

THE REMEMBRANCER

*A MAGAZINE FOR THE LORD'S PEOPLE
PUBLISHED MONTHLY
("IF THE LORD WILL.")*

"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."

—2 PET. i. 12, 13.

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The Remembrancer

STOCK-TAKING.

“Set your heart on your ways.”

(Haggai i. 5, 7. Margin.)

The above is, as given in the margin, the literal translation and conveys more force than “consider your ways.” There are stated seasons for stock-taking among the careful business men of the world. They like to know, as far as possible, exactly how they stand in their business and leave nothing in uncertainty. The blessed Lord said (Luke xvi.) that “the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light.” Let us then who, through grace, are of the latter class take a lesson from the former. The beginning of another year, seems to be a suitable occasion for spiritual stock-taking. How beautiful and forcible are the words “Set your heart on your ways,” for there needs to be real *heart* and *conscience* work in a matter of such serious import.

That it may not be a superficial thing, we would do well to remember the lesson taught in Psalm lxxiii. : how the one there whilst judging on nature's platform formed an

entirely erroneous judgment; so much so that, after being in "the sanctuary of God," he says, "my heart was grieved and I was pricked in my veins," for his previous wrong estimate of the matter before him. Now a child of this world might go so far as to change his opinion. But what marks the 'child of light,' when he has been truly in the light of God's presence ("in Thy light we see light" Ps. xxxvi.) and finds himself wrong, is that he not only changes his opinion, but judges and abhors *himself* for his previous wrong estimate. So, in Psalm lxxiii., he proceeds, "so foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before Thee."

Beloved 'child of light' it is a most blessed but most solemn thing getting really into the presence of God and having to do with Himself. We are creatures of such mixed motives and so apt to look at things from nature's stand point, and there are so many influences that act and blind our judgment: our likes and dislikes, self-interest, self-will, &c., which are only really detected when we get into the presence of God. In Leviticus x. 9, 10, the priestly family were enjoined "not to drink wine nor strong drink" (anything that would excite nature) "when going into the tabernacle of the congregation" (where God dwelt among them, see Ex. xxix. 43-46). Why? "Lest ye

die," which for us is loss of communion, the result of which would be utter inability to carry out the priestly function that belonged to them as mentioned in verse 10, viz., to "put difference between holy and unholy" (what was fit for God and the opposite) "and between unclean and clean" (what was fit for the 'child of light' and the opposite). All this to precede "teaching," ver. 11. (Compare Isaiah lii. 11).

Now let us turn to Psalm cxxxix. "O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me." All excuses and the subterfuges of our deceitful, treacherous hearts are unavailing now.

Then in ver. 2, "The downsitting and uprising known"; the inmost "thought" understood. Ver. 3. The "path" (walking about) "and lying down" (couch) compassed" (lit. 'winnowed'); every detail thoroughly sifted. The result being, "Thou understandest (art thoroughly acquainted with) *all my ways.*";

Every thing about me, not merely what meets the eye of man, the very thoughts and motives *ALL laid bare and detected.*

When creatures of such mixed motives as we are get really into the presence of God there can be but one result. What is it? It comes out clearly in Job's case. Now Job was one of whom the Lord said, "There is

none like him in the earth." There was, nevertheless, something in his heart which the Lord saw and which He would have Job see and judge. In Job xxvii., comes out the self-complacency, self-sufficiency and taking credit to himself of what God had done for and in him. Well, Job was like many one meets in the present day—converted, knowing a good many truths which they have heard by the hearing of the ear, but who have never really known what it is to stand in God's presence; consequently they are characterized by a good deal of self-complacency and self-sufficiency and a fairly good opinion of themselves. Now, good opinion of self betokens moral distance from God. Job could talk about God quite fluently and say a great many true things about His greatness and His majesty, &c., which he had "heard by the hearing of the ear." All that, yet one thing had never happened to him; he had never seen himself in the presence of God. Dear fellow 'child of light' has there ever been a moment in your history when the word of God was applied in such power by the Holy Ghost to your inmost soul that you felt yourself, as to your conscience, in the very presence of God. There is one result inevitable when such is the case. It comes out clearly in Job's case: "Now mine eye

seeth THEE. Wherefore I abhor ('loathe') myself and repent in dust and ashes." Abhorrence of *self* (not merely of what he had said or done) and self-abasement was the result of Job's seeing himself in God's presence. We see the same result too in Isaiah's case. See Is. vi.

Just a few words more and I am done. Turn again to Psalm cxxxix., and see other precious results of being truly in God's presence and having been "searched" and "known" and sifted and scrutinized. In ver. 17, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them." And then lest there might be anything remaining to hinder the full enjoyment of God's thoughts and communion with HIM, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." He realizes that God "desires truth in the inward parts" (Ps. li.) and feels he cannot trust his own heart (he that does so "is a fool," Prov. xxviii. 26) to search it thoroughly, but he can now trust God's heart and so turns to Him in full and perfect confidence to do so. What reality! What uprightness of heart has been brought about. Dear fellow 'child of light' get alone with God and let the stock-taking be a deep reality!

THE LORD'S REQUEST.

Thy parting word, Lord JESUS—
 "This do, remember Me,"
 To those whom sorrow gathered
 That night so close to Thee ;
 By grace our hearts do listen
 To hear its echo still,
 It strikes a chord within us,
 And praise our hearts doth fill.

Thy parting word, Lord JESUS,
 Has touched the deepest spring,
 And wakes anew affections
 Our waiting hearts within ;
 Thy parting word, when sorrow
 Around Thy footsteps pressed,
 When Satan, death, and judgment
 Their fears to Thee addressed.

Thy parting word, Lord JESUS,
 Ere judgment on Thee broke,
 Ere on Thy holy Person
 Came down that righteous stroke ;
 The wrath of God before Thee,
 Whilst foes did gather round,
 There too Thy "friend" betrayed Thee,
 And darkness did abound.

Thy parting word, Lord JESUS,
 Before Thou didst endure
 The being of God forsaken,
 Our blessing to secure ;
 Oh, grace beyond expression !
 Which sought that we should be,
 All through Thy time of absence,
 In death remembering Thee.

Thy parting word, Lord JESUS,
 We treasure in our heart,
 And from the love which spoke it
 We never more can part :
 Soon, Lord, Thou wilt receive us
 Unto Thyself on high,
 Till then we Thee remember,
 Who for our sins didst die.

ASSEMBLING OURSELVES TOGETHER.

It is quite certain that those who are whole-hearted for Christ desire to be in His company. They instinctively wend their way to the spot where He is known to be. Is there such a spot on earth? Yes, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt, xviii. 20.)

No one who is truly conscious of the greatness and excellency of His person, and of the blessedness of communion with Him, would willingly be absent from that favoured place. A neglected Lord's Table, and a neglected prayer-meeting, speak aloud of the Laodicean state of the heart towards Him. We read that of old "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts ii. 42). Alas that there should be such a lack of continuing steadfastly now!

Does the Lord say to the Father, "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee" (Heb. ii. 42), and can we suppose that He fails to notice whether we are there or not, to join in the song He leads?

In the coming day of review before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. v. 10), how shall we take the disclosure, that self-indulgence, a little unfavourable weather, or a

tiff with a brother or sister in Christ, has outweighed with us all the mighty motives for a loving response to His wish, "This do in remembrance of Me"? (Luke xxii. 19).

It is deeply humbling to think that any who have tasted the Lord's love can take advantage of not having to work on the Lord's day, to spend its morning hours in bed, and that others can excuse their absence from its meetings on the ground of visiting, or receiving visits from friends. Priceless opportunities of gratifying the heart of the Lord, and of showing our attachment to Him in the scene of His rejection are thus wasted and lost.

It is mere mockery to repeat "Come Lord Jesus," and use glowing expressions of desire to be with Him in glory, if, by our absence from His assembly, we betray our indifference to His presence here.

Beloved, it is high time to awake out of sleep (Rom. xiii. 11; Ephes. v. 14). May we take to heart the solemn and impressive exhortation of the word, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the the day approaching" (Heb. x. 25).

Closely connected with the foregoing is the question of *time*. Where is our rever-

ence for the Lord, or our sense of His grace, where our responsive love, if we come with lagging steps, five, ten or fifteen minutes after He has taken His place in the midst of His own ?

It was easy in the freshness of first love, to come early to the place where He manifests Himself in such a peculiarly blessed way. Excuses were not made. Has He become less precious ? The moments we may thus spend together with Him on earth stained with His blood, are swiftly passing away. Let us not willingly lose one of them.

It is touching to remember that no thought of all the sufferings that awaited Him, of Himself presently becoming the true passover, "sacrificed for us," delayed the Lord's appearing at His last paschal feast. "When *the hour was come*, He sat down and the twelve apostles with Him (Luke xxii. 14).

Oh for a holy eagerness to be where He is !



FRAGMENT.—If the *head* thinks, it is always sceptical, can be nothing else, because it is altogether unable to comprehend God. He would not be God if human understanding could measure Him. God sets the conscience in activity in its true position through faith alone : we are subject, and acknowledge God in His transcendence.

A FAMINE OF THE WORD OF GOD.

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of *hearing the words of the LORD*: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to *seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.*” (Amos viii. 11, 12.)

In time of plenty who thinks of famine? But famine sometimes succeeds plenty. It was so in Egypt. There were first seven years of plenty, and then seven years of famine; and all the plenty was forgotten when famine consumed the land. So it is sometimes with the ministry of the word of God. At a time when many honoured servants of the Lord are actively engaged in ministering Christ to souls, there are few perhaps who consider the possibility of scarcity following the plenty. It may be that the greatest blessing that God gives to souls on earth is a plentiful and seasonable ministry of His precious word which testifies of Christ; and yet some of us can look back and see place after place where this was so, which has now become little more than a state of desolation and almost famine of the word; so that those who are children of God are barely *existing* instead of being in holy liberty devoted to the Lord.

About this some believers may be ready

to say, "If we are deprived of all the Lord's 'gifts,' we still have the Bible." True; and we would add, "Ye need not that any man teach you:" for you have received the Holy Spirit, who can "guide you into all the truth;" and happy are those who thus find daily food for their souls. But there is another side to this. How many are there who read the Bible as a routine, and get nothing for their souls? Why is this? Are we not told that Moses and the prophets were read in the Jewish synagogue every sabbath-day? So that, with the Scriptures in their hands, and read at stated intervals, there was such a famine of the word of God, that they knew not Him of whom the Scriptures which they read spake, but actually fulfilled the same in condemning Him. Again, was not Nicodemus well-instructed in the facts and letter of Scripture? Yet was he not ignorant of the foundation truth that a man "must be born again" either to "see" or to "enter into the kingdom of God"? And is it not in the present day most appalling, with so many Bibles and so many readers, to find so few who declare with divine certainty, founded on God's word, their present possession of eternal life; and fewer still who speak of God's word, because it testifies of Christ, being the daily food of their souls?

Is there not at this moment with many, and in many places, "a famine of the word"? As in the time to which we have referred, those only who in their need had to do with Joseph had bread, so it is now. Christ is our Life-sustainer; and many are faint, and in perplexity and uncertainty, because they do not go to Him to be nourished by His truth. As in olden time, the people came to Joseph, saying, "Give us bread," so all believers have to learn that there is a famine everywhere apart from the blessing of the greater than Joseph. We are told, "There was *no bread* in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine And they came unto Joseph, and said. Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence?" (Gen. xlvii. 13-15.) Now Jacob was a man of faith, and he bitterly felt the lack of food. He wanted bread, and knew that it could only be obtained from One who was over all the land of Egypt, whatever the instrumentality might be that brought it. This Joseph was a remarkable type of Christ risen and glorified. He had been hated by his brethren, sold by them, falsely accused, put into a dungeon, and after he had been taken out of it was highly exalted. *Then* it was he became, by

God's ordering, the dispenser of bread *to preserve life*—a striking type of the Lord Jesus, our Life-sustainer. Jacob and his sons were objects of God's love and care, and they fainted for lack of "corn." They hungered for bread; nothing less than the bruised "corn of wheat" could satisfy and sustain them; nothing else could meet their need. Have it they must, if possible; for they were famishing; and it could be had only from the typically dead and risen Joseph. May we never separate the Scriptures from Christ, of whom they testify!

Are we, dear Christian reader, panting and longing for more of Christ? Is it Christ, or something else, we are so desiring? Is it with us a settled truth that Christ, whom we have joyfully known as the Saviour of sinners, is the only food and Sustainer of our souls? And can this be enjoyed without personal intercourse with Him through the Scriptures and prayer? In the former He speaks to us; in the latter, when real, we speak to Him.

When we read the Bible are we remembering that "He filleth *the hungry* with good things"; looking up to Him and saying, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth"; and, as to the attitude of our hearts, "as new born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby;" con-

sciously in His presence (like Mary of old) sitting at the feet of Jesus *hearing His word*. Then it is that it is His own voice to our inmost souls. We may be sure that it is only by personal intercourse and communion with Him that we can be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"; "strong in faith; giving glory to God."

True the famine is sore in many parts of Christendom. Many even of God's children seem to be lean and *just existing*, without any power to step out in the ways of faith. There is no hope of reviving in the souls of such but by having personally to do *with Christ where He is*. Mere formal routine in Bible reading will not suffice; but, through the Scriptures, having intercourse with the Lord Jesus—feeding upon Him who is the Anti-type of the "manna" as well as of "the old corn of the land."

Like dear old Jacob, you may not be in utter destitution. You may have some balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds; but these things are not "corn," nor can they supply its place. You may perhaps see beautiful things in Scripture; you may have committed to memory some of the sweet incidents there found, be familiar with many of its remarkable historical records, have received solutions of what many call difficult passages of the word, and

know that you belong to God, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Jacob knew that he was the object of divine love and care; but he also keenly felt that, good as "balm" and "honey," "spices" and "nuts," were in their proper places, they were not "corn," and could not satisfy his pressing need. He therefore said, "*Go again, buy us a little food.*"

Be assured, beloved Christian reader, it is not the discovery of beautiful things in Scripture, the solving of intricate questions; but it is *Christ*, of whom the word testifies, who is *the food of our souls*. It is not "a little balm" or "honey," "spices" or "myrrh," "nuts" or "almonds," that can sustain and nourish our souls, but "the old corn of the land"—having *personally to do with Christ Himself*, who is crowned with glory and honour, and soon coming to receive us unto Himself.

Most surely we believe that with many *the famine is sore in the land*. The unbelief as to the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth, our need of Him, and the supposed competency of the natural mind for searching, receiving, and communicating the deep things of God, close the door of access to the true Joseph's store. It is when men and the world are rightly considered by us according to Scripture, and it is settled by us that

there is nothing for our souls in what is seen and temporal, that we are in a state for looking to the fulness of Christ as the only source of supply for our spiritual necessities. When this is not clearly held, the believer easily glides into the refinements of the world ; such as science, literature, the fine arts, or its so-called innocent amusements, which are often stepping-stones to other absorbing and soul-damaging departments of the world socially, commercially, political-ly and religiously.

Our first pursuits in the morning generally indicate where our *hearts* are. The children of Israel had to gather their daily food before sunrise, or they would be too late ; and if the believer can rise from his bed and go about the business of this life before he has looked up to the Lord, and turned to the Scriptures which testify of Him for renewal of the inward man, it is more than probable that *his heart* has got away from God. Nothing can possibly make up for a lack of food, for "Christ is all;" and those who really live upon Him can say, "Farewell to cold and dry formality and routine," can detach themselves from worldly religiousness and every false way, and say—

"None but Christ to me be given,
None but Christ on earth or heaven."

Do not many of the religious books of

the day bear evident marks of a famine of the word of God? After reading pages, we have sometimes said, "There is no ministry of Christ here. Where is food for souls?" And why do we thus speak? Is it merely to expose the barrenness of the pages? Far be the thought; but rather to warn Christian writers and readers against wasting their time and energies and money in that which neither honours the Lord nor feeds souls. We are sometimes reminded of the prophet's words, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Isa. lv. 2). Oh, the untold blessedness of looking up without a veil to our Lord Jesus Christ on the Father's throne, who is Head over all things to the church which is His body, and finding joy, sustainment, and comfort in the contemplation of the infinite perfectness of His person, work, excellencies, offices, fulness, and glory, as revealed in Holy Scripture! Then our earnest cry will surely be—

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

We are convinced that it is not true love to refrain from looking this weighty subject

fairly in the face. That Christians generally are longing after more of Christ, and that many of the religious books of the present day give a solid ministry of Christ to souls, we fear is far, very far, from being true. The inspired prophecy of Amos to God's ancient people is very solemn: "Behold, the days come saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of *hearing the words of the LORD*: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it" !!



PHILADELPHIA AND LAODICEA.

(*Extract from a Letter*).

Laodicea began in John's time. I do not doubt there is a consecutive history in the passage, which I divide into two parts (chaps. ii. and iii.), for it ends in Thyatira or popery. In chap. iii., you have Protestantism (Sardis) alongside. Philadelphia is a church without pretension, which *keeps Christ's word*, and does not deny His name; which, further, keeps the word of His patience; which still expects Christ, though it may seem He will never come. He is waiting, and in the patience in which He waits

(for the longsuffering of God is salvation. He is not slack concerning His promise), taking His word to guide, and still waiting; and such will be kept. But it is not the party which *outwardly* characterizes the church which is addressed—all in a general sense—but, I believe, those who have ears to hear.

It is not apostacy, nor heresy, nor Babylon which *characterizes* Laodicea but much more, I think, professed light from human sources, from the human mind, not having God's eye-salve; nor has it the gold tried in the fire, Christ as divine righteousness; the sum of the value of all things (just the reality of that which is divine) known by divine teaching. I do not think the seven churches go down a regular declivity. Smyrna is God's stopping decline by persecution. Philadelphia is not decline, nor Sardis; the tendency is there, but it is not absolute or universal. A great deal that is neither here nor there has been said as to Philadelphia and Laodicea; but those of Philadelphia are not the description of the progress of evil. Not keeping Christ's word, but denying His name was their danger, and in this they had overcome. The other was dropping the expectation of the Lord—the word of His patience. In this, too, they had overcome; and they had two promises. Kept

from (*ek* not *dia*) the hour of temptation, they would be off before it; and the ecclesiastical powers, which had despised them, should be humbled to recognize that Christ had loved them. They are singularly identified with Christ. But the faithful in Philadelphia are called to overcome as much as in Laodicea. Faithfulness in the circumstances of each particular assembly is what such are respectively called to.



“IN RETURNING AND REST SHALL YE BE SAVED; IN QUIETNESS AND IN CONFIDENCE SHALL BE YOUR STRENGTH.” (*Isa. xxx. 15*),

Let nothing make thee sad or fretful
Or too regretful,
Be still.

What God hath ordered must be right,
Then find in this thine own delight,
His will.

Why should'st thou fill to-day with sorrow
About to-morrow,
My heart?

One watches all with care most true;
Doubt not that He will give thee too
Thy part.

Only be steadfast: never waver
Nor seek earth's favour;
But rest.

Thou knowest what God's will must be
For all His children, so for thee——
The best.

“MY MEDITATION OF HIM SHALL BE SWEET: I WILL BE GLAD IN THE LORD.”

(Ps. civ. 34.)

The life of the Lord JESUS was one of constant unbroken communion. His spirit or heart was the altar on which the fire was ever burning (See Lev. vi.). And thus, if no peculiar circumstance directed or formed His fellowship with God, yet His soul was in the sanctuary; still the fire was alive from its own necessary virtue.

The solitariness of our Lord in worship is much to be observed. As it is said of Him, He got up before day, or went out into a solitary place, to pray, that He might be marked as *alone* in prayer. So it is said, He withdrew Himself and prayed; He continued all night in prayer; He was alone praying. Nor is He once seen in prayer even with His disciples, though He owned their praying, both teaching them and encouraging them to pray.

Why, then, was this? If He taught and encouraged them to pray, and also prayed Himself, why did He not join them in prayer?

This may be the answer. His prayers had a character in them which none others could have had. He was heard “for His piety” (Heb. v.). O! He needed no mediator,

but stood accepted in Himself. He pleaded no one's merit; He used no mercy-seat with blood upon it. This was the character of His communion in prayer; but into this there was no entrance for any worshipper but Himself. He prayed in a temple erected, as it were, for such a worshipper as the Son of God, who offered prayer at an altar the like of which was not to be seen anywhere; it had no pattern on the top of the mount. He was a worshipper of a peculiar order, as He was a priest of a peculiar order, or a servant of a peculiar order. He did not owe service, but He learnt it; He did not owe worship, but He rendered it. He was the voluntary Servant (Ex. xxi. 5; Heb. v. 8) and the personal accepted Worshipper. Thus He prayed "alone."



COMMUNION; OR PART WITH CHRIST.

(JOHN XIII, 1-17).

Three things, it is plain, especially come out in this chapter: first, the full and perfect finishing of the work which the Father had given the Lord Jesus to do; secondly, while that gives the full consciousness of the place we are in with God, there is the jealous care, and the holiness and watchful-

ness in the path in which we are called to walk down here; and thirdly, the blessed and gracious love of the Lord, "having loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end," and the way He made Himself a servant in order to minister to us.

It is important for us as christians to see our place with God in Christ; to know distinctly what that place is. Many sincere souls do not know it—do not know their relationship with God, and what the blessed Son of God has done for them in dying for them and bringing them to God; and, at the same time, how this bears upon holiness of walk.

The Lord shows here that no defilement can be allowed, and then adds the measure of holiness. Suitability of walk and conduct flows from the place you are in. You cannot expect any one who is not a child or a servant to behave as a child or a servant. Evidently, then, it is of all importance to know the place I am in, as all my duties flow from it. The moment the relationship is there, the duties are there; but you cannot get the relationship by doing the duties. It is of all importance to see the connection between the grace of God that brings salvation, and our practical walk; we must see what the relationship is, before we can

have the consciousness of its duties. The Lord would bring us, perhaps, through painful exercises, to the consciousness of the place we are in, and the gracious loving provision there is for us in that place never to allow unholiness. If it were only the being saved, this would be a blessed thing; but He brings us into positive relationship with Himself, in infinite love and perfect righteousness. He came into the world of sinners for this. We have the treasure in earthen vessels; but the relationship is settled: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Therefore His first word to the Magdalene after His resurrection is, "Go tell My brethren, I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God." My Father is your Father too. He wishes them in His place; He has brought them into it; and He tells them where He has brought them.

But this is not all. The moment I estimate the cross according to the word of God, I get to this, as the apostle says, "If one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor. v. 14). I see One who came in unspeakable love to save me. God said, I have yet one Son; one thing I can do—to see if I can waken up right thoughts and feelings in these husbandmen. But when they saw the Son, they cast Him out and slew Him.

In calling ourselves Christians, we profess the Son of God in a world which has cast Him out ; we are in a world of sinners, condemned sinners.

God was dealing with man : He tried and tested man, who had got out of his place where God had put him in Paradise, to show whether his heart could be reclaimed. But all this ended in bringing out the condition in which man was ; it showed that he preferred anything to God—money, pleasure, duties (I do not speak now of sin), but no object too small to govern the heart and to shut out Christ. Take dress : is this too small ? Take money : it is the same case with all our hearts. You never found a natural man thinking of Christ as the object of his heart. If alone in a room for two or three hours, he thinks of his sorrows, of his joys, but not of Christ.

You never find a man ashamed of a false religion. A Mahometan, if you are making a bargain with him, will stop to say his prayers, if the hour comes ; and you may wait till he has done. Of gods that even man might be ashamed of, they are not ashamed. But you find true christians ashamed of confessing Christ. The true God, people are ashamed of ; but of a false religion, never !

Any object and every object in the

natural heart has displaced Christ. I own JESUS the Son of God has come and died for me; and do I prefer a bit of dress to Him? All this tells us what Scripture says, "the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. viii, 7); that every object is dominant over it; and even when we do love God, we are often ashamed of Him!

It is not now a question of trying to arrange ourselves a little and set things straight; but the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. My natural condition is, *I am lost*.

Where men get their enjoyment, if you only bring Christ in, it is all spoiled. The natural man never enjoys Christ, and as christians we have to watch ourselves, lest we slip into that state of things.

First comes the honest conviction that I am lost; and then I find what God has done. And this is another thing altogether.

The law came to *require from* me; but Christ came to *bring salvation to* me, because I am lost. If I own myself as a sinner, I cannot go into heaven as a sinner, of course; so the question is, What has He done for me that I may be cleansed? Supposing I have been brought thoroughly to confess that I am lost, I turn to Christ, and what do I find there? That, when I did

not think of God, God was thinking of me. This is what I learn; and I have then, with no seeking of mine, what the spring of God's thoughts and heart were toward me, that He spared not His own Son. If I acknowledge myself as a sinner, I find what the blessed Son of God has done; I find the spring of His heart. He cannot allow sin. He is perfect in holiness and righteousness; and I find Him doing, what love always does when it is real: He considers the whole state of its object. I was dead, and Christ comes into death; judgment was against me, and He takes the judgment. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John i. 14): I see One coming in love and goodness and grace, which astonishes me, as it did the poor woman by the well (John iv). He must bring us into truth and light. He says, You are so vile, you are not fit to show your face to a decent person. But there is the revelation of God in Christ; it comes not as a claim upon me, but as grace to me; it tells me I am a sinner, or why should it come? It brings all this out to me. If the highest measure of grace is the cross of Christ, it is the very thing that shows me where I was. Why should He go down into the dreadful ditch, if there was not some one there to pull out?

I get this perfect work done completely ("I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do" (John xvii. 4)); so that He is set down at the right hand of God, accepted by God. He gave Him in love and accepted Him in righteousness. God is satisfied, more than satisfied—glorified about the sin. The cross is the place where good and evil met completely, absolutely. There all the evil of man is shown out against Christ. He was going about doing good, healing all their diseases; and even Pilate could say "Why, what evil hath He done?" "I find no fault in Him." It was enmity against God.

But if I get all the wickedness of man's heart, what do I find on the other side? Absolute obedience and perfect love to His Father: "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do" (John xiv. 31). Where do I learn love? "Hereby perceive we the love, because He laid down His life for us" (1 John iii. 16).

There is no such perfect display of perfect righteousness anywhere, as in Christ drinking that dreadful cup. I get most solemn righteousness and the perfect love of God to the sinner too. If we look at the moral glory of the cross, the whole question of sin was perfectly settled, and God has glorified

Christ up there. What did He die for? For my sins, according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. xv. 3). If I come as a poor vile sinner to the cross. I see Him bearing my sins in His own body on the tree, and He is now in glory. Has He got my sins there? No! I see Him standing here for me in righteousness, drinking that dreadful cup, the very thought of which made Him sweat as it were great drops of blood. And then, having "by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. i. 3): not like the Jewish priests who were often offering the same sacrifices; but He for ever sat down, because the work is finished. If the work is not perfect, it never will be. I am not speaking now of your appreciation of it, but of the work itself; if we live near to God, we shall appreciate it more every day. But the work is done.

