace. Is He received or not? The two things John speaks of here are the words of God, and One come from above who is above all. Am I not bound to listen? Am I not bound to receive? You tell me, must I not judge whether they are His words, and whether He came from above? I answer, yes; but you are judged by the result you come to, because God knows He has given a perfectly-adapted and gracious witness; yea, that He is it. If you have rejected this, you have rejected Him, and remain in your sins and under wrath.

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 180.)

CHAPTERS XVII-XXI.

MANIFESTATION OF THE RUIN AND FINAL RESTORATION.

Religious and Moral Corruption of Israel.

Chapters XVII-XIX.

The Levite of Judah.

Chapter XVII.

Chapters xvii. to xxi. form a kind of appendix to the book of Judges, an appendix of all importance for the completion of the moral picture of the declension of Israel, but which, in reality, as to time, precedes the opening of the book we are considering, and goes back to the last days of Joshua and of the elders that outlived him. It was important to show that if, on the one hand, declension was gradual, that on the other, the ruin was immediate and irremediable from the moment that God had confided to the people the responsibility of preserving the blessings bestowed on them at the beginning. It was important, too, as we shall see later on, to demonstrate that *the end God had in view* was not the ruin, but the restoration of a people who might dwell before Him in unity, after the chastisements had run their course. It was, furthermore, of importance to show the connection of the priesthood with the ruin, and how it was associated therewith, and contributed

thereto. All these weighty subjects, and many others besides, are touched upon in the small compass of the chapters which we are about to consider. The date of them is shown us in three passages which I mention for those who are interested in the *arrangement* of the book, and also that it may not be necessary to refer to them again. The first of these is in chap. xviii. 1. We learn from Joshua xix. 47, that the tribe of Dan took possession of Leshem (the Leshem of Joshua being the Laish of Judges), at the time when the twelve tribes were called to conquer their inheritance. In the second passage, chap. xviii. 12, "Mahaneh-dan" received its name from the expedition of Dan, whereas at the commencement of the history of Samson (chap. xiii. 25) it was a place already known. Finally, in chap. xx. 28, "Phin-eas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it (the ark) in those days ;" from which we necessarily conclude that those days followed immediately what is related in Joshua xxiv. 33.

These details established, we find in chap. xvii. and xviii. the picture of the religious corruption of Israel whilst still in possession of their original blessings—a picture which does not offer a single spot where the heart can rest amid the ruin ; and, when we come to examine it by the light of the word, we shall understand that our only refuge in this terrible flood of evil is God Himself.

These chapters are linked together by a characteristic phrase occurring four times. "In those

days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (xvii. 6 ; xxi. 25). "In those days there was no king in Israel" (xviii. 1 ; xix. 1).

Thus the state of the people is depicted by two facts. First : "There was no king in Israel." The time had not yet come when Israel would say : "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. viii. 5). Hitherto the people had Jehovah as their king ; now, God was forgotten or set aside, although royalty after the manner of the nations was not yet established. The people had abandoned the system of divine government, without having as yet proclaimed that of the world, and this fact characterizes also Christendom in our days.

In the second place : "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." They had, as in the present day, *the reign of liberty of conscience*. Each laid claim to having the "light of his conscience" for guidance, whilst the true light of the word of God was set aside and no longer referred to. How greatly these times differed from those of Joshua, when the word was the only guide and the only authority for Israel, in all that they undertook (Josh. i. 7-9 ; see also, amongst others, chap. iii., iv. 6 ; viii. 30-35, etc.). Now in reality, conscience, notwithstanding its immense value for man, is not a guide, but a judge—a wholly different thing. This judge which he does not listen to, man pretends to honour by choosing him as a

guide. But how will it lead him, when perhaps it may become asleep, hardened, or even seared? These chapters show us where it led the Israelites when every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Idolatry had taken root alongside of some religious forms which still continued. They followed the impulses of their own hearts provided they thought they were doing right, and were precipitated into frightful iniquities. "They thought they were doing right" is in the present day, as it was formerly, a current phrase used to sanction even what is apostasy from Christianity.

Utter disregard of the injunctions of God's word characterized Micah, this man of Mount Ephraim, and his mother. The one stole, when the law had said, "Thou shalt not steal" (Ex. xx. 15), and his conscience was untouched when he avowed the fact. The mother "had wholly dedicated the silver unto Jehovah" for her son "to make a graven image and a molten image" (ver. 3), although it had been said: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" (Ex. xx. 3, 4). She joined Jehovah's name to her idols, a worse thing than mere idolatry, and her conscience was silent. She set up a form of worship of her own, with which her guilty son fully identified himself. The so-called worship of the religious world in the present day does not differ so much from this as would at first appear; for the Lord's name is mixed up with many things coveted by the natural

heart, as to all of which it is said : " Little children, keep yourselves from idols " (1 John v. 21). Art, music, gold, silver and articles of value adorn what is called divine worship ; and man makes room for what the world esteems and runs after, wealth, influence and worldly wisdom.

" Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod and teraphim," associating the false gods with the ephod, a valueless part of Jewish worship when separated from the high priest who wore it. Then " he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest " (ver 5). More than ever was the word of God forgotten. His son had no right to the priesthood and Micah had no right to consecrate him.

A fresh circumstance arose. A Levite of Judah, having as such a connection with the house of the Lord, but without any right as to the priesthood, happened to pass that way looking for a place wherein to sojourn. Micah got hold of this man, who brought him *a semblance of religious succession*. " Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel and thy victuals " (ver. 10). Micah was getting on ; he had *installed* a bona fide Levite in his house ; valuing him more highly than his son, he *supported* and *paid* him. This was a ministry of man's appointing, constituted on the same principles as what we have all around us in our days. Let us notice, in passing, how God recounts these things.

He does not censure, nor express indignation ; He enumerates the facts, and places them before us. Those who are spiritual discern what God condemns and what He approves of, and learn also to keep aloof, as He Himself does, from all the principles of which this chapter gives us so sad a picture. The carnal man continues in his blindness. Micah, in doing that which was right in his own eyes, thought to conciliate the favour of Jehovah ! “ Then said Micah, Now know I that Jehovah will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest ” (ver. 13).

Dan and the Levite of Judah.

(Chapter xviii.)

This chapter shows us the connection of one of the tribes with the religious system which we have seen set up in chap. xvii. Dan had proved himself to be the weakest of the tribes of Israel. Forced into the mountains by the Amorites (chap. i. 34), and lacking the faith to take possession of his inheritance, he sent out five men to reconnoitre, in order to search the portion he still lacked. Laish, a quiet and prosperous town, was situated at the northern extremity of Canaan, far from the Zidonians to whom it belonged, and did no business with any one. This city afforded Dan an opportunity for an inglorious conquest, but presented besides everything that the natural heart could desire. “ A place,” said the messengers, “ where there is no want of anything that is in the

earth" (ver. 10). Apart from its wickedness, Laish, like Sodom before its destruction, was like a garden of the Lord ; a conquest worthy of a Lot but not of an Abraham, but which was a temptation to the tribe of Dan in their enfeebled and lax state. Dan had a battle to fight, a victory to gain in his own boundaries, over the Amorites of the valley ; but this combat would have cost him too much ; he preferred a conquest without danger, won at the extremity of the land far from the eyes of Jehovah's witnesses and from the place where his real enemy was, who was left without a word in possession of Dan's true inheritance.

