

WORDS OF HELP

FROM THE

SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH

VOL. VI

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“My Times are in Thy Hand.”

PSALM xxxi. 15.

TRULY we (Christians) may say this in even a deeper and fuller way than the psalmist of old, for *we* know God as *Father*, revealed in Christ, who is now our ever-living High Priest and Advocate on high.

As we enter upon another year, not knowing what it may have in store for us, what a calm and rest to the soul to know that all is in the hand of Him who loves us best and most, and who moves above all the storms and strifes of this world!

Were we to look only at surrounding circumstances, we might be filled with many serious forebodings. Who knows what will be the end of this terrible War, which has already brought desolation and sorrow to so many families both at home and abroad? But, amidst the shaking of all things, the Christian has, reserved for him in heaven, beyond this dying, fading world, an inheritance “incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” And, on the way there, he has *God* as his unfailing resource at all times.

But it must be evident to any thoughtful mind that God has many serious lessons to teach us, as we see much that we looked upon as firm and stable now crumbling into ruins. This ought, surely, to humble us, and to cast us over more entirely upon Him for grace and power.

Politically, the world is in a state of turmoil and transition. And, whatever may be the result of this present War, we know that nothing will ever be right “until He come whose right it is” (Ezek. xxi. 27); and God will give to Him “the nations for His in-

heritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession" (Ps. ii. 8).

Religiously, things have been steadily drifting for years in Christendom. Who that knows anything of what is going on as to the unsettling of the authority of God's Word in the minds of men, the advance of Ritualism, Romanism, spiritism, etc., can doubt this? Indeed Satan is using even the War for his own ends; witness the attempts made by some of the world's scientists to hold intercourse with the spirits of men killed in battle, the doctrine taught by others that those who fall fighting for their country go to heaven as a reward for their self-sacrifice, and other fatal perversions of the truth. No doubt all these things will contribute to the final apostasy mentioned in 2 Thessalonians ii.

And, coming nearer home, what are we to say as to the present condition of the Church of God? Is there not much to call for serious exercise of soul? If we are honest, we cannot fail to see the spiritual decline, the lack of love for the Word of God, the general worldliness and weakness which mark the day; and the multiplied divisions which have taken place amongst Christians.

What, then, are we to fall back upon in view of all these things? To depend on ecclesiastical authority, on great or gifted men (however valuable in their place), on rules or creeds—whether written or unwritten—is only to lean on a broken reed which can but pierce the hand. The apostle Paul, when addressing the elders of the church at Ephesus for the last time, in view of the state of things which he foretold would follow upon his departure, commended them to "God and to the word of His grace." Thank God these can never fail. We find also that the apostle John, in his addresses to the seven churches in Asia (Rev. ii.

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and iii.), in giving the Lord's last message to His Church, tells each one, who has an ear, "to hear what *the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*" Thus the written Word, as unfolded and taught by the Holy Spirit, becomes the true safeguard for the faithful in a day of difficulty and ruin.

Truly God never leaves His people without a resource, and here we have that which remains good and true for every individual soul amidst all that is crumbling into ruins around us. Only let us be humble and dependent, ever remembering that it is not God's purpose to reconstitute the Church as it was at the beginning, or to set up something that is great or important in the eyes of men. He never does so at the close of a dispensation (see Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, etc.) But if we walk in dependence on Him and His Word, humbly counting upon Him for wisdom and guidance as to our path, we shall not be disappointed. And we shall thus be able to say, thankfully, "Our times are in Thy hand."

Meantime, thank God, the blessed work of His grace in sending forth the message of salvation still goes on, and it will continue to do so until Christ comes. Let us never cease to pray for the gospel and to earnestly seek the salvation of sinners. To lose heart for the gospel, would be to get out of touch with the heart of Him who could rejoice over the returning prodigal, as also with the mind and purpose of our God, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Besides, it would show indifference to that which is of such deep interest to the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep.

May all true Christians be aroused to more earnest effort in seeking to spread the glad tidings, as the day of free grace draws fast to its close!

F. C. B.

Practical Lessons—I. Forbearance.

“REMEMBER the two bears,” said a godly man once to a young married couple, and added, in answer to their wondering looks, “Yes, as long as your wedded life lasts, have with you the two bears; carry ‘bear one another’s burdens,’ and ‘bear with one another’; you will then be happy.”

The need for this homely advice on forbearance amongst Christians is clamant in other spheres besides that of marriage. When we think of what the Christian is, with all his weaknesses and his failures; of how greatly we differ in temperament, in position, in attainments, etc.; of how the “fight for life,” the evil of the world, the trials connected with the War and many other things, press hard upon our souls, surely the call for forbearance to-day is as great, perhaps even greater, than in apostolic times. Then there are the many hindrances thrown in our way by the sad divisions in the Church of God, all of which call for mutual forbearance and consideration for one another.

Let us briefly consider the subject of forbearance as presented in the epistles in different ways:—

1. Persecution and trial has always been the believer’s lot, “we are appointed thereunto.” To meet this, *forbearance* is needed, and not the principle of the world, which is *reprisals*; so that we may please the Lord and even win our persecutors. The apostle Paul was hungry, thirsty, naked, buffeted, homeless, reviled, slandered, persecuted, made the filth of the world and the offscouring of all (1 Cor. iv. 12, 13). What would *our* answer to all this be? His was, “We suffer (or forbear) it.” In the Thessalonians, we see the same grace manifested (2 Thess. i. 4). He could boast of them that, in all their persecutions and tribulations, in

patience and faith, they endured or forebore. They left all, as we also should do, in God's hand; confident that He cares for us and will bring relief in His own good time.

2. God's people are exhorted repeatedly to forbear one another (see Eph. iv. 2; Col. iii. 11-13, etc.). In the epistle to the Ephesians, which discloses the highest Christian privileges, we are called to mutual "*forbearing one another in love*," and this can only be in as far as we are characterised by "*lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering*." If this spirit of forbearance is not found, we shall certainly deny in practice the very truth we profess, namely, the "keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." In Colossians iii. we see how their religious, national, and social prejudices could be overcome, and what they were in Christ made manifest; for what shone out in Him, should shine out in them.

Prominent in this we find "*forbearing one another*." How often have assemblies been broken up, and saints grieved and scattered, through lack of forbearance! It is not "toleration" we want to-day, but godly forbearance.

Let us remember how God has dealt with us. Has He not forborne with us every moment of our lives since He took us up at the first? Surely He has. What a lesson to act in like manner towards one another! Oh, how much trouble and sorrow might have been saved if Christians had only *considered each other*, and borne with each others' weaknesses, peculiarities, and even mistakes! Instead of this, has it not often been the case that the lame have been turned out of the way by rough, unkind, harsh treatment? Let us ponder over Romans xiv., and 1 Corinthians viii. It is really a very solemn question; for if we "sin against our brethren," and wound their weak consciences, we

“sin against Christ.” And it is in this connection we read in Romans xiv., “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God,” and “Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” Let us then see to it that we are not a cause of stumbling to even the weakest brother.

3. We are to forbear with those who have ministered to us the truth of God. The Corinthians, and the apostle through them, suffered because they lacked this (2 Cor. xi.), and so do we now. An independent and inconsiderate spirit towards elders and those who have served the saints faithfully through life, should be shunned. Let it never have to be asked of us, “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” but let us thank God for the help and ministry we have received from many godly men, and seek grace to bear with them, and give them our whole-hearted sympathy and prayers. W. M. R.

Prophecy.

I HAVE often been struck by the danger of being occupied with prophetic *events*, instead of considering the *Person* who is the centre of them. With the very commendable intention of finding edification in the study of prophecy, one may approach it on the ground that we find it interesting, even captivating, for the man who studies the philosophy of its history; but, in result, very dry for the Christian's soul. If the events of prophecy are, on the one hand, the awful proof of the wickedness of man, the setting forth of them has as its object, primarily, to bring into prominence the righteousness, the holiness, the power, and the glory of Him who directs all these events, according to an unchangeable plan, fixed in His eternal counsels.

But the events which prepare the way for, which introduce, or accompany the reign of Christ are not the King *Himself*, however much they may be in relationship with Him. We must, therefore, watch carefully never to lose sight of the Lord as the centre to which all the ways of God lead us. Even the knowledge of the immediate *entourage* which surrounds that blessed Person should not suffice us. His court, His dignitaries, His palace, His capital, His people (the remnant of Israel), His army—all these witnesses of His glory—are not *Himself*. Even as to the attributes which belong to His Majesty and His power—His crown, His royal robes, His sceptre, and His sword—these do not belong to an *intimate* knowledge, still less to a *complete* knowledge, of His character.

The Christian can find *intellectual* satisfaction in an exact knowledge of these aspects of prophecy, and yet his *heart* be but little occupied by it; and an exclusive preoccupation with these subjects would only produce unhappy effects on our piety, in lowering the level of those fertilising waters which it is ours to communicate to others, and which flow from a close personal relationship, from an intimate communion with Christ, who is the source itself of the water of life.* H. R.

* We desire to draw special attention to the fact that the two articles which appeared in our September and October issues, in connection with prophecy and the Powers engaged in the War, have now been reprinted in booklet form, with the title, "What does the Prophetic Word say concerning the Powers engaged in the present War?" The second of these articles has been revised by the writer of it, and the above is an extract from same. They will be found, we believe, both instructive and profitable to those who desire to have understanding of the times in which we live. The booklet can be purchased from Mr Alfred Holness, price 1d., by post, 1½d. ; or 1s. 2d. per dozen, post free.—ED.

The Cross.

I HAVE said that good and evil met in all their force in the cross. It is well to seize this fact in order to understand the moral importance of the cross in the eternal ways of God.

The cross is the expression of the hatred, without cause, of man against God manifested in goodness. Christ, the perfect expression of the love of God in the midst of the wretchedness that sin had brought into the world, had brought in the remedy for this wretchedness wherever He met it. In Him this love was in constant exercise, notwithstanding the evil. He was never wearied, never thrown back by the excess of evil, or by the ingratitude of those who had profited by His goodness. Sin, disgusting as it was, never arrested the course of Christ's love; it was but the occasion of the exercise of this divine love.

God was manifested in flesh, attracting the confidence of man by seeking him, sinner as he was; by showing that there was something superior to evil, to misery, and defilement. This was God Himself. Christ, perfectly holy, of a holiness that remained always unfailingly intact, could carry His love into the midst of evil, so as to inspire the wretched with confidence. If a man touched a leper, he was himself defiled; Christ stretches forth His hand and touches him, saying, "I will, be thou clean."

J. N. D.

Fragment.—The sense that we are nothing makes us glad to forget ourselves, and then it is that Christ becomes everything to the soul.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

INTRODUCTORY.

IN approaching this wonderful book, our object is not to present anything new in the way of interpretation, but simply to direct the reader's attention to its character, as forming a fitting conclusion to the whole Word of God, while it appeals in a special way to the heart and conscience of the christian reader, directing his thoughts to the *person* of his Saviour, whom he is supposed to know, and whose love and patient grace is, or should be, the living source of all his thoughts and feelings. The divine answer, furnished by the Spirit of God to the opening salutation in verses 4-7, is a sufficient illustration of that which we would insist upon; and the last two verses of the book set, as it were, the divine seal to the whole of the Revelation therein contained.

There is a special blessing attached to him who reads it, and lays to heart the "*words* of this prophecy," in order to "*keep* the things which are written therein." That alone should show us its importance. But the great incentive for every soul is the personal *coming* of the Lord Jesus Christ, not in the undefined future, but at any moment, as is three times insisted upon by the word "*quickly*" in the last chapter (verses 7, 12, and 20).

In the seven messages addressed to the churches of Asia, His coming (and that in judgment) is made most prominent, whether as an inducement to "*repent*," or as an encouragement to "*hold fast*" the truth (ii. 5, 16, 25; iii. 3, 11, 20). The exception is in the case of Smyrna, at a time of such repeated persecution, that apparently the faithful ones had martyrdom continually before them; but the Lord comforts them with the *fact* of His own death and resurrection (ii. 8), and with "the

crown of life" reserved for those who should be "faithful unto death" (verse 10). We find the same practically in Matthew x. 21, 22; James i. 12; and 1 Peter iv. 12, 13, 19. Paul looked forward to it (Phil. ii. 17; 2 Tim. iv. 6-8). There have been martyrs in this sense all along the Church's history, beginning with Stephen, and James, the brother of John (Acts vii. 59; xii. 2). It was no doubt allowed of God, in order to stir up His saints, and to make a definite distinction between them and the world, as represented especially by those who pretended to have the monopoly of the Scriptures for the time^s being, using them as the basis of their self-constituted authority. That was very evident in the cases of Stephen and of the blessed Lord.

We have referred to the Lord's coming, and in *judgment*, as characteristic of this book. But we must not confound that with the proper hope of the Church, particularly revealed to Paul when he wrote the first epistle to the Thessalonians (iv. 15-18.) That hope is not referred to, except in a mystical way in chapter xii. 5, taken in connection with ii. 27, where the same expression occurs of "ruling the nations with a rod of iron" (see Ps. ii. 9, and 2 Tim. ii. 12). The hope peculiar to the Church we designate as the "rapture," or secret snatching away of all true believers from this world *before* the last judgments begin. It was only given to Paul, and at a very needed moment, when the first believers in Europe began to think that their sufferings and martyrdom necessarily cut them off from the blessings of association with Christ in His future kingdom and power. They had not realised the "*heavenly calling*" of the Church, of which Abraham's sojourn in Canaan, *without possessing* it, was a very faint indication indeed. It gave the negative side of pilgrimage in this world, but not at all the positive

side of association with Christ in glory, contained in His words to the disciples at the last supper, after Judas had gone out: "I go to prepare a place for you" (John xiv. 2). The manner of accomplishing such association was not given then, nor, indeed, in any of John's writings, if we except the allusion in Revelation xii. 5, referred to above. For the great point was, and is, and always will be, the *most* intimate association with the Lord Himself, and that in the full blessedness of the Father's house.

Now this supreme blessing is only true of "the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23). That is "the mystery" which was revealed to Paul alone (Eph. iii. 2, 3). It is only found in *his* writings, as at the end of Romans, and especially in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, written during his imprisonment at Rome. It was implied in the Lord's own words to him, which arrested him in his mad career of persecution, on the way to Damascus, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou **Me**?" (Acts ix. 4). For any one who injured a member of His "body" affected in the same way the **Head** in heaven. We must remember, too, that Paul had never seen the Lord on earth, "in the days of His flesh" (Heb. v. 7), but for the first time in heavenly glory; and that glory, which blinded him, was "above the brightness of the sun" at mid-day (Acts xxvi. 13). It gave a peculiar character to his ministry, forming, as it were, the substratum of his epistles (compare in that to the Romans ii. 7; iii. 23; v. 2; viii. 17, 18, 30; ix. 23; and 2 Corinthians iii. 8-11, 18, etc.). Who would think of describing a sinner by the words "come short of the *glory* of God," unless they had the distinct assurance that God's purpose was to have "many sons *in glory*" (Heb. ii. 10)? And that glory was, as Peter

shows, only manifested *after* Christ had ascended up to heaven (Acts iii. 13; 1 Pet. i. 21). Stephen's face shone with the reflection of it when the Jewish leaders stoned him (Acts vi. 15).

Let us remember, too, that John the Baptist, the greatest of all the prophets of the olden time, distinctly states that he does not belong to the Bride; but enjoyed the peculiar hope and blessing of being the "friend of the Bridegroom" (John iii. 27-29). The Church is the Bride which the Lord will present to Himself (Eph. v. 27): it only began at Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down from heaven, thus accomplishing His promise to His disciples *after* He Himself had gone back to the Father (John vii. 39; xvi. 7). The whole character and calling of the Church is *heavenly* in principle, whereas the book of Revelation has to do with what goes on here below on earth.

This brings us also to another characteristic of the Book, namely that the "**Father**" is but little mentioned, and where it is found, it refers to the relationship in which the Lord Himself stands (see i. 6, and xiv. 1). In three other places, in the addresses to the seven churches, He Himself uses the words "my Father" (ii. 27; iii. 5, 21). This last is perhaps the most remarkable of all, inasmuch as the state of Laodicea—prefiguring, no doubt, the finally hopeless condition of the responsible Church on earth—is so bad that the Lord speaks of "spewing it out of His mouth." We do not anywhere find an allusion to the first message given by the Lord to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection, "**My Father and your Father**" (John xx. 17). And we cannot forget that those blessed words form the chief burden of John's epistle, as indeed of the Lord's commission to His disciples (John xx. 21), and of His discourse after Judas had gone out on the

night of the Passover, terminated by His prayer in chapter xvii. In the Apocalypse, things are looked at from another standpoint, and all that passes on earth is subjected to God's judgment.

Is it not, however, most interesting and instructive to notice that, in this remarkable book, the relationship with the Father, as well as the constant expectation of the Lord's coming, and what it involves for the believer's soul, are to be learned and enjoyed, not by our own feelings, but by what they imply for the blessed Lord Himself, and consequently for His saints in energizing power?

The name of God habitually used, is the **Almighty**, revealed to Abraham in Genesis xvii. 1. Six times it is associated with "Lord," that is **Jehovah**, first revealed to Moses in Exodus iii. 14, 15; vi. 2, 3. The passages are as follows: chapters iv. 8; xi. 17; xv. 3; xvi. 7; xix. 6; and xxi. 22. God Almighty is found in xvi. 14, and xix. 15. Once, in chapter i. 8, it is found alone; but, coming after "Lord (Jehovah) God," is all the more emphatic, and brings these passages to the number of seven.

How precious it is to see that the Lord's first care is for the Church, and He closes the book with words of comfort for His saints on earth, "Surely I come quickly!"

W. J. L.

Typical Teaching of Genesis, and Inspiration.

THE typical character of the book of Genesis is well known; in fact, it has been called "the seed-plot of the whole Bible."

We may take as an illustration of this the first man, Adam, set up in Eden as head and centre of all.

representing God in government, "figure of Him that was to come." But the first Adam disobeyed God, and fell; the last Adam was obedient, even unto death. Eve was the "help-meet" provided by God Himself, taken out of the side of Adam whilst he slept; type of the Church, the true bride of Christ (see Eph. v. 22, 30-31).

Abel, justified by faith and accepted in virtue of the offering which he brought, was a type of those who are accepted on the ground of the sacrifice of Christ. Enoch, walking with God by faith during 300 years, prophesied of the judgment about to come, but through which he himself did not pass. By faith he was translated that he should not see death; type of the saints translated to heaven at the coming of the Lord.

Noah, type of the godly remnant of Israel, witnessed to the world of judgment about to come, *through* which he and his family were preserved.

But it is not our purpose to pursue this typical teaching of Genesis, which is interwoven with the whole structure of the narrative, and which is so remarkable and complete in this the earliest book of the Bible. What we desire is, to draw attention to this fact—that God ordered and shaped the lives and histories of those of old time with a certain well-defined purpose in view, as well as giving us the inspired record of them in the Bible.

It will be found, too, that the ordering of the events themselves was in such a way as to form the framework for the pictorial or typical representation of them, which was afterwards so fully developed and enlarged upon throughout the Bible itself. These persons—types in themselves—are so described as to cover the varied interpretations in detail.

Thus, as we have remarked, the men themselves—

their lives, acts, and words—were all under the controlling hand of Him who orders all things after the council of His own will; and that with a definite and distinct design in view. All was before the divine mind from the very beginning. This, of course, in no way interfered with their several responsibilities.

And here we might remark that this typical character of the Bible records, has been a great help towards the better understanding of the doctrines unfolded in the New Testament. It has also furnished a valuable means to the preacher of the truth of making it plain and intelligible to his hearers.

Such, then, is the remarkable building up and unity of the Bible throughout all its books, diversified as they are in their varied instructions. Yet they bear the impress of the one divine mind which presided over all from Genesis to Revelation. And in the light of the New Testament, those very typical teachings, from Genesis onward, are seen to have been part of one complete whole; all of which converge upon one point, namely, the heading up of all things, both in heaven and earth, in Christ, the second man, the last Adam, the Son of God.

No other book, or collection of books, ever devised by the wit of man, has stood or could stand on such a level for one moment. We may then well ask how it is possible that such a record as that which the Bible presents—one which required a foreknowledge of events from the very beginning—could be the work of mere scribes, priests, or others of later date, as the critics pretend?

There may be, and there are, difficulties in the Bible; though patient and prayerful study, and clearer light from God, will dispel most of them, and we cannot expect to understand everything at once. In any case,

the book itself bears increasingly to the reverent student the impress of a divine wisdom and completeness which far overshadows any difficulties it contains.

“A glory fills the sacred page,
Majestic as the sun !
It lends a light to every age,
It lends, but borrows none.”

F. G. B.

An Extract.

“ I SHOULD like here, in the clearest and most unmistakable way, to express my deepest conviction of the divine origin of the Holy Scriptures. Although in reading them I cannot fail to see imperfections and small defects in the translation, still I read it as that which, because it is the Word of God, has absolute authority over me. The Scriptures have been my delight, my comfort, my food, my strength for many years, the while I read them simply as the Word of God. I had at the commencement, on this point, a severe conflict to go through, but since then I have, thank God, held them fast as the invaluable link between God and my soul, although heaven and earth, men, even the visible Church, should crumble into dust. It is my deep conviction that God has given it in order to form this connection between Him and me. And the best means to know the truth of the Bible, and also its authority, is to read it patiently. The Scriptures speak to us of grace; not only of truth, but of the grace and love of a God who gave His only begotten Son, that we might *come to Him to know His heart.*”

J. N. D.

The God of Peace.

THIS blessed title of God is found frequently in the New Testament; generally at the close of an epistle, where the writer commends the saints to His care. Peace is the atmosphere in which God dwells, above and beyond all the storms of this world.

In Romans, Paul, after commending those believers to God (chaps. xv. 33; xvi. 20), comforts them by pointing them to the end, when the "God of peace" would bruise Satan under their feet shortly. In 2 Corinthians he says, "Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you." Thus it is our privilege to go through this evil world singing:

"Through scenes of strife and desert life
I tread *in peace* my way."

In Philippians the title comes in most suitably after the exhortation to leave all our cares and burdens at the throne of God; and there, enjoying the "peace of God," it is ours to have the "God of peace" with us all along our path.

In 1 Thessalonians it is connected with our sanctification in view of the "coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And, lastly, in Hebrews we have the *God of resurrection*, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ—the "God of peace"—to whom the apostle prays, to perfect them in every good work to do His will.

God, in His grace, has saved us and set us on the road to glory: but, at the present, when we are passing through times of stress, trial, and difficulty—this comes home to every household in some way. Let us pray earnestly that the "God of peace" may sustain His beloved people, and strengthen their faith and confidence in Him.

Practical Lessons, II.—Brotherly Forgiveness.

BROTHERLY forgiveness is largely enjoined in the Bible. The prayer the Lord Jesus taught His disciples spoke of it: "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." Yet who will say that this important subject commands the attention it should among the saints of God?

Forgiveness, as set forth in scripture, falls under three heads — judicial forgiveness, which is God's prerogative; governmental forgiveness, which may be from God or man; and personal forgiveness, as between man and man. It is with the latter we are now concerned. Let us then notice:—

(i.) **Brotherly forgiveness, as to its need and nature.**—The believer, although a child of God, has still in him the old nature. Pride, self-seeking, and resentment at offences may easily show themselves. The lurking seeds of bitterness, hatred, and strife, through taking or giving offence, will readily spring up. He has also against him the power of Satan and a hostile world—all tending to hinder that good and pleasant dwelling together in unity which God so values (Ps. cxxxiii.). But He who knows beforehand all our wilderness needs has exhorted us to mutual forgiveness and forbearance as one of the things indispensable to Christian fellowship and testimony. Without this, neither the one or the other is possible.

Brotherly forgiveness has been defined as "the changed aspect of the mind of him who forgives as regards the faults of the forgiven." This gracious practice was never more needed in the church or in the world than it is to-day.

(ii.) **Brotherly forgiveness, as to its importance.**—While every believer is privileged to *know*, and should

know, that his sins are all forgiven him for Christ's sake (1 John ii. 12), yet his *enjoyment* of that forgiveness very largely depends on his walking in communion with God, and his attitude towards his fellow-men. For example, as in that first prayer we find the petition, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," etc., (Matt. vi. 12-15), so in the explanation which follows, we learn that it was only as they showed a forgiving spirit to others, that their heavenly Father would forgive them; and if they did not forgive, neither would they be forgiven.