I get then, beloved friends, this blessed truth, that, coming to God by Him, that work is done which is a proof of the love of God to me when I was a sinner, and I find it accepted by God when I was a sinner. Of course my heart is changed too, or I should not care about it in that way.

He is waiting till His enemies are made His footstool, having brought me to God by that work. And God is anxious in His love

to put it before us in every shape in which it can meet our need.

Do you say you are guilty? but God has justified you. Defiled by sin? yes, but God says, I have cleansed you with the precious blood of My Son; but you say, Oh! I have offended God dreadfully. So you have; but God has forgiven you. Then the Holy Ghost came down at Pentecost, and is given to every one who believes "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise"; "Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost"; "If any man confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." Oh! that those words rested in our hearts and consciences, beloved friends.

There is the place we are brought into; but we shall not get fully into the glory till the Lord Jesus Christ comes, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him." "The glory Thou hast given Me, I have given them." The purpose of God is (I am speaking to you as believers) to bring us into the same glory as His Son.

I earnestly desire for your hearts, that you should get clear hold of this—how all is cleared of the first Adam, that we might have all the blessing the Second Man gets. He became a man that He might be the

Firstborn among many brethren. The dignity of His Person is always maintained ; but He will never be satisfied until He sees you there in the same glory, with Himself and as Himself for ever.

If I pay a man's debts, and leave him without a farthing, he is a ruined man still ; but Christ has paid our debts, and has, so to speak, given us an immense fortune besides ; for "as is the Heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly" (1 Cor. xv. 48). The Scriptures teem with passages which show the way in which we are associated with Himself. As soon as Christ was gone up into heaven, the witness of divine righteousness, the Holy Ghost came down, that we might know it. "Because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). How can I say Father, if I do not know that I am a child ? It would be hypocrisy. If the conscience is purged by the blood of Christ, relationship is known by His Person, and then I must walk as a child ; but I must know that I am a child first. You cannot expect people to walk as christians if they are not christians. Something else has to come first : they have to confess their sins, and be saved by faith.

Now if you believe in the Lord Jesus, beloved friends, can you say, I know I am in

Christ? "At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." I have to manifest the life of Jesus in my mortal body, but I must have it first: how can I manifest it if I have not got it?

Supposing I have listened to that word, "My Father and your Father," He has brought me into the same place as Himself, and I am waiting for God's Son to take me there in person. Death has lost its sting; and if I die, it is to be with the Lord. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8). The full result will not be till He comes again, and the marriage of the Lamb takes place; we are not in the glory yet, we know.

We might think that Christ having gone up into glory, all His service was over; but it is not so: love never ceases, and never gives up the happiness of those it loves. If a child goes wrong, the father's heart yearns over him; he may have to punish, but the heart goes after him. Christ's love is perfect, and it never gives up its service if it can make the loved one happy: and this we get here. The supper over—He came from God and was going back to God in all the blessed perfectness in which He came; and what does He do? He had said, "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke xxii.

27). Is there an end of His service now? No; He rises from supper, testifies He cannot stay with them here, but tells them He must have them with Him there. He could not stay as Messiah. I am going away as your Forerunner, "I go to prepare a place for you."

We get this in two ways. First, He is as Priest serving, "He ever liveth" [think of that!] "to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii. 25). This is not exactly for sin, but that we may not sin. I a poor failing thing upon the earth, and He is always at God's right hand occupied with me. But in this chapter is another thing. Supposing I do sin, how are my feet to be washed? (This alludes no doubt to the custom of the priest's consecration. His body was all washed when he was consecrated: but whenever he went do anything at the altar, he washed his hands and feet. It was as much as to say, there must be holiness). "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet;" he cannot be regenerate over again. The word used for washing the body and washing the feet is not the same in the original of this chapter or anywhere else.

We are cleansed by water and by blood. But then there is always this danger: here I am, walking through this world always

ready to defile me. There is danger of picking up dirt upon my feet. And when the Lord goes into heaven *He takes what heaven is as a measure of our walk.* He does not pray that we should be taken out of the world, but kept from evil (John xvii. 15). Looking up to the Lord in glory, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory (2 Cor. iii. 18). "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 Jno. iii. 3). I see Christ in glory; I know I am going to be like Him; and I therefore want to walk as like Him now as ever I can.

But supposing we fail (there is no excuse for doing so, it is our own carelessness and neglect) then He says, I am going up on high and I shall wash your feet. I have washed you here, "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Peter was ashamed of seeing the Lord there like a servant to wash his feet; but, when he hears he must be washed, he says, "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." No; He says, Not quite right. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father . . . and He is the propitiation for our sins." The propitiation is unchanged, but another service comes in. If I have sinned, I do not deny that I am under the blood of sprinkling. But can the Father

have fellowship with an unholy thing? No! It says, "if any man sin," not "if any man repent." The advocacy brings us to repentance, to be sure.

If I have let only an evil thought come in, do you think God has communion with that? It were blasphemy to say so. I have found my pleasure, if only for a moment, in what made Christ's agony on the cross. Horrible to say so! But if it made His agony, it cannot be imputed to me. I am convicted, humbled, led like poor Peter to repentance. It was not because he repented that Christ prayed for him; but Peter repented because Christ prayed.

What I get in the present work of the Lord Jesus is this: if by any thing I defile my feet, He takes away the taint because I belong to His place. He does not raise the question whether I do belong to it, He acts because I do belong to it. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Holiness is maintained, because I am in this relationship. God, as it were, says, I cannot have defiled people in My house. He chastens that we may be partakers of His holiness. He brings the word of God, which reveals what I am, to bear upon my conscience. He restores my soul and leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

The Christian is standing between the

first coming of Christ which accomplished redemption, and His second coming which takes him to glory; and meanwhile the Holy Ghost is given to every one that believes. He makes the cry, Abba, Father, the witness that I am a child, and He is the earnest of the inheritance. He gives me the certainty of the efficacy of Christ's work when He first came, and leads my heart on to the glory.

But I must have holiness, and I get grace still working and giving me the measure of what I am. It tells me I am going to be like Christ; and he who has this hope purifies himself. And here is the measure of my walk—"even as He is pure." Not that I have attained; I never shall, until I am with Christ; but I ought to be going on, never to soil my feet, never to do anything inconsistent. There are three things: we are to "walk worthily of God who hath called us to His kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. ii. 12); "worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing" (Col. i. 10); "worthily of the vocation wherewith we are called" (Ephes. iv. 1). Our calling is put before us in these three shapes.

We get the perfect settled consciousness of the relationship into which we are brought; and then the conduct which suits those who are in this place.

Do your souls know, beloved friends, supposing you profess it, that your consciences have got hold of the efficacy of His work? "Peace I leave with;" can you say you have got it? Do you fear the judgment-seat? There is no place in which a christian may be so bold, because, raised in glory as He is so are we. Do you believe that your sins will be no more remembered? Many a one sees it in Scripture and says it is true; but can you stand in thought before the judgment seat, in the consciousness that it is so? that you are become divine righteousness before God?

One more question. If you can thus stand, are you seeking to be in everything the epistle of Christ? Whatever you do, in word or deed, to do all in the Name of the Lord JESUS? (We shall need carefulness, searching of the word, etc.—exercises which make good soldiers). The motive is the great thing. If I love my father and he wishes any book to be laid this way instead of that, I put it so, because I love my father.

The Lord give us to have His will as the one object of our lives, the motive of all we do—to remember that we are not our own but bought with a price. May He give us to have our eyes upon Him, that we may know His love and seek His will!

A FEW WORDS ON CONDUCTING BUSINESS IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

“ And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress (‘overreach,’ *New Trans.*) one another. According to the number of years after the jubilee thou shalt buy of thy neighbour, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee. According to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it : for according to the number of years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee. Ye shall not therefore oppress (‘overreach’) one another ; but thou shalt fear thy God : for I am the LORD your God.”
Lev. xxv. 14-17.

In the above Scripture we learn that in all the dealings and trafficking of an Israelite he was to have respect to the year of jubilee, when the hand of God would restore in righteousness what the hand of man had disordered in His people's portion. The only way to conduct his traffic righteously was to have respect to the year of jubilee, measuring the bargain and the value of things according to that. In principle this holds now. For all our commerce in the affairs of this world should be ordered with our eyes resting on the return of the Lord Jesus ; and our *hearts* acquainting themselves with this, that *man's world* is soon to end, and all present interests to cease.

In Israel, God watched over the worldly dealings of His people in such a way as to provide for the restoration of everything every fifty years: He then resettled the family estates, and put all in order again. In the church, also, He watches the worldly dealings of His saints; but it is not in order to restore earthly arrangements again, but with respect to the maintaining of *spiritual communion* with Himself. In all their callings He tells His saints, now, "therein abide with God" (1 Cor. vii. 24); and in addressing them, as no longer on the world's platform but, as "risen with Christ," he enjoins, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord JESUS, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Col. iii). The soul, amidst all around that is discordant and disordered, is to be preserved for heavenly citizenship, and exercised in relation to a heavenly life, where the flesh and *man's* world will be gone, and *gone for ever*.

We would do well to bear in mind the solemn warning in Matt. xxv. 48, 49, showing that when the *immediate* return of the Lord loses its place *in the heart* how quickly we settle down to the world's level and the world's ways.



"*Godliness with contentment* is GREAT GAIN" (1 Tim. vi. 6).

"LOSS."

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

TRUE GREATNESS.

(Luke xxii. 14-30.)

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

First of all His desire is to eat that paschal feast with His disciples. He was the only One who knew what it meant—the One to whom it spoke of such a burden as never was nor could be borne by mere man.

And yet with desire He desired to eat of that passover before He suffered. He knew it was the immediate harbinger of His death upon the cross. Yet there was not one of the disciples that so desired to eat it with Him, as He desired to eat it with them. This is love, and love is self-sacrificing.

It was this cup that He told them to divide among themselves—not that of the Lord's supper. Our Lord Jesus never partook of His own supper. He partook of the paschal supper, but not of His own. For this is for us, being the witness of a redemption which He wrought for us (not for Himself, of course). The paschal supper was for Him as well as for the disciples, and He desired to eat it along with them. On the occasion of the passover, after its cup was passed round, He institutes His own supper; but before that He says He was no longer to drink of the fruit of the vine till the kingdom of God was come.

He had done with the earth and had no fellowship more with men in flesh and blood. He took the supper, to Him not a

sign of joy, but of the deepest suffering. The Lord's supper, which speaks to us of perfect peace through His suffering, He needed not: He gave it all to us.

But this very thing forthwith brings out, as grace invariably does, whatever is unjudged in nature. The more love you show, if there is not a heart that answers to it, it is but provoked by it, and takes advantage of it. The very perfection of Christ's love brought out whatever was unjudged in the disciples. As for one of them, there was nothing at all in him but unjudged self, and he betrayed his Master. As for the others, what were they doing? They were striving at that precise moment which of them should be the greatest. That was the question in their minds. Jesus was going to shew that He would become the least and lowest of all, that they might be exalted; yet this was just the moment in which they had this discussion which should be the chief among them. But our Lord turned it to infinite profit, bringing out for us the character of true greatness. Self is never great, and it has the consciousness of its own littleness. Persons strive to be great, when they have no greatness in reality; whereas when the soul has found Christ and when Christ is the Object of the soul, our satisfaction in His greatness forms our affections. Accordingly, here with the disciples, self was their object. Thus they were totally inconsistent with what Christ had made them. Had they had Christ, not only as their life before God, but as the Object of that life, there would have been,

without a thought about it, the real greatness which properly belongs to the child of God.

True greatness at the present time is shewn by being nothing at all. Greatness can go down; greatness, instead of seeking to be served, serves others: greatness now, in an evil world far from God, shews itself in the resources of grace known in Christ before God, and giving out of that fulness which it possesses in Christ. Everything in the world is founded on the exact opposite; and the deeper runs the stream of the world, the greater is the desire to be something, and the desire to parade whatever we think we have. This is flesh in its littleness; and flesh and the world always keep company together. Self likes the world: it holds hard what it has got, and seeks to make a bargain with the world to get more. The knowledge of Christ delivers from all this. But a Christian who does not know that he is a Christian, who does not know what he has got in Christ is entirely inconsistent, and all else must be out of course. In order to have practical power, I must not only have the thing, but know that I have it. Supposing a man possesses all the wealth of India and does not know that he has got it, it is practically useless to him. The consequence is that the man, after the manner of men, is miserable; he can do nothing, serve nothing, help nothing. The possession of the things of this life never makes a man happy. Christ does, and the believer possesses all in Him, and the Holy Spirit is given to know and enjoy it (John xvi. 14, 15; 1 Cor. ii. 12).

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

What is the Bible? The history of the struggle between God and the devil. This one thing runs from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation. It is not merely a question of man, but of Satan working by man to dishonour God. The earth was the place where the battle was fought. The first Adam comes, but falls; and all the history of the Old Testament is the failure of the first Adam, with promises and predictions of the triumph of the Second. Then the New Testament comes; the battle is over, the triumph is won. We

(i. e. believers) are put with the Second Adam, and Christ looks that we should be victorious. But we are never victorious except so far as Christ is our Object, when He is before our eyes at each moment, in each difficulty or trial that comes before us here below. When are we happy? When Christ is before our eyes—not when we are looking back to the happiness of yesterday. Satan would have us look back upon past happiness, and perhaps date our blessing upon such or such a day. But it ought not to be so. I am, of course, to have a joyful recollection of all that the Lord shews me, and I shall certainly not forget the first moment of blessing from Him. But how miserable if this only be our comfort and stability now, and our assurance that we shall be with Christ! Nay; it is a living Christ that we have—a Christ that died and is alive again, and a Christ that would imprint His own character upon us, making us truly great. It is holding fast what Christ has given us that delivers us from littleness, and holding it fast in Christ Himself.

The Lord grant that, strengthened of His grace, we may be enabled thus to do. Then each word of Christ will have its own power over our souls, will be clothed with His own love; it will come to us not as some great draught upon us, as if the Lord could be enriched by us, save only in such honour to Him as really blesses our own souls. It is the consciousness that we have such blessing, such wealth, such dignity in Christ, which gives and keeps us in the feeling that all that is of this world would

rather detract from us than add anything to us. It is not only that we have got Christ, but that there is nothing but Christ that is a real honour or power or glory to the saint of God. And the bright day will come when Jesus will tell us what He told the disciples, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." This was after the discussion of who should be the greatest, after He had before Him the treachery of one disciple, and the unworthy vanity of the others; after all that He says, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." But knowing all that they had been in the past, the trial they had been to Himself, their many weaknesses and failures, yet He puts it as an honour to them, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." It was He who had continued with them, who had sustained and kept them in spite of themselves. Yet see how love delights in saying to us, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom."

The Lord give us then to be stedfast. It is but "a little while." Soon the time of our trials and temptations will close. Soon the time of Christ's dishonour in this world will give place to a throne of glory, and "every eye shall see Him," and every knee bow before Him. May we be faithful to Him for this little while. Bright will be the remembrance of suffering for Him in His presence for ever!

“ A WORD FITLY SPOKEN IS LIKE APPLES
OF GOLD IN PICTURES OF SILVER.”

(Prov. xxv. 11.)

I.

What we call life here below is a system of difficulties, permitted or put together, within and around us, calculated to bring us quickly to our wits' end, if we tried to show our competency, truly, but the rather prepared as the occasion for Christ to show His grace and loving care of, in, and toward us, as we pass along through them all. He wants the occasion in which to show out that “I am with you”; and “It is I”; and shall we repine or be unwilling to have it so, as that the whole journey down here shall be a history of His triumphant love ever leading us about, and causing us to be, in all things, more than conquerors through Him that loved us? We are poor things indeed—had nothing of our own but our sins; but “knowing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich,” now we are His and He is ours; and His heart is set upon us and cares for us, and He will lead us on until His own presence is our dwelling place for ever. The Lord enable us more to lay hold of that handle of every

thing which is the Lord's; and not of that which I, or man, or Satan can say, that is mine, not the Lord's. Stones are hot in the sun, but they often keep what is below them cool and moist. Not "our leanness, our leanness" should be our burden, as we pass along here below, but rather "what a Christ is He who has found and picked me up." I set my face to Him-ward and would strengthen my soul in Him. Body, soul, and spirit in me belong to Himself alone, and I would have them wholly His until He comes to take me to Himself. May I not say, and you too say, "Amen and Amen" for ourselves to this.

II.

In these "last days," those who, in the fear of the Lord, have acted on the word in 2 Timothy in purging themselves from the vessels to dishonour in the "great house" and also in following righteousness, faith, love, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart," have found how truly they are "perilous ('difficult') times" — in which the pretensions and the energies of man are highly manifested. It is not an easy thing to be content with being simply what we are in reality before God. Times of "revival" reveal the thoughts of many hearts; but to learn in a day of grace to

abide in peace, and know that God is God, is completely above the education of the flesh.

The spirit of the age affects many Christians who labour to restore the "old things" for the service of God, instead of being broken before Him by the feeling of their own fall. I do not at all doubt their sincerity, but I fear that they have not judged themselves, that they know not the actual state of the ruin that surrounds them; so that they cannot have an adequate confidence only in the living God, as in the God of all resources in the midst of this scene where man has failed in everything.

We ought never to be afraid of the whole truth. To confess openly what we are in the presence of what God is, such is always the path of peace and of blessing. If it be thus when even only two or three are found before God, there will not be disappointments, nor fallen hopes. If the wells dug in the days of Abraham have been filled and stopped up with earth, we have nevertheless to do with a God who can make water issue out of the rock, even when struck, and cause it to flow in the parched desert to refresh His people, thirsty and fatigued.

I do not envy the labour of those who dig canals in the sand for the streams, which after all may take another course.

The active ways of God, in all times of

blessing, consist in reproducing the glories of the work of the Lord Jesus. The darker the long night of apostacy becomes, the more distinctly the light of life shines. The word to the remnant is, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts" (1 Pet. iii. 15). He is the only gathering point. Men make among themselves confederations (Is. viii. 11-14), having many things in view; but the communion of saints cannot be known unless every line converge on this living Centre.

The Holy Spirit does not gather the saints around simple views, true as they may be, on what the church is, on what it has been, or on what it may be on the earth. He gathers them always around this blessed Person who is the same yesterday and to-day, and for ever! "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). We are certain that Satan and the flesh will seek to resist this work and this way of the Lord, or to overthrow them.

We have need to be guarded from boasting, as is the case in these days; we need to be kept peaceful in the presence of God: there is so much independence and self-will almost everywhere. "We shall do great things" is the most unbecoming cry that can be heard at this time, when the light has made evident how little has been done.

God has made us know His truth as that which delivers us: "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John viii. 32). This liberty is not that of the flesh, because it penetrates our hearts with all the reality of a separation well known to God, who is holy. Thus one gets straight into His position with one's heart humbled and broken. If anyone talks of separation from evil without being humbled about it, let him beware lest his position be simply that which at all times has formed sects, and has also produced heterodoxy in doctrine.

As to our service, we have seen our precious Lord and Master in profound abasement wash the feet of His disciples, giving Himself as an example—to whom? To us assuredly. Now I know no service at the present time which is worthy of Him and agreeable to Him, if not done in humiliation (cf. Acts xx. 19). This is not the time to speak of a place for ourselves. If the church of God so dear to Christ, is in this world dishonoured, dispersed, ignorant and afflicted, he who has the mind of Christ will always take the lowest place. The true service of love will seek to give according to the wants of, and will never think of putting shame on, the objects of the Master's love, because of their necessity.

The men taught of God for His service come forth from a place of strength, where they have learnt their own weakness and their own nothingness. They find that Jesus is everything in the presence of God; and Jesus is everything for them, in all and through all. Such persons in the hand of the Holy Spirit are real helps for the children of God; they will not contend for a place of distinction, or authority among the scattered flock. Communion of man with God with respect to the Church is shown by a frank disposition to be nothing in it, and thus one will be happy in one's heart in spending and being spent.

In our personal remembrances we have lessons to learn with fear and trembling. May the thoughts of power never occupy our hearts too much: "Power belongeth unto God" (Ps. lxii. 11). For some years there has been a time of excitement, men seeking power everywhere, and crossing seas to find it. Many thought of the church; but it was rather the church in power. They have felt and said that the power was lost; how regain it? From that time they became occupied with earthly things, as if they could work deliverance here below.

Some may recollect how Satan put man forward, and the result has been the same everywhere. Whatever the form that

such efforts adopted in days of confusion and excitement, they were invariably agreed to let all go on perceiving their deception (for all failed in their objects, and the result was only sects). There were even mortal marks of hostility against the Lord Jesus; or if His name was left untarnished, they prepared, nevertheless, the way for the terrible result of annulling the presence of the Holy Spirit, who alone can glorify Jesus.

The Great Shepherd will not forget the labour done in his name with a happy heart for His dear sheep, poor and necessitous. An unfading crown of glory and abundant praise in the day of His appearing, will be the portion of those who meanwhile act thus. God will own all that He can own and none will lose His recompense. I am not surprised at the disappointments which have followed all the efforts men have made in the church to introduce some formal system of ministry, authority or government. God cannot allow men to come and arrange the ground on which in these days He is pleased to find and bless His saints. We know very well what is the path of the flesh, which is completely indifferent about the fall of the church: it is to occupy a place among men where God has not granted it.

There is great instruction in the conduct of Zerubbabel, related in Ezra (iii.). The son and heir of David takes his place with a remnant returning from captivity. He is content to labour in Jerusalem, without a throne, without a crown. In building the altar of the Lord and the house of God, he simply served God in his own generation. Heir of the place that Solomon had formerly occupied in the days of prosperity and glory, he speaks neither of his birth nor of his own rights; yet is he faithful in all the path of separation, grief and struggles he is obliged to pass through. May the Lord render us more and more peaceful and confiding in Himself in these days of trial. "When I am weak, then I am strong," is a lesson Paul had to learn by a very humbling process. If we speak of *our testimony on the earth*, it will soon be evident that it is all nothing but weakness, and, like the seed that is lost by the wayside, the testimony will end all the same for our shame. But if the living God has by us, on the earth, a testimony to His own glory, then the feeling of weakness will only draw us more directly to the place of power. An apostle with a thorn in his flesh learns the sufficiency of the grace of Christ. A little remnant is gathered and assembled, having nothing in which it can boast in the flesh; but it is thus

that it is suited to remain faithful to the name of the Lord Jesus, when that which seemed to be something before men has failed.

Neither anger nor prudence nor pretensions of man can do anything in the state of confusion in which the church is now. I have no hope in the efforts that some are making to insure themselves an ecclesiastical position. In an earthquake, when the ground is undermined from its foundations, it matters little for a man to see how he can make his dwelling agreeable. We shall find it better to remain where we are set by the first discovery of the ruin of things in the hands of men, and with our faces in the dust. Such is the place that belongs to us if right, and after all it is the place of blessing. In the Apocalypse, John learns the actual state of the churches, falling at the feet of Christ. He was afterwards taken to heaven in order that thence he might later on see the judgments on the earth; but evil in the church can never be well known, save when one is humbled at the feet of Jesus.

I have read of a time when several gathered together in such a grief of spirit that for a long time they could not utter a single word; but the floor of their meeting room was moistened with their tears. Were the Lord to grant us still such meetings it

would be well to frequent these houses of tears: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Ps. cxxvi. 5). It is not only for an earthly remnant that that is true, but it is also written for us. I should willingly make a long journey to join persons thus afflicted, but I should not take a single step with a view to receiving, at the hands of the most excellent of men, power to overthrow all to-day, and to reconstitute tomorrow.

All that we can do is to walk with vigilance, but peacefully, thinking of the interests of the Lord Jesus; as to ourselves having nothing to gain and nothing to lose. The path of peace, the place of testimony, is to seek to please God. We need to be very watchful over ourselves, lest, after having been preserved from the corruptions of the age by very precious truths, made known to us in our weakness, we should be caught in the net of presumption, or launch out into insubordination—a thing that God never can own or tolerate. "Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace." The word of God is the same to-day as ever. All that has happened has not changed His purpose, which is to glorify the Lord Jesus. If we are humbled before Him, all that belongs to the glory of Christ will be to us of great moment. And what do we wish more?

III.

Evil as the days are, and ragged and dirty as the path is through which we are called to pass (a path where false profession has made sloughs and mires, and wherein the high way is broken down) yet there is a bright bit at the end upon the earth, even that terminus wherein shall be heard, ere the Spirit leaves the earth, ere the Bride has gone on high, those blessed precious words, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." Professors may not know where the Spirit is now; and many may be saying "and where is the church, that assembly which was set up at Pentecost?" But faith can look on high, faith can see, read and know the living thoughts of the risen and ascended Lord, and faith knows how His heart and mind have the assembly, the Bride in them and carry her there; and faith, too, feels and owns the claims which are upon oneself to live and walk here as part of this same Bride which shall be adorned and meet for her Lord: a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, in yet a little while, I want the reality of that, His present love to be more tasted, more enjoyed, more practically lived upon by myself and by those He loves who are here below.

And surely now is the time for this. Rebecca on her camel's back (Gen. xxiv.), as Rebecca leaving her kindred, and Rebecca journeying through the strange journey, needed to stay herself upon her good fortune and to feed herself with her high calling: when she came to Sarah's tent hope was in measure changed to sight.

And it is not an unreasonable thing, either, to urge this. He who is on high is as much set *now* on giving forth to us, daily and hourly, as He was set once, in time past (Luke ix. 51; xii. 50; xiii. 33), on getting to the cross where He made an end of our guilt, having borne there the judgment due to us; or, as He will be in the time to come, when He will bid us rise up hence and come away with Him. His face, now unveiled, He shows to us on high; His faithful love He proves *now* to us down here; and He lets us know too, that to His heart and mind that coming is no secondary thing of little importance. If once He cried, "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it be accomplished," so now He says, "Surely I come quickly." One great grief to Him when He was down here, was that none of His own shared with Him His thoughts—were prepared for His self-renunciation. Just so *now*, I judge that His joy is in those who do think of what is

now dear to His own mind, what He is about to bring out to light when He comes to be admired in all those that believe (2 Thess. i. 10).