On their way, these five men met the Levite in the house of Micah and asked him : " Who brought thee hither? and what makest (doest) thou in this place? and what hast thou here?" (ver. 3). These questions ought to have opened the eyes of the Levite, if anything could have done so. What answer, in fact, could he give? His own will had *brought* him there, for he sought to establish himself ; he *did* what Micah told him to do ; he *had* money, a salary—just so many characteristics of all ministry of human appointment, which can go on entirely without God, being dependent upon men, and working for a salary.

" And they said unto him. Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous " (ver. 5). Of such an one do the men seek direction as to their course, and they get the answer that they

desired : " Go in peace ; before Jehovah is your way wherein ye go " (ver. 6). Under penalty of not being considered a properly appointed minister, it was necessary to mix up the Lord's name to this false pretention of being the oracle of the people.

Later on, when the tribe of Dan were again passing by armed, the first thing they did was to carry off Micah's gods and take absolute possession of his priest. They set before the latter in the most dazzling way the promotion that he would obtain : " Is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe, and a family in Israel ? " (ver. 19). He got a call to a more influential and lucrative position. As to the will of God in the matter, that never entered the mind of the priest. His " heart was glad " at being called away to a new post, and taking " the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven images, he went in the midst of the people " (ver. 20). He took away his idols with him, and it is with this one whom the men called " their priest " that idolatry assumed an *official* character in Dan.

Micah ran after these spoilers and said : " Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away ; and what have I more ? " (ver. 24). What language ! They had taken away his religion and the minister that he had appointed and he had nothing left ! A man of faith would not have felt the loss of these things ;

God Himself, His word, His priesthood and His house at Shiloh would have still remained.

The children of Dan went their way, smote Laish, seized upon the city and "called the name of it Dan, after the name of Dan their father" (ver. 29). The name of Dan had more importance for them than that of Jehovah. Such was, in a few words, the dark picture of the religious history of Israel.

The Levite of Ephraim.

(Chapter xix.)

Chapters xvii. and xviii. have shown us the religious condition of Israel and the influence exercised over them by the pseudo-sacerdotal class. This self-styled priesthood, religiously corrupted, kept up religious corruption among the people. If the scenes with which chapter xvii. commenced, belonged as we have seen to the times preceding the Judges, their transmission was necessary in order to set before us a picture of the solemn gradation of evil in Israel. It is somewhat the line which the Spirit of God follows in Luke's gospel, where the facts are grouped out of their chronological order, for the purpose of giving effect as a whole to certain moral truths.

Samson, the last of the Judges, still invoked Jehovah on certain memorable occasions of his life. The Levite of Judah only invoked Him over the head of his images and teraphim. The Levite of Ephraim, whose history we are about to con-

sider, did not, alas ! invoke Him at all. As far as he was concerned it seemed as if Jehovah no longer existed ; and yet this man belonged to a class set apart to the service of Jehovah, for that of the priesthood, and of the house of God.

In chap. xix., we have the Levite of Ephraim in his connection not with the *religious*, but with the *moral*, state of the people. The latter was even worse than the former. The woman that the Levite had taken, left him, after being unfaithful to him. He went after her, following the bent of his own heart, and united himself to this degraded woman, doing just what pleased himself. This satisfied the woman's father, who saw therein the reinstatement of his daughter. Alas ! this act was also, without his being aware of it, the justification of the evil and a sanction to the defilement—all the more serious, carrying with it, as it did, the weight of the sacred position of this man. The father detained his son-in-law, for the longer he remained, the more public and conspicuous did the reinstatement of his daughter become. The kindness of the world is manifested toward us in proportion as we serve its interests ; it does not object to alliance with the family of God. The Levite allowed himself to be belated on his way. Having only his conscience, instead of God, as his guide, he yielded to the influence of others, missed his opportunity, and fell into evil.

This man, who had allied himself to a prostitute, would not turn in to the Jebusites. It is sometimes thus with Christians. They shrink from open association with the world, whilst at the same time the hidden springs of their own lives are impure. It is possible to be very strict as to one's public walk and yet very lax as to personal holiness. " We will not turn aside hither into the

city of a stranger, *that is not of the children of Israel*" (ver. 12). The Levite was more attached to his people than to Jehovah, or rather, he did not take the latter into consideration at all. Avoiding the Jebusites from national pride rather than from piety, he seemed to imply that whatever came from Israel must necessarily be all right, when Israel had already outrageously abandoned Jehovah. These principles remain unchanged, and the ruin of our day is as much characterized by them as that of God's ancient people. Every sect in Christendom is boasted about in contrast with the heathen nations; when, as to matter of fact, Christendom itself has become the haunt of every sort of corruption, moral and religious. The Levite soon perceived that he was not received in the midst of a people whom God had expressly commanded not to forsake the Levite (Deut. xii. 19). Corrupted profession did not offer a shelter to the servant of Jehovah. (I do not speak here of the moral character of this man). We see in verse 18 the feelings which such treatment produced in his heart: "I am now going to the house of Jehovah; and there is no man that receiveth me to house." An isolated stranger who sojourned amid the corruption of Gibeah, and like Lot in Sodom, aware of it, for he said: "Only lodge not in the street" (ver. 20), received the traveller into his house. A frightful thing ensued. The impure passions of men who bore the name of Jehovah equalled in horror those of the accursed city. Such things, taking place in Israel, were worse than the history of Lot, for, as dead flies cause the ointment to stink, so the corruption of the people of God is the worst of all. Moreover, we do not see any intervention of angels to deliver the just. Like Lot, the host of the Levite speaks

at the door, accepting one evil to avoid a worse, and this is necessarily the principle of action of believers who go on with the world. God preserved this man from seeing his house defiled by these infamous wretches, but *for him* there was no other way visible. The Levite gave up his wife to dishonor. This issue might have been avoided by an appeal to God, remembering His protection in former days. Could He not, as formerly, have smitten the people with blindness? But no cry of anguish went up to Him; from the heart of the Levite to Jehovah the passage was barred.

The wretched woman, recovered from her earlier course of prostitution, without repentance or exercise of conscience, died from the dreadful consequences of what she formerly hankered after. God allowed the evil to run its full course, but, as the succeeding chapters will inform us, out of this frightful evil He brought glory to Himself.

