

WORDS OF HELP  
FROM THE  
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH

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VOL. I

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DUBLIN  
DUBLIN TRACT REPOSITORY, 10 D'OLIER STREET

1912



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## “The Word was God.”

IT is of the very last importance that the Christian should be well established in the great fundamental truth of the Deity of Christ. It is, indeed, a truth which shines all through Scripture; but we shall only touch upon one passage in order to prove it. It is the special object of the Holy Spirit in the opening of the Gospel of John to assert the personal glory of the Lord Jesus; and this He does in a few brief sentences which are truly a divine and complete exposition of the eternal Deity of the Word. “In the beginning was the Word”—this goes back far beyond Genesis, which gives us the beginning of creation. Let us fix our mind on any point in that past eternity before creation—then the Word *was*—it does not say, came into being, but *was*. Secondly, “the Word was with God”: He was a distinct person in the Godhead. Thirdly, “the Word was God”—absolute Deity is predicated of the One here designated as “the Word.” Verse 14 leaves us in no doubt as to who it is that is here called “the Word,” for it tells us that “the Word was made flesh,” and we know that it was the Son who took human nature—the Father and the Holy Spirit have remained in their own unseeable majesty. Then, fourthly, lest anyone might say that there was some point in a past eternity when He was not a distinct person of the Trinity, we have the words added, “He was in the beginning with God.”

In His being, He was eternal: in His person, He was a distinct person of the Trinity, and He was so eternally: in His nature, He was divine.

Creation is then brought in, but dismissed after one brief sentence, which ascribes it in the most unrestricted

and positive manner, to Him; "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." The Son was Himself uncreate; yea, the Creator of all. Now to create is a divine prerogative, no one can create but God, and He who creates must be before that which is created—this is, therefore, an additional proof of His Godhead.

In view of such plain and undeniable teaching as this, how despicable are the petty speculations of the mind of man—the so-called old or new theology—which lowers the truth of Christ's person, and seeks to cast a cloud over the divine glory of the eternal Son!

### "What Wait I For?"

**T**HIS is a question which appeals to everyone in some way. The man of the world is untiring in the pursuit of pleasure, wealth, fame, or something which fascinates the natural mind. But, after all, are not these things, in the end, vanity and vexation of spirit? Do they give real lasting satisfaction and peace? No, indeed; they last just for a moment and then pass away! And the votaries who run after them fade and die like a flower of the field.

But, in contrast with this, what a wonderful prospect is before the true Christian! He waits for God's Son from heaven (1 Thess. i. 10), and, while waiting, it is his privilege to "serve the living and true God,"—what vast and eternal interests to be occupied with! He is to watch during the darkness of the night of Christ's absence, for the rising of the bright and morning star; and to reiterate again and again, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

There will be, one day, a most wonderful meeting; greater by far than any meeting which ever took place

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in this world. This meeting will not take place on earth, but "in the air" (1 Thess. iv. 17). The object of it will not be to meet one another (though we shall then meet one another), but "to meet the Lord." Not one true Christian shall be absent—whether of those who have fallen asleep, or of those who shall be alive when He comes—and not one unsaved person shall be present. All denominational differences and barriers shall be removed, and all divisions among Christians shall be done with for ever. This meeting will not be in circumstances of weakness and failure, as now; but in the glorious triumphant power of Christ's victory over death. Every saint shall be clothed with a body like Christ's body of glory, for, "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Jesus Himself, coming in person, will be the central Object for every heart, as it is His resurrection "shout" which shall effectuate this wonderful change, transforming, in one moment, every one of His own into perfect conformity to His image in glory. And this blessed moment draws nearer and nearer every day, and every hour that passes. It is the moment, too, for which Christ Himself is waiting: *then* shall the day of the "patience of Jesus Christ" come to a close, and all His heart's affection for His church shall find its blessed fruition in presenting her to Himself, glorious, without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Mark the strong and urgent appeal Christ makes to the Father at the close of His prayer in John xvii. ! He says, "Father, *I will*"—(ver. 24)—it is even a stronger request than before (compare vers. 9 and 15). And what is it that He so urgently pleads with the Father. It is that those who are so dear to Him, not only as those for whom He died but as the gift of the Father Himself, should be *with* Him where He is, in

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that scene of incomparable glory, apart altogether from this world, where all the Son's affections and the Father's love could be known and enjoyed to the full. There to "behold My glory," says the Lord—wonderful and unspeakable privilege! There is, indeed, *a* glory which will be displayed before the world, and where we shall be along with Him (Col. iii. 4), but this is not that: it is the intimate privilege, reserved only for His own, of beholding what He here calls "my glory." This is His own peculiar glory, that which is proper to Himself, which was given Him of the Father (for He had become man, and therefore, as the dependent One, takes it from the Father)—blessed answer to all that He suffered down here. This, it shall be our privilege (not to share, but) to *behold*: and what a joy to see Him honoured and glorified above all! May the light of that day shine with increasing brightness on our path now, and produce its own transforming effect in our life and walk down here!

"What wait I for?" I wait to hear Thy voice,  
 (Blest hope which *now* can make the heart rejoice)  
 To hear the first note of the trumpet's blast;  
 Long waited for; but heard from heaven at last.

Then clothed with Thy blest image—matchless grace!  
 Which gives to all Thine own this wondrous place:  
 Arrayed in glory, like Thyself above,  
 Blest fruit of Thy divine, surpassing love.

What grace untold! what fullest joy divine!  
 To those who shall in Thy blest image shine,  
 That we, the Father's gift to Thee—Thine own,  
 Should glory see, displayed in Thee, the Son.

"What wait I for?"—no words could e'er portray—  
 'Tis more than human language could convey—  
 The deepest, truest longings of the heart;  
 To be *with* Thee, and ne'er from Thee to part.



## The Church of God.

THE Lord Himself was the first to make mention of the Church or assembly of God. It was on the occasion of Peter's confession of Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God; and He speaks of it as something then future: "On this rock I *will* build my Church" (Matt. xvi. 18). Pentecost was, we might say, the birthday of the Church; and the coming of the Lord *for* His saints (not His appearing in glory) will be its termination. That this is so Scripture abundantly proves.

When Christ came, He presented Himself to His own people, Israel; but He was rejected, cast out, and crucified. We know that His death and atonement were necessary in order to meet the claims of God's glory, before blessing could come either to Israel or the Church. But, at the cross, God was fully glorified by the sacrifice offered up there, and the whole question as to sin and sins was settled on a righteous basis, the results of which will extend out even to the new heavens and the new earth, where everything will be brought into perfect harmony with God's holy nature, all trace of sin being for ever gone. Having risen from the dead, He took His place in heaven at the right hand of God; and the Holy Ghost came down from a glorified Christ to unite a people on earth to the Head in heaven. The Church is, therefore, a body formed on earth, after the glorification of the Lord Jesus as the Head in heaven. This was something entirely different from all that preceded it or had ever existed before; it was a new order of things—not a national blessing as with Israel; but all believers, whether Jew or Gentile, were formed into one body by the Holy Ghost sent down. Clearly this could not

have existed in Old Testament times, because it was not till Christ had taken His place as the Head above, that the body could be formed on earth. Abraham, Moses, David, and the many true saints and servants of God in the old dispensation, however honoured or valued they were as men of faith and true saints, did not form a part of the Church of God. Man was still on his trial up to the cross; God was still patiently cultivating His vineyard to see if anything could be produced out of it, but it only produced wild grapes. Christ was the last test of all to the heart of man, and at the end He had to say, "they hated Me without a cause," and they chose a murderer and crucified the Son of God, saying, "we will not have this man to reign over us": *then* the trial of man was over, and God began an entirely new work in grace.

The Apostle Paul was the chosen vessel and instrument used of God to bring out this blessed and wonderful truth of the Church of God. It was, indeed, foreshadowed in the word of the Lord spoken to Saul of Tarsus when he was going to persecute the saints at Damascus, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" and, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." The voice from heaven did not say, why do you persecute My saints? but why do you persecute *Me*—for those few Christians at Damascus were, so to speak, a part of Himself.

It may be well here to remark that some have mistakenly taught that we are united to Christ in incarnation; but this is entirely contrary to Scripture. Christ, the true grain of wheat, must fall into the ground *and die*, before any could be united to Him, or before one single grain of the harvest could be stored in the granary of God (John xii. 24). The Christian is united—not to a Christ incarnate, but to Christ

glorified; by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Nor is it by any improvement of the old nature that we can be brought into this position; there must be a new birth—the communication of a new life and nature. All true Christians belong to the new creation, where all things are of God; as we read, “If any man be in Christ [there is] a new creation”: and it is on new creation ground that we have to do with Christ now (2 Cor. v.). Nor can any ordinance bring us into the Church of God. Thus, the door of admission to the Church is not water baptism, but the possession of the Holy Ghost; it is “by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. xii. 13). And so every member of the Church of God is quickened with divine life, and has received the Holy Spirit, consequent on faith in Christ (Eph. i. 13).

Now, it is a wonderful and blessed truth for the soul that the Church of God is said to be Christ’s body, “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. i. 23); and this is when Christ is set as Head over all things, to the Church. Again, He is “Head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead” (Col. i. 18). The Head would not be complete without the body, and the body is the body of the Head, the completeness or fulness of none less than Him who fills all in all. There is, therefore, but one body, and this includes every true Christian on the earth at any given time. We find in Romans xii. 5, “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another.” Of this unity the Lord’s Supper is the outward and visible expression: thus, “We, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1 Cor. x. 17). The apostle could write to the Church at Corinth and say, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in

particular" (1 Cor. xii. 27). But members of what? Clearly of *the* body of Christ; not of *a* body or *a* church. In those days, all believers in that city were together, and he could say, "Ye are our epistle . . . ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ": not merely they *ought* to be the epistle of Christ, but they *were* so. The idea of various churches or bodies, as seen in Christendom to-day, was then unknown, and is quite contrary to the truth as found in Scripture: there is no membership in Scripture but membership of the body of Christ. So it was in the early Church; and this showed itself practically in many ways. Thus, the gifts were not restricted to a certain denomination or body of people, as is largely the case now; they were for the edification of *the* body of Christ. When the saints met together at Corinth, Ephesus, &c., all were together; and scope was left for each gift to edify, exhort, &c., in the assembly according as the Spirit of God might guide. Moreover, Christ's heart and affection to His Church is not restricted by any of these human limitations—He loved *the Church* (not a part of it) and gave Himself for it: in His present service to His Church, He washes it with the water of the word; and He will present it to Himself, glorious, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. v. 23-31).

The truth of the Church, as already remarked, was a thing entirely unknown in Old Testament times. Paul laboured that the saints might understand this great truth of the mystery which, he tells us, "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men" (Eph. iii. 5). A mystery in Scripture does not mean something strange or mysterious, but something which we could not know apart from divine revelation, or understand apart from the teaching of the Spirit. This mystery was "hid in God"; it does not say hid

in the Scriptures, for there was no revelation of it in the Old Testament at all. It is true that there were types and shadows, as we can see now in the light of the New Testament—such as Eve taken out of the side of Adam while he slept, Rebecca brought across the desert to Isaac who was a type of the risen Christ, and many others; but the truth itself was kept “secret since the times of the ages, but now made manifest by prophetic writings” (Rom. xvi. 26). Again we read, “The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints” (Col. i. 26). And God would have us to know and intelligently understand this blessed truth, so little understood by thousands of real Christians (alas that it should be so!); thus it is written, “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you [Gentiles], the hope of glory” (Col. i. 27).

The keynote of the gospel which has reached us through Christ is *grace*. Man, whether Jew or Gentile, was found to be afar from God, dead in trespasses and sins, no pulsation of life toward God. But God, in the riches of His grace, brings in redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins. It is remarkable what exuberant language, if we may so say, Scripture uses when speaking of this subject—thus we find such words as the “exceeding riches” of His grace, “the glory” of His grace, “the riches of the glory” of His inheritance, &c. All depends on His sovereign grace, which has quickened us together with Christ, raised us up together, and seated us together in heavenly places (not yet *with* but) in Christ. The middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile has been broken down, the enmity

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abolished, and both are reconciled to God in one body by the cross. Thus the Gentiles are brought in to be joint-heirs, a joint-body and joint-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus by the gospel.

Another aspect in which the Church is viewed in Scripture is as the house of God. It is a building, which is fitly framed together, and growing unto a holy temple in the Lord. And so, as each soul is quickened with divine life, it is, as a "living stone" fitted into its place in the spiritual building, and this building grows up, for a habitation of God by the Spirit. When the last stone is added, the Lord will come. It is God's building, and in it there is nothing but what is vital and real, there are no mere professors without life. This was so from the beginning, in Acts ii., when *the Lord* added to the Church such as should be saved. It is blessed to see that it was always God's purpose to dwell amongst His people!—He said to Moses, "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God" (Exod. xxix. 45). And so the moment redemption was accomplished, in type, in the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, God's habitation was spoken of in the song of Moses and the children of Israel (Exod. xv.). The tabernacle and the temple were filled with God's glory, and everything spoke of the holiness of Him who dwelt there, and who could be approached only on the ground of sacrifices which met the requirements of His nature as a holy God. *Now* the great work of which the sacrifices were but types and shadows has been done—Christ has died and risen again, having fully glorified God by His work on the cross, and God dwells in the Church by His Spirit. The apostle could write to the Corinthians, "Ye are God's husbandry, God's building," and again, "Know ye not that ye are

the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"—weighty responsibility for the assembly to remember, for in God's house everything must be suitable to Him! And so we find the apostle writing to his son in the faith, Timothy, in order that he might know how to behave himself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. Every servant of God, and indeed every saint, is responsible as to his conduct in the house of God; this is a solemn consideration which we need to weigh carefully and prayerfully before God. Here the Church of God is viewed as that which exists on earth, and it is said to be the Church or assembly of the living God, and the pillar and base of the truth. This is true of the Church even in its present broken and fallen state—for where are we to find the truth outside it?—it is God's witness to the truth; and of this truth the person of Christ is the centre.

But it is important for us to see that Scripture also looks at this building in another aspect—namely, as a building committed to the responsibility of men, who build therein. Now whatever man touches is marked by failure more or less, and even by evil and corruption. So we learn from 1 Corinthians iii., that there are those who build into the professing Church, not only "gold, silver, precious stones"—that which will stand the test: but worthless things, compared to "wood, hay and stubble." There are even some who "corrupt the temple of God." Thus the outward profession of Christianity grew up—what is commonly called Christendom—the great professing body of the baptized, including vast numbers who are still unconverted. So, in the parable, the tares (which look like wheat but are not) have been sown along with the wheat by the

enemy, and the harvest is spoiled. The field in which they are sown is the world, and both tares and wheat are to grow together until the harvest. When we turn to the Second Epistle to Timothy, which was the last epistle Paul wrote; and which was written specially in view of the ruin which was even then coming into the professing Church; we find that the apostle likens the outward assembly to a great house in which are vessels, not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth: some to honour and some to dishonour. All this aptly describes the state of things by which we are surrounded; the Church having become a great professing body in which are found what is evil and what is good, what is true and what is untrue. It is no longer possible to purge out the leaven or evil from the house, and the instruction to the individual who really desires to be faithful to Christ, is to purge himself from the vessels to dishonour in the house. But he is not to remain isolated, but to associate himself with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart, so that he may be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use and prepared unto every good work. Who these vessels unto honour are and how to find them amidst the confusion is not the point here; but separation from the evil and identification with that which is good. At the same time it is a most important and practical point to discern what the path of God's mind is; it is a question for faith, guided by the word, and with a single eye which seeks only the glory of Christ. But there cannot be the least doubt that many grave mistakes have been made in the application of this very scripture, in cases where such an application was not, and could not be, warranted. One thing, however, which we may be assured of is, that God will never leave His own without a resource,



if only there be that humility and dependence on Him, which is so necessary in order to ascertain His will.

The Church is often spoken of in its *local* aspect; thus we read of the "Church of God which is at Corinth," "the Churches of Galatia," "the Churches of the Gentiles," &c. But the plural—Churches—is not used here in the modern sense, as when people speak of the various denominations or religious bodies of the day. In the early centuries there was no such state in existence; and it is a remarkable fact in history that, although there were sects and parties within the Church itself, there was no outward schism until about the year 240 A.D. The various Churches referred to in the New Testament were so many local expressions of *the* Church of God. So careful was the Spirit of God that there should be no breach or division in the early Church, that when a question arose as to whether the Gentiles should be put under the law, the matter was not settled at Antioch where it was raised, but at Jerusalem, which was the centre of Christianity amongst the Jews; and the decrees of the apostles and elders liberating the Gentiles from bondage under legal ordinances came from that very city where Jewish prejudices might be supposed to be strongest. Had the matter been settled at Antioch, it might have led to a Jewish Church and a Gentile Church, which would have been altogether contrary to God's will and mind.

(*To be continued.*)



## Concerning the Lord's Coming.

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### *EXTRACTS.*

THE Lord is coming. Yes, that is true. It is *the Lord*, but I am a son of God, and I wait for God's beloved Son to come from heaven. The very inward life of the believer is formed in connection with the coming of the Lord. However dark the night, and however many the difficulties there are, we should be able to see that bright Star. When the Lord thinks of us, what are His first thoughts of us?—of the deep sands of the wilderness? No, He knows there is a certain responsiveness of heart in us to the thought of His coming. His thought is that we are waiting for Himself from heaven. If He let them (the Thessalonians) come to their wits' end, it was that He might show them He could meet all their needs, and let in the droppings of His love. He always takes occasion of every difficulty to show forth Himself. If I get near the Lord Jesus Christ, I find that there is in His heart a speciality of thought and affection for a people down here, who are waiting for Him—not for the glory, that is quite another thing. He has everything that He can personally want, but there is a craving in His heart that cannot be satisfied till He shall come to take us home to Himself. And can I think of this and not want to see Him? Formed for Christ's own individual presence, the heart cannot say "satisfied" till it gets there. It is an immense help to remember

that the Lord Jesus never forgets His coming. There is a fixedness of heart in Him to come and fetch the bride home to the Father's house, and I can have sympathy with Him in that. Christ is in the Father's presence; I down here serving Him and waiting for Him. The soul that is formed on His coming cannot be satisfied without Him.

We should like to put a very plain question to the reader—a question which can only be answered rightly in the immediate presence of God. It is this, What is it thou art looking for? What is thy hope? Art thou looking for certain events which are to transpire on this earth, such as the revival of the Roman Empire, the gathering back of the Jews to their own land of Palestine, the Antichrist, the great tribulation, &c.? These all stand on the prophetic page; they are all recorded in God's history of the future, but they were never intended to cast a shadow athwart the Christian's bright and blessed hope. That hope stands forth in glorious relief from the background of prophecy. What is it? It is the appearing of the bright and morning Star—the coming of the Lord Jesus. Who sees it? The one who has been watching during the dark and dreary hours of the night. The Church is supposed to be watching, to be lovingly wakeful, to be looking out, to be putting forth the inquiry of the intensely longing heart, "Why tarry the wheels of His chariot?" Alas! the Church has failed in this. But that is no reason why the individual believer should not be in the full present power of the blessed hope. "Let *him* that heareth say, Come." This is deeply personal. Oh that the writer and readers of these lines may realise habitually the purifying, sanctifying, elevating power of this heavenly hope. May we understand and

exhibit the practical power of those words of the Apostle John, "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

It may be said, why do you set so much importance on the coming of the Lord? I believe there is no testimony without it. You have no right goal. Everyone is a witness for something. Lot was a witness of what a divided heart is. Abraham of what the walk of faith is. If a person is going to be a witness for God he must have his goal marked out. The coming of Christ from heaven for us is the pole star for the Christian. If a Christian is not looking for this coming, you may be sure that his testimony is not according to the mind of God. What is the thought of being in heaven compared with the thought of His coming to take us there. At times our hearts are drooping, but what is anything we have to pass through here, if one only has the consciousness of being able to respond to Him, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus?"

I gaze upon Christ in glory—  
 That glory so bright, so fair—  
 And there passes a change upon me  
 Till I am as He who is there.

Then no more in the earthen vessel  
 The treasure of God shall be,  
 But in full and unclouded beauty,  
 O Lord, wilt Thou shine through me.

## “The Word was made Flesh.”

**I**N our last number we dwelt briefly on the great foundation truth of the Deity of Christ: we now desire to say a little on the equally important truth of His humanity. We have already seen from John i. 1 that “the Word was God”—here it is a question of what He *was*, and that eternally: but in verse 14 we read, “the Word was made (or became) flesh”—this is what He *became*. What a blessed truth it is for the soul that God has come near to us in grace and tabernacled amongst men. And having once taken human nature, Christ never gives it up; He is still a man, though now glorified on high.

Thus our blessed Lord was truly and really man, and the disciples had contemplated His glory; it was that peculiar glory of an only begotten Son with His Father: not coming with the sword to execute judgment, but making God known in grace, revealing the Father, full of grace and truth. The more we study the gospel of John, the more we shall find that while the divine glory of the Son, the eternal Word, is so strikingly set forth, yet He never leaves the place of dependence and perfect submission to the Father’s will. The Word became flesh, and, having taken the subject place, He is always loyal to the position which is true and proper to man, that is, the place of dependence on, and obedience to, the will of God. Do we want to learn what God is in the moral qualities of His nature—His love; His grace, His goodness, His mercy, His truth, &c.? We shall see it all fully manifested in the life and path, the words and works, of Jesus Himself in this world.

What a wondrous descent was His; from the

brightness of the glory to the cross of shame, as we find in Philippians ii. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, for He was God. Being in the "form of God"; He unrobed Himself, so to speak: voluntarily and in divine love He laid aside His glory and took upon Him the "form of a bondservant"; going down, down as far as death, and that the death of the cross. But He was as truly God when here below as He was before He came—God manifested in flesh.

We must always remember that our Lord's humanity was perfectly holy and without taint or sin. Miraculously born of the Virgin by the power of the Holy Ghost, it was announced to her by the angel, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Scripture carefully guards this truth lest anyone should fall into a mistake about it, as, alas, some have done. Thus we read, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth"; "in Him is no sin"; He "knew no sin"; and He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Being truly man, our Lord Jesus can sympathise with His people as well as represent them on high before God. As their High Priest He bears their names on his heart and on His shoulders continually in the presence of God. Having been in this world and tasted its sorrows, He is able to sympathise, in tenderness and compassion, with His tried or suffering people; for "we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart."

And it is "the Man Christ Jesus" who is the Mediator between God and men, and what divine grace and tender compassions are His! To quote the words of another: "No tenderness, no power of sympathy, no humanity like His; no human heart that

can so understand, so feel with us, whatever the burden may be that oppresses the heart of man. It is the Man, the Christ Jesus, who is our Mediator; none so near, none who has come down so low and entered with divine power into the need, and all the need, of man. The conscience is purified by His work, the heart relieved by that which He was, and which He is for ever." May it be ours to experience His grace, His divine and perfect sympathy as we pass on through the difficulties of life to the rest that remains for the people of God!

### The Bible.

**T**HAT the Bible is a revelation of and from God, given us by inspiration, is a fact which we should hold to tenaciously in these days of sceptical unbelief. We are told in Hebrews iv. 12, that the Word of God is "living and active"; and in 1 Peter i. 23, that it is "living and abiding." This could not be said of any merely human book, however valuable in its place. The Scripture has a living power in every part, and it will endure when heaven and earth have passed away. It has also a pervading unity of design throughout, and a divine purpose runs through it, and binds the whole together. Thus, the whole plan of redemption is foreseen and foreshadowed in the very earliest books; and the figures and types of the Old Testament point forward to that which was yet to come, and which could not possibly have been known to the writers themselves. But all was present to the eye of God who is the Author of the book. The future, as well as the present, all lay out before Him as one vast panorama.

Christ is the great central theme of the whole, and

the key to its understanding. But you cannot force the lock: we need a power and wisdom from above, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The very lives and actings of those men of old whose history is recorded for us there, were so shaped and ordered of God as to be suited types of that which was yet to come. Thus Adam, Abel, Enoch, the patriarchs, Moses, David, &c., were real living men, but their lives were so ordered as to set forth or exemplify some great principles, more fully brought out in the New Testament: or to be, in some respects, types of Christ Himself.

Another striking feature of the inspired volume is the way in which we are admitted to look in and see those inward exercises of heart which are produced in those who love the people of God, whatever may be their condition. Take the prophecy of Jeremiah and the Lamentations—what a touching picture of the prophet's heart, overwhelmed with grief because of the sorrows which had come upon the people; till at last he turns to God, and finds a resource in the unfailing faithfulness of God Himself! But the prophet gives us, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the record of those exercises of heart, as he entered into them himself. How different from a dry history or narration of events! In a somewhat similar way we find our Lord Himself weeping over Jerusalem—His heart filled with sorrow on account of His rejection, and the judgment of God which it would surely bring upon the guilty but beloved city. So, too, in the Psalms; how touchingly does the inspired Word open out the heart of Jesus, if we may so express it, in His path of trial as the Man of Sorrows, ending only in the cross!

The Bible shows out man in the roots and moral principles of his being; as utterly estranged from God since the Fall. It reveals God Himself as light and



love. Its pages are replete with a wealth of testimony as to Christ in all the glory of His person—God manifested in flesh; full of grace and truth; coming into a world which was at enmity with God; but Himself the revealer of God, and the full manifestation of the Father down here. Thus, it speaks to the inmost heart of the Christian: it is the light and guide of his path, it is that which fully equips the man of God to all good works. The characteristic of the godly man is that he meditates in God's Word day and night (Ps. i.): by it he is kept from the paths of the destroyer, and grows in the knowledge of God Himself. Its prophetic teachings open up the future, now veiled and hidden from the ken of even the wisest and cleverest of men. It shows how evil will yet be put down, God's government established and made good in this world; that terrible enemy, Satan, laid low and bound in the abyss; and Christ, the rightful King and heir of all, set over *all* the works of God's hands. Finally, it carries us on beyond the confines of *time* entirely, and unveils for us the *eternal* blessedness of the saints, in the new heavens and the new earth, where righteousness shall *dwell*; and, every trace of sin having been removed from the whole universe as a result of the work done at the cross, God shall be all in all.

## The Church of God.

(Continued.)

THE Church, as to its character and calling, is essentially heavenly—though on earth it belongs to heaven. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," says the divine Saviour in prayer to His Father (John xvii. 14); and again, in a still more emphatic form, "Of the world they are

not, even as I am not of the world" (ver. 16). They were *in* the world, and going *through* it, but not *of* it. The Church existed in the purposes and counsels of God before the world was, and it is not of the world when it does exist. This is just what we so easily forget, and if the soul gets out of communion with God, and Christ ceases to be the real object before the heart, then the old motives begin to act, and the Christian may easily be drawn again into the world, out of which he had been delivered. But what an empty passing thing it is after all! The apostle foresaw the danger, with the Colossian saints, of not holding the Head, and there were two forms of the enemy's seductions to which they were exposed—tradition on the one hand, and philosophy on the other. It was the turning away from Christ to human ordinances and arrangements, or to the speculations of science and human reason; but all these things are "not after Christ." But the true safeguard against every seduction of the world or Satan is to walk in the conscious enjoyment of our union with the Head in heaven. He is the source of supply for the members, who are mutually dependent one on another, the joints and bands supplying that which is needful for the body, which increases with the increase of God.

Look back on history, what do we find? The truth of the distinctive place and calling and hopes of the Church was very soon lost by the great mass of Christians, who became mixed up with the world and worldly things. The result was that when corruptions came in, men assumed undue authority within the Church, doubtless in many cases with the best intentions—sometimes with the desire to maintain order or keep out false doctrine; and hence the writings of the sub-apostolic period which are considered authentic,

such as the epistles of Ignatius, Polycarp, &c, speak much of obedience to bishops and others as the safeguard for the saints, instead of direct dependence on God and the word of His grace. Closely connected with this, the hope of the Lord's coming, as the proper hope and immediate expectation of the Church, was soon lost sight of. The evil servant said in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming," and as a consequence he oppressed his fellow-servant and sank down to the level of the world and adopted its ways.

We have in the seven addresses to seven Churches in Asia, given us in Revelation ii. and iii., a brief sketch of the history of the professing Church on earth. It is given in the form of seven addresses to seven Churches which then existed, so that it did not, to the early Christians, in any way militate against the truth that the Lord might come at any moment. But looking back over it now, *we* can see that it gives us a concise outline of the history of the Church from the beginning to the end. The number seven, which signifies in Scripture language completeness, and the selection of those particular Churches as the ones addressed, are additional proofs of this. This prophetic outline was given by the divine wisdom of the Lord Himself, and it is *His* judgment of the Church. This is a fact of great importance, because *we* can only judge of things partially and failingly; but here we have a true and divine estimate of everything. Christ is seen in chapter i. as the Judge, standing in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, which are said to be the seven Churches. The Church is set as a responsible witness or lightbearer for Christ on earth; and the Lord Jesus walks in the midst of these in order to take knowledge of everything that passes, and to see how far the Church has answered to the light and privilege given. The Church is not

viewed, in these seven addresses, in its place of privilege as the body of Christ, nor is He looked at as the Head, ministering the nourishment needed by the members, who are the objects of His tender care and solicitude. Rather is the Church viewed as the responsible witness, and Christ as the Judge; there to take account of all that passes. It takes in, therefore, that which professes to be for God on earth, that which takes the place of the Church, and which is held accountable as such. The Lord acts in grace as well as in judgment, and recognises what He can which is to be commended in each Church; and He shows the true state of that which professes His name. But failure and ruin has marked the history of the Church, as it has marked everything which has been committed to the responsibility of man; and therefore there is the need of overcoming. The overcomer is the one who stands for God and maintains what is due to Him, in each particular state of decline or failure—the one, in fact, who is not overcome by, but overcomes the evil which is at work in the Church. But besides the promise to the overcomer in each Church, there is the closing word, repeated seven times, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches”—occurring, in the first three, before the promise, and in the last four after it. It is well to notice this admonition to the one who has an ear, because when the Church got into a corrupt and worldly state, individuals claimed an undue place of rule and authority, but the word from the Lord to the one whose ear was attentive to hear is, to hear (not what the Church says, but) what the Spirit says to the Churches. It would be an easy thing to hear a voice of authority coming from the Church in cases of difficulty, and would not require any exercise of soul; but here we find that each individual is

responsible to hear what *God* says, what the Spirit teaches, and this does require exercise and discernment, on the alone authority of God's Word. This is the true safeguard and resource for faith at all times.

Scripture shows that it is at the house of God that judgment begins (1 Pet. iv. 17), for God begins with that which is nearest Himself, His own house. And what a solemn and humbling thing it is to review the history of the Church in the light of the Lord's own judgment of it? Failure began with that which is *inward*, the loss of first love to Christ; and it ends with pride, self-complacency, boastfulness, and indifference to Christ—a state utterly nauseous to Him. God has brought these things before us in His Word, so that they may have a practical effect upon us now, and that we may watch the very beginnings of those things which led to the ruin and failure which has come in. The history closes, further on in the book of Revelation, so far as God's judgment is concerned, with the judgment of the false, professing Church under the figure of the harlot, seated upon the scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy—Babylon the great—the pretentious, self-glorifying antichurch, in whom was found all evil and abomination, and who meets her final doom at the hands of the Lord God who judges her (Rev. xvii. and xviii.).

But, long before this, the true Church had been translated to heaven, caught up to meet the Lord in the air; each one clothed in a body of glory like His own. Then, as the Bride of the Lamb, glorified in heaven above; arrayed in fine linen, figurative of the righteousnesses of saints—owing everything to Him who purchased her at such a cost, and who is her Lord and covered with all the loveliness which Christ Himself has put upon her, she is presented to Him. Long

He had watched over the assembly for which He gave Himself, when in the scene of trial and sorrow (through which, indeed, He Himself had passed); had loved and cared and cherished her: but now, at last, the hour has come when she is presented to Him as His spotless bride, graced in all His own perfection, dear to Him as the gift of the Father, and for ever to enjoy those purest and deepest joys which His own ineffable grace delights to bestow. Others are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, but they are not the bride; blessed as their place and portion may be, they do not stand in that peculiar relationship to Him in which she does.