I used to think that I had lively faith, communion and hope; but as I get older I find myself more like a babe faithfully watched over by a mother's eye, and seem to get more satisfied to see what His thoughts of today are about me and what His plans for the morrow. Less account made of my feelings, more of His. Less notice of my faith, more of the fact that He died in my stead. More consciousness of the worth of His presence in heaven as a fact, than of the feelings which the knowledge of it produces in me—more counting on the certainty of His coming back, in order to put the finishing stroke to what He has wrought than of the flutter of expectancy. Not that the work wrought in us by the Holy Ghost has sunk in value in my thoughts, but that I look more at the outgoings of that work in me. To me to live is Christ. The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. *Individual attachment of the soul to the person of the Lord seems of growing importance.* He bare the wrath in our stead; He has confessed in heaven above His love to us; He

means to come and fetch us home. How can I say such things and not want to see HIMSELF, His own very self? True, when He comes, the scene will be surpassingly grand and blessed—Himself, the Resurrection and the Life, coming out from God to turn the low estate of those who have trusted in Him, to an occasion in which to show forth the glories of His own divine Person as the Resurrection and the Life. He will come and will call up out of the grave all that believed in Him—and then, standing on the cloud, will cause the life wherewith He will have quickened those that are alive and remain to His coming, to burst forth; and then their bodies shall be as instinct with His life as the souls of His people already are; and He will catch them away to be with Himself for ever in the Father's house. Most blessed as this, the doctrine of 1 Thes. iv., is—my soul seems to find its deeper more individual portion in chapter i. I appreciate Him; and do so in the very presence of God: He loves me and I love Him, and I wait for Him to come from heaven. The individuality is so blessedly seen on the one hand, and the contrast between this divinely wrought love to Himself and the poor world all around. It is, too, one's portion for to-day, just where we are now.

LONGING FOR HOME.

My soul, amid this stormy world,
 Is like some flutter'd dove :
 And fain would be as swift of wing,
 To flee to Him I love.

The cords that bound my heart to earth
 Were broken by His hand ;
 Before His cross—I found myself
 A stranger in the land.

That visage marr'd, those sorrows deep,
 The vinegar, the gall,
 These were His golden chains of love,
 His captive to enthrall.

My heart is with Him on the throne,
 And ill can brook delay ;
 Each moment list'ning for the voice,
 " Rise up, and come away."

With hope deferr'd, oft sick and faint,
 " Why tarries He ?" I cry ;
 And should my Saviour chide my haste,
 Sure I could make reply :

" May not an exile, Lord, desire
 His own sweet land to see ?
 May not a captive seek release ?
 A prisoner to be free ?

“ A child, when far away, may long
 For home and kindred dear ;
 And she that waits her absent Lord,
 Must sigh till He appear.

“ I would my Lord and Saviour know,
 That which no measure knows ;
 Would search the mystery of Thy love,
 The depth of all Thy woes.

“ I fain would strike my golden harp
 Before the Father’s throne,
 There cast my crown of righteousness,
 And sing what grace hath done.

“ Ah ! leave me not in this dark world,
 A stranger still to roam,
 Come, Lord, and take me to Thyself,
 Come, JESUS, quickly come !”



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 into 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.



“FOR EVEN CHRIST PLEASED NOT HIMSELF.”

ROMANS XV. 3.

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 Him self. An unbroken stream of blessed, perfect, un-failing 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 its 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, and having procured the means of living without it, gives it up, what then? He just adopts an-

other 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 of 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 went 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 it 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.



“ABSENT FROM THE BODY—PRESENT WITH THE LORD.”

2 COR. V. 8.

Two things go together for us as saints: the certainty of the Lord's coming, and the uncertainty whether or not we shall fall asleep before He comes. Known to God only

is it whether I shall put off the tabernacle of the body, or be found in occupation of it when Christ returns in the cloud; but in the presence of the certainty of His coming, the uncertainty whether I shall then be in the body, or out of the body, however much it may interest, does not disturb, me. In either case a blessedness is assured to us richly surpassing our present blessing, and we can happily entrust to His sovereignty the disposal of our earthly house of tabernacle! It is good to be for Him here; it is "far better" to fall asleep and go to Him; but best of all to awake in His likeness if I have slept, or, if living when He comes, to see Him as He is! This, the superlative thing, and not the comparative (though that also be blessed) is what the Lord always puts before us as the object of our hope; nothing short of this is the "mark for the prize," or the desired consummation when He and we are glorified together! The fact that, in Scripture, the Holy Ghost uniformly connects our hearts' aspirations with the return of Christ should suffice to satisfy every saint of God that the superlative thing, that which is the subject of "that blessed hope," is His coming, and that if we substitute anything else, it only indicates that we are out of the mind and current of the Spirit of God. But while that be incontestable, and cannot be too emphati-

cally maintained, the fact that so many saints have fallen asleep since the assembly of God first acquired "that blessed hope," and that one after another around us is ever and anon retiring to rest, necessitates to our souls a very deep and ever renewed interest in the character of their blessing.

The thief in whom grace wrought on the cross, blessed as was the new-born desire of his heart, got help on three points, each of exceeding interest. He asked (1) to be remembered by the Lord, (2) at His coming, (3) in His kingdom. The Lord both corrected and surpassed each feature of his request: for He promised (1) that He should be with Him (2) that day (3) in paradise! This affords the fullest Scripture teaching as to the blessedness of those who put off this tabernacle, and connecting it with Paul's testimony, that "absent from the body," the saint is "present with the Lord;" that "to depart and to be with Christ is far better;" and that "to die is gain," clearly establishes that the emancipated spirit enjoys (1) the blessedness of being with Christ, which is far better than any blessing enjoyed below, (2) that such blessing is immediate, and (3) it is in the elysium of His own presence, a locality otherwise undefined;

But if this summarizes the direct instruction which the Holy Ghost has given us in

the word, yet may we safely and soberly predicate a variety of aspects of the blessedness involved in that momentous change of condition into which the spirit is introduced when the earthly house of its tabernacle is vacated. Disencumbered of the body, it is at once relieved from the drag or resistance which a sinful body, however well adapted for the exercises of faith, and as an instrument for service to the Lord in a sinful world, must inevitably impose upon its freedom. With what new gladness shall we reflect that we can never grieve His blessed heart any more, nor ever again bring dishonour upon His peerless name, that sin and sorrow, toil and trouble, care and conflict, and all that tends to weaken our love and attachment to the Lord, or hinder its outflow, with every other thing that tells of the fall and the curse, are left behind for ever! Whether it be the needs and weakness of humanity as created, or its sick and suffering condition as fallen, or as the vehicle in which my will would work, that abode in which the flesh dwells — all this I am freed from on leaving the body. By vacating the body I have broken every link with the flesh and its activities, with the world and its elements. What a release from Satan's hostility and subtlety; what an escape from every snare of the fowler; from the world,

too, Satan's usurped empire ; no further exposure to its hydra-headed opposition to Christ and to those who are His ; the wilderness past, with all its painful experiences of battlings and buffetings, and the haven reached where all evil is excluded, and all toil ceases in the eternal calm and sublimity of His presence !

It is a happy and a refreshing thought that my body, being a member of Christ, is assured of resurrection, because of His Spirit who dwelleth in me (1 Cor. vi. 15 ; Rom. viii. 11, marg.), and this secures the body for that day ; while being "one spirit" with the Lord, one with Him in living, eternal union, whether in or out of the body, my spirit in returning to God, finds that eternal haven in the presence of Christ which secures it for re-union with the body at His coming !

Save the Lord Himself, no one was ever more superior to circumstances than Paul, he who could say, "I am initiated both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer privation. I have strength for all things in Him that gives me power" (Phil. iv. 12, 13. New Trans.) ; yet he says, "I have a desire to depart." No one had a more important service to detain him below, and no one was more singularly qualified, and more thoroughly devoted, as a servant. It is summed up — this remarkable identification

of himself with Christ's interests on earth — in the words, "For me to live is Christ," and yet he adds, "to die is gain!"

There are three aspects in which the departed saint may be regarded: as to what he escapes or resigns, as to what he retains, and as to what he acquires. What he escapes has been already sufficiently touched upon. What he resigns is equally apparent, though not, perhaps, sufficiently recognized, otherwise we should value and turn to account more than we do the present unique period of the soul's history! Each of us has doubtless looked back to the days of his youth, never to be recalled, and found occasion to mourn over days of evil that cannot now be corrected, and opportunities for good that can never return: as that spring-time of life has left its stamp on all after-years, so surely will the soul's spring-time bear its mark for eternity, for I learn now, and I gather here, that which, missing the present opportunity, I shall never learn or gather at all; in fact, this is the time of the soul's pupilage in the place where it takes its degree! All this we resign when we leave the body; surely, were saints sufficiently alive to the fact, we should not find so many droning away the precious spring-time, unmindful of the word, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and

Christ shall shine upon thee" (Ephes. v. 14). But, further, I forego, if I leave the body, the outward and visible fellowship of saints, the table of the Lord, with its rich and endearing associations, the endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the exercises of brotherly love, of prayer, of sympathy, of generosity and hospitality, of practical separation from evil, what James calls "Pure religion and undefiled" — all these exercises, in fine all that is demonstrative in its character, I have passed out of for the time being, while such principles as faith, patience, dependence, and obedience, if in exercise, are in exercise under such new conditions as constitute, or at least imply, a generic change!

In respect to the second point—that which we retain — I content myself with suggesting that I retain all that which divine grace has conferred upon me for eternity; I carry with me, and shall continue to enjoy, the eternal life, the new creation blessing, union with Christ, the peace which surpasseth understanding, the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, and the relationships into which grace has introduced me, which can never be weakened or annulled!

Lastly, as to the "gain," it is clear that I have finally entered into rest — a rest never to be disturbed, a full and deep repose, never

to be broken! What a wonderful expansion will my spirit experience as it emerges from the density of an atmosphere so oppressive as this into that of His presence, and how sweet the conviction that steals over me, that I have passed into that blissful presence for ever; that I am at length in that new region of unruffled peace characterized by the presence of my Saviour and my Lord:

“There shall all clouds depart,
 The wilderness shall cease,
 And sweetly shall each gladdened heart
 Enjoy eternal peace.”

But though with Himself in the profound quietude of an eternal calm, and enjoying an unalloyed happiness with Him, I wait for His coming on that cloudless morning, when He shall bring forth from the grave, to the joy of His own heart, the bodies which, in all ages and in every clime, He had hushed to sleep! In the scene of His rejection I had once waited for Him, but sleep overtook my body, my heart was still wakeful, my spirit passed into His presence, and I waited on — my waiting became more like His, I kept vigil with Him! It was not enough to be in His presence, I wanted to see Him as He is; it was not enough to be with Him, I wanted to be like Him, for this would give peculiar joy to His heart; for this I needed a glori-

fied body, and I waited still! It was not enough that He should be crowned with glory and with honour upon the Father's throne, I longed for His manifested glories in heaven and on earth: I longed to see His brow bedecked with many crowns, and I longed to swell the harmony of the new song which should extol His worth; I longed to see Him in the Father's house, to be there at home with Himself; I longed to see Him express, as there only He fully can, the fervour of His faithful love to His bride, and to set forth in blessed array the untold joy and delight that will thrill His heart when He shall have things all His own way, and make everything around in the heaven of His own presence subserve the object of that heart from eternity!

All these blessed longings of spirit, which have Himself for their object, I can then unhinderedly and undistractedly indulge, and thus the superlative thing, the glory itself, is blissfully and powerfully anticipated. All that, if absent from the body, my heart will but the more ardently long for and watch for in the patience of Christ, and as to which cannot be fully satisfied short of its consummation; all to which my heart aspires now, and would aspire then, whether in these circumstances or in those, only His coming in the cloud can possibly supply an answer to!

Then shall we resume the functions of worship in the conditions alone compatible with it; then shall we sing as redeemed saints, and in the body, only are said to do! Then only will He see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; then only will He present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; then only will He make us to sit down to meat, and come forth and serve us; then only will He satisfy for us every desire which our knowledge of Himself has inspired in our hearts! Upon this, then, the superlative thing, His own heart is set, as well as that of the Spirit and the bride, saying, "Come;" and He who loves to be thus greeted, loves too to reply—"Surely I come quickly," adding His own "Amen;" and if we, like the beloved disciple, have pillowed our heads upon His bosom, though in another way, we shall love to respond, whether in the body or out of the body, "Even so, come, Lord JESUS!"



THE APPROBATION OF THE LORD.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God."

2 TIM. II. 15.

It should be joy to anyone who loves the Lord Jesus to think of having His individual peculiar approbation and love; to find He has approved of our conduct in such and

such circumstances, though none know this but ourselves who receive the approval. But, beloved, are we really content to have an approval which Christ only knows? Let us try ourselves a little. Are we not too desirous of man's commendation of our conduct? or at least that he should know and give us credit for the motives which actuate it? Are we content, so long as good is done, that nobody should know anything about us—even in the church to be thought nothing of? that Christ alone should give us the "white stone" of His approval, and the new name which no man knoweth save only he that receiveth it? Are we content, I say, to seek nothing else? Oh! think what the terrible evil and treachery of that heart must be that is not satisfied with Christ's special favour, but seeks honour (as we do) of one another instead. I ask you, beloved, which would be most precious to you, which would you prefer, the Lord's public owning of you as a good and faithful servant, or the private individual love of Christ resting upon you—the secret knowledge of His love and approval? He whose heart is specially attached to Christ will respond, "the latter." Both will be ours if faithful; but we shall value this most; and there is nothing that will carry us so straight on our course as the anticipation of it.

HOW DOES THIS WORLD STAND NOW BEFORE GOD, IN VIEW OF HIS DEALINGS WITH IT ?

“WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?”

(*Isa. xxi. 11.*)

The watchman of that early time, and as under the spirit of prophecy, said, “The morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will inquire, inquire ye, return, come.” God has never let the night-time of the ruin of creation and of man (no, nor yet of Jerusalem and of His people Israel) pass out of His own hands; and to them that look for Him, all will yet issue in “a morning without clouds,” when the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His beams.

Another (and he, the anointed apostle for these last times) sent to us from the risen Son of man (exalted above the night of chaos and of ruin, and seated in the glory of God) cries, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand, let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” The prophet and the apostle are each right, and in the mind of the Lord, in their respective occupations and seasons, giving out their varied lessons to the people of God.

Isaiah, in the midst of the earthly family, is directing their thoughts as to the night and morning, in relation to the two centres of the earth, Jerusalem and Babylon. Paul, in the midst of the heavenly family, is instructing the elect Gentiles what to do, and what to be, in these present church ruins,

and in the night time of an evil world. Paul writes to those united to the Lord (who has been cast out of it till the morning comes), and the word by this watchman to us is, "Ye are all the children of light, and of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness; therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober," &c. (1 Thes. v.).

Many of those who are instructed in the school of God, know that the ministry of an Old Testament prophet, and his prophesying, can only find their opportunity and place, when the people to whom he is sent have failed in the original blessing where God had set them; for, as we have said, God never allows even the ruin to pass out of His own hand. The ministry of "an apostle by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead," is of a different order, and reveals the hidden things which were "kept secret from before the foundation of the world, and which God ordained to our glory," with Christ. The blessing of the church in the heavens, by His divine callings and separations in a risen Lord, and the final prosperity of Israel, and the nations on the earth, by their bounds and divisions, together with the deliverance of a groaning creation, into redemption-light, are alike in the counsels of the living God, and to be manifested in glory. It is equally in His own hands to meet and set aside Babylon and the Gentile nations then, as to establish Jerusalem, and make her a praise in the whole earth, with Christ hereafter.

The watchman said, by Isaiah, "The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will

inquire, inquire ye: return, come;" and these are the alternations which lie before us for inquiry and examination. Originally everything in creation that God saw was good, and there was no evil; but, as in a moment, all was changed, and everywhere there was evil, and no good. Originally too, the blessing of God that maketh rich rested on every creature, but, as in an instant, the blessing was nowhere, and the curse of God lay heavily on all around. In creation the evening and the morning made each day, but in history with man, it is the morning cometh, and also the night, alas! Still, He has not cast away the heavens and the earth that He created for His own pleasure with the sons of men, nor will He suffer the mighty ruin to pass into the power of the enemy of God and man. But what will He do, in whose hands are the issues of life and of death? Only to think for a moment of God Himself standing in the breach, and acting upon the supremacy of His own goodness, over all the evil and the misery; yea meeting the usurpation of Satan, and the outbreak of sin in the creature, by falling back upon His own sovereign power and electing love! *God's only resource was in Himself*, nothing could challenge His omnipotence, or escape His omniscience, or go beyond His control. He alone can say, "Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." How will He, and how can He, bring down His own immensity and infinitude in grace into the circle of morning and night? How connect them with Himself inside the range of men

and things, where all is now in ruins and wretchedness, and when all that was morning has become night, and gone down into darkness?

He who said, Let there be light, and there was light, and who made a firmament in the midst of the waters, to divide the waters from the waters, can bring in a sunrise to form a morning where there is none. In the earliest records of His ways, He did it after this creation-pattern of dividing the one from the other, when He acted as the Possessor of the heavens and the earth. For example, "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people ('peoples') according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deut. xxxii. 8). When this supremacy of God, by act and deed, in dividing the nations, is anything more to man than an historical fact, it becomes a very wonderful thing. Marvelous indeed to set their bounds; and, further, that God should come out into the midst of mankind, to divide them, and to act upon His own sovereignty in grace—yea, to begin a register, by which to chronicle an earthly family for Himself in their generations! This supervision and care makes one understand that some purpose of God, which He has ordained for His own glory, and the blessing of His creatures, is to be ultimately reached in the circle of manhood, notwithstanding the expulsion of Adam from paradise. One only begins to discover what this divine secret can be of dividing a nation from all others, and a race from races of men,

when we recall the promise that "the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." This wonderful registration was therefore strictly maintained till after JESUS, the Immanuel, was born, to whom God pointed, according to the genealogies that went before, and which closed by His incarnation.

It is remarkable, too, that our early progenitors were guided to call their sons by names, not only significant of their own faith in this promise, but that their offspring were the rightful heirs. The two books of Chronicles, which contain the generations of Israel, and their kingly history, maintain these facts in their general character, and prove likewise that God held that elect nation always in His mind, by starting their genealogies from Adam and Seth. The first of these books is in harmony with the dividings and distinctions in the six days' work of creation, and with God's intention of thus bringing out a seed for the accomplishment of His purposes, and the establishment of covenanted blessings in the midst of Israel and the tribes, as "an elect people" on the earth. The second book opens grandly with the record of this accomplishment, in the typical David and his son Solomon, reigning on God's throne in Jerusalem. The king and his kingdom are established in Israel, and divided off from the nations, as the wonder and admiration of the whole world. Consistently with these objects, the first book begins its genealogy of the family, or household of God, in the elect line of Adam, Seth, and then Enoch. It commences thus the history

of the elect tribes, in the registry of Jehovah and His people, by going back to the man created in the image of God; and closes their antedeluvian ancestry with the Enoch who walked with God, and was translated that he should not see death. A precious type this of the heavenly family caught up, on the one hand, and an early intimation that Israel will really be connected with them, and in blessing likewise, in the time of their happy millennium.

It is a point of much interest and significance to notice here, that in this Book of Chronicles, where God is writing up His people, or setting Israel as a firmament to divide the nations from the nations, the Spirit refuses to introduce or make any mention of Cain, that wicked one, and his posterity. I judge this was that the earthly family might be rightly identified by descent, and as born after the flesh, with the promises of Jehovah; and, moreover, distinguished and divided off from all others, as they afterwards were, by circumcision. Indeed we may ask, in passing, how could the man who went away out of the presence of God, and became a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth, be a link in the chronicles of an elect people? On the contrary, Seth, or the substituted and appointed one (instead of righteous Abel, whom Cain slew), is the man with whom the generations of men and their genealogies begin anew in Gen. v. "And the days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years. And Seth lived, after he begat Enos, eight hundred and seven years,

and begat sons and daughters." Israel's genealogies, which include the birth of the Messiah and finish with it, are on this account full of interest; nor is there any other ancestry or generation worthy of record, save it be "the dukes of Esau, and the dukes of Edom," which stand apart in an unenviable place of their own, and outside.

Succession in the flesh was thus established by God, and became their pride—yea, everything—to a true Israelite. On this account, as "an elect people," it was their only remaining glory and boast, on coming up out of Babylon, that they could be still reckoned by their genealogies and families, because the promises were made to "the Seed" of their father Abraham. Thus "the Tirshatha" says in Nehemiah vii., "My God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles and the rulers and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first," which identified them with the city of Jerusalem and the first Book of Chronicles. Morally and prophetically, we may add, as well as by adoption and birth, they were the descendants of an elect seed, to be brought out in due time as the ordained family, and an appointed nation, for the introduction of covenanted blessing upon the earth. This was promised through Abraham, the friend of God, as the heir of the world, and confirmed to David, the man after God's own heart, as the anointed king, whose greater Son is yet to rule and reign over it, from the rising to the setting of the sun.

It may be further observed, that the First Book of Chronicles closes its earthly and typical programme with David's charge to Solomon, and with the transfer of all the measurements and patterns which he had received by the Spirit of God, concerning the temple of peace, and rest, and glory that was to be built. For "the palace," as he says "is not for man, but for the Lord God," who was coming to take up His abode in their midst. Nor can David happily close his eyes upon that day and generation until he, as the head of Israel, unites with the chief of the fathers, and with the princes of their tribes, in offering their gifts of gold, and silver, and precious stones, to make the place of the Lord's feet glorious in that hour of their morning glory. As the sweet psalmist, under the anointing oil, he exceeds them all when he sings or plays upon the harp, touching their bright millennial day; or when, as a worshipper before the ark, he dances on its way to the place of its rest; or as now joyfully making preparations for the temple to receive it. How excellent is he, too, as the leader of the prayers and praises of the great congregation: "Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name . . . O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the King."

The first book of genealogies, and its

arrangements of order and service for the throne and the kingdom, together with the magnificent architectural plans and buildings, with its yet costlier gifts and preparations, is in manifest distinction to their accomplishments and construction in the Second Book of Chronicles. Who can measure, for example, the contrariety and the distances between the opening verses in each book? Or who would attempt to fill in the immense gap of time and circumstance between them, by a narration of the historical facts, except as gathered from the word of God? It is like coming up out of the night of chaos into creation again, with a new company, as we open the first book, and read of an "Adam, Seth, and Enoch," who was translated that he should not see death. Nor is this feeling of surprise lessened when we open the Second Book of Chronicles, to read, as in the morning light, "that Solomon, the Son of David, was strengthened in his kingdom, and the Lord his God was with him, and magnified him exceedingly." What a tremendous chaos is thus being filled up by God in history! It is like a new beginning in the midst of other and elect creatures, and of a better creation, so that one scarcely knows where we are in this new genealogy, which has given birth, by the letter and order of the first book, to such a man as this Solomon of the second; and yet a man endowed with wisdom such as never had been, or shall be; and invested with honour and power, by the hand of the living God, such as Adam had not before the fall.

Within the beauty of this enclosure, too—"Immanuel's land"—one might ask again, "Watchman, what of the night?" and what has become of the curse on the ground, when all flows with milk and honey? In the presence of this Solomon, inducted into the highest place out of heaven, and invested with royal majesty as a king, before whom all other kings bow and pay tribute, and queens do homage, one may almost think of the fall, and of the man whom God drove out of Eden, as a bygone thing, a dream that is past away with the night, and obliterated in the peace and prosperity of this new centre of the world's jubilee. The earth seems to invite the heavens to come out, and hail the new morning that is come, and make merry and be glad with the elect people whom God is leading into His "rest in Zion." Moreover, Jehovah has left the tent and tabernacle, in which He dwelt and journeyed with the twelve tribes of these genealogies in the wilderness, and is ready to accompany them, and the ark of the covenant, out of the First Book of Chronicles into the Second, and to draw out the staves, when its final resting-place in the temple is completed. The Lord will Himself then appear, and fill the whole house with His glory, so that there shall not be room even for the priests to enter in, because God is in His holy temple.

The Second Book of Chronicles introduces us, in its early chapters, to scenes like these, and the whole world is wakened up, on this break of day, to lay bare its treasures, and mines of gold, and all the precious things in

the depths of the earth, because God has risen up out of His place, and is coming in with the brightness of the morning into Jerusålem, to make it "the city of the great King." What change—yea, what mighty revolution—in favour of mankind, can have come up before the God of heaven and of earth, that all kings and countries should be tributary to Him on this great occasion of His temple on Mount Moriah? Again, we may say, "Watchman, what of the night?" when Hiram, king of Tyre, is a willing servant, and lays the forests of Lebanon at the feet of Solomon, with cedar-trees, fir-trees, and algum-trees in abundance. He provides also a cunning man, endued with understanding, who is skilful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber. In purple also, and in blue, in fine linen, and in crimson; for Jehovah was coming forth into this kingdom and its costly temple. "Likewise men to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device that shall be put to them with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord David thy father;" for this sun was to rise upon Solomon without a cloud.

What can such mighty changes mean between God and His creatures? What can they betoken, but that "the watchman's morning cometh in?" Is the Creator finding out a rest for Himself once more in the works of His own hands? and are men become so good, that He gives out patterns to them, and calls their cunning ones to be master-builders and artificers for Him?

Are the plans and methods of the divine order so enlarging themselves, as that He who built all things above and below should ask men to build Him a house? And such a house! Or, perhaps, wearied in maintaining righteous government in the midst of men upon the earth, is He about to forego the records of the cherubim at the garden-gate? Does He not remember the destructive deluge, when a world that then was perished? or the cities of the plain which were burned with fire and brimstone, because of the exceeding wickedness of its inhabitants? Can He have forgotten Babel, and its city, and its tower; or the day when He confounded men's tongues, and set at nought their speech?

But there is no room for such doubtful inquiries; on the contrary, it is in the full knowledge that Adam and Eve are gone for ever, and that an end of flesh in the world before the flood had come before God, and perished, that He has thus divided a nation from the nations, and separated by genealogy a generation from the families of men; that His own purpose of grace by election might surmount the deluge and the flaming sword. He has therefore brought in promises, and a covenant, and a calling-out, and established these in Abraham and his Seed, which is Christ. He has also set up mediation by Moses, and priesthood in Aaron, so that that dark night of ruin might give place to the morning light, and the great day of atonement. God is adding the glory of kingship to these others, in the person of Solomon, whom He now sets upon

the throne of his father David, and establishes him over the kingdom of Israel. No, God is not unmindful of His judgments in the earth, but in the midst of them He remembers mercy, and works for His own glory.