The word of God presents two great subjects to us. What God is on the one hand; what man is on the other. God never attempts to cover up man's actual state, for, if He did, He would not be the God who is light; and His word would be false in both its presentations. As to man, God depicts him as indifferent, amiable, or religious according to nature, violent or corrupt, always selfish, hypocritical, ungodly, apostate; without law, under law, under grace, and that in all circumstances and in every degree—while God also shows us the work of His grace in the heart of man under all its forms and in all its gradations. We obtain thus a divine picture of our state, and are forced to the conclusion that we have no resource in ourselves, and that our only resource is in the heart of God.

(To be continued, D.V.)

THE CONSCIENCE IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S PRESENCE.

The knowledge of our proper relationship with our gracious God, as Father, and of our calling and standing in the Lord Jesus Christ,—the Son of Man at God's right-hand,—necessarily goes far beyond all questions of conscience and exercises of soul in the children of God. Yet because of this, and in order to the full blessing—"fellowship with the Father and with His son Jesus Christ"—the conscience of the believer must be in the light; all that is individual judged *there—alone with God*. For there is no such thing as *corporate* conscience. May it not be said that the Lord's great purpose, in all His dealings in grace, is to bring the souls of His children—the individual soul—into fellowship with himself? Does not John so present it? (1 John i. 1-7.)

There seems to be a special need at this hour to speak as to conscience being in His Presence, so that all might be judged according to God. It was always so surely. But this present is a solemn moment. Christendom, spurious, and apostate Christianity enlarges—Satan is working mischief as an angel of light; flesh or man's nature is active; combinations between the true people of God and mere professors are weakening the former and nullifying their testimony—the mass indeed are sunk down to the level of the earth, alas! Of those who are in some measure

separated to God, what urgent need of self-judgment as to the will and ways ! What confession may be made ! What humiliation is becoming ! All this demands that conscience should not only be exercised, but be really in the light of the Lord's presence. In fact, this lesson may be learnt : that, while there may have been activity in God's service, even joy, and the Lord (for faith was there) using the strength of his servant, yet conscience, not having been fully in the light ; and self and nature not judged there,—communion with God, and its happy peaceful effects and power, have been unknown or very imperfectly known in the soul.

We read those remarkable words in Ephes. v. 8. "Now are ye light in the Lord ; walk as children of light." What does the Apostle mean in its practical experimental sense by "light in the Lord" ? Surely if the gentle, but strong, hand of the Spirit of God leads the renewed soul,—the new man,—the divine nature of the believer—into immediate contact with its Source (*i. e.* God Himself)—conscience brought there—all will be seen, all judged (according to the measure given) in that presence "where no flesh can glory." There the flesh is judged, there sin is seen in its exceeding sinfulness—there the will is detected—there it is no longer the *fruit* only of sin and flesh which is judged but the *roots, deep laid roots*, exposed and made bare in that light. The world is there unmasked ; above all, grace, seen and learnt in its proper Divine character ; and the soul, by faith

established in it ; there the blessed Source, " the God of all grace," bowed to in another and deeper way ; reconciliation known more truly ; the living glory of the Father's name connected with the soul ; and the beauty and glory of Jesus, the Son of Man, seen and appreciated, through the power of the present and Eternal Spirit. " Now are ye light in the Lord." The heart may make progress now in the power of its communion, yet the work in conscience go on from time to time, whenever there is something in nature not in obedience to Christ, " Casting down reasonings and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ " (2 Cor. x). It may be further stated, that the conscience being in the light, and the affections of the soul drawn out to God, who reveals His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, the soul learns what " fear and trembling " mean in the word. Yet that fear is in the very light of the grace consciously possessed, and in the taste of it. For sure I am, at least I believe the thought to be according to truth, that while tasting the love of God in Christ, and the joy of relationship—while the cry of Abba Father, intelligently understood as giving a place of heavenly sonship, yet there is a blessed, solid, divine satisfaction and joy in discovering and knowing the holiness of God. Oh, the joy when the Spirit sanctions and enforces that truth in the light, that nothing can be suffered in the child as to will—

nothing recognized by God which is contrary to His nature and being. All must be judged—the levity and folly of man—the will and way—the mixed motives, all exposed there, that God may impart deeper blessing. Hence chastisement, and the exercises of Hebrews' xii., “that we might be partakers of His holiness.”

The Scriptures in their rich and varied treasures, afford abundant illustrations of the action on conscience and exercises of soul when man is brought into the light of God. We see there the Divine hand at work, illuminating the understanding, quickening and enlightening, as well as purging the conscience; purifying the heart by faith, and drawing out its affections, renewed by grace, to God; to us, the affections gathered round and centered in the Person of the Son. It may be profitable just to glance at a few instances of the Spirit's handy-work, to exemplify and apply what is stated above. The case of Abraham would not be adduced as showing *exercise* of soul and conscience. Yet as to the general question of God acting on man's soul, it is most important to observe that if Abraham, called and elected peculiarly as the Lord's witness against an idolatrous world, needed power for difficult requirement, the Holy Ghost teaches us in Acts vii. the secret that, “the God of Glory appeared unto him.”—The glory shone into his soul, and he “obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” (Hebrews xi.)

In the account we have of Moses in Exodus ii. and iii., seen in the light of Acts vii., where we get some comment on these chapters, we find exercise of soul. We see his conscience brought into the light, and its effect in power and communion. There is activity in him (in Exodus ii. 11-14), and love of his brethren, though expressed with carnal power and wisdom; "he looked this way and that way;" "he supposed his brethren would have understood;" marking the want of calmness and guidance, and he has to flee from the consequences of his act. But when he beholds the glory from the burning bush; when he has to put off his shoes from off his feet, (the rough shoe of nature must come off), for it was holy ground; when sent by Him who calls himself, "I AM THAT I AM," what a contrast do we find! Unable to move or speak at first; yet, when the heart of Moses is assured, and faith is there—the rod of power is taken instead of the carnal weapon—boldness now in the presence of Pharaoh, endurance in difficult service, "he endured as seeing Him who is invisible"; and of this exercised servant, the Holy Ghost deigns to say, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. xii. 3).

In the history of Job, we have a still more apt illustration of our subject. We see there, in a pointed way, the difference wrought in a man, and he a child of God, when conscience is brought into the light of His presence. It will suffice here, to

notice the case *generally* ; and it is happy to remember the Holy Ghost's own comment on the cause of Job's trial and great afflictions :—"Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord ; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy " (James v. ii.). The end of the Lord was to give His servant and precious child, Job, deeper blessing, true communion with Himself ; and this he did *by bringing the conscience into the light of His presence*. No one would suppose it was mere natural uprightness which Job exhibits at first—that he was religious or pious according to the flesh. God's own words to the Adversary of Job and man (chaps. i. 8 ; ii. 3), would show the contrary. But Job's nature detected grace, and *exalted itself*. He was occupied with *himself*—his good works—his righteousness (the history of many a soul, and quickened soul too, at the present hour) ; and God would have all judged according to the light, hence His dealings with Job. We see the terrible process. We hear fearful language before God in the bitterness and trial of his soul ; he is sifted ; his heart is *wrung out*. Oh ! to those who in their measure have known something of this process—the Spirit of God carrying the conscience into the light, where the heart must be wrung out ; "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," judged ; all passing under His eye who has judged, and has brought this judgment into conscience. The process continues, as we know, till