We find in Mark xi. 25 what is more pointed still: "When ye stand praying, forgive"; as much as to say, "It is no use praying if we do not forgive others" (see also Luke vi. 37 and xi. 4). Matthew xviii. 35 shows us that the forgiveness was to be no superficial making up of a quarrel, but "*from your hearts.*" We have no right to expect forgiveness from God unless we are prepared to forgive one another; nor can we count on Him for that which we are not prepared to extend to our brethren.

The matter is solemn and urgent for each of us to take to heart—let us not merely be "moralising," but seek grace to carry out in practice what we profess! We must be careful not to sin against our brethren, for in so doing we "sin against Christ" (1 Cor. viii. 12); and since "every one of us shall give account of himself to God," let us not "put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in our brother's way." But if, alas! we do offend, then both *offender* and *offended* are told what to do: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and *go thy way*; *first be reconciled* to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. v. 23, 24). Even if I intended

no harm, and may not be conscious of being in any way an *offender*, I must put things right with my brother and receive his forgiveness first, before approaching God as a worshipper. If, on the other hand, I am the *offended* party, Matthew xviii. 15 meets my case, directing me to seek out, privately, the offending brother, and then: "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he should hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." Let us remark that no *letter-writing*, or any other attitude than that mentioned, will put me right in the face of this scripture.

The offended one might say that it was rather lowering to his dignity to go, and that it was the place of the trespasser to come and apologise; but he is reminded that the Son of man came down (vers. 11-13) all the way from heaven to seek one offender; and He sought until He found him and could rejoice over him. If *He* acted in such marvellous grace, surely we may well follow *His* steps.

We hope to continue this important subject next month (D.V.).

W. M. R.

"I, Yet Not I."

A Tea-Table Talk with Some Young Christians.

WHEN walking in my little garden one day with an old Christian gardener, I noticed that he suddenly stopped before a young fruit-tree and, taking his knife out of his pocket, cut off the most promising branch.

"Why did you do that?" I exclaimed.

"You ought to know," said he, pointing to the tree; and when I looked with a suspicion of the truth already in my mind, I found that the promising

branch had been growing below the graft instead of above it.

“Was that the reason the gardener cut it off?”

“Certainly, and it is an excellent illustration of the truth taught us in the sixth chapter of Romans, as to the practical effect of having two natures in us as believers in Christ.”

“That is a subject I have long wanted to know a little more about. I don’t understand what we were hearing about the ‘two I’s.’”

“Well, I think the tree with the grafted branch illustrates what this sixth chapter of Romans teaches us. Before conversion we were ‘in the flesh,’ children of Adam, with the old nature only. But as born again we have a new nature, grafted as it were on the old stock, so that, while still alive in this world, we have two natures. We are not all spirit or all flesh. Our Lord, when speaking to Nicodemus in the third chapter of John said, ‘*That* which is born of the Spirit is spirit’; not *he* which is born of the Spirit, or we might have supposed that a ‘born again’ person was only spirit.”¹

“But doesn’t this chapter (Rom. vi.) say that our old man is crucified with Christ; and that we are dead with Christ?”

“Yes! and it is evident from this that God looks upon us as “in Christ” instead of in Adam, and the

¹ “There had been only flesh before; now, as believing in Christ, the man is born of God (1 John v.); and each nature retains its own characteristic. As flesh never becomes spirit, so spirit never degenerates into flesh. The natures abide distinct, and the practical business of the believer is to hold himself for dead to the one that he may live in the other by the faith of the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself for him.”—W. K. [Ed.]

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exhortations at the end of the chapter are based upon what is true as to us before God. It tells us that through the death of Christ we are delivered from the dominion of sin, no longer obliged to do what our old nature delights in, but freed from that servitude in order to do the will of God."

"But we are such poor weak things, we cannot help doing the desires of the old nature."

"Now that is an important point practically, because, if I say I do certain things because I cannot help it, it is clear that I am under the power of a nature or will that is too strong for me, and that I am not delivered from the servitude of sin, from which this chapter says we are delivered. It says that our members—minds, tongues, hands, feet, etc. — which hitherto had been used in the service of self, instruments of unrighteousness unto sin—should now, in those that are alive from the dead, be used in the service of God, instruments of righteousness unto God. To take the familiar illustration of the grafted tree—all the life and vigour of the stock is to be drawn upon for the fruit-bearing of the graft, and no branches are to be allowed to grow on the old stock at all."

"And is that what is meant by the "two 'I's."

"Well, as a matter of fact there are three 'I's, when looked at in this way. 'I' the old man, 'I' the new man, and 'I' the person in whom the two natures are. This is very clearly seen in the third chapter of Colossians, for instance. Let us turn to it. 'Lie not one to another, seeing that we have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him' (ver. 9, 10). Very similar also is the way this truth is put before us in the fourth chapter of Ephesians (ver. 22-24), which we may as

well read also. Now this makes it clear that the *person* is addressed in his responsibility as to these two natures, and that our personality is neither lost nor confused."

"Still I am not quite clear, for the eighth verse of our chapter says 'if we be dead with Christ,' and the seventh 'he that is dead is freed from sin.'"

"I am glad you spoke out, it is so much better than assenting when things are not clear to us. Let me put the truth I stated just now in a way a little different. '*I*' the old man—crucified with Christ. '*I*' the new man—Christ who lives in me. '*I*' the individual who, though alive in the flesh, live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. He (Christ) loved *me*—not the old man, or the new man—but *me*, the individual, once a sinner in his sins, in Adam, but now through grace 'in Christ,' and constrained by His love to live, not to myself, but to 'Himself.'"

"You said something just now about the Roman Christians having obeyed from the heart the doctrine, or teaching, delivered to them, which I did not understand."

"Well, that refers, I think, to the special truth given us in this chapter. It is not a question of forgiveness, or acceptance, or justification, which are all treated of in the former chapters, and summarised in the magnificent opening sentences of the fifth chapter, commencing with the triumphant '*Therefore*' of the first verse. It refers rather to these particular points we have been talking over, as to *how* God has dealt with our old nature, the flesh, so as to give us deliverance from it. He does not say it grows better, or weaker, neither does he say that it is taken altogether out of the believer. Experience also tells us

this, and that is where conflict comes in (Gal. v. 17). We find the old nature with its lusts and power still there, but we are freed, or justified, from it (and are no longer under its dominion), by the sentence of death passed upon it by God in the death of Christ.

"I am afraid I know very little about this, but I should like to understand it better."

"Well, thank God, our enjoyment does not depend on our understanding doctrine, important as this is; but on our communion with the Lord by the power of the Spirit given to us. Look only to Christ in heaven, and depend simply upon His power to keep you. Many Christians that know very little of doctrine are happier than those that know more, because they abide more constantly in Christ. If the Lord will, we will look at what the seventh chapter of Romans says about these subjects another time."

T. R.

AN EXTRACT.

The Crowned and Enthroned Elders (Rev. iv. 4).—We get two facts connected with the heavenly saints. When the throne is set, they are sitting in the very midst of judgment, in calm, quiet repose. The thunders and lightnings neither shake the crowns upon their heads, nor their hearts within. It is all perfect peace with them. Blessed testimony this, of our place! The Lord grant us to enter into it, to get our hearts up to the height of God's thoughts about us. We should be amazed at the wonderful grace of His ways towards us, when we think of the perfect peace which grace has given us to enjoy above, even in the presence of the tokens of divine judgment, and the redemptive power which has given us a capacity to be there.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

INTRODUCTORY.

II.

A PROMINENT feature in this book, and one which we should always keep in mind, is that its wording, or phraseology, is familiar to every careful reader of the Bible, whether the Old or the New Testament. Numbers of passages, which are not strictly quotations, are reproductions—often word for word—of what is found elsewhere in Scripture; but the special feature throughout is *judgment* of all that has been committed to man's responsibility, after long patience and forbearance on God's part. For we must not forget that judgment, in righteousness, is "His strange work" (Isa. xxviii. 17, 21). But there must be a final testing of every privilege enjoyed, and a searching inquiry into the use made of it, whether by His chosen people of Israel, or by those who have adopted the name of Christian.

The former, since their rejection of Christ, have long been banished from their promised land; but the controversy of the cross has not yet been settled, though blessing has passed to the Gentiles whom they despised, and these have been blessed in a way the Jews little thought of. But they also have been unfaithful, in spite of the apostle's warning in Romans xi. 17-24. They have been as the branch of "a wild olive-tree, grafted in" upon the original Abrahamic stock of calling, blessing, and promise; but the present increasing unbelief of the Gentile nations thus favoured, will lead providentially to their being likewise "cut off," and, as a consequence, there will be a final reinstating of Israel in "their own olive-tree."

We know that the particular portion of the nation

which we call "Jews," represented by the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, were partly restored to their land under the leadership of Zerubbabel, after the Babylonish captivity; it is these, or rather their descendants, who were guilty of crucifying Christ, and they will be dealt with accordingly. The others will only be brought back *after* the "great tribulation" (Jer. xxx. 7; Dan. xii. 1). But it is interesting to notice that the ten tribes—"lost," as we call them—are enumerated *between* Judah and Benjamin¹ in Revelations vii. 5-8. All are referred to in chapter xxi. 12.

For the right understanding of these things it is needful to remember that the principles of *faith* and *promise*, established in Abraham, was in no sense through the law or by law-keeping; they were made good to him in connection with the promise of a seed symbolised by the "stars of *heaven*," and thus representing a *heavenly* family. Most remarkably, also, this was done *before* he was in that *outward* relationship with God which was specifically characteristic of Israel—his descendants according to the flesh—from the time of their leaving Egypt to go into the land of Canaan (see Gen. xv. 5, 6; Dan. xii. 3; Rom. iv. 9-13, 16-18; Heb. xi. 9, 10, 16). In Abraham, therefore, is opened up to us, in type, the strangership of the Christian on *earth*, his calling and hope being *heavenly* in principle (Heb. iii. 1; x. 32-36). Peter insists on this in his first epistle (ii. 11, 12; v. 10). And we may notice in the letters to the "seven churches," that it is just here that failure came in, through an increasing conformity to the unbelieving world around. It is particularly so in the case of Pergamos and Thyatira (Rev. ii. 13, 20), and, in another sense, in Laodicea (iii. 17).

¹ Compare as to this the "prince's portion" in Ezekiel xlviii. 22, which is also between Judah and Benjamin.

On the other hand, we must not, in the Apocalypse, expect to find the Church's present association *spiritually* with Christ in heaven, in the sense of the truth of the "one body," unfolded in the epistle to the Ephesians; for this is the hidden main-spring of faith in the enjoyment of the love of Christ, as it is also indeed the basis of Christian responsibility (Eph. iv. 1-4; v. 25). Nor do we find in the letters to the seven churches any allusion to the present work of the Holy Ghost. The book deals with that which is *outward*, that is to say, with practical *testimony on earth*, which should be to the Lord's glory, and which is therefore subject to the Lord's judgment.

It is quite true that when Christ reigns, we shall reign with Him (1 Cor. iv. 8). The apostle insists upon this in writing to Timothy at the end of his earthly course, and in view of his martyrdom (2 Tim. ii. 12; iv. 8, 18). John also refers to it in his opening address (Rev. i. 9). The "patience" he speaks of was clearly in view of the coming kingdom. Besides this, the "door opened in heaven," in chapter iv., revealed to him the "elders" who represent the whole company of the redeemed, and who will be associated with the Lord in glory, from the moment when He shall come to take His saints—raising the dead and "changing" the living, as explained by the apostle Paul. It had been a mystery, that is to say hidden, until it was revealed to him (1 Cor. xv. 51-54; 1 Thess. iv. 14-17). All these believers (no doubt including those of Old Testament times, as well as the Church, properly so-called) are seen *already* sitting on their thrones, *before* the last judgments on this earth begin (Rev. iv. 4). The Lord's words in Matt. viii. 11; Luke xiii. 28, etc., are clear in this respect.

This is very important. The number "twenty-four," twice twelve, evidently indicates this inclusive

character, and the redemption-song which they sing, shows its world-wide application (Rev. v. 9-10). In a somewhat similar way, we notice, at the end of the Book, that those who will be saved during the tribulations of the last days, and who pass through martyrdom, will all be finally raised, and thus have their portion in heaven, and in "the kingdom of our God and of His Christ" (Rev. xi. 15; xii. 10). There are two distinct companies mentioned: those seen to be martyred when the fifth seal is opened (vi. 9), and those put to death during the reign of the beast and the Antichrist (xiii. 15; xiv. 13). All these are found associated with the former ones represented by the twenty-four elders (xx. 4); they will all live and reign with Christ for "a thousand years." All of them form a part of "the first resurrection," of which the Lord Jesus Himself was "the first-fruits" (1 Cor. xv. 20-23).

The fact of *all* the redeemed having part in the glory and responsibility of the kingdom still future, is sufficiently shown in the "new song" of the twenty-four elders, who say at the end, "They shall *reign* over the earth."¹ Besides this, the Lord's parables in Matthew xxv. 21, 23, and still more definitely in Luke xix. 12-19, where the "kingdom" is twice mentioned, indicate the same thing.

But *until* we came to the description of the heavenly city at the end of the book, we find that the judgments are in connection with the *earth*, and with what goes on *there*—first of all in the church, God's responsible witness at the present time, in the first three chapters, and then with Christendom as a whole, not, of course, omitting the Jewish people, after the church is seen in heaven in chap. iv. We should, however, not lose sight of the fact, that what goes on down here is

¹ This is the true reading of Revelation v. 10.

presented as *seen from heaven*. The door is opened there, and John is invited to enter, in order to observe what goes on as God looks down upon it (iv. 1, 2).

Morally, this is of very great importance for us all; for we never can understand things aright unless we see them as God unfolds them to us. Satan takes care to blind the eyes of those who believe not, so that the petty things of this world may be accounted of great importance, while eternal things are neglected altogether (2 Cor. iv. 2-4). At the end of the book it is interesting to notice an inverse order, namely, that the heavenly city, Jerusalem, which comes down from heaven, is seen from "a great and high mountain" *on the earth*.

We add an important word, namely, that the key to any true understanding of the book is Christ Himself. It is essentially His revelation. All things at the beginning were made by Him, and for Him; and in Him they are summed up at the end. He is the Alpha and Omega of it all. The final state is the habitation of God with men (xxi. 3); and is not that another unfolding of what He is as Emmanuel, **God with us?** Matthew begins with it, at the end of chapter i., and the Lord Himself closes with it, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age" (Matt. xxviii. 20).

W. J. L.

Sir Oliver Lodge's Recent Book, "Raymond."

THAT this book, which is published at 10s. 6d., should have reached a third edition in a short time, shows that the public are ever ready for that which gratifies curiosity by prying into the unseen, especially when such a book comes from the pen of a noted scientist like Sir Oliver Lodge. His son, Raymond, was killed near Ypres in September 1915,

and very shortly afterwards Sir O. Lodge, who is a leading spiritualist, got into communication with "mediums" about him. We have not read the book itself, but only a lengthy review of it, which is sufficient to indicate its contents.

As to the young man himself—one would hope better things than spiritualism has to offer. He carried his Bible with him, and he evidently read it, for he had marked various texts: let us hope that he really trusted Christ as his Saviour.

But the fact that this book, and others of the same nature, are sought after, and no doubt their ideas and suggestions followed, by many who have lost their relatives or friends in the War, makes it a solemn and serious question, showing how wide-spread spiritualism is becoming, and how active Satan is in deceiving men.

It would not be for profit to follow the foolish and worthless sayings of "mediums," "controls," etc., who were consulted in this case, but what strikes one is the senseless and petty talk to which they give expression, though put forward in an occult and mystic manner, characteristic of these kind of utterances. What *we* (believers) have to do is to ask, What does Scripture say about dealings with the spirit world?

Now nothing can be more explicit and definite than the commands given by God to His people of old on this subject. Let us quote some of the passages:—

"There shall not be found among you he that . . . useth divination, that useth auguries, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or one that inquireth of a spirit of Python, or a soothsayer, or one that consulteth the dead. For every one that doeth these things is an abomination to Jehovah, and because of these abominations Jehovah thy God doth dispossess them (the nations) from before thee" (Deut. xviii. 10-12, new trans.). "Turn not unto necromancers and unto soothsayers; seek not after

them to make yourselves unclean" (Lev. xix. 31). "The soul that turneth unto necromancers and unto soothsayers, to go a whoring after them, I will set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people. . . . And if there be a man or a woman in whom is a spirit of Python or of divination, they shall certainly be put to death" (Lev. xx. 6 and 27). "And Saul died for his unfaithfulness . . . and also for having inquired of the spirit of Python, asking counsel of it" (1 Chron. x. 13).

After all, no man is a match for Satan—not even the cleverest of men—for there can be no question that it is wicked spirits who personate the dead, and thus they deceive the votaries of spiritualism.

The New Testament is as emphatic as the Old on this subject. It tells us of "wicked spirits in the heavenlies," of the "spirit of error" as opposed to the "Spirit of truth"; of "doctrines of demons," "of sacrificing to demons." We might expect that, as the end of this age approaches, we would witness a special activity of Satanic power and craft in this direction as well as in others. The Antichrist, acting under the power of Satan, will, we know, in a future day, cause fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men and give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should speak, etc. There will then be a trinity of evil, "the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet" (Rev. xiii. and xvi. 13). At the present time we see the dark foreshadowings of these things, and the only true place for the Christian is to hold all such doings in utter abhorrence, and to keep himself absolutely clear from any defilement with them.

F. G. B.

“Here and There.”

A Brief Word of Exhortation by J. A.

I WISH, dear friends, to draw your attention very briefly to two words, trusting that the Spirit of God may cause them to find a lodgment in your hearts. The first is in Hebrews xiii. 14, “*Here* we have no continuing city.” Just think of what that little word “here” conveys to us. “Here,” amidst the sorrows, trials, and difficulties of the way; *here*, where things at times would make your heart break. *Here* we have no continuing city; it is a vanishing, fading, passing scene.

But now turn with me to Revelation xxii. 5, “There shall be no night *there*.” What a contrast! What does that little word “there” remind you of? Does it not tell us how we shall see Jesus—the very same Jesus who was in this world? The Christ who raised Jairus’ daughter, the widow of Nain’s son, and Lazarus from the dead. The Jesus who saved the poor dying robber, the Jesus of Calvary and Golgotha—and we shall be with Him for ever!

Yes, *there* we shall see Him face to face, we shall sing His praises with myriads of the redeemed, with many we companied with down here. *There*, nothing shall ever again get between our souls and Himself, as even the lawful things of life sometimes do here. There shall be no night *there*; nothing to darken or cloud the scene—no sorrow, no grief, no tears—but joy and worship and praise for ever and ever.

Does not the prospect of it make your heart bound within you, as you pass on, to meet the Lord in the air?

“Consider Him.”

“Consider well Him who endured so great contradiction of sinners against Himself” (Heb. xii. 3, new trans.).

WHAT gives strength and comfort to the Christian's soul and enables him to persevere in the path of faith and service to Christ, is the example of the Lord Himself, who has trodden that path in dependence on the Father's will and perfect obedience to His word. There are many tests and trials by reason of the length of the way and the difficulties to be encountered, as we all know by experience, and there is the constant tendency to become discouraged and to grow weary. This is especially so in times of exceptional trial like the present. But, even in the things of this world, he would be accounted a poor soldier who always expected to repose in easy circumstances, without having to encounter some of the hardships incidental to actual warfare in the service of his king and country.

We find in the gospels the blessed and encouraging example of our divine Saviour, who, in grace, has trodden the path before us. And, whether we take the Messiah, Emmanuel, Son of David, as in Matthew; or the Servant-prophet, as in Mark; or the Son of man, Christ Jesus, as in Luke; or the divine and eternal Word, as in John: what varied moral glories are seen in all His blessed pathway here! He was indeed *God manifested in flesh*. God amidst men—not coming in the brightness of His divine and invisible majesty, but in the lowly grace, the compassion, the absolute unselfishness of the humble, devoted servant of the Father's will.

Here was One who had no motive but the Father's will and glory, no self-seeking; and whom no power or

subtlety of Satan could cause to deviate from the path of obedience to the Father who sent Him;—One who lived by the Word of God, and met all the seductions of the enemy by the simple “It is written” of the inspired book;—One in whom was perfect light, yea, who was *the* Light in this world: exposing, as this light must necessarily do, all that was contrary to it in men.

But the manifestation of this perfect love and grace and lowliness—this light amidst the darkness—only drew out the bitter hatred, scorn, and contempt of the world, especially of the religious world. So that He had to say at the end, “They hated Me without a cause,” and, “They have both seen and hated both Me and My Father.” What an index of the heart of man—of all our hearts by nature!

Thus Christ Himself is the example for us. In spite of difficulties, opposition and trial, He pursued the path of faith right through from beginning to end. Let us “consider well Him who endured,” for the encouragement and strengthening of our souls. Let us remember that *this is the time* of trial; this is our opportunity to witness for Christ and serve Him in a hostile world; in heaven we shall not be called upon to do so. Let us not miss the opportunity.

And then, too, there shines before the Christian, the blessed and encouraging hope of His coming again. It is truly a *heavenly* hope; and if the eye is turned to heaven to watch for the rising of the Morning star, how suited such a hope is to lighten the burden, quicken the steps, and impart joy and vigour to the soul along the path—even if it be rough and difficult—to the glory of God.

Is not Christ’s last word to His Church, in what we might call the appendix to the book of Revelation, “Surely I come quickly,” intended, like the pole-star in

the heavens, to guide and encourage us on the way? Oh yes; it is the word of the One who "testifies these things"—and the book is the "testimony of Jesus Christ"—the word of the One who "loves us and has washed us from our sins in His own blood," as though He said, "It is *I*, Jesus, Myself, and no other: I am coming for you."

May this blessed hope brighten our path and encourage our souls to persevere in the path of faith and testimony for our absent Lord, while we are waiting for the joyous moment when He shall come in the clouds, and we shall meet Him in the air!

F. G. B.

"God Manifested in Flesh."

THE Lord Jesus has manifested in His life here below, a power which destroyed entirely the power of Satan over men. He healed all the sick, cast out devils, raised the dead, gave to eat to those who were hungry. He had, as man, bound the strong man and spoiled his goods. And not only that, but what was still more important, the human being who was the most abandoned to sin, found in Him a way by which he could return to God. God Himself was come to seek him—God, who was showing that no sin was too great for His love, no defilement too repulsive for His heart. Satan had ruined man by destroying his confidence in God; God neglected nothing to re-establish it, but with a perfect condescension. Perfect, because His love could not do otherwise; perfect, because it was the true expression of His heart, which found in the miseries, the faults, the weakness of man, the occasion of assuring them that there was a love on which they could always count. . . .

It is a love which inspires confidence, because, when all is known, God remains always love. . . .

Such was Christ on earth. The sinner who would have been ashamed to show himself to man, could hide his face in the bosom of Jesus, sure of not finding a reproach there. Not a sin allowed (if there had been, confidence would not have been established, because He would not have revealed the *holy* God), but a heart which, through the midst of sin, received the sinner in His arms; and it was the heart of God. Christ was all that in this world, and He was much more than my poor pen could tell: and man rejected Him. . . .

If man (Pilate) is a judge, he condemns the innocent, washing his hands as to it. If he is a priest, whose duty is to plead for those who are out of the way, he pleads against the innocent and just person. If it be a question of friends, one betrays, another denies, the rest forsake, Him who had shown unceasingly the abundance of His affection. In men, no fear of God, no compassion for man! The Saviour went low enough for a wretched thief, suffering the punishment of his crimes, to insult Him in death.

Bible Treasury, 1864.

Opened Ears.

IF anything were needed to emphasize the value and blessedness of having our ears opened to the voice of God, it can surely be found in the fact that our blessed Lord, so often in His discourses while on earth, repeated that expressive sentence, "He that has ears to hear let him hear." And again, in the addresses to the seven churches in Asia, the last words to the assembly on earth, the seven-fold repetition of these same words cannot fail to impress us.

It is well to remember, too, for our practical help, that it was by the ear man lost God, for Eve listened to the tempter's seductive voice, and it is through the ear that God is regained (if we may so express it), for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. x. 17). How thankful then should every one of us be, whose ears have been opened by grace to hear what God has to say; and in this connection we have the Lord Jesus brought before us, as the One who not only spoke for others to hear, but, perfect in time and place, took Himself the position of one who listened and heard.

As an example of this, there is that remarkable passage in the fortieth psalm (ver. 6), "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire, mine ears hast Thou opened (margin "*digged*"), burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required." It is well known that in Hebrews x. 5 and 6 this passage is quoted with the words, "A body hast Thou prepared me," instead of "mine ears hast Thou opened": so if we are to learn that opened ears are equivalent to a "prepared body," as expressing the beautiful dependent attitude of the Lord Jesus on the words of His Father, what an incentive is this to us, to ever carry an opened ear Godward. And what new meaning it gives to those words of the Lord Jesus, "As My Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John viii. 28).