Nor is He come forth to repeat Himself, or to inaugurate another beginning, with His creatures; but He is bringing out and completing in Solomon and a theocracy, all the reserves of wisdom and grace, which God had kept in His own power, and still postpones for manifested blessing, till the second coming of Jesus-Immanuel, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Solomon was responsible (like Adam) for maintaining these treasures which had been put into his hands, and for using them to the glory of God. Jehovah had thus given out all He had to bestow (except, last of all, His Son), and set up these resources before their eyes in Moses, and Aaron, and David, and the times that went over them. Now, "kingship" is to be displayed in Solomon, and the watchman's cry is heard again, "the morning cometh, and also the night." And is this what God is doing with the elect king, in the midst of His elect nation? Is He in very deed making one more display of Himself, and one more appeal to them, and this almost the last, before the night, that terrible night, comes again, and He sets the best thing aside that He can do for the welfare of His earthly people? Is all this to share the same fate as Eden, and must God come into it all one day, and profane His sanctuary, and His throne, and His kingdom by cast-

ing all down to the ground? Alas! He has done all this, and Jerusalem is "trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." What a lesson does this historical picture present to Judah and Israel, and the civilized world, in their forgetfulness of God, and in this day of their boasted progress and prosperity, whilst they are in a mistaken defiance, making out histories for themselves by their self-sufficiency.

But the judgment of God, by driving out or casting down, plucking up or cutting off, never comes in to take revenge on departure from Himself, and what He creates or bestows, till He can say, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" If we repeat the inquiry in the light of this patient consideration of God, and yet of human responsibility, under such accumulated grace and outward prosperity, as marked the ascent of King Solomon to the throne of his glory, the answer must be plain. And what would this answer be but this—that the moment of his grandest elevation was the one of his greatest danger, and the ripest hour of his vast power and dominion was but the precursor of his declension and downfall. And why? Because, though an elect vessel, like the nation was an elect nation, yet was he but a man in the flesh, and still in a sinful nature, outside Christ and the Holy Ghost.

The time was not yet come for them to stand before God, as we now do, upon the

ground of accomplished and eternal redemption by the work of Christ upon the cross. Nor could "they reckon themselves dead unto sin," and to the law, by the body of Christ, and be thus made "free to be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead, that they might bring forth fruit unto God." However favoured Solomon might be, and was, yet it was by endowment; whilst as the head and king of Israel, he was responsible by his own obedience, in the position he held, for maintaining them in unbroken relationship with Jehovah, their Lord. These great drawbacks, as to his manhood, made him a celebrity by what God had heaped upon him, and not because he had earned them, or was competent to retain them as part of his own being. There is only one—JESUS, the Son of God—of whom it can personally be said, "Thou art worthy to receive all wisdom, and glory, and riches, and power," and He had not yet come into this world (though promised) by the mystery of the incarnation. A heavy thousand years had to roll round, weighted by the saddening tale of the decline and fall of a theocracy, in the midst of Israel; and made sadder by their rejection of the marvellous ministry of the prophets (even though accompanied by their lamentations and tears), before the fulness of the time came for God to send forth His Son. The Messiah, their only Saviour and Deliverer, will then be the light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

The first man, Adam, in innocency, and in

the image of God (before history had begun), was at home in an unspotted creation, with Him who made it ; yea, God walked with the creature He had formed for His delight in the cool of that unclouded day. When all this was lost, and marred by Satan and sin, and it repented God that He had made man upon the earth, and the world that then was perished by a flood, God, in His sovereignty, called out one and another to walk with Him, upon promise, and blessing, and future happiness to be established in an elect seed, according to covenant. What else could He do in wisdom and grace, when all present and created good, even a paradise, had been forfeited, and the gates of Eden closed—yea, man driven out ; and God had retired into His own place to consider, leaving a curse behind Him, in righteous judgment, upon a groaning creation ? Adam's world has been since buried by the waters of a deluge, weighed down, moreover, by the violence and the corruption of the millions who inhabited it. In this world, since the flood (or Noah's world), God formally called out Abraham to begin this new line of His election, as the genealogies of the First Book of Chronicles have taught us. These have given birth to, and perhaps close up, this illustrious line of elect vessels with Solomon, till Matthew and Luke add the generations which bring in the Immanuel.

We have taken this short review of two worlds, in order to give weight, or prominence to Solomon, the man of endowments and attainments, conferred upon Him by God, in contrast with all who ever were be-

fore, or shall come after him ; and it is with this wonderful Solomon, in whom the expectations of the world culminate, the Second Book of Chronicles begins, with its bright morning in Jerusalem, followed by its dark night of captivity in Babylon. He is before the world, and before the heavens, and all who dwell in them, to stand or fall in the place where never man was seen before, in royal majesty and imperial power. He is responsible for their use to Him who bestowed them ; and yet, having this unheard-of opportunity of bringing glory to God, and blessing to the ten thousands of Israel and the nations, by their rightful exercise, what a new era in the history of God and mankind is in view, and depending on the fealty and obedience of the only competent man, too, upon earth, for he has not his fellow ! Adam was perfect as a created being, and a creation hung upon his allegiance to the Creator. Solomon is perfect, not as a creature, but set apart as an elect vessel to receive the favour of God, and to be enriched by Him in mind, body and estate ; so that, by reason of his endowments and attainments, " he was wiser than all men, and his fame was in all the nations round about." What an unparalleled hour in history ! what an opportunity for the wisest of men ! what an occasion for the world in its throes, and under the bondage of corruption, if it could be delivered by super-human wisdom and power !

Nevertheless, in the counsels of the Godhead, this problem had to be wrought out, as to the competency, or incompetency of a

fallen man, even when sustained and endowed to the utmost, to hold and to use what was entrusted to his hands for the glory of God, and his own happiness, and the welfare of his fellow-creatures? The great men of successive ages may well be dumb before this greater man of a previous age. The bold men of the twentieth century may stagger, and bow their heads before the man "whom God magnified exceedingly" three thousand years ago, and respecting whom He said, there never again should be his like. It was God who brought out this problem before the world (of the insufficiency of the creature), and that it might not be left an open question for generations which should come after, but be settled in the life-time, and by the living ways, of no one less than King Solomon and this most favoured nation. If, besides all these endowments, men speak of genius, let them, but they must pale before him who uttered three thousand proverbs, and whose songs were a thousand and five. If they rejoice in the created works around, and think themselves masters of all the eye can see, or the heart desire—let them, but they must give place to him "who withheld not his heart from any joy." He spake of trees, from the cedar in Lebanon, even to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.

Whether one sees him on the throne in government, and exercising justice and judgment; or in the temple, before the altar of the Lord; or upon the scaffold of brass, as an intercessor and a worshipper, between

Jehovah and the commonwealth of Israel—all is as complete and exact as the laws of the sanctuary and of the kingdom demanded. Indeed these were the birth-place and great beginnings of a history, and of a name that rose up in its strength and brightness over the haze and darkness of a vast universal declension—like the sun that dispels the gloom, and drives away the mists, till it mounts into its own supremacy, and rules and makes the day. “Watchman, what of the night? The morning cometh, and also the night.” God acknowledged and put His own seal upon all this opening prosperity, by the glory that dwelt in the temple, and filled the land. “And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand which is on the sea-shore.”

Who would think of, or dare to repeat, an Adam, sinless and in innocence, with whom God was so close, that there was no room for an intermediate providence, nor any necessity for its exercise? Are God and men still so one as to walk and be together, or have they ever since been separated off by sin in a fallen creation? Nay, not only has He closed up all such direct and immediate intercourse between Himself and the creature, but measured the distance, and maintains it still, as a God superintending all things by His providence. He is sitting in the heavens in His righteousness, and they upon the earth, with the curse and the sweat of the brow upon every child of Adam, and the groaning of a blighted creation all around. Moreover, who would think of, or

dare to repeat, a Solomon, not sinless like Adam, but sinful in his nature, as born of the man who fell, yet made illustrious, and made a celebrity, by conferred gifts and endowments which he received of God, and which were commanded in a moment of time to rest upon him, in answer to his prayer?

Men may possess the same faculties, but where and when have any stood forth as he, to be wondered at, not because of their attainments, but some who were not a Solomon for one instant, and became one the next, by having had to do distinctly and directly with God? May it not be said, yea, must it not be admitted, that first-class education, and its necessity in this century, cannot measure the distance, much less do away with the gulf, between those who are under its high pressure, and an endowed Solomon; just as, for other reasons, a kind and merciful Providence maintains a distance now between the Creator and His creatures? Did Solomon become one under tutors and governors, and by the slow and measured steps of examinations, and degrees, and honours, as the hardly-won fruit of collegiate study, which are accepted in the present day as the high road to advancement and preferment, for place or power, in the world as it now is? No; he was the wise man, made such out-of-hand, by God, in a moment, just as truly as when He breathed into Adam's nostrils, and he became a living soul—the image and representation of God in manhood; but where and what is he?

In due time Solomon closed up the progressive history of this elect people according to the flesh, in the generations and genealogies of the First Book of Chronicles. But who and what was he in the Second Book? The morning cometh, it is true, but also the night. Alas! "the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he kept not that which the Lord commanded." The allegiance which was due from the creature to the Creator, in the creation, but which was violated and broken up by Adam's sin, is come to nought a second time in Solomon, who was seated in glory and power upon the throne of God's government in the earth. The crown has fallen from his head, and the sceptre from his hand, and the kingdom from under his feet, and the two staves of beauty and bands has God broken asunder, "for Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites."

An important interval, or dispensation, yet remains to be noticed in the history and ways of God with men, between Adam, without any government, before government (like Providence) could have any place; and Solomon, as the representative and administrator of a theocracy in the city of the Great King, where government in righteousness was indispensable, on account of the holiness of God, as well as of sin and

the flesh. Intermediately the law was given by Moses, and proclaimed, yea, established the claims of Jehovah upon the elect nation for the worship and devotion which were His due. Besides this, they were morally responsible for obeying and loving Him for all the goodness and mercy which, as the God of providence and the Jehovah of Israel, they had known, together with their fathers, all the way from the house of bondage to the Canaan of rest, into which He had brought them. At any rate, if this were a problem, it had to be wrought out into proof, like the others; for they had entered into covenant with God, and had returned their answer by Moses, at Sinai, "All that the Lord hath commanded us, we will do." This was, in fact, the time of the world's probation, brought to light, it is true, in a handful of people and a sample nation, but under all the advantages and encouragements to love God, and their neighbour as themselves, which He could introduce by outward prosperity and plenty, and by calling them up to Jerusalem, that they might keep "the feasts of the Lord" with Himself, and find their joy in His presence. But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit, wherefore He was turned against them, and became their enemy; and now, what is become of this highly-favoured and select nation, and when are the feasts of Jehovah kept, or with whom? and where is Jerusalem, the city of the Great King? Alas! Ichabod is the sole epitaph, and the one record of forfeited blessing, and of departed glory—from the drawn

sword in the hand of the cherubim at the garden-gate, to the trodden-down Jerusalem by the feet of the Gentiles.

It is time to ask now, what is the solemn result of these trials and tests of such a distinguished man, and what our lessons by God in this history, and of His ways with a nation, in the brief record of his reign? Or rather, what should be the effect of this great proof in such a king, and of an elect people, when gathered round God Himself, with His glory in the temple, and this endowed man upon His throne, as the guarantee (if there could be one outside Christ) of permanent and universal blessing? Ought not the leaders and great men of modern times to allow such an one to challenge them all by the question, even if they do not like to answer him, "What can the man do that cometh after the king?" (Eccles. ii. 12.) Nay, is it not presumption, if not a presumptuous sin, for the men of this period to suppose the problem of what man is, and is worth, in his relation to God, and to his neighbour, and to the world, to be an open question still, and left for them to solve? This, too, in the face of the prophecy which challenges all, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done?" (Isa. v. 4.) Do any of them come up to Solomon, or can they excel God? Will the scientists, and the men of mark and renown, say they are at an advantage, because experimenting amongst a non-elect people, instead of an elect one, which was so beloved, and placed under law to God? Will they tell us it is

better to begin the problem in the midst of Gentile nations, with whom God does not stand in any relationship of this kind, than with the nation which He chose, and brought to Himself? (Exod. xix. 4.)

Do they think it in their favour to make laws of their own, and establish various forms of government, and set up thrones of their devising in their modern cities, rather than to bow their heads, and learn their lesson from the ruins of Jerusalem, and the cast-off people they are treading under their feet? Do they judge it to be in their favour never to have had a Solomon, qualified and endowed as he was, and under the direct guidance of God, that so they may be free of Him, and be left to their own inventions and expediences, under Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon? If the reigning emperors and kings, with their empires and dynasties, are agitated and perplexed, or sometimes overthrown in the struggle between absolutism and democracy, or betwixt imperialism and a republic, do they think this uncertainty an advance upon the theocracy of the God of Israel? They will do well to remember that the divine form and principles of political economy and of jurisprudence were long ago determined by God, and are indelibly written by His finger in the Pentateuch; as well as the patterns and form of the temple, and its priesthood and worship, in the two books of Chronicles. Neither the throne nor the altar has been overlooked. Be it so, that all this greatness and magnificence have come to nought, with an elect people, who had God in their midst, and as

a wall of fire around them ; what can those do who come after ? Is it better to be without Him, and safer and wiser to take counsel with their own hearts, that their dignity and honour may be publicly, and far more fatally, seen to proceed from themselves ?

If it be further said, Yes, but this Second Book of Chronicles ends with the captivity of the people, the carrying away of all the golden vessels into Babylon, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the transfer of governmental power from Israel to the Gentiles, and "the morning cometh, and also the night," is fulfilled in their history ; be it so. But what, I repeat, is such a lesson for them "who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, . . . and without God in the world" (Ephes. ii. 12.)—who are non-elect, unendowed, and uncovenanted ? Will such come out into history at a premium on their predecessors ? We shall see. In the meanwhile the elect nation and her kings are set aside by Jehovah.

If we here close up their two books of Chronicles for another and a brighter day in the millenium of their history, and go with the children of the captivity, it will be only to see that God abides faithful to His own, and advances Daniel into a new place in this strange country. He becomes the prophet of woe to Babylon. The captive Israelite is the one who is anointed by Jehovah to reveal to the great King Nebuchadnezzar, as the head of the Gentiles, all the secret of his dynasty, and its destiny and doom. The four grand divisions of the

golden image, which troubled the monarch in his night visions, and which include what is now called "the civilized world," but which none of the wise men could divine to their master, are brought to light by this child of the captivity. It is Daniel's hand which thus early writes "Ichabod" upon all the grandeur of the king and his kingdoms. *So distinguished is this elect vessel in a strange place.*

The man who shines brightest among the nobles, and imports a grandeur and a glory into Babylon to which it was a total stranger, is this Israelite; for Daniel stands in a holy lustre, be it in the palace, or at the gate of the king, or when in the lions' den. This is the great charm in their opening history, that Daniel eclipses all. The transfer of power from Jerusalem, or rather the use of it when thus committed to Nebuchadnezzar, put the sentence of death upon his palace and his kingdom, and indeed upon himself. It was but taking Jonah into the ship. God was angry with him for his pride, and sent him into the fields to eat straw like an ox, till his nails became as birds' claws. In like manner the transport of the golden vessels from the temple of Solomon to Babylon, and their profanation at the feast of Belshazzar, brought out the handwriting upon the wall, "Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin," which put the sentence of death into him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed. So, again, when the king of Babylon had set up the idol-image, and the fiery furnace was prepared for any who refused to fall down and worship it, the three elect

children of the captivity were thrown therein, but only to be joined by another, and that one like unto the Son of God. The sentence of death was transferred from the three elect ones, who were in the flames, but not burnt, and gave birth to the decree, that whosoever spake anything amiss of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, should be cut in pieces. Alas for Babylon and its great idolatrous king at the commencement of this history, and for his non-elect and unchronicled descendants! Thou art this head of gold, and that crowned head driven out of the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and debased to the level of a beast!

But perhaps, as an empire, their future is brighter, though he must be a bold man, and something more, who would stop us to raise such a question upon the four beasts, or the ten toes of Daniel's prophetic image, in this century. Such an one must be forgetful of their great iron teeth, devouring much flesh, to which all the newspapers bear witness, and which all the world knows. Only let them look at the future in the records of Daniel, or in the Apocalyptic visions of John, and demand in their turn, "Watchman, what of the night?" as being their two books of Chronicles—and what are they? The hand-writing in detail of that selfsame finger which wrote their history in brief upon the palace-wall of Belshazzar says, their "morning cometh, and also their night." They rise up as a great host of people, "without God," at their beginning in Babylon, and "without

hope in the world," at their close. Idolatry, maintained by absolutism, was at the rise of the power, in the hand of the great monarch, at the first, and proved by the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar set up, and commanded all people to worship.

But perhaps, religiously, their future is different, and they may call on the living and true God, and be better at the latter end—nay, vain is any such expectation, for Revelation xiii. says, "He had power to give life ('breath') unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." Blasphemy and profanity were in the palaces of Babylon at the first, when the finger wrote upon the wall; and at the close, the hand-writing in Revelation xiii., declares, "He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." Their last end is even worse than the first.

But perhaps, politically, the history of imperial power in the hands of the four great empires, of gold, silver, brass, and iron, may bring up some correctives; not so either, for these metals, in their fourfold character, prove the deterioration of delegated power, and at the close, a "Stone, cut out without hands, falls upon the ten toes of the image, and it is destroyed—yea, becomes like chaff upon the summer threshing-floor." But yet again, Babylon and its descendants may have "hope in their end?" Not so either, "for the kings of the earth,

who have committed fornication, and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning" ascending up. "Without God" at the beginning, and "without hope in the world" at the close, embraces these nineteen centuries of Nebuchadnezzar power, or Gentile greatness. Their doom and utter destruction stand out in contrast with the chronicles and prophecies of the elect nation of Israel, "to whom" still "pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever" (Rom. ix. 4, 5).

If we now turn from these prophecies to their present history, it yet remains to see how Israel and the Gentiles answered God, when He woke the world up once more by the light of "the day-spring from on high," and by the songs of the angelic hosts at the coming in of Christ, the Son of the Father, by the mystery of the incarnation. "Last of all He sent to them His Son." The question is no longer the competency of Adam to retain a paradise upon the sole condition of allegiance to the Creator; nor of the sufficiency of Solomon to govern the elect nation in Jerusalem, with Jehovah in covenant relation to the throne and the temple; nor of the Gentiles, in their use of power for the glory of God, when transferred to Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar; but will they reverence the Son, and welcome

Him as the Saviour, the King of kings, and Lord of lords? "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will to men," was the new song given out from the heavens to the earth when JESUS was born. Another morning is come; must another night succeed this? Deliverance and blessing were to issue forth from heaven, seeing that all hands were incompetent below to keep what God had bestowed, or retain the place of honour and power in which He had set them for His glory. The groan of creation—the captivity of Israel—the idolatry of Babylon—left no hope in the world. The cry of the oppressed once more went up to God, and so the multitude of the heavenly hosts brought in their melodious anthem, and piped unto them of the Child born—would they dance? God had yet one Son, and He so loved the world He had made, and the men in it, that He sent Him forth as the Redeemer of Israel, and the Saviour of the world.

The innocent first man—the endowed king—the elect nation, on the one hand; or the head of gold, and the image, in its continuation of silver, brass, iron, and clay on the other; had forfeited their thrones and dominions, their kingdoms, and their sceptres and crowns;—can they appreciate deliverance, or will they yet do worse? Yes, far worse than all, for when they saw the Son, they said, "This is the Heir, come, let us kill Him, and seize upon His inheritance. And so they cast Him out of the vineyard" and the world too, vociferating up to God, "we will not have this Man to reign

over us," and that Man the Son of the Highest—yea, God manifest in the flesh. The whole world had grown so old in wickedness, that it could not estimate such an intervention in supreme goodness as God sending forth His Son to save the lost and the undone. Not only Herod the king (an Edomite) was troubled at the birth of JESUS, but likewise all Jerusalem ("the city of the great King" Ps. xlviii. 2) with him. (Matt. ii. 1, 3.) The high priest, Caiaphas, rent his clothes, and Pilate washed his hands of innocent blood, when his lips had given sentence against Him. The Son of God, the incarnate One, come down to walk with men upon the earth, and to go about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, has been refused, cast out, and crucified. The trial and the test at this time were not, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thine heart, and thy neighbour as thyself," but will men consent to be loved by Him who has come after them in love? Alas! they refused to be loved by God, and compel even JESUS to say of them, "For my love they are my adversaries."

They take Him out of the manger, and lead Him to the brow of the hill, and then to the cross, where they crucify Him between two thieves; and God has looked down upon all this. Yet the earth moves upon its axis still, and a God in providence makes the sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust. WHAT A GOD HE IS! If mankind ever had the sense of what was right-

eous and true in His sight, they would have accepted the sentence of death in Adam's transgression, when confirmed by the flaming sword at the garden-gate; and if they carried the sense of grace, they would cling to the promise of deliverance through the Seed of the woman, and shadowed forth by the coats of skin which God made, and wherewith He clothed them. But it was not till four thousand years had told their sad tale to the heavens, and all who dwell therein, of the growing distance and enmity below, that the cross bore witness against the world itself by the rejection of Christ as its king, and of JESUS as the Saviour come to seek and save those that are lost. The earth and its inhabitants had long ago broken down, when tried representatively, before the law, and the kingdom of Israel. Then God called it out into His presence, to learn its insufficiency for restoration and re-establishment under such a government as He had set up in Jerusalem. The world itself, and all its pretensions (and at their highest and best too), had suffered collapse, when its representative man and representative nation failed towards God, and wrought no deliverance in the earth.

Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, with the ten toes, may deny this great and summary collapse as conclusive, and expand and inflate themselves and their kingdoms, as they have done, and are still doing, but only to suffer a heavier judgment and doom by their experiment, and break down finally under the responsibility of power in their own hands. Worse than this, far worse;

for it was under the power and rule of the fourth beast of the image that Cæsar's representative acted, and that the Roman soldier pierced the side of JESUS with his spear. Human enmity came forth, instead of love to God, and wickedness had found its Victim at last in the Son of God's grace, and their common outlet at His cross and in His blood. This was the crisis, and a night of darkness. What must the Judge of the earth do now? Can there ever be a morning again? Will He submerge the world by water a second time, in righteous anger? or will He destroy it by fire? God had a remedy after the deluge, and brought in the law, and an economy by Moses, whom He installed as the mediator between God and men. Has He yet a resource? Besides this it was the school-time, when the Levites taught the people, and instructed them in the right ways of the Lord. Israel was at school, and under its school-master. After (or rather with) an elaborate and wondrous system of education in this sample and elect nation, He established government by a theocracy in the midst of this experimental people. The best that God could do with men as they were, and the choicest sample of mankind too, came to nought, and they were driven out of Canaan. Neither education nor government availed. After Jerusalem came Babylon and the Gentiles, and their one only point of agreement, as determined by Caiaphas and Pilate, was to condemn Christ, and crucify Him. This was the cross, where the whole world, which had

broken down morally, rose up in defiance and rebellion against God, and against His Anointed. (Acts iv. 24-27.) Wickedness and hate have overstepped themselves, by reason of Him who was their Object and Victim.

A climax has come, and the whole world is in blood-guiltiness before God; but He will not, yea, cannot, determine this new enormity by water, as He once did, nor by melting fire, as He will do at the last day. And why? Because He had His purposes of grace and redemption to bring to light at the cross, and by means of the precious blood they had shed. That act, which was the *outlet* of man's hatred of God and Christ, becomes the door for the *inlet* of His infinite love to sinners. He will not take up the crucifixion of His Son as a murder at His cross, though it be so horrible, nor be ruled by it in vengeance *to-day*, but use it as a door into the acceptable year of the Lord. By means of the cross God can proclaim forgiveness to the betrayers and murderers, in proof that, high as the world's hate rose, His love was yet higher, and overreached it, even to pardon it, through faith in the atoning blood, which was the very proof of their guilt. In this forbearance and grace the Father and the Son are one: for, as when the woman whom the Pharisees brought to Jesus in her sin—in the very act, as they said—to be stoned, and He would not condemn her, but stooped down, and wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not; so has God, in grace, been acting during this long day of patience and long-suffering, not willing that any

should perish, but that all should come to repentance. After the blood-guiltiness at the cross God comes out in grace, beginning at Jerusalem; and this is indeed as the light of another morning—"a first day"—and becomes the time of salvation, through the blood and death of Christ, during which God refuses to hear the accusation or enter into judgment upon this sin with mankind. There is an alternative still between God and man at the cross—salvation or judgment—and herein is wisdom, to be of one mind with Him, and thankfully accept justification by faith in the blood of Christ, and eternal life, through His death and resurrection to the right hand of God as the Head of the new creation. Union, by the Holy Ghost, with the Son of man there, and in the glory (to every believer), is the new position which the gospel of God proclaims and offers even to the chief of sinners. CHRIST IS GONE!

In conclusion, we may and must ask, Is this alternative accepted for "the obedience of faith among all nations?" Are they rejoicing in the glad tidings of God's salvation, and looking for the second coming of Christ, to take all those who believe up to the Father, as redeemed by the blood of His Son, and to be manifested as the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ? (Rom. viii. 16-21; Col. iii. 4). The Lord and the glorified saints are the appointed kings and priests unto God, and they will order and put the world all right (Rev. i. 5, 6; 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.), when He takes to Himself His great power, and reigns on the throne of

His glory, as the "Greater than Solomon," to establish His interests in righteousness and peace on the earth.

"The morning cometh, and also the night," and it is at the dawn of another and a new dispensation from above, by the coming of the Lord; and in the face of such an administration as this will be, it is that the antagonistic path completes itself, into which "the god of this world" (2 Cor. iv. 4) has led the counsellors and the great men of these nineteen centuries. Do any inquire, as the watchman bids them, what the night-time is of this present century? and what is the fatal and final night? The answer is this: "So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns." Moreover, she had "in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" Isaiah's watchman cried out in his day, "If ye will inquire, inquire ye, return, come;" and Daniel the prophet, as well as the Apocalyptic apostle, the two watchmen who chronicle the approaching end of this age to us, cry "The dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure." "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear, . . . for the time is at hand!" John, who describes the depth of the darkness of this horrible night-time, as well as its coming and closing judgments, cries out, "The ten horns which thou sawest upon ['and'] the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat

her flesh and burn her with fire." Once more, the watchman cries, "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." (Dan. ii. 45; Rev. i. 3; xvii. 3, 4, 16, 18.)