poor (but rich) Job utters the memorable words, "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." Grace now understood in the light, produces self-abhorrence, self-loathing. Grace gives the broken spirit, which we so essentially need at this hour. Grace teaches us. May the reader of this remember (and if the point be urgently pressed, let him bear with the writer a little), that it is *only in the Lord's presence that grace can be appreciated in its proper or Divine character*. Hence the importance of this subject. Let this thought be well weighed, *that communion is before walk, or service, or exercise, or gift*. Oh ! for the power of true communion ! One drop of the love of Jesus in a broken heart and softened spirit ! Look for a moment at that word in Titus ii. 11, 14, and connect it with the Lord's presence. "Grace," the apostle tells us, "teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts (in fact, *ourselves*), we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." The soul, being true, covets to learn thus. It is to be learnt of grace. Where ? In the Lord's presence ; for outside that we cannot really know grace. But, further, this precious grace teaches us to look for that blessed hope (the return of Jesus to take us up into the air to Himself), and the appearing of the Glory of our Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (the Epiphany, or public manifestation of the Glory of Jesus, when the Saints will be manifested with Him). Blessed be His Holy Name, for such hope !

Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and other prophets, in their day and history, would witness something of the same. We may take a passing notice of Isaiah and the rather as it furnishes so lovely a

picture of grace and light acting on conscience. What cry burst from his lips, as narrated in chap. vi., when he saw the glory of Jehovah Jesus filling the Temple (consult John xii. 41, where the Holy Ghost shows us it was Jesus)? "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips:" and when the grace reaches him—for we see three virtues or powers flowing to him—from the Throne and Person of the Lord; first, full conviction of what he was; secondly, full forgiveness and purging of conscience; thirdly, the heart won, and the dependence of true affection: "Here am I, send me"—The servant and prophet formed, and for difficult service, the message of judgment. These illustrations might suffice, but I would yet briefly notice one or two in the New Testament.

There, where the mighty instruments for God's work were prepared, the Holy Ghost being down here consequent on the work of the Lord Jesus, there is necessarily a deeper action on conscience—a deeper and brighter glory visits the soul. Not that the deep and bright glory of God did not visit Abraham—but Abraham never could have known the communion which Paul and John enjoyed. The question of righteousness had not been raised, which we know the law did—and, instead of promises, to which Abraham in his wondrous faith looked, Paul and John (the Church's portion) possessed the Accomplisher of the promises. The Lord of Glory, the heavenly Son of Man—all was deeper—"The true light now shone." "It was fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." With what wondrous grace, then, divine tenderness and power, the Lord Jesus dealt with Peter's conscience after his fall, restoring his soul and putting honour upon His servant (John

xxi). The Lord had accomplished redemption, and in Resurrection light and power, stands before His poor trembling servant, conscious of having accomplished sin and a terrible fall. The Lord does not take up the sin, but rather deals with the *root*. The deep laid evil in his nature—the immense self-confidence in Peter; the carnal energy which characterized him. (Alas! if one may speak for others, how much of this have we found in ourselves, and the bitter fruits: how far has it been judged in His presence?) “*Peter was grieved*, because He said unto him the third time, lovest thou Me?” Here was conviction of conscience. There is nothing but grace from the Lord, winning the affections of the soul of His servant; but showing him it could no longer be Peter for power of walk, but Christ in Peter. When filled with the Holy Ghost, we have the mighty Apostle of the Circumcision.

In Saul of Tarsus we have that which exceeds: He meets, he sees, in his mad career (the very expression of the Jews' hatred to Messiah), the Lord of Glory, who has accomplished Redemption. Saul beholds the Heavenly Man, from whose face streamed down the Glory of God—a glory too effulgent for man (he is blind for a season). Saul utters these strange words (conscience struck and confounded), “who art Thou, Lord?” He finds that Jesus the Head in Heaven, speaks of all the saints as Himself. “I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.” He preaches the Gospel of the Glory, that Jesus is the Son of God. How sweetly this honoured servant afterwards learns the secret of power, as recorded in 2 Cor. xii., where the Lord shows him that it is dependence in conscious weakness which was the condition of power. “My grace sufficeth for thee, *for* (the condition) My

power is made perfect in weakness." It may be observed here, that Revelation 'itself, Blessed and glorious as it is, is not power, but communion with God in the Revelation. It produces for Paul, here, the thorn in his flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure. "All power is of God." The creatures—even the Angels who have kept their first estate—only have strength as communicated to them; hence the secret of the blessings of dependence—"dependent suppliants alone prevail."

Further, do we not find, in Rev. i., the secret of that power which enabled John, the beloved apostle, to have communion with the heavenly scene opened to him, as recorded in chap. iv.—he has title and power to look within the door opened in heaven. He has communion there with the crowned elders, as secure as they are; yea, as The Throne itself. When John's conscience was brought into that living blaze of glory—judicial glory, no doubt around The Person of the Son of Man (chap. i., when he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day)—he fell at His feet as dead." The glory was exceeding bright and overpowering. Yet, in fulness of grace and Divine tenderness, Jesus said, "fear not."

John never feared anything after that Seals, trumpets, vials, judgments, all pass before him: he is unmoved in their midst. John is witness to the end,* not only of the coming of The Lord Jesus, but of the Kingdom and Glory—of the New Heavens and the New Earth. May each of our hearts taste, in sweet communion, the love of Our Father; and, in personal love to Jesus, Our Lord, bow head and heart in worship saying, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus." Amen.

* Compare John's Gospel, xxi. 22-23.

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 200.)

Breach and Recovery.

(Chapter XX.)

Following on the crime of Gibeah, all the tribes from the extreme North to the extreme South were gathered together *as one man* unto Jehovah in Mizpeh" (ver 1). Very little seemed wanting in this unanimous protest against evil. There was *zeal* to enquire in'o, and to purify themselves from, it, and also a sense of Israel's *corporate responsibility*, which, later on under Deborah, Gideon and Jephthah, was lacking. The assembling together, the actions and the sentiments of the eleven tribes presented above all a fair appearance of *unity* (vs. 1, 8, 11), for the smallest tribe, and what was more a guilty one, was the only one absent. The centre of the people's unity was acknowledged, for it was "unto Jehovah" that they gathered together in Mizpeh (ver.1). What then was wanting in Israel? One thing, "the first love," which finds expression both towards God and towards those that are His. *Towards God*, this love had waxed cold in Israel. They had hearkened, deliberated, decided, and then consulted God (ver. 18). In place of commencing with *the word of God* they had left it to the last. Not that it was omitted, but it no longer occupied the first place. This was a mark of having left

their first love. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "If a man love Me, he will keep My word" (John xiv. 21, 23). "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John v. 3). Another mark was, that their hearts were more alive to the *shame* inflicted on Israel, than to the dishonour done to God (vs. 6, 10, 13). How often does this tendency show itself in assembly discipline ! It is because God no longer has His right place in our hearts.