Does not Isaiah, too, speak of Him, when he says in the fourth verse of chapter fifty, "The Lord God hath wakened mine ear to hear as the instructed" (R.V.)? *He* is the receiver of the "word in season for him that is weary," and wakeneth us morning by morning, to wait as it were for that word from God. Beautiful it is to trace in the ministry of Christ upon the earth, this blessed service of searching out and

relieving the weary ones, as He passes the pool of Bethesda, and looks with divine compassion upon the helpless man, who had been a long time (thirty and eight years) in that case (John v.); and the poor woman, "who had suffered many things of many physicians" (Mark v. 26); or the beggar blind from his birth (John ix.); and countless others, who found the true meaning of the words, "I am Jehovah that healeth thee."

It is most interesting to observe that in each of the three synoptic gospels where the parable of the sower is given, the Lord emphasises the importance of the parabolic teaching with the well-known appendix, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear"; but in Luke the moral effect of the word on the various classes of hearers is rather more detailed. For instance, we read as to the seed which fell among thorns, "these are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" (Luke viii. 14). Should we not all take this to heart? We have heard the question asked, "What becomes of all the truth that is ministered?" And we must all admit with sorrow, how little "fruit to perfection" is seen to-day as the result of all that the Lord has graciously given to his Church, even in the last century.

Again in the last words of the fourteenth chapter of Luke, the Lord closes His warning word about savourless salt with the weighty admonition, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear"; but this is not found in Matthew or Mark in connection with the same truth.

We are exhorted, too, not only to "take heed *what* we hear—for there are many voices abroad—but *how* we hear," and we might well seek to learn of the blessed Master Himself in this, praying with Solomon,

“Give Thou Thy servant a *hearing heart*” (1 Kings iii. 9, margin).

May the Lord exercise our hearts afresh as to all this. It cannot be said of us perhaps in the same degree as is said of Saul of Tarsus, that we should “see that Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth” (Acts xxii. 14); but it is assuredly true of all that are born of God, “Every one that is of the truth heareth *My voice*” (John xviii. 37). T. R.

Zionism.

AN article speaking strongly against Zionism appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* for November by “An Englishman of the Jewish Faith.” It has been bitterly resented by the Jewish Nationalists in Great Britain; and two replies to it appear in the December issue of the same magazine, one by the Chief Rabbi and the other by Herbert Bentwich. We take the following extracts from the latter of these.

“What do Zionists want? They desire, according to the formula adopted by the International Congress at Basle in 1897, and repeatedly confirmed by subsequent Congresses, the establishment of ‘a publicly recognised and legally assured Home for the Jews in Palestine.’ . . . The Jews are a nation, a scattered nation. Hitherto they have been almost a voiceless multitude of separate units. Why should they not have a centre from which they can speak to the council of the nations on behalf of the oppressed? The Zionist organisation which has spread its branches to the four corners of the earth has, at least, given dispersed Jewry the power of united utterance.”

The article concludes as follows:—

“There (in the Resettlement of Palestine) at all events, is the promise of a solution, on historic lines, of the Jewish problem. A new factor in the problem has arisen in the emergence of Palestine into the sphere of British interests.

In the new world which is to be born out of the Great War 'a place in the sun' must be found for the Jewish people; what place so good and so suitable for the people without a land as the land without a people! Our aspirations as good Britons, as well as faithful Jews, lead us there."

Is it not interesting and remarkable to see the very decided and growing aspirations of the mass of the leaders of Jewish thought to-day after a national Resettlement in their own land; and is it not an indication of the approaching end of the present dispensation? Alas, we know that when they do return (at least the two tribes) it will be in unbelief, according to the sentence of judicial hardening pronounced by the prophet Isaiah, referred to after they had rejected the ministry of the Lord in Matthew xiii. 13-15 and John xii. 37-41; and finally pronounced by the apostle Paul, after they had refused the testimony of the Holy Ghost, in Acts xxviii. 25-27. But, even then, God will have a remnant prepared to bear testimony for Him, and, in a future day when they finally repent and turn to Him, Christ will appear for their lasting deliverance and blessing (Zech. xii.-xiv.)

F. G. B.

Fragments.—The death of Jesus opened the full flood-gates to reveal all God's love, and accomplish all God's purposes. He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Our sins are completely put away by His sacrifice, and the conscience is perfectly purged according to God's own knowledge of good and evil.

God can bring blessing out of the very things that seem to be most against us—see the case of Job. Thus He makes *all* things to work together for good to those that love Him.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

CONTENTS OF THE BOOK.

III.

IT is, we may boldly say, impossible to grasp the true sense and direct application of this blessed book unless we hold firmly in our souls the opening words, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." It is **His**, and from beginning to end it appeals to the Christian heart and conscience. No truly exercised soul can, in His presence, read the second and third chapters without feeling the direct personal application of this appeal, clenched by the words in verse 3, "Blessed is he that *readeth*, and they that *hear* the words of this prophecy, and *keep* those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

The responsibility of listening to the "words," and of keeping the "things" applies, of course, to *everyone*, including those who are unable to read for themselves. These latter formed the great majority from John's day onward, until the time when the art of printing was invented. Even at the present day, it applies to millions who have never heard the gospel, and who know nothing of the privilege of being able to read. The responsibility to *hear* is individual as well as collective, and should lay hold of every conscience, particularly in this favoured land of ours, where the Scriptures of truth are to be had in almost all the languages spoken throughout the world—no small privilege indeed, but involving the duty of doing all we can to favour their circulation.

We would then note here, once for all, the *three* divisions of the Book of Revelation, as given in verse 19 of the first chapter: First, the things which John "*had seen*," that is, the vision given in the chapter

itself; secondly, "the things *which are*," applying to the particular messages addressed to each one of the seven churches in Asia; that is, chapters ii. and iii.

Finally, "the things which shall be *after these*" embrace the rest of the book, from the opening of chapter iv., ending at verse 6 of chapter xxii. That verse closes with a repetition of the words which mark the change of the stand-point from earth to *heaven* in chapter iv., *e.g.*, when the prophet was invited to go up there to observe "the things which must shortly be done."

By the concluding words of intimate love and exhortation in the last chapter, we are then brought back to the opening verses of chapter i., with a three-fold mention of the Lord's speedy coming, and a repeated blessing promised to him "who *keeps* the words of the prophecy of this book" (ver. 7).

The response of each truly watchful soul to this thrice-repeated fact is, "Amen, come, Lord Jesus" (ver. 20). Here we are on familiar church-ground again, and the usual blessing falls upon attentive ears and hearts. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints."

We may notice that this word "come," in the last chapter, is found in verses 7, 12, 17, and 20. In the present tense, or in the imperative, it occurs just seven times, and refers us back to the way in which the Lord himself is announced at the beginning of the book, as one who is essentially "He who comes" (or is coming).

The purpose of His coming is a secondary matter. It may be for His saints so that their hearts may be satisfied, and also *with* them, according to Enoch's prophecy, given in Jude 14-15. He is abundantly so spoken of, since those antediluvian days.

All this is *personal*, and should surely be the outflow of the love which fills the heart of each one of those

whom the blessed Lord has redeemed at such infinite cost to Himself. What would eternity be without Him? "He loved me," says the apostle, "and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). What joy to know that "When we see Him we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2)! Would that the purifying process, spoken of in the next verse, went on more rapidly!

But in any case, there can be no failure on His side: "For yet a very little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. x. 37). No doubt this is stated in a very general sense, just according to the word of the heavenly messengers who stood by the apostles, as they were gazing up into heaven at the moment of the Lord's ascension (Acts i. 11). And so it is in many other passages, as Colossians iii. 4; 2 Timothy iv. 8; 1 Peter v. 4, etc.

The special anticipation of this by taking all true believers to Himself in a way, and at a time, of which the world will know nothing, was confided to Paul when he wrote the first epistle to the Thessalonian saints, to comfort their hearts and relieve their anxieties, persecuted and tried as they were in various ways. But it is scarcely mentioned outside of Paul's epistles, as in 1 Corinthians xv. 50-54, where it is called "a mystery," and in 1 Thessalonians iv. 15-17.

It is nowhere mentioned in the gospels, though possibly implied in John xiv. 3;¹ but even there, the "rapture" was not available for faith, until the *heavenly* calling of the saints should have been made clear, in contrast with an *earthly* calling, such as Abraham's was (compare Heb. iii. 1 with xi. 8-9).

¹ See back, p. 10. We should bear in mind also that the Gospel of John was *written* many years after the epistles of Paul were in circulation amongst the early Christians.

And Paul was the apostle especially called by the Lord *from heaven* (Acts ix. 3-6; xxii. 6-9; xxvi. 13-18).

Accustomed as we are, through grace, to look forward to the secret rapture of true believers (previously to the Lord's coming *with them* in glory, as stated in Zechariah xiv. 5), the simple facts above mentioned may appear somewhat strange to many. But they ought on the contrary to reach our consciences, in reminding us that the all-important occupation of our souls should ever be the glory of the Lord, and what is due to *Him*, rather than our relief from the trials and sorrows or persecution which we may encounter in our earthly pilgrimage. The truth, in its due order and importance, can only be learned in the person of Christ, and not in any sense by our own experience or our sufferings.

In the earlier part of the book of Revelation, the rapture, or taking away of believers from this earth, which is the scene of their testimony for the Lord, is *not* historically intimated. Had it been the mind of the spirit to allude to it, we should expect to meet it between the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth chapters. But, as already remarked, on p. 27, it is a book of *judgment* as to all things confided to the saints for the glory of the Lord, during the time of His absence. Then the scene changes, and John is invited to *heaven* (chap. iv. 1), in order to consider what goes on here below, when the heavenly saints, who constitute the "Church," will no longer be in a suffering condition.

While the Church remains on earth, it will be the object of the enemy's constant attacks, in order to frustrate, and, if possible, obliterate any true testimony to Christ's glory. God graciously, from time to time, gives periods of relief and revival; but the general note in the history is that of decline, and the last phase in Laodicea is nauseous to the Lord (Rev. iii. 16).

When, however, the saints shall be taken out of this scene altogether, they are seen at once to be enthroned in heaven (chap. iv. 4). That fact alone should surely emphasize their place and portion in association with the coming "Kingdom," though they be now "in patience and tribulation" while waiting for it, as John himself was, in the isle of Patmos (chap. i. 9).

In closing this brief notice of the contents of the book, it may be well to draw the reader's attention to the fact that the third section contains a brief allusion to the eternal state, in eight verses only (xxi. 1-8). Peter refers to it in the closing chapter of his second epistle, showing how the knowledge of that which will finally take place should act on the heart and conscience of the believer now (2 Peter iii. 7, 13 and 14).

Chapter xix. 11-18 presents the Lord coming with His saints out of an opened heaven, in judgment. The judgment before the great white throne, after the end of His reign of a thousand years, is found in the chapter following, and in chapters xxi. 9 to xxii. 5 is found a supplemental description of "the holy city, Jerusalem." The repeated statement as to the words being "faithful and true" should appeal to all our consciences (xix. 9; xxi. 5; xxii. 6). It is the *name* of the coming One, who is Himself the "**Word of God**" (xix. 11, 13).

W. J. L.

Practical Lessons iii.—Brotherly Forgiveness.

(*Continued.*)

WE have noticed how brotherly forgiveness bears on the relationship of one Christian towards another and with God; how we cannot, and ought not, to expect our Father to forgive us unless we are ready and willing to forgive our fellows; and that we should first, before approaching Him in prayer or

worship, be reconciled to our brother; otherwise He will not hear us.

Some may object, on the ground that these principles apply rather to Messiah's Kingdom on earth. Granted, but what then? Will any sober-minded reader say that the standard of walk for the Christian, whose home and hopes are *heavenly*, is lower than what may be looked for from saints on earth in the day of the kingdom? Nay, but rather let all their weight and force be now felt on every heart and conscience.

What havoc amongst saints an unforgiving spirit works! It hinders fellowship, clips the wings of praise and joy, detracts from our usefulness for Christ, and is injurious to our soul's progress in the truth. This leads us to another important consideration:—

(3) The Limit and Standard of Brotherly Forgiveness.—Here, as in all else, the pattern and standard is Christ Himself, and God our Father. We read, “If any man have a quarrel against any, even *as Christ forgave you, so also do ye*” (Col. iii. 13). We would not like Him to have forgiven us less than He has, and He does not ask *us* to forgive more. Then again, how frankly, freely, and fully God has pardoned us; and so the word is, “Forgiving one another, even *as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*” (Eph. iv. 32). Here a holy God finds in Christ and His work sufficient motive and worth, to forgive the sins of a life-time for His sake; therefore we are to find in Him and His love to us, an irresistible reason and a compelling power to pardon one another.

As to the *limit* of our forgiving, the instruction is quite as clear. It is “seventy times seven,” that is, without limit (Matt. xviii. 21-22). Moreover we read also, “And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and *seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent*; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke xvii. 3-4).

And while the disciples were praying, "Lord increase our faith," in the face of such a charge, the Lord adds, "When ye shall have done all these things . . . say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do" (ver. 10). And how much more becoming it is for *us* to say, "we are unprofitable servants," than for Him to have to say, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness," etc. (Matt. xxv. 30)!

We now come to:—(4) **Corporate Forgiveness.** Nothing exposes the sad condition of the professing church generally, in so far as public conduct and testimony is concerned, as its attitude towards corporate discipline and forgiveness. Whether we look at the Romanist, the Episcopal, or the dissenting bodies, we find that policy rather than piety dictates their conduct both as to discipline and forgiveness.

These facts, however, should make those who respect the Word of God, and seek to be guided by it, all the more diligent in acting aright in this matter. Every Christian assembly is responsible to exercise godly discipline, as directed in Scripture, and to put away from its midst the evil-doer or teacher; but always in a spirit of humility and genuine sorrow for having so to act; and always with a view to the restoration of the one on whom the discipline is exercised. When he has repented, it is equally incumbent on them to unitedly receive and forgive him, and restore him to their fellowship; lest such an one should be "swallowed up with over-much sorrow" (2 Cor. ii. 7-11). But if we fail in this, and, in place of acting in grace and forgiveness, show a harsh and unforgiving spirit, how can we expect God to act in grace to us, and to give His blessing?

We find in Isaiah lviii. 4-14, a failure to act rightly before God, somewhat similar to that we have just referred to. Israel, though making an outward show of

piety, were full of hypocrisy and empty religiousness. But God looked for reality in the practice of grace and mercy: loosing the bands of wickedness, undoing the heavy burdens, letting the oppressed go free, and breaking every yoke. If they showed *this* spirit, He was ready and willing to bless them to the full.

And if it is painful to think of Israel's want of obedience to God's mind in this matter, what are we to say as to the church of God to-day, and especially the unforgiving attitude of some assemblies of Christians towards one another? May the Lord press on the heart and conscience, both of the reader and writer, whether he too shares in this or not!

But, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" *Should* not the very scriptures we have quoted from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, though spoken to individuals, apply also to the bearing of Christian assemblies towards one another? And *would* they not, if applied, provide the balm desired? We truly believe that they *should*, and *would*.

It is unquestionable that the weakness and declension plainly manifest in many directions to-day, is due, in part at least, to neglecting or ignoring the practical principles of corporate forgiveness and forbearance; and with it there is the attendant loss in unanswered prayers.

Far be it from us to be lax or indifferent as to the doctrine, or walk, or the associations of others. For where these contravene the word of God, that word must be maintained at all costs. But surely, where there is not a clear conviction from Scripture that we should put a band, or a bond of discipline, round any Christian or assembly, we ought to be deeply concerned before God as to definitely refusing to be reconciled to them, and to have fellowship with them.

W. M. R.

Is Christ Sufficient?

YES, truly He is. Every Christian knows that Christ is sufficient as a Saviour. He has met the deep need of the soul by His work upon the cross. He has more than satisfied the longings of the heart, which this poor world could never satisfy. He is now the living, crowned, glorified Saviour in heaven; and He is the coming One.

Many, even amongst true believers, are asking the question, Why does God allow this terrible and long-continued war? He allows it for the chastisement of the nations—would that they bowed under His hand far more than they do! And He means, through it, to speak to *us* (Christians) also. Do we hear His voice? Are we attentive to what He has to say, as we see so many sorrows, bereavements, and trials amongst God's people at the present time? It is surely a time to walk humbly, in self-judgment, and to seek grace to put in practice the truth we know. No doubt the war will continue just so long as is necessary to accomplish God's purposes, and no longer.

Everything around us is changing. Those things which men thought most stable and secure crumble beneath our feet. There is but One who does not change, and on whom we can lean with implicit confidence: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." This is the one unfailing resource for faith to rest upon in this passing world.

As the risen and glorified Man, the Head of the Church, His love and care never fails or grows weary. As our ever-living High Priest in the presence of God, His intercession is continuous and undying. As our Advocate with the Father, His restoring grace and

ministry is ever available to lead to confession and restoration if we have failed.

Add to all this, the great truth of the glory of His Person, not only as truly Man, but as God. He could say when on earth, even in the hour of the utter refusal of His testimony as *the Light* come from God, "Before Abraham was, **I am**." The One who spoke, was none less than the Supreme, the Eternal. What is man, even in his best estate, in presence of such a fact! Truly it is written, "Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away (Ps. cxliv. 4). With all his boasted progress, his advance in science, his great inventions, man is "altogether lighter than vanity" (Ps. lxii. 9).

Christian reader, let us *look up* and take courage. How wonderful is *our* Saviour—the lowly, humble, dependent Man in this world, marking out the path before us; yet the "**I am**" (John viii. 58). While it should melt the heart and bow our whole soul in the sense of His grace, it should fill us with confidence and peace:—"Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace" (Isa. ix. 6). A glory attaches to His Person which far surpasses any ability of ours to fully comprehend, much less to describe. The completeness and efficacy of His work upon the cross follows as a necessary consequence, as does also His competence for every office He sustains; but His Person, as the divine and eternal Son—very God, and very man; the **I am**, yet the man Christ Jesus—is the foundation of it all.

Let us adore and worship, and let us trust Him with deepening and increasing confidence each day.

F. G. B.

“I, Yet Not I”—ii.

A TEA-TABLE TALK WITH SOME YOUNG CHRISTIANS.

(Continued from page 24.)

BEFORE we turn to the seventh of Romans as promised, we must, I think, answer our young friend's question, who is still at a loss to see what is the *practical* gain of the sentence of death passed upon the old nature.

Now, surely it is a great relief to any Christian who is troubled by the fact that the old nature with its workings and desires is still in us, to see that the Scripture does not speak of its improvement or extinction, but of its sentence to death (by God) in the death of Christ. We are called upon to accept this, and in the daily exercise of faith, so to reckon it; a new power having been given us to walk in the enjoyment of a new relationship formed by the Holy Spirit. In a word, “we reckon,” with God, and surely this is a real gain, though, of course, it calls for the exercise of faith and dependence.

How important the twenty-second verse of chapter vi. is, “Now being made free from sin (no longer in bondage to it), ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life.”

Now, as to the seventh of Romans, which is a much better known chapter, though, perhaps, quite as little understood—there are numerous theories of explanation, especially as to the latter part, which we may call the experimental part.

With these various explanations, we have nothing to do, but must confine ourselves to the bearing of this chapter on the subject we have been considering together, and the questions already put, which I will summarise in this way.

Will the law help us in conflict with the flesh? Are we to look there for power to keep it in check, as the majority of professing Christians appear to think?

As to this, the sixth verse of our chapter says, "But now we are delivered from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." We must mark this, having made the necessary correction in the text (see R.V.). It does not say that the law is dead, or in any way derogate from its claims, but affirms that the Christian has died from under it in the death of Christ. It is another view, so to speak, of what has been done by God in the death of Christ, and very clearly says that the law has nothing to say to a dead man; it applies to the living. Marriage is the illustration used by the Spirit of God to explain the tie that death alone dissolves; and the fourth verse, as you see, says, "that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

—"But, further on in the chapter, the apostle Paul says he is powerless to avoid the evil he hates, and to do the good he wished to do. How then can *we* expect to succeed, for we cannot compare ourselves with him?"

—"True, but the question arises, whether the apostle is giving us his own personal experience here at the time he wrote it, or describing an experience he had passed through in his soul *before* he knew what deliverance and being '*in Christ*' was, as described in the eighth chapter."

—"I have been waiting for an opportunity to ask about these '*I's*' in the later verses of chapter vii., I must say they puzzle me, and I have been told we must expect such a state more or less as long as we are in this life."

—"Well, we will take the last point first, and see what

the Scripture says as to what should be proper Christian experience. And here again the apostle Paul will best serve us. Turn to the last three verses of the second chapter of Galatians, where the subject is much the same as we have been talking about, and where we meet with somewhat the same use of 'I.'"

"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Now anyone can clearly see that these verses describe a totally different state from that in the seventh of Romans, and there is no reason to suppose that Paul was sometimes in one, and sometimes in the other, for this is distinctly stated to be the life he lived. What is described in the seventh of Romans is a state he possibly had passed through, and which at some time or other we most of us touch in our souls more or less deeply, but it is the experience of an undelivered soul—"born again" surely, or how could there be two natures—two "I's"—so distinctly in conflict with each other, with apparently no way out? We see deliverance comes eventually through looking *outside* oneself to Christ Jesus our Lord.

The seventh chapter of Romans is, I think, parenthetical; for it is in the sixth chapter we are told to reckon ourselves "alive unto God *in* Christ Jesus our Lord" (ver. 11), and the eighth chapter starts with the triumphant note, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

The experience described in the seventh chapter is, therefore, not that which properly belongs to "them which are in Christ Jesus."

The teaching of the Galatian epistle is not quite the same as that in the epistle to the Romans, but we turned to the second chapter because of the use of the two "I's," and I think it is clear that no Christian can have the experience of both Romans vii. and Galatians ii. 19, 20, as his ordinary manner of life.

Let us look at the latter again. Paul does not say "my flesh" or "my old man" was crucified with Christ, but "*I*" (Paul, the natural man) am crucified with Christ, nevertheless *I* (Paul, the new man in Christ) live. Is not this practically acting upon Romans vi. 11—reckoning himself alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Now he goes a step further, "Yet not *I*, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which *I* (Paul although still in the flesh) live, *I* live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." How beautifully this brings in the One whose love, as the Saviour Who gave Himself for us, now draws out the affections of our hearts to Himself!

But let me give you another homely illustration. We all know that there are three things that are necessary to good physical health—good food, fresh air, and exercise. These have their counterpart in spiritual things. We need *good food*, that is the Word of God, feeding upon Christ through the Word. *Fresh air* answers to the presence of God, in the sunshine of which it is our privilege to live. And, in prayer and praise, the affections are kept in a healthy condition. A morbid spiritual state is just as bad (and alas! just as common) as a morbid physical condition. Then we *exercise* ourselves in two ways—"to keep a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man" (Acts xxiv. 16), on the one hand, and "to do good and to communicate," on the other; "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. xiii. 16). Also, Paul exhorts

Timothy to exercise himself unto godliness" (1 Tim. iv. 7).

Many years ago I learned a fine sentence from a valued servant of God, "The secret of peace within, and power without, is to be always and only occupied with good." And many a humbling fall should I have avoided, and enjoyed much more happiness, if I had remembered it more faithfully. But good as it is, it is after all only saying in man's words, what Philippians iv. 8 gives us in God's words, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me (Paul) do: and the God of peace shall be with you." T. R.

Humiliation and Confession.

BEFORE this (April) number reaches most of our readers, many of them will have learnt by circular that it is proposed to hold special meetings during the holidays, early in April, for prayer, humiliation and confession. The need and call for such must be felt by every thoughtful Christian. We are to-day in presence of a world-conflict, of a magnitude far exceeding anything ever known; with all its attendant results in loss of life, sufferings, bereavements, privations, etc. God is speaking *solemnly*—not only to the nations, but to His people. May we bow under His chastisement, owning His hand, not in any formal or perfunctory manner, but in deep, genuine and heartfelt confession and humiliation—and may we be enabled to rise above sectarian differences, and take in *all* the Lord's people in doing so!

The present condition of the church of God, the lack of spiritual power in ministry amongst the saints, and of blessing in the gospel to the unsaved, is a further reason for earnest confession and supplication. [Ed.]

Conflict and Conquest.

"Lord, open his eyes that he may see" (2 Kings vi. 15-17).

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them" (Ps. xxxiv. 7).

As Syrian hosts of old withstood,
With threat'ning mien, the "man of God,"
So, now, the Christian faces foes,
And subtle powers his way oppose.
The trembling soul—to conflict new,
May say, "Alas, how shall we do?"
But opened eyes—by faith set free,
Will always *God's salvation see*.