In conclusion, let us ask, are these truths practical realities with us *now* as they should be? If so they would surely lead us to humble ourselves when we think how little we know practically of the place and calling and hopes of the Church, how little we are really carried outside this world in heart and affection for Him whose love has been set upon such undeserving objects! The deeper the Christian enters into these truths, the more his steps are quickened, as he passes through the world as a pilgrim and a stranger waiting for the Son from heaven. The ruin of the Church as a corporate witness for Christ is indeed a very sad and solemn reality, which calls for constant confession and self-judgment on our part; but, bless His name for it! it does not change Christ's love for His Church, and even His rebukes and chastenings are in love. Nor can it annul or set aside His counsels of grace, to present the Church to Himself, glorious, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

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## Tabernacle Furniture—The Ark.

**I**TS *Structure and Typical Meaning.*—The ark was made of acacia wood, overlaid with pure gold inside and outside, and it had a crown or border of gold round about. There were four rings at the four corners as receptacles for the staves with which it was carried, which were also overlaid with gold. The mercy seat, which formed the lid of the ark, was made of pure gold, with cherubims of gold of beaten work, one at each end: they stretched out their wings, covering the mercy-seat, and their faces were turned towards one another, towards the mercy-seat. Its place was within the veil, in the most holy place.

The ark represented God's throne, where He dwelt in the midst of Israel, where His immediate presence was—the One who “dwellest between the cherubims”—and from there He communed with Moses and gave commandment concerning the children of Israel. Gold is the well-known symbol in Scripture of divine righteousness—“righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne”—it was the throne of God, who is holy in His nature and righteous in His ways. The cherubim we find in Genesis iii. guarding the way of the tree of life, and Ezekiel speaks of them as “the living creatures that I saw by the river Chebar”: they were the executors of God's power and judgment.

The ark and the mercy-seat typified Christ, who was the “image of the invisible God”; the One who perfectly represented and manifested God here below, who was “God manifested in flesh.” Once in the year, on the great day of atonement (Lev. xvi.), the high priest went into the holiest of all, with blood and a cloud of incense—the cloud of incense covering the mercy-seat—and he sprinkled the blood, once upon the

mercy-seat and seven times before it. The Epistle to the Romans tells us that God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation or mercy-seat through faith in His blood, and all His holy claims being met by that blood, God is perfectly righteous in justifying the poor sinner who believes. Christ, our High Priest, has entered heaven by His own blood (Heb. ix. 12), presenting before God all the wondrous efficacy of that blood, and has made a perfect and permanent atonement for sin. Hence the throne of justice is now a throne of grace for those who believe.

Within the ark was to be placed the testimony that God would give Moses. But the first tables were broken to pieces beneath the mount and never reached the ark; and it is worthy of note that, when Moses recounts the circumstances respecting the second tables in Deuteronomy x., he mentions in immediate connection with it that God directed him to make an ark and to put the tables therein. The only One who kept the law perfectly was Christ, and He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

*The Ark going through the Wilderness.*—Let us now visit the camp of Israel in the wilderness, when it is about to set forward on its journey. Here are the priests (Num. iii., iv.), from thirty to fifty years of age—just the time of life when their service would be most efficient—arranged in the exact order appointed by God Himself. Aaron and his sons come and take down the veil and cover the ark with it; after this they place over it the covering of badgers' skins, and over this a cloth wholly of blue. Observe that none of the other vessels were so covered, for they had the badgers' skins *outside*. Then the sons of Kohath come forward and bear it; but "they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die," neither "shall they go in to see when



the holy things are covered, lest they die." Does not this teach us that, in everything which is connected with the person of our blessed Lord, we need to approach with unshod foot, with deepest reverence, and in strict accordance with the Word, also in a spirit far removed from that of prying or levity? Then, let us note, the ark was covered, first with the veil, which represented Christ's humanity, His flesh; and *outside* with the covering wholly of blue—that is, the heavenly colour. He was *the* heavenly Man—"the second man is the Lord from heaven"—heavenly both in His origin and character. See, then, this object, presenting wholly the blue colour, as it moves along through the desert! Christ alone fully answered to this; though the believer is to "walk even as He walked"—quickened with divine life, and being made a partaker of the divine nature—he is to show in his walk the same moral traits and features of character as Christ Himself did.

The normal place of the ark, when the camp was on its journey, was in the midst of the tribes. But in Numbers x. we find a circumstance which it is interesting and profitable to note. It was on the occasion when Moses asked Hobab his father-in-law to go with them as their guide, and to be to them instead of eyes. Doubtless, Hobab knew the desert well and could show them the way they should go. And we ourselves too—how prone we are to lean on some "Hobab"! how slow to learn the lesson, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him"! But God has to teach Moses that He Himself is the unfailing resource of His people; and so we find that when "they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey, the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey to search out a resting place for them." God, in His grace, came

out of His place, so to speak, to go before them. It is, as one has said, "A beautiful picture of the tender and precious grace of Him who, if He makes us pass through the wilderness for our good, does not fail to be there with us, and who takes care in putting out His sheep to go before them, and to solace them with His love. Mighty leader of His people by the way, He is their joy and their glory when He comes to rest in their midst!"

*(To be continued.)*

## Concerning the Lord's Coming.

### EXTRACTS.

**W**HEREVER we turn, in whatever way we look at the subject, we are more and more confirmed in the truth of the clear distinction between our Lord's "coming" or "state of presence," and His "appearing" or "day." The former is ever held up before the heart as the bright and blessed hope of the believer, which may be realised at any moment. The latter is pressed rather upon the conscience, in deep solemnity, as bearing upon the entire practical career of those who are set in this world to work and witness for an absent Lord. Scripture never confounds these two things, however much we may do it; nor is there a single sentence, from cover to cover of the holy volume, which teaches that believers are not always to be looking out for the coming of the Lord, and ever to bear in mind that "the day is at hand." It is only "that evil servant"—referred to in our Lord's discourse in Matthew xxiv.—that "says in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming"; and there we see the terrible results which must ever flow from the harbouring of such a thought in the heart.

The Lord *Himself* shall descend from heaven with a summons designed only for the ears and hearts of his own (1 Thess. iv. 13-18). Not one uncircumcised ear shall hear, not one unrenewed heart be moved by that heavenly voice, that divine trumpet call. The dead in Christ, including, as we believe, the Old Testament saints, as well as those of the New, who shall have departed in the faith of Christ—all those shall hear the blessed sound, and come forth from their sleeping places. All the living saints shall hear it, and be changed in a moment. And oh! what a change. The poor crumbling tabernacle of clay exchanged for a glorified body, like unto the body of Jesus.

Look at yonder bent and withered frame—that body racked with pain, and worn out with years of acute suffering. It is the body of a saint. How humiliating to see it like that! Yes, but wait a little. Let but the trumpet sound, and in one moment that poor, crushed, and withered frame shall be changed, and made like to the glorified body of the descending Lord.

To rise and meet the Lord in the air is the hope which is the most immediately upon the heart of the believer. Then the going with Him to the mansions in the Father's house. As He says, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." And that house will give exercise to all those family affections which the heart so well understands. The Father will be there, and the first-born among many brethren, and the many brethren themselves. And to extend these relationships, and awaken affections to the full, there will be the marriage there, and the now espoused or betrothed Church will become the bride of the Lamb (Rev. xix.).

There are scenes of glory also, and occasions of other

joy, accompanying this. In those heavens there will be the "Holy Jerusalem," the dwellings of the saints as a royal priestly people, the place of *government*, and of *worship*. And there will be the Tree of Life, and the River of Life, and the Light, and the throne of God, and the Lamb. And the saints will be there as harpers, not having cymbals and timbrels of merely *human* skill, fitted to raise the joys of earth (Ps. xviii.), but having "harps of God," instruments of divine workmanship, fitted to awaken melody worthy of heaven itself. And the enthroned elders will be there, casting their crowns before the throne, and the angels delighting to ascribe all power and authority to the Lamb that was slain.

And throughout all this there will be nothing to trouble or to hinder. As on earth, in those days, "nothing will hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain," so, in the heavens there will be no entrance to anything defiling. There can be no enemies, for they have been judged; no serpent, for he has been trodden under foot. There will be no weariness of heart, no coldness or dulness of soul, no fainting of spirit; but the servants will serve without fault, and night and day there will be the happy worship, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty."

This heaven, too, will be one scene of God's own rest or Sabbath, and the saints, in their measure tasting the same refreshing, will dwell in that rest in bodies fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. They shall be like Him in His glory, seeing Him as He is. They shall shine "as the sun" in the kingdom of their Father. In mind, body, and estate they will be conformed to the Beloved. And there will be the seeing or understanding of all the precious revelation of God, not as through a glass darkly, but face to face.

## Gleanings for the Heart.

**I**N the midst of all the trials and difficulties of the way, we find these two means which God uses to carry us on: the Word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword, which judges everything that is contrary to God; and the intercession of Christ, which meets all our weakness and failure.

In all the path of trial here below, there is not one of the difficulties to which grace does not apply His intercession. There is not a step of my life that God is not thinking of me.

Then, when we fail, intercession comes in and restores the soul, and yet it always maintains the soul in the confidence of divine love. The Lord intercedes for us without our even asking. We do not gain His intercession for us because of our repentance or prayers. He did not intercede for Peter when he repented, but before he sinned; He interceded for Peter because he needed it.

We may forget Him, we may fail in appreciating the position in which He has set us, and in walking according to it; but in the holiest He keeps us, in unmingled, untiring enjoyment of what is there—*there* in perfect love and in the light, as God is in the light, sin put away, and ourselves made the righteousness of God in Him.

“Christ loved the Church and *gave Himself* for it.” As I look at Christ’s love, I see that it had no motive but in itself, and it gave itself: nothing is held back. He is wholly and altogether mine; He has given Himself, and all is lumped up in that. The self-sacrifice of Christ was absolute: it was Himself, all He is, and all

was in perfection. The whole motive of His nature was engaged in it: "He gave Himself."

Christ does not separate the saints down here from Himself. He is interested in them, cares for them, nourishes and cherishes them, as a man does the flesh of his own body. And in this He can never fail. The darkness may be great, and the power of evil strong, and growing stronger; but, no more than a man can hate himself, can Christ fail in doing this—in nourishing and cherishing the Church.

Christ never fails, and there cannot be a want in Christ's Church without there being an answer to it in Christ's heart. All we want is to have the eye fixed on Christ, from whom all grace and love flow, and to be sanctified in heart and spirit thereby, while waiting for Him who gave Himself for us, so that we might be like Him even now, while walking through this world.

J. N. D.

## The Morning Star.

### *Introductory.*

PARADISE was not long enjoyed by our first parents. Through listening to the suggestion of Satan, they disobeyed the solitary commandment which had been given to test their dependence upon God in the scene where everything was prepared for their happiness, and where communion with their Creator would have been their supreme joy. All the other creatures, being by their nature incapable of this blessing, had been made subject to Adam, according to God's first purpose, and God brought them to him to give them names (Gen. i. 26-28; ii. 19-20). That dominion remained to him after his fall; but Paradise, where it had been for an instant enjoyed with God,

was lost to him for ever,—lost through his *disobedience*. Into the details of God's subsequent ways with Adam we cannot enter, our present object being to draw attention to the fact that in judging the "serpent," God intimated that his final destruction would be wrought by the woman's SEED. She had been, in the first instance, seduced by Satan; and through her, the Deliverer was to come. Besides that, He was to be characterised by the obedience in which both she and Adam had failed.

Such is the real meaning of the words in Psalm xl. 6, "Mine ears hast thou opened." \* The true sense of this figure in its moral bearing is given by the Greek version, quoted in Hebrews x. 5, "A body hast thou prepared me." The blessed Lord took His human body, "made of a woman, made *under the law*" (Gal. iv. 4), in order that obedience might become possible for One who not only had made all things, but sustained and upheld them all "by the word of His power" (Heb. i. 3). Before taking human form, He had never been in a position to obey; but having taken it, His delight was to carry out to the uttermost the Father's will who had sent Him, as it is indeed expressed in the words of the Psalm, "Lo, I COME (in the volume of the book it is written of me); I delight to do Thy will, O my God, yea, thy *law* is within my heart" (see John vi. 38; viii. 29). Ever subject, He "learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb. v. 8; Isah. l. 4-7).

His supreme act of obedience was His death, when

\* The word "opened," as stated in the margin of our Bibles, means literally "digged" or "hollowed out"; an allusion, no doubt, to the way in which a potter finishes off his work, by digging out of the clay the "ears" (or handles) which are needed to complete the circular part of a vase, made upon the wheel. The hearing "ear" signifies obedience (Prov. iv. 1-4, 20; xx. 12).

He took upon Himself the penalty attached to Adam's disobedience, and its consequences: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. v. 19). Those words never could be true of any of Adam's seed according to the flesh. And here let us note how both the divine and human nature of our blessed Lord is clearly established in a way that reaches the heart and conscience of all who can say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). It will be our joy in eternity.

It is therefore not surprising that the coming of Christ, as expressed in those words, "Lo, I come," is one of the most prominent truths on the pages of the Old Testament. We find it both in direct and positive statements, and also in figures and in types which proclaim unequivocally not only His *personal coming*, but also His *death* and resurrection; for "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins" (Lev. xvii. 11; Heb. ix 22).

As time went on, the unfolding of these blessed truths became more complete in details, as in Isaiah liii. and the end of Daniel ix.; but for various reasons, they remained more or less obscure. They were difficult to reconcile with other passages which spoke of His kingdom, power, and glory. The Lord Himself began to unfold them to His astonished disciples from the moment of His undertaking the last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. He reminded them again of His death, at the last supper, on the night in which He was betrayed; and, again, after His resurrection, He showed how the scriptures set it forth (Luke xxiv. 6, 25-47).

It is remarkable that, in the gospel history, not one of the disciples asked Jesus an explanation as to how sins



could be righteously forgiven, nor as to the reason for His dying. The scribes and Pharisees reasoned in their hearts when they heard Him say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; but, not believing in His Deity, they treated it as "blasphemy" (Mark ii. 6-12; Luke vii. 49). No doubt they all believed, from Old Testament scriptures, that there was such a thing as forgiveness of sins. It had been first proclaimed on Mount Sinai, in the very spot from whence the Ten Commandments had been promulgated. It was given in answer to Moses' intercession after the first commandment of all had been violated in a way which trampled under foot God's goodness as well as His power, and also after Moses had broken the tables divinely made and graven; for he was overcome when he saw the extent to which the Israelites had debased themselves in presence of the golden calf. But Moses interceded, and God answered him; such was His grace then; and the moment was well suited for establishing the basis of future access into God's presence afterwards, figured by the blood sprinkled on and before the mercy-seat (Lev. xvi). Thenceforward, the faithful could say with the Psalmist, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Ps. cxxx. 4). Forgiveness was an established fact, though as yet unaccounted for, and the blessedness of one forgiven could be celebrated, as by David in Psalm xxxii. But what the needed sacrifice was, or when it was to be offered, had not as yet been clearly understood. Even John the Baptist did not know it, though by the Spirit he had pointed out "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). Only the Lord Himself could reveal it, and He only did so when the appointed moment had arrived to carry out God's will.

Many other features of the coming of Christ are set

forth in the Old Testament. And these required time for making them known generally. He is the Prophet, Priest, and King. Personally, we find these typically in Abraham, Moses, and David; and the gospels of Mark, Luke, and Matthew correspond thereto respectively. Moreover, in Abraham, we find most particularly the fundamental principle of *justification* on the principle of faith. It is set forth in Romans iv. Not only so, but the portion of those justified through faith is shown to be *heavenly*, by the words which directed Abraham's attention to the stars, saying, "So shall thy seed be." How, where, or in what circumstances his seed was to be like the stars of heaven was not then stated,\* nevertheless there was, in the words used, a present divine purpose for the blessing of Abraham's own soul, as is shown in Hebrews xi. 14-16. This is why the saints of the present economy of grace are called "partakers of the *heavenly* calling." The gospel cannot be properly preached now without insisting on the Saviour's present place *in heaven* (Acts iii. 21), which, in His person, set forth God's purpose of having "many sons in glory." There it is that Jesus can say in the fullest sense, according to His own heart's desire, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me" (Heb. ii. 5-15; iii. 1; John xvii. 24).

All the scriptures which speak of Christ's power over this earth, when the judgment—over and over again predicted—must be carried out by Him, will also surely have their fulfilment. But even then, the judgment will not be unmixed with grace; for He is Priest as

\* God gave a further intimation of its meaning to Daniel (chap. xii. 3). Compare with Genesis xv. 6. Righteousness was Abraham's portion from God as soon as he believed, but it was reserved for others to turn "many" to it, so that the heavenly "seed" might be manifested, as well as their consequent "*shining*" for the glory of God.

well as King, "and will be a Priest upon His throne," when He shall "bear the glory" (Zech. vi. 13; Ps. lxxii.).

This supposes His coming again to this earth. He insisted particularly on His return, in speaking to His disciples before He left them, and it was definitely promised by angelic instrumentality when He went up from their midst on the Mount of Olives (John xvi. 16-22; Acts i. 11).

W. J. L.

*(To be continued.)*

## Holiness.

### *The Substance of Actual Conversations, in Familiar Dialogue.*

*F.*: Thank you for the little book you sent me. It is very good and I should think scriptural, but I cannot say I understand it all. I have lent it to a friend whose whole teaching is on the greater salvation.

*R.*: What is the greater salvation? Scripture speaks of the "so great salvation, which at the first was spoken by the Lord"; is there anything greater than that?

*F.*: Well, I have read that too, but what I am anxious about is to know whether there is not something better than the experience of most Christians one meets with—and indeed my own is not at all what I should like it to be; but my friend speaks of the constant deliverance from sin—the perfect liberty of the children of God, and other blessings: and these people seem to me to have something I have not got.

*R.*: I am only too pleased to find you are interested in such a subject, and I quite agree that the general experience of Christians is below their privileges; the question of holiness, or sanctification, is certainly one of the most important things a Christian could be

exercised about, for, does not the Word say, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," and, "Be ye holy, for I am holy"?

*F.*: Just so, and that is why I want to know the secret of this higher life. Sometimes I hope that the blessing is mine, but I have not been able to maintain that blessed state; and such is poor human nature, I am soon back again in the old state, and sometimes even doubt if I am a child of God at all.

*R.*: Then, if you will not mind my saying so, I think the difficulty must be reached another way; and I should like to ask you a definite question, "Have you peace with God"?—are you resting in the knowledge of acceptance in Christ?

*F.*: Well, I know the Lord Jesus is my Saviour, and I do trust in Him for all eternity; but, when we have passed from death unto life, and have become new creatures, what becomes of the divine nature in us if we have to be always trying to keep the old nature down, and have no power for victory?

*R.*: I think I see your difficulty, and, if I am not mistaken, it arises from mixing up two things that must not be confused, if we are to have the joy of salvation. I mean, the work of Christ *for us*, and the work of the Holy Spirit *in us*. Peace and joy, although closely connected, are very different things; and my *peace* may be said to be the foundation on which my joy is built. The question of holiness opens up rather a different line of truth; but so much has been said about it of late years amongst Christians, that it is very important to be clear about it.

*F.*: But my difficulty is that I seem to get no better: if, for a short time, I have a season of joy; I feel that the old nature within me is still unchanged, for, when temptations come, I am soon just as I was before.

*R.*: I see then, you expect the nature within you—the old man—to improve; and if, by some means, its activities were quieted, you would be comforted by the thought that you had attained to a better state. Is that so?

*F.*: Well, I don't leave out the Spirit of course, because I understand that the sealing of the Spirit gives power over sin, and liberty, to which I am altogether a stranger. Does not the Bible say, "After ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise"—and therefore we should seek that further blessing.

*R.*: It is true that the 13th verse of Ephesians i. does read like that, but it does not mean what has been taught from it; that an interval necessarily takes place between believing and sealing. Competent scholars tell us that the more correct rendering of the passage is, "upon believing, ye were sealed," and I think you will find that, in scripture, sealing of the Spirit is always connected with faith in the gospel of our salvation. As to Acts xix. 1-5, where we read of some who had not received the Holy Ghost, having only heard of John's baptism: it is true that persons may be awakened, and quickened by the Word of God without having peace; but I do not think any souls could be found *now* exactly like those twelve disciples at Ephesus, since the full gospel of the grace of God, telling of remission of sins through a dead and risen Christ, has been preached.

*F.*: I am glad to get your explanation; but, if all who believe *now* receive the Spirit, why are not all equally happy and consecrated? I have always thought that, after believing, the work of the Spirit commences.

*R.*: There is a certain amount of truth in that thought; but the whole bearing of those teachings

which you have been hearing and reading seem to quite ignore the fact that it is the Lord Jesus who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. This is expressly declared in John i., and other scriptures, to be one of the proofs of His Deity; and, as announced by Peter on the day of Pentecost, "having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, *He* has poured forth this which ye see and hear" (Acts ii. 33, R.V.).

*F.*: But you were going to say something more about holiness. I am very anxious to have that cleared up. And you were about to tell me why you did not agree with what I said as to the need of full surrender.

*R.*: Let us go direct to the Word of God. There we shall find that holiness, or sanctification, is almost invariably applied to God's work in setting apart believers in Christ to Himself. Look at Romans i., "To all that be in Rome . . . called to be saints"—holy ones; again, in Corinthians i., "To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus"; so also, "To the saints which are in Ephesus"; "To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi"; "To the saints which are at Colosse"; and, to the Thessalonians, "Unto all the *holy* brethren." There is no thought of attainment, or a special class, in any of these scriptures. It is the description of persons set apart to God, from the beginning of His work in their souls as Christians. There is no allusion whatever to the idea that has become connected with the word "saint," through erroneous teaching, borrowed mainly from Romanism. In 1 Corinthians vi. 11, sanctification is put before justification—for a special reason, no doubt; but it plainly shows, as all other scriptures do, that sanctification is in no way limited to that progressive work of holiness which goes on in the soul after we are justified. God forbid that anyone should object to practical holiness in our walk and ways—for holiness

is that which should characterise the Christian—but I see constantly the harm that is done by occupying souls with the work of the Spirit *in* them, instead of with the work and the person of Christ; which it is ever the blessed office of the Holy Ghost to minister to us. I believe that the “Sanctification of the Spirit” embraces the whole setting apart of the soul to God; from the beginning, when He uses the word to awaken us, right on to the end, when He leads in the cry, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.”

Now, just a word about surrendering to the Spirit. Let me try, by a simple illustration, to explain what I think yielding to the Spirit is. If I came to visit you in a part of the country to which I was an entire stranger, you would, doubtless, like to give me an idea of the beauty and surroundings of the locality. The morning after my arrival, you say to me, “Now, where shall we go—what would you like most to see?” I reply, “It is all new to me, I leave myself entirely in your hands, to lead me wherever you think best.” This is, I think, a simple illustration of the truth as to the Spirit’s guidance of the Christian. *He* takes possession: *we* yield ourselves to Him—“His servants ye are to whom ye obey,” “If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under law,” “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

All these scriptures speak of the same thing, and give us, surely, the true meaning of consecration—call it “surrender,” if you will; but remember that, first of all, we must be the Lord’s; “Sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ, and called” (Jude i. 1). When the apostle addresses the Hebrews, in chapter iii., as “Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,” he is speaking to them *all*, not to a special class amongst them; and again, when we read, “perfected for ever

them that are sanctified," it is not as singling out *some* amongst the whole. Indeed, the same thing is true *now*, in Christianity, as to places and things—there are no holy places now on the earth; no sacred things in God's sight. The presence of the Lord, in spirit, makes the house of God: and no sanctity whatever attaches to it in God's sight, when the saints are not there with the Lord in the midst.

I hope shortly to have an opportunity of conversation on other subjects, if the Lord will.

T. R.

### Revivals.

“**O** LORD, send a revival and begin with me”—a card bearing these words was printed and circulated by someone not very long ago; they are very good so far as they go. Many Christians earnestly desire a revival; and we can truly say with the prophet, “O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years.” A revival is much needed at the present time, because, though there is a work of God's grace going on in some places, yet there is, as a rule, much coldness, deadness, and formality. Indeed, the word which best describes the general state of things is—*Indifference*.

We think it would be profitable to look at what chiefly marked some of the revivals in scripture, so that we may learn from them those principles which would be practical help to ourselves. In Judges vi.-viii., we have the history of one of these revivals—it came at a time when things were at a very low ebb in Israel: they had done evil in the sight of the Lord, and He had delivered them into the hand of Midian. In the bitterness of their distress they “cried unto the Lord”; this was the first thing. There cannot be a real revival



unless those interested in the things of God are conscious of the need of one; and, feeling the need, take their place before God in the attitude of prayer.

Then the Lord raised up a deliverer: He sent His angel to Gideon as he was threshing wheat stealthily to hide it from the Midianites. And the Lord said to him, "Go in this thy might . . . have not I sent thee?" Mark these last words, because this is everything; if we have God's command and His presence with us, we may go forward in simple faith and reliance upon Him. Gideon felt his own nothingness and weakness; his family was but poor, and he was the least in his father's house; but this was no hindrance with God, it was, in fact, just the very reason why God could use him in His service. If we think we are strong, we are sure to go down before the power of the enemy; we have to learn that true strength in God's work is realised only in conscious weakness and dependence—"when I am weak, then am I strong."

The next thing we find is, that God tells Gideon to throw down the altar of Baal which his father had built, to cut down the grove which was by it, and to build an altar to the Lord. Thus it must ever be—every true revival commences *within*, amongst the people of God. It would be no use to attempt to do battle with the Midianites outside, while Baal had his place within. We cannot serve two masters, Christ and mammon; and those things which are incompatible with God's presence, whether individually or collectively, must be put away, before He can use and bless us in our service for Him. This may cost us something, as it did Gideon—for the men of that place wanted to slay him—but *God* was with Him and thus deliverance was assured. Then "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon," and he blew a trumpet and gathered the

people together. Mark, it was the Spirit of the Lord who wrought, using Gideon as His instrument. And is it not so in every genuine revival? Human machinery and human devices will never do, we cannot get up revivals by these means; what is real and lasting must be the work of God, of the Holy Spirit. But Gideon must be put to the test still further, in order that he may learn his need of entire dependence on God. To all appearance an army of 32,000 men would be a valuable asset to one going to do battle with a powerful enemy; but God would not allow this, "lest," as He says, "Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, mine own hand hath saved me." Alas, the flesh is ever ready to take the credit to itself and boast of something, and God would have us constantly to remember that "the flesh profiteth nothing." After 22,000 men had returned home, God said, "The people are yet too many"; therefore they must be put to another test—they are brought down to the water, where only those that lapped (300 men) are retained. But it is blessed to see in all this history, the way in which God so graciously sustains the faith of Gideon, and encourages him. First He gives him the sign of the fleece, which was wet with the dew while the ground around was dry, and *vice versa*; and then He allows him to know what was passing in the camp of Midian, and the state of fear produced amongst them by His interposition. Ah, He knows how wavering our faith is at times; but if the heart is true and loyal to Christ, He knows how to encourage His people in their conflicts and trials in connection with His service.

Gideon then goes down to the battle; but, in what would seem to unbelief, and to merely human judgment, a foolish way. He divided the 300 men into three companies and put a trumpet in every man's hand,

with empty pitchers, and lamps in the pitchers. Not a sword was seen anywhere, though the battle-cry was, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." Is it not just what the apostle says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God"? Not one sword was drawn, nor one arrow shot from the bow of an Israelite: there was simply the *testimony* given by the blast of the trumpet, and the *light* shining out from the broken pitcher. Oh for more complete dependence on God and His strength in every effort put forth in His service! The result here was that God came in in a most remarkable manner, "*the Lord* set every man's sword against his fellow," &c., and discomfited the enemy.

We are far too much disposed to look to great things and great men, and to think that if we have not these, nothing can be done; but God uses that which seems to man feeble and despised, in order that no flesh should glory in His presence. Sometimes one finds Christians cast down because of the dead state of things in the locality where they live; but, if only those who feel this, be they even a few, would come together in earnest prayer to God, what blessing might be the result!

Then the men of Ephraim came up, after God had given deliverance from the enemy, complaining that they were not called by Gideon at the first, and they did chide him sharply. It may be that if they had been called they would not have come; but, in any case, Gideon answered them well—he said, "What have I done now in comparison of you?" Being in the presence of God he could afford to show a spirit of grace and not to seek credit for himself. It was as much as to say—God has given the victory, you may take all the credit of it if you wish. It is, indeed, easy to criticise and complain; and those who do so most

are often not very earnest themselves. But let not the simple earnest Christian be discouraged by these things: to his own master each of us must stand or fall, and if he has the *Lord's* approval, *this* is what he should desire, and this is sufficient. However, the anger of Ephraim was abated when Gideon said, "What was I able to do in comparison to you?" the fact was *God* had done all, though He used Gideon as His instrument.

What we want is more of that earnest, persevering energy of faith, which goes forward in simple dependence upon God; more separation from everything which would hinder His being free to use us in His service; and more true, earnest, believing prayer that God may graciously come in, blessing His word by the power of the Holy Ghost, reviving His work, and granting seasons of refreshing amongst His people, as well as a rich harvest, to His own glory, amongst the unsaved around.

*(To be continued.)*

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*A Good Ordination.*—An aged Christian, who has been preaching the Gospel in the open air for many years in one of our large cities, once spoke as follows:—"I have not been to college, to Cambridge or Glasgow, or Edinburgh or Dublin Universities, but I have sat at the feet of Jesus, the same place as Mary was in; and He has so filled my soul that my heart overflows with His love."

The magnet always turns towards the pole; the needle always trembles a little when the storm and tempest roar, but its direction changes not;—the needle of the Christian heart points always towards Christ.

## Gleanings.

**N**OT only has Christ borne away our sins, cleansed us from all defilement, and made us fit for the presence of God, but, in order that we may enjoy this blessed reality, He has gained for us, at the same time, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Not only do we, when being born again, receive a new nature, which is holy and capable of sentiments suitable to the position in which grace has placed us before God, but we receive the Holy Spirit, who shows, and reveals, and communicates to us divine things, and inspires sentiments such as these divine things should awaken. We are strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man, in order that, being rooted and grounded in love, Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and that we may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. iii. 16-19). The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us (Rom. v. 5). He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us; and all that the Father hath is Christ's (John xvi. 15; xvii. 10). That which eye hath not seen, which ear hath not heard, which came not into the heart of man—the things which God has prepared for him whom He loves—God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.

The Holy Spirit, then, gives us, first of all, the assurance of our redemption. Where the Spirit is, there is liberty. He reveals to us the glory of Christ as presented in the Scriptures, as He once did to

Stephen, who, full of the Holy Ghost, beheld the glory of God, and the Son of man at the right hand of God. Moreover, He gives us the consciousness of our union with Christ on high. We know that we are quickened together with Him, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. Besides all this, He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts—the spring and fountain of joy to ourselves, of pity towards this poor world, and of love to all the family of God.

Again, if Christ is the Head of the body, each Christian is a member of it, and consequently united by the Holy Spirit, who forms the bond of the whole in every other member. The same Spirit dwells in each Christian; his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. vi. 19). And believers, being quickened and united together, they, *as a whole*, are also His temple (1 Cor. iii. 16).

J. N. D.

### “Abba, Father.”

THIS title is found three times in the New Testament. “Abba” is, as the dictionaries inform us, the Chaldee form for “Father”; and the title “Abba, Father” is said to be more emphatic than the simple word “Father.”

The first place where it occurs is in the words addressed by the divine Saviour to the Father in the garden of Gethsemane: “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me” (Mark xiv. 36). Looking forward to the cross, and feeling in His own soul all the depths of what that cup was, as He alone knew them, He prayed three times that it might be removed. His communion with the Father was perfect, in the full and blessed consciousness of the relationship expressed in those words

“Abba, Father.” But His obedience and submission to the Father’s will was perfect also, and He adds, “nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt.”

In the two other places where the words occur (Rom. viii. 15 and Gal. iv. 6), they are connected with the blessed place and relationship into which the believer is brought through God’s infinite grace. This new relationship was first declared by the Lord Himself from the resurrection side of the empty grave, when He sent the message by Mary: “Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.” It was not now God revealed as the “Most High,” the Almighty Protector of the patriarchs in the land of Canaan, nor was it God making Himself known as “Jehovah,” the One who would surely fulfil the promises to Israel; but it was that new and intimate relationship of Father, of which the risen Lord here spoke.

Now the great point brought out in Christianity is, that the Father has been revealed by *the Son*; this was one of the first things lost sight of by the Christians of the early centuries. That revelation could not be made before Christ had died and risen and the Holy Ghost had come down; but *now* God has sent forth the Spirit of *His Son* into the heart of the believer, crying, “Abba, Father.” Many souls around us have felt needs, and some try to meet them by the hollow outward forms of Ritualism, instead of by the knowledge of Christ, who is the *way* to the Father, the *truth* about the Father, and the *life* which is the expression of that known relationship, in which He Himself walked, and in which it is our privilege to walk also.