The forsaking of first love also betrays itself in our conduct *towards our brethren*; indeed intercourse with God and with our brethren are closely connected. "And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John vi. 21). Israel looked upon Benjamin as an enemy, and, notwithstanding the fair appearance of unity, did not regard the sin of one tribe as that of all of the people. They said: "What wickedness is this that is done among *you*?" (ver. 12)—not "*among us*." What a difference between this love and that which is described in 1 Cor. xiii. 4-7 ! Zeal was not wanting, but that did not make up for having left their first love. "Thou canst not bear them which are evil" of Rev. ii. 2, was found here ; but, as further on in the address to Ephesus, the Lord could say to His people : "I have somewhat against thee." They added : "that we may put away the evil from Israel" (ver. 13), but where was their

brotherly affection? This is indeed always the danger in connection with discipline, and the Corinthians were exhorted to confirm their love toward the one who had fallen, after the discipline had done its work. If on the one hand, the people addressing Benjamin said "you" in place of "us" in verse 12; on the other, "us" and "we" usurp an undue place in the next verse: "Deliver *us* the men . . . that *we* may put them to death and put away evil from Israel." Leaving the first love opens the door to self-importance.

As for Benjamin, they had grievously sinned in upholding evil in their midst, and the remonstrance of Israel, instead of humbling them, incited them to the most serious act: "to go out to battle against the children of Israel" (ver. 14), and then what was far worse—they allied themselves with evil. The children of Benjamin gathered themselves together at Gibeah, they numbered the inhabitants of Gibeah, and they went forth out of Gibeah and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites (vs. 14, 15, 21). The absence of humiliation on their part led to terrible results; not only did they not judge the evil, but as a necessary consequence, they fatally excused it, taking sides with the evil-doers against the people of God. It is true that they put on an appearance of being *without* the inhabitants of Gibeah (ver. 15), but they numbered them and availed themselves of their seven hundred chosen warriors. In this army the "left-handed" were equal in numbers to the

chosen men of Gibeah, weakness which became strength in the Lord's service when it was an Ehud who fought. Here the left-handed were skilful against the Lord ; the hand which ought to have been apt in defence, was strong to attack and deceive those who confronted them.

When every preliminary was exhausted, Israel asked counsel of God (ver. 18). Judah shall go up first, was the reply of Him who was about to discipline Israel, and twenty-two thousand men of Judah were destroyed down to the ground. What grace God displayed in this defeat ! Israel must learn that, in contests between brethren, there could be neither victors nor vanquished, but that all must be vanquished for the Lord to triumph at the end. God made use of this defeat for the restoration of His beloved people. Israel came forth strengthened from a combat which had cost him his troops, for he came out of it judged in reality by God himself. When the twenty-two thousand fell, the men of Israel encouraged themselves (ver. 22 . See what fruit their chastisement bore : First : It led them to seek again the presence of Jehovah. Secondly : Instead of human indignation, they were filled with sorrow according to God and their tears were the proof of it. Thirdly : Their sorrow was not transient, for they wept until even. Fourthly : They learnt to depend more truly on the word of God, and no longer say, " Which of us shall go up first ? " but " Shall I go up again ? " Fifthly : Affection for their brother

in his fall is at length revived, for they say : " The children of Benjamin my brother " (ver. 23). How worthy of God was such a result ! It was not victory but defeat which brought about these things, blessed fruits of the discipline, and meanwhile other fruits were yet to be produced. " And Jehovah said, go up against him."

Eighteen thousand men of the children of Israel were destroyed down to the ground in the second defeat. Then, in the first place, "*All the children of Israel, and all the people went up, and came unto the house of God.*" No one was missing ; they were unanimous in seeking Jehovah. Secondly : Instead of weeping until even, they wept, and sat there before Jehovah. Their sorrow before God was deepened and of longer duration. Thirdly : They "*fasted that day until even*" That was more than sorrow ; it was humiliation, judgment of the flesh and repentance. Fourthly and fifthly : They "*offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Jehovah.*" They recovered those two things of inestimable value, a true sense of the value of the sacrifice and of communion. Dependence on the word of God and the realization of His presence became more highly valued, through God's discipline. The people had the consciousness of being before God Himself, who dwelleth between the cherubims over the ark, and drew near to Him, by a living High Priest who interceded for Israel. Sixthly : Their own will was at last completely broken. " Shall I yet again

go out or shall I cease?" (vs. 26-28.) What thorough restoration! And that which brought it about was a horrible evil; not that God makes light of the enormity of the evil, but in the interest He bears towards His people, He makes use even of the evil for their blessing. From that time God could bless and assure them of victory.

Then the battle took place in which Israel restored, yet experiencing his own weakness and insufficiency, obtained the victory, but lost nearly a whole tribe. Benjamin was defeated by a humbled people who showed themselves weaker than he. It is the principle of all discipline in the assembly. Without love, without dependence on God and His word, without self-judgment, discipline will always be defective, and it is only under such conditions that an assembly can purge out the old leaven.

Fruits of recovery.

(Chapter xxi.)

The restoration of Israel had as a result the absolute refusal of any connection with the evil. "Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying there shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife" (ver. 1). Let us remember that, in a day of ruin, when souls, under the action of grace, recover their first love for the Lord, they never become more tolerant of evil.

The closer our communion is with God the more does it separate us from evil, but the affections of the saints' hearts towards their brethren are not blunted by this separation, as we see here. For the third time the people went up to the house of God, for this place having been found again, became indispensable to them. Defeat first drove them on that road, victory led them on to it again. "And they abode there till even before God." On the previous visit, "*they wept and sat there* before Jehovah;" on this occasion, the *first* thing was to abide there. "When thou saidst, seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face Jehovah will I seek" (Ps. xxvii. 8). It is our happiness, amid the evil and the sorrow of the present day, to seek the face of the Lord and abide till even before Him. Tears then flowed and such tears! "They lifted up their voices and wept *sore*." For the first time feeling all the bitterness they said: "O Jehovah, God of Israel, why is it come to pass in Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel?" They did not say: The evil is put away, we are at length in quietness and tranquility. The bitterness was in proportion to their recovery of their affections for Jehovah and for their brethren. The breach had been made, one tribe was wanting; it was like the body suffering from the loss of a limb. Israel's God had been dishonoured, the God before whose eyes, in His tabernacle, was the golden table with the twelve loaves of shew bread thereon. Israel no longer thought of their own dishonour as they had before their humiliation, for the tears of bitterness were shed before Jehovah; and it was when the unity seemed hopelessly lost, that its realization was

made good in the hearts of the people, which, in the eyes of Jehovah was more true unity than the semblance of it by the people in a state of declension in the beginning of chapter xx.