"In perfect peace"—the Lord his stay,
The child of God pursues his way,
Nor fears when hostile forces rise;
His faith is fixed beyond the skies.
The Cov'nant-angel camping round,
His conflict turns to hallowed ground;
And opened eyes through faith in Thee,
Again Thy great deliverance see.

Then when the pilgrim path is o'er,
And self and sin deceive no more,
When—past the need, the staff, the rod—
We reach the city of our God;
There hosts to Thee their homage pay,
Whose grace has led them all the way;
With unveiled eyes, and *hearts* set free,
Thyself in glory, Lord, we'll see.

M. E. B.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

THE VISION.

IV.

BEFORE entering on the details of the vision itself, it seems necessary to call further attention to the peculiar character of John's ministry, which differs from that confided to Paul, who at first saw Christ *in glory* (1 Cor. xv. 8). To him was then committed the revelation of the church in its **heavenly** calling, as referred to above (pages 10-12). The mystery of the "**Body**" of Christ and the responsibility of its members to one another, and to the Head, glorified in heaven, was revealed to Paul alone. John, on the contrary, walked *with* Christ when He was on earth, having part in the ministry especially confided to the apostles while the Lord was *with* them, and consequently he was called to deal with the churches locally, as witnesses for God *on earth*, somewhat similar in this respect to what Israel had been before the incarnation of Christ. In both cases declension and ruin came in, calling down God's reprehension and judgment. The following quotations from the "Synopsis," which deals with this subject in detail, will serve, we trust, to elucidate it.

"In a state of universal declension, *stability* is *only* to be found in Christ's Person, first for eternal life, then for the ways of God upon earth. If the assembly be spued out of His mouth, He is still the 'faithful Witness, the beginning of the creation of God' (Rev. iii. 14-16). . . . In John xx. 27-29, we have a foreshadowing of God's ways with His people on earth, from the resurrection of Christ until the time of His future dealing with the remnant of Israel in the latter days. This is represented by Thomas's look on the

pierced One, and believing by *seeing*” (compare Zech. xii. 10). The special *christian* blessing applicable to the *present* interval, is then pointed out by the Lord, “Blessed are they that have *not* seen, and yet have believed” (John xx. 29).

“At the close of the next chapter, the particular ministry of Peter and John is pointed out in a figurative or mysterious way. The sheep of Jesus belonging to the circumcised Jews are confided to Peter (see Gal. ii. 7-8). But this ministry was destined to close *before* the destruction of Jerusalem. As to John, his ministry by the word was to go on as long as the Bridegroom tarried. But John was no ‘master-builder,’ like Paul; he had no ‘dispensation’ committed to him (1 Cor. iii. 6, 8, 10, 11). He was connected with the assembly in its earthly character and structure, like Peter; but he carried on the earthly system *among the Gentiles*, only holding fast the Person of Christ—come to earth with divine title over it, and judging it in its state of decay.

“There is another point of divine wisdom here. Though we have the whole history of the assembly to its end in this world, it is given in facts then present, so that there should be no putting off the expectation of the Lord’s personal return (Acts i. 11). We see the same principle in the parables of the Ten Virgins, and the Talents, in Matthew xxv. The ‘servants’ are in principle the same, though ages have passed and death come in.” *

The opening of the Book of Revelation is remarkable. It is Christ’s,—God’s gift to Him. He communicates it to His servants, not directly, as when He was on earth, but by means of His *angel*, to his servant John.

* ‘Synopsis of the Books of the Bible,’ small edition, Vol. V., pp. 491, 492.

We may compare, as to this, the book of Daniel, and the messages given by Gabriel, in Luke i. and ii.,—in contrast with the Holy Ghost's work in the aged Simeon, who "awaited the consolation of Israel" (Luke ii. 25, 26).

The word "angel" has two senses. It refers, of course, to the heavenly servants or messengers of God; but besides this, it is frequently used in the sense of a *representative*, it may be in a mystical sense, of one not actually seen, *e.g.*, as of a child (Matt. xviii. 10), or of Peter (Acts xii. 15), or again of Jehovah himself (Zech. xii. 8, and many other places). It is thus that the seven churches in Asia are addressed. As a rule, all the ministry in the Book of Revelation is *angelic*; even the Lord Himself takes this form, as in chap. x. 1-3, 5, 6 (compare Deut. xxxii. 40).

Consequently we do not look here for any unfolding of the Holy Ghost's work in making good in the heart of a Christian the truth of his *adoption*, as in Romans viii. 14-16; Galatians iv. 6; and 1 John ii. 20, 24, 27, etc., nor for membership of the "Body" of Christ, as in 1 Corinthians xii. 27. Throughout, it is a question of conduct or testimony in this world, of which the light of a lamp or candle is a suited figure (compare Matt. v. 14-16): "Let your light *so shine* before men, that they may *see* your good works, and glorify [*not you, but*] your Father which is in heaven."

We must consequently mark attentively the way in which the Spirit of God is presented here—not at all as indwelling in the believer (1 Cor. vi. 19-20), but as "seven spirits before the throne of God" (i. 4), seen in chap. iv. 5 as "lamps of fire"; the number "seven," as usual, indicates perfection, and here in connection with God's governmental dealings. The several messages to the churches, which John was ordered to write, are,

however, spoken of as the words of the Spirit (ii. 7, 11, 17, 29; iii. 6, 13, 22). In chap. iii. 1, the Lord is said to have "the seven spirits of God," the fulness of the perfection in which He will govern this earth. In chap. v. 6 they are "the eyes of the Lamb."

The Lord Himself,—let us note it carefully,—is presented as the One who has passed through death, and is now risen. Thomas and the other disciples had to own this (Luke xxiv. 39-40). John himself was the first to recognise and believe in His resurrection, as also the first to discern the Lord when He appeared to the "seven" who had gone a-fishing (John xx. 8; xxi. 7). But it is not only in the opening address that He is set forth as "the Firstborn of the *dead*," calling forth the hearty and blessed response "to Him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in His own blood": we find it again in the first *spoken* words to John (verse 18), when he sees Him in the vision; and that is repeated, when he sees Him as "the slain Lamb" in heaven (chap. v. 6). What a rich and deep echo should these words produce in the heart of every saved soul!

Then we have the announcement of His *coming* with the clouds of heaven, when those who pierced Him shall, as we have seen above, "wail because of Him" (verse 7).

The following verse demands our special attention as being a remarkable instance of the truth contained in the Lord's words, "**Thou** in **me**," in His prayer addressed to the **Father** (John xvii. 23). **God** dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. vi. 16), and our knowledge of Him in *eternity*, to which that verse in John's gospel applies, will only be as He is *revealed* in the Son of His love; and so it is for us at the present time (see John i. 18). Revelation i. 8 confirms this, inas-

much as the words of verse 4 are repeated here: "**who is**," expresses eternal being (compare Exod. iii. 14; and Deut. xxxii. 40, spoken *on earth*); secondly, "**who was**," looking back, taking in all His *previous* dealings; thirdly, as the "Coming One," about to carry out and make good all that has been foretold concerning Him. Finally, He is the "**Almighty**," as revealed to Abraham (Gen. xvii. 1: see page 13).

John was a prisoner in the island of Patmos "for the testimony of Jesus." Thus debarred from his ordinary pastoral and loving work, he was fitted in his loneliness to be God's messenger to the group of churches in the province of Asia (a small portion only of what we call Asia Minor). These afforded the necessary features for setting forth the divine sketch of what was to be in the earthly history of Christendom. Only two of them are mentioned in Paul's epistles: Ephesus near the sea-coast, and Laodicea in the mountains, over a hundred miles to the east of it, which he had never been able to visit (Col. ii. 1; iv. 13).

In the vision, the Lord Himself is seen in the midst of the seven lamps, or candlesticks, which represent the seven churches spoken of. His general appearance recalls what Daniel was given to see in chapters vii. and x. of his prophecy. The "Ancient of days" in verses 9, 13 of chapter vii. is **God**, and the Son of man "comes" with the clouds of heaven; but, in verse 22, He also is called the Ancient of days,* as the Coming One. We may note two differences in the descriptions: the golden girdle of divine righteousness is here at the *breast*, indicative of the affections rather than the power, as in Daniel x. 5. And the feet are not only, as in Daniel x. 6, brilliant and undefiled in them-

* Another example of what is noted above, as to Revelation i. 8. Compare also the snow-white hair with Daniel vii. 9.

selves when in contact with evil, but as if "burning in a furnace," indicative of the character of judgment about to be exercised. He has come to judge, as **Son of Man** (John v. 27).

W. J. L.

Practical Lessons iv.—Christians and Debts.

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything, but to love one another" (Rom. xiii. 7, 8).

SUCH are the three-fold liabilities of God's people. **The First Debt** is one we owe to the government of the land we live in. Christians have financial, moral, and social responsibilities to the State, set up as it is by God. Those dues they are to pay heartily and faithfully: "tribute" or taxes for purposes of revenue; "custom" or duty on merchandise; "fear" to the magistrate as the minister of God to administer the law; and "honour" to those in any way set over us. The first one, therefore, to pay his rates and taxes, should be the child of God.

The Second Debt is one we should never be in: "Owe no man anything." This covers every form of liability, especially material debts for goods supplied or for money. If it was needful in those early times to enforce this practical lesson, it is no less so to-day.

This passage says nothing regarding borrowing money or anything else, by the consent of the other party; the question is one of paying, not borrowing. For whether it be a bill, a statement of account, an insurance premium, or a loan, it is not due until the day appointed for payment; but when this arrives, it should be paid forthwith. Much harm has been done, with dishonour to the Lord's name, through

the children of God getting into debt, and entering into obligations they have not been able to duly meet, or to make restitution at the appointed time. This is nothing less than disobedience to the Lord, and a direct contravention of this verse.

How often one hears of some christian household heavily in debt; of some mother and children so careless in handling money as to make them the talk of the locality; of long-standing bills owing to tradespeople for clothing or food, ruining the witness of some gifted preacher; or of some Christian professing high truths, in debt and not providing for his family; or of borrowed money being due, but neither interest nor principal forthcoming. All this spells failure, moral loss, and disaster to the christian testimony of those concerned, and, frequently, far-reaching hindrance to others.

How important then is that word, "Having on the breastplate of righteousness," wherewith to face the enemy and the world. A business man recently said to the writer, "I have never worn a shred of anything in my life which had not been paid for beforehand." This principle may not be always easy to act on in the letter of it, but well indeed would it be if we followed it in spirit. A believer who owes money, or gets into debt, and does not pay as it becomes due, misuses what he is only a steward of, robs others of their just rights, and sins against Christ. The sooner he sets himself right before God and man the better. May the Lord stir up our consciences as to our responsibility to "owe no man anything."

The third debt mentioned here is one of quite another kind—"But (or save) to love one another." This unpaid debt of love is a legitimate one, and most acceptable to the Lord. We have it always with us,

we never get out of it; nor should we wish to do so, although there is the highest reason for applying ourselves diligently to its payment.

Holiness and love is the native air of the believer. The holy character of God, and the love of Christ which has embraced him in virtue of the cross, both concur to make a heavy draught upon his love. He is a debtor to God, and therefore to all who are His, in respect of every form of grace bestowed upon him, both as to the nature and extent of that grace. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," "Love one another as I have loved you," etc.

Many of the fruits of the gospel were of old demanded in the law, but Israel had no power to produce them. The Christian now, unlike the Jew, knows God's grace, perfectly and fully revealed in Christ, and his heart is formed by its blessed influence. He yearns to produce the traits of the love seen in Christ, and the Spirit is given him as the God-given power to effect this, and so to fulfil the righteous requirements of the law. And just as this love of our Lord Jesus Christ has gone out fully and freely to all who are His, and even to His enemies, independent of what they are or once were, so our love likewise is under abiding obligation to follow the same course, and go out freely to one another.

This is far more than the discharge, in a legal and perfunctory spirit, of the obligation of money or love laid upon us. It is the natural outflow of a heart animated by the love of Christ to us, and the Spirit's power in us. The Lord grant us grace to labour at this comely Christ-like task until He comes!

W. M. R.

“The Gospel of God.”

THERE never was a greater need for the gospel of God than there is to-day. Many homes have been saddened by the loss of husbands, fathers, sons, etc., in the war; and it is to be feared that many more will be so before it is over. Alas, in spite of this, there seems to be a very general spirit of indifference and unbelief abroad, as to the question of the soul and eternity.

Our resource in such a case is to be found in persevering prayer and supplication that God may awaken sinners, and by the Holy Spirit bring souls to a consciousness of their need of a Saviour. In order to come in contact with the unsaved, much may be done by personal work—visiting and distributing tracts, booklets, etc., as well as holding meetings wherever sinners can be brought under the sound of the Word.

But, amidst all the indifference and the discouragements by which the preacher of the gospel is surrounded to-day, it is blessed to know that God's heart of love still goes out to this lost and guilty world. With what energy the father in the parable ran out to meet the returning prodigal, sinner and guilty though he was! How he found his joy in enfolding him in his arms, kissing him caressingly, and receiving him in a way worthy of such a father! How, again, he ordered his servants to clothe him in the best robe, to put the ring on his hand, and the shoes on his feet, and to kill the fatted calf; and he it was who struck the first note of joy and merriment to which all heaven could respond! Such is the blessed attitude of the God of all grace in His compassion for the poor sinner.

Oh, to be more earnest in seeking the lost: just to do what little we can, not in a formal way, but as those

who really believe in a God of holiness as well as of love, a heaven and a hell! May all His servants go forth in the sense of a full and free salvation, offered to "whosoever will," without money and without price, by the God who "beseeches sinners to be reconciled to Him!" And let us never forget what tremendous issues hang on the acceptance or rejection of God's salvation—*eternal issues*, which must be settled in this world or not at all.

Since the foregoing was written, we received from a correspondent in the army, stationed in the south of Ireland, and attached to a non-combatant corps, the following notes suitable to our subject:—

I must give you a little account of our journeyings with the tracts. Last Saturday two brethren and myself left the camp about 5.30 P.M. We made for the old Woollen Mill, and visited many cottages, where books were given away accompanied by a few words as to the Bible and God's love in sending His Son to die for sinners. We find very few houses have a Bible. In one case we went in and had a talk with a gardener and his wife and five little ones, all sitting round a log fire. At first the man refused the books, saying "he did not want our tracts"; but his wife was kindly disposed towards us and took the books. We were able to speak of the Lord, who blessed the little children when here, and of His death on the cross for sinners. Finding they had not a Bible, we left them one of the gospels. The man asked whether we were Catholics: "We are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ," was the answer.

In many cases we quoted John iii. 16, slowly and distinctly. On our return home we had a word with some lads. When asked, "What is the gospel?" they answered, "The Mass." We left a book with them and explained the gospel to them. It seemed a real joy to mention the name of Jesus to these dear lads.

The next day we took the road leading to C——. We travelled along this road for some five miles, calling at all the farms and cottages on the way. In many cases we

were able to speak a word as well as give a tract. There seems to be a great deal of darkness among these poor Irish people: many seemed in fear as they took our little books.

One of our brethren had a very serious talk with the wife of one of the farmers. She confessed that, though an R.C., she was far from satisfied and not happy. The tears came to our brother's cheeks as he gazed upon this poor woman bound by Rome; but he pointed her to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, who cried, "It is finished." "I shall be a Christian after this," she said, as our brother left.

We took the branch road to the camp by way of C——, giving our little books at the farms as we went along. Our last visit before dark was a small farm on the other side of C——. They asked us in, giving us a cup of milk and two biscuits each. The farmer's wife and two neighbours were there with their children. After a chat with the little ones, we gave them a little book each. We asked if they had a Bible in the house. The wife took an old Bible from the top shelf of the dresser, which we could see had been frequently used. We read a part of John iii., from verse 14, and spoke of the Son of man being lifted up, dwelling also on verse 16, and pointing out the word "believeth," as showing God's way of blessing for the sinner. This dear woman evidently had read the Word, for she was able to finish many of the Scriptures we quoted. May God bless His own unchangeable word for Christ's sake! It is in the darkness that the light becomes so manifest, and shines brightest. "The entrance of *Thy Word* giveth light"; "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

F. G. B.

"Stand Fast."

"**S**TAND fast" is written in the Holy Scriptures nine times. Three times in the Old Testament and twice three in the New. Interesting and instructive are they in their different bearings and settings. Twice in the Psalms and once in Jeremiah

"Stand fast" can be found. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy name, O LORD God of Hosts," said the prophet Jeremiah xv. 16.

The Apostle Paul is the only one in the New Testament given of God to write "Stand fast" to the saints. Five times "Stand fast" sounds out as an appeal or admonition—a note, as it were, of warning from a vigilant watchman.

1. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."
2. "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."
3. "That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."
4. "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."
5. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."

Would that these exhortations were hearkened unto and heeded, acted upon, and through grace carried out! The Apostle Paul lived and laboured for the welfare of the saints, and such love had he for them that for their sakes, he says, he would rather remain; for to him to live was Christ (Phil. i. 21). So also he could say, "For now *we* live, if *ye* stand fast in the Lord."

" 'Stand fast in Christ,' ah, yet again
He teacheth all the band!
If human efforts are in vain,
In Christ it is we stand."

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

The Apostle Paul did “stand fast” by the grace of God. He could say, “By the grace of God I am what I am.” When ready to be offered, and the time of his departure at hand, he states:—

“I have fought a good fight,
I have finished my course,
I have kept the faith.”

And yet he knew what it was to be forsaken by all, and he lets us know that—“At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.” May these two words, “Stand fast,” have their place and power over us in these times when the enemy is making unceasing efforts to move the believer from God’s ground!

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong!”

U. G.

The Revolution in Russia.

OF all the great events which have taken place within the past few months with such dramatic suddenness, this is one of the most remarkable. There has been accomplished, in a few days, that which generations of unceasing effort on the part of all sorts of revolutionaries have failed to bring about. The truth is, God’s time was come; and we know that nothing can be accomplished till He permits.

It is not our object to view the change in its political aspect; but we may hope that the granting of religious liberty will open the door more widely for the gospel,

besides being a mercy to many true Christians. Looking at it in the light of prophecy, the Revolution will no doubt contribute towards what a recent writer has called "the Russia of to-day, whose vast Empire will be reorganised under a new form in view of the final conflict." *

The breaking up of the "Triple Alliance" between Germany, Austria, and Italy, which took place when the last-named Power entered upon the present war, was unquestionably a step towards the regrouping of the Great Powers as they will be in the last days—namely, the Confederation of the Western Powers under the revived Roman Empire (Rev. xiii.-xvii., etc.), and the Eastern under Gog or Russia (see Ezek. xxxviii.-xxxix.; Ps. lxxxiii., etc.). The latter is frequently described in prophecy under the title "the Assyrian," and undoubtedly Russia will be the chief or centre of that group. It is quite possible that (as suggested in the booklet referred to in the note), after the close of this war, Germany, having lost the provinces which did not form part of the old Roman Empire, will, in the end, join with the Eastern Powers under Russia; which latter will, sooner or later, break off from the Western group under the revived Roman Empire. Austria will probably break up, and most part of it, having formed a part of the Roman Empire, will be identified with the Western Powers. The Turkish Empire will disappear, and Russia and her allies of that time will hold sway over Asia Minor, in Constantinople, and probably over Macedonia and Greece.

No doubt most of these events may take place *after* the rapture of the saints at the coming of the Lord, for which we wait (see 1 Thess. iv. 13-17).

* See the booklet by H. Rossier, p. 13; notice inside back cover of this magazine.

But let us remember that the object of prophecy is not to feed the mere intellect or to gratify curiosity, however instructive it may be to guide our thoughts as to the trend of events which pass before our eyes. No; it is to speak to the heart and conscience of the saints, and above all to glorify Christ. God will surely set *His* King on His holy hill of Zion, in spite of the rage of the nations, and the opposition of the kings of the earth (Ps. ii.); and not only so, but that same blessed Christ will, as Son of man, be set over *all* the works of God's hands (Ps. viii.). What joy to the Christian it is to know this!

How to Understand the Bible.

(1) **D**O not bring your own thoughts to the Word of God, but go to it to learn *God's* mind and *His* thoughts—what *He* has to say to you in His word (Ps. cxxxix. 17).

(2) Look for grace to carry out in practice the truth you do know, and God will give you more (Luke viii. 18; xix. 26; Dan. ii. 21; James i. 5).

(3) Wait humbly on God in prayer that He may, by His Spirit, give understanding of His word. Remember that the things of God are "revealed," "communicated," and "received" by the Spirit (1 Cor. ii. 9-16; see also Ps. xxv. 9; cxii. 4; Isa. lxvi. 2; Prov. iii. 5-6).

(4) Make the doing of *God's will* your great object; not seeking your own will or your own honour, or using God's truth to accredit yourself in some way. "If any man will (or desires to) do His (God's) will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John vii. 17).

(5) Be diligent in the study of the word, and do not

let it be displaced by other reading, not even the best of books. Meditate therein "day and night" (Ps. i. 2; Joshua i. 8, etc.). Seek to feed upon Christ in the word, for your soul's profit and growth (John vi. 48).

"This Side Jordan."

THIS side Jordan" (Joshua i. 12-18). There are Christians (I cannot say approved of God) who take their place on "this side of Jordan"—that is to say, on this side of the power of death and resurrection, applied to the soul by the Spirit of God. The place in which they settle is not Egypt; it is beyond the Red Sea, it is within the limits of Israel's possessions—outside Egypt and this side the Euphrates, river of Babylon. But it is not Canaan. It is a land they have chosen for their cattle and their possessions; they establish their children and their wives there. It is not Joshua who conquered that land; it is not the place of testimony to the power of the Spirit of God—that "Canaan" which is beyond Jordan. J. N. D.

"Behold the Lamb of God!" (John i. 35). John the Baptist was uttering the hidden satisfaction of his soul when he said this. He does not appear to have addressed these words to his disciples; but they, hearing him thus in holy, happy contemplation of Jesus, follow Jesus. And, beloved, it is this which gets the same honour now. *Our power in drawing others after the Lord mainly rests in our joy and communion with Him ourselves.* John was done with himself, and was lost in thoughts of the Lamb of God, and his disciples seem to catch his mind, for they leave him and follow Jesus.

J. G. B.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

FIRST LOVE.

V.

THE words of warning confided to John were addressed to the "angel" of each of the seven churches. These assemblies were in a small province then called "Asia," relatively near to one another, on the mainland, and contiguous to the island of Patmos, where John was confined. The word "angel," as often in scripture, designates a representative. This form of communication was admirably suited to combine the collective responsibility of the whole body with the individual application of the message to every one who formed a part of it. For, as already remarked, everything that was going on was subject to the Lord's scrutiny and judgment, and it is so still, as long as the Church is on earth.

In the opening address to Ephesus we notice the practical repetition of the last verse of the first chapter, which enforces the universal nature of the inquiry. The Son of man holds the *seven* stars (practically representing *all* the Churches) in His right hand, and He walks in the midst of the *seven* golden lamp-stands which embrace the entire Church on earth.

The first address is, in this sense, an epitomy of the whole—want of repentance resulting in the removal of the candlestick, or in other words, putting an end to the present order of things, as a *testimony* for the Lord on earth. The only hint of a "testimony," subsequent to this, and resembling, in a measure, what the Church ought to be, is confined to the "two witnesses" specially raised up in the last days of final judgment, in chap. xi. 4. The Church—that is, all those who are really the Lord's in the world—will have been finally

removed from this scene some time before that terrible conflict comes upon it.

We quote again, as last month, an important remark : " John's ministerial testimony as to the assembly, views it as the outward assembly on earth in its state of decay, and hence in particular assemblies which, of course, could be judged and removed. There is another point of divine wisdom here. Though we have, I doubt not, the whole history of the assembly to its end in this world, it is given in *facts then present*, so that there should be *no putting off* watching for the coming of the Lord. So in the parables (Matt. xxv.), the virgins who go to sleep are the same that wake up; the servants that receive the talents are the same found on the Lord's return, though we know ages have passed, and death has come in." *

Many things are commended in this message to Ephesus—works, labour, patience (though, as often noticed, these three words are *not* followed by the *faith, love, and hope* signalled by the apostle in writing to the Thessalonian saints, chap. i. 3); care as to doctrine, hatred of evil works, etc.; but there is one fatal mark of the enemy's work gnawing at the root of all true testimony for Christ: "Thou hast left thy first love" (verse 4). It is this that calls for repentance, and the promise to the overcomer carries us back to the antitype of what Adam lost in the garden of Eden. We see at a glance that it is a question all through of first principles, underlying all the details which follow in the addresses to the other churches. This needs particular attention.