We may state the great essential truths of Chris-

tianity, as contrasted with Judaism and all that went before it, as follows: (1) The revelation of the *Father* by the Son. (2) The Son of man in heaven, Head of His "Body," the Church. (3) The Holy Ghost on earth, witness to Christ who is the Head in heaven. (4) The coming of Christ into the air to raise or change all the saints into His image, which is the proper and proximate hope of the Church.

Now, it is God's special purpose and desire for His people that they should know and enjoy this relationship into which they are brought; and for this express purpose He has given the Spirit to all who believe: "because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Thus the Christian is to walk through the world daily, every day and all day long, at his work or wherever he may be, in the happy consciousness of this blessed place which grace has made his through Christ. Why should a doubt or misgiving as to it ever come to cloud the vision of the simplest believer? The apostle John wrote to the "little children" in the faith—those "babes" as the word really means—because they had known the Father (1 John ii. 13). This was not an attainment of some advanced Christians of riper years; it was the common portion of even the babes in Christ. It is true that these little ones might not have much knowledge of the wealth and extent of the inheritance which God had given them, nor perhaps much experience of God's ways and dealings with His people; but they could look up, by simple faith, into the Father's face, and say, "Abba, Father." This was their blessed privilege, and it should be their enjoyed portion.

Then, we must remember, that all our responsibilities flow from the place and relationship in which God has set us. This is so in the things of this world also, for



a child in the royal family of the king is responsible to conduct himself in a way becoming the position in which he is placed. If, in the marvellous grace of God, we are made "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," we are responsible to act as such, to walk in a manner becoming children; to walk worthy of God, who has called us unto His kingdom and glory.

### The "Wretched Man" and His Deliverance.

THE interest that centres in the seventh chapter of Romans, and the exercises therein described, are very generally admitted, and may be explained to some extent, perhaps, by the comparatively few accounts of such soul exercise given in the New Testament, while the Old abounds in them. But, doubtless, the main reason lies much deeper, and must be found in the fact that, in part, if not altogether, it describes exercises through which most Christians pass, in a greater or less degree, when awakened by the impulses of the new nature to the reality of the claims of God in the law; and when they are still ignorant of the true character of the deliverance wrought out for all believers in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Many have been the opinions and theories put forward as to whom the apostle is here describing—"himself or some other man"; and a recently issued book by a well-known Christian writer controverts the generally received explanation, and contends for the opinion that it is not the apostle's own experience, but that of a "conscientious unconverted Jew fully instructed in the law," which is described so vividly in the well-known verses of the latter part of Romans vii.

The importance of the subject is our sufficient reason for seeking, in these pages, to gather from the Word of

God itself some light as to this ; because, if the author referred to be correct in his opinion, it alters altogether our relation as Gentiles to this important scripture. We can learn from it certainly, as written for our admonition ; but it affects entirely its voice to *us*, if that interpretation of the chapter be the correct one ; bearing in mind also, as of paramount importance, that, whether Paul's own experience or not, it is equally inspired ; and it is by the Spirit of God that he gives this teaching to the Roman Christians, and to us through them. If led of the Spirit to describe his own experience at some early stage of his soul's history after his conversion, we can imagine no better words which he would be led to use than those he has used ; but, remembering what he says in 1 Corinthians iv. 6, we need not contend that it must *necessarily* be his own personal experience, because it might, doubtless, be "in a figure transferred to himself, for your sakes." Still in writing as he does, he speaks as of himself ; and in plain direct terms he describes the unhappy condition of one when powerless to do the good he willed to do, or to escape the captivity to the law of sin which was in his members.

We cannot conceive an unconverted Jew, however law-abiding, arriving at the conclusion of verse 17, for instance, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" ; or, even more so, that of verse 18, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." And, would such a one be likely to say, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man," before the difference as to that *inward* and *outward* man had been made known to him by the new birth ? All this, however, is in the latter part of the chapter more particularly ; but the first part is equally important. In the first four verses, the apostle uses the

well-understood relationship of marriage to explain the marvellous fact that the death of Christ dissolves the tie by which believers under the law were once held in order that they may be united to Christ risen, and bear fruit to God; which, under the law, they did not and could not do.

The teaching here is, clearly, that the law stood in the relation of husband to a man under it (having rule over him as a husband over a wife); and that, just as the death of the husband sets a wife free to be married to another, so the believer had been made dead to the law by the body of Christ, who went into death for *sin*, as well as to bear our *sins*. It is not the law that is dead, or has died, either in this chapter or the sixth. In the latter the apostle thanks God that the Roman Christians had obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered to them. What doctrine was that? Why, the precious and important truth so rarely heard, and certainly rarely delivered to Christians now; that they had died *with* Christ, as well as that Christ had died *for* them. The answer to "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" is not—how could we do such things, as the law so clearly condemns?—but, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" "Thou shalt not," is no longer the guiding rule of a believer's life; but "how shall we." Death, the death of Christ, has delivered us from bondage—the servitude of sin; for, by death, not only is it true that "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest," but there also, "the servant is free from his master" (Job. iii. 17-19). This is what is meant by "being made free from sin" (Rom. vi. 22.), or, as a better translation gives it, "but now having got your freedom from sin." The result of the death of Christ—the answer to "death hath no more dominion

over Him"—is, that "sin shall not have dominion over you."

Observe that there is no reference or allusion to any state where it can be said that we have no longer sin dwelling in us; but that, in the cross of our precious Saviour and substitute, our old man has been crucified (Rom. vi. 6). If it were *actually* dead, there would be no occasion for the exhortation, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God *in* Jesus Christ our Lord" (ver. 11).

Let us take an illustration in order to enable those young in the faith to grasp the meaning of this, and perhaps we may get help by it as to the much-debated questions in chapter vii. If I take a tub of water and put a piece of wood in it, the wood will float on the surface—it is its nature so to do; and if I press it down to the bottom of the tub it will rise to the surface again immediately I take off my hand. It is evident that I may go on with this exercise for any length of time. But now let us tie a lump of lead to the wood, and it will remain at the bottom. Its natural qualities have not been altered, but, weighted with the lead, it is held at the bottom of the tub. So with our old nature—the flesh; weighted with the heavy sentence of death, it is sunk and powerless, as long as we, by faith, accept what God has done, and *reckon* ourselves "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God."

Both are alike the reckoning of faith—we believe from the heart the teaching delivered to us—and not the results of our experience. Someone may say, "How can you have died to sin, when you are still alive and have the old nature still in you?" Am I to argue thus from my experience or feelings? Not at all—my experience often belies the fact, but *God* says "ye are dead"; He has weighted my evil nature with the heavy

sentence of death, and sunk it to the bottom in the grave of Christ. My part is to accept thankfully what *He has done*, by reckoning it so in daily practice.—T. R.  
(*To be continued.*)

## The Morning Star.

(*Introduction continued.*)

**I**T is well to bear in mind, in reading the Old Testament, that its primary intention was to reach the consciences of those to whom it was first delivered, so that they might walk with God by faith in His written Word, and not by their own estimate of passing events.

At the same time, prophetic announcements were, as Peter says, “not of any private interpretation”; that is, they were by no means confined to instruction adapted to the particular circumstances which gave rise to them. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” and had, by diligent inquiry, to learn that the Spirit was testifying to Christ, and consequently to future events which reached far beyond anything that their actual knowledge of God’s plans and purposes could enable them to grasp (1 Pet. i. 9-12; 2 Pet. i. 20-21). Daniel himself “fainted and was sick certain days,” and had to record that “none understood” the vision that was shown to him (Dan. vii. 28; viii. 27).

All predictions of that which was to take place were necessarily partial, though sufficient to accomplish their object; not by flattering the intelligence, but appealing to the conscience of those who heard them. *We* have the advantage of beginning at the point to which the Old Testament saints looked forward, namely, the sufferings of Christ, which were needed to accomplish

redemption. They could celebrate the blessedness of forgiveness as the only possible ground of walking happily with God, but none of them could point to the finished work of the Redeemer as their own start in a new life, to which they could look back. Whereas we, having the cross before our souls, can now enjoy to the full the divinely-given expressions of the blessedness that flows from it (Ps. xxxii. 1-2; cxxx. 3-6; Rom. iv. 3-8).

Faith is now, as it ever was, the only principle for a walk that is pleasing to God, such as Enoch's. And faith is formed and nourished by revealed truth. The principle is the same for all time (Heb. vi. 17-20; xi. 4-6). But at any given moment of the world's history, only so much of the truth could be really made use of as had a direct bearing upon the circumstances of the time being. By this means true exercise of conscience toward God was produced, and the soul was animated by "the hope set before it" (Heb. vi. 11-12).

Abraham, for instance, had promises for this world, but his portion here was to live as a pilgrim and a stranger, while waiting for the things promised. We, knowing accomplished redemption, have other promises, heavenly in their character, for the full realisation of which we wait, though we are already made "partakers of the divine nature," and our calling is "heavenly" in principle (2 Pet. i. 3-4, and 1 Pet. i. 3-5).

The above remarks, though short, will, we trust, suffice to explain why it is that, in the Old Testament writings, the first coming of Christ to this world, and His return in glory to set up His kingdom, are often treated as one single event, both advents being referred to in the same verse. The passage which the Lord read from Isaiah lxi. in the synagogue at Nazareth is

a case in point (Luke iv.)\* His purpose being to show from the Scripture what was the object and character of His ministry in Galilee, He read only so much of it as referred to His first coming, and "closed the book" in the middle of the second verse, when He came to words which spoke of a future "day of vengeance."

Elsewhere, as for instance in the latter halves of Psalms xiv. and liii., we do find indications of *two* "comings," the first in grace and suffering, the second in judgment. But, as a rule, there was no need to speak more definitely at the time when these Scriptures were written, their essential object being to insist upon Messiah's **personal coming** to this earth.

He is the "anointed one" whose throne God was about to set "upon His holy hill of Zion" (Ps. ii. 1-6). His authority must eventually be owned in the place where He was rejected and so suffered for us; † and for His "glorious appearing" every loyal soul, whether he belongs to this Christian dispensation or not, must wait with a longing heart. Paul did so, not expecting his "crown of righteousness" until that day shall come (2 Tim. iv. 6-8; Titus ii. 13).

Nothing is more definite, all through Scripture, than the Lord's *personal* coming to this earth. The first intimation of it on the occasion of Adam's fall and the consequent judgment of the serpent, is given in those striking words, "Thou shalt bruise His *heel*" (Gen. iii. 15). And the closing chapters of the Old Testament remind the faithful among His ancient people (now

\* The adaptation to the day of Pentecost, of Joel's prophecy, is another instance (Joel ii. 28-32; Acts ii. 16-21).

† That the coming manifested glory of the Lord in His kingdom is the appointed counterpart of His sufferings here, is abundantly shown by the accounts of the Transfiguration in the first three gospels. Compare also Luke xxiii. 42-43.

treated as "Lo-ammi," Hosea i. 9; ii. 23), that the Lord whom they seek for shall suddenly come to His temple (Mal. iii. 1). Indeed the returned captives in Zerubabel's time had to be assured that the builder of the only temple that can have a permanent duration must be the Lord \* who will "be a priest upon His throne," true Melchisedek, "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham"; Son of man, and Son of God (Zech. vi. 12-13; Ps. viii. 4; lxxx. 17; cx. 4; Dan. vii.; 1 Chron. xvii. 13-14; Matt. i. 1; Luke iii. 38).

Besides His personal coming into the world, His death is abundantly set forth, not only in type, as by the sacrifices which are everywhere found in the Old Testament from Abel's onwards (see Heb. xi. 4; xii. 24); but also in direct testimony, as in Psalm xvi. 10-11, xxii. 15, cii. 23-24; Isaiah liii.; Daniel ix. 26, &c., &c. And death was to be followed by resurrection. He "showed Himself alive after His passion to the apostles whom He had chosen" during forty days, before He went up in their sight from the Mount of Olives (Luke xxiv. 50-51; Acts i. 2-3, 9-10, 12). And to that spot He must return; His "feet shall stand there" (Zech. xiv. 4). So that in every way Christ's return to this earth is abundantly guaranteed.

The last prophecy of the Old Testament, addressed to those who "fear Jehovah's name," presents the Messiah as "the Sun of righteousness" who "shall arise with healing in His wings." Yet it does not omit the mention of judgment which must also take place at that time, and burn up the wicked (Mal. iv. 1-3; compare Matt. xxv. 31, 46). The coming of Elijah the prophet, to prepare the people for that day, is foretold in the same passage, so that grace might run its course

\* Presented as "the Branch," i.e., the Son of man who should "grow up out of His place" (compare Luke ii. 40, 52).



instead of judgment. But the Lord, in referring to it, showed His disciples that for those who "could receive it," Elijah's mission had been already fulfilled by John the Baptist, who was sent of God to prepare the way of His own Son, by leading the people to repentance (Mal. iii. 1, iv. 1-6; Matt. xi. 10-14; Luke i. 67-79; John i. 6). From this point of view the most important part of Christ's work was already accomplished at His first coming (see Ps. xl. 7-8; John xvii. 4-5), and His present glory with the Father is the answer to it. Indeed, all John's gospel makes the Lord's death exceedingly prominent, for without it no one could ever have part with Him in His glory, nor could He have prepared a place for any in His Father's House (John xii. 24; xiv. 2-3).

He was indeed "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29), but the Baptist, though divinely instructed to point this out, was unable to tell any one of those who came to him that their sins had been forgiven; nor could he at all understand why Jesus should take a place with those who had confessed their sins at the Jordan (Matt. iii. 14). His mission was simply to put God's seal, as it were, by baptism on those who, by their confession, took their place before God as sinners; then he was able to direct their thoughts to "One who was to come after," and who alone could baptize them with the Holy Ghost (Mark i. 1-8). For that, however, it was needful that Jesus should, in the first place, ascend to heaven (Mark xvi. 19; John xvi. 7; Acts i. 4, 5; ii. 1-4, 33). The Lord hinted that to Nicodemus when He intimated to him that He had "heavenly things" to communicate; and He could not speak to him of eternal life, until He had first shown the necessity of His being "lifted up" upon the cross (John iii. 12-15, viii. 28; xii. 31-33).

His *death* opened up the way to glory "above," in the Father's house, not to Jews only, but to Gentiles—both being included in the words "all" and "whosoever." The "other sheep" were Gentiles (John x. 14-16).

Henceforward every hope, whether for the enjoyment of the FATHER'S House in company with the SON, or for the accomplishment of the promises made to the fathers by the prophets (Heb. i. 1), depends upon the return to this earth of Him who, in His cross, laid the foundation of every blessing in store for this sin-stricken world. How and when these things are to take place, we have yet to examine.

W. J. L.

(*To be continued.*)

## Tabernacle Furniture—The Ark.

(*Continued.*)

*The Ark crossing the Jordan.*—The ark had now finished its eventful history in its journey through the wilderness. But between the wilderness and Canaan there lay the river Jordan (and it was then at flood-tide)—type of death, of which Satan wielded the power (Heb. ii. 14). According to the command of Joshua, the leader of the people, the ark was to go before them, the Levites bearing it; but there was to be a space of about two thousand cubits between it and the people. They had never passed this way heretofore. Who could pass through death and come out of it in resurrection-life in his own strength or by his own power? No one could. Christ, the true ark, must first go down alone into death and exhaust its power, before His people could follow Him. Peter sought to follow Christ in his own strength; he said, no doubt most sincerely, "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake"; he sought, as

someone has said, to dip his foot in the water of Jordan before the ark went in ; but the Lord's answer foretold his sure failure : " Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake ? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice."

But, when the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, the course of the river was stayed, and the people passed over right against Jericho. Remark that the priests stood firm in the midst of Jordan until everything was finished, and all the people were passed clean over Jordan. Our Lord Jesus had to meet all the terrible power of the enemy ; to pass through the river of death, and that when it was at flood-tide. He had to do it *alone*, for us and for our salvation. All Jehovah's waves and billows passed over Him, and He has accomplished a full and complete atonement. He has, bless His name for it ! dried up the Jordan for His people, so that they can pass over dry-shod ; and we who believe are already risen with Him in the power of His resurrection-life (Col. iii. 1).

*The Ark in the Philistines' country.*—A considerable time had now elapsed since we saw the ark going before the people of God and drying up the Jordan for them—about three hundred years or so. What had taken place during that long period ? Alas, it is the sad history, which so often repeats itself—the history of failure. The people had been settled in the land, in so far as they had driven out the nations of Canaan ; but, in spite of God's mercies in bringing about constant revivals under the judges, they had departed farther and farther away from Him, and sinned against Him. As to the house of Eli the priest, who was personally a pious man, we read that his sons " made themselves vile, and he restrained them not," and this in spite of the warnings given. God sends a message to Eli saying,

“thou honourest thy sons above Me”—solemn words which we do well to take heed to in this our day!

But soon the clouds of judgment gather—the Philistines set themselves in array against Israel, and Israel is smitten before them. Then the suggestion is made: “Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.” Vain delusion! Will Jehovah sanction the making use of His name and authority for deliverance from the enemy, when the moral condition of the people and the state of the heart was not right with Him? Certainly not. He allows the ark to be taken and carried away into the enemy’s country, where it remains seven months, though He shows, even then, that He is supreme over the false gods of the world. The ark is brought into the house of Dagon, and set beside Dagon; but Jehovah maintains His majesty, and Dagon falls on his face and is broken before it. And is there not something answering to this in Christendom to-day? Truly, if we enter some of the chambers in the “great house” of Christendom, where the true God is professedly owned, we shall find them filled with veritable idols, objects worshipped by deluded souls; but God will surely uphold His own glory in the long run, and all the machinations of Satan, by which he deceives his dupes, shall come to the ground under the judgment of God.

*(To be continued.)*

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“The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them,” says the Lord, “that they may be one even as we are one: I in them,” &c. If Christ is in us now the *hope* of glory, He will be in us then the *display* of glory. He will be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe.

## The Prevailing Unrest.

THOUGH the Christian's path lies entirely outside the politics of this world, yet we cannot rightly be indifferent as to what is happening around us. It would, it is true, be a mistake to allow ourselves to be unduly swayed in our judgment of passing events by what appears to *us*, in our day, to be a great upheaval in society. There have been, as every student of history knows, many great upheavals, and even revolutions, in the past, and the course of things in the world has quieted down again into a settled and orderly state. But what is of importance is, to discern the underlying principles which are, and have been, at work, and which cause the present unrest—we may call it general unrest—both in the social and religious spheres of life. No doubt, the advance of Socialism and Infidelity (the latter, in some of its phases, still maintaining the outward Christian form) has contributed largely to a loosening of the old ties, and to make men restless under authority—which, in part at least, accounts for the large and highly organised bodies, intended to control the labour world, and to insist on their rights. It is quite true that there have been, and doubtless there still are, wrongs on both sides; but we are now only considering the general features of the times.

It has been increasingly the tendency of more recent times to put power into the hands of the democracy, and thus man's *will*, which is restless under restraint, is given a larger scope than ever, and is all the more difficult to control; but, while aiming at greater liberty, in the long run it works itself round to less liberty for the *individual*, who must conform to the will of the body; and thus it leads to despotism in another form.

The great outstanding feature in it all is this, that it aims at the betterment of man without any reference to God, in fact *God and His Word are left out*. In a word, it is the glorification of *man*, instead of God. This, as we know, is just what will be seen in its full-blown expression in the Antichrist, "the lawless one," who will do "according to his will," and "exalt himself"; and who will cause all, small and great, to bow to his authority, executing summary vengeance on those who refuse.

The following extracts from an article written more than sixty years ago, are of special interest in this connection :—

"It seems to me well that Christians should apprehend what they have to look for, and be prepared for it, if the Lord tarry. . . . But my object is to notice the effect [of putting power into the hands of the democracy] on the state of society. God cares for the poor. But the poor have ceased to be in the scriptural sense of the word. They are masters. The effect on the masses and on the active mind of the country will be infidelity, exalting man. Even popular religious preaching will take this character. It will keep up the name of Christian, but will exalt man in its statements—not Christ—despising government, says the apostle, presumptuous, self-willed, not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Human reason, not God, will be the arbiter of good and evil. What already prevails so largely will be open to a vast party in the country. The will of the people, confidence in man, his rights, his general perfectibility, will be the banner of all this class. The aristocracy, on the contrary, having lost power will seek to compensate themselves (vexed and dissatisfied in heart) by luxury and pleasure. To maintain quiet (principle having gone in both classes), and some influence—some barrier against the strong will of the people, they will rapidly seek to increase the influence of the clergy—the only one remaining over those that constitute the bulk of those around. . . . The disruption that is taking place is a disruption into infidel radicalism or popular will,

and Popery in the aristocracy and in all that they can bring under its influence, as a check upon that will. I have no doubt that God will keep every faithful soul, and maintain every needed testimony; but it is well that Christians should know what is before them, as time goes on more rapidly, perhaps, than we are aware.

“I do not look for violence, because I believe there is no courage anywhere to resist the course of events. I do not pretend to say how long it may take to bring these things about. God knows, and God holds the reins or looses them; but I have no doubt as to what is coming on. The Christian may walk in peace through it all, waiting for God’s Son from heaven, and keeping the word of His patience; yea, he may have a specially blessed place of testimony in the midst of it all, but a lowly one, content to be nothing in a world which has rejected Christ and is ripening for His judgment. Our part is to *keep His word* and not deny His name.”

J. N. D.

### “The Highways and Hedges.”

“GO out quickly,” said the master to the servant in the parable; first into the streets and lanes of the city, and then into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. “Go out”—to reach the people we must go to them—and there is no time to be lost, it is to be done “quickly.” Now it seems evident that one of the best ways of doing this, and of presenting the blessed truths of the gospel to sinners is by open-air preaching, and it is quite a scriptural way. Our Lord Himself spoke most of His discourses—at least those which were intended for the multitudes who thronged around Him—in the open air. The Apostle Paul disputed in the market daily with those who met with him, and he stood on Mars’ Hill and preached that remarkable discourse which was blessed to several souls. Philip, the evangelist, preached Christ to the people of Samaria (where

also the Lord had spoken to the woman at Sychar's well) with much blessing, probably in the open air; and he was sent specially to speak to the Ethiopian eunuch in "the desert." Doubtless much of the work in those early days, when the Spirit wrought with such marvellous power, was done in the open air. So also, coming to our own times, much of the blessing which took place at the great revival in the North of Ireland accompanied the preaching of the gospel and testimony given in the open air.

The importance of the subject is our sufficient warrant for calling attention to it. Is it not a fact that many, many around us are going on, as fast as time can carry them, to eternity—an eternity to be spent, if they should die unsaved, in "the lake of fire." This is not overdrawing the picture: we state *facts*—solemn facts, it is true—but facts, to which Scripture bears ample testimony. Do these facts weigh upon our hearts and our souls as they should, and lead us to earnestly seek the blessing and conversion of the unsaved?

It is true that there are discouragements to be met with and difficulties to be overcome in open-air preaching, as in every other service we may undertake for God's glory: but then *He* is above all difficulties, so that we may take courage. Who that has tried this kind of work has not been discouraged by the blank indifference of many, the opposition of some, and the scoffs of others? But there is an unfailing resource in prayer. Oh for more earnest, believing, persevering prayer! It is so easy to become lethargic and indifferent, to love our own ease, or to get into a mere rut; instead of going to new places and seeking out new souls. It is comparatively easy for anyone who has a gift for speaking, to address a congregation made ready for them (and it is a very good thing in its place, we should be sorry to say one



word against it); but are there not numbers of towns and villages in our land; little evangelised, and where much spiritual darkness exists?

We need prayer for guidance where to go, for the faith and courage to speak as if we really mean what we say, and feel the weight of eternal things; prayer that God may bring the right people to hear, and bring home the word to the heart and conscience by the power of the Holy Spirit. Eternity is coming rapidly upon us, the night of judgment for this world is coming; will not all who read these lines join to pray earnestly that God will graciously revive His work in the glorious message of the gospel. Let us be in earnest. Men are in earnest in the pursuit of wealth, or pleasure, or fame; is the Christian to be less in earnest as to the eternal destiny of souls? Doubtless many could profitably use some of their spare time in visiting in the towns and villages, distributing tracts, and announcing open-air meetings to be held at some suitable time and place. And those who cannot go themselves or who are not gifted for this work, could happily spend some time in prayer for God's blessing on the message. May He graciously awaken fresh interest in the work of carrying the blessed message of life to the unsaved; whether in the open air, or in cottages or houses, or by books and tracts, or however it may be done!

## The Morning Star.

### CHRIST OUR HOPE.

**I**N our introductory remarks, our thoughts have been chiefly occupied with some of the prophetic announcements of the personal coming of our blessed Lord to this earth. We may say that this is the central truth of the Old Testament from Genesis

to Malachi; and well it is for our souls, if it has an abiding and increasing place in our hearts. None of God's purposes of grace towards fallen man could possibly have their accomplishment without it. Promises and types all converge around that one blessed truth. The New Testament unfolds what was foretold in the ancient Scriptures: it opens with the account of Christ's first coming, and closes with the assurance of His speedy return.

Now this hope can only be kept alive and operative in our hearts through the power of the Holy Ghost, by means of the Scriptures (John xvi. 13, 14). The Christian is thus enabled to walk here below in a way that pleases the Lord, "being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. i. 5, 10, 27, iii. 4).

The first portion of the New Testament that was written was directed to the Thessalonians, shortly after the apostle's visit to that city. It speaks in every chapter of the Lord's coming. Paul only had the opportunity of preaching to them on three successive sabbath days, before he was driven away by persecution raised against him and his companion, Silas; but the effect of his preaching was so marked, that all the people in the country round, even as far as Greece, were informed of it; and the report which rapidly spread abroad, testified as to its extraordinary results on those who had "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven" (Acts xvii. 1-5; 1 Thess. i. 5-10).

The method adopted by the apostle in his preaching is clearly indicated in Acts xvii. 1-3. In the synagogues he found copies of the Law and the Prophets, which served his purpose; consequently he sought out the synagogues, and proved to the Jews, by their own

Scriptures, that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the "Christ" to which they bore witness. He it was who had suffered, as it had been foretold, and was risen again from the dead. Numbers believed the message; and in spite of the afflictions that awaited them, they were filled with the joy of the Holy Ghost.

It will be of the deepest interest for us now to trace out briefly in the inspired record, the way in which "the decree," which the Lord Himself was to declare, according to Psalm ii. 7, was eventually carried out.

It is, so to speak, from the earth, sanctified, as never before, by His blessed presence, that He does so; and, according to the terms of the prophecy, in connection with God's settled purpose then and there expressed, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." God would "set His King" there, in defiance of all the lawlessness which seeks to set aside and tread under foot every vestige of His authority. He finds delight in His Son alone; and the Son, as born into a world alienated from God, says, "I will declare the decree, the LORD hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee; ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession."

That prayer has not yet gone up to God. Just before leaving His disciples to go to the cross, He poured out His heart to the Father, and, in commending to Him all His redeemed whom He owned as the Father's gift to Him, He said, "I pray for them; I *pray not for the world*, but for them which Thou hast given Me. for they are Thine" (John xvii. 9). *Judgment* must be the portion of the world when the Lord returns, as we have already seen; but in the meantime, we learn the riches of God's *grace* set forth in His love to the Son of His own bosom. Jesus would have His disciples

know it; and how deep and full are the words which express it; "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love" (John xv. 9).

This is our blessed portion now. In perfect accordance with it, we find God working in His own way to carry out the promise He made to Abraham. Heavenly indeed was the promise in its character; but in order that it might be so for sinners, strangers to grace, it had to be carried out, in its most important features, *on this earth*, where alone the antitype of Abraham's offering of Isaac could take place. Isaac bound and laid upon the altar, became a vivid type of Christ upon the cross; when he was replaced by the ram provided as his substitute, God gave Abraham the wondrous promise, "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xxii. 18; Gal. iii. 16). The seed, says the apostle, was Christ. The promise itself was of such importance that it was repeated both to Isaac and Jacob (Gen. xxvi. 4, xxviii. 14). And surely it was to this that Jesus referred, when He said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John viii. 56).

Our minds turn instinctively to the *earth*, when we think of "the woman's *seed*," who was to bruise the serpent's head. In doing it, His own "heel" must needs be bruised. The word "heel" \* involves a walk on the earth. But we must ever bear in mind that the promise made of God to Abraham, after he had seen Melchisedec, turned his thoughts away from earth to heaven. He had previously heard that the Most High God was possessor of heaven as well as earth, and the contrast was great between thinking of his

\* It is sometimes translated "footsteps," and it is used in connection with the iniquity inseparable from man's walk on earth, in Psalm xlix. 5.

future posterity "as the dust of the earth," and his having now to hear them likened to "the stars of heaven" (compare Gen. xv. 5 with xiii. 15-17). The former had been sufficient to give him courage to deliver Lot; but it needed the visit and the words of Melchisedek in order to keep him from losing the blessing prepared for those who confess that they are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. xi. 13). God was the "God of heaven" as well as of earth, and He would be not only a shield to Abraham, but also his "exceeding great reward." God's estimate of the future seed was to be measured thenceforward according to the glory of His own dwelling-place in heaven, rather than by Abraham's path when walking by the sight of his eyes on earth. For journeying from place to place, Abraham needed the light of *day*, but God's further communication to him was made in the darkness of the *night*, when nothing hindered the manifestation of *heavenly* glory, in the countless stars which testified of God's mighty power and wisdom.

There was at that time no need for any explanation as to how or when God's word was to have its accomplishment; the effect to be produced by it was the faith needed for the walk here. Heavenly aspirations were doubtless produced by the words, "So shall thy seed be"; but the faith that was formed by God's word, and that accepted it, is the faith to which justification is attached (Rom. iv. 3, 5, 9).

As it was for Abraham, so it is for us. Faith, righteousness, grace, and glory all go together, and "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. v. 1, 2, 5). How blessed to know God, in these three displays of His nature, love, glory, and righteousness! But for this to be our portion, Jesus must die, and at His very

entry upon this scene, say, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Ps. xl. 7 ; Heb. x. 4-10).

Faith and hope are intimately connected ; and it has pleased God to illustrate both by Abraham's instructive history, the former more especially in the epistle to the Romans, the latter in that to the Hebrews, where our heavenly calling is so prominent : "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

We can enter somewhat into Abraham's joy, as, in the silence of the night, he gazed upwards on the well-garnished heavens, and all the stars in divine chorus seemed to answer, "So shall thy seed be." The hidden meaning attached to their *shining* was not needful for enjoying them ; it was reserved to the close of the Old Testament canon, after the return of the captives from Babylon to Jerusalem (Dan. xii. 3).

But we must follow the line of revelation. Nearly nine hundred years after God's word to Abraham, those same stars thrilled David's soul ; and he was inspired to write of the glory of the humbled SON OF MAN, now "crowned with glory and honour" (Ps. viii.).

Yet another thousand years, or rather more, had to pass, before an angel brought the heavenly light down amongst the shepherds of Bethlehem, as they kept watch over their flocks by night, to convey to them the wondrous news that the Christ, the Lord, was at length born, that He was a Saviour for them and might be gazed upon in the most humble place of all, a place which, because of their occupation, belonged especially to shepherds. There they saw Him, after they had heard on earth the acclamations of the heavenly host, going up in praises to the Most High God (Luke ii. 8-20).

Shortly after that, on another night, a new "star"—His own—arrested the gaze of Gentiles in the East, and

in that very quarter of the heavens where the sun is accustomed to rise. It was not at that time to usher in an expected day of glory, but to fix their attention on the ONE who was coming and to constrain them to undertake a long and dangerous journey to the West, to see the "little child" who was "born a King" in order to "witness to the truth" (John xviii. 37).

Their inquiries for the King of the Jews in Jerusalem, His royal city, awakened consternation instead of joy. But the Scriptures had indicated Bethlehem as the place of His birth; and when they sallied forth on another night in obedience to Herod's order, "His star" again appeared to direct them to the very house where they found Him. There, in the quiet of the night, they were enabled to worship Him, while laying their treasures at His feet (Matt. i. 11). And they disappeared from the scene, returning to their country another way.