The earliest rays of the morning found Israel at work building an altar. The people might say, with the Psalmist : " Early will I seek Thee." Humiliation and ruin did not hinder worship. What grace that there remained an altar to Jehovah amid such a state of things ! Three things preceded this worship and led up to it—resolute separation from all evil, getting back into the presence of God, the ruin deeply felt and acknowledged. It was there that they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings ; then that the heart entered into what the sacrifice of Christ was for God, and the portion God has given us with Him in it.

All these blessings recovered in the path of humiliation, were the starting point for the judgment of Jabesh-gilead. The inhabitants of that place had not come up to Jehovah to Mizpeh. That was indifference to the judgment of the evil by which God had been dishonoured in Israel's midst, and it was at the same time contempt for the unity of the people established by God, and which had been confirmed in such a striking way by the attitude of the eleven humbled tribes. The people of Jabesh-gilead had doubtless said, that it was no concern of theirs. How frequently do we hear such expressions in our days ! Their state was even worse than that of the evil-doer. For such a refusal, there was no mercy ; but *before* the execution of the judgment, Israel delighted to contemplate mercy. " And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, there is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.

How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing that we have sworn by Jehovah that we will not give them of our daughters to wives?" (vs. 6, 7.) Moreover, the judgment was but the exercise of this mercy, for the cutting off of Jabesh-gilead was with a view to the restoration of Benjamin. Such was the way that Israel came out of that long and painful conflict. Happy indeed are they who learn from such circumstances, and know how to combine *perfect hatred* of evil, with unmingled love for their brethren. The four hundred young virgins of Jabesh-gilead were given for wives to the poor remnant of Benjamin.

But that did not suffice; the wound must be completely bound up. Love was ingenious in finding the remedy and suggested to Israel a way of helping their brethren without disowning their obligations toward God, or lowering the standard of separation from evil. Israel allowed themselves to be plundered at Shiloh (vs. 17-21), as it were under the eyes of Jehovah. Exchanging the victor's place for that of the vanquished, they permitted their brother, so sorely tried by the discipline, to have the last word.

"And it shall be," they said, "when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes, because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war" (ver. 22). Israel did not say: *They* reserved not, but "*we* reserved not." What delicacy and tenderness did those words evince, and how different from those recorded in chapter xx. 12. "What wickedness is this that is done among *you*?" Israel no longer separated their cause from that of their brethren and the unity of the people, formed by God Himself, recovered its due place of importance

in the eyes of the faithful in those sorrowful days of declension.

God grant that such may be the case with us, my brethren ! If men, if Christians even, lightly esteem the divine unity of the church, or, when forced to avow that it is outwardly gone, seek to substitute for it a miserable daubing with untempered mortar and content themselves with an appearance of unity which does not deceive even those upholding it ; if, in a word, men form alliances between their various sects, proving the very ruin they seek to justify ;—let us turn away from such things, humbling ourselves on account of the ruin of the church (looked at on the side of human responsibility) without conforming to it ; boldly proclaiming that “ there is one body and one Spirit,” “ endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace ” (Eph. iv. 3, 4), refusing all fellowship with the moral and religious evil of the day, “ and above all these things putting on love, which is the bond of perfectness ” (Col. iii. 14).

Such is the instruction contained in the book of Judges, which closes with the solemn repetition of that which characterized the evil days. “ In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes ” (ver. 25). God did not change that deplorable state of things ; He simply states the fact ; but He led His own away from the confused light of conscience, which while it judged never guided them ; and brought them back to the pure light of His own infallible word which was able to conduct them, to build them up, and to give them an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (*c.f.* Acts xx. 32). “ To the law and to the testimony,” this is our safeguard in a day of ruin ! (Isaiah viii. 20.)

A RETROSPECT OF THE JOURNEY.

*“Not one thing hath failed of all the good things
which the LORD your God spake concerning you.”—
Josh. xxiii. 14.*

Lord, when the journey's over,
And we the road survey,
What grace shall we discover
Has led us all the way ;
Where we were once so fearful,
The dangers seemed so vast ;
Where we were sad and tearful,
The skies so overcast,
Because of weak faith's blindness
So slow Thy love to learn ;
We shall Thy watchful kindness,
In every stage discern.

When we Thy joys inherit,
And all Thy glory share,
And through Thy death and merit
The crown of life shall wear ;
When we shall drink the waters
Fresh from the throne of God,
With all the sons and daughters
Redeemèd by Thy blood ;
When we shall tune our voices
To golden harps above,
And each with all rejoices
In Thy surpassing love :—

Oh, what will seem the sorrow,
When measured with the joy

Of that eternal morrow,
 Of bliss without alloy ?
 How light our heaviest trouble !
 How short our sharpest pain !—
 Gone like a bursting bubble,
 Compared with all we gain !
 He comes, and we are risen ;
 We meet Him in the sky,—
 One step, as from a prison,
 To heaven's own home on high !

The world's vain, worthless pleasures,
 Its treach'rous hopes and lies,
 Its rusty, worn-out treasures,
 As baubles we despise :
 We look for His appearing,
 The Morning Star so bright ;
 This hope our spirits cheering
 Beguiles the hours of night :
 We know by many a token
 We soon shall reach our home ;
 For our " Beloved " has spoken,
 " Behold, I quickly come ! "

But, oh, most blessèd Saviour,
 Before we see Thy face,
 Grant us each day this favour,
 To live upon Thy Grace !
 While groaning in this prison,
 With many a grief opprest,
 To look, with faith's strong vision,
 To our eternal rest ;
 Time's seen-things all are wasting,
 Night's shadows quickly flee ;
 O joy ! the day is hasting,—
 Eternity with Thee !

“ A LITTLE CHILD.”

It is important in a day of decline—for the day of apostacy advances (Jude 14, 15), and the saints are in danger of becoming infected with its premonitory symptoms, those of “lukewarmness” (Rev. iii. 15, 16)—it is of all importance to return to what is the desire of the great Head of the Church for us all. This, if cultivated and sought after, is calculated to preserve from this spirit, which is tinging almost the whole of religious profession. I refer the reader, in illustration of His desire, to the Lord’s reply to the question asked in Matt. xviii. 1 : “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” In the preceding chapter there had been given them a glimpse of the “Son of man coming in his kingdom”—a little toreshadowing of His glories, which, as Son of man, are yet to come. Would one who gazed thereon seek to place any on an equality with Him? No sooner is the proposal on the speaker’s lip than the voice of the Father is heard interrupting the vain desire, “This is MY BELOVED SON, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye HIM.” From the excellent glory He is thus declared beyond compare glorious and beloved, the centre of all, greatest and highest. Thus Peter’s voice was hushed ; and though there with Him, and the eye-witness of His majesty, as he afterwards declares, yet *He* is God’s Centre, the only one who in Himself has title to be there. In the day of the mani-

festation of that glory we who believe shall be with Him too, our voices hushed in the contemplation of Him who is God's Centre—a day which will see the fulfilment of His prayer in John xvii.: “ Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me wherè I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me ; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

Descending from the holy mount where they had heard the testimony of the Father as to the Son of His bosom, they ask the question already quoted, whose tenor is, Which of us shall be next to Him ? And what a reply comes from those gracious lips—a reply for each heart to weigh the import of then, and a lesson for us to ponder still ! Does He deny that there is such a place ? Does He assert that we shall be all equal in that day ? No, He does neither ; but, exposing by contrast their love of self with what will be the true ground of exaltation, personal love, and devotedness to *Himself*, He replies, “ Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” He does not say, as is (perhaps unintentionally, but commonly) misquoted, “ Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child humbles itself, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” We cannot understand a little child humbling itself, because one who *is* in the place, *who is that*, needs not to come down to it ; for already he is a little child. The Lord's words are rather, “ You must become *as* this little

child, if you desire the highest place in the day of my kingdom glory."