All the ways of the Lord's people, considered as a testimony for Him, in the world which He had left for the time being (see Acts i. 9-11), are passed in review,

* Synopsis, small edition, vol. v., p. 492.

with special reference to His last charge to the disciples, in the "new commandment" given to them after Judas had gone out, and His prayer in anticipation of the cross (John xiii. 34; xvii. 10-12): "I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee."

The measure of the new commandment is "*as I have loved you*" (*repeated* in chap. xv. 12-14); and that was the setting forth in practice of the Father's love to the Son (xv. 9). In a word, it could only be measured by the *cross*: as such it was the motto of Paul's life (Gal. ii. 20). Jesus had accepted all the humiliation and untold suffering of His rejection and death—such a death—in order that the objects of His love might be with Him and like Him for ever. Consequently the inward test for them, and for us at the present time, refers to the motive power of *this* love *in our hearts*, as the basis of any and every *true* testimony for Him during His absence from this scene.

In order to realise this in a measure, let us first follow the facts given in this wonderful "Revelation" of Jesus Christ, as confided to John, and then gather up further instruction from what is set forth in the Gospels.

In the first chapter, verses 5 and 6, we may notice the spontaneous response to the salutation from the Triune God, the moment the name of Jesus Christ is mentioned, as "the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead." The *first* effect is to give expression to the sense of His love, who has "washed us from our sins in *His own blood*." This is repeated by the glorified saints, in chapter v. 9, on the *first* mention of His name as the slain lamb, when He is seen in the midst of the redeemed, and draws near to take the book of the inheritance out of the right hand of

Him who sat upon the throne: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God *by Thy blood*, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

Should not such a repetition appeal to each one of us, testing our souls as to the *abiding power* of His love, since we are marked out for eternal blessing with Himself, at such a cost?

For the better understanding of this, we may turn our thoughts for a moment to the vessel specially chosen by the Lord to convey to the "seven churches," the message He sent him by His own "angel."

We have, no doubt, observed in reading John's *gospel*, that the writer does not once mention his own name, but conceals it under the touching epithet, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," which occurs five times over. There was another "John" (the Baptist), whose name was divinely given as the chosen ambassador of Christ; but that can hardly be the only reason why he does not apply it to himself. The dominant thought in his heart was not *his* love to the Lord, which gave him confidence for leaning on His breast at the last supper—but rather the Lord's love to him, like Paul in Galatians ii. 20.

Now there are two Greek verbs, both of which mean to "love," the one most commonly used as being expressive of what God is, in His own nature (1 John iv. 8, 16). This word is always found, when God is the subject of the sentence, *except* in John v. 20, where the following words indicate a human comparison: "The Father *loveth* the Son, and *showeth* Him all things that Himself doeth." In John iii. 35, speaking of the divine purpose, the ordinary word is found: "The Father *loveth* the Son, and hath given all things into His hand."

The other word, which also means "to *kiss*" (Matt.

xxvi. 48; Mark xiv. 44; Luke xxii. 47), is found in Revelation iii. 19: "As many as I *love*"; but it is distinguished from the usual word above referred to, by the translation "has affection for," or "is attached to" (John xvi. 27; xx. 2; xxi. 15-17).* Peter twice shelters himself by the use of it, when the Lord was searching his conscience by the question, "Lovest thou Me more than these other disciples do?" The third time the Lord uses Peter's own word, and that stung him to the quick, as we say. The distinction is important for the full understanding of the passage. It was needful, after the triple denial of his Lord, that all self-confidence should be taken away from him (compare Matthew xxvi. 33).

When John speaks of himself, he uses the former or divine word four times (xiii. 23; xix. 26; xxi. 7, 20); the only other occasion is xx. 2, where he uses the more human word, possibly in deference to Mary Magdalene's attention, in conveying the news about the empty sepulchre.* All this is touchingly delicate and beautiful, expressive of the heart's *true* rest, not in anything of itself, but in what Jesus *is* in His own *divine* nature, and all He says and does.

Such is the first love, often very feebly apprehended, and, alas, easily lost; it should ever be the living spring of all we say, or think, or do. How we need heart-searching in this respect!

Several instances of such love may be seen in the gospels, and they are generally found in couples—though not always in the same place—confirming the divine principle of the efficacy of "two witnesses." We can only hint at these now. Diligent seekers will find others.

There were two women who anointed the Lord's

* See the "New Translation," by J. N. D.

feet: the "sinner," in Luke vii., of whom He says, "She *loved* much"; the saint, in John xii., of whom it is written that Jesus *loved* her (John xi. 1-5).

Two devoted men, who enjoyed the riches this world can offer, were together at the critical moment to care for the Lord's body in a becoming way: Nicodemus, who at first came to Him by night, and Joseph of Arimathæa, a member of the sanhedrim; Jesus was thus "with the rich in His death" (Isaiah liii. 9).

Two devoted women bore witness concerning Him: the aged Anna at His *birth*, who "served God with fastings and prayers night and day"; Mary Magdalene, weeping at His *death*, to whom was confided the message owning the disciples as His "brethren" in eternal life (Luke ii. 36-38; John xx. 11-17).

W. J. L.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

I N Christ. The measure of my *privilege* is that I am in Christ; the measure of my *responsibility* is that Christ is in me.

Love and Righteousness.—Christ came down from heaven in love to serve; He has gone up in righteousness, having fully glorified God by His death upon the cross.

Him that loveth us, etc. (Rev. i. 5).—The mention of the name of Jesus is enough to stir the heart, for those who know Him as we do, in a suited doxology.

"Come."—"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is to Jesus. To whom else could they say it? The bride breathes out the word to the

Bridegroom ; and the Holy Spirit is He that gives fervour to her desire that Christ should come.

Peter learned that there was nothing good in himself, when he had done his best ; and that there was no failure in *Christ's love*, when he had done his worst.

After all, the more one gets on in the world, the less the ability to serve in the Church. If the wheel is caught in a rut, the man who has on his working clothes is ready enough to put his shoulder to it, but the gentleman, with his nice clothing on, cannot stoop to that.

God's ways, His acts, His counsels.—God made known His *ways* unto Moses, His *acts* to the children of Israel. Did He reveal His *counsels* to them ? No ; that was reserved for us. God has let us share in His most hidden purposes, His eternal counsels with regard to Christ ; He has made us His confidants. What grace !

"Jesus wept" : "Lazarus, come forth" (John xi. 35, 43).—The tears on the cheek of the Son of God showed how really and truly man He was ; feeling in His soul the terrible power of death under which men lay. The words addressed to the dead man, "Lazarus, come forth," bore witness to the divine glory of His person as the Son of God. All, however, was done with perfect reference to the Father, and complete submission to His will, on the part of the ever-dependent One.

Following Hard.—"My soul followeth hard after Thee, Thy right hand upholdeth me" (Ps. lxiii. 8). In cleaving to the Lord, we experience His strength. Oh ! may we in our troublous days realise more of this

close cleaving of soul to Christ. May we have hearts that seek and desire naught save Himself, which do not make a show before the world of their feelings, or of their consecration to God, which do not say, "I am rich, and have need of nothing," but which say to Christ in the silence of His own presence, and in accents which His ear alone can hear, "I love Thee because Thou hast first loved me," and also on account of Thy matchless beauty, oh, inimitable Pattern, some traits of whom, however feeble, I would fain reproduce! "My soul followeth hard after Thee."

H. R.

We (Christians) have a special possession, which is *Christ*. We are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*." God desires that we should appropriate the riches of Him in whom we are, and that our hearts should enter into these things in such a manner as to make them our own. I do not speak of seizing them with the mere intelligence, which may be done in a certain sense, but not permanently; for whatever is not laid hold of by faith, slips through our fingers like water. We need to have our affections set on these things, if they are to be really our own; and, above all, we want an object for our affections, for, apart from Christ, the heavenly things themselves would not fill our hearts. That is why it says, "Seek those things which are above, *where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God*."

H. R.

We shall *behold* Him, whom not seen we love;
 We shall be *with* Him, whom we long to see;
 We shall be *like* Him, fit for realms above;
With Him, and *like* Him, for *eternity*!
 Is now to sit at Jesus' feet thy choice?
 How will fruition then thy soul rejoice!

J. G. D.

A Lesson from the Returned Captives.

WE find in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah much that is good and suitable to the times in which we live. Let us look briefly at what distinguished the captives brought back from Babylon as found in Ezra, chapters i.-iii.

(i.) **Separation to God.**—Though the sentence of “Lo-ammi” (not My people) still rested on the nation as a whole (Hos. i. 9), yet this feeble remnant recognised that Israel was God’s people according to their original calling; taken out of Egypt to be “unto Him a people for inheritance” (Deut. iv. 20), a separated people. They therefore put away those who could not trace their genealogy. But in doing so they did not assume to a knowledge for which they were not competent, but, taking an humble place, were content to wait a future day when there should stand up a priest with Urim and Thummim (chap. ii. 63).

Here there is a most useful lesson for ourselves. The Christian’s place is one of *separation from the world*, and it never can be otherwise. It is still the world that has rejected Christ, and he who is the friend of the world is the enemy of God. Besides, the whole calling and position of the Church of God is *heavenly*. At the same time it is our wisdom to own the ruin in which the church is, as to a collective testimony for Christ, and to bow under God’s hand so plainly manifest in discipline upon His people to-day.

(ii.) **Obedience.**—They were exceedingly careful to go by the written word—“As it is written in the law of Moses the man of God.” Thus the Scripture alone was what guided their conduct and worship.

(iii.) **Faith.** — When this remnant came back to Jerusalem the city was in ruins, desolation marked everything. Yet they set up the altar of God, offered burnt offerings, and kept the feast of tabernacles; and all this while the walls were still unbuilt. *God* was their resource and protection, and He was sufficient.

Do *we* find it so? True, we walk amidst the ruins of the church, once set up so fair at Pentecost (Acts ii.), and we suffer for our fathers' sins as well as for our own, as these Jews also did. But there can be no doubt that the faith of this remnant was more pleasing to God than all the display of power and magnificence in the days of Solomon. It is ever the privilege of faith to take its stand for God; humbly, it is true, but firmly, according to the written word.

We know not what new tests and trials may arise in our path to-morrow, but we can always say with the psalmist: "GOD is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

(iv.) They "gave after their ability," and "willingly offered" for the work and service of God; also they sang His praises "after the ordinance of David, King of Israel."

Here, too, we have a most practical lesson. If the claims of Christ really have their place with us, there will be the ready response to help on His work so far as we can; and this the apostle, writing from his prison at Rome calls, "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice well-pleasing to God."

And not only so, but if Christ has His place in our hearts, there will be praise and worship also. How grateful to God must have been the song of praise, according to the ordering of David, type of His rightful King, ascending even from the ruins of the city, but from hearts sensible of His grace! And cannot *we*,

who have a victorious and ever-living Saviour at God's right hand, raise our note of praise and worship to His blessed name, even from amidst the ruins of Christendom?

Nothing shows a soul really in the presence of God and happy in the love of Christ more than praise and worship. It must be so, for however small a vessel may be, if it be filled up over the brim, there must be an overflow. Worship to the Father and the Son, flowing out from the heart by the Spirit of God, is that overflow for the Christian.

F. G. B.

The Old Corn of the Land.

(Joshua v. 10, 11.)

BEFORE going to fight, Israel must be seated at the table of God. . . . Let us not wait until the morrow, for we may be called to fight this very evening. Let us feed on Christ to-day, to-morrow, every moment, that we may be ready at the first signal to arise and march on to victory.

Yes, beloved, it is a Person; it is Christ who is our food. Not truths, nor privileges, but Himself. And He is here (Joshua v.) presented to us under three aspects: the Passover, the Old Corn of the Land, and the Manna. . . .

The Passover in Canaan corresponds with what the Lord's Supper is for the Christian. And notice, it is a *permanent* food. It will not cease in the glory; only it will no longer be the remembrance of the Lord's death celebrated during His absence, neither shall we need something tangible to remind us of it, for our eyes will see in the midst of the throne, the Lamb Himself, as it had been *slain*. He will be the visible centre of the new creation founded on the cross, the basis and pivot

of eternal blessing, the object upon whom myriads of myriads gaze with adoring and universal worship.

But there is more than this in our heavenly repast. "And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the self-same day." God gave them a food which had been unknown to them in Egypt, the old corn of the land of Canaan, a heavenly, glorified Christ; but Christ as a man who had been through this sin-stained world in a spotless humanity, the unleavened bread,—One who, in this same humanity, had passed through the fire of judgment like the parched corn, and who, having entered the glory in resurrection, sits as man at the right hand of God. . . .

I behold this man and say, "There is my place." I am in Him, a man in Christ, possessing already the same life as He, life eternal, the life of a man risen from among the dead. I am united to Him, seated in Him in the heavenly places, enjoying this infinite blessing by the Holy Spirit who leads me into it. Blessed Saviour! for me Thou camest down, for me Thou didst hang on the cross; Thou art gone into the glory, and Thou hast brought me into it already in Thine own Person, previous to being with Thee and like Thee for ever.

H. R.

"The Axe is Laid to the Root of the Trees."

(Matthew iii.)

VERY simple and striking is the way Matthew announces the commencement of John the Baptist's ministry—"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The Scriptures are as silent over the early life of the Baptist-prophet, as over that of the Lord Jesus, and even more so, for the curtain is drawn aside to give us the incident of Jesus at twelve years old "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions." But as to John, Luke alone gives the narrative of his birth, with the addition that "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel" (Luke i. 80).

When the day of his shewing unto Israel had come, he emerges from his retirement to announce the kingdom, and the answer to his trumpet call is prompt and satisfactory. "Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan" respond to his appeal. And even more than this, for "many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism," and his withering rebuke shows that by the power of the Spirit he discerns no true repentance in their action. It may be that they desired to accredit this great religious movement, for evidently the voice of John had moved the people greatly. But it was no false shepherd now, "climbing up some other way," and drawing disciples after himself, but one who in the spirit and power of Elias heralded the presence of One mightier than himself, before whom he would be glad to retire, when his work of preparation was done.

This visit of the Pharisees and Sadducees draws from the minister of "righteousness" some further important truths (Matt. xxi. 32).

The time had come when "the axe was laid at the root of the trees." Israel, and man in Israel, had been tested by God in every way that divine wisdom and divine patience could propose. The final test was now to be made. "Last of all He sent His Son also."

From His people, notwithstanding all the love and patient culture, God had gathered no fruit, and the question is raised, Is the tree to come down? The axe laid at the root tells its own tale. "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. iii. 10; Luke iii. 9).

If God asks the question, "What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?" (Isa. v. 4), there is no voice that can justly demand more labour and patience. But the resources of God are not exhausted. This same chapter (iii.) directs our eyes to the public entrance, if we may so say, of the One whom John announces as "He (who) shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." And very beautiful and striking is the way of the introduction of "The second man, the Lord from heaven": "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him; and lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

If the verdict as to the first man, under the most favourable auspices and gracious dealing is: "The axe is laid to the root of the trees." The voice of God directs our disappointed hearts to a new and blessed source, which is to demonstrate in a new way the words uttered so long before, "From Me (Jehovah) is thy fruit found" (Hosea xiv. 9).

Fruit for God from the first man there was none; still the baptism of fire was not yet. There was to be a day of grace, an extended period in which the long-suffering of God would wait for the ingathering of the wheat into the garner ere the unquenchable fire should burn up the chaff.

Righteousness might well say, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" But the answer of *grace* is, "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it, and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." And so there is not only to be the extra year of grace for Israel (added to the three years of *His* personal labour in seeking for fruit), which ended for that people (alas!) in the rejection of Stephen's testimony to the risen and glorified Son of man, but an extended "day of salvation" and "appointed time," which is an answer to the sufferings of Him who was heard and succoured in an acceptable time (Luke xiii. 8-9).

And most important is it for us to see this only way of obtaining fruit. The Lord's own word forbids any other source than His death and resurrection: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

It is not even an added lesson on the old lines, much less, as some would say, another factor in the general scheme of human education. "Ye must be born again" is the opening announcement of the elements of a new kingdom, built by the Spirit and Word of God on the only true foundation that is laid (1 Cor. iii. 11).

Again, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself . . . no more can ye, except ye abide in Me"; and so the voice of God would arrest the attention of the disappointed hearts of men to-day, and fix them again upon His "Beloved Son" in whom He is always well pleased, now "straightway glorified" at His right hand, as the One who, on the Cross, glorified God on the earth (John xiii. 32).

There is a mighty effort to-day to explain away the incontrovertible fact that man, educated, cultured, and even outwardly Christianised, is a confessed failure.

All kinds of future blessings are promised after he has learned in the crucible of war the bitter lessons of this "sad and terrible lapse." Christianity is said to have failed, but, as another has well said: "If Christianity could be said to have failed because of the war, much more could be alleged against science and education, seeing that the forces which had built up the world were now bidding fair to destroy it."

Thank God, there is peace and universal blessing ahead, and "He is not slack concerning His promise," but even now it is as if one heard amid the strife and din, and long-drawn agony, the voice of God saying to the nations, as once to Israel: "Oh that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea" (Isa. xlviii. 18).

And to those that are "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," how great is the grace and love that would invite us amidst all the trials of the present tribulation, to make a deeper and fuller acquaintance with His resources, "in *Whom* dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

"God manifest, God seen and heard,
The heaven's beloved One :—
Worthy O Lamb of God art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow !"

T. R.

Fragment.—Christ on earth was the truth, as He always is. Truth exists before the Church of God. His word is truth, and faith in the truth gathers the Church by the Holy Ghost. But the Church maintains the truth; and when the Church is gone, men will fall into a strong delusion. That which is not the pillar and support of the truth is not the Church as God understands it.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

VI.

WITNESS, OR TESTIMONY.

WHEN we consider attentively, from the point of view of the Lord's honour and glory, the position and responsibility of the Church as a whole, we must admit that the uppermost thought in every heart true to Him, should be to remember that we are His "witnesses" in the world during the whole time of His absence.

The closing words of Mark xiii. make this clear. The "porter," according to the figure there used, has to "watch," caring for his Master's interests during the *whole* period from the very moment of His leaving this scene, until He returns. Secondly, as to His return, *no sign* is to be expected, in as far as the "porter" is concerned; the time is wholly and intentionally *unrevealed*. "Of that day and *that hour* knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" * (verse 32). Luke confirms this, showing that the "porter" represents practically *every* truly converted soul. Each member of the "little flock," to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom, is to have his loins continually girded and his light burning, so that when the Lord comes and knocks he may open unto Him "immediately" (Luke xii. 30-40). And the Lord adds, "Be ye therefore ready, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when *ye think not*." He desires to find each one "watching,"

* Compare with this the Lord's answer, as given in Matthew xx. 23, to James and John, who desired places nearest to Him in His Kingdom, "It is not mine to give, but to those for whom it is prepared of *my FATHER*." The last three words are not found in Mark x. 40; but note how the FATHER is brought in, though in a different way, in each of the three gospels.

so that He may Himself "make them sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them."

What a wonderful incentive is this to encourage us to be occupied with Him during every moment of His absence! Besides that, there is a definite *witness* to be given of Christ's sufferings and resurrection (Luke xxiv. 46-48). During that last night before the cross, on leaving the upper chamber, the blessed Lord, after again speaking of the coming of the Comforter who would testify of Him, adds, "And ye also *shall bear witness*, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John xv. 26-27). The apostles realised this at first, in the midst of sharp persecution by their religious leaders (Acts ii. 32; iv. 20; v. 29-32).

As we think over these things, can we wonder that the Lord, in reviewing the actual state of the churches, noticed first of all the decline of their "first love?" If we judge ourselves according to the charge He bequeathed to them and the measure of His requirements, how far has this testimony the uppermost place in our thoughts and lives? Has not the thought of the Lord's personal return at any moment practically disappeared? We talk of it when we are in trouble, hoping soon to be delivered out of our anxiety; but how much do we think of it, from the point of view of *His* glory, and the satisfaction of *His* heart, in having *with Himself* in His Father's house, all those whom He has redeemed at such a cost, and "washed in His own blood" (Rev. i. 5)? Should not this weigh upon our hearts at present?

Do we realise that, as expressed by another, waiting momentarily for the Lord detaches the heart from this world? whereas, if in any degree, in our thoughts, we put it off, the servant who does so is left to the action of his own will; and this must call for judgment and

a "portion with unbelievers" (Luke xii. 45-46). This is serious indeed.

The more we ponder over these things, the better we understand that the Lord's review of the "seven churches" must have the character of judgment, as we have seen set forth in figure already, in the first chapter of Revelation. In the addresses which John had to write to each one of the seven churches, in chapters ii. and iii., the Lord's coming has a very prominent place. In no case is there an allusion to the "rapture" of the saints, in taking them *out* of this world—a truth revealed to Paul alone, as already mentioned (p. 10), in answer to the difficulties of the early Thessalonian saints in those days of trouble and persecution. (See 1 Thess. iv. 15-18; and 1 Cor. xv. 51-58, where Paul calls it a "mystery.") It is possible that the translation of John himself, in spirit, from earth to heaven (in Rev. iv. 1-2), may set it forth mystically; but if so, it only confirms the fact that the testimony of the Church on earth has then no more place: it is finished, concluded, alas, in judgment; the candlestick or lamp is gone.

The question with the churches *on earth* is as to the way in which their responsibility, as the Lord's *witnesses*, during the whole period of His absence, has been carried out. We have seen already in the first chapter, verse 7, that the Lord comes with the clouds of heaven, and, in the next verse, that He is essentially in His own divine person, the "coming One" (see above, p. 61). But then it is particularly to deal with what has taken place, and is going on here below, during the time of His absence from this earth. In the vision, we repeat, He is still in the midst of the candlesticks, and He holds the representative "angel" of each church—the seven stars—in His right hand.

In the respective addresses to these "angels," except in the case of Smyrna in a time of bitter persecution, the Lord's coming is everywhere prominent. In the case of Ephesus, it is to remove the candlestick altogether (ii. 5); to Pergamos, to fight with the sword of His mouth against the evil doers (ii. 16). In Thyatira, there is a faithful remnant whom the Lord encourages to hold fast until He comes, which is, we may say, a return to the proper responsibility of the Church from the beginning. But to the next one, Sardis, where there was renewed decline in *watching*, the Lord adds the words "as a thief"—found as a warning in the gospels. It is again repeated to any remaining faithful ones, in a godless world (chap. xvi. 15). For Philadelphia, it is a precious encouragement for those who do keep the word of His patience (iii. 10, 11), and in Laodicea, He is outside and knocking at the door (iii. 20). Even then, there is special blessing in reserve for any one who will open to Him. But the opportunity for so doing will soon be gone for ever. The Church, or individual churches as witnesses for Christ on earth, then disappear. John goes "to heaven."

Referring to the gospels (Matt. xxiv. 42-44; Luke xii. 35-40), we cannot but note that the expression "come as a thief" is exceedingly forcible and solemn, both as to the uncertainty of the *time*, and the lack of *watching*. In both we read, that "if the good man of the house *had known* in what watch the thief would come, he *would have watched*, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up; therefore be ye also *ready*; for in such an hour as *ye think not*, the son of man cometh" (verse 42 of Matthew, repeated in xxv. 13, is also found in Mark xiii. 33). Such repetition surely demands our most careful attention and meditation. Revelation xvi. 15, referred to above, sets forth

the final judgment of everything on earth, just previous to the Lord's kingdom being set up.

The closing address to Laodicea confirms this, as to the church's responsibility; for, as a witness for the Lord on earth, it is entirely disowned "spewed out of His mouth, as no more to be mentioned in what thenceforth goes on in this world. All that remains is "the Amen, the faithful and true WITNESS, the beginning of the creation of God" (verse 14). There can be no change in Him. (Compare, as to this, the words "God of truth" in Isaiah lxxv. 16, which is literally, "Elohim (God)—Amen," a most remarkable combination.)

Notwithstanding all this, grace prevails until the last, and opportunity is given for the most intimate enjoyment of Christ's presence to any individual who opens to Him in answer to His knocking. The "overcomer" in such circumstances will have his part in the coming glorious *kingdom* of the Lord, which, however, is the least of the blessings reserved for those who suffer (2 Tim. ii. 12, 13). For the measure of the Lord's love for the church goes far deeper (John xiv. 13, xv. 13). He gave Himself for it (Eph. v. 25). And that thought, operative in the heart, was at the basis of all Paul's service: "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" (Gal. ii. 20).

W. J. L.

Three Considerations.

- (i.) "CONSIDER the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." In all things He must have the pre-eminence. Consider Him: in all the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of Him from Genesis to the Revelation. The Lord Himself, when He spoke with the two on the

road to Emmaus, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself, and showed them that all things must be fulfilled which were written "in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me."