In all these cases, it was not the glory which belongs to Christ's manifested power on earth, which filled the hearts of those that belonged to Him: it was HIMSELF, His own person, who was their all in all. The aged Simeon, directed by the Holy Ghost into the temple at the critical moment, is another affecting example. He had long "waited for the consolation of Israel"; but when he took the little child into his arms, he was led to see in Him "God's salvation," and as to himself, in abounding joy, he could say, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace" (Luke ii. 29, 30). Christ was far more to him than all the glory to which an Israelite could look forward.

Such is our present portion, while waiting for His return. It is the same for saints still living, as for those who are called to rest before seeing the Lord. The great apostle of the Gentiles was enabled, in view of death, to say, "To depart and to be with Christ is

far better,"—better even than serving Him here below, and participating in His sufferings in a scene which cast Him out. The "night" is still running its course, but believers are "children of the day"; and their aspirations and hopes are formed and maintained by Him who, not only prepared and sent His star on a fitting occasion, but who is Himself, for our hearts, "the bright and morning Star." That truth carries our hearts away from earth to heaven, centering them in our coming Lord.

W. J. L.

*(To be continued.)*

## The "Wretched Man" and His Deliverance.

*(Continued.)*

**M**ANY are the expedients resorted to in order to attain what people call "freedom from sin," and often very delusive and unscriptural are the teachings advanced on this important subject; because few, indeed, are simple enough to accept the *full* results of the death of Christ for us. On the other hand, many give up the struggle in a sort of despair of improvement, and virtually yield the victory to the enemy with the remark: "Well, the flesh is still in us, and we cannot help it." Should this be so? How do we know and enjoy the forgiveness of sins?—how have we peace with God, or any other of the many blessings peculiar to Christianity? Is it not by faith in the person and work of Christ? And here are two added blessings, linked together by the Spirit in God's Word, and secured for us by the same finished work of our blessed Saviour; namely, that we are "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God *in* Christ." How do we get to be in Christ? Is it by some great act of faith?—is it an elevated place of blessing to be reached only



by some superlative effort of faith, and therefore attained only by a few? Nay, that is not the doctrine delivered to the Roman Christians, and by them believed from the heart. They accepted it as the common, enjoyed portion of all who believe; and it is worthy of note that this is the first place in the epistle where we get this expression, *in* Christ Jesus—for so verse 11 should read (not “through”), and it paves the way for the grand opening statement of chapter viii., “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

Why is it not said in that well-known, oft-quoted verse, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that believe”? or, “to them that are justified”? Because though this is true in fact, it is not what the apostle is teaching us; but it summarises the results of what is reasoned out in chapter vi., and tells us that, in addition to that rare casket of blessings opened up for us in chapter v. (justification, peace, access into the favour of God, joy in God, &c., vers. 1-14) there is this *additional* blessing of a *new place*, where—in Christ—condemnation cannot possibly reach us; and where a new rule of life, and a new power to walk in it also are found.

But we have somewhat strayed away from chapter vii. and we may now go back and see if any light and help has been given us wherewith we may see, for what reason we are taken through this valley of humiliation, after treading such lofty heights of blessing in the first part of chapter v.

We have seen for what purpose the simile of marriage is introduced in chapter vii.; and the more we study the whole bearing of it, the clearer the parenthetical character of that chapter becomes. But, if not spoken of acknowledged believers, why should it be said,

“When we *were* in the flesh?” Are unconverted Jews, however law-abiding they may be, not in the flesh?

Another idea most ingeniously argued in the book already referred to, is a fanciful notion that the “marriage” in this chapter is a union between “mind” and “flesh” in the unconverted Jew; and that “the illustration teaches that a mind once wedded to, and bound by law to serve the old corrupt nature, may survive the death of that old nature, and be united with the new man.” We confess we cannot find this in the Scripture, and we think that the writer, with many others, has missed the solution of the difficulty, in not seeing that the conclusion arrived at in the last verse is *after* the soul has been led to look thankfully to the way of deliverance opened by Jesus Christ our Lord. It is, we think, a serious mistake to suppose that the mind of man was not involved in the Fall, equally with his other members; and, in the converted man, it becomes, through grace, one of the members yielded “as instruments of righteousness unto holiness,” when the possessor of the “mind” knows himself to be “alive to God from among the dead.” Does it not say that “the carnal mind is enmity against God”? (Rom. viii. 7); and “even their mind and conscience are defiled”? (Titus i. 15); and that the “Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened”? (Eph. iv. 17, 18). Was it the flesh only, and not the mind in Saul of Tarsus, that made him “breathe out threatenings and slaughter,” when he “*verily thought* he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth”? Was it the mind controlling the flesh, or the flesh under the power of the mind in him; and why do we need the “renewing in the spirit of our mind,” if the mind is

*for* God and opposed to the flesh in the natural man? Surely it is the quickened soul that says, in verse 23 of our chapter, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members"; and the struggles for release from this bondage are over, when the soul looks to the only deliverer, Jesus Christ our Lord; in whose death the victory was gotten for all who, in simple faith, look to Him, not only for forgiveness of sins, but for freedom from the power of sin. It is true that the flesh is still in us, but we are not in it, but in the Spirit. Two things are true and explicitly stated of those who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them—they are "in Christ," and "in the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 1, 9).

If we look at the conflict mentioned in Galatians v. 17, there is no "I" in the verse at all, "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these things are opposed one to the other, that ye should not do the things which ye desire" (new trans.). Where is the man in this verse—the believer? On which side is he? And what do "these things" contend for, if it be not a question of who is to rule the man in whom they are? and the answer is, "but if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under law."

Now here is the whole question, scripturally stated for us in another way, as to who is the ruling partner, and who the subject one; and it distinctly tells us that we cannot be under the law and under the Spirit at the same time. The difference between this and our chapter (Rom. vii.) is easily seen; for in the latter there is no mention of the Spirit at all; and for the simple reason that the man there described has not got the Spirit, although awakened and born again; or he could not have the experiences so strikingly detailed.

What a mercy it is, dear fellow-believer, that although the flesh is in us until the end of our natural life, and is neither improved or subdued, we are not in bondage to it, for "sin shall not have dominion over you." If this does not mean deliverance from the power of indwelling sin, what does it mean? And therefore we no longer excuse ourselves by saying, "I cannot help it, the old nature is still in me"; and so excuse all kinds of failures, until, perhaps, the conscience becomes weakened or hardened as to the true nature of sin: but, owning that there is no need to sin and therefore no excuse for it, yet we read, "If any man sin . . . we confess our sins," and "He (God our Father) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

But beyond this, which we may call the negative side, there is the positive side, so full of blessing for us practically—that the Spirit leads in another line altogether, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death." The former cuts the cords of the old bondage, the latter binds by a new power, a new rule of life, to a new Object—Christ risen and glorified.

Astronomers tell us that if it were possible to hurl a stone beyond the limits of the earth's power of attraction, and to come within the attraction of the moon, the stone would, instead of returning to the earth, fly with increasing velocity towards the moon. The stone would be beyond the influence of the "law of gravitation," so far as this planet is concerned, and would be subject to a law operating from another quarter. So with the believer: the rule of sin and death that once governed him has been broken—annulled in the death of Christ—and he is now governed by another law, the rule of the Spirit of life

in Christ Jesus. Shall we not say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" ?

T. R.

## Tabernacle Furniture—The Ark.

(Continued.)

*The Ark sent to Kirjath-jearim.*—The Philistines suffered severely under God's hand and at length the ark is sent away, God disposing the milch kine, whose calves had been left at home, to go, contrary to their instinct, the way straight to Bethshemesh. The ark is now once more within the borders of Israel's land. Here the men of that place have the temerity to look into the ark, and some seventy (this seems to be the better reading) perish. We may learn from this that all who seek to pry into the holy mystery of the Person of Christ are sure to incur God's displeasure and His chastening. If that blessed One, who subsisted ever in the "form of God," deigned, in fullest grace and divine love, to take upon Him the "form of a servant," to take His place here below as the Man Christ Jesus, yet His Person is incomprehensible, no man knoweth the Son but the Father. Thus, in His humiliation the glory of His Person is safeguarded against all prying of men's minds, and the door is foreclosed against all speculations of human reason.

*The Ark brought to Jerusalem.*—We have now followed the ark from the Philistines' country to Kirjath-jearim, where it rested in the house of Abinadab, a Levite. There it remained twenty years, and all Israel lamented after the Lord (1 Sam. vii. 2). But it was not brought away from this resting place for about fifty years more, as there was some further lapse of time before the beginning of Saul's reign, and, as David says, "we in-

quired not at it in the days of Saul" (forty years, see Acts xiii. 21). The whole time, therefore, that it remained at the house of Abinadab appears to have been something over seventy years.

After this long lapse of time, David consulted with the captains and leaders of Israel to bring back the ark of God, and he gathered together all Israel and went up to Kirjath-jearim. But, though David's desire was a good one, he made a serious mistake in trying to carry it out in his own way, instead of in God's way—for, as we read, they carried the ark "in a new cart." Now this was just the way the Philistines had sent it back from their country; but why imitate them? How could *they* be expected to know God's word, or to understand what was suitable to Him? Is it not even so with ourselves sometimes—we imitate the world and the world's way of doing things, indeed some people say, "You must keep pace with the times." But such reasoning is entirely off the ground of faith and simple obedience to the Word of God.

The consequence was that Uzza "died before the Lord," and David was afraid of God, and brought not the ark of God to the city of David, but it was brought to the house of Obed-edom, also a Levite, where it remained three months. David at length learned his lesson: doubtless he studied God's Word, and discovered that "none ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister to Him for ever." It is now no longer a question of the "new cart," or of man's devices, but of simple obedience to the Word of God, for David had learned that the cause of the breach which God made upon Uzza was, "because we sought Him not after the due order." We never can depart

from the path of obedience to the Word of God without spiritual loss to ourselves, and dishonour to God.

How different everything was now!—the ark was brought out of the house of Obed-edom with joy, for *God* helped the Levites that bare it. And, remark here, that the ark was not brought back to the high place at Gibeon, where the tabernacle which Moses had made was still in existence; it was brought to the tent which David had pitched for it at Jerusalem (2 Chron. i. 3, 4). God's judgment had come upon Shiloh and all connected with it, in consequence of the sin of the people; but now God interposes in sovereign grace through His King, David (type of Christ), who is established in Zion.

Thus everything centres around Christ, and the types of the old Testament will all find their sure and blessed fulfilment in Him whose glory is the ultimate object of all God's purposes and counsels. Everything connected with His glory must be a matter of the deepest interest to the Christian.

*(To be continued.)*

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As a pot of the manna, which nourished Israel in the desert, was to be kept in the ark in Canaan, that Israel in its rest might know what had sustained them in the desert, so we shall eat of the hidden manna, which has nourished and fed our souls in our pilgrimage. And if Christ is what we hope for in glory, He is what we need on earth; but our heavenly state will not diminish our power of delighting in the perfection of that blessed One.

## Law and Grace.

“The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

'MID the darkness and the tempest,  
And the trumpet sounding clear ;  
'Mid the lightnings and the thunders,  
Filling every heart with fear ;  
'Mid such scenes of power and glory,  
God sent forth His holy law—  
Moses, though His chosen servant,  
Trembled, as he heard and saw.

“Come not near,” God’s words of warning,  
Lest the Lord break forth in ire,  
Lest they go to gaze, and perish,  
In the dread consuming fire ;  
For Jehovah—the thrice Holy,  
In whose presence none can stand,  
Sits upon His throne so righteous,  
There to make His just demand.

But—and oh how great the contrast !  
When God speaks in words of grace ;  
Grace personified in Jesus,  
As His footsteps here we trace ;  
Grace can meet the deepest ruin,  
Of the state in which we were ;  
Grace can fit us for the glory,  
All its fruits with Him to share.

Yes ! this matchless grace so boundless,  
Balm of Gilead—oh how sweet !  
Finds its deepest joy to have us,  
Sitting ever at His feet ;  
And, blest Saviour, ever learning  
Deeper lessons of *Thy* grace,  
Till, enfolded in Thy bosom,  
We shall gaze upon Thy face.

\* \* \*



## Tendencies of the Age.

**T**HERE are two streams which are flowing in Christendom, deep and wide—infidelity on the one hand, and superstition on the other. It is well that Christians should be on their guard against the tendencies of the age, for we are always in danger of being influenced, it may be imperceptibly, by that which surrounds us.

An article which appeared in one of the current Reviews, entitled "Liberty and its limits in the Church," serves to illustrate plainly the present tendency in the direction of what is called "free thought"; or, as the writer expresses it, the danger of gliding into the same condition as was produced by eighteenth-century Arianism. The writer allows a very wide margin for the exercise of liberty as to what views people think best to adopt; but he seeks to show that there is a point beyond which you cannot go without giving up everything which can constitute a Christian Church. He argues that liberty is wrong when it renounces the gospel of Christ as the Redeemer, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible; that to do so would be for the Church to unchurch herself. He asks, How far must a "liberal theology" go? That, he says, is the great question of our day. The article concludes with the remark that "the Church was created by the resurrection of the crucified Redeemer, and if it discards, for any liberty, the principle of its creation, it parts with its life as a Church."

Now the very raising of such an issue, as to whether the giving up of foundation truth is allowable in the Church of God, shows the extent to which departure from the path of simple obedience to the unquestioned authority of the Word of God has gone. Remark that

the state of things to which this article refers, and which is, alas, so prevalent, is not brought about by attacks on Christianity from *outside* by avowed infidels; but by man's *will* and man's reason working *within* the professing Church, and thus usurping the authority which God's revelation contained in the Bible, should have over the soul. It is only too evident that the small breaks and cracks in the dikes which once kept out the flood of rationalism and infidelity, have increased so much of recent times, that this flood threatens to carry away all before it, especially in some quarters where such teachings would not have been tolerated some thirty or forty years ago. It is but the shadow of "the apostasy" of which Scripture speaks (2 Thess. ii. 3), and which will, doubtless, fall with terrible reality upon these very countries where so much light and truth has been vouchsafed.

Men plead for toleration, and true it is that there ought to be toleration and forbearance amongst Christians on all minor matters as to which they do not see eye to eye. We may learn this from such scriptures as Romans xiv., &c.; but this is a very different thing from *neutrality* where fundamental truths are at issue. It has been truly said, that "in a war of antagonistic principles, the man who seeks to temporise, while proving that he has no principle of his own, and loves no truth, will disappear, and leave only the memory of his own folly." Scripture allows of no compromises on such matters. The "elect lady," to whom the Apostle John wrote, was enjoined not to receive into her house, or even to bid God's speed to those who did not bring the "doctrine of Christ." Even in John's day, as he tells us, the spirit of antichrist, which did not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh, was already in the world. To compromise with any teacher or professed

Christian who does not bring the true Christ, is to make terms with Satan against Christ. And if it was so necessary to warn saints *then* against the many false prophets which were gone out into the world, how much more so now! So, too, the Apostle Paul in the epistle to the Galatians, pronounces a solemn "Anathema" on anyone, even though it were "we, or an angel from heaven," who would preach a gospel different from that which he had preached, and which they had received.

In view of the state of the professing Church, is there not a serious call for prayer that we may be kept? And is there not also a need for humble dependence on God, and submission in heart and soul, to the revelation He has given us in His Word? It would be a mistake to suppose that any are safe from the surrounding influences, unless kept by the grace of God. We are no match for the craft and subtlety of Satan, and we could not stand for a moment, if left to ourselves. There is but one place of safety amidst all the confusion which the self-will of man and the pride of intellect have brought about; that is, in the consciousness of our own weakness, and in true dependence on God and the word of His grace. No mere intellectual knowledge, even of the letter of Scripture, will preserve the soul. But "the Lord preserveth the simple," and He says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." The place of simple obedience—always the best and the most blessed place—not seeking to be anything, but in separation from the world in heart and practice, desiring *only* the glory of the Lord Jesus in a scene that cast Him out, while waiting for His coming—*this* is the true place of safety and strength.

## Worship.

**I**S the glory of the cross a glory which dazzles us and which forces us to a distance by its very greatness?

Quite the contrary. Christ hung upon the cross for us—in our stead—as the very lowest from among the children of men. “His visage was marred more than any man’s.” His cross is the expression of tender affection towards us, of love stronger than death. He loved us even unto the end. He undertook to render us happy in the presence of the Father. He counted nothing too dear to Him that He might accomplish this end. And His heart, perfect in love, rests on those whose cause He has undertaken. He has associated them with Himself. He, who has need of nothing, has need of us.

If Jesus attaches value to our remembrance of Him—if He presents Himself to us with so much tenderness in the memorial of His dying love, that love, at the same time, produces in us the very deepest affections—affections which are connected with what is most exalted in the grace of God, and which express themselves in the adoration of the heart.

The Holy Spirit being the source, the power, and inspirer of all true Christian worship, the unity of the body formed by Him, and in which He acts, necessarily holds a prominent place in the worship which He produces in its members so united. Love, which is the soul of it, is defective in one of its most perfect forms, if conscience as to this unity is wanting. The presence of the Holy Spirit produces the consciousness of this unity, of which He is the author and the bond. Now, considered in one aspect, the Lord’s Supper is the expression of this unity. We are all but “one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread” (or, as in the original, “of that one loaf”).

How sweet to find oneself united to "all saints," wherever they may be, in the unity of the body of Christ, as members together of that body, according to the privileges which attach to it by reason of the love of Him who "nourishes and cherishes" it, as a man does his own flesh. How sweet to feel, through the Spirit, one's union with all that are Christ's, accompanied with the thought, so full of joy, that all those dear to us, as belonging to Him, are cherished by His constant love.

Jesus Himself is present in our midst, according to His promise. In fine, worship is exercised in connection with the very sweetest recollection of His love, whether we regard His work upon the cross, or whether we recall the thought of His ever fresh and tender affection for us. He desires our remembrance of Him.

Sweet and precious thought! oh! how joyous to our souls, and yet, at the same time, how solemn ought such worship to be! What sort of life should we be careful to lead in order to render it! How watchful over our own spirits! How sensitive as to evil! With what earnestness should we seek the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, in order to render such worship suitably! Yet it should be very simple and truthful; for true affection is always simple, and at the same time devout, for the sense of such interests imparts devoutness.

What I have said relates to the assembling of the children of God for worship. Sweet and precious privilege to anticipate that which will be our eternal employ in heaven! There, all the Church in its completeness will be assembled to render worship in the midst of the general assembly on high. There, without distraction and without fear, worship will be its eternal joy in the perfect favour of God. What a privilege, even here below, to close the door for a moment upon all

the distractions of this nether world, and by the Spirit to satisfy the desires of the heart in rendering to God the thanksgiving which He is worthy to receive, and which in His grace He has breathed into our souls!

J. N. D.

## The Morning Star—Christ our Hope.

*(Continued.)*

**B**EFORE the blessed Lord left His disciples, He took care to comfort them in their sorrow by the assurance of His return. He had come forth from the Father in order to make the Father known to them, and it was needful that He should go back, in order to send the Holy Ghost (John i. 18, xvi. 7, 28). Their grief was great to learn that He was going; but He said, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (xvi. 5, 6, 22). That hope is still the comfort of His saints at the present time. We are still, to use the words of the apostle, "waiting for the Son from heaven" (Phil. iii. 20; 1 Thess. i. 10).

We are all naturally more disposed to be occupied with the things which will take place at the Lord's return, than with the blessedness of seeing Him and being with Him for ever. But if we read the scriptures attentively, we cannot but be struck with the fact that God's thoughts are concentrated on the Person of His Son, in whom and through whom all His purposes of grace are carried out. And He would have our attention fixed there also, so that we may enjoy the communion to which we are called (1 John i. 3, 4).

The first promise of the Deliverer was given on the occasion of Adam's fall. The main point in that account is, He was to be "the woman's SEED." She seemed to

remember that word when her son was born, however mistaken she was as to his character, and being also quite ignorant of the time that was to elapse before the Deliverer came. But her words, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," surely show that, for her, the birth of the son was the chief consideration (Gen. iii. 15, iv. 1).

Again, in Abraham's case, God allowed him to enjoy Isaac for many years before he was called to give him back; and it was at that moment that God gave the promise, "In thy SEED, shall all nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xxii. 18). The promise was connected with Abraham's *obedience*. Nothing is said as to how or when the blessing spoken of for the earth was to be realised; but Jesus says to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see *My day*; and he saw it, and was glad" (John viii. 56). We have too the divine assurance that the SEED spoken of was CHRIST (Gal. iii. 16).

Later on, David's desire to build for Jehovah a permanent temple in the midst of His people, at Jerusalem, was answered by God's assurance that such a work, according to God's intention and estimate of it, could only be carried out by his "SEED," whom God would, in the course of time, raise up after him. He alone was competent to carry out the Father's thoughts in the Father's own way. And when He received from Peter, the true confession of who He was, He intimated a new kind of building, spiritual in its nature, which alone corresponded to the full revelation of the Father and the Son. "On this *rock*," He said, "I will build My church" (1 Chron. xvii. 11-14; Matt. xvi. 16-18; Rev. xxi. 9, 10).

The Spirit of God would keep our thoughts set upon the Person of Christ in whom the Father found all His delight. Only so can we really understand any truth affecting ourselves. With such a key for the right

intelligence of all prophecy, we are not surprised to find that Christ's second coming is in complete correspondence with His first appearance—"born" in this world according to the fore-announced fact, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a SON is given." His names, including that of "the MIGHTY GOD," are noted at the same time (Isa. ix. 6). He was born to be seen and believed in when here (John vi. 40, ix. 35-38). He it is for whom we wait (1 John iii. 2, iv. 14, v. 20).

All John's gospel carries the heart on from Christ as seen here, to the realisation of the blessed hope of seeing Him again (John xvi. 16). The interval may effectively be treated as a *parenthesis*.

A parenthesis is a sentence enclosed between two curved lines in the course of a larger one treating of any particular subject. Though needed for the better understanding of the matter in hand, it may, if convenient, be omitted and the sense is not interfered with. The connection between what preceded it and the words which follow it, is left unimpaired.

Now this is precisely what we find as to God's ways with the earth, and more particularly with His chosen people, Israel. His thoughts as to them are unchanged, in spite of their being for the time "Lo-ammi," that is "Not my people" (Hosea i. 9, ii. 23, iii. 4, 5). His thoughts about them are set forth by Moses and by David; they had been taken out from among the nations, separated to God, to be, on condition of their obedience, His peculiar people (Exod. xix. 5, 6; Deut. iv. 7, 8, 20, 31-38; 1 Chron. xvii. 20-22). But they, like Adam, disobeyed (Hosea vi. 7); and they lost their land. Notwithstanding that, after the Captivity, a remnant returned to it; and, in process of time, the promised Messiah was born (Dan. ix. 25). But Christ found them as rebellious as ever. On the way to the



cross, He wept over Jerusalem, and had to leave their house "desolate" (Matt. xxiii. 37, 38).

On God's side we always find His faithfulness to be unchanging (Ps lxxxix. 33); Christ came to those that were peculiarly "His own," but "His own received Him not" (John i. 11). As said the prophet, "They smote the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek," and were, in consequence, "given up" (Micah v. 1-3). Rejecting the counsel of God against themselves, and despising their own mercies, they crucified the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame (Jonah ii. 8; Matt. xii. 41-45; Luke vii. 30; Heb. vi. 6). Nevertheless, Paul, while weeping over them and still praying on their behalf, found comfort in the fact that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He called to mind that "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises," all belonged to *them*, as God's special gift; the "fathers," too, were theirs, and of them, as concerning the flesh, "Christ came" (Rom. ix. 4-5; xi. 29). All that remains true, and God will never forget it; but it is also true that they "killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead" (Acts iii. 15).

That act never could be undone. They refused the light; and darkness came upon them: Jesus "did hide Himself from them" (John xii. 35, 36). He never showed Himself to any but His own disciples after He had been laid in the tomb. All distinctively *Jewish* hopes lay, so to speak, buried there; and there they must remain until His earthly people shall say as to Him, in a day still future, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxiii. 39). When He was here, they said, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke xix. 14).

In that coming day, they will indeed look on Him whom they pierced, and will mourn for Him as for an only—a first-born—son (Zech. xii. 10; Isa. lxvi. 7, 8). But between these two moments of their final rejection of Christ and future reception of Him intervenes the *parenthesis* we speak of. When it is over, the thread of their history will be resumed in connection with the accomplishment *on earth* of the promises made to Abraham.

The Lord, however, did not leave the earth immediately after rising from the dead. He showed Himself to His disciples now and again “during forty days,” but only to the “witnesses chosen before of God” (Acts i. 3, x. 41). And He treated them as altogether apart from the Jewish world, taken out of it in order that they might be sent again into the world in its fuller extent (including Gentiles as well as Jews), even as He Himself had been sent of the Father (John xx. 21). He had already prayed for them as the Father’s own gift to Himself, and as no longer belonging to the world (John xvii. 6-10, 16). It was from their midst that He went up to heaven, leaving them still to wait on earth for the promised gift of the Holy Ghost. He fulfilled that promise “when the day of Pentecost was fully come,” ten days after His ascension. Thenceforward every saved soul was no longer considered as being on Israelitish or Jewish ground, with *earthly* hopes, but on the contrary as having *heavenly* hopes in and with Christ. Belonging to Him who was risen and glorified, they were “added to the Church” (Acts ii. 1, 47).

We may then consider the first curved line of the parenthesis in this world’s history as being marked by “the cloud” which received Jesus out of the sight of His disciples, when they stood on the Mount of Olives,

gazing after Him as He was taken up into heaven (Luke xxiv. 50-51; Acts i. 3, 9-11). From that moment, dates the special calling and portion of the Church. It belongs to Jesus risen and glorified.

The close of the parenthesis is indicated by another "cloud," which will receive, in like manner, every believing man, woman, and child at the moment of the Lord's return. At the same instant, every sleeping saint, that is, everyone who has believed and "died in faith," will be raised; and all together will be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 15-17). Blessed is it to think of it!

As soon as the Church is removed from this scene, the remnant of Israel, with their *earthly* hopes, will come once more into prominence; and a call to repentance in connection with those hopes will again go forth (Matt. x. 23). That will be the time of Zion's "travail"; and those who lend a willing ear to the call, will be considered as "the remnant of Christ's brethren." They, instead of being added to the Church as we are, will then "return unto the children of Israel," and be reckoned with them (Isa. lxvi. 8-14; Micah v. 3). They will also be earnestly looking for "the rising of the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings"—that "Sun" which the disciples saw for a moment on the mount of the transfiguration (Mal. iv. 2; Matt. xvii. 2).

The Church will at that time be seen in her proper place in *heaven*; for "the righteous shall shine forth *as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. xiii. 43; Luke xii. 33). That glory will be ushered in for us by Him who, through grace, is already known to our souls as "THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR" (Rev. xxii. 16).

(*To be continued.*)

W. J. L.

## Discipleship.

*“And ye shall become disciples of Mine”*

(John xv. 8, N.T.).

WE are all familiar with the usual definition of a disciple—a follower: and not less so with the general remark that all believers are disciples of Christ. Nevertheless, it is a subject which might profitably engage our attention, and we naturally turn to the gospel of John for instruction upon it, for no attentive reader could fail to notice how much is said about disciples in that precious portion of Holy Writ. The frequent occurrence of the word, in either the singular or plural form, is in itself remarkable, being found some eighty times in John’s gospel, and only about forty times in either Mark or Luke. The first chapter gives us the account of the first disciples—they had heard John speak, and followed Jesus, before He uttered, for the first time, the irresistible invitation (to Philip) “Follow Me.” And we trace their path chapter by chapter, through scenes and circumstances both testing and encouraging, until the witness closes with the same simple emphatic phrase, “Follow thou Me,” as the last recorded utterance of the Divine Master given us in this matchless record.

It is worthy of note also that “the twelve” are never called apostles in this gospel; but always “disciples.” It is here, too, that we read, “From that time many of His disciples went away back and walked no more with Him” (chap. vi. 66), and then the record of Simon Peter’s memorable words in response to the question “Will ye also go away?” “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast words of eternal life; and we have believed and known that Thou art the Holy One of God” (New Trans.).

There are three great characteristics of discipleship, all given us in John's gospel; and these we would briefly consider: First, "If ye continue, or abide, in My word" (John viii. 31). Secondly, "If ye have love one to another" (John xiii. 35). Thirdly, "That ye bear much fruit" (John xv. 8).

First, there is the all-important qualification, may we call it, that we continue, or abide, in the word of Christ; and this marks a peculiar kind of disciple—"then are ye My disciples *indeed*"; or as another translation gives it, "*truly* My disciples." First in order of the three, and first in importance, we may surely say too, is this quality of continuing in the Lord's word. Nothing so surely stamps a disciple as his loyalty to the word of the master. Great philosophers as well as great theologians have had their disciples in the past, and in the present day; and one unfailing mark is their devotion to the words of the one they follow. Far more telling than any badge is this proof; and ought it to be less so with us who profess to be followers of "our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4, R.V.)? But is it to be understood that there are ordinary disciples, and disciples indeed? Are the latter a class to themselves? Nay, rather let us seek to be truly His disciples, disciples indeed, in the blessed path of treasuring His word above everything else in this world, and walking by it in the obedience of faith.

This being so, there will be no need to announce who it is we follow; it will be a sufficiently distinctive badge, if our lives bear the impress of those who abide in His word. All *the word* equally revered as divine, and equally valued in its place; but especially His, Christ's word, as that which bears more particularly on us as Christians to-day, having the first, last, and

always ascendant place in our hearts. Then mark, too, the result of this in present blessing, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Liberty of the widest, truest character, is known only when we so walk, "If the Son shall make you free, than shall ye be free indeed." All the wide range of the truth characteristic of the revelation that the Son of God came to give of "The Father," is thus opened by Him to His disciples, abiding in His word. Disciples indeed—free indeed—what a vast arena of blessing to captivate and hold the heart of the obedient disciple!

T. R.

*(To be continued.)*

## Tabernacle Furniture—The Ark.

*(Continued.)*

*The ark in the tent David had pitched for it at Jerusalem.* In connection with the passages we were considering last month, all depended upon kingly power, entrusted to David, Jehovah's anointed. He it was who appointed the service of the Levites; and royalty in his hands takes precedence of priesthood, which is subordinated to it. Then David delivered a psalm of praise to Jehovah (1 Chron. xvi.), which is a very remarkable selection from various psalms, suitable to celebrate that *grace* which brought about the establishment of blessing when all had failed on the ground of *responsibility* in Israel. Thus everything was arranged so as to fit together the typical framework which would suitably set forth that future day of deliverance and blessing for Israel, when Christ Himself, the true anointed King, shall be set by Jehovah upon His holy hill in Zion (Ps. ii.). And it was the privilege of faith, even in David's day, to look on to that brighter and

better day, when they would celebrate the praises of Him whose "mercy endureth for ever."

*The ark at rest.* At length Solomon, God's king, was established on his throne in assured peace, and God's house was built at the very place where He had met David in *grace*, after the judgment consequent on his sin—"in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." Then the congregation was gathered together, and the Levites took up the ark and brought it into the most holy place, in the oracle of the house. There was no repetition now of David's mistake in carrying it on "a new cart": all was done in its proper order, according to the Word of God. The ark was placed "under the wings of the cherubims," which were not looking down upon it, as in the tabernacle, but looking out, towards the house. All pointed forward to the millennial day of blessing, and the cherubims looked *outwards*, in order to bless, rather than *down* upon the law, in order to enforce God's righteous commands. Here, also, the staves were drawn out, because the ark had reached its resting place. The beautiful note of praise with which Solomon ends his prayer at the dedication of the house, links together Jehovah Himself and the ark of His strength, as entering into rest, "Arise, O Lord God into Thy resting place, Thou, and the ark of Thy strength: let Thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and Thy saints rejoice in Thy goodness. O Lord God, turn not away the face of Thine anointed: remember the mercies of David Thy servant." So it will be in that glorious day when Israel will be brought back to their land, through God's rich and abounding grace, and will rest under the banner of Him who will make good in power all that is involved in the everlasting covenant of peace, "even the sure mercies of David" (Isaiah lv. 3).

There was nothing in the ark when it reached Solomon's temple except the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb (2 Chron. v. 10)—the golden pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded had disappeared. Both these were connected with the wilderness journey—the former represented Christ as the spiritual food, to be fed upon in the daily path here below; and the latter represented that priestly grace, so needed for the daily journey. But the wilderness journey was over and the rest of God had now been reached; if not actually, in type at least.