In the by-gone chronicles of God's actings with men, probation and their education were His own care, till they "changed the truth of God into a lie," and then, judicially, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind, because they did not like to retain Him in their knowledge" (Rom. i. 25, 28). These, as well as the theory and establishment of government and rule over the nations, are things of the past, and on the page of history; and yet these are the very subjects which the senates and parliaments have recommenced, and which occupy them in their sessions, as if they were out upon a voyage of discovery. How tedious and disappointing they find it, none knows so well as themselves, as one premier supplants his fellow and forms another cabinet, or dissolves the existing house of assembly and introduces a different policy; nor will we stop to inquire, for pity's sake. Enough for us to know they are in the darkness of the night, and labouring for very vanity. They have the wrong man in hand to make better, and the wrong world to garnish—the Cain, who went out from the presence of God at first; and, lastly, Barrabas instead of JESUS, when they cast Him out and killed Him—the God who came back into it in the Person of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son. Woe be to the world that refused the mystery of the Child born

and put Him into a manger, and, when wearied of Him, took Him down from the cross, and offered Him a sepulchre ! Life and peace to a world, in which redemption out of its ruins is preached through the death and resurrection of Christ, is God's only remedy, by the Holy Ghost sent down from the Father and the Son in heaven, in the gospel of His grace, and in which world a free pardon is proclaimed through faith in the precious blood of Christ which they shed.

This refusal of God's only resource, as the Judge of the whole earth, is like demanding a new trial (if one may thus speak) at the throne of His Majesty, where the rejected Son is sitting, "till His enemies are made His footstool." This demand is boldly maintained, moreover, by a refusal to accept the humbling fact of the worthlessness of man, as proved by his break-down educationally in the school of Moses, or under the economy in Immanuel's land, when king Solomon reigned over the nations ; or, finally, by the enmity and outbreak of the civilized world against God and His Anointed at the cross. In their eyes He is still without form or comeliness, for man and the world and the devil are the same ; neither is there any beauty in the Son, or value in His work of redemption, that they should desire Him or it. If any think it may be otherwise now, and that national Christianity, together with the pretentious Congress in eastern and western Europe, may yet float these nations ; or give them favour in the sight of God by the mockery of their established but contradictory religions ; one only need

point any such to the boasted "union" of the Church and State throughout the Roman earth, to falsify every expectation of "a morning without a cloud."

"Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth; serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in HIM!" (Psalm ii.)



"HEAR, O HEAVENS, AND GIVE EAR,
O EARTH: FOR THE LORD
HATH SPOKEN."

(*Isaiah i. 2.*)

We are in a world in which God has spoken, and spoken plainly "at sundry times and in divers manners in times past through the prophets—in these last days by His Son. God solemnly warns "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh" (Heb. i. 1, 2; xii. 25).

Now God's word carries its own proof of authority with it, as does every testimony from God: this is a fundamental principle. It does not require proof; it furnishes its own proofs of everything to the soul. We do not bring a light to the sun in order to discern it; it enlightens us. The word of God is not judged; it judges. If God speaks, woe unto him that hears what is spoken, and knows not that *it is God who speaks*. There are those, assuredly, who will not own that it is He. If this refusal to believe

be final, they are lost—sentence has already been passed upon them; the light is come, and the darkness comprehends it not. “The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The word of God, whether spoken or written, has to be received *as the word of God* (see 1 Thess. ii. 13); he who rejects it does so at his peril. If any remain in ignorance of some of its details—if any are mistaken as to some book, they lose just so much of it: “The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple More-over by them is Thy servant warned.” “The entrance” (the one who presumes to judge God’s word keeps it outside and will not let it “enter”) “of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Ps. xix. 7, 11; cxix. 130). This conviction that the word is its own evidence, is all important; this alone maintains the true character of *the word of God*, and distinguishes the Bible from every other book. It is written “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (judgment, as in v. 22); but is passed from death unto life.” “He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; *because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son* (John v. 24; 1 John v. 10). The Lord JESUS, in speaking of “The Scriptures, said “They are they which testify of ME (John v. 30).

ON THE SCRIPTURES.

“Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name.” Psalm cxxxviii. 2.

We may by a little consideration observe the value which God has set on the revelation He has, from time to time, been making of Himself and His will, and also our own title to the direct personal use of that revelation. And such truths are of serious and happy importance to our souls at all times, but in some sense especially now.

When the Lord God planted and furnished the garden, and set Adam in it, He made all to depend on His word or revelation: “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” This was the revelation then; and man’s history, as we know, was to hang entirely upon it. And thus, at the very outset, we see what a place of value the word which had gone out from the mouth of the Lord holds; and it became the direct object of the serpent’s assault and enmity.

So, when the character of things had been changed through man’s disobedience to this first word of God, all is made to depend on another word: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Man’s return to God now depended

on his belief of this word, as his departure from God had afore hung on his disobedience to the first word. For all now rested on faith, or obedience to this revelation. Thus we find that Abel, by *faith*, offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. All service from man now rested on faith, or obedience to the word or revelation of God. (Heb. xi.) So high was the value which the Lord put on His word, making it, as before, the standard and the test of obedience, and the hinge on which man's history was to turn. And Cain's offering was in unbelief, or in despite of God's word about the Seed of the woman. He despised God's word, as the serpent had before assailed it. And so, in process of time, in like manner, Noah and Abraham, to instance no others, are called forth from a revolted world by revelations from God, and their acceptance of such revelations determines their path in present peace onward to glory.

But when we reach a larger scene for the energies and acts of God, as in the nation of Israel, we still find that all was made to turn upon the revelation He was giving His people. We read that they were neither to add to it or diminish from it. (Deut. iv.; xii.) So carefully did He hedge round it, so jealously did He watch over it, that it

might not be entangled with the thorns of the wilderness of worldly wisdom, or disturbed by the admixtures of man's thoughts. And having thus protected it, and provided for its purity, Jehovah ordered that his people should bind it round their heart and their soul, and fix it under their eye continually, inscribing it on their gates and doors, making it their morning and evening meditation and the theme of their family intercourse (Deut. vi.-xi.), so that they should let it in, that it might mingle itself with all their personal and social life, and shed its light on every path, however ordinary, of their daily journey. And if any of them were put at a distance from the more immediate place of the nation and of their religious observances, still the *word* was to be their rule there. (Josh. xxii. 4, 5.) And if any of them were called into circumstances which might be extraordinary or unlooked for, the same word of God should follow them there; for if there were to be a king in days to come, the law of his God should go up to the throne with him, and be there before him as fully as he was before the people. (Deut. xvii.) And the history of Israel as a nation, like that of Adam in Eden and out of Eden, was to be determined by their use of God's word. (Deut. xxviii.)

What an expression of the value which the Lord set upon His word all this gives us! and with what jealousy does He watch it, that He may maintain it in its purity! and how immediately would He have it bound round the heart and soul of each of His people!

It is blessed to see the Lord thus esteeming His own revelation, and commending it to our esteem; and, as we go on in His ways, it is His word we still find the Lord using and estimating. Israel was disobedient to the word of His law; and what He does is to send them the word of His prophets. If they refuse one testimony, it is only another they must get. God will still use His word, and still make their history to rest on their use or abuse of it. And, therefore, we find that their final dispersion and bondage in Babylon came of this, that when the Lord had even risen up early to send them His prophets, they did but despise those prophets, and the words which they brought; so that wrath came on them to the uttermost, and there was now no remedy. (2 Chron. xxxvi.)

There is however a return to Jerusalem out of Babylon; and return to God then is marked very clearly by a return to His word. The captives are obedient to the word. Ezra, for instance, makes it his

meditation, the theme of his intercourse with the people, and the rule of his ways and acts in the midst of them. (Chap. vii.) So Nehemiah and his companions: they read it, they own the power of it over their consciences, and they set themselves to walk and act in the light of it. (Chaps. viii.-xiii.) As long, or as far, as those returned Jews were obedient to God, so long, and so far, were they attentive to the voice of His truth, both trembling at, and rejoicing in, His word according to its spirit in addressing them. They had returned to God, and must, therefore, return to His word; and while this was so, blessing was theirs, and latter day blessing is made to depend on this also. (Mal. iv. 4-6.)

When we open the New Testament, after all this, we find *the word*, or revelation of God, in this accustomed place of honour and value. It is put into the lips of the Baptist; no power lies in his hand, but the word of the Lord breaks from his lips. "John did no miracle," but he was a "voice" from God, acceptance of which was again to determine the history of Israel. So the Lord's own ministry, which this of John introduced, was not only a fresh ministry of God's word (on the value of which I will not speak), but it did itself greatly honour the precious word; and this still shows us

what value in God's esteem His word holds. Thus, in His *acts*, the Lord Jesus was ever fulfilling that word, as the Evangelists are careful to tell us; in His *conflicts* with the devil, He uses that word, as the Gospels again tell us; and in His *teachings*, He is ever referring to that word, rebuking the Jews for their value for anything else, for their use of traditions, and their neglect of it, and giving them to know that not a jot or tittle of it can in any wise fail; that the Scripture cannot be broken; and that if Moses and the prophets be not heard, even one risen from the dead would not avail to lead to repentance.

This is much to be observed; and thus did *the Son*, in His day, honour the word. The Holy Ghost, in like manner, is a Spirit of revelation in the apostles, and fills up by them the word of God. But not only so, but in them He does continually, clearly, and fully, express His divine sense of the value of the Scriptures. If man dare not add to it, God need not. It is *perfect*, able, as the apostle tells us, thoroughly to furnish the saint to all good works. And no authority stands, or can possibly stand, on equal ground with it, so that even if an angel were to gainsay it, he must be cursed. It matters not who it may be, all must sink below the voice and authority of that gospel

or revelation of God which had been delivered.

Thus do we see, from the beginning to the end, the Lord's value for His own word—how He has made a hedge about it, that no rude hand may guiltlessly touch it, and also has appointed it to be the great standard* at all times, on which the history of His people, either for blessing or for curse, was to turn: and has bound it round the heart and soul, before the eyes, and on the palms of His people, and given it an authority which nothing is to be allowed either to gainsay or to rival. God of old, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each in His day, attests this. And all this is precious to the soul. God and His word are joined together. To give up His word is to give up Himself. For He can be known only by His own revelation.

But if we thus see the divine estimate of the word, with equal clearness and sure-

*A standard must be a standard for everything; and for this it must be the whole and the perfect record of truth. As this is not in the mind of man, it must be revealed, and this with authority for all or it is not a rule to which every one is responsible. Otherwise individual responsibility and mutual sense of righteousness are destroyed, and manifest fruits of righteous cease to be of avail as a test of conduct and fellowship, because there would be no common standard to which they could be brought.

ness we may see our title to that word, and how the Lord has joined us and the word together also, and that no man therefore can put such asunder.

By one short sentence the "ready writer" has given all saints an immediate personal interest in all the *old* Scriptures: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." This one sentence writes our title to this most precious inheritance. The old Scriptures are God's gift, and this word from Romans xv., is the deed of gift, entitling all saints to a common property in it. The title is short and clear and simple, as the inheritance conveyed is invaluable.

But with equal simplicity can we make out our title to the *new* Scriptures. Luke addresses his gospel to a private christian friend as we may speak, hereby showing that it was written for the saint in the most ordinary circumstances—not committed to any elect order of persons, or persons in authority, but to a private christian friend, who bore no office or distinction of any kind, of whom, indeed, we hear nothing but in this address of the evangelist to him. But this shows that this gospel is given to us all. And if Luke be thus part of our inheritance, so surely are Matthew, Mark and John. We ask no favour from any one.

to allow this: the title is so clear, so simple, so beyond all question; and on the very same ground is our title to the book of Acts. This was the property of the same private friend, the same "Theophilus:" any "lover of God" may deem himself in fullest possession of it, as a further part of his inheritance, and use it without reserve.

The Epistles, in their turn, not only convey their rare and valuable treasures to our souls, but at the very outset tell us of our title to them.

They are addressed (saving in personal cases, as Timothy, Titus, or Philemon), to the saints, or the churches in the different places to which the Spirit by His apostles sends them: and the book of Revelation (which, following the Epistles, closes the volume of God) is sent to the seven churches in Asia; and thus we read the title of all saints to these words. They are not specially committed to any separated order of men, but cast upon the hearts of all the saints, as Moses had done with all the statutes and judgments of Israel. And I may add, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" would never have been written to the saints at Colosse, if they had not title to the immediate personal enjoyment of that word. But so it is, blessed be God! He has as simply joined His word and the

heart of His saint together, as He has joined Himself and His word together. And we say again, what God has joined together let no man put asunder.

And if any do so violently—if any take away the key of knowledge, they are falling under the direct judgment of the Lord; “woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge.” (Luke xi. 52.)

Such is God's estimation of His own precious revelation, and such His care that it should be kept pure. But in connection with this, I would for a little moment look at I Kings xiii.

The kingdom of the ten tribes under Jero-boam was at this time an unclean place. The calves of gold set up at Bethel and at Dan were the confidence of the people, obedient to this word of their king, “Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”

The Lord sends a missionary into that land with words of judgment. His commission, his ministry, and his conduct in his ministry, were all specially ordered by “the word of the Lord.” He comes out of Judah to Bethel “by the word of the Lord” (ver. 1); he cries out against the altar there “in the word of the Lord” (ver. 2); and his behaviour, while in that place and doing that

service, is prescribed to him "by the word of the Lord" (ver. 9). And thus, as we said, his commission, his ministry, and his conduct—all are under the light and authority of God's word. This provided for everything: he had only to observe it.

This is most particularly marked by the Spirit of God in this narrative. And at the beginning, the Lord's missionary, "the man of God," acts accordingly. He pleads "the word" as the warrant for his ministry of judgment upon the altar at Bethel, and also against the offers and invitations of Jeroboam, making it the only light and guide of his path while in his country. And this was all safe and happy. The Lord had given him a very simple directory, and in the observing of it his path was maintained in security and peace.

But that old serpent who, in the garden of Eden, made "the word of the Lord" the object of his attack, and has ever since been seducing the heart of man from it, tries with this man of God something further, since the offers and invitations of a king are resisted.

There was "an old prophet" in Israel at that time—another man of God, I doubt not; but, like Lot, found in a place where he ought not to have been, and where he could not act in character as a prophet: for how

could he reprove the darkness with which he was more or less associated ?

Such an one is easily used by the enemy, and so it proves here. The father of lies employs him to do his work, and he tempts the Lord's missionary to eat and drink with him, contrary to "the word" which he had received, under the pretence that "an angel" from the Lord had spoken to him. And the temptation prevails: the path of simple obedience to "the word of the Lord" is deserted, and the servant of God dies under the judgment of God—a kind of pillar of salt, a kind of abiding witness and warning to us all, that our souls may ever hold to this—"let God be true, but every man a liar."

Deep and serious, and for the present evil day well-timed is the instruction of this little narrative. The man who withstood the invitations of a king, and had determined on cleaving to "the word of the Lord," though against the offers of a man in power, falls under the pretences of a man of religion. A religious guise seduces one whom the splendours of a court had tempted in vain. And so it is still and will increasingly be. The devil is still practising, by what the world judges to be religion, as it judged and estimated the traditions and observances of the Pharisees of old. And

he succeeds if he can but withdraw from subjection to "the word of the Lord." That is what God opposes to everything: "If they speak not according to it, there is no light in them" (Is. viii 20).

Clearly, then, do we trace in the Scriptures God's value for His word or revelation, and the believer's title to it. If God's word be deserted, He Himself is given up, for He can be known only by the revelation of it. There is no light in the soul—"They have taken away the key of knowledge"—and our Lord joins this with not entering into the kingdom of God. (Luke xi.)

There is an opposite error. There is the taking of this key, and using it to one's own destruction. The untaught and unstable do this. (2 Pet. iii.) The mere human or intellectual man, in the confidence of his own strength, takes this key, and injures, all he can, the door of the treasury of wisdom and knowledge through his awkwardness or violence. This is very true. And the danger is, lest, being offended by this as the saint should and must righteously be, he is cast on the former error, and tempted to let the key of knowledge be taken away, and deposited in some sacred hand, as is thought. But one error is not to be corrected by another: the key is neither to be taken away, nor used unskilfully.

I fully however allow, and it is to be deeply remembered by our souls in a day of intellectual pretence like the present, and of much activity of human thought and wisdom, that the book of God is not to be subjected to the mere acuteness of man's mind. Far otherwise indeed. It demands, in the name of God, our full subjection to itself. Nor is it written, as one has said, for critics, for scholars, or for judges, *but for sinners*. "It is not an interesting exercise for our faculties," that we are to expect in it. And it is by laying aside malice and envy and hypocrisies, and by simple desire after the living God Himself, that we are really to grow by its sincere milk or strong meat. (1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.) I would indeed add this to what I have said on the value of the Scriptures. The Lord forbid that we should say anything that would appear to treat it as only one of the many books of the schools. For the Son of God is not the mere Master of a new school, but the living Head of the church to minister nourishment through joints and bands to the whole body. And let me add the striking and seasonable language of one of other days: "Wouldst thou know that the matters contained in the word of Christ are real things? Then never read them for mere knowledge sake. Look for some beams of Christ's glory and

power in every verse. Account nothing knowledge, but as it is seasoned with some revelation of the glorious presence of Christ, and His quickening Spirit. Use no conference about spiritual truths for conference' sake, but still mind the promotion of edification."

This would help to put the soul into a right attitude, when purposing to learn the secrets of God's most precious oracles. And when the apostle prays for the saints (as in Eph. i., and Col. i.), that they may grow in *knowledge*, he does this after he has sought for them that they might have a spiritual understanding; and this tells us, or intimates to us, that mere acquaintance with, or information about, Scripture, would all be divinely nothing worth, and that we should be careful not to pursue enquiry into revealed truth by the light or skill of the human mind, but by the exercise of the understanding given to us in Christ Jesus.

All this surely I would uphold before my own conscience at all times. But all this leaves untouched the great truth we have been mainly considering—the value of the written word *with* God and *to* us, and that it is the great one standard for the testing of all our thoughts, and the common inheritance of all the children. It is even the delight and commendation of an inspired

apostle, that Timothy, the child of a child of God, from his childhood had known that word. So surely has God bound it about the heart and soul of His people. Therefore, again we say, let no authority divorce them or put them asunder, neither let any one use it, but in that holy obedient mind that is due to a gift of God.

The Spirit, in a very large sense, gives the Scriptures to all. For in the inspired penman of the Acts, the Holy Ghost commends the Bereans for their candour, their nobleness, in searching the Scriptures, whether what even an apostle was teaching was according to them. It was grateful to the mind of the Holy Ghost to have His word thus used and honoured by these poor Jews. Bereans they were, of the synagogue in that city; and the Spirit rejoices at seeing the Scriptures in their hands, making them the standard, even though an apostle was preaching unto them. This surely puts the written word in high places. And so the same apostle, as quickened by the same Spirit, reasoned with the Jews out of the same Scriptures, from "morning to evening;" as the Lord Jesus Himself restored the minds of the two disciples by leading them through all the Scriptures. Peter also commends the disciples to the light of the prophetic word, and by his own word

would ever have them bear in mind all that was needful for them, whether for past, present, or future truth ; and never (as another has observed) thinks of commending them to any official or apostolic successor of his, but to that word which the Holy Ghost by him was then delivering. As even teachers, feeders of God's flock—as spiritual elders set over them are commended to God and His word, and not to anything else, in order that they might be kept and edified. (Acts xx.; Luke xxiv.; 2 Pet. 1.)

This, and more than this, which we have, is more than enough to make our souls prize this precious, precious, gift of God—much more precious to our souls by the attempt there has ever been made to take it from us as not belonging to us, and to deposit it in some dark and distant corner. They have sought to put asunder what God has joined together—the heart of His wayfaring saint and the light of His word.

God's word may be given up by the infidel who rejects it ; but it may be given up, though in another way, by him who would join other words with it.

Traditional Christianity is real infidelity ; for it denies the Scriptures, which assert their own sufficiency, and make themselves the standard. “To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to

this word, it is because there is no light in them." And again, "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo! they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" (Is. viii. 20; Jer. viii. 9). A betrayer of the book, in purer days, was judged as wicked an one as the denier of the faith." The one is *profane* infidelity, the other is *religious* infidelity, and man by much chooses the latter. It enables him to keep God at a distance, which is the desire of man, or the flesh, and at the same time to keep a conscience at peace with religion still, which is equally his desire.

Sorrowful is the sight that man still prevails—prevails in the religion of the world, as well as in its kingdoms. But blessed, blessed indeed, the prospect of entering a sphere where JESUS shall prevail, and that for ever. The light of God's thoughts shall shine there, the righteousness of God's power shall be felt there. "Times of restitution" (Acts iii. 21) indeed—times of refreshing; because times of the presence of JESUS!

It is not merely thoughts of God that our souls need: all religion, divine or human, i. e. true or false, will teach us to think of God. But it is the thoughts of God we need to have brought into our souls—and those

thoughts are to be learned only, authoritatively and unmixedly, in the word. The Scriptures are these thoughts of God conveyed to us. And the Psalmist says of them, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand" (Ps. cxxxix. 17, 18; cf. xl. 5). O that we may thus prize them!

I would add, in the words of another, "The malice of Satan has raged no less against the book than the truth contained in it." This we might expect. For what is the book of God? In the words of the same, "God's merciful and steadfast relief against all that confusion, darkness, and uncertainty, which the vanity, folly, and baseness of the minds of men, heightened by the unspeakable distractions that fall out among them, would otherwise have certainly run into." And this book, like every work of God, manifests itself. It is its own witness. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" And in contrast with all other words—with all words or writings which are not His—the Lord says, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" (Jer. xxiii.) Such things do we learn of the word, or the Scriptures.

And in closing, I would just say, that we need the whole of it, but nothing supplemental to it. This is intimated both by the Lord and Moses: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." (Deut. viii.; Matt. iv. See also Prov. xxx. 5, 6.) This testimony is strong. These words tell us that nothing less, nothing more, is needed as food for the sustaining and strengthening of divine life in our souls, the Spirit most surely being alone able to make it effectual. The soul does not know what portion of the precious word, in its conflict with various darknesses and subtleties of Satan, it may not need, but it can live by that. Its life will not need aught beside, but it is not to spare any of it. These two thoughts are clearly intimated in these words. And thus, for our blessing as for the divine Giver's praise, we are not to add thereto or diminish therefrom. We may and shall attain different measures in the knowledge of it, according as there is gift of God, and the exercise of the spiritual senses; but we are to make it the common standard in the camp of God. And the standard-bearer of the Lord must not faint in the day of battle, but remember the encouragement given in Psalm cxl. 7, and Psalm cxliv. 1.

“TWO STICKS.”

(Read 1 Kings xvii. 12.)

How many believers in this day are culpably like the poor widow of Sarepta before she met the Tishbite. They know so little of the wonderful service they are predestined of the Lord to fulfil for Him here, that they are, ignobly enough, looking only for a couple of sticks, accounting that they have sufficient in the barrel and the cruse to die upon, but far from enough to live upon! They have so little understood the wonderful fact that they have present possession of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, as the inexhaustible resources of faith (of which the meal and the oil were types) that they go along with their eyes upon the ground; and their piety chiefly consists in a suitable preparation for death! It may be in the near, or it may be in the distant, horizon, but this only is looming before their souls. These are they who religiously affirm that “in the midst of life we are in death,” never having learnt how much happier it is to be able to say, and how much more divinely true it is to the saint, that in the midst of death we are in life; not knowing either how incomparably greater a thing it is to be fit to live than to be fit to die.

When the famine had long raged throughout the land, and even beyond its borders, the prophet of God was directed to forsake Israel's dried-up rivulet, Cherith, for Zarephath of Zidon, for there had Jehovah commanded a widow woman to sustain him; the "many widows in Israel" being passed over, that a Gentile might taste of His goodness, and also be the almoner of His resources. (Luke iv. 25, 26.) At the very gate of the city they met, and he, being entitled to draw at once upon her supplies, requests of her bread and water, only to elicit the disclosure of her abject penury. Everything but the last mouthful was gone, and she and her son were at the point of death.

Elijah's reply, "Fear not," etc., beautifully asserts the ascendancy of his faith. Be it that the famine was at its height, and that the person upon whom he was billeted was an embodiment of wretchedness and misery the most profound, he had gone there in the name and at the word of the God of Israel, to live, and not to die, and to announce, as well as to receive, succour. And as the two mites dropped into the Lord's treasury by a Jewish widow of another and a later day, met the commendation that she had cast in more than all the rest (Luke xxi.), so were the "two sticks" of this Gentile widow, gathered

with a view to the last desperate morsel before death, to be used for preparing, by the bounty of Jehovah, "enough and to spare," the prelude of a new lease of life to herself and to the prophet, and the pledge of unmeasured mercy and grace to the Gentiles.

She had gone forth of the city, having no object higher or happier than the "two sticks," but she found the Lord, as it were, at the gate; for there she met His prophet, and there she heard His word. How many believers are like her, as she sallied forth that eventful day, full of their own thoughts and forebodings! In what they have, and what they seek, they have self for their motive, thus rising no higher, and seeing no further, than the couple of sticks, for they have not yet met the Lord at the gate, or, in other words, have not yet got their commission—the service for Himself He has assigned to them here.

What a revolution of soul must she have experienced as the word of Jehovah fell from the mouth of His prophet! Retracing her steps now, not to be the prey of death, but as one taken out of the world, and afresh sent into the world, she enters the city with composure and with dignity, as hostess of the servant of the living God. Henceforth the famine is over for her and for her household, and she ranks as a com-

missioned officer in the commissariat of the Lord of hosts. In a marked manner is she identified with His interests on earth, and that primarily, for the prophet had said, "Make me thereof a little cake first." Her faith and her self-denial ran together as twin-sisters, for she did so, and she and her house did eat many days, even until Jehovah sent rain upon the earth. Had any one told her that morning that before the sun set she should eat abundantly, and her household, and that also she should entertain the same day as her guest the most distinguished man upon earth, even him at whose word the heavens had been so long shut up, would he not have been unto her as one that mocked?

And, in like manner, how little now do saints generally recognize that no higher dignity and no greater privilege could be conferred upon us than are ours already, in being sent here, not to get on in the world but, to find in the interests of Christ our *first* consideration, and in being made competent, by the divine resources we possess, to minister of them as freely to others as we have partaken of them abundantly ourselves! (cf. Matt. x. 8.) How simply and how confidently did the Zidonian widow receive and act upon the Tishbite's testimony! She goes back into Sarepta ennobled by faith and

enriched with promises ; qualified and commissioned by Jehovah to dispense His bounty to His honoured servant, and to be the witness of divine superiority to the deepest human exigencies, as to herself and her house ; a poor Gentile by nature, but bound up now in the bundle of life with Elijah and Elijah's God !