Such is the *attainment*, my reader, which the Lord Jesus proposes to each of us to aim at and to reach—"a little child." Do we ask why? It is because we are not in heart and spirit, and ways and affection, *such*; they betrayed it in their question; and do *we* not betray it in ourselves day by day? May I then draw your attention to two or three things, seen prominently in the model before us, seen in "a little child"? .

Watch him in the nursery (picture of this world wherein we grow up, and where the child of God now is); not a fear, not an anxiety, not a care has he! Dependent for food, and shelter, and raiment, and everything he wants or possesses on another; while in himself without plan, or thought, or resources, and with no ability to make his wants known save to One, who alone can understand the baby language that he speaks—such is our model. Is he happy? Let any one who doubt it observe him; or let my reader look back at the days of his own infancy, and the reply is at hand. But while his feebleness is thus before us, we must remember that he *has a consciousness*, young as he is—a consciousness that only deepens and increases with the lapse of years—that consciousness is that *he is beloved*, beloved by the One we have already mentioned, with a perfect and never-changing love. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath

torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. That *person* who loves fills the whole range of his vision—a *person*, my reader, not a *place*. And is it so to-day? Is it so with each of *us*? One, as he walked this earth has borne the marks of it. “One thing I do that I may win *Christ*, and be found in Him.” “For to me to live is *Christ*, and to die is gain.” “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect ; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” A *Person* filled the sphere of his vision. He was beloved, and he knew it. “He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*.” Reader, do *you* know it? Can *you* say it? and has it power over you as it had over him?

But the nursery time is passing away with all of us. Let our model, “a little child,” be brought then from the nursery into all the light and brilliance of that day of the coming glory for which we wait. Let the assembled company stand back to make way for the approach of a “little child.” “Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me ; *for of such is the kingdom of heaven* ” (xix. 14). Why amidst the brilliant throng wanders his eye timidly from one to another? Is there not enough in the grandeur of all around to engage his attention? No ; the *place* is nought to him, while all the grandeur and all the dignity do but distress him. He seeks for One whose heart's affections are twined around

him, and whose love he has learnt and proved in other days, and in other scenes, than these ; for that same person, who fully satisfied him then, can only fully satisfy him now ; and passing by all else, he hastens to the arms and the bosom of *love*. And He, whose is all the grandeur and dignity of that day, delights to pillow that timid, trembling head on His own bosom.

Add thus shall it be in the day of the kingdom-glory ; and **THUS** has the “ little child ” reached the highest place, even the bosom of that One to whom it shall be confessed in that day, that fast-coming day of His glory, “ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing ” (Rev. v. 12).

Reader, who will occupy the place of the little child ? If you occupy it *now*, He declares you shall occupy it then. Again we would ponder His blessed words, “ Of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Oh, may we cultivate day by day, and seek grace to manifest day by day, the simple heart and ways, and the spontaneous affections for Him, our **ONE BELOVED OBJECT**, which are seen in “ a little child ! ”



“ For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”—1 Cor. viii. 9.

THE ANTHEM OF THE ANGELS.

Luke ii. 13, 14.

Two things here present themselves—the angel who comes to the shepherds of Judea announces to them the fulfilment of the promises of God to Israel; the choir of angels celebrate in their heavenly chorus of praise all the real import of this wondrous event.

“Unto you,” says the heavenly messenger who visits the poor shepherds; “is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” This was proclaiming good tidings to them and to all the people. (Not, as in the authorized version, “all people.”)

But in the birth of the Son of man, God manifest in the flesh, the accomplishment of the incarnation had far deeper importance than this. The fact that this poor Infant was there, disallowed and left (humanly speaking) to its fate by the world, was (as understood by the heavenly intelligences, the multitude of the heavenly host, whose praises resounded at the angel’s message to the shepherds), “glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good pleasure (of God) in men.” These few words embrace such widely extended thoughts that it is difficult to speak suitably of them in a work like this; but some remarks are necessary. First, it is deeply blessed to see that the thought of Jesus excludes all that could oppress the heart in the scene which surrounded His presence on earth.

Sin, alas ! was there. It was manifested by the position in which this wondrous Infant was found. But if sin had placed Him there, grace had placed Him there. Grace super-abounds ; and in thinking of *Him*, blessing, grace, the mind of God respecting sin, that which God is as manifested by the presence of Christ, absorb the mind and possess the heart, and are the heart's true relief in a world like this. We see grace alone ; and sin does but magnify the fulness, the sovereignty, the perfection, of that grace. God in His glorious dealings blots out the sin with respect to which He acts, and which He thus exhibits in all its deformity ; but there is that which "much more aboundeth." Jesus come in grace, fills the heart. It is the same thing in all the details of Christian life. It is the true source of moral power, of sanctification, and of joy.

We see next, that there are three things brought out by the presence of Jesus born as a child on the earth. First, glory to God in the highest. The love of God, His wisdom, His power, not in creating a universe out of nothing, but in rising above the evil, and turning the effect of all the enemy's power into an occasion of showing that this power was only impotence and folly, in presence of that which may be called "the weakness of God ;" the fulfillment of His eternal counsels ; the perfection of His ways where evil had come in ; the manifestation of Himself amidst the evil in such a manner as to glorify Himself before the

angels—in a word, God had so manifested Himself by the birth of Jesus that the hosts of heaven, long familiar with His power, could raise their chorus, “Glory to God in the highest,” and every voice unites in sounding forth these praises. What love like this love? And God is love. What a purely divine thought, that God has become man! What supremacy of good over evil! What wisdom in drawing nigh to the heart of man, and the heart back to Him! What fitness in addressing man! What maintenance of the holiness of God! What nearness to the heart of man; what participation in his wants; what experience of his condition! But beyond all, God above the evil in grace, and in that grace visiting this defiled world to make Himself known as He had never yet been known!

The second effect of the presence of Him who manifested God on the earth is, that peace should be there. Rejected—His name should be an occasion of strife; but the heavenly choir are occupied with the fact of His presence, and with the result, when fully produced, of the consequences, wrapped up in the person of Him who was there (looked at in their proper fruits), and they celebrate these consequences. Manifested evil should disappear His holy rule should banish all enmity and violence. Jesus, mighty in love, should reign, and impart the character in which He had come to the whole scene that should surround Him in the world He came into, that it

might be according to His heart who took delight therein (Prov. viii. 31).