Consider Him Godward and manward; God over all, blessed for ever, yet the man Christ Jesus. The Son of God; the Son of man. The Eternal Son of the Eternal God, yet the son of Mary, born in Bethlehem; the Son of the Father, the Son of the Highest, yet Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus of Calvary, Jesus crowned with glory and honour, Jesus made both Lord and Christ.

Consider Him that endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself: in His pathway of love, lonely and lowly, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; in His humiliation, in His exaltation, in His obedience, and in His dependence.

Consider Him in His life: the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, in His temptation, in His triumph, in Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha.

Consider Him: the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the author and finisher, the great I AM.

Consider Him—the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely one, "brighter than the brightest," "fairer than the fairest," "higher than the highest," the head of all principality and power: Christ is all and in all.

Consider Him—for whom God the Father claims equal honour.

Consider Him—whom God, the Spirit of truth, has come down to glorify.

Consider Him—of whom the Holy Scriptures testify.

Consider Him in time, and eternity will be spent in considering Him.

(ii.) "Consider one another" to provoke unto love and to good works. Consider one another: how little is this consideration put into practice. Many can expatiate on it, but how few practically express it. Thus to consider one another produces and provokes "love and good works." If the children of God had given heed to this word of exhortation, "consider one another," they would not have provoked one another to suspicion, strife, and separation. May grace be sought that any root of bitterness which has sprung up, troubling and defiling, may be removed, or replaced by the grace of God acting on each heart to consider one another, comfort one another, edify one another, love one another, and to seek one another's welfare.

(iii.) "Consider your ways." Weighty and wholesome is this appeal, searching and seasonable, comes this sentence! Twice repeated within three verses of Holy Writ, it sounds as a solemn call: it should echo and re-echo to all who are the Lord's, to respond and to retrace our steps from "ways" of our own, which have grieved or quenched His Spirit, brought reproach on His name, and not glorified His Father. "Now, therefore, thus saith the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the LORD of hosts—Consider your ways (Haggai i. 5-7)"

Here in Haggai, imperatively important is the command which is so applicable to the present condition of the people of God; for what is the real result of all

the ministry and all the sowing: has it not "brought in little"? There is the eating, drinking, clothing, and working, etc., but where can be found the truth contained in the four chapters of the epistle to the Philippians? where, the carrying out of what chapter ii. of that epistle unfolds? Yet that chapter is perhaps as much read as any other amongst the once gathered companies of believers, alas now so much divided, and who seem to have forgotten "the former days," and to ignore the blessed fact that the Lord Jesus Christ died to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." "Consider your ways"; this, if hearkened to and acted upon by each and all, would doubtless heal and restore many a bruise and many a breach, through the mercy of God.

These three considerations are worthy of our prayerful perusal—

"Consider Him."

"Consider one another."

"Consider your ways."

HELPER.

Gleanings.

"**Glory from men.**"—"I receive not glory from men" (John v. 41). Glory from men is the moving spring of the world: Jesus not only sought it not, but did not receive it. He always did the things that pleased the Father, who gave Him commandment what He should say, and what He should speak. W. K.

* * * * *

Love.—In John xv. we get the measure and character of the Son's love to us: "*as the Father hath loved Me.*" In chapter xvii. we get the measure and character of the Father's love: "*as Thou hast loved Me.*" Could anything exceed this?

The Spirit of the Age.

TURN where we will at the present time we find the spirit of lawlessness and unrest pervading the masses. Socialistic teachings and the prevalence of unbelief in God and His word are largely accountable for this. The governments of the various countries find it increasingly difficult to control the masses, even in view of the special circumstances of the War. No doubt all is gradually moving on towards the state of revolution and anarchy called in Revelation xiii. 1, "The sea," out of which the first beast, or head of the revived Roman Empire, will arise; to be followed by the second beast of that chapter, "the lawless one" (2 Thess. ii. 8), the Antichrist (1 John ii. 18).

We must, however, remember that until the Church has been taken to be with the Lord (1 Thess. iv. 17), there is a power which hinders or restrains the full progress of evil: "There is one that restraineth now, until He be taken out of the way" (2 Thess. ii. 7—R.V.). This, no doubt, is the Holy Spirit; and the "powers that be," whatever their faults and failures, are now used of God for the same end (Rom. xiii. 1-7). But when the Church is gone, and the Holy Ghost in the Church; and when "the dragon, the beast and the false prophet" (Rev. xvi. 13), hold sway, there will be no hindrance to the full development of lawlessness and evil—not only in the heathen world, but, as 2 Thess. ii. shows, in apostate Christendom. This is what we are fast going on to, whatever the dreams of socialists or others may be.

It is not, however, our object to pursue this side of the subject, but rather to consider how far the Church of God is affected by the same thing, and what is the

path we should walk in, in view of the spirit of the age.

No thoughtful person can doubt that the spirit of self-will and restlessness is at work in the Church as well as in the world. How is it to be met? That it causes sorrowful division and confusion amongst Christians is only too apparent. That which claims to be the one true church meets it by an enforced submission to a supposed infallible head, thus over-riding individual conscience, and setting aside individual responsibility to God and His word.

But God's word gives us clear light for our path, no matter what the difficulties of the times may be, if we are only subject to it. He who has an ear to hear is told to hear "what the Spirit saith unto the Churches," which is, for us, the written word.

When the Church was first set up at Pentecost, there was the most blessed unity, even amongst men differing widely in nationality, in habits, and in thoughts: "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul" (Acts iv. 32). This was true unity, produced by absence of self and self-will, and by the moving and controlling power of the Holy Ghost. It was, no doubt, an answer to the Lord's prayer to the Father in John xvii. 21, "that they all may be one."

It is in the same spirit of grace and absence of selfish strife that the Apostle Paul exhorts the Ephesians to use diligence to "keep the unity of the Spirit"; namely, "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. iv. 2). Now, this is just the opposite of an enforced unity, like that of Rome on the one hand, and of the lawless and independent spirit of self-will on the other.

But oh! how serious and grave is the departure of even true Christians to-day from the simplicity and

Christ-like devotedness of Pentecostal days. We may well say, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." It is only as we know what the Church was at the beginning, and what it is according to the Word of God, and as we enter a little into what it is to Him who, out of pure love, "gave *Himself* for it," that we can truly weep over its present condition. Alas, we see it now torn by sectarian strife, and fast drifting back into conformity with the world out of which it was delivered.

Can we not understand something of the apostle's mind when he wrote, "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 2)? And to the Galatians he wrote, "I travail in birth again until *Christ be formed in you*" (Gal. iv. 19). In Christ there was no self-will or self-seeking, but perfect submission and devotedness to the Father's will and glory. He who had the right to all, gave up all, and came down, down from the brightness of the Godhead glory to the shame of Calvary's cross (Phil. ii.).

It is as we contemplate *Him*, that pride, self-will, the desire for place and power, and such-like fruits of the flesh which cause so much sorrow and trouble amongst Christians, are withered up within us. The disciplinary rod and ecclesiastical severity cannot keep the flesh in order or produce a Christ-like walk, and that unity which the Psalmist called both "good and pleasant" (Ps. cxxxiii.).

May we seek to follow Him who was *the* meek and lowly One—always *the* faithful witness for God, but always the humble, dependent Servant who could say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John iv. 34)!
F. G. B.

Gleanings.

CHRIST the True Test.—Christ is the means and measure by which we can judge of everything.

If I want to know God, I must learn Him in Christ. If I want to know what man is in perfection, I learn it by Christ. In a word, all real truth is learnt, and learnt only, in or by Christ. Whether it be man, or sin, or death, or life, or love, or hatred, all is manifested in Christ, or by Christ. Hence the importance of having the soul occupied with Christ, of feeding on Him, since He is the only transforming power, the only standard of excellence, and the light by which all things else are made manifest.

J. N. D.

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“He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world” (Eph. i. 4).

“On the resurrection morning,
When I see the Saviour’s face,
I shall share His wondrous glory,
Prove the fulness of His grace;
God is faithful, Hallelujah!
In His heart I have a place.”

W. J. Y.

Christ His People’s Canopy.

GOD governs our lives. He does it, too, in varying ways, but all with a view to greater glory to Himself and blessing to us.

He uses such means as deep sorrow, bitter disappointment, shattered health, heavy weights of care, family or business break-up, losses by fire and water and war, opposition and suffering in Christ’s service; or, perhaps, calm and peaceful days. But whether the experience is pleasing or painful, the Christian cannot take a step or draw a breath without being the subject of the Lord’s tenderest care and most loving sympathy.

Beside exercises of this order, which come from without, there are those which have their spring in us. Self-will, in one form or another, too often sways the undercurrents of our lives; currents which, in the nature of things, run counter to God's will. It is here that the breakers meet; and often bitter conflicts ensue, as to which will triumph, God's way or the working of the flesh in us; for neither rest of heart nor christian joy is possible until His will is wholly bowed to. The height of our joy in Him corresponds to the depth of our submission.

The existence of the flesh in us often makes God's discipline a painful necessity; and often has He to come in, in restraining, reproofing, and restoring power.

Three striking examples are exhibited in Scripture of this power of God providing for His people in the sufferings and trials incident to their pathways.

I. The first is in 2 Corinthians xii. Here is a great and chosen vessel faithfully serving the Lord, gladly facing the loss of all for His sake, taken up to the third heaven where he hears unspeakable words. Lest he should be unduly exalted, God sees fit to allow a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. This, whatever its form, was found very trying to bear; and he prays three times for its removal. But even his prayers, apostle though he was, were not answered in the way he desired; because an all-wise God knows better our needs, and when and how to meet them; so He may not grant our requests just when and as we wish. The Lord's response was a promise not to take the thorn away, but to supply him thenceforth with grace to bear it.

It is blessed to see here and in his trouble in Asia, where he was pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that he despaired even of life, that trials of

this nature never fall on any saint without grace being bestowed equal to their weight. So, learning this, he now boldly affirms, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, *that the power of Christ may spread a tabernacle over me*" (ver. 9—R.V.).

If such a discipline was needful for such an one as Paul, we must expect similar things in our own lives, as the messenger of God for our profit; although

"Not a single shaft can hit
Till a God of love sees fit."

Much might be said also as to His *ways*, in order to stir us up to more devotedness and educate our souls. The present war is, beyond question, permitted for this purpose. It has raised among Christians acute problems and unexpected difficulties; but these could not perplex us as they do, had we been more simply acquainted with God's word and God's ways. It has found us, in spite of much light and privilege, to be holding lightly many vital truths as to our position in the world and in the Church, the Lord's claims over us, and our resources in Him.

But there is one sure antidote, and only one, for all these ills in us, or around us: that is, Christ and His power. Blessed be His name, He ever stands to guard His own, physically and spiritually; so let us not shrink from the conflict, but meet the malice of Satan, reproach for Christ, and the sorrows of the Church and the world, under His canopy. He who has overcome the world and its prince knows how to give rest, and peace, and light in the darkest, wildest night, and can *spread His tabernacle over us also*.

"Ye fearful saints fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

II. In Revelation vii. we see *Gentiles* receiving the same tender protection as we do now. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands" (ver. 9). These are blessed on the earth after the Church is taken to heaven. They are, by God's mysterious working, touched in heart, and find salvation through the blood of Christ, and have to suffer in consequence the untold horrors of "*the great tribulation*" (ver. 14—N.T.).

Although the present upheaval tests us very severely, yet, at its worst, it is as the smoke of the morning, compared with the calamities of the coming "great tribulation"—calamities from hell beneath and heaven above; but the power which once preserved Noah, and preserves us to-day, will perfectly protect the poor sufferers of that time, and carry them right through the storms, to enjoy, on the earth, great nearness to God both in worship and service. They will experience His shepherd-care, His shelter from the heat, living fountains of water, and no more tears.

How this is effected is explained, "*He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them*" (ver. 15—N.T., R.V.). So we can see that hell and Satan, in their final, their worst and most desperate effort, cannot inflict any suffering, or sorrow, or loss on the objects of God's love, which He is not capable of meeting by His care as completely as He does to-day.

III. The third example of Jehovah's tabernacle being spread over His people is naturally, like the other two, exercised on the earth; and the saved and restored remnant of *Israel*, in that future day, will be the subjects of His gracious care.

Just as His cloud overshadowed them in the wilderness of yore, and, in spite of their foes, carried them into Canaan, so will He do again in the millennial kingdom. "The LORD will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a canopy, *and there shall be a tabernacle* for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain" (Isaiah iv. 5, 6).

Jehovah's glory will be their canopy, securing their *dwellings* in Zion, as it did their pilgrim *tents* in the desert; and undisturbed repose will be the effect, even although "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." Again, "The LORD is thy keeper; *the LORD is thy shade* upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night" (Isaiah xxx. 26; Ps. cxxi. 4-6. See also Gen. viii. 22).

What an unspeakable comfort to them all this will be, after their peeling by the nations (Isa. xviii. 2), and their deep sorrows at the hand of the Antichrist. So, whether it be the *saints* of this dispensation, or the saved *Gentile* multitude, or the *Jewish* remnant of the coming day, all can say, "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us," and that, because nothing less than His power is exercised to "cover our defenceless heads with the shadow of Thy wings."

W. M. R.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

VI.

THE HOLY GHOST.

BEFORE speaking of the third division of the book of Revelation which commences with chapter iv., it seems needful to say a few more words as to "the things which are," that is concerning the Church's testimony up to and until the time when the last remaining witnesses for the Lord on earth are finally removed from it, and taken up to heaven. As noted above on pages 41 and 42, "these things" are found *only* in chapters ii. and iii. The messages of warning or encouragement are given by the Spirit in a form which reminds us of David's last words, in 2 Samuel xxiii. 2. Nowhere do we find in these addresses any allusion to the presence and action of the Holy Ghost as unfolded by the Lord in John xiv. to xvi., or by the Apostle Paul in his epistles (see pages 27 and 59).

The letters themselves no doubt contained pictures of what the Lord saw in each one severally addressed, in the places mentioned, at the time when John wrote. At the same time, the *order* in which they were named was perfectly adapted to set forth historically, in a consecutive way, what would take place long after John himself had left the scene of his service on earth. In this sense they form a concise review of Christendom as a whole, considered as a responsible witness for God and Christ on earth, so long as divine patience could bear with the general decline and failure, while granting from time to time moments of revival and encouragement. But the Holy Ghost is not seen as working *in* the churches; on the contrary, He is inditing the messages sent *to* them.

The most deeply interesting and instructive feature in the messages sent, is that the Lord presents Himself to each individual assembly in that particular aspect most suited to meet its condition or failure, so as to furnish a remedy for its state, and an encouragement to each one who "has ears to hear." There is no indication of such an attitude after its sevenfold repetition in chapters ii. and iii., if we except the intimation given in chapter xiii. 9, in connection with those whose names are written "from the foundation of the world" in the book of life of the slain Lamb (for so that verse should read).

Finally, the way in which the Lord presents Himself, as meeting the varied states and conditions described, is drawn from the vision of the first chapter—the Holy Ghost conveying the message through John, the chosen servant here—such as had ever been the case from olden time. Peter is most careful to insist upon this in both his epistles (1 Pet. i. 11, 12 ; 2 Pet. i. 21).

When speaking above of the historical *sequence* of the descriptions given, we must not, however, forget that, in the case of the last four churches addressed, though they are not simultaneous in their *beginning*, they all extend to the close, so that, at the end, all four will be found together ; or, more exactly, some features of each of them may be discerned here and there, by those who have eyes to see and hearts to understand, through occupation with the Lord's person and interests.

For instance, "Hold fast till I come" is as prominent an encouragement to the faithful remnant in Thyatira, as it is to the Philadelphian church in its entirety (ii. 25 ; iii. 11). In Laodicea, "the faithful and true Witness" is actually there, standing and knocking at the door (iii. 14, 20).

Sardis, as a whole, though with a few "worthy" exceptions, is so worldly in its general character that, like Pergamos, it is threatened with the judgment foretold as about to overtake apostate Christendom, upon which the Lord will come "as a thief" (Matt. xxiv. 43; 1 Thess. v. 2-4; Rev. ii. 16; iii. 3). That expression not only indicates the destruction of those things that all worldlings prize, but also the unprepared state of those who do not obey the Lord's injunction to "watch" (Luke xii. 33, 39; John x. 10; 2 Pet. iii. 10). From the end of Mark xiii. we learn that "watching" supposes a faithful soul, intent upon his Master's desires and interests.

Let us now consider the way in which the Lord Himself is presented in each one of the Spirit's messages to the seven churches. We have already remarked that, in the first instance, in addressing *Ephesus*, it is a transcript of the close of the preceding chapter (see p. 73). It is, in this sense, a sketch of the *whole* of the Church's testimony on earth from the Lord's standpoint. In whatever degree the Church may forget Him, and thus stray from becoming fidelity to Him who gave Himself for it,—He can never forget the assemblies in the midst of which He walks, nor will He give up their representatives whom He holds "in His right hand." This blessed fact must ever be the source and spring of true repentance in every heart that turns in reality to Himself. When that fails definitely, as it will do in the final "lukewarm" state of Laodicea, the candlestick is removed. The promised blessing to Ephesus, as to every true believer, is the enjoyment of eternal life, not in Eden, but "in the paradise of God" (Luke xxiii. 43).

In the case of *Smyrna*, we find the Church in persecution, as the necessary consequence of walking in the

Lord's path through the world which crucified Him. He had warned His disciples of it, after Judas had gone out on the night of the passover: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John xv. 20; xvi. 1-4, 33). John himself was at that time a prisoner in Patmos, on account of the testimony he bore (Rev. i. 9); and the Lord had revealed Himself as "the first and the last, who had passed through death, and was alive." So is He presented to the church in Smyrna; and the promise to the faithful is "the *crown of life*" (see James i. 12).

Historically, ten "persecutions" are spoken of, which varied much both in character and duration, with an interval of some seventy years or more, in the latter part of the second century. They were finally put an end to by Constantine's nominal adoption of Christianity, for political reasons, when the council of Nice or Nicæa, in Bithynia, practically admitted the leadership of the Emperor. This led to the state of things described in the letter to *Pergamos* in A.D. 325.

In that letter, the only description of the Lord, as having "the sharp two-edged sword," is taken from chapter i. 16. (Compare Heb. iv. 12, where its spiritual effect is described.) In chapter xix. 12 the Lord's *name*, when He appears for judgment on the nations, is "the Word of God." Everything that goes on in this world, first of all in the house of God, where "judgment begins," must finally be dealt with according to what is written. The reward to the overcomer is "the hidden manna," the word in its sustaining as well as life-giving character: and the "new name," indicating special intimacy with the blessed Lord Himself.

From this point there is a break; for in the next church, *Thyatira*, we find a *remnant* who are specially addressed, being singled out from the mass given over to

idolatry, and who are exhorted to "hold fast" until the Lord's coming (ii. 25). Thenceforward the "overcomer" is found amongst *these*, and the exhortation "to hear" is found at the close. So it is in the case of the three churches that follow, all of which go down respectively to the end; for though they begin at certain successive intervals of time, they are all, at *the close*, found co-existent.

Historically, the introduction of Jezebel, wife of King Ahab, who brought Baal-worship with her from Sidon, and thus made it the central sanctuary of the kingdom, until Jehu put an end to it (2 Kings x. 18-28), might correspond with a similar change externally in Christendom, especially in the eastern half of the Roman Empire, of which the capital was Constantinople. Leo, the "image-breaker," sought to get rid of idolatry in the East during the first half of the eighth century; but at his death, the Empress Irene managed to assemble a *second* council at Nicæa in 787, and ordered the bishops formally to re-establish it. In the meantime, the Saracens had been overrunning the whole of the north of Africa, and Spain, until their progress was stopped in France by Charles Martel in 730. But all these judgments did not free the church from Jezebel's teaching. The Saracens hated idols, but in Christendom idolatry went on.

A fresh title is introduced here, "the Son of God," the only time it is found in the Revelation—showing no doubt that the enemy's great effort is against **Him**, so as to destroy its effect in the hearts of His followers. Satan's temptations called this in question (Matt. iv. 3, 6); and the Jewish leaders made it the subject of their condemnation, in order to get Pilate to pronounce the sentence of death on Him (John xix. 7). Have we, in our souls, a full and true appreciation of what idolatrous worship really involves, as the enemy's method

of getting rid of Christ for the believer's soul (see Ps. xlv. 11)? May we lay it to heart! His eyes are "like unto a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass" (chap. i. 14, 15; Dan. x. 6). Nothing escapes His gaze, nor can He let any defilement pass.

The letter to *Sardis* repeats the "seven stars," as to Ephesus, in chapter ii. 1, but introduces the Holy Ghost in the perfect governmental form, already noticed in chapter i. 4, and in iv. 5—seen in heaven as "lamps of fire" before the throne. This is the more remarkable, in view of what is called in question by a large proportion of so-called Protestants.

To *Philadelphia*, where weakness is prominent, Christ's person is their resource—"Holy" (Luke i. 35; Acts iii. 14; Ps. xvi. 10); "True" (1 John v. 20). Then He holds "the key of David" (Isaiah xxii. 22), and can keep an "open door" for those who look to Him. His coming *quickly* is very prominent here—not for judgment, as in ii. 5 and 16—but as the sustaining hope of the watchful soul. How thankful we should be to the Lord for having called attention to it, and revived it in the souls of His saints within the last century! The crown is here mentioned in a personal way—"thy crown"—needing much watchfulness lest it should be lost; and, to the overcomer, the reward from the Lord is, to be "a pillar in the temple of *my* God," with *three* names written, embracing the "they . . . thou . . . me" . . . of His prayer in John xvii. 6, when His heart is poured into His Father's ear on behalf of His saints, so dear as the Father's gift to Him (see chap. xxi. 2).

The words to *Laodicea* carry us back to chapter i. 5; John i. 1-3; Colossians i. 16. And in Isaiah lxxv. 16, "Amen" appears twice as a *name*, translated by the words "of truth," in our Bibles. Individual intimacy with Christ is promised to any who will open the door

in response to His knocking; and, to the overcomer, association with Himself in His throne, which, in the next chapter, is seen to be the portion of all the saints raised at His coming (see 2 Tim. ii. 11-13).

W. J. L.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

CHRIST'S Obedience.—How does the heart look back with delight, and trace in Christ perfect obedience to the Father's will in all His pathway through this world! He had all power, but never used it to serve Himself. From the manger to the cross it was the embodiment of the word, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." Because He was above all evil, He was able to go through all evil unassailable by it; while at the same time He was capable of touching and dealing with those who were in it.

J. N. D.

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God's Dealings with the Nations.—"At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in My sight, that it obey not My voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them" (Jer. xviii. 7-10—R.V.)

* * * * *

Keeping Grace.—No progress in the things of God will ever keep a person—nothing but actual nearness to God and dependence on Him.

That Blessed Hope.

O Saviour, blessèd Lord,
 When shall we see Thy face?
 When shall we hear Thine own sweet voice,
 So full of love and grace?

Thy word, "I'll come again
 And take you to My home,
 That where I am there you may be,"
 Awakes the answer, "Come!"

What joys will then be ours,
 When free from sin and care;
 What joys be Thine, as Thou shalt view
 Thine own in glory fair!

Nor shalt Thou be content,
 Nor those, through grace set free,—
 Till in Thy likeness we awake,
 And all Thy glory see!

'Tis but "a little while,"
 And we shall hear Thy voice,
 To bid Thy Bride to Thy blest side
 For ever to rejoice.

Then over all will shine,
 Thy glory and Thy grace
 To us, once lost,—to heav'n, to earth,
 To *all* of Adam's race.

Still, while we wait for Thee,
 We'll praise and worship blend,
 With service in Thy blessed name,
 Till faith and hope shall end.

W. J. F.

“Behold the Bridegroom!”

EVERY instructed reader of the Scripture must have remarked the way in which the truth of the second coming of the Lord runs through almost every part of it. This we shall find to be the case, the more we study the Bible.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of it, saying, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints,” etc. (Jude 14, 15). Melchisedec, who met Abraham after his victory over the kings (Gen. xiv.), typified Christ in His millennial character both as King and priest. Balaam, the false prophet, under the constraining power of the Spirit of God, prophesied that there should “come a Star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel,” who would triumph over all His enemies. David prefigured Christ in His victorious power, as Solomon prefigured Him reigning in peace and tranquility.