Nevertheless she has practically to learn death. Upon the old ground she had met the wreck of every earthly hope in becoming a widow, but this would not suffice. Upon the new ground of divine favour and exhaustless benefits, death must be experimentally brought home to her heart. And so the son of her bosom is cut off before her eyes, but she receives him again at the hand of the Lord, *plus* the incalculable gain that the sentence of death carries with it to faith. She held him before, upon the uncertain tenure of the old creation, as the fruit of her womb ; she gets him back upon new creation tenure as the fruit of resurrection. Moreover, the man of God (figure of Christ) and the word of the Lord are both established before her soul—"Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."

Surely all this is full of instruction for ourselves, and beautiful in its season, for

the scene around us is one of dearth, and drought and death; and how happy and how blessed is the discovery made to faith, that in the antitypes of the meal and the oil we have Christ our life, and the Holy Ghost its power, in such present plenitude as to render us eminently superior to everything here, so that the famine prevailing in the old creation only enhances more and more unto our souls the immeasurable and unfailing resources of the new.

How many alas! of the Lord's people now-a-days resemble the widow before she met Elijah, under pressure of what she felt powerless to avert, and only seeking to pass, without further suffering, out of this blighted scene—a sight as painful and as pitiable as a stranded ship on a barren coast! But the truly-taught saint of God (blessed as he is with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ and indwelt by the Holy Ghost) should be like a noble merchantman, freighted with a cargo more precious than gold of Ophir, filling her sails with every heavenly breeze, touching at every open port to discharge somewhat of her unworldly and exhaustless treasure, carrying divine blessing wherever she is welcomed; and knowing, moreover, that she is homeward bound, having everything taut and trim to enter harbour in full

sail, "for so," says the apostle Peter, "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."



THE HOLY GHOST IN PERSON.

Each of the divine Persons in the eternal Godhead has, in connection with Christianity, obtained a blessedly distinctive expression; which never previously had any place in the revelations made to faith. The Father has been Himself revealed; the Son, as Man risen from the dead, has been glorified in heaven; and the Holy Ghost has for nineteen centuries been a Dweller in the house of God upon earth, and in each member of the body of Christ.

Yet it would be difficult to predicate which of these blessed facts—facts which constitute the essential character of Christianity—has been most ignored, not to say denied, by Christendom. How many are they who rank as Christians, but have no solid apprehension of the revelation which has been made of the Father, who have no divine perception of union with Christ in glory, and perhaps, least of all, have clear, conscious possession of the Holy Ghost in Person.

These remarkable verities of Christianity

which, impinging at every point upon our souls, are unfolded in all their wondrous bearings in Paul's epistles, constitute the framework—the very bone and sinew—of that special character of truth which sitting at the feet of Gamaliel gave no qualification for apprehending, but for which the “light above the brightness of the sun,” and the voice that spake with him, afforded preparation, and which was itself divinely supplied by the revelations made to him in the third heaven. But the Christianity which prevails around us, even where divine life really exists, is the crude, and alas! almost purely selfish, thing which is undisturbed by divine claims, and unimpressed by divine desires. Relief from the load, deliverance from the guilt, escape from the wrath, in a word, forgiveness of sins, and, at the most, some knowledge of justification, exhaust the ordinary conception of it as a present reality; finally, heaven after death!

Could anything more perfectly ignore every divine thought of God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus before the world began, which not only requires the meeting the exigencies of the sinner, but the satisfying in righteousness every claim His holiness preferred; and, above all, the fulfilling those cherished desires of His blessed heart which can find no adequate answer until

His Christ is invested in all His glories, heavenly and earthly? Nothing could, perhaps, more strikingly indicate how imperfectly people enter into God's thoughts, than the comparative readiness with which they accept truth as to themselves, as to Israel, and as to the nations, without ever grasping the scope of divine purpose to which all these things are absolutely subservient, being really but the means to that preordained end. Man's unhappy egotism shuts God out, even where God must be everything, or He is nothing; for if, as to His eternal purpose, or as to his ways with us in time, we lay claim to be anything more than vessels of mercy, "afore prepared unto glory," but meanwhile broken pitchers, for the light to shine out, we entrench upon what is due to the divine Persons, and thus is the Head dishonoured in His members, and the Spirit of God grieved. Practically, what more than anything else conduces to this deplorable failure in the appreciation of these things is a defective apprehension of the presence of the Holy Ghost in Person, and what it carries with it to faith.

How many Christians have little, if any, personal knowledge of the Father, or sense of union with Christ, the glorified Man on high, and this because they have not the

Holy Ghost. They stand, as it were, between the two things of Ephesians i. 13—"After that ye believed ye were sealed." So far from believing and sealing being synchronous, the word "after" clearly marks how positively it is otherwise in every case, although setting no limit, long or short, as to duration of the interval. In point of fact how many Christians are just there, occupying that interval. They have made it their halting-place and have not gone "on to perfection" (Heb. vi. i) and since the Holy Ghost is given of God "to them that obey Him" (Acts v. 32), they, whilst in that position, fall short consequently of the knowledge of the Father, and of eternal life, which embraces it. (John xvii. 3.)

Where shall we find in the great Christian communities those who have practically, to the joy of their souls, a real, precious, personal acquaintance with the Father and the Son? So blessed and so abiding a privilege is absolutely beyond the reach of souls, until the Holy Ghost is known in Person as the indwelling divine Paraclete, by Whom alone that holy, blessed, happy intimacy can be enjoyed. And how often alas, do we, who, (through grace) have been sealed and really know of His personal presence, lose the enjoyment flowing from it through grieving Him!

If we turn to the Lord's words to His own, as given in the Gospel of 'John, we find how wonderfully He stamps a reprobate character on this scene, by the fact, with its issues, of the Holy Ghost being here in Person. "I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove ('bring demonstration to' or 'convict') the world of sin and of righteousness, and of judgment." (Chap. xvi., 7, 8.) It is the fact of His presence in Person which convicts the world of its sin in having made away with the blessed Son of God, and these are the world's present relations to God in blood-guiltiness, thus and thereby infinitely enhancing His sovereign grace in delivering the souls whom He brings out of the world to Himself. Then, further, the Holy Ghost's presence demonstrates God's righteousness in His exaltation of the Son to the throne of the Father, consequent upon His finished work, and in attestation of the divine satisfaction in it and in Him. Again, His presence demonstrates that judgment is pronounced, for that the world and its prince are alike judged, is proved by the fact that He, who was refused of the world, and afterwards met the power of Satan at the cross, has through death annulled him that had the power of death, has been received up as a Man into glory, and has Himself

sent down the Holy Ghost in Person as the promise of the Father.

But if His personal presence has this threefold aspect towards the world and its prince, so also has it a singularly blessed tripartite character in respect to Christ and His saints. In this same pathetic discourse of our beloved Master the same night in which He was betrayed, He unfolds the deep and precious significance of the Comforter, for whose advent it was even gain to them for Himself to go away, and connecting chapter xiv. 26 with chapter xvi. 13, we find how blessedly the past, the present, and the future are comprised in the wonderful scope of His current ministry to our souls.

(1.) "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (Chap. xiv. 26.) What the master Himself had done or had said, but which could not then be communicated in power to the heart, and precious, and beautiful, and full divine import as it was, was often unheeded or forgotten, because its significance was often wanting to their souls, should all come back in mighty volume and enhanced blessedness, every word melodious, and every act fragrant with the virtue and the value of His atoning work and glorified

Person, now disclosed to faith, and ministered by the Holy Ghost, that other Comforter. For an instance of this character, compare chapter vii. 39 with chapter xii. 16.

(2.) "Whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak." (Chap. xvi. 13.) If we might reverently say so, He is the mighty, living, divine Telephone, by means of which celestial harmonies are conveyed to the soul, the mind of heaven conducted into our hearts, and all the present thoughts of Christ, not only as to the assembly, but also in respect to His interests of grace in the world, are brought home and unfolded in divine power and heavenly freshness to the members of His body here.

(3.) In same verse—"He will show you the things to come." (Compare 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.) All of the Church's portion, whether her path of sorrow and, alas! of defection here, or of glory beyond; all of the new creation, wherein is no sorrow or no defection, but "all things are of God," to the glory of its exalted Head; all of the coming kingdom of the Father above, and of the Son of Man below, when Israel shall be gathered, and the nations universally blessed, after the indignation and wrath have been poured out, as they must be; all of the new heaven and the new earth for eternity, so far as revelation of it has been

vouchsafed ; all this, and much more—yea, every precious thing of God and of Christ—does the Holy Ghost in Person occupy Himself in ministering to those who, by His indwelling presence, are personally sealed for God, as of the sons He is bringing to glory, and are corporately constituted the body of Christ.

But further ; certain things are set forth in a very definite way. The word is “the sword of the Spirit.” (Ephes. vi. 17.) How clearly does this imply, not only that the Holy Ghost is here in Person, but that He alone enables us to use the word rightly ! Prayer, supplication and intercession are very distinctly in connection with Him. (See Rom. viii. 26, 27 ; Ephes. vi. 18 ; Jude 20.) So that I may not trust myself either as to how to pray, or what to pray for ; but He, divine Person though He be, “helpeth our infirmities.” Do I “mortify the deeds of the body ?” It is “through the Spirit.” (Rom. viii. 13.) Do I want guidance, as a Son of God away from home in this world ? I am “led by the Spirit of God.” (Ver. 14.) Do I covet to be more like Christ in glory ? This practical transformation is by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. iii. 18.) Do I need a positive check in service, or the sounding of a warning note as to where I should labour ? The Holy Ghost knows

how to bring it to pass. (Acts xvi. 6; xx. 23.) And in fine, all the personal path of the saint, if according to God, whether as to growth, devotedness, service, communion, worship, or whatever the spiritual exercise may be, as well as the whole administration of gifts in the assembly, and their exercise in subjection to Christ, must be in the energy and power of the Holy Ghost, or it is mere fleshly activity, and the working of the human will, (1 Cor. xii. 3-13.) And while speaking of the assembly, it may be added, that when the glorified Head of His body draws out the affections of His members, and inspires towards Himself the ardent longings of His bride for His coming, the Holy Ghost, in unison with the saints, takes the lead in this desire of heart also: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." (Rev. xxii. 17.)

Once again: "All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that He [the Spirit of truth] shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John xvi. 15.) Is there anything so dear to the Father as the Person, the character, the ways, the work, the interests, the glories of Christ? In all this our fellowship is with the Father, which is only possible to us by possession of the Holy Ghost in Person. Has God children on earth through faith in Christ Jesus? He

gives them the Holy Ghost to witness of this to their spirit, and that they may address Him, "Abba, Father" by that "Spirit of adoption," who is "the Spirit of His Son." (Rom. viii. 15, 16; Gal. iv. 6.) Do they, then, seek access to their Father? It is "by one Spirit." (Ephes. ii. 18.) Are they strengthened of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with might in the inner man? It is "by His Spirit." (Ephes. iii. 16.) "Fellowship of the Spirit," and "Love in the Spirit," are alike theirs (Phil. ii. i; Col. i. 8.). Sowing to the Spirit, they "shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 8); and, should they fall asleep, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken their mortal bodies by (or, 'on account of') His Spirit that dwelleth in them. (Rom. viii. 11.)

May we not fittingly ask ourselves (implicitly accepting, as we do, the doctrine of the Holy Ghost's presence) whether we anything like adequately apprehend all that is involved in it, either as to the world, or as to the saints of God? He whose presence here in Person is the pledge of the world's impending doom, is "the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." (Ephes. i. 14.) Meanwhile, in this, interregnum, Christ, the glorified Head, has "One body" and "One

Spirit" here below (Ephes. iv. 4), to whom His interests are confided. How little have we understood all that is implied in "the communion of the Holy Ghost." (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) How little, for instance, is it practically recognized by saints, that not only every spiritual victory obtained, but every single thing done that is truly and purely spiritual, everything essentially pleasing to the Father, or glorifying to Christ, is due to our possessing the Holy Ghost in Person! Every bit of divine love that descends into our hearts (Rom. v. 5), as well as every bit of true, divine apprehension of heavenly things and heavenly joys, is the result of our possession of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Ought we not, then, to be free to confess how much we need the touching appeal which He, the Holy Ghost, has addressed to us, and which is found in the midst of that divine unfolding of the very highest truth—the Epistle to the Ephesians? "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

The Comforter, now present,
 Assures us of Thy love;
 He is the blessed earnest
 Of glory there above:
 The river of Thy pleasure
 Is what sustains us now,
 Till Thy new name's imprinted
 On ev'ry sinless brow.

THE LORD *STANDING* OR *SITTING* ON HIGH.

ACTS VII., AND HEBREWS X.

The Holy Ghost opens heaven to our view, and enables us to contemplate that which is found there; and forms us on the earth according to the character of JESUS. As to the change that took place in the progress of God's dealings, it appears to me that it was the realization by the Spirit of the effect of the veil being rent. JESUS is seen still *standing*; because until the rejection by Israel of the testimony of the Holy Ghost, He did not definitively *sit down* waiting for the judgment of His enemies. Rather He remained, in the position of High Priest, *standing*; the believer with Him on high by the Spirit, and the soul having thus far joined Him there in heaven; for now, by the blood of Christ, by that new and living way, it could enter within the veil. On the other hand, the Jews having done the same thing with regard to the testimony of the Holy Ghost that they did with regard to JESUS, having (so to speak) in Stephen sent a messenger after Him to say, "We will not have this Man to reign over us," Christ definitively takes His place, *seated*, in heaven, until He shall judge the enemies who would not that He should

reign over them. It is in this last position that He is viewed in the Epistle to the Hebrews; in which consequently they are exhorted to come out of "the camp" of Israel, following after the Victim whose blood had been carried into the sanctuary; thus anticipating the judgment which fell upon Jerusalem intermediately by means of the Romans, in order to set the nation aside, as it will be finally executed by JESUS Himself. The position of Stephen therefore resembles that of JESUS, the testimony being that of the Spirit to JESUS glorified. This makes the great principle of the Epistle to the Hebrews very plain.

The doctrine of the Church, announced by Paul after the revelation made to him on his way to Damascus, goes further than this; i. e., it declares the union of Christians with the Lord in heaven, and not merely their entrance into the holy place through the rent veil, where the priest only might go in previously, behind the veil which hid God from the people.

We may remark here, that the sanctuary, so to speak, is open to all believers. The veil indeed was rent by the death of Christ, but the grace of God was still acting towards the Jews, as such, and proposed to them the return of JESUS to the earth

(Acts iii. 19, 20), that is to say, outside the veil, in the event of their repentance, so that the blessing would then have been upon the earth—the times of refreshing by the coming of Christ, which the prophets had announced. But now it is no longer a Messiah, the Son of David—but a Son of Man in heaven; and, by the Holy Ghost here below, an opened heaven is seen and known, and the Great High Priest *standing* as yet at the right hand of God is not hidden behind a veil. All is open to the believer; the glory, and He who has entered into it for His people. And this, it appears to me, is the reason why He is seen *standing*. He had not definitely taken His place as *seated* for ever (or ‘in perpetuity’—*eis to dienekes*, Heb. x. 12), on the heavenly throne, until the testimony of the Holy Ghost to Israel of His exaltation had been definitively rejected upon earth. The free testimony of the Spirit which is developed, here and afterwards, is highly interesting, without touching apostolic authority in its place. As to the Jews, till the High Priest comes out, they cannot know that His work is accepted for the nation; as, in the day of atonement, they had to wait till he came out that they might know it. But for us the Holy Ghost is come out while He is within, and we do know it. (Heb. x. 15.)

LOVE.

1 CORINTHIANS XIII.

The connection in which *love* is introduced in 1 Corinthians xiii., must, I suppose, have struck most who study God's word. It bears the same impress of power and of suitability which ever characterizes His word. May we, therefore, led by the Spirit, the Inditer, dwell upon it for a little.

The cause of all the mischief in the Church at Corinth was a remarkable one—one which testifies surely of the great goodness of God. It was the abundant grace and goodness of God acting upon *unsubdued flesh*. The testimony of Christ was *confirmed* among them (i. 6); they were in every thing enriched by (or “in”, as also in ver. 4) Him, in all *utterance* and all *knowledge*. But though there was much gift, grace was not in the same proportion. The seed had been cast abroad richly, but the earth had not been deeply ploughed up; consequently, it much mixed its own productions with the gift of God. The testimony which had been brought among them was estimated by some external characteristic, rather than *as* the testimony of God, as was happily the case with the Thessalonians (1 Thess. ii. 13). And consequently, one was for Paul, another for Apollos, and

another for *Christ*: showing that in a sectarian, independent spirit we may stand (or apparently so) *for Christ*.

Their moral state too, showed that there was not much depth of earth. In chap. iv. "they were full, they were rich, they reigned as kings" without the more faithful saints; they found themselves comparatively at ease in the world, a state which rendered them an easy prey to a *doctrine* which, in chap. xv., assured them that there is no resurrection of the dead; a doctrine which could not so readily suit one who had to say, "I die daily." Even when terrible evil came in, it did not disturb the light complacency of the flesh (chap. v.), they were "puffed up, and did not rather *mourn*, that he which had done the deed might be taken away from among them." The same lightness of work, too, made them bad judges about Christian liberty (chap. viii); for Christian liberty does not consider so much what we *may* do, as what will be for the glory of God, and the welfare of our brethren.

The same state of soul made them also but badly prepared for the use of the spiritual gifts which were so richly amongst them, (chap. xiv. 26) "every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a revelation, etc." a thing which he does not

check, but regulates: therefore he says, "Let all things be done unto *edifying*." It is only in the Spirit that we can handle rightly the things of the Spirit.

It is, therefore, to meet this state of things that the apostle introduces this digression in the midst of his discussion about gifts; for without it, gifts would just split up the Church of God. He proposes it as the tempered mortar. "Though I speak," he says, "with the tongues of men, and of *angels*, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." It is that which gives fullness to the sound, like the High Priest's bells of old, the bells of the sanctuary. "And though I have prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains;" yea, and even though apparent *grace* and *devotedness* come in, so that we either crumble our property into bits (see Greek) to bestow it on the poor, or even give *our body* to be burned, and yet have not *love*, we are profited nothing. What a declaration by the Spirit of God that nothing external—power, devotedness, whatever it may be—is of value before God without that *love* which makes it of savour to Him, and of real refreshment to others. "Love," he says, "suffereth long, and is kind; love en-

vieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly [and this love teaches us our place, Ephes. v. 21]; seeketh not her own [and, therefore, of all things most of Christ, Phil. ii. 21]; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil." It is remarkable that the *quieter* fruits of the Spirit indicate more of His power. Galatians v. 22, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Love is *holy* in its tastes and feelings, "It rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth *with* the truth" (in kindredness of spirit); "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." How fully, then, does He let us into the real and noble nature of Love. It is the highest of all: those things which we are so apt to glory in, as setting *us* forth, tongues etc., are only arguments of our imperfection. They are only to supply our mutual need, and are in us imperfect; "we know in part, and prophesy in part," until we obtain the perfect state of things. But when all need is satisfied, all imperfection is done away, love will still find its full element, as it will ever have to do with God who is love, but light too.

I have dwelt upon this, because it may be particularly suitable to those who are desirous of standing for the Lord and maintain-

ing His truth in a day like the present. Contention against evil has been the great thing to which God has called such latterly. This has broken through, in some measure, that false love or charity, which is, perhaps, the great sin of this professing age, and which is just a counterfeit of the true. That false charity lets anything become of God's truth, rather than speak out faithfully and disturb the robber in his prey. But, "it is required of *stewards* that they be found faithful:" a man may dispose as he will of his own property, but if he dispose, in the same ready way, of another's, we remind him that he must be just before he is generous. And the truth is God's property, of which we cannot dispose, save as He guides us by His Spirit. Now that same *Holy Spirit* (who is also the Spirit of *truth*), would have us careful of the trust, and enjoins us (James iii. 17) that, "The wisdom that is from above is *first* pure, *then* peaceable." Let us who, through grace are the Lord's, remember that we are all in this sense "*stewards* of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1, 2).

Paul, we find in Galatians ii., approached his elder brethren in Jerusalem with something of trembling, lest, through his own weakness, he, by any means should run, or had run, in vain. But when God's truth was really in question, he gave place by

subjection not for an hour, but "withstood Peter to the face, because he was to be blamed."

We are "exhorted" by Jude "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," and there has been, and is, very, very much all around that will call us there-to. Yet, meanwhile, let us seek to be careful, that, whilst contending against evil, we love fervently and cherish all that is, and all that are, of the truth. John, after telling them (1 John iv.) not to believe every spirit, "but try the spirits. &c.," then returns to his more pleasing, and still most incumbent occupation (ver. 7), "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God." It is "the bond of perfectness" (Col. iii. 14), which throws its golden charm around all. We are so apt in securing one truth, to let go another kindred one: but how carefully does the Spirit of truth maintain the balance in 2nd and 3rd epistles of John, "Whom I love *in the truth*" "for the truth's sake, etc.," "in truth and love" "this is love, that we walk after His commandments, &c." (see 2 Jno. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 3 Jno. 1, 3, 4, 6).

'Beloved, let us seek grace to combine these two things, steady faithfulness against evil, and yet frank, confiding, upright and hearty love where it is fairly warranted.

Our Lord, Himself will come soon, very soon: happy indeed to "be found of Him" (through grace) in peace, without spot and blameless!" (2 Pet. iii. 14).

“AS ORACLES OF GOD.”

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.”—1 Pet. iv. 11.

One is quite right in thinking that the apostle's word goes far beyond speaking according to the Scriptures, for a man might say nothing but what was scriptural, and not speak “as [the] oracles of God” (*hologia Theou*). The passage implies that one should only speak when one has the certainty of uttering what one believes to be the mind of God for the occasion. If there is not this confidence, one ought to be silent. It may be an artless message, possibly like that of Peter and John, displaying the speaker to be humanly ignorant and unlearned, and yet just the mind of God, suitable to the present need. This is to speak “as oracles of God.” Another might speak a word true in itself, but applicable to wholly different circumstances, warning where comfort was needed, instruction where the Spirit was rather calling out communion, or *vice versa*. To speak thus is not to speak as oracles of God.

Of course, there is the other and equally imperative obligation on the part of those who hear, of examining all by the word of God.—“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

DAVID SERVING HIS GENERATION.

“For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep.” (Acts xiii. 36.)

It is truly wonderful to mark the controlling power of God over agents the most unconscious and unwilling, so as to render them subservient to the effectuating His own counsel: “howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so.” (Is. x. 7.) But it is equally important to see, when God has, from time to time, raised up special instruments for the work He has to be done, such instruments have ever manifested that both the wisdom and power they have is derived from God. So long as they have acted in their proper sphere they have succeeded: because they have acted in faith. “The Lord of hosts is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.” Such considerations give great present calmness to the believer: God has given to us “the spirit of a sound mind.” We know that God has a counsel, and it shall stand, although He bringeth the counsel of the heathen to naught; we need not feel ourselves as though God could not carry out His own counsel without our plans or assistance. “Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, . . . and taught him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?” In the rich grace wherein God has abounded toward us in redemption, He has “abounded toward us in

all wisdom and prudence." He has left no contingency to be provided for by the wisdom and prudence of His saints: their power of serving Him is faith. Hence, says the apostle, whom his adversaries would charge with acting from policy, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." But it is one of the results of the fall that man affects creative power and rejoices in the works of his hands; but that which he makes is like himself, even without continuance. He may strive to perpetuate that which he vainly conceives he has originated: but, "the Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity." That can only stand which God both originates and perpetuates. On this point as well as others touching the pretensions of man, God will come to an issue with man. To those who know redemption, the issue has been already joined, and the result is, that no flesh can glory in His presence; but he that glorieth can only glory in the Lord: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He alone can "bear the glory," who is able to say, "I am the first and the last," "the Alpha and the Omega," "the Beginning and the End." The essential glory of His Person is the security for effectuating His work. All real subordinate ministry flows directly from Him. "He ascended up on high and He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some

pastors and teachers," and He still gives them, according to His own sovereign will. He has not left the ministry for the building up of His body to depend upon succession, as the Aaronic priesthood; or on the schools of philosophy, as in ancient times; or on universities or academies, as in our day; or on popular choice; but directly on Himself. In giving such gifts of ministry He has not given to them the responsibility of devising means to perpetuate His work: He works in them, and "with them;" and they only work healthfully as they hang upon Him, and fill up that place in the body which He has assigned to them for its present service. Hence in their ministerial capacity, as well as their capacity as Christians, they alone "stand by faith."

The analogy afforded by the history of Israel is very striking. After the death of Joshua, God was pleased to act by the extraordinary ministry of Judges, for four hundred years. "Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them; and yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other Gods, and bowed themselves unto them; they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord, but they did not so. And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for it repented the Lord because of their groanings, by reason of them that

oppressed them, and vexed them. And it came to pass when the judge was dead, that they returned and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way." When the men of Israel would have perpetuated their blessing after their own thoughts, in the case of Gideon one of their judges, Gideon refused their offer. "Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you." Gideon had fulfilled his mission, and served his generation. God had wrought by Gideon to bring Israel to depend on Himself, and Gideon sought to answer the same end. On the other hand, the prominent failure of Samuel, otherwise so remarkably blameless, was the attempt to perpetuate his own mission in his sons: "And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. . . . And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment." This led to the people's desire for a king: "Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." Samuel may have seen more distinctly than Gideon that such a request was the rejection of Jehovah Himself as their King; yet he had vainly

thought to perpetuate good government through his sons, whom God had not called to that ministry.

Among many instructions afforded us in God answering the desire of the people for a king, in giving them Saul, and then removing him, according to the word of the prophet Hosea: "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath"—the important truth, that perpetuation of blessing rests alone with God, is sufficiently apparent. So that even when God Himself "raised up unto them David to be their king, to whom also He gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, which shall fulfil all my will," the highest honour which God put upon David was to be a type of His own Seed, in Whom alone blessing can possibly be perpetuated—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." It is in this order that the Holy Ghost Himself leads our thoughts by the apostle (Acts xiii.), abruptly turning from David to David's Seed: "Of this man's seed hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, JESUS." But David served his own generation, and in doing so did that which he sought to do in another way, even serve posterity. This is an important principle, that in serving our generation, doing our appointed service in God's way, and in His time, we do really secure the very thing which we attempt to secure by providing for the future by means of our own devising. In trying to act for posterity we retrograde, and oppose a barrier to

others carrying on the work which God may have assigned to us to commence.