This quotation leads to a glorious apprehension, both of what was then doing and of our blessing. The special interest of God is in the sons of men ; wisdom (Christ is the wisdom of God) daily Jehovah's delight, rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth before creation, so that it was counsel, and His delight in the sons of men. His incarnation is the full proof of this. In Matthew we have our Lord when He takes His place with the remnant, as this is fully revealed ; and it is in the Son's taking this place as man, and being anointed of the Holy Ghost, that the whole Trinity is fully revealed. This is a wonderful unfolding of God's ways.

The means of this — redemption, the destruction of Satan's power, the reconciliation of man by faith, and of all things in heaven and earth with God—are not here pointed out. Everything depended on the person and presence of Him who was born. All was wrapped up in Him. The state of blessing was born in the birth of that Child.

Presented to the responsibility of man, man is unable to profit by it, and all fails. His position thereby becomes only so much the worse.

But grace and blessing being attached to the person of Him just born, all the consequences necessarily flow forth. After all, it was the intervention of God accomplishing the counsel of His

love, the settled purpose of His good pleasure. And Jesus once there, the consequences could not fail. Whatever interruption there might be to their fulfillment, Jesus was their surety. He was come into the world. He contained in His person, He was the expression of, all these consequences. The presence of the Son of God in the midst of sinners said to all spiritual intelligency, "Peace on the earth"

The third thing was the good pleasure,* the affection of God, in men. Nothing more simple, since Jesus was a man. He had not taken hold of angels.

It was a glorious testimony that the affection, the good pleasure, of God was centred in this poor race, now afar from Him, but in which He was pleased to accomplish all His glorious counsels. So John i., "the life was the light of men."

In a word, it was the power of God present in grace in the person of the Son of God taking part in the nature, and interesting Himself in the lot, of a being who had departed from Him, and making him the sphere of the accomplishment of all His counsels, and of the manifestation of His grace and His nature to all His creatures. What a position for man; for it is indeed in man that all this is accomplished! The whole universe was

* This is the same word as when it is said of Christ, "In whom I am well pleased" It is beautiful to see the unjealous celebration by these holy beings of the advancement of another race to this exalted place by the incarnation of the Word. It was God's glory, and that sufficed them. This is very beautiful.

to learn in man, and in what God therein was for **man**, that which God was in Himself, and the fruit of all His glorious counsels, as well as its complete rest in His presence, according to His nature of love. All this was implied in the birth of that Child of whom the world took no notice. Natural and marvellous subject of praise to the holy inhabitants of heaven, unto whom God had made it known! It was glory to God in the highest.



"THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, COME."

Beloved! often it is given to us to sing with yearning, joyous hearts:

"The days are passing by, the years flow on apace.

Lord Jesus, Thy return draws nigh; *we long to see Thy face!"*

and, nearing the close of another year—another year of grace, long-suffering, *not slackness*, on the Lord's part. (Oh! still unsaved one, if this should meet *your* eye, mark it well—"the day of the Lord *will* come.") Another year marked as ever with the patience and the grace of the "God of patience" (Rom. xv. 5) and the "God of all grace" (1 Pet. v. 10) in His ways with us, His own. It is a rare joy to us, His called ones (called unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus), to trace adoringly the continuity of *His* way with us, manifesting the steadfastness with which He pursues His purpose and with which He will pursue it unto the full fruition thereof, and this is as His

strong wine for our heavy hearts, in view of the rapidity of the declension in the House of God upon earth—a declension which in its impetus threatens to carry everything before it ; but faith can still speak exultingly of Him who is able to keep us without stumbling, and He has assured us, “ My counsel shall stand, and I will do *all* my pleasure ” (Is. xlv. 10).

If it was given to a Moses in a day of impending ruin to pray, “ shew me now *Thy* way, *that I may know Thee*,” how blessed for us now to discover His way, His undeviating way ! As witness it prefigured in the history of Eleazer and Rebekah in the words so fraught with meaning to us, “ the servant took Rebekah and went *his way*.” And what was *his way* ? Naturally we would have looked for a graphic description of the desert journey, its dangers, and the way through them all ; but no such account meets the eye. We see the espoused one equipped for the journey in such manner that she is to be carried across at the cost of the father for whose son she had been bespoken, that father’s house having furnished full provision for the whole way. The start is made, told out in the words already quoted, “ the servant took Rebekah and went his way,” and then we read these heart-stirring words, “ and Isaac came.” Ah ! my soul ! if this was the way of the servant, simply to bring Rebekah and Isaac together, what is the way of the Servant of the Father and the Son (the Holy Ghost) to-day, but to accomplish, as accom-

plish He will, the meeting between the Royal One ("the root and the offspring of David") and His bride. And, as the eye is lifted to take in that heavenly vision, the scene in that eastern land of old fades from view, and its imperfections are apparent. Isaac's voice could not be heard by Rebekah on the journey across ; but oh ! spouse of Christ ! what ravishing sound is this that greets thine ear upon the way ? " I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star." What wilt thou say to this ? If the presentation to Rebekah's heart of the unseen and unheard Isaac, the father's son, produced the unhesitating reply, " I will go," what hast thou to say to that voice that sets in motion every chord of thy heart, for it is " the voice of my beloved ! behold He cometh ? " Ah ! what canst thou say but, " Come " ?

But, mark, if thou art to be in *His* company shortly and forever, in whose company art thou the bride found travelling onward now ? Ah ! thy heart would have played the laggard's part long ages ago in thine encounters upon the desert way if thou hadst not been furnished, by the Father who desires thee for His Son and by the Son who yearns for thee, with such an Escort, for it is thy divine Escort that keeps thine eye uplifted and thine heart attuned. " The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Long has He led thee on, but thou art not travel-worn—thou hast been carried all the

way, through varied scenes. Pentecostal glories once were thine manifestly below. He was then with thee. What shall be said of thy place below now when those glories are no longer visible? Ah! thy fickle heart! But He, thine Escort, and thy Guide, He has been journeying on with thee all through, is still with thee, and ever shall be; and, in concert with Him, thou dost raise the cry, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come."

And this is His way as truly now as when He came forth from the Father.

"The Holy Ghost is leading,
Home to the Lamb, His bride.

Listen yet again as at the last expiring hour of another year that voice, well known to thee, in its eternal unchanging sweetness, speaks to thee; "Surely I come quickly." And as thine eye beholds that coming One, thou dost not need to put the question to thy Guide, "What man is this?" But again, *thy* voice is heard, as, led onward still by the way of the Spirit, thine undeviating Escort and Guide—His Paraclete, His Comforter, His Advocate within thee—thou canst not forbear to burst forth, "Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus."

Nor is the provision for the passage across the sands of the desert yet remaining rendered scant, because of the length of the way thou hast already been brought, as is evidenced by the words thy Guide speaks in thine ear as He still leads thee on—even these, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."