It is remarkable that, while Solomon made the vessels for the temple, the same as those used for the tabernacle (only on a much larger scale and greater in number), yet there was no new ark made; it was the same ark, only in different surroundings. God's throne and His presence, as symbolised by the ark, were always the same—and the ark, with the mercy seat, typified Christ, who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Besides, everything here looked on to that millennial day when Christ will be both king and priest (for His priesthood is after the order of Melchizedec, not after the order of Aaron), and when every blessing for Israel, as well as for the nations, will surely be made good under His righteous and peaceful sway.

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We never can be truly humble except in the presence of God, and we never can be in the presence of God without being truly humble.

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The law is the key which shuts up all men to condemnation, and the gospel is the key which opens the door and lets them out.



## The Need for Prayer.

**W**HAT an encouragement it is to find so many exhortations in the Scripture to perseverance in prayer!—"pray without ceasing," "continuing instant in prayer," "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," "continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving," "by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." It is as though God Himself would invite us to come to Him about everything; to lay down our every care and burden in His own presence, and to count on His love and interest in us, and His willingness to meet all our needs and wants, whether in connection with our own circumstances or with the interests of His beloved Son in this world.

Our blessed Lord Himself (though God over all, blessed for evermore) was truly the dependent, praying man on earth. We find Him praying frequently in the gospel of Luke, that gospel which presents Him to us so blessedly from the side of His humanity—the man Christ Jesus. He is seen praying when, at His baptism the heaven was opened, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him, and He was owned by the Father's voice from heaven as His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased (chap. iii. 21). Then, after He began His public ministry when great multitudes came to hear Him and to be healed, Jesus "withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed" (v. 16); again, before calling His disciples "He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (vi. 12). On another occasion He is found "alone praying" (ix. 18); again, "He went up into a mountain to pray,"

and as He prayed He was transfigured before His three disciples (ix. 28); and we find Him "praying in a certain place," when one of His disciples desired Him to teach them to pray (xi. 1). Again, in the hour of His agony in the garden of Gethsemane He "prayed more earnestly." Thus, whether it was at the moment when Christ's glory was manifested in miracles and works of power, or at the moment of His deep, deep sorrow and trial in view of the cross, when He "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him out of death" (Heb. v. 7), He was *ever* in the place of prayer and dependence: spending, at one time, a whole night in prayer, or again rising up a great while before day and going into a solitary place to pray. May we ponder well His blessed path for our souls' profit; for in all these things He is the perfect example for His people! The greater the pressure of the sorrow or trial, the more earnest was His supplication and prayer to God.

And it is instructive to notice that the Lord Himself, in His parting words to His disciples, places them in direct relation to the Father, and gives them all the value of His name to plead before the Father in prayer. He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John xvi. 23, 24). How powerful, how efficacious that name when pleaded in the Father's ear! Do we avail ourselves of this blessed privilege of prayer as we ought? Do we spend much time in prayer in our own rooms or houses? When we come to the assembly prayer-meeting, do our prayers come really from the depth of the heart, speaking consciously to God Himself,

praying in the Holy Ghost, and pleading that name which is so dear to Him and so efficacious before Him? These are searching questions for our souls. It is so easy to become formal and to get into a routine in prayer as well as in other things.

Our lot is cast in days when, so far as we can judge, the history of the Church is drawing to its close, and the coming of the Lord is near. In view of all the activity of the enemy, and the weak and scattered state in which Christians are found, there is, indeed, a special call for prayer. And every true revival and movement of blessing amongst God's people has been preceded or accompanied by prayer. It is true there are many claims on our time in these days of hurry in work or business; but nothing can make up for the loss of seasons spent in prayer. May God graciously lay upon the hearts of His people everywhere the great importance of simple, earnest, believing prayer!

## The Morning Star—Christ our Hope.

(Continued.)

SHORTLY before his departure, the Apostle Peter, feeling the necessity of stirring up the saints by "putting them in remembrance" of what they had already heard, was led to recall that wondrous scene when he, with James and John, were eye-witnesses of the Lord's glory on the "holy mount." It was, so to speak, his legacy to the Church. And we may notice that he calls especial attention to the "voice" which they were then given to *hear*, and which centred all their thoughts on the Lord Himself as the object of the Father's delight. This expression of delight was a

notable feature of Isaiah's prophecy given 750 years previously (chap. xlii. 1); but, when quoted in Matthew xii. 18, the word "beloved" is added by the Holy Ghost, thus linking the passage in a very marked way with the testimony already given at the Lord's baptism, and repeated at the transfiguration (iii. 17, xvii. 5). Peter adds that the voice came "from heaven," identifying "the excellent glory" they saw with "heaven" whence the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form after the Lord's baptism (see also Mark i. 10, 11; Luke iii. 21, 22).

Let us pause here to take note of three wonderful things:—

(1) The Father's good pleasure is equally centred and expressed in the SON, when He condescended to identify Himself in baptism with confessed sinners hoping for mercy, as when He shows for a moment His coming glory in the kingdom.

(2) The mystery of the Trinity is for the first time manifested to human eyes and ears at the baptism (John i. 33, 34; 1 John i. 1-3). The communion which we are now called to enjoy is founded upon this.

(3) Though on earth, carrying out the Father's will and purpose, the humbled Son of man belonged to *heaven*, and in the mystery of His divine Person was ever there. Consequently, as He says to Nicodemus, He alone was able to unfold "heavenly things" (John iii. 13).

These blessed facts lie at the basis of Christianity, and have evidently the most important bearing upon "the heavenly calling" of which every believer in the present age is made a partaker (Heb. iii. 1). It is very little understood, and, as a consequence, the "hope" which should animate our souls is enfeebled, and our practical walk often comes far short of what it ought

to be. Is it not a sad fact that, in the minds of many, the "hope" is reduced to a vague idea of getting to heaven eventually, because they find they cannot live for ever on this earth as they would like to do? That is very different from the glory of the mystery given to Paul to reveal, which he says is, "CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27). And the practical consequence flowing from the possession of such a hope, is that, abiding in Him, we should walk "*as He walked*" (1 John ii. 6).

The Christian calling is heavenly *in principle*, because it is God's purpose to have "many sons in glory." They are made "sons" by receiving God's testimony about His own blessed Son; and they are the Father's gift to Him, Christ, who was ever His delight,—the Son in the Father's bosom who became flesh in order to carry out all His will in redeeming them. Having thus become "the Captain of their salvation," He is *now* seated at His own right hand *in the heavens*. It is as speaking from thence that Jesus says, "I and the children which God hath given me" (Heb. ii. 9-13, viii. 1, 2, x. 8-10, 12-14). Surely, all this is in contrast to the blessing reserved for God's ancient people of Israel, who will have their portion on earth, in the promised land, when Christ shall come in Person to make it theirs (Zech. xiv. 4, 5; Mal. iii. 1). And it is this future deliverance of the people which is referred to in Isaiah viii. 17 to ix. 7; where there is no mention at all of Christ's present place "on high," nor of His personal glory, nor of the coming of the Holy Ghost.

It is true that Abraham's thoughts were turned toward heaven, when God spoke to him of the "stars," but heaven was not mentioned in his *call*, which was simply to "go forth into the land of

Canaan," into which "*he came*" (Gen. xi. 31, xii. 5-7; Acts vii. 3, 4; Heb. xi. 8). The earthly inheritance will eventually be made good to the earthly people, that is, to Abraham's natural descendants, when God's time is come to establish them once again in Canaan; but in the meanwhile Christ has His own place in glory, and with Him are associated in the most intimate way those who are consciously at the present time the fruit of His sufferings on the cross. That is why they are called "holy brethren," and "partakers of a heavenly calling." And it is to this "incorruptible inheritance," reserved for the saints in *heaven*, that Peter drew the attention of the converted Jews to whom he wrote. Naturally enough, they looked for the accomplishment on earth of the promises made to their father Abraham, all the more so as they were "strangers scattered abroad" far away from Palestine. But what they lost on earth was made good to them "in heaven." It is quite true that the glory of that which is "reserved" for believers of the present day, will only be fully known at the "revelation of Jesus Christ," for which we wait; but the "spirit" of it is to animate the souls of those now called to be "partakers of Christ's sufferings" (1 Pet. i. 3-13, iv. 12, 13).

Everywhere we find in the epistles that this glory is the counterpart of sufferings endured in the present time. It is to be our eternal portion "after we have suffered awhile" down here" (1 Pet. v. 10; so Rom. viii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 12, &c.). And how beautifully that is set forth in the transfiguration scene, when we learn that Moses and Elias who "appeared in glory" were talking with Jesus "of His decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem"! They were occupied with Christ's sufferings, whereas the disciples had the privilege of seeing His glory, "and the two men

who stood\* with Him" (Luke ix. 30-32). May the Lord lead our hearts into more constant and diligent occupation with the Person of Christ in His present glory, that we may realise more of that change "into the same image, from glory to glory," now being accomplished by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. iii. 3, 18)! We have to be "transformed by the renewing of our mind" in order not to be conformed to this world (Rom. xii. 2).

All these scriptures that we have passed rapidly in review, bring us again to the *parenthesis* in God's ways of which we have already spoken (pages 92, 94). How needful is it that our souls should get confirmed in its distinctive and moral features, in order that our practical walk may be in accordance with it!

The more we realise its character, the more readily we can understand the difficulty felt, even by the apostles who had seen the Lord on earth, in laying hold of the meaning of His words, "Ye are not of the world" (John xv. 19). It needed the presence of the Holy Ghost, who came down on the day of Pentecost, to teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance all that He had said to them, besides those other things which they were not able to bear, or enter into at all, until after His death and resurrection (John xiv. 26, xvi. 12-16). So complete a change in all their thoughts and aspirations must needs be gradual. His death had seemed to blast all their Jewish hopes in connection with their Messiah whom they rightly believed Christ to be (Luke xxiv. 21); and when they were assured of His resurrection, it was their familiar hopes that were

\* Compare with this what is said of Moses when called to go up into Mount Sinai the second time, when God graciously stood with him there and showed him as much of His glory as it was possible for him, in his human body, to see (Exod. xxxiii. 21, xxxiv. 5-7).

naturally revived. We observe it in the question, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6). The Lord's answer was confined to insisting upon the character of their testimony to Himself, as He had previously told them (John xv. 27), while waiting for the coming of the Holy Ghost. Little by little their thoughts were turned into another channel, as the meaning of His death and resurrection dawned upon them, while they still waited for the coming of the Comforter.

When He came down on the day of Pentecost, a new era began for them, but as yet they had no idea at all of the glad tidings going beyond the limits of Israel; and for the moment they were so enthralled by the great facts of the Lord's ascension to the right hand of God, and of His having sent the Spirit as He had promised that they had enough to do to preach the gospel of the remission of sins "to the house of Israel" (Acts ii. 31-39). They knew full well that this gospel must go to those "afar off," as the Lord had distinctly told them more than once, but they were very slow to carry it to them; and the majority of those converted in Jerusalem could not conceive it possible that Gentiles could be brought into the enjoyment of its blessings. Even Peter himself presented to the Jews the acceptance of the gospel as a reason for the Lord's immediate return to accomplish the earthly promises made to their fathers (Acts iii. 19-26). Many were scattered abroad afterwards by persecution, but the apostles, in spite of the Lord's charge to them, remained at Jerusalem (Acts i. 8, viii. 1). They were slow to fulfil their commission of going "to the uttermost part of the earth." But God carried out His thoughts in His own way, as we shall see.

W. J. L.

*(To be continued.)*



## Discipleship.

(Continued.)

THE second characteristic of a disciple is not without its special feature either, linked as it is with that "new commandment" given us by the One who so manifested what love is, in its essential features. "By this shall all men know that ye are *My* disciples (disciples of mine), if ye have love one to another." Alas, that there should be so little indication of this to the world through which His disciples move! But one thing is certain, that no motive is so powerful in producing this desirable trait in the disciple, as the sense of *His* love working in our souls, "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another." How can I be expected to love the unlovable, unamiable followers of Christ that many are; or they to love me who am so little to their taste? Ah, how indeed! if His love be not the formative power, and if that new nature be absent of which this is one of the unmistakable marks? (1 John iii. 14).

When we come to consider the third feature of discipleship, "that ye bear much fruit," we see how closely allied it is with the first. We have in John xv. "fruit," "more fruit," "much fruit"; and it is of the last of these that it is said, "and ye shall become disciples of Mine." But "much fruit" is brought forth only by the one that "abideth in Me, and I in him"; and further, "herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." Are we to infer that we are only disciples when we bear "much fruit"? This is not what is taught, but it is evidently the Lord's desire for His disciples that they should bear much fruit; and He adds, "for without Me (apart from Me) ye can do nothing." We may well therefore, ask the question,

How can we bear much fruit?—and the answer comes: Abide in Christ. If we ask how can we abide in Him? what can the answer be, but by abiding in His word? We show our love to the Lord by keeping His word, as He says, “If a man love Me, he will keep My word” (John xiv. 23).

Thus we find that these things go together; they form another instance for the “threefold cord that cannot be broken.” The new nature, which the believer has received, and the Spirit which dwelleth in him, are the indispensable necessities in this matter of discipleship.

But there is another side to this question, which we must look at, because it has an important bearing on the subject, and because of the exercise which it causes to many of God’s children. If we take the passage at the end of Luke xiv. we read, “If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” What does this mean? And the following verses, too, about counting the cost before commencing to build a tower, “lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it,” &c.; and one going to make war without considering the power of the enemy, and the strength of his own army? What has puzzled many here, is the particular place in which we find these searching words; coming in, as they do, immediately after the well-known parable of the great supper, and the oft-repeated words, “compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”

Does not the Lord desire to have disciples? Does He say these things to deter any from following Him, after giving expression to that wonderful invitation of the lord of the feast, “Compel them to come in, that

my house may be filled"? If He does not desire to deter any, why this sudden and striking change? Let us look at verse 25, "And there went great multitudes with Him," &c.; and let us compare this with verse 18, "And they all with one consent began to make excuse." Is not the secret of the change this: the parable is the Lord's reply to the guest who said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God"—and this was said, no doubt with the natural idea that anyone and everyone would willingly be at the feast. But the Lord's reply in the parable certainly shows that this is far from being the case: the provision is abundant ("all things are ready") and the invitation wide and free, but the reluctance is on the part of the guests. There are well-spread tables, but no guests—instead of everyone hastening to be there, as expressed in the remark that drew forth the parable.

Then, as is markedly the case in Luke's gospel, where things are presented to us morally; the scene changes, and multitudes follow Jesus. Are they true disciples? Can multitudes be trusted in the path of following a rejected Christ? This is the question, and it comes home to us to-day. Can Christ be popular in a world like this; and can human nature, as it is, be expected or trusted to follow Him? The blessed Saviour does not say such words as these to the woman who was a sinner (Luke vii.) or to the woman of Samaria (John iv.). Nor does He so speak to any other poor sinner from that time to this, who seeks a Saviour from their sins and the judgment of God: but He does say to those who set out to be disciples, that there is something in *that* path which is always called a "cross." So, before one can build a tower, one must have the material to build—serious reflection this, what does it mean? Or if one is engaging in Christian warfare, where a wily

and powerful foe has to be contended with, how expect to be victorious without a power greater than that of the enemy? But let not the young Christian be dismayed—these things are not said to hinder any in the desire to follow the only One who is worthy to be followed; but that we may learn two most important lessons—first, that the flesh cannot follow Christ, whatever its good intentions may be; and secondly, that we are not sent into this path of discipleship nor do we wage this warfare, at our own charges.

No, blessed be God; the Christian *sets out* with a new nature, and a new power, and a new object. This new power is the Holy Ghost, and the new object, a living Christ in glory. Now here we see most clearly the difference between law and grace—the one is responsibility without capability, for the law gave no power to do what it demanded: the other (grace) involves no responsibility without capability. Grace does not ask you and me, dear fellow-believer, to be or to do anything that it does not confer the power to be and to do. Are we expected to follow Christ? grace gives, as we have said, all that is needed to do so, namely, a new nature (for we are born again of the Word and Spirit of God); a new power—the Holy Spirit—and a new Object, our adorable Saviour and Lord. Thus we are provided with material to build, so to speak; and power to meet the enemy. And we can say with Simon Peter, as we follow the blessed Master—often faltering, often stumbling, and, alas, often failing, it is true, “To whom shall we go,” if not to Thee? To whom shall we cling, if not to Thee? For whom shall we labour, if not for Thee? For whom, Lord, shall we wait, if not for Thee?

Thus the words of verse 33 (Luke xiv.), “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he

hath, he cannot be My disciple," are not spoken to a repentant sinner seeking salvation. We have not to forsake all that we have in order to be saved; but we are frequently put to the test as to whether what we *truly* value is "what we have" in this life; or the Christ who died for us. Which is first with us?

T. R.

### Revivals.

*The Revival under Hezekiah.*—Things were, indeed, in a very corrupt state in Israel at the time when God raised up Hezekiah, a man of faith and energy, in order to lead the people back to Himself. His father, Ahaz, had acted very wickedly; even following the abominations of the heathen in burning his children in the fire, cutting up the vessels of God's house and shutting up the doors thereof, making altars in every high place, and burning incense to other gods. What a deplorable state of things for the very king of the line of David to be instrumental in bringing about!

But Hezekiah did not say, "The state of things is too bad, there is no use now in trying to serve Jehovah according to the way ordained through Moses and David." Not so—for faith always clings to God's word and seeks to walk in obedience to it, however great the ruin may be. He "trusted in the Lord God of Israel," and he "clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him." Thus he looked beyond the condition of Israel to God Himself, as the unfailing resource in a time of difficulty.

Hezekiah did not content himself with mere sentiment; he set to work in earnest. He commenced by opening the doors of the house of the Lord, instructing the priests and Levites to sanctify themselves, and cleansing the house from the pollutions with which it

had been defiled. So it must ever be—if we are to carry on the work of God, there must be separation from evil and defilement—in fact, there must be suitability to God's nature, as a God of holiness and truth.

Then the worship of God was restored; sacrifices were offered to make atonement; and, what is to be remarked here is, that they made atonement "for all Israel," not merely for Judah and Benjamin—for the king's express command was that it should be made "for all Israel." We know that the ten tribes were, at this time, in a very corrupt and broken condition, and some of them had been carried away captive; nevertheless Hezekiah embraced in his faith the whole nation in its unity before God. Then he sent letters to Ephraim and Manasseh that they should come to the house of the Lord, and keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel. Proclamation was sent throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba to Dan, that they should come to Jerusalem to the passover, saying, "Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and He will return to the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria," &c. It is beautiful to see the simple faith of Hezekiah, in acknowledging the hand of God upon the people on account of their evil ways, and falling back on the unfailing faithfulness of God. Indeed, those words "turn again" come home to ourselves to-day with peculiar aptitude; for, if the Church of God has sadly failed collectively, let us never forget that God is ever ready to hearken to the contrite and humble soul who turns to Him.

But the reception given to the messengers of Hezekiah was far from encouraging—they laughed them to scorn: however, some "humbled themselves," and also in Judah the hand of God was to give them

“one heart” to serve Him. Oneness of heart and purpose amongst God’s people is most blessed; but it is not an outward pretentious thing that is needed; what is wanted is true unity of heart and aim, and this can only be produced by the Spirit of God.

And so there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast: thus Hezekiah’s desire was granted, and there was rejoicing and “great joy” amongst the people. It is true there were many difficulties to be overcome; for the priests and Levites had not sanctified themselves, nor were the people gathered together in time to keep the passover in the *first* month, as ordained by Moses; but Hezekiah seems to have availed himself of the provision made in Numbers ix. 10, where we read, “If any man of you or your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the Lord. The fourteenth day of the *second* month at even shall they keep it.” This appears to have been the only occasion on which it was kept, as a national feast, in the second month. Thus the order of the service of God, according to the word of God, was re-established in Israel, and Hezekiah was blessed and prospered, because he sought the Lord and did His service *with his whole heart*.

But after every revival there is sure to come a testing time; for the enemy cannot allow the work of God to go on unmolested. We find that, “after these things,” Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came and entered into Judah, and proposed to fight against Jerusalem. But Hezekiah encouraged the people, saying, “Be strong and courageous, be not afraid, nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us

is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah." What a touching and instructive instance of simple faith in God at a most trying time! Unbelief invariably looks at the difficulties and the power of the enemy which seems to be irresistible: *faith on the other hand looks to God, and relies upon Him, who is above all the power that is against us.* And, in this case, God did come in, in a most marked way, and gave complete deliverance from the vast host of the Assyrian army which seemed so overwhelming. And if *we, too, are walking in obedience to God's word, and with a single eye for the glory of Christ, we can say, "With us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles"—if God be for us, who can be against us? May we count more upon Him with simple, implicit, and unwavering confidence! If He allows us to pass through trial and conflict, it surely is for our good and blessing, and in order to teach us how entirely dependent we are on Him for strength.*

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"THOU wilt keep in perfect peace the mind stayed on Thee, for he confideth in Thee. Confide ye in Jehovah for ever; for in Jah, Jehovah, is the Rock of Ages" (Isa. xxvi. 3, 4, New Trans.). In times of trial, do we thus find in God Himself our unfailing resource? If the mind is stayed on *Him*, there is perfect peace and calm in the soul where otherwise there would be agitation and unrest. "Confide in Him at all times, ye people; pour out your heart before Him: God is our refuge" (Ps. lxii. 8). "God is our refuge and strength, a help in distress, very readily found" (Ps. xlvi. 1). Oh, to trust Him *at all times*, in the dark days as well as in the bright, in the storm as well as in the sunshine!



## “First Love.”

THE word of the Lord to the Church at Ephesus, given us in Revelation ii. 4, “I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love,” is both touching and instructive to dwell upon. The translators of the Authorised Version seem to have missed the point when they added the word “somewhat” in italic print; for they, doubtless, considered it to be just a small thing, a little fault for which this Church was blamed, whilst it is praised for many good things. Truly the Lord in His grace owns all that He can that is good; but the context shows that the loss of “first love” was not, in His estimation, a small thing; on the contrary, it was fatal if not repented of.

This first of the seven Churches shows us, then, that which was the root-cause and beginning of all the subsequent failure in the Church—decline of first love to Christ. When Christ loses His place as the Object before the soul, the door is open for all sorts of counter-attractions, leading to worldliness, and eventually to various corruptions and evils to which the poor human mind is so prone, and which Satan is so active in bringing about. And remark here, the Lord does not say, “You have failed in earnest and active service,” for they had “works, labour and patience”; nor does He say, “You have not upheld the truth against those who sought to bring in false doctrine,” for they could not bear evil men and they had tried the pretensions of those who claimed to be apostles and were not, and had found them liars; but (and *this* was the crucial point!) “Thou hast left thy first love.” Failure in the Church, or in the individual believer, does not begin with that which is *outward*, but with that which is *inward*, with

the state of the soul, the inward springs of the heart's affections.

Let us ask, then, what is "first love"? It is, we believe, that state of the heart and affections where Christ is the first and the last, where He is everything. When His love is first made known to the soul, it is fresh, living, and powerful. It needs only the mention of His name, the thought even of *who* He is, and there is an immediate response; the whole soul goes out towards the Object, towards Christ Himself. Now nothing can make up for the loss of this. There may be zeal and energy, devoted labour and endurance, as there was at Ephesus (very good things in themselves), but, if Christ is not really the moving spring of it all, and if love to Him be not the source, it soon becomes a dry and formal thing. There may also be soundness in doctrine—and this, too, is absolutely essential if we are to walk in the path God has marked out for us in His Word—but if "first love" has faded away, decline has taken place, we are "fallen," and we need to "repent." Yes, we need to get back to the point of departure, for He who loves perfectly cannot be satisfied with any lower level than this; and He looks for it just because He does love perfectly. To take an illustration: Suppose a husband were away from home, and on his return were to find that his wife had everything as it ought to be and in perfect order in the house, but that her love to him was not what it once had been; would all her activity and zeal make up for the loss? No indeed! Nothing can satisfy love but love, and "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." It is characteristic of true love that it looks that this love should be reciprocated; it would not be true love if it did not look for an answer to itself.

Now Christ has loved the Church truly, deeply, with a love stronger than death; yea, a love which led Him to give *Himself* for it. What could He give more than Himself? It is, too, a love which never fades nor declines—a love which never grows cold. Rightly, therefore, and just because He does thus love, He looks for a response from the heart of the Church; yea, from the hearts of each one of His own. And if He does not find this ready response, He feels it—feels it truly because of the strength and divine perfection of *His* love. Service is very good, very blessed in its place; but Christ says to the Church, “I want *yourself*, your heart.” Service which does not spring from love and communion will soon become cold and formal service.

Thus, we may safely say that the state of the heart and affections touches and affects everything—every branch of truth, as well as our whole walk and conduct as Christians. Where there is “first love,” it gives a vividness, a living reality and freshness to all truth; indeed to everything concerning the Lord Himself. It must be so, because all truth centres round Christ; and if He has ceased to be the central Object for the heart and affections, even truth may become a dry theory, held in the intellect, instead of a powerful and living reality in the soul.

How true, then, are the words of the apostle, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal”—just an empty sound without power or unction. God said to Israel of old, “I have loved you,” but they replied, “Wherein hast thou loved us”? they had lost the sense of His love to them, and consequently their love to Him had grown cold. And how easily we too forget! we who have been so richly blest. How prone we are to selfishly

take all the blessings and privileges we get through Christ, and yet to become cold and indifferent as to the claims His divine love has upon us, body, soul, and spirit! Take one simple illustration. A gifted preacher referred some time ago to the lack of attendance at prayer-meetings, as one of the chief signs of the "down-grade"; should we have to deplore this if the flame of "first love" burned brightly in the hearts of Christians as it ought to do? No indeed. But, on the other hand, if Christ has His true place in the heart and affections, what blessed reality and freshness it imparts to all service, whether it be to preach to thousands, or to give a cup of cold water in His name. Again, if everyone coming to a meeting—whether for worship, for prayer, or for the preaching of the gospel, came with the realised sense of the love of Christ filling the soul, what blessed times we might expect! And, is there any reason why it should not be so? Certainly there is no reason on God's part; the failure is with us. May He graciously send a revival, and rekindle in the hearts of His people that "first love" which once burned so brightly at the beginning!

## The Morning Star—Christ our Hope.

*(Continued.)*

THE assembling of so large a multitude on the occasion of the miraculous effects accompanying the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost made it necessary that Peter should show the Jews that their own scriptures were accomplished by what had taken place. For the Lord's death, resurrection, and ascension to the Father's right hand had all been set forth in so many words a thousand

years previously.\* Peter's preaching was in the power of the Holy Ghost which he had received, an evident token of God's gracious purpose to lead His rebellious people to repentance, so that they might learn the fulness of His grace in the forgiveness of their sins. Let us, however, not lose sight of the fact that the forgiveness they needed was the Father's answer to the prayer of His blessed Son at the moment when He was nailed to the cross (Luke xxiii. 34).

Their reception of the gospel message was followed by baptism. It was only right that they should thus testify to a complete and definite change of position, involving their giving up Jewish privileges and boasts in order to own the lordship of the Messiah they had confessed. God had made Him "both Lord and Christ," and they must needs confess it by being baptized unto His death.

The repentance of the Jews, thus marked, made a distinct change between them and the leaders of their nation, who, persisting in their unbelief, soon began to persecute the followers of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts iv. 1, 2, 29-30, v. 17-18, 28, 40). The Lord's words in John xv. 17-21, both as to the hatred shown towards His disciples, and the persecution of which they were to be the objects, were very soon fulfilled. Those that believed were "added to the church"; those that refused the proffered forgiveness maintained their place and position in the world which hated the Father and the Son (see also Rom. viii. 7).

The importance of such an inevitable separation of the Church from the world is too great to be overlooked, all the more so because of the increasing

\* The scriptures quoted by Peter from Ps. xvi. and cx. furnished the needed proof. His sermon was an example of what is stated in Ps. lxxviii. 18 ; compare Eph. iv. 7-11.

tendency in the present day to obliterate this distinction.\* The climax of the foretold "strong delusion" will be reached when Christianity is reduced to an outward improvement of the world, with a view to finally getting rid of the name of Christ altogether, and substituting for Him a political, and a religious leader, all whose power, in both cases, will be derived directly from Satan himself (2 Thess. ii. 12; Rev. xiii. 4-12). And consequently, wherever God works in His long-suffering grace, a persecution of all who are faithful to Him must necessarily follow. It has often been so in the history of the Church, though with less pretension to universal success than at present. But the enemy outwits himself, and the supposed emancipation of mankind so much in vogue, will end in a slavery far worse than any which they think they have a right to complain of. When the Church is gone, persecution will burst out in a fresh direction—namely, against the Jews who will then once again be God's messengers to a Christless and Christ-hating world.

But let us pursue the history. After the descent of the Holy Ghost God's work prospered in Jerusalem, for a time. The numerous converts to Christianity felt the necessity of being together, and of having "all things common." The outward unity of the Church was thus borne witness to, but they had much to learn as to the faith they professed. That was the case even with Peter himself, and with the others, who were all slow to understand and carry out their commission to go "to Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8). Though seven deacons were chosen to look after the temporal administration and care of so large a

\* Even in Japan, Christian "delegates," so-called, have recently lent themselves to fraternising with idolaters for "elevating national morality," and "furthering national prosperity!"

multitude of believers, in order that the apostles might be free for the ministry of the word, God made use of two of these very deacons to carry out the ministry first confided to the apostles. One of them, Stephen, gave the last and crushing denunciation of Jewish apostasy; the other, Philip, was the first to visit Samaria with the Gospel. Later on, Peter, much against his Jewish thoughts, received a special call to carry the Gospel to Gentiles at Cæsarea; after which he was severely taken to task for it by the leading converts at Jerusalem (Acts x. 9-21; xi. 2-3, 18).

The true character of Christianity was only apprehended by degrees. Peter, led of the Holy Spirit, had spoken of "the Father" on the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 33); but present relationship with Him, according to the Lord's first message after His resurrection, "My Father *and* your Father," was not entered into (John xx. 17). Nor does it appear in their prayers, recorded in the early chapters of the Acts. They address God as "Jehovah," which is represented by the Greek word "Lord," and once (chap. iv. 24) as Master or "Sovereign Ruler" (as in Jude i. 4), and they speak of the Saviour as God's holy "child" or "servant."\* They had not yet realised what the Apostle John afterwards described as the Father's "manner of love" (1 John iii. 1-2). Jewish aspirations and Jewish hopes filled all hearts, engrafted on a sense of forgiveness by the accomplished sacrifice of Christ, such as had never been known under John the Baptist's preaching, or since. Peter's stirring call to repentance, in Acts iii., was based, as already remarked, upon the realisation, in the near future, of national hopes inspired by the prophets of Israel, when

\* "Son" in chap. iii. 13, 26, should be "child" or "servant," as elsewhere, and Acts viii. 37 is known to be an interpolation.

they foretold the earthly blessings to be inaugurated on Christ's return.

A further testimony was needed of a wholly new character, in order that these hopes might become heavenly in accordance with Christ's *present* seat at God's right hand in glory whither He had gone to prepare a place for those whom the Father had given to Him (John xiv. 2). This special testimony, God, in His sovereign mercy, was now about to bestow. And that it might be effective in every way, three conditions were satisfied: the witness had to be a pharisee of pharisees, thoroughly versed in Jewish modes of thought, and withal a man of spotless life (Acts xxvi. 5; Phil. iii. 5-6); secondly, the most desperate persecutor of those who followed what they esteemed to be a delusive novelty (Gal. i. 13-14); thirdly, he was to be admitted to see the personal glory of the Lord (1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8). By such means God not only operated his conversion, but also gave to his ministry the needed power. This witness was Saul of Tarsus, afterwards known as the Apostle Paul. He had never seen Jesus on earth, and consequently his start on the Christian career bore the stamp of what he saw and heard when, as persecutor, he "drew near to Damascus" (Acts ix. 3-6). The person of Christ in the glory was everything to him, accompanied by the deepest self-judgment (1 Cor. xv. 9-10); and he was the first to preach Jesus in the synagogues that "He *is* the SON OF GOD" (Acts ix. 20).

To Paul were confided truths of a peculiarly Christian character, and of which we find little or no mention in other writers of the New Testament, but which have their source and living expression in a glorified Christ; and this explains the fact of the glory being such a remarkable feature in the epistles he wrote, as for



instance in Rom. v. 1 ; Col. i. 27 ; Heb. ii. 10 ; 1 Thess. ii. 12, &c. &c.