The Old Testament prophecies contain a wealth of testimony to the same blessed truth. They speak continually of Christ as the Messiah of Israel, who should put down all His enemies and reign in righteousness and assured peace and blessing for this poor distracted world. The Psalms proclaim the fact that God will set His King upon His holy hill of Zion (Ps. ii.), and not only will He rule over Israel, but over *all* that God has created (Ps. viii.). They celebrate the deliverance of the godly remnant of Israel from their oppressors, and close with songs of praise and thanksgiving in view of that day. Indeed, to quote the words of the apostle Peter, these times of blessing had been spoken of by the mouth of all God’s holy prophets since the world began (Acts. iii. 21).

Almost every book of the New Testament proclaims

the fact that God is going to "head up in one all things in Christ," speaking of that time of blessing in many and varied ways.

But it was given to the Apostle Paul, in the first inspired epistle which he wrote (1 Thess.), to clearly distinguish between the two parts of the Lord's second coming, and this "by the word of the Lord." These two are (1) His coming into the air *for* His saints, to raise the dead and change the living; and (2) His coming or appearing *with* them afterwards in glory (chap. iv. 13-17). The former is here named "the coming of the Lord"; and the latter "the day of the Lord" (chap. v. 1-5), which we know from the Old Testament is a day of judgment on the world.

But what we desire is, to say a few words as to the practical bearing and importance of these truths at the present moment. We know that Christendom is becoming more and more apostate from the Christian faith, and the world is fast going on to judgment. It is not our place to try to set the world right, but to seek the conversion and salvation of souls *out of* the world for Christ.

The Christian's true place and calling, like that of the young Thessalonian converts of old, is to "wait for God's Son from heaven . . . even Jesus, our deliverer from the wrath to come."

Let us clearly understand that the proper and distinctive hope of the Church is a *heavenly* hope. The very figure used by the Lord Himself at the close of the inspired book brings this before us, "I am the . . . bright and morning star." No state of the world, no failure of the Church, can dim its brightness; and it is our blessed privilege to turn the eye of faith *heavenwards*, and to watch for the rising of this "bright and morning star," even now, during this

the night of His absence. How could the Church, the bride, do otherwise than desire the coming of the bridegroom? And the Holy Spirit, who created those bridal affections within the soul of the Church, gives the suited word of invitation to Jesus, "Come"—"The Spirit *and* the bride say, Come."

Surely the long night of His absence is now fast drawing to its close. Everything calls for His return as the one and only remedy—a groaning creation, the many grief-stricken and sorrowing hearts of bereaved ones, a scattered and downtrodden Israel, a divided and distracted church.

Oh to rise, in true loyalty of heart and soul, to the height of Christ's desires expressed in His closing words to His people, "Surely I come quickly," and to respond without any reserve, and with whole-hearted and joyous expectation, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

F. G. B.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

"THE Patience of Christ" (2 Thess. iii. 5, R.V.).
—How blessed the thought that if we are waiting for His return, we have communion with His patience! We wait *with* Him, if we wait *for* Him.

Sympathy.—There is not a sorrow comes upon a saint, not a trial of faith in which we can find ourselves, but Christ can fully sympathise with us in it. . . . If the path becomes rougher than ever it was before, surely we shall find only the more of the sympathy of Him who has trodden it in all its roughness.

J. N. D.

Faith in God.—Why should God's people doubt Him for the *way*, any more than for the *end*? Let us

be always confident. It is not the habit of faith to be looking *down* at what is painful in the wilderness, but to be looking *up*, and to reckon on the mercy of God according to His own word. He would have us to know the blessed secret of grace which brings in His power on our behalf.

Jesus Wept (John xi. 35).—Let us just notice the tears of Jesus here. The consciousness that He carried resurrection-virtue in Him, and was about to fill the house at Bethany with the joy of restored life, did not stay the current of natural affection. His heart was still alive to the sorrow, as to the degradation, of death. His calmness throughout this exquisite scene was not *indifference*, but *elevation*. His soul was in the sunshine of those deathless regions which lay far away and beyond the tomb of Lazarus, but He could visit that valley of tears, and weep there with them that wept.

J. G. B.

The State of the Church.—If men had a just sense of the present state of the Church, they would put on sackcloth and ashes instead of blowing trumpets. What we have to do is to humble ourselves before God, because of what we are and see around us, even in the best. It requires a great deal of patience not only to bear and be borne with, but to go on in love. . . . While it becomes us to humble ourselves, we need not be disheartened. We know that our hope is one that maketh not ashamed. It is not founded upon what the Church or any society is going to do, for our hope is Christ. . . .

W. K.

Our Hope.—The assembly's hope is, and the height of its joy will be, to see the Saviour as He is, to be always with Him, like Him who loves us and has

washed us from our sins in His own blood. This is the greatest blessing, too great for us, if not the fruit of something greater—the cross and the sufferings of the Son of God.

Once this blessed Saviour has suffered, and the Son of God has been made sin for us, and has died as a man on the cross, nothing is too great; it will only be the fruit of the travail of His soul. He shall be satisfied; His love shall be satisfied in our happiness and in our presence with Him. . . . The Father, too, will rest in His love, and in the accomplishment of all His counsels for the glory of His Son; showing, at the same time, in the ages to come, the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

J. N. D.

“He is faithful that promised” (Heb. x. 23).

“Daily will I speak His goodness,
Tell to others He is near;
Near to help in time of sorrow,
When my heart would faint from fear;
God is faithful, ever faithful,
Hears each sigh, counts ev’ry tear.”

W. J. Y.

Christ Crucified.

“The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor. i. 25).

“For though He was crucified through weakness yet He liveth by the power of God” (2 Cor. xiii. 4).

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. x. 17).

THE mind and heart of man, unsubject to the living Word of God which *produces* faith, and thus untaught by the Spirit of God, must always be confounded, if not filled with enmity, on hearing the story of the Cross.

The preaching of "Christ crucified" is "foolishness" to him. From his point of view, the death of Christ was merely a martyrdom carried out by the infatuated leaders of Jewish tradition. If the sceptic dare go so far, he may even consider that God was "foolish" in allowing such a death, for he is not conscious of Satan's power in "blinding the minds of them which believe not," or of the fact that man, even by his *religion*, proved himself to be "under sin," and that nothing less than the death of a substitute could satisfy the righteous claims of God against sinners. Unless a man is *convicted*, so as to own himself a sinner under judgment, he cannot possibly understand that the wisdom of God is seen in concluding *all* in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all (Rom. xi. 32).

God's righteousness must needs be satisfied, or He would cease to be God, in dealing with His sinful creatures. But because He is also longsuffering and merciful, He gave His Son to die that particular death, which the dying thief owned was *righteous*, "We indeed justly," he said. And to that, every ransomed soul in glory will be a witness. Each one will own the marvellous wisdom of God in making good His grace in *righteousness*.

Let us then consider what is contained in this word of the inspired apostle, calling attention to the apparent "*weakness* of God."

Who could think of such a term being used concerning Him, who is the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, into whose understanding there is no possibility of penetrating? He indeed "weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance" (Isaiah xl. 12, 28). Without the Son of His love, nothing at all was made (John i. 3). How then can we think of Him as being apparently "weak"?

Yet we read of Him to whom the Divine testimony is borne: "Of old Thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands," as having His strength "weakened" in the way, and His days shortened (Ps. cii. 23-25; Heb. i. 10; ii. 9, 10). He was indeed "crucified through weakness"; but *for whom* did He thus consent to lay down His life, while suffering His creatures taunt, "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross"; or again, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save"? He had already prayed in the garden of Gethsemane: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Previously also in the presence of others He had given expression to what was passing within, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.—Then came there a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John xii. 27, 28).

At such a cost did He accept the unspeakable suffering of the cross, even if only *one* from among the children of men was to be delivered from the wrath to come, and brought to the home of joy and light above, where Jesus now is. The apostle applies it as the only explanation of his own personal salvation, "He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*" (Gal. ii. 20).

Man put forth his supreme strength against Christ, taking advantage of His voluntary weakness, though but a few days before He had raised Lazarus from the grave and corruption. All the natural hatred of man's heart against God was seen in the Jewish leaders, jealous of One whose words they were unable to find fault with, and whose truth unmasked their hypocrisy;

and all Satan's malice was added, to accomplish the death of the blessed Son of God.

Little indeed did they know what they were doing when, as they thought, they "killed" the Prince of life. But even then God had prepared the friendly hands, foretold in His precious word, in order to care for the precious body, and do the last honours for Him who, in three short days, was to rise again from the dead. He was thus dependent on the creature to bear Him to the tomb. According to the prophetic word, He was "with the rich in His death" (Isa. liii. 9).

The Lord Jesus endured the wrath of God against sin for you and me, dear reader, in order to ransom our souls from everlasting fire and to redeem us to God. But His death was followed by His resurrection.

The Jewish leaders vainly thought they would keep the precious body of the Saviour in the grave, but all their fruitless efforts only resulted in proving more definitely His resurrection, or they would not have bribed the soldiers to propagate a lie. And Christ rose from among the dead "by the glory of the Father," in order that we might learn to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4).

What does the world with all its boasted wisdom know about this? Do we not see again how "the foolishness of God," from their point of view, is "wiser than men," and that the "weakness of God," from their point of view, is stronger than men? For though He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God; "and every Christian has to learn "the exceeding greatness of that power to usward who believe," in order that he may walk so as to please God (Eph. i. 19).

R. G.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

VIII.

THE THRONE.

AS often noticed, the letter to Thyatira is the first of the seven which introduces the Lord's coming in the Christian sense of that Hope, as we through grace are accustomed to speak of it;—that is, not for judgment, as in the cases of Ephesus and Pergamos (ii. 5, 16), but for the removal of His saints in mercy from this scene, *before* the final judgments begin (see above, pages 42 to 44).

The words in chapter ii. verse 25, "Hold fast till I come," are addressed, not to the whole professing body, but particularly to the faithful remnant singled out from among them as not having been carried away by the prevailing idolatry which characterises the mass under Jezebel's direction. In this case also, we must not lose sight of the fact that the words, "He that hath an ear, let him hear," are now, for the first time, found at the close, after the promises specially addressed to the "overcomer." The mention of the "Morning star," which is seen *before* the rising of the "Sun of righteousness" (Mal. iv. 2), comes in beautifully in the same connection. It is repeated as a special reminder of what the Lord is, on behalf of His suffering saints, in chapter xxii. 16. Compare 2 Tim. ii. 13: "He cannot deny Himself."

Moreover, the promise to the overcomer, and the added condition of keeping the Lord's works "unto the end," involves "authority over the nations." This is a new feature, and appears to refer to the throne, spoken of in chapter i. 4, though it is not particularly mentioned in this connection, until we come to the closing words to Laodicea in association with the

Father's name, which is quite peculiar, carrying us on, in principle, to chapter xii. 5, where, however, the Father's name is not mentioned. But does it not bring forcibly to mind the Lord's first message by Mary Magdalene to the disciples, after His resurrection (John xx. 17)?

We may surely ask ourselves whether the blessed Lord's gracious association of the overcomer with Himself in His kingdom, be not a fitting introduction to the following chapter iv., where we find a detailed description of the throne in connection with the three names, "Lord God Almighty."¹ It is presented here in verse 8 as the continual expression of the four living creatures, thrice calling attention to His holiness, drawing attention to it as a fact, in *time*, and not merely in divine eternal existence, as in chap. i. 4, where "who is" *precedes* "who was and who is to come" (see above, page 13). Does this fact exercise our hearts and consciences, whenever we think of God's government of this world, where nothing can pass unnoticed by Him? The words of Peter, quoted from Leviticus xi. 44, and xix. 2, should appeal forcibly to each one, since it is written, "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (chap. i. 16).

The throne is little mentioned in the New Testament before the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Lord speaks of it in a general way as God's (Matt. v. 34 ; xxiii. 22) ; and in xxv. 31, He sits there in judgment when He comes in glory with His angels. In Matthew xix. 28, and Luke xxii. 30, the twelve apostles are associated with Him for judging the twelve tribes of Israel. David's throne is adjudged to Him in Luke i. 32 and Acts ii.

¹ We would remind the reader that Rev. i. 8 should read, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

30, as previously promised to David, celebrated in Psalm xlv. 6; Hebrews i. 8. So it is practically in the quotations of Psalm. cx. 1, and Hebrews iv. 16, viii. 1, and xii. 2. It is indeed a "throne of grace" for us at present.

But the description given in Revelation iv., carries us back to Isaiah vi. and Ezekiel i. In comparing them, we see at once that neither "cherubim" nor "seraphim" suffice to describe the four "living creatures" which are "in the midst of the throne," as well as "round about" it, and "full of eyes before and behind," as well as "within" (ver. 8). They have "six wings" like the seraphim of Isaiah, and like them they insist unceasingly on the holiness of Him who occupies the throne. Here it is "the Lord God Almighty," whereas in Isaiah, we find "Jehovah Sabaoth" (compare James v. 4).

Their general appearance is not definitely described, except in the case of the third one mentioned, whose "face" is that of "a man." In Isaiah there is no description or number, except to say that each seraph had "six wings" as here; but their use is definite: "With twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly" (ver. 2). There is no self-assertion, but absolute dependence, humility, and readiness to perform any service required of them. In the case of the prophet, what grace was in it, at the moment he felt so keenly his own wretchedness and complete unworthiness!

Consider, too, the state of things in Israel. King Uzziah, one of the most gifted and powerful who had ever reigned in Judah, not so much in war as in the arts of peace, and turning to the best account the good land they possessed, had just died—a "leper." His success in war, and the general defence of the kingdom

had been remarkably great also, and his name was "spread abroad"; but when he was strong, "his heart was lifted up to his destruction," and he fell, smitten, in the temple itself, with leprosy which remained "until the day of his death" (2 Chron. xxvi.). What a solemn warning! but also what a comfort for the prophet to learn that Jehovah's throne remained unchanged, and that He still recognised His earthly habitation, for His train "filled the temple," which Uzziah's pride would have desecrated.

The prophet was unable to bear the glory of that presence; but when one of the seraphs had taken a live coal from the altar of burnt-offering in order to touch his lips with it, so as to give expression to the value and efficacy of the divinely appointed sacrifice, he was cheered with the words, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." That brings us to the beginning of John's message in Revelation i. 5: "To Him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in His own blood." What wonder then that the crown and kingdom still remain?

When the prophet's needs as a "sinner" are met, and he hears the question, "Who will go for us?"—he is able to answer in *words*, as the seraph had done by his *act*, "Here am I, send me." The readiness to go as a messenger in his favour, at the time of his felt need, had been already set forth to him in the seraph's *wings*, which carry each one forward, wherever it is needful to go, according to the behests of Jehovah of hosts.

With Ezekiel, we are in another scene. Jehovah's long patience with His rebellious people had well nigh reached its term; the prophet himself was in the land of the victorious "Chaldeans," and the young king Jehoiachin¹ had already passed four years in prison,

¹ Jehoiachin is also called Jeconias, or Coniah.

at Babylon, while his uncle Zedekiah was reigning at Jerusalem. Another half dozen years, and the temple itself was to be destroyed, and the prophet was bound to silence until the sad news should reach him (Ezek. iii. 24-26 ; xxiv. 25-27 ; xxxiii. 21-22). Notwithstanding this, the vision of the first chapter proved that God was still over all, though the form of His outward relationship with His chosen people had radically changed. *They* must needs go into captivity, even to their last remnant, still clinging to the promised land given to their fathers, "to the seed of Abraham for ever," as Jehoshaphat had pleaded (2 Chron. xx. 7 ; and see Luke i. 55).

The land of Israel was to be no longer the seat of His government. The ark and its cherubim must disappear from earth for ever ; they are, indeed, no more seen, until the temple of God is "opened in heaven" (Rev. xi. 19). To Jeremiah, who still remained in the land until the end, was given the word that the ark would never be made again, even when the captives should in mercy be brought back (chap. iii. 12-16). He was left there, in order to describe events as seen from within, whereas to Ezekiel, with the captives already transported, was shown the *seat* of government, of which the cherubim were the expression, for they had wings to fly in the heavens, and were accompanied by the four-faced wheels to run, without turning, upon the earth. They always went "straight forward" (chap. i. 12, 15-21).

It is a wonderful picture of God's supreme government of everything connected with this earth, in *judgment*, as intimated by the general appearance of *fire*, on which the prophet insists.

Above the heads of the cherubim is the firmament of heaven, and over that the *throne*, on which one sits

who has "the appearance of a man," accompanied with the rainbow¹ of God's promise recalling His covenant with the earth "as long as it remains" (Gen. viii. 21-22; ix. 8-17).

W. J. L.

"The Unity of the Spirit."

(*Ephes. iv. 1-3.*)

WHAT is meant by "the unity of the Spirit," which we have to "keep"? It is the unity of the Holy Ghost, which is already formed, and which embraces all the members of Christ. . . . It is not the unity of our spirits, but the unity of *the* Spirit.

When we reflect that it is the Holy Ghost who forms this unity, is it not a solemn thought? Ought we not to guard against anything that would grieve Him? . . . The Church is a witness of divine grace, and it has to seek the blessing of the unconverted, and the restoration of Christians who have gone astray. Are we endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit? How is it that Christians are formed into different associations? If the Word of God be that which they at all cost seek to carry out, why do they require human rules and modern inventions? If God gives a rule I do not want another; I do want to have His in all its strength, so as to bring forth the truth to a man's conscience, and say, "That is God's will."

Is it well or wise to yield this up? God has written a word that bears upon everything moral, by which He intends His children to walk: are we doing so? You may ask, Are you then perfect? I answer, We are endeavouring to hold fast, and in peace, the Spirit's unity, we are honestly seeking subjection to the will of God: are you doing the same? This is the main

¹ In Rev. x. 1, it is seen upon His head.

question for every child of God—Am I endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit? and am I doing it in God's way, or out of my own head? Have I surrendered myself to His will? Our business is to be dutiful to Him. We have our orders, and our responsibility to carry them out, subject to Him whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve.

But further, this unity is to be kept in the bond of peace. God is forming His Church of all those who belong to Himself. It is not Christian persons holding particular views of this or that; but the Spirit holding to his own unity, *i.e.*, to what Christ is to them, not to the points in which they differ one from another. If I want to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, I must have my own soul settled upon this: the Holy Ghost is glorifying Christ alone. You cannot please the Father more than in exalting the Son; and you cannot touch Him more nearly than by slighting His Son. All is secured in maintaining Christ. This brings it to the simplest possible issue.

What have we to do with forcing people to give up their views and adopt ours, let them be ever so correct? God's Word furnishes a ground, in the name of Christ, on which you can embrace all saints, let them be ever so weak or prejudiced. Let us beware of being more careful of our own reputation or ease than of His will. Let us not be vain in our little knowledge, or of the point we may have attained to in practice. Let us look up to the Lord for faith and patience to own every real member and servant of Christ, wherever found. Let us cleave to the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and be diligent in maintaining it, whatever the difficulties may be, and they are great.

Faith does not see many bodies and one Spirit, it

knows but one body. Bearing with others who in this see dimly or double, let us be rigid in holding fast the name of Christ, and for ourselves be careful to accredit nothing contrary to it. "There is one body and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling." This is our most essential, vital blessing in Christ; "for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." "One Spirit" is added immediately, because it is the Holy Ghost who makes it good; and what we are now by the power of the Holy Ghost, we hope to enjoy by and by with Christ. We shall have it fully and perfectly in the presence of God in heaven . . .

W. K.

(Bible Treasury, 1863.)

Days of Trial.

HOW many bereaved and sorrowing ones there are everywhere at the present hour! The very flower of the country's manhood is being cut down in a cruel and protracted war, and no end is in sight yet.

But, for the Christian, *God* is his resource. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Let us turn to Him with unshaken confidence, and with an humble and contrite heart. Jesus Himself "drank of the brook by the way." In every sorrow He had to pass through, He found a resource in God His Father, as well as rest and calm in perfect submission to His will, and hence He could say, "take *My* yoke upon you, and learn of Me . . . and ye shall find rest for your souls."

Fragment.—The early saints *began* with exercise of heart, but some of us modern ones have to be exercised at the finish. This is God's mercy to us, and shows God has not left us alone.

Primitive Christianity.

“Then had the churches rest, . . . and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied” (Acts ix. 31).

LET us go back in mind, dear Christian reader, and look for a little at the early Church in its primitive simplicity and freshness as presented above.

Saul of Tarsus, that bitter enemy and persecutor of the saints of God, had just been converted to God, no doubt in answer to the prayer of the dying martyr, Stephen. Thus the attack of Satan on the Church from without was overcome, and the very persecutor himself was changed into a most zealous and devoted servant of Christ. The spirit of untruth, working within the Church, had also been sternly rebuked in the solemn judgment on Ananias and Sapphira. As a consequence, through God's mercy, the Church had a little time of respite from persecution without and corruption within.

Two things are here said about their walk, which was marked by spiritual progress as well as increase of numbers—it was in “the fear of the Lord,” and “the comfort of the Holy Ghost.” Does not every true-hearted servant of God desire to see spiritual progress and increase of numbers to-day? Surely; but, alas, how little we see of it!

Here we are told that the churches were “edified.” It is only as the word of God is ministered in the power of the Holy Ghost and received as His word, that real edification and the building up of the saints on their most holy faith can take place. May we not well pray that this may be so increasingly?

The next thing was that reverential "fear of the Lord" which so becomes us. We rightly maintain that where two or three are gathered together unto Christ's name, there He is in the midst of them (Matt. xviii. 20); blessed provision even for a day of weakness and declension! But what reverence this would produce if really entered into and believed! Our very attitude and demeanour in a meeting, as well as our walk and conduct before we come together, would bear the impress of His presence, would it not?

Then there was, in those early days, "the comfort of the Holy Ghost." It is a truth almost forgotten in Christendom that the Holy Ghost is here, dwelling in the Church and in the believer. He is here to glorify Christ, to lead us into all truth, to shed abroad the love of God in the heart, to put into the very soul and lips of the believer the cry, "Abba, Father." He is here, too, to lead the assembly in worship, praise, and thanksgiving to the Father and the Son. Blessed and glorious privilege!

Why is it then that we hear of lack of spiritual energy, lack of unction and power in meetings? May it not be because we "grieve" the Spirit by our ways individually, or quench or hinder Him in our assemblies collectively? These are serious considerations which we do well to ponder over in the presence of God.

See what this lack of spirituality and godliness led to at Corinth—divisions, strifes, discord, and even worse; so that the apostle has to say to them, "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" How far is it so with us to-day?

If only the Church of God had walked in true separation from the world, with an ungrieved Spirit, "espoused to one husband," to be presented "as a

chaste virgin to Christ," how different might have been the history! But, alas, other objects came in and Christ lost His place in the heart. The history of the decline began with what is so touchingly expressed in the word of the Lord to Ephesus, "*thou hast left thy first love*"; and it will end in the sad state of lukewarmness described in Laodicea.

What then is the way of restoration? It is to "repent," to humble ourselves under His hand, to take the place of genuine confession and self-judgment. At the same time to rely, in implicit confidence, on "God and the word of His grace" as sufficient for all times. And let us remember that it is our privilege to-day to walk in "the fear of the Lord," and the "comfort of the Holy Ghost," as truly as in the brightest days of the Church's history. F. G. B.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

The Good Shepherd's Voice.—To hear His voice is the humblest place in the world, yet has it the power and wisdom of God with it.

* * * * *

Knowledge.—Have you not met some Christians who know a great deal of truth, but who are as cold as marble? And what is the reason? It is because this knowledge is in the *head* and not in the *heart*.

* * * * *

The State of the Church.—Even if it were possible to bring all sections of the Church together (we mean, of course, all true believers), and thus to end the divisions which we have to deplore to-day, that is not *all* that is necessary, however desirable in itself. Unity, unless based on the truth, is not true unity. Moreover,

unless the Church of God is true to her calling as *not of the world*, but set here to witness for a *heavenly* Christ, her witness would not be true, but calculated rather to mislead on account of that very unity.

The Lord in the Midst.

PROVERBS viii. 31 presents the Lord, far back in eternity, speaking of things that were not yet, as though they were; He says, "Rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth: and My delights were with the sons of men."

The counsels of the Father and the Son in eternity planned that, in time, the Son should become man. In the fulness of time He came, received the name of Jesus as born a babe at Bethlehem, and from the cradle to the cross He was known by that name, as also in resurrection and in glory.

It is His first personal name in the gospel of Matthew and the last personal name in Revelation. Jesus Himself is the first and the last: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." The **I am** of the Old Testament is Jesus of the New Testament. The scriptures testify of Him; He Himself said so. God the Father claims equal honours for Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit wrote and wields the scriptures to glorify the Son.

Jesus is the first-born One among many brethren, and God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. God is bringing many sons to glory, but faith sees Jesus already crowned with glory and honour, awaiting the moment when the men whom the Father has given to Him out of the world

shall be with Him where He is, to behold His glory, the glory given Him of the Father (John xvii. 24).