Most blessedly did David serve his generation, when the Lord took him as He said, "From the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel: and I was with thee withersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth." It was the time of David's "trouble," but it was also the time of his real greatness, and of his most important service to his generation: David then magnified the Lord, and the Lord magnified David in the sight of all Israel. Walking before the Lord, David could afford to appear vile in the eyes of Michal, and of all who despised him. *No two things are morally more opposite, than the Lord making an individual great, and the same person whom the Lord has magnified acting the great man himself.* Here truly is found the need of "hinds' feet" to tread upon our "high places." The Lord magnified Moses by His promise, "Certainly I will be with thee." "And the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, and in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people." The Lord would not allow any insult to be put on His chosen servant, but promptly resented it: see Num. xii. Only once did this chosen servant magnify himself, and it is "written for our admonition. "And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now,

ye rebels; must *we* fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with *his* rod he smote the rock twice. . . . And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."

David had most blessedly served his generation, "when the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies." At this time, "when the king sat in his house," the thought came into his heart that it was not suitable for the ark of the Lord to dwell in curtains, whilst he was dwelling in a house of cedar. David knew well the value of the presence of the Lord, and he sought to secure it in a way which seemed right in his own eyes, and which commended itself also to the judgment of Nathan the prophet. But "who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" The man after God's own heart, and an inspired prophet, are alike destitute of true counsel when not walking by faith under the immediate guidance of the Spirit of truth. The thought of David was a pious thought, it was the expression of that desire of the renewed heart for rest, without conflict, in the immediate presence of God. "Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for My name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart: notwithstanding thou shalt not build the house." Zeal without knowledge, and piety apart from actual dependence on God, have proved alike dangerous to the truth of God:

it has pleased God to show that He of His own grace delights to "provide some better thing for us," than we should choose for ourselves. Had David been allowed to act under the impulse of his own heart, and to build the house which his son built, what a loser had David been: every quickened soul is almost unconsciously drawn to David, and as unconsciously little interested in Solomon. David "in his troubles" finds truer sympathy in our hearts than Solomon in "all his glory." Had David, according to his desire, acted for another generation, instead of serving God in his own, we are all able to see what he would have lost. Nathan now instructed in the mind of the Lord, is sent to David with the message of the Lord. The first great truth announced is, that the will, even of the saint, is not to take the lead in the things of God; if permitted, the result would be "will-worship," one of the most fearful evils in the Church of God. It is our part to "prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God." So long as God is pleased to "walk in a tent and in a tabernacle," it is not for any one to build Him a house. Solomon, according to the promise of God to David, his father, did build a house for the Lord; the house was filled with the glory of the Lord, and called by His name; but in due course it became the subject of prophetic denunciation (Jer. vii. 11-14): its history, with brief gleams of relief, is the history of Israel's abomination, till at last the Lord Himself suddenly comes to His temple and finds it a den of thieves, and utterly repu-

diates it ; it is no longer a house which He could own as His, "Behold *your* house is left unto you desolate. (Matt. xxiii. 38.)

The next thing announced by Nathan was the determinate counsel of the Lord, in His own time and way, to give settled rest to His people Israel, according to and far beyond their heart's desire : "Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more ; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more." This is the happy theme of many a prophecy, the cheering close to many a heavy burden, "Jehovah-shammah" (Ezek. xlviii. 35 ; Jer. iii. 16-18 ; Obad. 21 ; Luke i. 32, 33).

But the most blessed part of the announcement still remains to be noticed : "Also the Lord telleth thee that He will make thee an house." David would have been content to have built a house for the Lord, but the Lord's thoughts were higher, even for the Lord to build a house for David. This was the word of recovery to David's soul. It brought him before the Lord. He reviews all the gracious dealings of the Lord with him, and becomes suitably impressed with a sense of his own insignificance, "Who am I, O Lord God?" Such was not the thought in David's mind when he sat in his own house ; he then looked from himself, but now from the Lord to himself. It is this which ever checks the thought of the consequence of our own service, as well as the attempt of doing that which the Lord has not called us to do :

“By the grace of God I am what I am; I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” It is equally a sin to run without being sent, and not to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty when He calls. The Lord can do without us, but we cannot do without Him: if He be pleased to use us, sufficient is the honour of being the servants of such a Master, but we only really serve Him as we do the work of our own generation. The moment we cease to serve by faith, we regard the sphere of service as our own, forgetting that the husbandry and building on which we are occupied is not ours, but belongs to Him whom we serve. Needful is it also in contemplating any service, to retrace the way the Lord has led us “hitherto.” But all is “small” now in David’s estimation compared with the promise of the Lord making him a house: David’s work of making a house for the Lord is now superseded by the happier thought of God making him a house. If we would happily and healthfully serve our generation, it must be by giving to the Lord His due pre-eminence in service as well as in everything else: “I am among you as He that serveth” (Luke xxii. 27); and He still serves at the right hand of God, making intercession for us.

“And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord God, but Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant’s house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?” The manner of man is to rejoice in the work of his hands: he

seeks to achieve something great to make himself a name. His work often survives him ; but in process of time it falls to decay, to add to the monuments of the vanity of man by the very means he seeks to secure his greatness. But " whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever : nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it ; and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him " (Eccles. iii. 14). David served his generation and fell asleep, but the promise of God to David, when He was disappointing his desire to build a house for the Lord, became the sustainment of faith throughout Israel's dreary history, and will be again, when faith shall be revived in Israel. The multitude looked to the temple ; faith in the godly remnant regarded the promise to David. God brought judgment on Israel for their confidence in the house, but He showed mercy for David's sake. David's disappointment has, in the result, proved to be his service to his posterity. Is the house of David threatened with extermination by the confederacy of Israel and Syria in the days of king Ahaz ? " It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass." God had made David a house, and this confederacy shall only tend to prove its stability : " Hear ye now, O house of David, Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also ? Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign : Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel," David's Son and David's Lord. (Is. vii. 7, 13, 14.) Is Hezekiah sorely beset by the armies

of the king of Assyria ; the cry of Hezekiah to the Lord is answered in mercy, "For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake, and for My servant David's sake." It had not been said in vain, "Also the Lord saith, I will make thee a house!" Do the people go into captivity and emerge from it only to be "servants" in their own land unto the kings whom the Lord had set over them because of their sins ; how cheering must have been the angelic announcement, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David." What a meaning in the words, "I will make thee an house!" "Is not this the Son of David?" and, "O Son of David have mercy on us!" were the expressions of faith during our Lord's own personal ministry. And if either ourselves or Israel look for security of blessing, we are led back to David's disappointment in his service to God (Acts xiii. 32-34). And David still lives in our memories in Him who, in His closing words of "The Scripture of truth," announces the fulfilment of all the ancient promises to Israel in announcing Himself, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David." (Rev. xxii. 16.)

But how entirely did David's disappointment in his contemplated service turn to the stability of his own soul in the sure grace and faithfulness of God. "Solomon built Him an house," and after accomplishing the "magnifical" work, he leaves, as it were, his last words for our instruction: "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

“What hath a man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart wherein he hath laboured under the sun?” But how different “the last words of David,” the lesson he teaches is not only happier but deeper: “Although my house be not so with God, yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.” These are last words indeed, and such will ever be the train of thought of those who serve their generation. Instead of rejoicing in any result of their own service, there will be rather the looking for the only satisfying result, that which the Lord Himself will introduce: our expectations may be disappointed, but there is no disappointment to him whose expectation is from the Lord. If a present palpable result be the object we propose to ourselves, we are likely to be disappointed; but if it be the honour of Christ, and there be no present result answering the desire of our heart, whilst deeply humbled under the sense of our own imperfection, we may take comfort from the language of the only perfect Servant, “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God” (Is. xlix. 4).



“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High. . . . For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work: I will triumph in the works of Thy hands. O Lord, how great are Thy works, and Thy thoughts are very deep! (Ps. xcii. 1, 4, 5.)

WHAT IS THE CHURCH, AS IT WAS AT THE BEGINNING?

AND

WHAT IS ITS PRESENT STATE?

We may consider the Church in two points of view. First, it is the formation of the children of God into one body united to Christ Jesus ascended to heaven, the glorified Man; and that by the power of the Holy Ghost. In the second place, it is the house or habitation of God by the Spirit. The Saviour gave Himself, not only to save perfectly all those who believe in Him, but also to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. (Jno. xi. 52.) Christ has perfectly accomplished the work of redemption; having "offered one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God." "For by one offering He has perfected for ever those who are sanctified. Whereof also the Holy Ghost is a witness to us," "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Heb. x. 12-17.) The love of God has given us Jesus; the righteousness of God is fully satisfied by His sacrifice; and He is seated at God's right hand as a continual testimony to the accomplishment of the work of redemption, to our acceptance in Him, and to the possession of the glory, unto which we are called. From heaven, according to His promise, Jesus has sent the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who dwells in us who believe in Jesus, and who has sealed us for the day of redemption, that is to say, of the glorification of our bodies. The same

Spirit is, besides, the earnest of our inheritance.

But all this would be always true, even if there were not a Church upon earth. That is, it is one thing that there are individuals saved, children of God, heirs of glory in heaven; quite another is their union with Christ, so as to be members of His body; and yet another it is to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. We will speak of these latter points.

There is nothing clearer in the holy Scripture of truth, than that the Church is the body of Christ. Not only have we salvation by Christ, but we are in Christ and Christ in us. The true Christian who enjoys his privileges knows that, by means of the Holy Ghost, he is in Christ and Christ in him. "In that day," says the Lord, "ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you." In that day, that is to say, in the day when we should have received the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. He who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. Accordingly we are in Christ and members of His body. This doctrine is largely unfolded in the Epistle to the Ephesians i.—iii. What is there clearer than this word—"He gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body?" Observe, that this marvellous fact began, or was found existing, at soonest when Christ was glorified in the heavens, even though all that is found contained in these verses is not yet accomplished. God, says the apostle, has raised us up with Him, and has seated us together in Him in the

heavenly places—not yet *with* Him, but “*in* Him.” And in chapter iii.; “Which [mystery] was not in other ages made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel . . . that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God.”

Here, then, is the Church formed on earth by the Holy Ghost descended from heaven, after the glorification of Christ. It is united to Christ, its heavenly Head; and all true believers are His members by means of the same Spirit. This precious truth is confirmed in other passages; for example, in Romans xii., “As in one body we have many members, and all the members have not the same office; so we who are many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

It will not be necessary to cite other passages, we will only call the attention of the reader to 1 Corinthians xii. It is clear as daylight, that here the apostle speaks of the Church on the earth, not of a future Church which shall be made good in heaven, and not even of churches scattered over the world, but of the Church as a whole, represented locally by the Church at Corinth. Therefore, it is said, at the beginning of the Epistle, “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of

Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." The totality of the Church is clearly seen in the words, "And God hath set in the church: first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then, gifts of healing," etc. It is evident that apostles were not in a particular church, and that the gifts of healing could not be exercised in heaven. It is the Church universal on earth. This Church is the body of Christ, and the true believers are its members. It is one by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of this one body, though many, are one body; so also is Christ." (Ver. 12.) Then, after having said that all these many members work, each in its own function in the body, he adds (ver. 27), "Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular." Bear in mind that this is come to pass by the baptism of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. Consequently this body exists on earth, and embraces all who are Christ's wherever they may be; they have received the Holy Spirit whereby they are members of Christ and members one of another. Oh how beautiful is this unity! "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

Here the word teaches us besides that the gifts are members of all the body, and that they belong to the body as a whole. The apostles, the prophets, the teachers are in the Church, and not in a particular church. Consequently these gifts, given by

the Holy Ghost, are exercised in all the Church where the member is found, because he is a member of the body. If Apollos taught at Ephesus, he taught also when he was at Corinth, or in whatever locality he might be. The Church is, then, the body of Christ, united to Him, its Head, in heaven, and one is a member by the Spirit who dwells in us, and all Christians are members one of another. This Church, which will be by-and-by made good in heaven, is at present formed on earth by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, who abides with us, and by whom all true believers are baptized into "one body." The gifts, in the next place, are exercised as members of this one body, in the entire Church.

There is, as we have said, another character of the Church on earth; that is to say, it is the habitation of God on earth. It is interesting to see, by examination, that this had no place before redemption. God did not *dwell* with Adam even while innocent; nor with Abraham, though He visited with much condescension both the first man in paradise and the father of the faithful. Nevertheless, He never dwelt with them. But no sooner was Israel redeemed out of Egypt than God comes to dwell in the midst of His people. As soon as the building of the tabernacle was revealed and regulated, God says, "I will dwell in the midst of Israel and I will be their God; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who hath taken them out of the land of Egypt to dwell in their midst." (Exod. xxix. 45, 46.) Thus the dwelling of God in the

midst of the people was the end of the deliverance : the presence of God in the midst of the people is their greatest privilege.

The presence of the Holy Ghost is what characterizes true believers in Christ. "Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. vi. 19.) "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Christians taken together are also the temple of God ; and the Spirit of God dwells in them. (1 Cor. iii. 16.)

Not to speak more of the individual Christian, I will say, then, that the Church is God's habitation on earth by the Spirit. Most precious privilege ! The presence of God Himself, the source of joy, strength, and wisdom for His people ! But at the same time there is very great responsibility as to the way in which we treat such a Guest. I will cite some passages to prove this truth. In Ephesians ii., "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and pilgrims, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God ; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone ; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord ; in whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Here we see that, though this building is already begun on the earth, the intention of God is to have a temple formed, made up of all that believe after that God had broken down the partition wall that shut out the Gentiles ; and that this building grows till all Christians

are united in glory. But meanwhile the believers on earth form a tabernacle of God, His habitation through the Spirit, who abides in the midst of the Church.

In 1 Timothy iii. the apostle says, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou may knowest how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." By these words we see that the Church on earth is the house of the living God; that this epistle teaches Timothy how to behave himself in this house. We see also that the Christian is responsible to maintain the truth in the world. The Church does not teach, but the apostles taught. Teachers instruct, but the Christian maintains the truth by being faithful to it. It is the witness of the truth in the world. Those who seek the truth do not seek it among Pagans or Jews or Mahometans, but in the christian Church. It is not authority for the truth, but the word is its authority. The Church is the vessel that contains the truth; and where the truth is not, there is no Church. Such is the Church, the body of Christ, who is its Head. Such is the house of God by the Spirit on earth. When the Church is complete, it will join Christ in heaven, clothed with the same glory as its Bridegroom.

Now it is necessary, before speaking of the state of the Church as it was at the beginning, to notice a difference which is found in the word of God as to the house. The Lord said, "Upon this rock I will build

my church." It is Christ Himself who builds His Church; and consequently the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.* Here it is not man who builds but Christ. Wherefore the apostle Peter, speaking of the spiritual house, says nothing of the workmen, "To Whom coming as unto a living stone ye also as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood." (1 Peter ii.) This is the work of grace in the heart of the individual by which man approaches Christ. Accordingly, once more, in the Acts it is said that "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." This work could not fail, being the work of God, efficacious for eternity, and manifested in its time. We read, moreover, in Ephesians ii., "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." This building which grows may be manifested before the eyes of men; but if the effect of this work of efficacious grace is not manifested in its exterior unity before men, God will not for that fail to do His work, gathering His children for eternal life. Souls come to Christ and are built upon Him.

The apostles John and Paul, and more particularly the latter, speak of a unity manifested before men in testimony to men of the power of the Holy Ghost. In John

* Be it observed that there are no keys for the Church. One does not build with keys. The keys are for the kingdom.

xvii. we read, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one; as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Here the unity of the children of God is a testimony borne to the world, that God has sent Jesus in order that the world may believe. Now this truth is, consequently, the evident duty of God's children. All know how the state opposed to this truth is a weapon in the hands of the enemies of this truth.

The character of the house and the doctrine of the responsibility of men are still more clearly taught in the word of God. Paul says, "Ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every one take heed how he buildeth thereupon." (1 Cor. iii.) Here it is men who build. The house of God is manifested on earth. The Church is the building of God; but we find there not only God's work (that is, those who come to God moved by the Holy Ghost) but also the effect of the work of men, who have often built with wood, hay and stubble. Men have confused together the exterior house built by men and the work of Christ, which may indeed be identical with the work of men, but it may also differ widely. False teachers attributed all the privileges of the body of Christ to the great house composed of every sort of iniquity and of corrupt men. But this fatal

error does not destroy the responsibility of men as regards the house of God, His habitation through the Spirit, any more than it is destroyed in respect of the manifestation of the unity of the Spirit in one body on earth.

I considered it important to notice this difference, because it throws much light on questions of the day. Let us now pursue our subject. What was the state of the Church at the commencement when it began at Jerusalem? We find that the power of the Spirit of God was wonderfully manifested: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread at home, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts ii.) And in chapter iv., "And the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart, and of one soul; neither said any of them, that ought of the things which he possessed, was his own, but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of lands, or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

(Acts iv. 32-35.) What a beautiful picture of the effect of the power of the Spirit in their hearts—an effect which was too soon to disappear for ever; but Christians ought to seek to realize it as much as possible.

The evil of the heart of man soon appeared; and Ananias and Sapphira, as also the murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration, manifested that the sin of man's heart joined to the devil's work was still working in the bosom of the Church. But at the same time the Holy Spirit was in the Church and acted there, and was sufficient for putting out evil and changing it into good. The Church however, was one, known by the world; and one could say that the apostles, having been let go, went to their own company. One only Church, filled with the Holy Ghost, bore testimony to the salvation of God and to His presence on earth; and to this Church God added all those who were to be saved. This Church was all scattered abroad because of the persecution, save the apostles who abode at Jerusalem. Then God raised up Paul to be His messenger unto the Gentiles. He begins to build the Church among the Gentiles, and teaches that in it there is neither Gentile nor Jew, but that all are one and the same body in Christ. Not only the existence of the Church among the Jews, but still more the doctrine of the Church, of its unity, of the union of Jews with Gentiles in one body, is proclaimed and put in execution. It was the object of the counsels of God already

before the foundation of the world, but hidden in God; a mystery which had been hid from the ages in God, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God: which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets* by the Spirit. So also in Colossians i. 26, "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints."

All Christians were known, all admitted publicly into the Church, Gentiles as well as Jews. The unity was manifested. All the saints were members of one body, of Christ's body; the unity of the body was owned; and it was a fundamental truth of Christianity. In each locality there was the manifestation of this unity of the Church of God on the earth; so that an epistle of Paul addressed to the Church of God at Corinth arrived at a single assembly; and the apostle could further add to it "with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Nevertheless in speaking specially of those at Corinth, he says, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." If a christian, a member of Christ's body, went from Ephesus to Corinth, he would have been equally and necessarily also member of Christ's body in this later as-

* Be it observed that the apostle speaks only of the prophets of the New Testament.

sembly. Christians are not members of a church, but of Christ. The eye, the ear, the foot, or any other member which was at Corinth, was equally such at Ephesus. In the word we do not find the idea of members of a church, but of of Christ.

Ministry, as it is presented in the word, is likewise a proof of this same truth. The gifts, source of ministry, given by the Holy Spirit, were in the Church. (1 Cor. vii. 8-12, 28.) Those who possessed them were members of the body. If Apollos was a teacher at Corinth, he was also a teacher at Ephesus. If he was the eye, ear, or any other member whatever of Christ's body at Ephesus, he was also such at Corinth. For this subject there is nothing clearer than 1 Corinthians xii. : one body, many members ; the Church one, in which were found the gifts that the Holy Spirit had given—gifts which were exercised in any locality whatsoever, where he might be who possessed them. In Ephesians iv. the same truth is set forth. When Christ ascended on high, He "gave gifts unto men and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait

WHAT IS THE CHURCH, AS IT WAS AT THE BEGINNING? AND WHAT IS ITS PRESENT STATE?

(Concluded from page 195.)

Such was the Church: how is it now and where does it exist? It will be perfected in heaven. Granted: but where is it found now on earth? The members of Christ's body are now dispersed; many hidden in the world, others in the midst of religious corruption; some in one sect, some in another, in rivalry one with another to gain over the saved. Many, thanks be to God, do seek unity; but who is it that has found it? It suffices not to say that by the same Spirit we love each other; for by one Spirit we have been baptized into one body, "That they all may be one" says the Lord, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." But we are not one, the unity of the body is not manifested. At the beginning it was clearly manifested and in every city this unity was evident to all the world. All Christians walked everywhere as one Church. He who was a member of Christ in one locality was so also in another, and he who had a letter of recommendation was received everywhere, because there existed but one Church.

The Supper was the outward sign of this

unity. "We being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. x. 17.) The testimony the Church gives now is rather that of proclaiming that the Holy Ghost with His power and grace is unable to surmount the causes of the divisions. The greatest part of what is called the Church is the seat of the grossest corruption, and the majority of those who boast of its light are unbelievers. Greeks, Romanists, Lutherans, Reformers cannot take the Supper together; they condemn each other. The light of God's children who are found in the sects is hid under a bushel; and those who are separated from such bodies, because they cannot endure the corruption, are divided into hundreds of parties who will not take the Supper together. Neither the one nor the other pretend to be the Church of God, and some say that it is become invisible; but what is the value of an invisible light? Nevertheless there is no humiliation nor confession in seeing the light become invisible. Unity with respect to its manifestation is destroyed. The Church—once beautiful, united, heavenly—has lost its character, is hidden in the world; and the Christians themselves—worldly, covetous, eager for riches, honour, power—like the children of this world. It is an epistle in which one cannot read a

single word of Christ.* The greatest part of what bears the name of Christian is the sect of the enemy or infidel; and the true Christians are lost in the midst of the multitude. Where can we find one loaf, the sign of one body? Where is the power of the Spirit who unites Christians in a single body? Who can deny that the Christians were thus? and are they not guilty for being no longer what they were? or shall we call it well to be in a state totally different from that in which the Church was at the beginning and from that which the word demands from us? We ought to be profoundly grieved at such a state of the Church in the world, because it no way answers to the heart and love of Christ. How many, alas! rest satisfied in being assured of their eternal salvation.

Do we seek what the word says on this point? Here is what we read there, in a general way, for what concerns every economy or dispensation, and the ways of God with the Jews and towards the branches from among the Gentiles who were substituted for the Jews. (Rom. xi.) "On them which fell, severity; but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Is it not a

* It is not said that we ought to be the Epistle of Christ, but "ye are the Epistle of Christ."

serious thing, when the people of God on the earth are cut off? Certainly the faithful are and will be kept; for God has no thought of failing in His faithfulness; but all the systems in which God glorifies Himself on the earth may be judged and cut off. The glory of God, His real visible presence, was once at Jerusalem, His throne was over the cherubim; but ever since the Babylonish captivity His presence abandoned Jerusalem, and His glory as well as His presence were no more in the temple in the midst of the people. And though His great patience endured long, until Christ was rejected, yet God cut them off as regards that covenant. The believing remnant were "added to the Church" (Acts ii. 47), but all the system was terminated by judgment. Such will be the issue of the christian system, if it continue not in the goodness of God. But it has not continued in God's goodness. Wherefore, though I believe firmly that all true Christians shall be preserved and caught up to heaven, yet for what concerns the testimony of the Church on earth, the house of God through the Spirit, it will exist no more. Peter had said already (ch. iv. 17) "the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God." And in Paul's time the mystery of iniquity was already working and was to be continued till the man of sin

appeared (2 Thes. ii.); already in the apostle's time all sought their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's (Phil. ii.). The apostle tells us further that after his departure there should enter among those in the Church grievous wolves, not sparing the flock (Acts xx. 29, 30); and that in the last days perilous times should come, men having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof; that evil men and seducers should wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; and that finally "a falling away" (or 'the apostasy') should come (2 Thes. ii. 3). Now is all this continuing in God's goodness?

And is this unfaithfulness a thing unknown in the history of man? God has always begun by putting His creatures in a good position; but the creature invariably abandons his position in which God set it, becoming unfaithful therein. And God, after long forbearance, never re-establishes it in the position it fell from. It is not according to His ways to patch up a thing which has been spoilt: but He cuts it off to introduce something entirely new and far better than what went before. Adam fell; and God will have the last Adam, the Lord from heaven. God gave the law to Israel, who made a calf of gold before Moses came down from the mountain; and God will

write the law in the hearts of His people. God ordained the priesthood of Aaron, but his sons from the very first offered strange fire; and from that moment Aaron could no more enter the holiest with his garments of glory and beauty. God made the son of David to sit on the throne of Jehovah; but, idolatry having been introduced by him, the kingdom was divided, and, after a time of long suffering and patience, the throne of the world was given of God to Nebuchadnezzar who made a great image of gold and cast the faithful into a burning fiery furnace (Dan. ii., iii.). In every case man was unfaithful; and God, having long borne with him, interposes in judgment and substitutes a better system.

It is interesting to observe how all the things in which man has broken down are established in a more excellent way in the Second man. Man shall be exalted in Christ, the law written in the heart of the Jews, priesthood be exercised by Jesus Christ. He is the Son of David who is to reign over the house of Israel; He is to govern the nations. Likewise as regards the Church, it has been unfaithful; it has not maintained the glory of God which had been confided to it. Therefore shall it be cut off as a system on the earth, the order of things established of God shall be closed by judg-

ment, the faithful shall go up to heaven into a state much better to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, and the kingdom of the Saviour shall be established on the earth. All this will be an admirable testimony to the faithfulness of God, who will accomplish all His counsels, spite of the unfaithfulness of man. But does this take away the responsibility of man? How then, as the apostle says, could God judge the world? Ought not our hearts to feel that we have cast the glory of the Lord into the dust? The mischief began in the times of the apostles; each added to it his own; and the iniquity of ages is heaped upon us; and soon the house of God will be judged. The blood of all the righteous has been required of the Jewish nation by Jesus, as also Babylon will be found guilty of the blood of all the righteous.

It is true that we shall be caught up to heaven; but, along with that, ought we not to mourn over the ruin of the house of God? Yes: formerly one, a beautiful testimony to the glory of its Head by the power of the Holy Ghost; united, heavenly, so that the world could recognize the effect of the power of the Holy Spirit who put men above all human motives, and, causing distinction and diversities among them to disappear, made believers in all countries

and of all classes to be one family, one body, one Church, a mighty testimony to the presence of God on earth in the midst of men.

But it is objected that we are not responsible for the sins of those who have gone before us. Are we not responsible for the state in which we are found? Did the Ezras, the Nehemiahs, the Daniels, excuse themselves for the sins of the people? Or rather, did they not mourn over the misery of the people of God as belonging to them? (Read Ezra ix., Neh. ix., Dan. ix) If we were not responsible, why then should God put them aside, why judge and destroy all the system? Why should He say, "I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." Why does He judge Thyatira, replacing it by the kingdom? Why does He say, "I will spue thee out of my mouth?" I believe that the seven churches furnish us with the history of the Church from the beginning to the end; in all cases we have there the responsibility of Christians as to the state of the Church. It will be said perhaps that there are none but local churches which are responsible, and not the Church universal. What is certain is that God will cut off the Church as a system established on earth.