The first particular communication was made to him at the time he wrote the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, explaining how it was that the Lord will bring His glorified saints with Him when He returns to this earth. The fact is stated in Zech. xiv. 5 ; and Jude refers to it as Enoch's prophecy (though in this case "saints" might refer to angels). But no explanation had as yet been given as to a *previous* removal from this earth of both sleeping and living believers.

The next became the subject of the Epistle to the Romans, which unfolds "the righteousness of God" in forgiving sins on the ground of Christ's sacrifice, and the character of the glory which is to be revealed in those who are made the "sons of God," so that Christ may be "the first-born among many brethren," all of them being "conformed to the image of HIS SON" (Rom. viii. 19, 29-30 ; Gal. iii. 26).

Another truth was the freshly established ordinance of the Lord for His Church on earth, to show His death "till He come"; and that is intimately connected with the glory, as we find in both Epistles to the Corinthians (1 Cor. x. 17, xi. 23-26, xv. 20, 23, 49-57 ; 2 Cor. iv. 17-18, v. 1-9).

Lastly, the full revelation of the "mystery" of the Body of Christ (unfolded in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and referred to at the end of the Epistle to the Romans, and in that to the Colossians) was confided to Paul alone, and gave colour to the gospel he preached (Acts xx. 27 ; Col. i. 25-26).

A very little reflection suffices to convince the attentive reader that all these truths, peculiar to Paul's writings, depend upon what Christ is in His own Person, now seated "at the right hand of the Majesty

on high," after having by Himself purged our sins when He suffered on the cross (Heb. i. 3).

And how infinitely precious it is for us to know that Christ must needs, in the first instance, satisfy His own heart, not by a public display of His power in this world, but rather in presenting *to Himself* His bride-elect, the Church which He has purchased with His own blood (Acts xx. 28 ; Eph. v. 25-27). The more we meditate upon these special revelations made to the apostle, the more our hearts are drawn out to the blessed Person of the SON OF GOD, which Paul was the first to preach. He began at once in the synagogue at Damascus. The persecutions he had been a chief means of carrying out, necessarily recoiled upon himself when he preached the faith he had previously sought to destroy (Gal. i. 23). But had he not heard from heaven the underlying truth of all his future ministry, when "Jesus, whom he persecuted," intimated the marvellous identification of His saints with Himself in the glory, in those words of pity and love, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?" (Acts ix. 4).

May the corresponding hope enliven our affections as we learn more of the deep meaning of the mystery, "which is CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27).

W. J. L.

### Concerning the Holy Spirit—A Dialogue.

A. (a) Is every believer *sealed* with the Spirit?  
(b) Is it possible for anyone to be sealed with the Spirit without having the Spirit dwelling *in* him?

B. (a) Yes, every one who has believed "the gospel of your salvation" is sealed. We read in 2 Corinthians i. 22, "God, who *hath also sealed* us"; Ephesians i. 13,

“Ye *were sealed* with that Holy Spirit of promise”; Ephesians iv. 30, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

(b) No, it is not possible; the Holy Spirit is the seal.

A. (a) Has every believer the *earnest* of the Spirit?

(b) Will God ever take back the Holy Spirit as the earnest?

B. (a) The earnest of the Spirit is God's gift to every believer. The Holy Ghost is Himself the earnest. As the grapes of Eschol were the earnest of the good things awaiting Israel in the land of Canaan, so the Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance (Eph. i. 14). (b) No, blessed be our God for ever, He never will take back his Holy Spirit. What! give us His Holy Spirit as the earnest of an inheritance we are not, after all, to enter upon! The thought would be a libel on His character, and shows the unbelief of our wretched hearts. “Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever.” The Lord says, “And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may *abide with you for ever*” (John xiv. 16). Again we read, “Whereby ye are sealed *unto the day of redemption*” (Eph. iv. 30).

A. (a) What is the meaning of the baptism by the Holy Ghost in 1 Corinthians xii. 13? (b) Is there, for the Christian, any other baptism of the Holy Ghost?

B. (a) We read in 1 Corinthians xii. 12, 13, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” First, it will be noticed that verse 12 uses the human body to illustrate that which has been brought about by the operation spoken of in verse 13. The body is composed of many members, yet it is but

one body. The divine statement is, "SO ALSO IS CHRIST." Next follows verse 13, which tells us by what power or process this marvellous fact has been brought about. No human being had any hand in this at all, for "BY ONE SPIRIT ARE WE ALL BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY." It is by the sovereign action of the Spirit of God that all Christians have been formed into ONE BODY. This baptism first took place on the Day of Pentecost. *Then* it was that the Holy Ghost came down from heaven to dwell in God's people in a way not known previously and formed them all into this ONE BODY. This body still exists on the earth, though its manifestation is not now seen. Human will and human arrangements have marred the outward display of this great truth, but, thank God, the truth still stands, "THERE IS ONE BODY" (Eph. iv. 4). Reader, do you recognise this truth and practically own it in everyday life? The baptism of the Holy Ghost, then, is that divine operation by which He forms all Christians into ONE BODY, and each member of that body is individually animated by that one Spirit. (b) The answer to the second part of the question is that Scripture never speaks of any other baptism of the Holy Ghost for the Christian than this one.

A. (a) In Galatians iii. 2 and 14 we read that we receive the Holy Spirit by the hearing of faith. (b) In Ephesians v. 18 we are told to be filled with the Spirit. How are these two things brought about, and do not they seem contradictory?

B. (a) There is no contradiction. The Galatian saints were turning back to *the law*; to do this is to deny Christianity in its proper character. The apostle challenges them as to the principle on which they had received the Holy Ghost; was it on the principle of law-works, or on that of faith? Christianity is "the

ministration of the Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 8). By its introduction the law, "the ministration of death," was *done away*, as that under which the Christian is placed (Rom. vi. 14). The presence of the Holy Spirit was the evidence that a new thing had commenced, that the previous principle ("this DO and thou shalt live") had ceased, as a principle of man's relationship with God. To turn back to the things imposed by the law was to give up the whole basis and principle of Christianity. It was to "fall from GRACE." (b) To be filled with the Spirit is the privilege and responsibility of every Christian. That which is to mark our lives is not the wild excesses of the old life, but the activities of Him who is the power of the new life. Thus we read, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit": again, "If we LIVE in the Spirit, let us also WALK in the Spirit." It is a solemn reflection that I may, by loose or careless behaviour, stifle the holy and beautiful activities of God the Holy Ghost who dwells in me.

A. In Luke xi. 13, we read that the Father will give His Holy Spirit to them that *ask* Him; yet we are told we should not pray *for* the Holy Ghost. How is this to be explained?

B. The scripture does not prohibit prayer for the Holy Ghost. In the case referred to in the question, the Lord Jesus was still upon the earth, and "the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 39). It was, therefore, *then* quite in harmony with the ways of God. *Now*, however, things are altogether different. The Holy Ghost *has* come; He indwells the believer, and all believers are, by Him, baptized into one body. To receive the inestimable blessing of His indwelling presence, it is only necessary to receive God's salvation. Faith in the

Person and atoning work of the Lord Jesus is followed by the Holy Ghost taking up His abode in the believer —“Know ye not that your body *is* the temple of the Holy Ghost?” (1 Cor. vi. 19); “After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. i. 13). Consequently to pray now for the Holy Ghost is to manifest ignorance of God’s word and His present ways with us; which, alas, is only too prevalent.

*A.* In reading the New Testament, I do not find a single case of praying to the Holy Ghost. Why is this? Is it not right to pray to or address the Holy Ghost, as some do in their meetings and their hymns?

*B.* This question answers itself. The silence of scripture is as golden as its most precious statements, and should command our respect. The Holy Ghost is here to glorify Christ. We read, “He shall not speak of Himself (or rather *from* Himself—*i.e.*, as a witness independent of the Father and the Son). . . . He shall glorify Me” (John xvi. 13, 14). Again, the Holy Ghost makes intercession for the saints; He works in us; He sheds abroad in our hearts the love of God; He divides the gifts, in the assembly, to every man severally as He will. All this He does, and more. Yet, as no example of praying *to* the Holy Ghost, nor of any exhortation to do so, is to be found in the New Testament, our wisdom in this as in all else, is, most assuredly, to be guided by scripture. May it be so increasingly with both writer and reader!

*A.* What is the difference between receiving the Holy Spirit by faith, as in Galatians iii. 2, and by the laying on of hands of the apostles, as in the Acts?

*B.* The impartation of the Holy Ghost, in certain cases, by the laying on of the apostles’ hands was, as is most evident, to enforce the great truth of the unity of all believers, and to leave no room for any thought of

independence to arise. The wisdom of God, displayed in the early days of the Church's history, is most marked. Where Jewish prejudices would have intervened, the Holy Ghost fell on Cornelius and those with him, apart from any human intervention beyond the preaching of the Word by Peter. Where independency might have crept in, the Holy Ghost is communicated by the laying on of the apostles' hands, as at Ephesus. But whatever form God, in His wisdom, thought fit to adopt in local cases then, the gift of the Holy Spirit was, in every instance, on the principle of faith. There is NO OTHER WAY to-day in which God communicates the blessings which the Gospel brings. C. R. L.

### Gleanings.

*“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was (or came into being), I am ”* (John viii. 58). It was said: the good confession before the Jews, the truth of truths, the infinite mystery of His Person, which to know is to know the true God and eternal life, as He is both. Such He was, such He is, from everlasting to everlasting. Incarnation in no way impeached it, but rather gave occasion for its revelation in man and to men. He who was God is become man, and as He cannot cease to be God, so He will not cease to be man. He is the Eternal, though also a man, and has taken manhood into union with Himself, the Son, the Word, not with God only, but God too. Abraham came into being: Jesus is God, and God *is*. “I am” is the expression of eternal subsistence of Godhead. He could as truly have said, Before Adam was, I am; but the question was about Abraham, and with that calm dignity which never goes beyond the needed

truth, He asserts it, and no more; but what He asserts could not be true, were He not the ever-present and unchanging One, the I AM before Adam, angels, and all things; as indeed, He it was who created them. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that has been made.

“*And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me*” (John xvii. 5). He was Son before time began; He had therefore, of course, glory with the Father before the world was. But He had taken the place of servant in manhood on earth, and now asks that the Father should glorify Him along with Himself with the glory which He had along with Him eternally. A man to everlasting, He would receive all from the Father, albeit Son from everlasting; and when glorified, it is that He may glorify the Father. Such is His perfect love and devotedness.

W. K.

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“*If ye loved Me ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father*” (John xiv. 28). Good and precious Saviour, we do indeed rejoice that Thou, who hast suffered so much for us, hast now fulfilled all things, and art at rest with Thy Father, whatever may be Thine active love for us. Oh that we knew and loved Thee better! But still we can say in fulness of heart, Come quickly, Lord! Leave once more the throne of Thy rest and of Thy personal glory, to come and take us to Thyself, that all may be fulfilled for us also, and that we may be with Thee and in the light of Thy Father's countenance and in His house. Thy grace is infinite, but Thy presence and the joy of the Father shall be the rest of our hearts and our eternal joy.

J. N. D.



## Practical Effect of Waiting for Christ.

THE coming of the Lord is not a dry doctrine or a mere theory, to be held in the intellect or reasoned about, while it has little or no practical effect on the life and walk of the Christian. It is, on the contrary, a great and living reality, a blessed hope which comes into all the details of daily life, a truth which pervades the whole structure of Christianity. It affects and influences every relationship and position in which the Christian is found.

It is not the object here to seek to unfold the doctrine itself, or to draw attention to the distinction between His coming *for* His saints and His appearing or manifestation *with* them in glory (two quite distinct events), but rather to take up the general truth of the Lord's coming in a practical way. Scripture bears the most complete and undeniable witness that Christ is coming, and that His coming *for* His saints may take place at any moment. It is not death that is set before us, but the Lord's coming, as the proper and immediate hope. In those touching words spoken by the Saviour Himself to His disciples just on the eve of His departure, recorded for us in John xiii.-xvi., He sought to cheer their sorrowing hearts by telling them of His return. "*I am coming again,*" He says, and these words bridge over the whole of the "little while" between His departure and His return. They were spoken, too, in that spirit of confiding love and grace which counted upon the affections of the heart being true and loyal to Himself, and feeling deeply His absence; and they come with particular force and aptness to ourselves to-day, for we live at the close of the period during which He is absent, seated at the

Father's right hand. Here, in John xiv., it was no doctrinal statement merely but words which flowed, not only from the lips, but from the heart of One whom they dearly loved, and who counted upon the fact that they would miss Him from their midst. He does not say, "I will send and fetch you"—oh no, this would have been much below the level of *His* thoughts—but "*I* will come again"—I myself, in person. Now this is an essential element in connection with the truth of the Lord's coming—it is *Himself* who is coming. It is not merely the announcement of the fact that someone is coming; but it is Jesus Himself—the *One* who is coming, brought before the soul, and this appeals to the heart and affections, and imparts all its power and living freshness to the fact itself.

We see an illustration of the effect produced by waiting for the Lord Himself in the Thessalonian believers; bright young converts they were, in whom the divine life was displayed in its early freshness and energy. They were waiting for God's Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, "Jesus," the One who delivered them from the wrath to come; and the result was that they were practical witnesses for Christ, even in times of trial and persecution. Yes, it is the same Jesus whom we see portrayed in the gospels; the same who hung upon the cross for our sins, and who, as the glorified Saviour, has watched over His own with such ceaseless love and tender compassion—*this* is the Christ who is coming.

The Lord Himself looks for and values the watching and expectant attitude on the part of His people. He says in Luke xii., "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord . . . that when He cometh

and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately." He had just spoken to His disciples of their treasure being above, and the heart being there also; and this is, doubtless, the key to it all; for it is only as the *heart* is engaged and occupied with Christ where He now is above, that the *hand* will be, so to speak, on the latch of the door ready to open to Him immediately. Remark, He does not say here "like men that hold the doctrine of the second advent," but "like men that wait." And this makes all the difference in the world, for we may hold the doctrine in a merely intellectual way as a theory, and be cold as an icicle and dry as a chip. Would Christians be craving after the honours and distinctions of this world or seeking to amass wealth if they were really waiting for God's Son from heaven? Truly they would not. Then, again, if the hope were burning brightly in the souls of the Lord's people, what a purifying and separating effect it would have, so as to be suitable and pleasing to Him! So we read, "every man that hath this hope in Him (*i.e.*, in Christ, who is to be manifested) purifieth himself, even as He (Christ) is pure" (1 John iii. 3). How diligent it would make the believer, how earnestly desirous for the blessing and conversion of the unsaved!

The apostle says, "our conversation (or association of life) is in heaven, from whence also we await the Lord Jesus Christ [as] Saviour" (Phil. iii. 20). We wait for a heavenly Christ who is coming, and who will give even these bodies of our humiliation a fashion like His own. It was when the *heavenly* characters of the hope was lost by the Church that she, too, lost sight of her true place as a witness for Christ, in separation from the world, and sank to the level of the world and adopted its ways and maxims.

Soundness in doctrine as to this blessed truth is very important truly; but, while insisting on this, let us ask ourselves the practical question, Are we really waiting for the Son from heaven? Are we looking for the rising of "the bright, the morning star"? What place has this blessed hope of the coming of the heavenly Christ in our daily life and walk as we pass through this world? This practical side of the truth is of the greatest importance in these days of easy-going profession.

But whatever may be the attitude of the Christian, even if failure, alas, has come in, Christ *is* "the bright, the morning star," nothing changes Him. Though we may change and become dull, He never does. No mists or clouds of earth, no lack on our part, no failure of the Church, can change or dim the brightness of "the *bright* morning star." Bless His name, nothing can chill the warmth of affection in Christ's heart! His unchanging love and affection for His Church shall surely be given expression to, in its living power, when He shall descend from heaven with a "shout"—that resurrection word of command which shall raise the dead and change the living, clothing them with bodies like His own; and remember, this may take place *at any moment*.

Is anyone disposed to say that this attitude of waiting for Christ as the immediate hope of the Christian, and as the true object of his heart's affections, is mere sentimentality? Not so, for we read, "the Spirit *and* the bride say, Come." It is the Holy Spirit Himself who joins with the Church in saying, "Come"; yea, it is He who has created those bridal affections in the Church, and who would give to her the consciousness of her *own* proper relationship as the bride, putting into her mouth, so to speak, that blessed invitation, "Come."

And how poor all the brightest and fairest things of

this world appear in the light of that day, when the glorified Saviour shall present His bride to Himself, spotless, arrayed in glory like Himself above! In divine and ineffable grace, He will make her to share with Himself that glory which He has acquired by His redemption work upon the cross; and when He reigns over the world in displayed glory, His saints will reign with Him. Better far even to suffer for Him now, if called on to do so, and to wait for *that* day, instead of grasping after the passing things of this dying, fading world.

It is very instructive to observe the way in which the book of the Revelation closes. That book is "the testimony of Jesus Christ"; and, whilst it is a book of judgment all through, yet, just at the close, the Lord Jesus presents Himself to the soul in a distinctly personal manner—"I, Jesus," He says, "have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the Churches." It is He *Himself*, Jesus, who is not only the root and the offspring of David, but the bright, the morning star. Then in the very closing sentence of the inspired volume, He would impress on His Church, as the last words of His testimony, His coming again, "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." As these, His last words, sound across the ages which have elapsed since they were spoken, have they lost—can they lose—any of their fragrance, freshness, and value for our souls as we wait for the moment when we shall meet Him in the air and see Him face to face? Surely not. Then let us ask ourselves, Do we take them to heart, or do we allow any of the passing things of this passing world to so come in between our souls and Himself as to cause a reserve, a hanging back, a want of alacrity in the ready response on our part to His closing testimony? And as His coming is surely near at hand

now, let us pray all the more earnestly that the saints of God may be awakened afresh to the living power and reality of this blessed hope, and respond with deeper emphasis, more earnest desire, and more longing expectation than ever, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

## The Morning Star—Christ our Hope.

*(Continued.)*

PAUL'S ministry has a character of its own. It is distinctly "heavenly," and is largely illustrated by his life which forms the subject of more than half of "The Acts." Luke, who was the author of the book, became Paul's companion when he left Troas to go into Macedonia, and thus take the gospel for the first time into Europe. We may well say that his peculiar testimony had its source in heaven, from whence the Lord revealed Himself to him, when he was intent on persecuting the saints in foreign parts, and was approaching the city of Damascus furnished with authority from the chief priests at Jerusalem to deliver the saints to prison or to death (Acts xxvi. 10-11). The Lord arrested him with the words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?" Did not those words contain the essence of the "mystery" afterwards more definitely revealed to him—the mystical union of Christ and the Church, "which is His Body" (Eph. 1. 20-23)?

Furthermore, Paul received for his own soul a wonderful accession of power, granted to no one else, when he was, in a vision, "caught up into paradise," whither the Lord took the repentant thief crucified at His side (2 Cor. xii. 1-10). On that occasion the Lord gave His servant a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him

humble, and to maintain in him a deepened sense of his own weakness—the proper condition for not merely knowing but *feeling* that all true power is from the Lord alone. There was real danger lest, through the abundance of the revelations, he should “be exalted above measure.” Dependence upon the Lord is constantly needed for all true ministry, and particularly for such as Paul’s.

Besides that, the Lord’s word to Ananias had to be fulfilled in regard to the apostle: “I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts ix. 16). Without the suffering here, there can be little spiritual power for entering into the glory set before us; it would be shorn of its true incentive and energy in the soul, through not being linked, as it should be, with the blessed Lord’s pathway and life on earth. Consequently, the apostle’s evangelistic service was a continuous series of bitter persecutions, especially from the Jews. On his many journeys he had to brave every kind of danger on land and sea, and was often in peril of his life, to say nothing of bonds and imprisonment (2 Cor. xi. 23-27). No other witness of the truth was called to suffer in the same degree, and thus “fill up,” or complete what might be lacking in those outward afflictions which served to show how the Church’s course on earth is practically identified with Christ’s (Col. i. 24). Every Christian has in some way thus to learn by experience how hostile is the world which nailed Christ to the cross. “Unto you it is given,” says the apostle, “in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me” (Phil. i. 29-30).

The Lord Himself, after His resurrection, showed to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus how intimately

connected are "the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow" (1 Pet. i. 11). Such indeed is one of the chief burdens of the Old Testament scriptures (Luke xxiv. 25-27, 32, 44-47). Is it not precisely on this principle that Christ's present place in glory, after having suffered, indicates the believer's hope? A little serious consideration will surely make this plain, and first as to life possessed:—

The Lord, in answering the cavils of the Jews, shows that every living soul must know the Son of God in one of two ways: either as the "life-giving Spirit" at the present time (1 Cor. xv. 45), or else as the Son of man, to whom all judgment has been committed by the Father (John v. 19-29). Now the believer, through grace, does not look for judgment, Christ having already borne that for him, and met every claim against him in righteousness, when "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." The assured portion of every redeemed soul is, consequently, to be with the Saviour in glory, there to enjoy "the rest that remaineth for the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9). Those who do not thus know Christ through the gospel, have before them all the terrors of awaiting the judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries (Heb. x. 26-31). From that judgment to come there is no escape for one who refuses the gospel of God's grace offered to every one NOW. But judgment is deferred till Christ's return.

In other words, for a believer, the present age is characterised by the Lord's *absence* from this world, as He said to his disciples, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. . . . And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John



xvi. 5-6, 22, 28). The gospel has gone forth, and it is still being proclaimed. The gospel net has been cast by the Lord Himself into the sea, and the work of the fishermen ever since has been "gathering the good into vessels" (Matt. xiii. 47, 48). Presently the reverse will take place; for, "at the end of this age, the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire." The preparatory work of "binding the tares in bundles," is already going on (Matt. xiii. 30, 49, 50). But the saints that form the Church have nothing to do with judgment; they await the Lord's return.

God is still speaking in the SON (Heb. i. 1). Judgment is, however, rendered necessary by the "lifting up" of the Son of man upon the cross. It was in view of His death that Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John xii. 31-36). But previously to the judgment, that is before He begins to carry it out, Jesus will come to take all His redeemed to be with Himself for ever in the Father's house (John xiv. 2, 3). For that we are now waiting. Paul bears constant testimony to the same truth (see Rom. viii. 18, 19, 29, 30; Phil. iii. 20, 21). The Thessalonians, who had only heard the gospel on three successive Sabbath days, were converted—turned to God from idols—"to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. i. 9, 10). They were characterised by their work of *faith*, labour of *love*, and patience of *hope* in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father. There were no printed Bibles in those days; no part of the New Testament had then been even written; notwithstanding, does not the energy of their faith put us to shame, when we think of the advantages we enjoy? Is the Lord Jesus Christ "our HOPE" (1 Tim. i. 1)? Are

we all earnestly looking forward to be with Him? Do our ways and walk prove it to those who know us?

We do well to ask ourselves a further question, Is Christ, in this sense, the "anchor of our soul"? Is it not a fact that the Lord is, as it were, forestalling the heavenly hope even now, by "appearing for us" in the very presence of God? (Heb. ii. 10, 13; vi. 19, 20; ix. 24). His prayer to the Father on behalf of His redeemed, must have its fulfilment: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am . . ." (John xvii. 24). By all these passages is our place shown to be "for ever with the Lord." Even a believer who dies in this present time, departs to be "with Christ," which is far better even than serving Him on the earth (2 Cor. v. 6-8; Phil. i. 23). Jesus who is already in the glory is our "forerunner," which He could not be if none were to follow Him there. We should be looking forward, at any moment, to meet Him in the air (1 Thess. iv. 17, 18). He will never fail us; does He find us faithful?

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Paul's ministry came early to a close, in martyrdom. But the Lord took care that it should receive a final and authoritative confirmation from both Peter and John, who survived him, and who had both seen the blessed Lord on earth, and were also present at the transfiguration scene. The importance of what they then *saw* and *heard* "on the holy mount" cannot be exaggerated. We have already referred to it on page 103. There were three witnesses whom Jesus expressly called aside; and Satan's object was evidently to get rid of them. Herod put James to the sword, but when he was, as he thought, keeping Peter safely shut up in prison for the same purpose, the Lord sent

His angel by night to open the prison doors (Acts xii. 1-11).

Both Peter and John were preserved to the end of apostolic history. Peter's mission was to explain the import of the transfiguration, as related by Matthew—"the Son of man coming in His kingdom" (chap. xvi. 28). In other words, that is from the point of view of God's governmental dealing with His saints at the present time of suffering, in view of the Lord's return. This is also pointed out in its moral features in Mark and Luke. John, on the other hand, does not mention the occurrence, but is really occupied with the *voice* heard "from the excellent glory"; for both in his gospel and in his first epistle he unfolds Christianity from the special standpoint of present relationship with the Father, as set forth in the Lord's message confided to Mary Magdalene: "My Father *and* your Father" (John xx. 17). The Gospel of John unfolds this relationship as *seen* in the person of the SON (chaps. i.-xii.), and made good in our souls by the power of the Holy Ghost (chaps. xiii.-xvii.). The epistle deals with the *effects* of sonship in believers, both as to their life and hope. Finally, the closing page of the Revelation emphasises the hope by confirming the promise made by "the Son of God" to the "overcomer" in the address written to the Church of Thyatira: "I will give him THE MORNING STAR" (Rev. ii. 18, 28).

Peter calls it the "day-star," literally a "light-bearer" or "light-bringer," evidently referring to its moral character, and intimating that darkness still reigns at the time of its rising. We have only to compare the closing chapter of the Old Testament, in order to be penetrated with the complete contrast between the *Jewish* hope, only to be realised *after* the

Church is gone, and the *Christian's* portion in an actually glorified Christ. The "Sun of righteousness" (Mal. iv. 2) speaks of outwardly manifested blessing on this *earth*, the attendant effects being shown in the expression "*healing* in His wings"; whereas the "day-star" is evidently a *call away* from this earth, only seen by those who are watching in the night. The saints should be ever *watching*; how much the Lord insisted upon it shortly before His death! (Mark xiii. 34-37). In full accordance with this attitude of watching, Peter's desire is that the day-star should be, as it were, already "risen in our hearts," with all its sanctifying power, and the day-time of Christ's glory be dawning there.\* In his first epistle this is called "the revelation of Jesus Christ" fraught with the final grace of completed salvation (1 Pet. i. 5, 7, 13).

W. J. L.

(*To be continued.*)

\* The passage, 2 Peter i. 19, is somewhat obscure in our Authorised Version, on account of the position given to the words "more sure." This is corrected in the Revised Version. The meaning is, that the transfiguration confirmed in an extraordinary way, and thus *made more sure* the "word of prophecy," with which the Jews were more or less familiar. Once this is understood, much light is thrown upon the passage. The Father's *voice*, heard on the mount, not only confirms all prophecies relating to the Son, but imparts to them a fresh and deeper signification with an accompanying effect on the believer's heart, similar to that of putting aside a candle because the day is dawning. The prophecy refers to future blessing on this earth; but it also speaks largely of Christ's personal sufferings and coming glory. Its scope is therefore not to be limited to the special circumstances or events which gave rise to it in any particular case. In this sense it is not of any private or restricted interpretation, like a human sentence; for "holy men of God spake under the power of the Holy Ghost."

**“Builded Together.”      “Gathered Together.”**

(Eph. ii. 22.)

(Matt. xviii. 20.)

*The presence of God by the Spirit ; and the presence  
of the Lord Jesus.*

**I**T must be plainly evident to every thoughtful reader of the New Testament that this present day of grace is characterised by the presence of the Holy Spirit upon the earth. The words of the Lord Jesus in the three chapters, John xiv., xv., and xvi., clearly show us that certain blessings were to result from His death and resurrection ; and that not only were these blessings in themselves a gain to true Christians, but that the Holy Spirit would Himself actually come and indwell believers, and abide with them for ever.

The spirit of truth, the power of testimony, and the glorifier of Christ—these are some of the things said of the “other comforter” who was to come down from the Father, as sent by Christ, when He ascended to the right hand of God, as victorious over all the power of sin and Satan. Accordingly His ascension was followed, as we know, by the actual descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, in the twofold manifestation of *filling* all the house where they were assembled as with a rushing mighty wind, and *sitting* upon the disciples in the form of cloven tongues like as of fire. It will be found that three little words are used in scripture to describe the operations of the Holy Spirit in the believer, viz., *with* you (John xiv. 16) ; *in* you (John xiv. 17) ; *upon* you (Acts i. 8).

But besides all the blessings that were to flow from the descent and presence of the Holy Spirit—all of the deepest importance to the believer in giving him the conscious enjoyment of his portion in Christ—there are two conspicuous features of this, the “Spirit’s day” (John xiv. 20), both closely allied with these blessings,

but not to be confounded with them. These are set forth in the passages quoted at the head of this paper, Ephesians ii. 22, and Matthew xviii. 20.

They present to us two things of the highest practical importance in this present interval of Christ's absence on high, and we desire to consider them a little in a simple and practical way, for the help of young Christians especially; not so much as matters of doctrine, important as this is, but in their effect on our walk and ways as believers.

And first let us note, taking the scriptures in the order in which they stand at the head of this article rather than as they occur in our Bibles—one is abiding and always true, namely, the presence of God by His Spirit; the other is conditional. The words in Ephesians ii. 19-22, addressed to Gentile believers, tell them (and ourselves also) that "ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints . . . built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; . . . in whom (that is, in Christ Jesus) ye also are builded together for an habitation of God in (the) Spirit." Let us ponder this a little. It takes us back to that precious thought of God, His desire to dwell with men. This was communicated to Moses, but it was only made possible by the redemption of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. It was beautifully expressed in their song on the banks of the Red Sea, "Jehovah is my strength and my song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation" (Ex. xv. 2).

True it is that Jacob called the place where God appeared to him "Bethel," the house of God; but this was only a temporary visit, though important as marking the effect of God's presence; but it was only when redemption was accomplished, in type at least, that God

revealed His purpose to dwell amongst men. Accordingly when He gave to Moses the detailed direction for the tabernacle, He said, "And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex. xxv. 8).

After a time the temple succeeded the tabernacle, and although Israel, as a nation, utterly failed in their responsibility to maintain what was suitable to God in their midst, yet we find that even when the glory of God had departed, the "house of the Lord" was still there for those who had faith (see Ps. cxxii., cxxxii., cxxxiv.). So, too, in Haggai's day: what is charged against the returned captives is their neglect of the Lord's house. They were occupied about their own houses, but they had to learn the lesson, so much needed for all times, that the Lord's house—what concerns His glory—is to be the first thing with His people; then He says, "From this day will I bless you," &c.

The Lord Jesus, too, recognised the temple which existed in His day as "My Father's house." The temple of Haggai's time had been rebuilt, and the one then in Jerusalem was largely fitted and adorned from motives anything but sacred and God-inspired perhaps; but still the Lord owned it, until the time when Israel's rejection of Him as their Messiah was consummated. *Then* He disowned it and finally all the visible marks of God's dwelling-place on earth passed away.

Here, no doubt, is the testing-point for us. When the visible passes away, and the transition takes place from the temple to the church of God, how is the dwelling-place to be discerned? Where *now* is the house of God? The answer is found in the scripture before us; it is where God by His Spirit dwells. The house of God is formed by the Holy Ghost—"buildded together" by the unseen power of God; and the presence of God, by His Spirit, marks its limits.

It has been truly said that God dwells in the Church now on earth, and that the Church is God's house. We read in 1 Timothy iii. 15, "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the church (or assembly) of the living God, the pillar and ground (or base) of the truth." Yes, and we must be careful not to confuse this aspect of the church as "the house," with the other aspect in which it is also presented to us in the word, namely, as "the body of Christ"—an equally blessed and important truth in its place. Both are true of the Church, and both essentially distinct. Every matter of practical holiness and behaviour; and every matter of discipline, is connected with "the house of God," hence the exhortation in 1 Timothy just quoted. Discipline cannot be connected with the "body of Christ," as such, for you could not (for example) cut off members of the body—it would be unthinkable. But as to the house, 1 Peter iv. 17 says, "Judgment must begin at the house of God"; a passage often misunderstood because the difference between "the house," and "the body" is not seen. Both terms are used of the church, or assembly, as we see from the scriptures already quoted. We must, however, bear in mind that the house of God, so far as it is the work of God, is composed only of those who are truly called of God; yet, as to the practical result of the work accomplished in the hands of men, it takes in those who profess, and may include that which is not genuine material (see 1 Cor. iii. 12-16). In 2 Timothy ii. 20, it is likened to a great house, in which are vessels, some to honour and some to dishonour. But the Church viewed as the body of Christ includes only those associated in faith and life with the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

T. R.

*(To be continued.)*



## Work in the Villages.

THE villages furnish a field for visiting and tract-distribution, in which those who desire to make known the blessed Gospel of Christ might profitably spend some time. As a rule, the people in the villages are more simple and not so hardened and indifferent as they are in our great cities, where there are so many worldly attractions to bid for their time and attention. By going round the same village occasionally, the visitor will become acquainted with the people and will thus gain their confidence, and a word of sympathy with such as are in trial, will often open the way for the introduction of the Gospel message. There is much spiritual darkness and much need on every hand, and the fields are white already to harvest; but soon the day of opportunity will be over. Oh for energy and faith to utilise this present time, which is passing so rapidly, for Christ and His interests in the blessing and conversion of souls!

This *individual* work of visiting from house to house is quite as important in its place as preaching. Many can be reached in this way, whom, for various reasons, it would be impossible to get to a meeting. It often opens the way for reading the Scripture to the sick or the aged or those who cannot come out; and sometimes even for speaking a word to the godless and careless, who are too indifferent to come to any meeting. The work needs earnest prayer for guidance and for blessing on the message, whether spoken or in print. Time is passing, souls are perishing, Christ is coming; may God stir up His beloved people to *be in earnest* in seeking by prayer, by visiting, or in any way we can, the blessing and salvation of souls!

## New Birth.

THE simple yet all-important truth of new birth, of which our Lord spoke to Nicodemus, has a much wider bearing, and is much more far-reaching in its effects than, perhaps, many think. It entirely cuts up by the roots the whole sacramental and ritualistic systems, which propose to meet the need of the soul by the various ordinances and rituals prescribed by the Church. All the vast fabric which was built up in the Middle Ages, which still exists to this day, and to which, alas, many are turning back, goes down before the simple yet comprehensive words of the Saviour, "Ye *must* be born again." All the great religious machinery on which men have expended so much labour, and on which they have prided themselves—that which is designed to act upon the senses—the ornate services, the rituals, the candles, the vestments, the pictures, the images, all the outward show and pomp which men prize so highly, is disposed of by those words which fell from His lips, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." These words prove conclusively that man, as he stands, will not do for God; in order to see or enter the kingdom of God he *must* be born again. The whole fabric of the outward Church—the professing body of the baptized—that which appears so great and imposing, and which holds sway over so many minds, is entirely set aside by the simple but momentous truth of NEW BIRTH.

It is well to remark here that the true force of the word translated "again," is not exactly "from above" (though new birth, in itself, be from above), but "anew," "right over again." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh"—it may be moral, upright, religious and cultured,

but it is "flesh" all the same. No amount of outward improvement or veneer can change it, for, as we read in Romans vii. 18, "In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth"—not *some* good, but—"no good thing"; again, "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (viii. 7).

Here, then, is the great fact which lies at the root and basis of all true relationship with God, and which we need to insist on so much to-day, namely, that no training or religious culture of the old nature will effect the change called new birth; we *must* receive from God an entirely new life and new nature—in other words, we *must* be born again, entirely anew.

As to the manner and means of the new birth, Scripture makes this so clear that we need not err about it. In 1 Peter i. 23, we read, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"; again, in James i. 18, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." Thus no outward ordinance, however right in its place—such as water baptism or ought else—can bring about the new birth. It is "by the word of God," applied by the Spirit of God, producing repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. But what is so important to see is, that it is not a bettering or amendment or improvement of the old nature; but the communication by faith of an entirely new life—eternal life—and a new nature; for we are made "partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. i. 4). What a blessing to have received from God a nature suitable to His kingdom!

A characteristic feature of the new nature is, that it delights in the things of God; it finds its joy in seeking

to please Him, so that His service is, not bondage or drudgery but the blessed joyous liberty of the Christian, that in which he finds his delight. Take an illustration—suppose an unconverted man were asked to go to a prayer-meeting or Bible-reading; he might do so, but he would doubtless consider it an irksome duty; if, however, he were born again by the Word of God, it is just what he would enjoy. The new nature, too, gives us capacity to understand what is pleasing to God; and the Spirit of God, using the written Word, finds His blessed service in taking of the things of Christ and presenting them to the soul, thus leading the Christian into an intelligent understanding of those rich and abiding blessings which are linked up with the glory of our Lord Jesus, and in which, through grace, we have our part.

Another thing connected with the new life and nature which we receive at new birth is, that it is a dependent nature—dependent on God every moment. The Lord Jesus Himself was the true example of a dependent and obedient man on earth. In Him we see the perfect manifestation of the divine life, in the midst of a scene where everything was opposed to Him. He was meek and lowly of heart; He never swerved from the path of perfect obedience and perfect dependence on the Father, so that He could say, “I live on account of the Father”; “I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me”; “I do always those things that please Him,” &c. What a path of perfect obedience and absolute devotedness to the Father’s will and glory!

Alas! how unlike Him we are! nevertheless He is our example, as He says, “Learn of Me.” All the Father’s words and commands were the *expression* of the divine life in Christ (for He was perfect); they are

given to us to guide and direct, and form the divine life in the believer. This, surely, is a wondrous pathway to be set upon! as it is expressed in John's epistle, we are to "walk even as He walked." Truly it is the blessed privilege of the Christian, who is quickened with divine life, and who has been made a partaker of the divine nature, to walk in communion with the Father and the Son, that our joy may be full (1 John i. 1-4). It is not merely that we may have joy, but that our joy may be *full*. This was the Lord's own desire for His disciples also; for, just before leaving them he said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

But we need *power* as well as life; for the new life is not, in itself, the power needed to witness for God and to meet all the difficulties of the way. For this, God has given to those who believe the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter, the Spirit of life and liberty. We are not put back under law, but the Holy Spirit is the source of strength; and He it is who, acting in the new life and nature, produces thoughts, feelings, affections, and actions pleasing to God and suitable to His holy nature.

Now the source and origin of the new life and nature which the believer receives at new birth is heavenly, it is from God, and it enjoys what is heavenly. We do not need to turn for peace and satisfaction to the dry rituals and empty formalities which can only puff up the flesh. We have all in Christ, who is the food, spiritually, of the new man. For the new nature has its new objects, new aims, new desires, new joys, new pursuits—it breathes the atmosphere, so to speak, of the "new creation" where "all things are of God" (2 Cor. v.). It feeds upon Christ, the heavenly manna, the true bread

come down from heaven. He is not only the *giver* of life (John v. 21), but the *sustainer* of life—the food, spiritually, of the life He gives (John vi. 48, 57). It is true, alas, and we know it by experience, that there is the constant danger of getting tired of this heavenly food, and lusting again after the fleshpots of Egypt—but these things can give no real joy to the new nature, nor can they give any lasting satisfaction to the heart. But God, in the riches of His grace, has given to all His people a wealthy and heavenly portion in Christ, far superior to all the best things of this world. May He enable us to live more habitually in the practical enjoyment of it!

### The Morning Star—Christ our Hope.

(Continued.)

**I**N connection with the Apostle Peter's account of the Transfiguration, we do well to notice that his second epistle is of a more general character than his first. It evidently embraces the whole Church, and thus falls into line with the wider application of the Gospel, as it was committed to Paul. See Galatians ii. 6-10. To Peter had been committed "the Gospel of the circumcision"; which means that Jews and proselytes were naturally first in his thoughts; and ministry to Gentiles, as in the case of Cornelius, was exceptional (Acts x., xi.). Paul, on the contrary, was sent definitely "to the Gentiles," while not excluding the Jews whom he necessarily met, and had first to deal with in the synagogues. For his habit was to go there in order to find the copies of the Old Testament Scriptures from which he proved that Jesus of Nazareth was "the Christ" to whom those Scriptures everywhere bore witness (Acts ix. 15, xvii. 1-3, xxvi. 17, 18).

Peter's first epistle was addressed more particularly to the converted Jews scattered over the provinces of Asia Minor, probably before or about the time that Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus. All who heeded the Lord's warning had then to leave the city (Luke xxi. 20-24). This extended to a period of forty years after the Lord had suffered on the cross. Terrible indeed were those "days of vengeance" on the unbelieving people, then weeping in vain for "themselves and their children" (Luke xxiii. 27-31). We can thus understand better what "reproach for the name of Christ" meant in those days (1 Pet. iv. 14). But in the second epistle, the apostle had good reason to feel that Jerusalem as a centre was blotted out from the earth, and that both Jew and Gentile must rally round the character of the Gospel specially entrusted to Paul. It was no longer a question of Jews being blessed in a new way, that is with a full knowledge of accomplished redemption, and of the efficacy of the blood of Christ, but, notwithstanding that, on lines set forth in Abraham's history, who confessed that he was "a stranger and pilgrim on the earth" (Heb. xi. 13). True as that must needs remain for Christians in all time, there was and is a still deeper truth at the basis of the Church's standing, namely the personal knowledge of the SON OF GOD. The Jews naturally looked for blessing on earth; the Christian finds it already in the person of Christ.

Now Paul *began* with this in his preaching at Damascus. And in agreement with it, all Peter's second epistle speaks of the precious things "that pertain unto life and godliness" through the *knowledge* of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ.\* In that "know-

\* We may usefully compare in this respect 2 Peter i. 2, 3, 8, ii. 20, iii. 18, with Colossians i. 10, and Philippians iii. 8.

ledge" we have to grow and increase, learning not only the grace but also the "fulness" which is in the SON (John i. 14-16). That is the great theme of John's writings, both of gospel and epistle.

Moreover, it is interesting to notice the humble place that Peter takes, putting "servant" before "apostle" in the opening verse of this second epistle, besides referring so definitely to "all" the epistles of "our beloved brother Paul also," at the close. His conclusion is, "Grow in grace and in the *knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ." God takes up man as he is, without taking into account national distinctions of any kind; for there is "no difference" in this respect, that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 22, 23). But then again, "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him"; and with this Peter's words agree.

His second epistle is addressed "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us." Do not these words recall what the blessed Lord said on the occasion of the coming of the Greeks who desired to see Him? Speaking of His suffering on the cross, so soon to come about, and of the consequent "judgment of this world," He added, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all* unto Me" (John xii. 32). See also John xi. 52, and iii. 16. The Gospel cannot be shut up within narrow Jewish limits, in spite of their great privilege in possessing the Scriptures. All are naturally dead in trespasses and sins—dead to God; and He comes in on their behalf with that quickening power, shown in raising up Christ from the dead (Eph. i. 19-23, ii. 1-10). What a blessing it is for us to have this assurance from God Himself!

But if, on the one hand, nationalities are dropped, so that there is "neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian,



Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all," there is also another kind of distinction more difficult to overcome, that of religious and class hatred, a distinction found often in the gospel history amongst the Jews themselves, and well illustrated by the parable of "the Pharisee and the publican" in Luke xviii. That feeling was deep rooted in Saul of Tarsus when the Lord met him in grace. But even he had to come into blessing together with the thief on the cross, whose language he practically uses at the end of Galatians ii., when he says, "I am crucified with Christ." The cross is thus, so to speak, the birthplace of "the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Col. iii. 10, 11).

And how infinitely precious is this *knowledge* of the Son of God! Paul's object in life was "to know Him." The excellency of that knowledge delivered him entirely from his own righteousness, and enabled him to count those things which were, from a Jewish point of view, most advantageous to him, to be but "loss for Christ" (Phil. iii. 3-11).

We may go even further, in considering the account of his conversion, and affirm that the practical apprehension of the "mystery," afterwards confided to his ministry, was in the *persons* of those *whom he most hated* on account of his religious zeal. This is a matter of the deepest importance for us all. And we may ask ourselves individually the question, What is the Person of the Christ to my own heart? Are all its hidden, ardent, inward longings expressed in those few words, "That I may *know HIM*"?

When the voice from heaven said, "Why persecutest thou ME?" who were they that, in the Lord's judgment, were signified and embraced in that word "ME"? Was it not the very ones that Saul was committing to prison

and to death (Acts xxii. 4, 5, xxvi. 10, 11)? Are we accustomed to realise and enjoy in this way our position and privileges, as members of the body of Christ? That is to say, not so much by *our own* personal feelings as by what *all* His "members" are *to Him*, and by the love and care which He bestows upon His Church? Do we enter practically into the meaning of that word, "to comprehend *with all saints . . .* the love of Christ" (1 Cor. xii. 25, 26; Eph. iii. 18, 19, v. 29)? If not, would it not suggest that, in our minds, there are lurking many of the thoughts and prejudices common to the Pharisees among the Jews? Surely this calls for much self-judgment.

When we begin to learn our own privileges by what is realised in the consciences of *our brethren*, "love in the Spirit" asserts itself, as in those to whom Epaphras ministered (Col. i. 7, 8, iv. 12). That love is measured by the Lord's love to *all* His redeemed, and again by the Father's love to Him (John xv. 9-13). May the apostle's earnest desires be more found in each one of us, as the fruit of the operation of the Holy Ghost, "To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. iii. 19)! The Holy Spirit's mission is to take of Christ's things and show them to us, and thus lead our souls into the practical enjoyment of the Father's love (John xvi. 13-15).

It is true that Paul does not actually refer to the "morning star" in so many words; but all his epistles set forth what it is to the heart occupied with Christ who is now hidden in the heavens. He is our "life," though not as yet in outward manifestation, for it is "hid" with Him in God; He Himself is also our "Hope" (Col. i. 27, iii. 3, 4; 1 Tim. i. 1). He it is to whom the Father bore witness on the mount of transfiguration,

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him” (Matt. xvii. 5).

In keeping with this, Paul gives expression to what he learned on the road to Damascus in that remarkable word, “It pleased God . . . to reveal His Son IN ME, that I might preach Him,” and, further on, “The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith, faith in the SON OF GOD who loved me and gave Himself for me”; and again, “Ye are all *sons of God* by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. i. 16, ii. 20, iii. 26).

Christ glorified in the heavens is the source of all our present blessing now, and occupation with Himself gives power in the soul to enjoy it. He it is who gives us that closing word, “I AM . . . the bright and morning star.”

W. J. L.

“**Builded Together.**”      “**Gathered Together.**”

(Eph. ii. 22.)

(Matt. xviii. 20.)

*The presence of God by the Spirit; and the presence  
of the Lord Jesus.*

*(Continued.)*

**M**OREOVER, the “house of God” takes its character from the presence of the One who deigns to dwell there; and it is most instructive to trace this in the word all through, from the time Israel, in response to the promised presence of God, sang, “He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him” (Exod. xv. 2). The Lord Jesus announced the new form of this habitation, when, in view of the impending change from types and shadows to spiritual realities, He said to Peter, “Upon this rock I will build My church” (Matt. xvi. 18). After His resurrection the Holy Spirit descended at the given moment, “when Pentecost was fully come.” Then the building, composed of those living stones (of

which Simon Peter was himself an example) was seen to be a "spiritual house," which it still is, the saints being the habitation of God by the Spirit.

Thus we read in Ephesians ii., "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." This does not mean that the Spirit builds, though that, of course, is true in the sense that the Spirit is the Divine Agent in all that God does on earth; but that God in (or by) His Spirit dwells in the house so built. Now this is where a difficulty always comes in for those who judge by what is called common-sense. Natural reason would surely say that the material house—the Tabernacle and the Temple—were the *real* things; yet Scripture declares that these, with all their ritual ordained by God—altars, sacrifices, and the like—were only the shadows, and not even the very image of the good things to come, now made known to faith (Heb. x. 1). We respect the feelings of the man who regards a church (so-called) as a sacred building; probably he reads in the entrance porch words which are intended to impress this upon those who enter, "This is none other but the house of God," &c., but the mistake is in the object to which reverence is due. His thought is, if he thinks at all, that in some way or other the building is the dwelling-place of God; but Scripture declares that it is the saints that are this; the real building is composed of "living stones," who offer up spiritual sacrifices.

Now mark the contrast:—In the earthly temple of old, those who worshipped gathered within its walls of costly stones to praise God; *now*, the stones themselves live, they compose the building, of which the chief corner stone, elect and precious, is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, once rejected and disallowed by the builders. The worshippers offer up spiritual sacrifices, where God dwells in the Spirit; and they, fitted and

led by the Holy Spirit, offer to God what is suited to Him, for "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him MUST worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John iv. 24). How blessed to hear from the Son Himself that the Father seeketh such to worship Him. He who knew as none other could what suits the Father's heart, came to make it possible by His death and resurrection that God should receive this worship.

But now we come to the all-important point which we have to take account of, namely, that failure having come in, the house of God, as seen on earth, embraces more than living stones, and that like all else that has been committed to man's responsibility, the Church has failed to maintain what is due to the presence of God. Is it any the less His dwelling-place, and is our conduct any the less to be shaped by the fact that He dwells there? Does Scripture anywhere hint that God would withdraw His presence if the Church failed, so that the Christian who desires to know and do His will as to Church matters, can no longer find that which answers to *His house*? Surely not. Rather let us remember that this great fact is always true for faith, always to be acted upon despite all appearances, and even the collective failure of Christians. We read that "holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever," and this is true to-day when God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands," and it never can be true that any lower standard is to be proclaimed.

Again, do not the directions in 1 Corinthians xii. and xiv. for the regulation of Christian worship imply this? Is not the teaching in the Epistle to the Hebrews an exhortation to leave the material earthly things that were connected with an earthly religion, given to an earthly people, and to lay hold of the heavenly things themselves by faith? Does not the whole tenor of

what is there taught prove clearly that to return, under the name of Christianity, to a ritual of ordinances, sacred edifices, altars, priests, and humanly ordained ministry, is a solemn giving up of the true spiritual character of Christianity? By what possible misconception can such a return to these "carnal ordinances" be called "*high*," &c.

Thankful indeed ought we to be that all this sorrowful failure on our part, and the ruin of the Church has not, so to speak, driven the Holy Spirit away. The pretensions of ecclesiasticism, the substitution of the material for the spiritual, and the practical denial of the presence of the Holy Spirit even where the fact is not denied, all tend to nullify the truths we are considering; but it remains a fact for faith to recognise still that God has a dwelling-place now on earth by His Spirit.

Another equally blessed thing for faith to count upon at all times, and in all circumstances of the Church's history, is the presence of Christ where two or three are gathered to His name. Let us not confuse these two things, lest we lose the value and importance of both. The Holy Spirit builds together an habitation for God on the ground of accomplished redemption, and faith owns His presence. The Holy Spirit also gathers believers together to the name of Jesus as their known Saviour and Lord, and as so gathered Christ Himself is in their midst. If I accept the first of these great truths, and in my thoughts about God's house keep *that* in mind, my feet are kept in a straight path amidst all the declension, sectarianism, rival churches and their pretensions, and the indifference of approaching apostasy. If by God's grace I keep the second of these blessed facts before me; it is not only a preservative from the many snares that beset one's path—the questions as to what is and what is not of God—but it is, in itself, a crowning mercy and an additional blessing. Mark the

simplicity of this latter fact, dear fellow-believer; it is not a promise, as we generally speak of promises—Jesus did not say, “I will be there,” but “there am I.” One condition only is needed—that we be gathered to His Name, desire no other, refuse all others; and then, come what may—weakness, contempt, scorn, poverty or ought else—*Jesus is there.*

What condescension! what touching grace! He who knew the end from the beginning, and the history of His Church during all the long night of His absence—who anticipated in His own earthly path, all that she would have to pass through from the world, prefaces His communications about her with this blessed assurance, that even the smallest number that could be possibly “gathered together” (two or three) would have His own presence; He would be in their midst. Did He not know how soon the Church would lose the faith, and comfort, and strength of this? Did He not know all the storm of persecution on the one hand, and what is more to be dreaded, the flattery and seduction of the world on the other, that would be allowed to test her fidelity? Surely He foreknew it all; yet He imposed no conditions, no limit of time or place, beyond being gathered to His own Name.

The same Lord who is seen afterwards walking amidst the seven golden candlesticks (Rev. i.), and giving the outline of the history of the Church in words which reveal only too plainly what unfaithfulness would mar her testimony to Him (Rev. ii-iii); has left this blessed resource for His saints, unaffected by their failure, and undimmed by our lack of response to all His grace.

May that same blessed Lord and Saviour graciously grant us faith to own practically both of the precious truths here presented, and to act upon them, for His name's sake!

T. R.

“*For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son*” (Rom. viii. 29).

God has foreknown His children, He has predestinated them to a certain glory, a certain marvellous blessing, namely, to be conformed to the image of His Son. . . .

What a glory! what a position—poor creatures as the saved are—to be conformed to the image of the Son of God Himself! This, in fact, is the thought of grace; not to bless us only *by* Jesus, but to bless us *with* Him. He came down even to us, sinless, in love, and in righteousness, to associate us with Himself in the fruit of His glorious work. It was that which His love purposed, that we should have one and the same portion with Himself; and this the counsels of the Father (blessed be His name for it!) had determined also.

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In Romans viii. the Christian is looked at as “in Christ”; he has got Christ as his life in the presence of God; no longer is he looked at as in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Christ, the last Adam, having put away all my sins on the cross, and having risen again, communicates this life to me. It is the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. I have seen this life; I have looked at Christ walking through this world, and there I see what love, what blessing, was in all His ways; what tenderness, what patience with His disciples. There, I say, that is eternal life, the life of God, and it has been manifested to me. In chapter ii. of his epistle, John says, “Which thing is true in Him and in you.” And now my standing in the presence of God is not in the old wretched flesh, but I am a man in Christ, because Christ is my life. . . . I had a life in the first Adam; that life brought in the bitter fruits of sin and corruption, but now I have got the life of Christ.

J. N. D.



## Reading the Bible.

A CORRESPONDENT referred some time ago to the tendency amongst Christians in the present day, of neglecting the reading of God's Word. This is an important subject, and one which we need to take to heart. We never can neglect the Word of God without loss to ourselves, and no doubt it is one of the causes of much of the spiritual weakness which abounds on every hand. If a magazine or a book—even a good book—takes the place of the scripture, it is so far more of a hindrance than a help to the believer. The Word of God and prayer are two things absolutely necessary if we are to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. What would have happened to the Israelite had he neglected to go out of the camp in the morning and gather the manna daily? He would have been without food and therefore weak and unfit for the exigencies of the wilderness journey.

It is quite true that some are much occupied and pressed with work or business; but, let us remember that it is not a question of the *quantity* we read; even a few verses read with the earnest desire to profit by them and feed upon them, are more helpful than whole chapters gone over in a formal way. What characterises the godly man in Psalm i. is that he *meditates* upon the law of the Lord day and night, and the result is that he is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, he is kept fresh and fruitful even in times of trial and difficulty.

We may depend upon it, this is what is needed. Not cold intellectual knowledge, but meditating daily

on God's Word, seeking the Spirit's teaching and guidance, and practically living out what we do know. Then God will give more.

### Atonement.

**I**T is remarkable that the word atonement does not occur in the New Testament, except in Romans v. 11, where it should be translated "reconciliation," as in the margin of our Bibles. We find, several times, the word propitiation, which is the English translation of the word used for atonement by those who translated the Old Testament into Greek, and whose translation is called the LXX. Some writers have explained atonement as at-one-ment, meaning that God and the sinner are set at one; but though the English word has this derivation, yet to take this only, would give us quite an inadequate view of the scriptural meaning of atonement.

Atonement is, indeed, a cardinal truth for every soul. We read in Leviticus xvii. 11, "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." On the great day of atonement (Lev. xvi.)—that solemn day which occurred once in the year in Israel, the high priest took two goats, one for the "Lord's lot," and the other for "the scapegoat." The first, which was for the sin-offering for the people, was slain, and its blood was carried in within the holiest of all, and sprinkled once upon the mercy-seat, and seven times before the mercy-seat. This was the only day in the whole year on which the high priest had liberty to go within the veil; and when he did go in, it was with blood and a cloud of incense which covered the mercy seat. It is remarkable, too, that he did not wear the garments of "glory and beauty," but the holy linen garments—these latter typified rather the personal purity and worthiness of

Christ, than His official position as our High Priest. The high priest of old went in as the representative of the people rather than in his official capacity: what was in question was the standing of the people before God; and the blood of propitiation was needed in order that God might dwell amongst a people who were sinners.

Now the two goats to which we have just referred, present to us, in type, two entirely different aspects of the death of Christ, which it is very important we should understand. The first of the two was the "Lord's lot," the other was "the scapegoat." The one on which the "Lord's lot" fell, typified Christ as the lamb of God's own providing. So John the Baptist, taught of God, declared Him to be: "God's lamb, the taker away of the sin of the world." Christ, "through the eternal Spirit," offered Himself without spot to God, and, in doing so, He accomplished a work so permanent and so efficacious in its results, that it forms the firm foundation of the believer's peace, and gives him a "purged conscience" before God. It is thus his privilege to have at all times a conscience righteously set free from any apprehensions that his sins will ever be imputed to him, the blood of atonement having met every claim of a holy God. That sacrifice is, in like manner, the foundation on which all the promised blessings shall be made good to Israel in the millennial day; and, finally, it is in virtue of this atoning work that the whole universe, which has been defiled by sin, will be for ever cleared, and that the future blessing of the new heavens and new earth will be established. What glorious and infinite results flow from the sacrifice offered up once for all upon the cross! It must be so, for the dignity and glory of the Person, and the adequacy and sufficiency of the work, are indissolubly

linked together. And all this present and future blessing purposed by God before the world was, is based upon that blood which is of such infinite value before Him. For Christ has not gone into the holy places made with hands, but has entered heaven itself, as the only adequate answer on God's part to the work He has accomplished on the cross, and His blood, presented before God, is the efficacious and permanent ground of atonement.

When Aaron came out from the holiest of all, after having made atonement at the mercy seat, he went out to "the altar that is before the Lord," which seems to have been the brazen altar of burnt offering, and on it he sprinkled also of the blood seven times. Thus he reconciled the holy place, and the tabernacle, and the altar, so that all the service came under the efficacy of the blood. Now this was typical of the reconciliation of all things, with reference to God's dwelling in the midst of His redeemed people. So we find in Colossians i. 20, 21, the reconciliation of "things" as well as of *persons*. And, while waiting for the full accomplishment of the former, *we*, as Christians, are already reconciled, having come under the infinite efficacy of the blood of His cross, by which Christ has "made peace." Creation, defiled by sin, has not yet been reconciled, though the work has been fully accomplished, in virtue of which it will be reconciled, or brought into perfect harmony with God's holy nature.

Our thoughts about the work of our Lord Jesus Christ are, alas, often shallow and contracted; we are disposed to limit its efficacy to the forgiveness of sins, which we, through grace, personally enjoy; but great as that blessing is, the results of that work extend far beyond our need and guilt. The truth is, as scripture plainly teaches, that God, in all that He is—His love

His holiness, His truth, His majesty, His perfect hatred of sin—has been vindicated, and all His claims have been met and satisfied at the cross; yea, He has been infinitely glorified by the work done there once for all. An atonement has been made by the One who alone was competent to make it, which is absolute, complete, and final; nothing can ever be added to it.

Thus we find that Christ is, personally, “the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” That He is so, is twice stated in the first epistle of John (chap. ii. 2, iv. 10), with which we may compare the words in Rom. iii. 25, “Whom God hath set forth, a propitiation through faith in His blood.” Thus, when we think of atonement or propitiation, we are occupied with what we might call the Godward aspect of the work of Christ—that which meets all His holy claims and enables Him, in perfect righteousness, to go out in world-wide blessing. There is no limit, no restriction; for a work has been accomplished which so vindicates His glory that He can bless *world-wide*, and He can do so in perfect consistency with all that He is as a holy Being.

Now, when we come to speak of the scapegoat—this presents to us, in type, quite another aspect of the work of Christ. The first goat, of which we have been speaking, is its Godward aspect; the scapegoat is its manward aspect, and the two are quite distinct. The goat for the “Lord’s lot” gives us propitiation; the goat for the people’s lot, *i.e.*, the scapegoat, gives us what is often called “substitution” (and the distinction is important), though it was also an essential part of the atonement made. Upon the head of this goat Aaron laid both his hands (the figure of identification with it), and “confessed over him *all* the iniquities of the children of Israel, and *all* their transgressions, in

*all* their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat," which was sent away, by the hand of a man standing ready, into the wilderness. The Lord Jesus was the great antitype of this goat for substitution, "His own self, He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." Christ was the propitiation "for the whole world," but He is known to be their substitute by *those who believe*; *i.e.*, believers get the benefit of it, for it is to believers Peter is writing when he says "our sins." Again, we read that Christ "was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Heb. ix. 28); and here let us note the word "many," it does not say of "all." So also we read in Isaiah liii. 12, "He bare the sin of *many*." It is quite true that Christ "died for all" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15); His death is *available* for all; but, alas, all do not avail themselves of it, only a few. So, too, God's righteousness is "unto all," that is its aspect; but it is "upon all" them that believe (Rom. iii. 22). The evangelist, therefore, is justified in going out with the blessed gospel of Christ *world-wide*, there is no limit as regards this: those that believe get the blessing. Through grace the believer can always say, He bare *my* sins in His own body on the tree, and they are gone; yes, all glory and praise to His blessed name! for ever gone from the sight and memory of God (Heb. x. 17; Isa. xxxviii. 17).

## The Morning Star—Sonship.

(Continued.)

**T**HE morning star has a heavenly character peculiar to itself as a "star," and is thus connected with the Church in a twofold way, as we shall see, whether we consider it as the "House of God" now on earth, or as the "Body of Christ." The latter was the

“mystery” specially confided to the Apostle Paul (Eph. iii. 2-4). All the truth about the Church depends upon and flows from what Christ is in His own Person—THE SON OF GOD. And therefore *sonship* is a prominent feature in the passages which unfold it. This calls for serious attention.

The Church is first mentioned in Matthew xvi. At the close of His patient ministry in Galilee, the Lord asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of Man<sup>1</sup> am?” Various were the thoughts about Him; but as soon as He received from Peter the desired answer, He said, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but MY FATHER which is in heaven.” We are thus placed at once in the presence of THE FATHER and THE SON, which is the great theme of John’s Gospel (John i. 18; xx. 17). Then Jesus added immediately, “And I say *also* unto thee, That thou art Peter (that is, a stone), and upon this rock I will *build* MY CHURCH.” Peter was thus recognised by the Lord as a representative “stone” in the building; that is to say, that every one of those who thus form a part of it, are characterised by this confession made to the Lord Himself, “Thou art the Christ, the SON of the living God” (Matt. xvi. 13-18).

<sup>1</sup> How simply and perfectly are the two sides of the Lord’s Person set forth, without any human effort, in the second Psalm, verse 7! It is Messiah, the “Anointed One,” who says, “I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee.” Born into this world, He is declared to be the “SON OF GOD.” Compare Isaiah vii. 14, ix. 6; Luke i. 35. The Father’s voice confirmed this, when, at His baptism, Jesus associated Himself outwardly with those who had confessed their sins under John the Baptist’s preaching; the voice *from heaven* proclaimed, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. iii. 16-17). The Lord will have the same confession from the heart and mouth of His disciples, as in the case of Peter (Rom. i. 4, x. 9).

The word "build" is an evident allusion to a well-known Old Testament figure of the "dwelling-place" of God in the midst of His redeemed people.<sup>2</sup> It will have its counterpart in the eternal state (Rev. xxi. 3), As an apostle, Peter had his place in the foundation (Eph. ii. 20), the blessed Lord Himself being "the chief corner-stone," or, according to the passage in Matthew, "the Rock" on which the Church is built (see 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11). No other foundation can ever be laid. More than this, the *fact* of God's present dwelling in the midst of His saints involves personal responsibility on their side which is of the deepest moment (see Ps. lxxviii. 18; 2 Cor. vi. 16). The apostle insists upon it after speaking of the Church in its future completed glory, in Ephesians ii. 20, 21. Considered with reference to the future, it is "growing unto an holy temple in the Lord"; but at the same time, it is equally true that believers are *now* "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (ver. 22).