Still more to demonstrate responsibility continually from the beginning to the end, let us read in Jude, "There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation." They had already slipt in. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all." Thus, those who in the time of Jude had already crept in, would bring the judgments on the profane professors of Christianity. In this Epistle we have the three classes of iniquity and their progress. In Cain there is purely human iniquity; in Balaam ecclesiastical iniquity; and in Korah rebellion, and then they perish. In the field where the Lord had sown the good seed, while the men slept the enemy sowed tares. It is very true that the good seed is gathered into the garner, but the negligence of the servants has left the enemy the opportunity of spoiling the Master's work. Shall we be indifferent to the state of the Church, beloved of the Lord, indifferent to the divisions that the Lord has forbidden? No;* let us humble ourselves, dear brethren,

*In 1 Timothy we have the order of the Church, the house of God; in 2 Timothy we have the rule to follow when the Church is in disorder, For our God has provided for all difficulties, that we should be faithful and depart from all iniquity.

let us own our fault and have done with it. Let us walk faithfully, each for his part, and endeavour to find once more the unity of the Church and the testimony of God. Let us cleanse ourselves from all evil and all iniquity. If it is possible for us to be gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a great blessing; but it is essential that this be done in the unity of the Church of God and in the true liberty of the Spirit.

If the house of God is still on earth and the Holy Spirit abides in it, is He not grieved at the state of the Church? And if He abides in us, should not our hearts be afflicted and humbled at the dishonour done to Christ and the destruction of the testimony that the Holy Ghost is come down from heaven to bear in the unity of the Church of God? He who will confront the state of the Church, as it is described to us in the New Testament with its present state, will feel his heart profoundly saddened by seeing the Church's glory dragged into the dust and the enemy triumphing in the confusion of the people of God.

Finally, Christ has confided His glory on earth to the Church. It was the depositary of that glory. There the world ought to have seen it displayed by the power of the Holy Ghost, a testimony to the victory of

Christ over Satan, death, and all the enemies that He has led captive, triumphing over them in the cross. Has the Church preserved this deposit and maintained the glory of Christ on earth? If this has not been done, tell me, Christian, is the Church responsible for it? Was the servant, to whom the Lord entrusted the care of His house (Matt. xxiv.), responsible or not for the state of his Master's house? It will be said, perhaps, that the wicked servant is the outward Church, which is corrupted and is not really the Church; as for me, I am not a member of it at all. But I reply that, in the parable, the servant is alone, and the question is whether this sole servant is faithful or unfaithful? It may be true, that you are separate from the iniquity which fills the house of God, and you have done well; but should not your heart be bowed down because of the state of that house? The Lord shed tears of grief over Jerusalem, and shall we shed none over that which is still dearer to His heart? Here the glory of the Lord has been trampled under foot: shall we say that we are not responsible for it? His only servant is held accountable. Even though, individually guided by the word, I may be apart from all the iniquity which corrupts the house of God, nevertheless, as Christ's servant, I

ought to identify myself with the glory of Christ, and with its manifestations to the world. It is in this that faith is shewn: not merely in believing that God and Christ possess the glory, but in identifying this glory with His people. (Exod. xxxii. 11, 12; Numb. xiv. 13-19; 2 Cor. i. 20.) First, God entrusts His glory to man, who is responsible to maintain himself in his position, and to be faithful in it, without leaving his first estate; by-and-by God will establish His own glory according to His counsels. But, first of all, man is responsible where God has set him. We have been set in the Church of God, in His house, in the habitation of His glory on the earth: *where is it?*



ON THE UNITY OF THE ASSEMBLY, ITS DISCIPLINE, AND OWNING AN ASSEMBLY JUDGMENT.

(Extracts from the writings of the author of the preceding article.)

I. "The body of Christ on earth is composed of individuals and not of churches. Now if this be the case, there is unity only in the ^{Christ} whole; there is none in any local assembly if it be detached from the ^{Christ} whole as a whole. If it be regarded as an independent church it has nothing to do with the body; it is not, in principle, an assem-

bly of God. At the beginning of the First Epistle to the Corinthians it is said, 'to the assembly of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all those who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.' Thus the apostle could say, 'Ye are the body of Christ.' Everything had a connection with the one body, composed of all the members of Christ. There was no action which did not relate to the whole body, no suffering of one member which was not felt by all the members of the body: 1 Cor. xii. leaves no doubt upon this point. The gifts were exercised in this whole (1 Cor. xii. 27, 28). Their object was first the perfecting of individuals, then the edification of the body of Christ (Eph. iv. 12).

"The object of the effort to make independent flocks is the desire of being independent, and of doing one's own will without submitting to the discipline of the Church as one body. Mr. — says as much. Each assembly being independent, united only by one faith and one worship, is in a position to judge the disciplinary proceedings of another assembly. The unity of the body therefore does not exist. An act is the act of an independent church; it has no reference whatever to the whole, and is

not binding upon other assemblies or other Christians. Some one may be put out by one assembly and another assembly may receive the one who is put out. It is evident that this is disorder, The 'within' and the 'without' are not simply the world and the Church of God. All that is lost. It is the 'within' of a small voluntary and independent assembly which only exercises discipline in relation to itself. It is quite evident that the 'within' and 'without' of 1 Corinthians is not merely the 'within' and 'without' of a particular assembly, so that the wicked man could be without at Corinth and within at Ephesus. The Epistle clearly teaches the unity of the body on the earth, and only recognizes the local act in that unity, a unity composed of individuals and not of churches. Look at the act of discipline in another point of view, and you see the immense difference of the principles, and how this system of independent churches destroys the truth of Scripture on this subject. What is the real power, the real source of authority, in discipline? *The presence of Jesus*: not simply that the discipline is the act of a voluntary society which excludes one of its members from its bosom, but that it is the act of an assembly according to God, assembled in the name of Jesus,

and acting in His name and by His authority, to maintain the holiness which belongs to that name. Now the independent church is only a society which acts for itself: another assembly may judge all that it has done. There is no trace either of the unity or of the authority of the Church of God.

“Does it then follow that, if another assembly has acted hastily, a flock is bound hand and foot? In no wise. Just because the unity of the body is true and recognized, and that in a case of discipline the members of that body who gather together elsewhere take an interest in what passes in each place, they are free to make brotherly objections, or to suggest some scriptural motive; in a word, they are capable of all brotherly activity with regard to it. If it be an independent assembly, it is not concerned; there is nothing for it to look into. If these things are done in the unity of the body, every Christian is interested in what passes. It may happen that the discipline of the assembly cannot be owned; but then it is rejected as an assembly, and the presence of Jesus giving authority to its acts is denied—a very grave thing, but one that may occur. Mr. — has entirely falsified the unity of the body, and wishes for independent churches and a unity of faith and worship, the aggregate of the churches forming,

according to him, the unity of the body. The word of God knows nothing of this system. The reader may judge of it by reading 1 Corinthians xii., Ephesians iv., 1 Corinthians i., and other passages of the word."

II. "Now, on another point, in connection with discipline, as to the independence of the assemblies, Mr. — fully confirms what I say about it. Here are his words: 'Every act of discipline in an assembly should be respected in the others, as long as there is no ground for considering it unlawful; but when one sees that a meeting has judged unjustly, then its decision is no longer binding on the other meetings. For my part I could never submit to a discipline which I could not judge.'

"There is complete independence; Mr. — is right in saying the assemblies should respect each other, but, as a natural and necessary consequence of having abandoned the primitive and *only scriptural* system, there is no joint responsibility. One respects the other when they are independent; one accepts when one thinks it is right, otherwise the discipline is in no way binding. Good people respect each other; but if a man has been driven from the house, the other will reflect before receiving him, but they are independent, and each will do in his own house what he thinks proper. It is

certain that it was not so at first. The Church, being one, whoever was put out at Corinth was put out of the Church on earth. The Church was united. It will be said I have already spoken of it; I repeat it, because it is the universal objection. I am bound by a judgment I disapprove of, you will say. Confess at least, that you are independent, and that you want to judge for yourself, and only accept what you approve of. This is the system of independent churches, in contrast with that of one sole Church—the only system found in Scripture. But because the Church is one, every member is at liberty to object, and to communicate with those who act, though not claiming competence to judge, refuse, or receive, at will, but, as a member of the whole, acting also according to his gift. Paul and his companions did so here (Corinth), to urge on to discipline when this course was not desired. It may happen, as Mr. — himself admits, that one rejects the discipline of an assembly; but then one rejects the competency of this assembly to act in the name of the Lord. Mr. —'s system is, then, the system of independent churches, which respect one another, but not the unity of the Church; only he adds to it his own competency to act in his own right, to judge the verdict of the whole Church

himself, and upon his own authority to reject a person he may consider unsuitable for communion."

III. "By Mr.—'s admission, the meetings he would like to establish are not set up on scriptural principles. The principle we follow, Mr.— himself admits is the one recognized by the word of God, and which governed the path of the Church as God established it; but it is impracticable, he says, to act on this principle at present. Having abandoned the principle of the unity of the Church, he cannot meet on the principle of this unity. That is impracticable, and he forms independent churches, which respect one another, and mutually accept each other's discipline from each other, provided it be judged expedient, otherwise not. This is not the discipline of the Church according to the promised presence of the Lord, but the discipline of a voluntary association, accepted, or not, according to circumstances."

IV. "Suppose we excommunicate a person here, and you receive him at S., it is evident you have denied us here as a body gathered in Christ's name, and acting by His authority; for that is what discipline hangs upon. Further, the unity of the body is denied wholly. It is clear, if I have a part as faithful to Christ in excluding a

person here, I cannot have one in another place in breaking bread with him there. Brethren united in the name of the Lord are not infallible, and remonstrance may be all right, but if a person is to be received in one place who is rejected in another, it is evident there is an end to unity and common action. . . . How could I hold with the rejection of a person here and his reception at S.? When deliberately done it is impossible. If I am out of communion with him here, and in communion with him there, the unity of the body is gone. And where is the authority of the Lord? Not in both. . . . No persons, for example, who had been put out, or who had deliberately separated themselves from——would be received here. They would have been separated from the unity of the body there, if we received you there as representing it, and would not be in that unity here.”

V. “*The ground is not the wisdom of a set of individuals, but the promise that where they were gathered to His name He will be in their midst.* And I have always found that respecting the action of an assembly *primâ facie* is the way of wisdom and what God owns. And Mr.— forgets the fact, that we are all one body, gives the title to communicate and remonstrate if called for, and in an extreme case, where

evil is *deliberately* allowed to disown the meeting altogether."

VI. "A judgment of an assembly, even if I thought it a mistake, I should in the first instance accept and act upon. My experience has been that the path of God is to respect the action of an assembly of God, while free to remonstrate and beg them to review their judgment. . . . *The weight of an assembly act is not from the individual voice or judgment of its members, but from the Lord's being in the midst of them when gathered together.*"

VII. "For my own part the longer I go on, the more importance I attach to the judgment of the assembly."

VIII. "I know it is alleged that the Church is now so in ruins that scriptural order according to the unity of the body cannot be maintained. Then let the objectors avow as honest men, that they seek unscriptural order, or rather disorder. But in truth it is impossible to meet at all in that case to break bread, except in defiance of God's word: for Scripture says, 'We, being many are one loaf, one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf.' We profess to be one body whenever we break bread; Scripture knows nothing else. And they will find Scripture too strong and perfect a bond for man's reasoning to break it."

NEARNESS OF THE GLORY.

The sense of the nearness of the glory should be cherished by us—and here I mean its nearness in *place*—and we need be at no effort to persuade ourselves of it. The congregation of Israel were set at the door of the tabernacle and as soon as the appointed moment comes the glory is before them. (Lev. viii., ix.) So at the erection of the tabernacle, and so at the introduction of the ark into the temple. (Exod. x. 1; 2 Chron. v.) So, when it had business to do (though in different characters) with the company on Mount Tabor, with the dying Stephen, or with Saul on the road to Damascus, wherever it may have to act, and whatever it may be called to do—to convict, to cheer, or to transfigure; to smite to the earth the persecutor, or give triumph to the martyrs, or to conform an elect vessel to itself—it can be present in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It is but a thin veil which either hides it or distances it; the path is short and the journey rapidly accomplished. We should cherish the thought of this, beloved. It has its power as well as its consolation. And so, ere long, when the time of 1 Corinthians xv., arrives, that moment of the general transfiguration, as soon as the voice of the archangel sum-

mons it, the glory will be here again, as in the twinkling of an eye, to do its business with us; and, bearing the *image* of the heavenly, to bear us up, like Enoch, to the country of the heavenlies.

Then shall the Lord be glorified in His saints, not as now, in their obedience and service, their holiness and fruitfulness, but in their personal beauty. Arrayed in which and shining in our glories, we shall be the witness of what He has done for the sinner that trusted in Him!



THE TIMES OF JEREMIAH.

The ministration of the prophets, in the varied exigencies of Israel, unfolds the grace and forbearance of the living God. The periods at which God raised them up, and the consequent character of their service, make the history of each very interesting; but of all the times during which the prophets prophesied, none are more painfully so than those of Jeremiah. It is not in the amount of good done that Jeremiah stands before us as pre-eminent; on the contrary, results of labour are nowhere found so small, perhaps, as from the labours of that prophet. The ministry of Moses was one that told wonderfully on the condition of God's people. He found them

under the galling yoke of Pharaoh—He left them within sight of the promised land. Joshua left them in possession. The history of the varied deliverers before the days of Samuel, gives us an account of victories obtained. Each one left some footmarks in the track, to say that he had passed that way. So, afterwards, with the prophets. Elijah's and Elisha's days were marked times of God's goodness to an unfaithful people; but if we ask what were the results of Jeremiah's prophecies, we see nothing but desolation and ruin, and by and bye, lose him himself in the great confusion. At the same time, we see incessant service, unwearied faithfulness, so long as there remained a part of the wreck to be faithful to. Others who had gone before, had foretold what the disobedient and rebellious ways of Israel would lead them to, but it was the lot of Jeremiah to be on the ship when it went to pieces. He warned and warned again of the rocks that were ahead; but Israel heeded not. Up to the last moment, he was used of God to press home on their consciences their sad condition—but without avail; and even after the captivity, he remained to guide the wayward remnant of those left in the land, but only to experience the same obstinacy and determination to be ruined on their part.

The word of the Lord came to him in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign. Now this was a period of blessing—of revival. It was in the eighteenth year that the Passover was kept, of which it was said: "And there was no Passover like to that kept in Israel, from the days of Samuel the prophet." Jeremiah would have his share in that joy. I have often thought how much depends on the start of a Christian; how easily the heart sympathizes with what is around, whether baneful or healthful. To have the lot in early life cast among the fresh provisions of God's house, and mid the energies of His own Spirit, will give advantages to such a soul which are not the common lot of the church of God. Such were Jeremiah's first days, the days of Josiah—he was cradled in blessing—such, too, as had not been tasted in Israel, since the days of Samuel. He lamented the death of Josiah. These joys so fresh were of short duration. But there is an intimate connection between the joys of communion and faithful warfare. There will be little of the one without the other. Jeremiah had drunk of the sweet draughts of blessing which had been so richly provided, and he was therefore able to feel the bitterness of the cup which Israel had to drink. The last chapter of 2nd Chronicles, shews how

prominent as a prophet he was. His words were despised, and the result, the casting off for a season of God's people. One of the services of Jeremiah during this period, was to break the fall (if I may so express my thoughts) of Israel. Careful reading will show how tenderly the prophet applied himself to the then existing wants of the people; and it is wonderful to see the compassion of God, as exhibited by him. Jonah regretted that God's judgment did not fall upon Nineveh—but the solitudes of Jeremiah were those of the tender parent, who would fain prevent the calamity befalling a disobedient child, but failing there, carries still the parent's heart, parent's tears, to soften the rebellious woes of that child. How often do we, in our intercourse with our brethren, act otherwise. If I see wilfulness and disobedience, I warn; I tell the consequences it may be; I press home with diligence those warnings; all are unheeded, the calamity comes, bad or worse, than I foretold; how ready is the heart then to triumph in its own faithfulness, and the poor victim of his own rashness is left to himself, while in a kind of triumph, I tell him, "'tis all deserved." The heart of Jeremiah could say: "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore and

run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." *Such hearts, such ministry are needed now.*

It is in the book of this prophet, that we have the history of that part of Israel which was not removed out of the land. Jeremiah's service did not close even when the city was taken, and the wall broken down. The heart that—like this prophet's—is true to God and His people, will always have something to do. The special place he held was to seek to draw the people into repentance, to warn; he was unheeded, and the judgments of God reached home. No sooner had the captives been borne away, than quite another field of duty arose before him; and one would have supposed that what had just happened would have made him a welcome guest in the house of the poor deserted Israelites. In chapter xlii., we see this new labour that Jeremiah found. The destroying flood had swept away all he had formerly been among, the kings, the priests, the princes, the temple, the vessels; the glory of Israel had departed. How often have we seen, that when services have been apparently disowned, the servant retires. When we have been labouring for an object, we find suddenly all dashed from our hands, like a goodly vessel, before the world and to our-

selves; our labour is in vain, and the heart faints and grows weary. Never was a more complete failure than that that was before the eye of the prophet. His heart alone remained whole amidst it all; he was ready for fresh service. The remnant muster to him; their confession seems honest, their hearts seem true. "Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the Lord thy God, even for all this remnant (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us); that the Lord thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do." (Chap. xlii. 2, 3.) Jeremiah had had experience of the human heart; ready to act as aforetime, he says, "Whatsoever thing the Lord will answer you, I will declare it unto you." After ten days the answer was given to the same company (verse 9, to the end of the chapter). The leaning of the hearts of the people was towards Egypt. There is something in Egypt, with all its bondage, that the heart naturally clings to. The remnant, wearied with the struggles they had passed through, sought for rest to the flesh. "Would God we had died in Egypt!" every now and then oozes from the hearts of Israel. There is something in Egypt to attract all our hearts, something that flesh values; and no

wonder, when we can say, "No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread." *This repose of death the Lord keep us from!* The disappointed heart is in danger of turning back here. When the people came to Jeremiah, their words were, "That the Lord thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing we may do." God had provision for this time of need. *There never was a time when the Lord would not bless them that trust in Him*—there was never a place, however desolate or forlorn, where God could not meet His afflicted ones. His word was, "If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I repent me of the evil I have done unto you. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon," etc. "And I will shew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land."

The prophet's words are despised; and notwithstanding the threats if they returned to Egypt, they are soon gone, once more to contend against the judgments of God. Once more Jeremiah finds himself despised. Unable to keep them by promises of blessing, or to deter them from going

into Egypt by threats of judgment, the power of unbelief has set in so strongly, that spite of the warnings, Johanan, the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, swept the land, and along with the rest Jeremiah himself, into the land of Egypt. But even here we find him with a word from God. The people, once back in Egypt, were soon burning incense unto other gods. When once we get into a current, it will carry us far beyond our intentions. This remnant hoped to reach Egypt, that they might no more see war, or hear the sound of the trumpet, or suffer hunger; but they went into all the idolatry of that people. How often have we seen the same in principle. In all the periods of Israel we shall not find a more hardened state than that into which the remnant sunk; see their reply to Jeremiah, chap. xliv. 15-19. Here we appear to lose the prophet; and might he not say, "surely I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought."

I think we may lose blessing, if we do not follow on in the track of God's grace to His people; and if we do, we must keep side by side with Jeremiah. Others had there service away in Babylon. God remembered His own their; but in following with this prophet, we learn the inexhaustible grace

there is in God, where there is a heart to trust in Him, while we see, at the same time, the evils of the human heart becoming greater and greater as that goodness is put forth.

What varied scenes did this man of God pass through, from the time when with joy he partook of the passover in the days of Josiah, till he saw the utter desolation, which he so pathetically describes in his Lamentations—*Oh, for hearts like his!* “Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water, for the destruction of the daughter of my people.”

As we have before observed, those who beforetime had served their generation by the will of God, saw around them the fruits of their labours. In none of them, however, do we see the same measure of tenderness of heart. God had reserved Jeremiah for his day, and had given him the heart for his work—a heart sorely tried, but one that could weep for Israel’s woes. This prophet was the expression of God’s heart towards Israel too. “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?” (Hos. xi. 8) was Jehovah’s language; and His prophet was there as the proof of God’s grace. On looking back on the history of the Church of God, we see a constant raising up of one after another to step in to meet the Church’s wants. The

Spirit of God acts according to His knowledge of present needs. Sometimes instruments (not marked either for correctness of knowledge, or even purity of walk, I mean when judged by the Word as to their associations) have been much used of God. In the latter days of Christendom, I doubt not, but that however lavish the hand of God may be in giving hearts like those to Jeremiah, to meet the wants of His saints, the apostasy will be so dark, that labour therein, even of the most devoted character, will scarce leave a trace of itself. The nearer we draw to the end, will, on the one hand, be the arduousness of service; and on the other, the profitlessness of it, too, to human eye.



PURE MINDS DIVINELY STIRRED.

2 Peter iii. 1.

None of the apostolic writings are more full of practical admonition than are those of Peter. In the epistles of Paul we have frequently one-half or more of doctrinal teaching constituting his thesis, followed by exhortations founded thereon. But in Peter's two epistles, after the introduction, which in the first occupies but twelve verses, and in the other only four, the hortatory portion begins, and constitutes the subject-

matter, while doctrinal truth and denunciations of evil follow in its train.

The exhortations open in the first epistle with the stirring word, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind," the "wherefore" being the point of impact between the striking and powerful statements of the antecedent verses and the beloved saints to whom he wrote. Begotten again according to abounding mercy, kept by divine power along the wilderness way, having already the salvation of their souls, and waiting for their incorruptible, undefiled and unfading inheritance in the heavens, they were subjects of a ministry and depositories of a line of truth, which, embracing the sufferings of Christ and the resulting glories, were what prophets had "sought out and searched out," and angels had desired to look into. These things, so long concealed in the germ, had now blossomed in the gospel which they had received in the power of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. Reciting these salient and blessed facts which changed the whole current of their "conversation," both nationally and religiously, but which equally pertain to us, the apostle brings forward his "*wherefore*," with herculean force. What indeed might not be enforced in high exhortation upon such premises?

1. "WHEREFORE gird up the loins of your mind"—beautiful word for the Christian pilgrim. Diligence, devotedness, and unworldliness, are all implied in the girded loin. The loose flowing robes of the East would obstruct a man in labour, impede him in walking, and certainly contract injury or defilement over rough or dirty ground. Hence the necessity for a girdle, essential to secure the robe when any great work was in hand or an arduous journey taken, and more especially when the path was rugged, thorny, or defiling. How fitting then in its moral application is the exhortation to use the girdle, which, be it said, is ever in Scripture expressive of righteousness, faithfulness, or truth. How could we allow our robes to flow in such a scene as this, wet, as we may say, with the blood of Christ crying from the ground? Oh, for girded loins! Is it not a time for diligence, seeing that on the one hand the fields are white unto harvest, and on the other the sheep have but little pasture? Is it not a time for devotedness when "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's?" and Paul's doctrine and manner of life are equally an offence. Is it not a time for unworldliness when more and more palpably the world exerts its every effort to be happy without Christ, so that what is not unmiti-

gated evil is religious worldliness, worldly religiousness, or Christless Christianity?

2. "Be sober," or self-restrained. What a truly needed word is this! How many there are who know deliverance from their sins, and deliverance from this scene, but who know not practical deliverance from dominant *self*. *Self*-allowance is closely akin to *self*-assertion. On the other hand, *self*-judgment is the parent and the power of *self*-restraint. Every germ of *self*-allowing or *self*-asserting is in principle disloyalty to Christ. He (having "loved me and given Himself for me") has won my heart and His love becomes the powerful motive, as it is written "the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves ('*self*'), but unto Him who died for them and rose again."

3. Hope on, perfectly or steadfastly. Diligence and sobriety are here followed with confidence. Hope unto the end signifies fully, perfectly, the full assurance of hope (Heb. vi. 11); hope which maketh not ashamed. Be it remarked that the New Testament sense of hope is never uncertainty, but immature or deferred *certainty*. Confidence, therefore, characterizes it as much as expectation; and thus, instead of being in doubt and uncertainty, in quietness and in confidence is our strength. The world has its hopes, but they are so steeped in uncertainty that the word hope has become almost synonymous with doubt;

whereas the believer is so confident as to that which constitutes his hope, that he can say, "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. viii. 25). "The grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ" we surely see not. With patience then we wait for it, because our hope is steadfast and blessed. He will surely come, He will not tarry; and oh, what tides of blessing will His presence usher in! "The grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

"He who, with hands uplifted,
Went from this earth below,
Shall come again all gifted,
His blessing to bestow."

4. The fourth thing is obedience—"as obedient children." Not the obedience of a servant or a slave, but the obedience of a child; or, to put it more forcibly and more accurately, "as children of obedience," the opposite of "children [or sons] of disobedience," which we were in our sins. (See Eph. ii. 2, and v. 6.) Such obedience is never irksome when the heart is right with God and the will broken before Him. Could we conceive the will of the Father to have been ever irksome to Christ? Did He chafe under it? Nay; says He, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." If, then, we ever find His will irksome, let us get into His presence in confession, being convinced there is something radically wrong, which only self-judgment can correct. "Children of obedience" is a lovely term for God's saints, implying as it

does that that which is characteristic of us, and which we should sedulously cultivate, is spontaneous filial obedience. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous" (1 John v. 3).

Finally we have holiness. That which marked us in our unconverted state was lusts and ignorance; that which is to mark us now is divine holiness. "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1 Thess. iv. 7). And He who hath called us, being Himself holy, says, "So be ye holy in all manner of conversation," or in every bit of your deportment; for if it savour of any contravention of holiness, this is a libel upon your calling, and upon Him who hath called us. That which should characterize us as saints is, on the contrary, that having been released from the bondage of sin and become bondsmen unto God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. How striking and complete is the triple contrast in Romans vi. 20 to 22.

(1) We were the bondsmen of sin, but are now the bondsmen of God.

(2) We had our fruit in things of shame; we have now our fruit unto holiness.

(3) The end of those things was death, but of this is everlasting life.

The Lord grant us to have girded loins in this day of general indifference and worldliness, and give us sobriety in place of laxity, confidence instead of the doubtful mind, obedience in place of self-will, and the careful observance as saints of that holiness which becometh Himself and His house for ever.