The history of God's ancient people is full of instruction for us; we are told that, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures

<sup>2</sup> See Zechariah ii. 10, iii. 9, iv. 6-10, vi. 12-13, 15. It is true that the *first* form of God's dwelling-place in the midst of His redeemed people was necessarily a "tabernacle" or tent, as long as the people were in the wilderness, moving from place to place (Exod. xxv. 8; 1 Chron. xvii. 5-6). When, after David's time, they were peacefully settled in the land of Canaan, the tabernacle was replaced by a palace built of stones. In this way Solomon's Temple, glorious as it was, but finally destroyed by the Chaldeans on account of the sins of the people, is still a figure of what is to be in a yet future day, when the Millennial Temple described in Ezekiel, will be built, not on Mount Moriah as Solomon's was, but on the future "Mount Zion" (Ps. xlvi. 1-2; Isa. ii. 2-3, etc.). Here again there is a divine forecast of the spiritual or heavenly Jerusalem.



might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4). Consequently we may observe in all these Old Testament passages that we have referred to, besides many others (such as Ezek. xxxvii. 26, etc.), a deeper spiritual signification addressed to the heart and conscience of believers at the present time. The Lord's answer to Peter involves this; and the epistles, especially Paul's, make it clear. We need, however, to remember that, in the case of Israel, their future establishment and blessing will be on *earth* and in the Holy Land; whereas in the case of the Church, in its future *manifested* glory, it is seen to come down from God, "out of *heaven*" (Rev. xxi. 10, 11). This contrast between *earth* and *heaven* must be borne in mind.

No adequate estimate of the Church, even in its most elementary character as a spiritual "building," can be formed apart from its heavenly origin. That is to say, that its final manifestation in heavenly glory is but a consequence of its heavenly start in connection with the *Person* of the Son of God, now seated "at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. i. 3, viii. 1, 2). That its very constitution is heavenly would appear from a comparison of Hebrews viii. 1, 2 with Exodus xv. 17; and we may infer it from the Lord's word to Nicodemus (John iii. 12, 13). For He came to speak of "heavenly things." But the formation of the Church was still future when the Lord spoke to Peter, for He said, "On this rock I *will build* My church (Matt. xvi. 18).

Let us then return to consider the question and answer on which the Lord based the first intimation to His disciples of that which He, as a Builder, was about to do. His first care was to draw, from them all, the confession of what He was, and especially of what He was to GOD. His words were, "Whom do *ye* say that I

am ?” Peter, who answered, had still to learn that what he said was a direct revelation from above, “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but MY FATHER which *is heaven.*” The truth embodied in the answer was new to them all : “Thou art the Christ, the SON OF THE LIVING GOD.” What could be clearer than, as above remarked, that the heavenly source and character of the revelation centred round the Person of the eternal SON? What that means for the saints of this present economy of grace is unfolded in John’s Gospel. The first message sent by the Lord to His disciples, *after His resurrection*, shows its effect, “My Father and your Father, my God and your God.” Sonship can only be truly known by us as manifested in the Person of the Son, and as the direct fruit of His death and resurrection (John i. 18, xii 24, xx. 17). It is made good in our souls by the Holy Ghost (Gal. iv. 6).

Furthermore, in considering the formation of the Church as the house of God, we see that Christ keeps it in His own hands. He is the foundation, and He constructs it. Every individual believer has his place in it as a “living stone” (1 Pet. ii. 5, 6). The position given to each one, assigned by the Lord, is also maintained by Him in such sort that “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” What a comfort it is to be assured that all the efforts and power of Satan are fruitless in the case of the Lord’s Church!

Peter, in his first epistle, treats of the Church as a “spiritual house,” in the Lord’s keeping, and already in existence, so that worship, praise to God, may go on in it, and service go out from it. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we find the same figure of the “house”; and besides that, an allusion to the heavenly city—“Jerusalem which is above” (see also Gal. iv. 26). This was afterwards shown to the Apostle John (Rev. xxi.). It

is instructive to notice in all these passages the place that "sonship" has; and that is even carried on to the eternal state (Rev. xxi. 7).

Let us now refer briefly to the other truth revealed to the Apostle Paul—the BODY of Christ. This was the mystery kept secret, "hidden in God," and of which we find no indication in Old Testament times. The type of the "Bride" was indeed seen in Eve (Eph. v. 31); but the figure of the Body is different. In this case also, as we have already noticed, the *sonship* of Christ is prominent.

Paul was the first to preach Him as "the Son of God" (Acts ix. 20). We have only to read carefully his epistles to see the effect of the apostle's call on his own soul. In writing to the Corinthians, especially as to church order, he begins with reminding them that they had been called by God into the "fellowship of HIS SON, Jesus Christ our Lord." To the Galatians, who, through Judaizing teaching, were in danger of losing this truth, he insists upon it in the most pointed way. (See chap. i. 16, iii. 26, iv. 4-7, 28, 29, v. 16). And as if to bring home to their consciences what they were giving up, Paul associates with himself "all the brethren" (chap. i. 2); for indeed the relationship with the Father was the common portion of them all, and by no means confined to any special leaders or labourers amongst them. As to himself he says, "It pleased God . . . to reveal His Son *in* me, that I might preach Him among the heathen." In believers the Holy Ghost is called "The Spirit of HIS SON."

The great subject of the Epistle to the Romans is the gospel from the particular point of view of God's righteousness revealed in it (chap. i. 16-17). Yet the opening verses declare that the subject of it is the SON (ver. 3); and in Him, and His redeeming work, the

love, righteousness, and glory of God are inseparable (iii. 21; v. 2, 5). God's glory is our "hope," as soon as justification is known, and sonship in its final character and manifestation in glory is largely developed in chapter viii., as well as that personal witness of the Holy Ghost "*with our spirit*" which makes it effectual in every believer's soul. The end and aim of it is the glory of the SON, that he may be "the first-born among many brethren" (ver. 29, 30).

The Epistle to the Ephesians which unfolds the "mystery" of the "Body of Christ," subject to the Head in heaven, also opens with this blessed truth of relationship with the Father, who has chosen us *in His SON* "before the foundation of the world," and "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself according to the good pleasure of His will." We have, therefore, in our daily walk to be "followers of God *as dear children*" (chap. i. 2-6, v. 1, 2).

In the Philippians we are exhorted to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke" (ii. 15), and in Colossians, we are called to give thanks "unto the Father, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the SON of His love" (i. 12-13).

This truth of sonship so characterised the apostle's early preaching, that in the case of the Thessalonians everybody was speaking of how they had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for HIS SON from *heaven . . .*" (chap. i. 10). The Lord grant that, with a deepened sense of this blessed relationship, such waiting and watching may become more vivid and habitual with each one of us!

W. J. L.

## A Bright Picture with a Dark Background.

*Thoughts suggested by an Address by J. A.*

**W**HEN a good picture is presented with a dark background, the very darkness of the background makes the picture appear all the more striking. We have something like this in the Epistle of Jude. The first nineteen verses give us the dark background, the remaining ones give us the bright picture, which is all the more brought out into relief by the very darkness which accompanies it. Christians are addressed, not simply as individuals, but collectively, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith." Note the words here, "building up": we are told in the Epistle to the Corinthians that knowledge "puffs up," but love "builds up"; and it is by the Word of God we are built up. How suitable is the expression here, "most holy faith"! It is in contrast with the unholiness which marked the mass of professors in the preceding part of the epistle. Then follows, "praying in the Holy Ghost." Oh what a need there is for this! Prayer is the expression of dependence, and the Holy Spirit, who came down at Pentecost, is still here, whatever the state of the Church may be; and therefore we do not need the aids that man proposes in the way of fine music, etc. The Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit guides and teaches us what we should ask for, if we are really in conscious dependence on the Lord in prayer.

We are passing through a scene of difficulty and distraction; but we ought to be like a good sailor, who trims his sails according to the wind; and who, when

he sees the storm coming, suits himself to it; but in order to go *through* it, instead of going *under*. Then we are to keep "ourselves in the love of God"—this is, again, collective in the way it is put. In Romans v. we are told that the Holy Spirit pours out the love of God into the heart, so that every crevice of the heart, so to speak, might be filled with it. Here, in Jude, we are responsible to keep ourselves in the practical daily enjoyment of this love of God, and this can only be as we go on with an ungrieved Spirit.

Then, as to the future, the prospect before us is a bright one, even though the picture drawn in the epistle is so dark. We are to be looking out for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. What a blessed thing to know that one day, even these bodies of humiliation shall be transformed to be perfectly like His body of glory! Thus the close of this epistle is particularly encouraging—it is really a note of praise and thanksgiving to God, who is not only "able to save," but "able to keep." And He is able to keep us, not merely from "falling," but, as the word really means, from "stumbling." And not only so, but to present us faultless, exultingly—where? Is it before our fellow Christians? No, but something far higher, "before the presence of His glory." I can add nothing to *that*, it is too great and wonderful. What a prospect this is, beloved! What a prospect! is it not? It is the bright part of the picture, shining out against the dark background of man's sin and folly. May the Lord Himself enable us to live daily in the power and enjoyment of it!

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"Selfishness likes *to be* served and thinks itself great: love likes to serve and is great."—J. N. D.

## Gleanings.

**W**HEN we sit *with* Christ, we shall be like Him, but, as to our real condition before God, even now we are sitting in heavenly places *in* Him (Eph. ii. 6). Divine love has reached down to the place of sin and death in which we were; and divine righteousness has taken us up and set us in the place of light, where Christ is; for there is no middle place.

Moses "wist not" that the skin of his face shone (Exod. xxxv. 29)—he did not know that his face was shining until he was asked to veil it. He was not occupied with himself: the object before him was God . . . he was absorbed in God, and so showed out God's glory. It will be the same with us, if Christ is the Object before me, I shall not be thinking of myself, but of Him. I shall be exhibiting Him, dwelling upon what He is, and not upon what I am. If my eye is upon Christ, I shall resemble Him (feebly indeed) in holiness, and humbleness, and love. I find these traits in Him in all their blessedness and beauty and perfection; and in looking at Him, I am changed into His image. In Him there is all that the new nature can crave or desire. In Him I can rest, and delight, and rejoice.

Think little of yourself: the true effect of real joy in the things of God is to empty us of ourselves, because first, our affections are drawn out to another (Christ), and because we see all their divine excellencies, not in ourselves . . . but in another, even in One who made Himself of no reputation, and humbled Himself for us, who "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He

became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

Study the Bible with prayer. Seek the Lord there, and not knowledge—that will come too; but the heart is well directed in seeking the Lord: the eye is single, and then the whole body is full of light.

We should search the Bible without doubt, but the cream is not found through much labour of the mind of man.

It is not that there are not deep things in the Word of God, but if we search it with His grace and His Spirit, it is always plain for us on the top; then we have it from Him. The cream is on the surface; not that we do not search and study, but that when we get it from God it is plain and on the surface. Till then we must wait till He teaches us.

It is not knowing we are nothing, but being it, which is the point.

J. N. D.

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In Joshua vii. we find two serious mistakes were made by Israel after they had crossed the Jordan and had seen the walls of Jericho crumble beneath their feet by God's divine interposition. First, they went up against Ai in their own strength without dependence on the Lord; secondly, there was evil amongst God's people, unjudged evil, and therefore they were powerless to stand before their enemies. Let us never forget that our strength lies in conscious weakness and dependence, "when I am weak, then am I strong"; and that holiness and truth must be maintained if we are to overcome the power that is against us, and serve God aright.



## “The Coming of the Lord.”

ATTENTION has been called to this subject recently by the wide circulation of a paper asking for prayer for the Lord to come. We cannot quite see that it is according to God's mind that we should pray *for* His coming, because the moment of that event is reserved in the Father's counsels, and when that moment arrives the Lord will come. Till then we must patiently wait (2 Thess. iii. 5), even as He is waiting, (Rev. i. 9). Yet, while this is so, the true and proper aspiration and desire of the Christian, in response to the word of the Lord Himself, “Surely I come quickly” (His last words in the inspired book), is “Even so, come Lord Jesus.” We can therefore be thankful that this hope is brought afresh before the children of God in various parts of the world.

But the *practical* side of this truth of the Lord's coming is of great importance for all; let us briefly enumerate some of the effects it would have on Christians, if held in living power and freshness in the soul:—

1. It would turn our minds and thoughts to *heaven*, where Jesus is, and fix the heart and affections on the *One* who is coming (John xiv. 3; Rev. xxii. 16-21; Phil. iii. 21).

2. It would enter into all the details of daily life, as a practical and purifying hope (1 John iii. 3; 2 Peter iii. 14). Our houses, our dress, our work, indeed everything, would be so ordered as to be pleasing to Him who is coming. We should be “*like* men that wait” (Luke xii. 36).

3. It would detach the Christian from the world and worldly things—from seeking the world's wealth and honours and distinctions—things which men prize so highly. At the same time it would make him diligent and practical in the affairs of daily life (2 Thess. iii. 12).

4. It would make us satisfied to go through the world in patience, without seeking to assert our rights, waiting till

that day when all will be set right that cannot be set right now (Jas. v. 7; Phil. iv. 5; Heb. x. 36, 37).

5. It would encourage the saint and servant of God to hold fast and persevere, counting on the Lord for strength and courage, even in days of trial and difficulty (2 Tim. iv. 8; Rev. iii. 11).

6. It would fill with peace and consolation the hearts of those who sorrow over departed ones who have gone to be with Christ (1 Thess. iv. 13-18).

We may surely say concerning this truth, as we may concerning other truths, that it is just in so far as we enter into it, heart and soul, we shall find it of practical value, and that it is really ours. The conscience needs to be brought under the power of the Word, the heart and affections need to be engaged, the truth needs to be kept connected with the person of Christ Himself, so that it may be fresh, living, and active in the soul. Mere theories and cold intellectual knowledge are of little value, and generally lead to pride and self-sufficiency. May our gracious God, by His Spirit, bring this "blessed hope" afresh before His people, in all its own blessedness, as a practical and living reality!

## The Morning Star—The Heavenly Call.

(Concluded.)

**W**E have spoken of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD, and noticed how it was the occasion of the Lord's first intimation of what the Church was to be, and the divine basis of all subsequent revelation as to the Church in its varied aspects. We have also traced rapidly the place that same confession had in Paul's preaching and in his epistles. But the Epistle to the Hebrews demands some further examination.

It is this epistle which particularly unfolds the "heavenly calling" of the saints during the present

economy of grace, and thus distinguishes them in more than one respect from all those who went before. Of these latter, Abraham was the great example: first, as to the character of his faith, which is the same in principle for all believers of every dispensation (Rom. iv. 3); secondly, as to his "call to go out" to another land, and the maintenance of the pilgrim character even in the land to which he went. That has also a *spiritual* application to believers of the present day; but considered as history, it is just there that we learn the contrast between the Old Testament saints and the Church of Christ. Abraham's call was *earthly*, that is, out of Ur of the Chaldees to Canaan, on reaching which he built his first altar (Gen. xi. 31; xii. 5-7; Heb. xi. 8, 9). Our calling is *heavenly* from the start, and is maintained in principle by a *heavenly priesthood*, of which Melchisedec's visit to Abraham was but a mysterious foreshadowing, entirely unexplained at the time. It is well to note also, that, in the description of the "Mount Zion" and "heavenly Jerusalem," which is set before us for our encouragement, "the church of the firstborn" (saints), whose names "are written in heaven," is distinguished from the "spirits of just men made perfect," which evidently represent the Old Testament saints (Heb. xii. 22-24).

In this Epistle to the Hebrews, who were well acquainted with the letter of the Old Testament, the Spirit of God everywhere insists upon the Sonship of Christ; and though the Father is not mentioned except in connection with an earthly figure in chapter xii. 9, to show the importance of discipline, yet the SON is prominent from beginning to end, in all the aspects of His glory which are touched upon. Types abound, of course, but their object is to bring out in every case the marked *contrast* between the type and the antitype.

If this simple fact be observed, the whole of the epistle becomes luminous for the believer's soul, and the most difficult problems are solved. We are exhorted to look off unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith (chap. xii. 2), and thus to "run with patience the race that is set before us."

God has spoken in these last days, in the person of the SON, now hidden from our sight in the heavens, but visible to the eye of faith, and in Him He speaks "from heaven" (chap. i. 2, 3, ii. 9, xii. 25). All His work of atonement is accomplished, and He now exercises His priesthood in favour of His redeemed. This priesthood is *heavenly* in character, and is exercised from heaven, yea, the very highest heaven; for as the high priest of old had to pass from the altar in the court, through the holy place, into the holiest of all, so Jesus has passed through the heavens even to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and His glory is set "far above all heavens" (Ps. viii. 1; Eph. iv. 10). Thence it is that He watches over His own and intercedes for them (Heb. iv. 14, vii. 26, viii. 1, 2, ix. 24).

Besides this, as High Priest, consecrated "with an oath," which the sons of Aaron never were, He is pre-eminently the SON (chaps. iv. 14, v. 5, 8, vii. 3, 28.) Those who despise Him are guilty of treading under foot the SON OF GOD (chaps. vi. 6, x. 29).

God's purpose is to have "many sons" in glory. Christ had therefore to become the Captain of their salvation by means of His sufferings and death on their account; but having now taken His place "at the right hand of the Majesty on high," He intercedes for and succours all who, through his finished work, are made heirs of salvation. He receives the "children" from God's hand as a "gift" to Himself, and looks upon them as having a heavenly character in consequence, though

they are still waiting till He comes to fetch them to be with Him where He is; but as belonging to that place in glory, He looks upon them as His companions, or "fellows." It is that character which He desires we should maintain (chaps. i. 9, ii. 14, iii. 1, 14). He has gone through the whole course, beginning with His suffering manhood, and ending with heavenly glory, and from the height and power of that glory, He, as the great High Priest, ministers to all who are called to follow Him in the race which He has run (chaps. ii. 18, iv. 15-16, v. 7-9, vi. 19-20, vii. 24-28, viii. 1, ix. 24, 28, x. 35-37, xii. 1-3). "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession," and "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus," waiting in patience until He come!

The character and effect of Paul's preaching of the 'Son of God' (Acts ix. 20) is well set forth in the Thessalonian believers, as shown in the first epistle to them, and which was probably the first portion of the New Testament committed to writing. They were "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." This remarkable change was wrought, and maintained in them in spite of circumstances so adverse that the apostle himself feared that they might have possibly been turned aside by Satan's continued efforts. Being himself hindered from going to them, he sent Timothy to establish and comfort them, and was greatly cheered by the tidings Timothy brought back to him of their faith and love (1 Thess. iii. 1-8). That was the occasion of his writing the epistle, not only to confirm their hope in waiting for the Son of God, but also to impart to them a special

revelation from God as to the manner of the Lord's return.

Up to that time, they had had no news of the *way* in which the Lord was about to redeem His promise of coming for His saints to receive them to Himself, as He indeed told His disciples before He left them (John xiv. 1-3). The early believers of the Gospel, including even Peter himself, had connected the Lord's return with the setting up of His millennial kingdom (Acts iii. 20, 21). And consequently the death of some of the converts filled the others with unwonted sorrow, under the impression that the departed ones would necessarily be deprived of their part in the glory they had expected to share in.

Such was indeed a fitting opportunity for the fresh revelation confided to the apostle, for the comfort and consolation of the saints in all time. While confirming the hope of the Lord's return at any moment, and inspiring the saints in their attitude of waiting with fresh spiritual vigour, it directed their thoughts more definitely than ever to the Lord's *Person*, and to His portion in His saints for time and eternity.

When He returns to this earth, He will bring His saints *with Him*. That had been already foretold (Zach. xiv. 5; Jude 14). But how it was to be accomplished was not made known, until it became needful to answer questions which arose out of the difficulties and trials of the Macedonian converts. They had to be assured first of all that the Lord would take His suffering saints, both dead and living, out of this scene, *before* establishing His kingdom and glory here below; and secondly, that this certainty was to prevent their supposing that the final manifestation of evil and Satan's power had already begun (1 Thess. iv. 14; 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2).

When the Lord left this earth from the Mount of Olives, the cloud concealed Him from the gaze of His disciples (Acts i. 9). Similarly, the cloud will hide from the knowledge of this world the taking up of the saints at the Lord's coming "into the air." As far as the world is concerned, their withdrawal from the earth will usher in the darkness of the "night" which precedes its final judgment (1 Thess. v. 1-7).

The MORNING STAR is indeed the harbinger of the coming day; but it shines in the night with a *heavenly* glory of its own, which has very little effect on the earth. Those that recognise it, rejoice in it for its own sake. The Lord grant that we may, each and all, be so watching, and occupied with himself that, as we hear in our inmost souls His assurance, "Surely I come quickly," our hearts may respond with the Spirit and the bride, "Even so, come Lord Jesus!" W. J. L.

**"Hast thou here any besides? . . . bring them out of this place" (GEN. xix. 12).**

THE last month of another year is with us. The year of grace 1912 will soon be amongst the records of the past, and all its happenings will have gone to make history, as men say. Another important thing is that this brings us nearer to "the day of the Lord," with all that this means for the world around us. The believer can say, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. xiii. 11), for the consummation of his salvation, the finishing stroke, so to speak, of that blessed work, awaits the coming again of the Saviour, when the *bodies* of His saints shall share in that salvation work, now enjoyed as to their souls; and "mortality shall be swallowed up of life."

But it is not with the coming of the Lord as the

hope of the Church, that we wish to speak in this short paper, but of that solemn aspect of it which the Lord Jesus Himself speaks of in Luke xvii. when He refers to "the days of Lot," and the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, as an example of "the day when the Son of man is revealed."

It is clear from the Lord's words that the present ordinary state of things will continue until "that day" arrives—"Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke xvii. 28-30). Mark the words *the same day*; there was no warning interval; no premonitory signs, in the way of cessation of business or pleasure, ushered in that day of Sodom's overthrow, and there will be none when the day of the Lord is impending over this world.

We hear a good deal to-day of the signs of the near approach of the end of this age, and Christians are even invited to join in prayer for its hastening, while in other quarters some mistaken zealots venture again to fix its probable date. We are thankful for anything that keeps alive, or kindles afresh in the hearts of saints the blessed hope that is so peculiarly *theirs*; but in view of what it means for the world around us, and more especially for those near and dear to us who are as yet unsaved, we venture to take up these words of the angels, that stand at the head of this paper, and loudly re-echo them in the ears of our fellow-Christians, and in our own: "Hast thou here any besides, bring them out of this place . . . for the Lord hath sent us to destroy it."

We all have relatives, friends, and acquaintances, yet



unsaved; our neighbours and business friends are mainly perhaps amongst the great unawakened masses of professing Christians. Many of those whom we have taught, or preached to, are still unreached by the convicting and converting power of the Word, and this deeply solemn cry comes home to us afresh as we near the end of another milestone of our journey—"Hast thou here any besides?"

Oh, dear fellow-Christians, fellow-labourers in the gospel vineyard, let it stir us up to renewed activity, more earnest *believing* prayer, more faithful personal labour. Destruction looms over highly favoured Christendom. England, like Capernaum and its sister towns of old, has been exalted to heaven by privilege, and like her it shall be brought down to hell. Indifference prevails on all sides—the faithful labourer often "sows in tears" like his blessed Master; iniquity abounds; unrest—political, moral, and religious—prevails. The Churches meet at their congresses, and discuss, with many a confession of failure, how to adapt their methods to the demands of the age. The crisis is approaching. Man knows it, and feels it, yet is helpless to meet or avert it. What is our path in the midst of all this but, as the sons of God without rebuke, to be "holding forth the word of life."

But it may be that this will meet the eye of an unconverted reader, and one perhaps that has often prayed, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." If so, let us remind him that it was in answer to a question about this very subject that the Lord Jesus spoke the words about "the days of Lot." The Pharisees demanded of Him "when the kingdom of God should come," and the Lord replied, "Behold the kingdom of God is among you"; referring, of course, to Himself, then present as the promised Messiah. But

He also adds a description of the days of the Son of man, as we have already remarked, closing with these words, "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

Suddenly, unexpectedly, "as a thief in the night," will that day come. As the sun rose over Sodom on the morning of that day of overwhelming destruction, so may the sun arise to begin its course on the day of Christendom's judgment, which shall be equally resistless and complete. We beg our readers to ponder the solemn words of Luke xvii., and especially to heed the striking and divine comment, "Remember Lot's wife." She was a standing witness to the judgment of God on one who, though she was no stranger to righteousness and to the claims of God, yet her heart lingered over what she had left in the doomed city, although the power of God had brought her unwilling feet out of it.

For ourselves, Christian reader, how many are the solemn and profitable lessons to be learned from the history of Lot! While we humbly seek to profit by all these things "written for our admonition," may the lapse of time and the nearing approach of the Lord's return find us ever more in sympathy with the long suffering of God, "who is not willing that any should perish." Let no dreams of "a good time coming," through the moral and mental improvement of man, deceive us into a false estimate of the world's condition. Well we know, from the unerring testimony of God's word, that it is ripening for judgment and that the only panacea for its many woes, is to be found in Christ and His coming kingdom. The better this is understood and felt in all its true solemnity, the more urgent shall we be to "*bring them out of this place*"; and the more shall we seek constantly, "if there are here any besides," to be enabled, by God's grace, to lead them to the Saviour.

T. R.

## Sin and Sins.

**I**T has sometimes been asked, what is sin? When the creature sets up his own will, in independence of God's will, this is sin. We need not scan the lists of crimes which are brought before our police courts, to see what sin is. These are only aggravations, but the real root of it all is man's will at work. Adam was placed in Eden at the beginning to represent God, and he had no right to have a will of his own, his proper place was simply to be obedient. When he ate the forbidden fruit, Adam acted in disobedience to God, and thus "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Rom. v. 12). Sin brought in its train, not only death, but the curse and all the evils that poor fallen man is heir to in this sad world. Just look around, there is no exception, "Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The stern penalty which God's justice demands must be paid, "The wages of sin is death." As He said to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 17). Adam fell, sin came in, and brought in its train the bitter consequences which we see in the world ever since the Fall.

In the New Testament sin is often identified with the evil nature which even the believer still carries with him; "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me," says the apostle (Rom. vii. 11); again, "Now it is no more I that do it (the evil), but sin, that dwelleth in me" (vii. 20).

We may therefore liken "sin" to the root or stock of the tree which produces the bad fruits; and "sins," to the fruits produced. If I have a wild apple-tree in my garden, it is useless to pluck off the fruit in the hope that it will not produce any more such fruit. It

must be cut down and grafted with a new stock in order that it may produce good fruit. And not only so, but not one shoot from the old stock must be allowed to grow up, or else it will take from the strength and vigour of the new stock. Just so it is with the believer; God does not propose to improve the old nature, "our old man," as it is called; but by His Spirit and His Word He communicates a new and divine life and nature, let us call it a new graft. And He calls upon us to keep the tree well pruned lest the old shoots should grow again. But before He does so, He shows us that He has already, Himself, accounted of the old nature as having been "crucified with Christ" (Rom. vi. 6); accounted of us that we are "dead with Christ," and that we have "died unto sin once for all," and are now "alive unto God." His discipline, too—the various trials He allows us to pass through—are the pruning of His hand for our good, that by so cultivating the new man, He may by the gracious ministry of His Spirit, produce from His people the precious fruits of grace, the "fruits of the Spirit," against which there is no law (Gal. v. 23). Indeed the scripture goes so far as to say "our old man has been crucified with Christ that the body of sin might be destroyed." This does not refer to the human "body"; but that sin, in its body or bulk or totality, might be annulled as to its fruit or promptings; that its power, in toto as we say, might be absolutely and entirely broken. Thus the Christian is freed from bondage to sin, not by some extraordinary effort of his own, but because it has been judged and set aside, as before God in the cross of Christ. The fact is that, through the death of Christ, not only were the believer's *sins* atoned for, but *sin*, the nature that produced them, was condemned and set aside as before God. What joyous

liberty is ours! liberty, not for the flesh or the old nature, but liberty for the new man—the only true liberty, namely, that of a nature which finds its delight in pleasing God.

God never proposes to forgive *sin*, that is, the evil nature; on the contrary, He has “condemned sin in the flesh.” But, as believers, we possess the forgiveness of our *sins*, in virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ, who bore them all in His own body on the tree. And if, alas, the believer does sin (for which Scripture never makes an excuse), he is still a child in the family of God, and he is to go to God his Father in sorrow and confession, in order that he may be restored to communion with Him. But mark—he is not told to confess sin, the evil nature; but Scripture says that if we confess our *sins* (*i.e.*, the acts), God is faithful and just to forgive. He forgives us on the ground of the blood of Christ, who is our risen Saviour and our subsisting righteousness before God. He is also our Advocate with the Father, and in virtue of all that He is, God our Father is perfectly just and righteous in forgiving us our *sins*, and in cleansing from all unrighteousness.

It would be an easy thing to make a kind of general confession of having a sinful nature, and that might even be turned into a sort of excuse for sinning, on the ground that we cannot help it. But to judge ourselves solemnly and deeply before God, feeling the bitterness of some specific act in which we have grieved the Holy Spirit—*this* is quite another thing!

Thus Scripture, which is divinely accurate as to even a single letter (in our language an *s*, signifying the singular by its omission, or the plural by its inclusion), shows us that all the believer's *sins* are forgiven, and that *sin*, the evil nature that produced

them, has been "condemned," judged by God Himself, and set aside in the cross of Christ. Then follows the practical responsibility of the Christian to keep that nature in the place of death, to reckon ourselves dead unto sin, and to walk in the blessed peace and liberty of the new nature, as led and guided by the Spirit of God.

Now, just note the simple and precious way in which this works: the *fact* is seen in Christ's death and resurrection; the *practical application* to ourselves is the "reckoning" of faith. Some there are who speak much about "sinless perfection"; but if there were no "sin" (looked at as the evil *root*) left in the believer, there would be no occasion for this "reckoning." We have to reckon to ourselves the double effect of the cross; for Christ not only died *for* our *sins*, but He then and there died *to sin* (Rom. vi.), and He never can have anything more to do with sin in any shape or form, for He died unto sin once for all, and "in that He liveth, He liveth *unto God*." In order that we may do this practically, we have to meditate upon His dying, so that His practical life may be reproduced in us (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11). In this God works out His own purposes of blessing in us by the experiences He brings us through—sometimes trying, but always for our good and His own glory in His saints.

**"Thy Way, O God, is in the Sanctuary."**

**"Thy Way is in the Sea."**

(Ps. lxxvii. 13, 19.)

**I**N the sanctuary God is known; there He dwells, and there all must be suitable to His presence. There all that is of man and self is hushed and silent. God is there in His righteousness, He is the God of truth, and He is light. But He is

also the God of love, for "God is love." In the sanctuary what is of man is set aside: God is listened to, God's word and will are paramount for the soul. When the psalmist considered the prosperity of the wicked, their pride and opposition to God, their oppression of the godly, their apparent immunity from trouble, all seemed an inexplicable puzzle. It is in the sanctuary alone that we can judge of anything aright and according to God's mind and thoughts: and so *there* it is He sees their end. All that seemed so difficult and incomprehensible became clear and plain in the light of God's presence.

Then, further, God's way is in the sea. The sea is that which is troubled, restless, and ungovernable—a place where there is no track. God "giveth not account of any of His matters"; His path is untraceable, but always marked by divine and perfect wisdom; and faith says (whether we understand His ways with us or not) that it is *always* and surely right. The "end of the Lord" is good, for He is "very pitiful, and of tender mercy." God orders all things according to divine power and majesty, but also according to divine love; and so we can surely say—however untraceable His footsteps may be—"all things work together for good to them that love God." This brings a calm and peace into the soul, even in trying and testing circumstances: it saves us from the restlessness into which constant occupation with the difficulties and adverse circumstances of our path is so calculated to lead us. "As for God, His way is perfect." This is a resource and sustainment for faith at all times and under all circumstances.

### Gleanings.

THE things we meet with on the road to the glory may be trying: Jacob's head lay on a stone pillow

whilst he was enjoying the heavenly vision. The deep sands and sharp stones may make the wilderness road very uncomfortable to walk along, but God uses it for the breaking away of all that will not do for the glory; and by it is teaching me the patience of Christ, and putting that part of God's character before my soul. Is it *long*, this waiting-time? But will any who are weary now make a murmur when standing in the glory, at the length of the way they had to pass? We should even glory in tribulation because it works patience (Rom. v. 3). Patience is not indifference. A patient man takes all that tries him and bears it in the presence of God; and in the presence of God he finds the Spirit of God shedding abroad in His heart the love of God (Rom. v. 5).

How came testimony to be broken up? From seeking our own and not the things of Christ. What maintained unity at first was simply going after Christ as sheep after the shepherd, not seeking anything else.

G. V. W.

We know that the eternal life which was with the Father is come down from heaven. We know that it is communicated to us, that Christ is our life, that having the Son we have life, that we are quickened and made alive according to the exceeding greatness of His power, according to the working of His mighty power, in which He raised Christ from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places; so that life for us and in us (for Christ is our life), is final triumph over death, and reaches into heavenly places. This has been brought to light by the gospel: John giving us life descending and manifested here in Christ and communicated to us; and Paul, life more fully completed in result up there, according to the divine counsels in glory.

J. N. D.