The Lord in the Midst is frequently mentioned in Scripture. Jesus, the Christ of God, is God's centre; all His purposes and promises radiate from, and revolve around, the Lord Jesus Christ. The man Christ Jesus is the mediator between God and men. When man was driven out from Eden on account of his sin, God laid help upon One who is mighty; and at the cross, with His name written over His head, He accomplished that mighty work of redemption, and opened up the new and living way to the Paradise of God on high.

Adam in Eden took the forbidden fruit, and lost his place both before God and in the garden: but from the cross, the repentant thief was the first to follow the Lord Jesus and find himself with his Saviour in Paradise.

The Lord in the Midst at the cross is the evidence to us that He will not "abide alone," but bring forth "much fruit" (John xii. 24). After He rose again and ascended to glory the Holy Ghost came down to form the body, the Church; and God will gather together in one *all things* in Christ, who will be thus the centre of the displayed glory of that day.

The first mention of the Lord in the midst is found, I believe, in Exodus viii. 22-24—a very striking passage and full of meaning. What is there set forth, namely, that God puts a line of demarcation between His people and the world, and claims to be the LORD in the midst of the earth, is equally before us wherever this truth of the Lord being in the midst of His people is brought forward throughout the word of God. And further, the holiness which His presence demands is insisted

on, as we read, "God is to be greatly feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him" (Ps. lxxxix. 7).

His presence "in the midst" is promised to all His own gathered in His name, and fulfilled according to the terms of His own words, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). This is an immense blessing and comfort for faith to rest upon. In resurrection, too, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them and spoke those cheering words, "Peace be unto you" (Luke xxiv. 36; John xx. 19).

In glory we find Him as the centre, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain," etc. (Rev. v. 6). Here it is remarkable that the words "in the midst" occur twice, as if to emphasise the fact that He is the centre of all that wondrous scene of glory.

Thus from Exodus viii. 22, which ends with "the earth," to Revelation v. 6, which closes with "all the earth" (and the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof), scripture repeats our theme again and again. Truly in all things He is to have the pre-eminence, and God is working out His counsels with this in view.

In Revelation vii. 17 we have, I believe, the last mention of His place in the midst. It brings before us what is yet to take place, when "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." And so, in eternity itself, we shall enjoy His presence who dwells amongst His redeemed people (Rev. xxi. 3-4).

U. G.

The Superiority of Faith.

IN Genesis xiii. 8 we find a beautiful illustration of what we might call the yieldingness of faith.

Abraham said to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee . . . for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." But in verse 14 **God** said to Abraham, after that Lot was departed from him, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever."

It is only as *we* (Christians) enter by faith into the portion we have in Christ, that we can afford to let the world and what it has to offer "drop off like autumn leaves."

Again, in chapter xiv. 23, Abraham said to the king of Sodom, who wanted him to take the spoils of the victory over the kings, "I will not take from a thread to a shoe-latchet . . . I will not take anything that is thine." He had learnt of God in secret, in communion with Him, and when the test came he refused what the world had to offer. And what is very striking is, that the next chapter begins by God's revelation of Himself to Abraham, "*I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*"

If he refused the world and what it had to offer, he had *God* as his protector and resource instead. What an incomparably superior portion!

Christ's Glorious Appearing.

'Tis but a little while,
And He shall come again :
Who died that we might live,
Who lives that we may reign.
He'll reign as King from shore to shore,
In life, victorious, evermore.

We too shall reign with Him
(O'er whom death reigned below)
In risen life and peace,
His worth, His praise to show ;
In Him, in scenes that know no night,
We in our God shall find delight.

To-day we see around
The trail of war and sin.
But even now it gives
True rest and peace within,
That He whose death put death away
Will soon bring in the perfect day.

Though dark the clouds that lower
O'er many a Christian heart,
The daybreak is at hand,
When songs shall be our part :
We hail that day of endless peace,
When sorrow, sin, and war shall cease.

God's peace in every heart,
God's peace through every clime !
Then Satan shall be bound :
'Tis the millennial time.
O praise e'en now, and never cease,
The Christ of God, the God of peace.

W. M. R.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

VIII.

THE LAMB.

IN very early days, fire set forth what God was in *judgment*, when He came into contact with His people. Moses had to learn it at the bush (Ex. iii. 2), and all the people of Israel at Mount Sinai (Ex. xix. 18). In Deuteronomy it expresses what God is, whether for maintaining holiness in the hearts of His people (iv. 24), or in dealing with their enemies (ix. 3); and the Lord so uses it in Mark ix. 49, the whole passage being a summary of Isaiah xxxiii. 14, in its double application (see Heb. xii. 28-29). We may then say that it runs through scripture. It is expressed in the sword of the cherubim, in Genesis iii. 24, and in the name of "seraph," which means properly a "burner." In Ezekiel, the whole of the first chapter in describing the throne in various aspects, is full of the same thought. "Our God is a consuming fire." Consequently, everything committed to man for his blessing must sooner or later be subject to God's scrutiny, for He brings "every work into judgment" (Eccles. xii. 14).

The more we realise this, the better shall we be enabled to enter into the blessedness of the Lamb's position, described in the fifth chapter of Revelation, not exactly *on* the throne, as in Ezekiel i. 26-27, "the likeness as the appearance of a man," all surrounded with fire, but "*in the midst*" of it, as well as in the midst of the four living creatures, and, wonderful to say, also in the midst of the "elders," who represent the whole company of the redeemed, raised at the Lord's coming in the cloud (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17).

Is not this precious beyond expression for all those

who know Him as their Saviour, and who follow the leading of the four living creatures in singing the "new song"? Neither angels, nor the whole creation in general, can do that, though they acknowledge the worthiness of the Lamb to receive all blessing and honour and glory and power. What rest of heart, too, is found here, as we contemplate what He was, and is, and ever will be! The redemption-song awakened by His presence recalls the blessed interruption in the opening words of salutation, at the moment His name, Jesus Christ, is mentioned, as "the first begotten of the dead," in chapter i. 5-6. Everything for the believer, whether past, present, or future, turns upon what He is, who has passed through death, and upon the efficacy of His blood which "cleanseth us from every sin" (1 John i. 7).

And it is the more important that this should come again at the unfolding of that which is to take place in the beginning of chapter vi., since all that follows is an order of events quite strange for Christians, who have nothing to do with judgment, except each one for himself (see Matt. vii. 1-5; Rom. xiv. 10-13; and 1 Cor. iv. 5). Again, who is there so fitted to unfold the future, when unsparing judgment begins for this poor world, as He who, in His own blessed person, bore the full weight of it on the cross? Only those who are themselves sheltered from it, through His suffering, are fitted to hear, and enter into, what God makes known as to judgments still future, which will close the history of this present age. And these are seen around the Lamb in glory, who appears "as it had been slain," having "seven horns"—the perfection of power, and "seven eyes"—perfect insight into everything, so that nothing can escape His notice. That is explained to mean "the seven spirits of God,"—as has been well

expressed, sent forth "for government, according to God's perfection, of all the earth." We add here the following remark:—*

"When He has taken the book, the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fall down before Him, with golden censers full of the prayers of the saints: they are priests here. Now a new song is sung to celebrate the Lamb. What seemed to be His dishonour and rejection on earth, was the ground of His worthiness to take the book. He who, at all suffering and cost to Himself, had glorified all that God was, was able and worthy to unfold what made it good in the way of government.

"It was not the government of Israel, but of all the earth; not merely earthly chastisements according to God's revelation of Himself in Israel, but the display in power of all God was, in the whole earth. He who had glorified all He was, and had, by the gospel of what He was through His death, "redeemed to God by His blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," was the fit One to make known that government over the earth, and bring it forth in power. He does not yet come forth Himself, but His finished work is the worthy instrument, the divine motive, for the display of it all: He can unlock the seals of God's ways and mysteries. . . .

"Here the angels come in to praise, which, in the fourth chapter, they do not. Until the Lamb takes the book, they had been the administrative power; they were the instruments through which the government symbolised by the four living creatures was exercised in the earth. 'But unto the angels hath He not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak' (Heb. ii. 5). Hence, as soon as the Lamb

* "Synopsis" (small edition), Vol. V., p. 523.

appears and takes the book, as soon as the idea of redemption is brought in,—the living creatures and elders are brought together, and the angels take their place apart, giving no reason for their praise.”

We may now return to consider the features of this great crisis in the history of Christendom, in connection with the government of the Lamb, as set forth figuratively in Israel, at the time when God's recognition of them as His people was about to be withdrawn (Hos. i. 9). Hosea was a contemporary of Isaiah; and Amos, followed by Micah, confirmed their testimony, ending in the days of the pious king, Hezekiah. The ten tribes were taken into captivity by the king of Assyria in the sixth year of Hezekiah, but Judah remained more or less for 133 years longer, until the temple at Jerusalem was burned, and the last batch of captives taken away. God's long patience with His people is no doubt figurative of His forbearance with Christendom, during its later years of increasing defection from the truth.

In Isaiah vi., Jehovah still owned the temple at Jerusalem as His dwelling-place; the glory of “His train” filled it. The time was fast approaching when it would be destroyed altogether, as we find in Ezekiel's testimony; but for the moment “mercy rejoiced against judgment” (Ps. lxxxv. 10; Jas. ii. 13). Isaiah experienced it in his own case, when he owned his real condition; though the message he was charged with was a heavy tale of judgment against “a disobedient and gainsaying people” (Isa. vi. 9-13; lxxv. 1-2; Rom. x. 21). Even in their case, mercy will shine out at the end, on behalf of a remnant who turn to God. But for us there is the hope still brighter, namely, to be taken away by the Lord Himself before judgment overtakes apostate Christendom.

To come to details, the notices of events become clear if we follow Nebuchadnezzar's history, as he was the first head of the Gentile powers when God's throne was definitely taken away from Israel and Judah. In his first and third year he came up against the land, and Jehoiakim submitted for a time. Seven years afterwards he went up again; Jehoiakim was then killed, and his son Jeconiah was taken captive, when still a boy, having "reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 9, 10). Of him it was said, "Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (Jer. xxii. 29, 30). His uncle Zedekiah was made king in his place, and reigned eleven years, until the temple was burned; but in as far as the genealogy was concerned, the kingly power disappeared entirely from the sons of David, in Jeconiah's person, and will never be resumed until the Lord Himself takes it at His coming in power on the Mount of Olives. This surely throws light on the words of "one of the elders" to John, "Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to lose the seven seals thereof." Then it is that the Lamb appears "in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures" (Rev. v. 5, 6).

Of the three contemporaneous prophets, Jeremiah began in the land itself in the thirteenth year of Josiah, just forty years before the temple was destroyed; Daniel was taken to Babylon, and gives the history of the future as seen from the centre of earthly power; Ezekiel dates from Jeconiah's imprisonment, from which he was only delivered after thirty-seven years, on the death of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings

xxv. 27-30). Is there not here another figure of the King yet to come, after having passed through death and resurrection?

W. J. L.

Two Men and Two Ships.

(Recollections of a brief address by J. A.)

I WOULD ask you to turn with me to a few passages in the 27th chapter of Acts. You could not well imagine a man in more untoward circumstances than you there find Paul in, yet he is the only man who is calm and undisturbed amidst it all. He was but a prisoner, but he told the centurion that the voyage would be with hurt and damage not only to the lading and ship, but to their lives. But the centurion believed the master and owner of the ship more than Paul. And why not?—he was a trained mariner who was accustomed to navigation: surely *he* ought to know!

Now I want you to notice that Paul did not interfere with the navigation of the ship. God did not tell him to do so. He left that to the shipmaster, yet he was the only man who was in the mind of God about it all; he understood the whole situation. That is one of the mistakes Christians make to-day: they want to meddle with the navigation of the ship—they try to set things right in the world, and mix themselves up in its plans and politics.

But soon “all hope that we should be saved was taken away”—what a plight they were in! Here Paul was again the one who was with God above all the troubles. Note what he says, “God, whose I am and whom I serve”; “I believe *God*”—there is the whole secret. Paul believed what the angel told him, but they believed the shipmaster.

You will remember another case of a man on a ship

in a storm, that of the rebellious prophet, Jonah. In that instance all the safety of the ship depended on the mariners throwing him out into the sea; but here, the safety of the ship depended on keeping Paul in. Oh, beloved, you see what a serious thing it is for a saint not to be going on in communion with God; he may do a lot of mischief, and be the greatest hindrance to others: but a saint going on with God—a man of God—may be the greatest possible blessing and help.

In Jonah's case, it was the man on that ship you would least have suspected, who was bringing all the trouble—the inconsistent saint. But in Paul's case, the consistent one who could say, "whose I am and whom I serve," was bringing all the blessing.

Just see the way in which Paul is master of the situation here. The circumstances were most trying, could not well have been more so; and looking at it from a human point of view he was only a poor prisoner just being transferred from one place to another: but you see how God's hand was over it all, and His purposes must be carried out; Paul must be brought before Cæsar, and not only so, but God would give him the lives of the 275 persons who sailed with him.

Many saints of God have difficulties to meet to-day, and if God leaves us here it may be even more so, but just consider the wonderful way God can come in, and what a resource He is for all those who go on with Him and trust Him:—

"With mercy and with judgment
My web of time he wove,
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lustred with His love.
I'll bless the hand that guided,
I'll bless the heart that planned,
When throned where glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land."

Scripture Notes.

God's Word.—God's word is said to be a "*critic*" of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. iv. 12). This is the only "*critic*" recognised in scripture, for this word is only once used.

The apostle Paul was not like many who "*corrupt*" or "*adulterate*" the word of God (2 Cor. ii. 17). This word is used here only in the New Testament. How many preachers to-day "*adulterate*" or "*mix*" the word of God, in order to suit their own ends or make it palatable to their hearers!

By the scriptures, which are "*God-breathed*," the man of God is furnished "*complete*," fully fitted to every good work. These two words are reserved for the scriptures, and are only found here in the New Testament: they could be applied to no other book in the world.

* * * * * *

Faith.—Faith looks at *God*, not at the circumstances and difficulties. Seeing Him who is invisible, faith endures and perseveres where sight and sense would be overcome. Faith can look up to God, even in dark and trying times, and say:—

“In darkest shades if Thou appear,
My dawning is begun;
Thou art my soul's bright morning star,
And Thou my rising sun.”

* * * * * *

Winnowing. — “Thou winnowest out my path” (Ps. cxxxix. 3). The winnowing, or searching, process may be trying but it is necessary, so that all that is chaff within us may be searched out and disappear.

The Barrel of Meal and the Cruse of Oil.

1 *Kings xvii.* 8-16.

THOSE were trying days in Israel when God told Elijah to go to Zarephath so that he might be sustained and fed. Ahab and Jezebel reigned in the land, the nation was almost entirely given over to idolatry, and God's hand in judgment pressed heavily upon His people. He had sent a terrible famine as a punishment upon them for their sins, yet we do not find that they bowed under His hand or turned from their evil ways.

Is not the state of things in the world something like this to-day, only in a much greater measure? God's hand presses heavily upon the nations, a terrible war is now in its fourth year, and so far the nations are unable to extricate themselves from the position in which they are found; nor are they disposed to recognise His hand and repent. Then, again, is it not so that infidelity and unbelief in God's word have led to disrespect for things divine, and that as a consequence disregard for His claims, godlessness, as well as all kinds of evil doctrines, abound and are even on the increase?

But it was just at such a time, and when His chastening hand was making itself felt, that God sent the prophet to the most unlikely person in the most unlikely place for help: "I have commanded," He said, "a widow woman there to sustain thee." The person was a poor widow, and the place was belonging to Zidon. But the prophet did not reason or question; he did not say, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" He at once obeyed God's word, went, and found the woman in the most pitiable circum-

stances, gathering two sticks to dress some meal that she and her son might eat and die.

Is not there a lesson for ourselves in all this? The times are trying, the power of evil is great, and may become even more so, but the resource of faith is just the same as ever—it is to be found in God and His word. It is in the power of His word, in the strength of His resources alone, that we can be overcomers amidst the trials, difficulties, and snares of this evil day.

Mark, the prophet was not sent to the rich, the mighty, or the noble in the land, but to the one of all others least able to help. It might seem impossible to nature and unbelief; but if "*God commanded*" that woman to feed the prophet, was He not able to do it? "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" said Jehovah to Abraham (Gen. xviii. 14), and again to the weeping prophet, Jeremiah (xxxii. 27). The prophet's own declaration is contained in the same chapter, "There is nothing too hard for Thee." How prone we are to look to the great, the wealthy, the learned, instead of leaning upon God Himself!

Here was the prophet's warrant for asking this widow to meet his need: "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel." It was not, "thus saith Elijah," or "thus saith the king of Israel." Oh, no; neither these people nor anyone else could meet the circumstances of the times. He had to prove, as we have also, that "*God* is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. xlv. 1).

And how blessedly God does come in; not, indeed, in supplying things which pamper our carnal wishes or tastes, or in flattering our intellectual fancies, but in meeting our need. What the Lord said was, "The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse

of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth," and so it came to pass. Let us remark also that it was entirely a case of God's sovereign mercy, for our Lord Himself draws attention to the fact that this widow woman did not even belong to the chosen race, but was outside the pale of Israel (Luke iv. 26).

Nevertheless the provision of grace was sufficient for the prophet, the widow and her house; they did eat "many days," until the time of famine was over. Oh, to have more implicit faith in God as our resource, and more simple obedience to His word as our warrant and guide amidst the darkness of this world! And *we*, Christians, what a rich portion *we* have; a living Christ at God's right hand, and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, dwelling in and with us to lead us into a knowledge of His will. May we avail ourselves, practically, of the portion God has provided all along the way until the Lord comes!

F. G. B.

Some Essentials in Worship and Service.—I.

WORSHIP and service exercise many minds to-day, and while it is usual to peruse the epistles for light on these themes, much help may be gathered also from the Old Testament. Psalm xxvi. especially will furnish us with much instruction here.

In this psalm are blessedly set out the steps, the essential features, of service and worship, and their interdependence, and both will be defective, according as the least element exhibited here is lacking. Let us notice these steps in their order.

1. Self-Judgment.—"Judge me O LORD . . . examine me . . . prove me, try my reins and my heart" (vers. 1 and 2). This is the prayer of the one who cries in

Psalm xxv.—“For thy name’s sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great . . . The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.” Conviction of sin had deeply ploughed his conscience; but now, having found rest, he can approach God and ask to be judged, examined, proved, and tried. It is the clinging of the upright heart that distrusts itself, but is willingly open to the scrutiny of the eye of God; and desires only that “my goings” should be in “Thy paths.” This state of soul is to be greatly coveted to-day. It would produce the single eye, and correct many a wayward step.

2. Appreciating God’s Love.—“*For thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes*” (ver. 3). Few had proved God’s love as deeply as David. It was ever green in his memory. But still greater reason have *we* to say, “His loving-kindness is before our eyes,” for we know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Nothing steadies and cheers the Christian like the vivid consciousness of all he owes to God’s love: “It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace” (Heb. xiii. 9).

3. Walking in the Truth.—“*I have walked in Thy truth*” (ver. 3). It was the appeal of one who revered God’s word. The prayer that has power with God, and the preaching that has power with men, must flow from a sincere heart and a godly life. We cannot lead others to *walk* in divine things further than *we* ourselves have *lived*. We may through grace *talk* of the truth, but do we *walk* in it? To the apostles, it was great joy to see their children “walk in the truth” (3 John verses 3 and 4; 1 Cor. iv. 15). Happy the man whose eyes are on Christ’s love, and his feet on the Lord’s path.

4. Walking Separate from the World.—“*I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers*” (ver. 4). We must needs see, and speak, and trade with men of the world, but we may not court their society. Citizens of heaven cannot be at home with the rejectors of their Lord. We cannot help the worldling by jumping into the mire with him. For, as another has said, “Those who would be transfigured with Jesus, must not be disfigured through conformity with the world.”

5. Separateness Inwardly.—“*I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked*” (ver. 5). There are two congregations—the righteous (ver. 12), and the evil-doers. And according to the large or small place which Christ has in our “inward parts,” will our thoughts be of this assembly of God or the assembly of Satan. How essential therefore that the believer should be devoted in heart to Christ!

6. Worship.—“*So will I compass Thine altar, O LORD*” (ver. 6). Worship is not hearing sermons or lectures from servants of Christ, however gifted. It is ascribing praise out of a full heart to God with our own lips. A holy life leads to holy worship; a crooked life cannot make an upright worshipper. Yet, with all the steps already named, I fall short of God’s desire, and even of the Psalmist’s standard, if I am not a happy worshipper at His altar (see 1 Pet. ii. 1-9).

7. Testimony.—“*That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works*” (ver. 7). This is no “dry rehearsal of well-known truths,” no mechanical repetition of matter culled from some musty book, no mere retailing of another’s ministry, however gifted. It is the glad overflow and outflow of what had first warmed his own heart, the proclamation of “wondrous works” which had already filled his own soul.

W. M. R.

“Himself.”—I.

Notes of an Address.

THE Lord Jesus Christ is the theme of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms testify of Him, foretelling His coming. The gospels, the epistles, and the Revelation, state that He did come, that He has gone away, and that He will come again.

The person of Christ is the centre and circumference of the counsels of God, the pivot on which turns the whole plan of His purposes.

The work of Christ is the foundation upon which rests what God has done, is doing, and will yet do for His own glory, “according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him.” “That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; therein is the righteousness of God revealed; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe. Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

The language of faith, which every believer on the Lord Jesus begins to learn, commences with knowing Him as the One who saves His people from their sins, falling at His feet and giving Him thanks.

Let us look at a group of Scriptures, which we will find have a striking and strong link by the word “Himself” being written in each one of them, so as to

appeal to any and every heart that has tasted that the Lord is gracious. Have you tasted of His grace? Have you drunk at the fountain of His love? Unto you that believe is the preciousness. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

1st Scripture—

“Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Can you add your “Amen” to this? “He that hath received His testimony hath set to His seal that God is true.” Who “gave Himself for our sins”; then our sins are gone. He delivers us from this present evil world, and provides us with a note of worship: “To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

2nd Scripture—

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

“Gave *Himself* for me”; then the “me” is gone, as, before God, it is crucified with Christ. I, the first I, is gone; “Himself,” Christ, is the life, a life lived “by faith,” the faith of the Son of God; blessed object of the new life! Thus my sins are gone! Self is gone, by our Lord Jesus Christ giving “*Himself*.”

3rd Scripture—

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

"Gave *Himself* for us," to redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto *Himself*," &c. Our sins are gone! Self is gone! We are redeemed from all iniquity, purified unto *Himself*! Everything is removed that came between our souls and Himself, for He gave *Himself* to have "Himself" and "us" together. He, the first born among many brethren, yet among all He is to have the pre-eminence. God is bringing many sons to glory; and Jesus, the captain of their salvation, will *Himself* present those whom He is not ashamed to call brethren, saying, "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me."

"If you are sheltered by the Cross,
And through the blood brought nigh,
When He gathers His own in that bright home,
Then you'll be there and I."

U. G.

"Praise Ye the Lord."

JOIN, all ye ransom'd sons of grace,
Your joyful notes prolong,
And sing to your Redeemer's praise
A cheerful happy song.

Blessing, and thanks, and power, and might,
Be now to Jesus given,
Who fills our souls with heavenly light,
Foretaste e'en here of heaven!

Thither by faith our souls He leads,
Thither He bids us rise;
Till—crowns of joy upon our heads—
We meet Him in the skies.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

X.

THE SEALED ROLL.

IN reading the Revelation, it is important to remember that it is throughout a book of *judgment*; the first three chapters, which especially concern the church, or christian dispensation, as we call it, are no exception to this. On the contrary, the vision of the Lord in the first chapter, which forcibly recalls what Daniel was given to see in his tenth chapter, as well as his chapter vii. 9, 26, prepares us for an inquiry into the conduct of the several assemblies mentioned, so arranged as to prefigure the moral history of Christendom during the prolonged period of the Lord's absence from this scene. At His return He will give to every one according as his work shall be (Rev. ii. 23; xxii. 12).

The church, as a complete whole, is only seen at the end of the book (chap. xxi. 9), as "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," associated with the Lord Himself in the glory of His millennial kingdom; during those thousand years He will once more, and in a more definite way, make Jerusalem the centre of His government on this earth. His kingdom will also be characterised by judgment, as we learn from Psalm. ci. 1-8. It is impossible to understand the book of Revelation aright, unless this is apprehended and borne in mind.

The sealed roll or "book," which we are now considering, has nothing to do with the church, or with what the church is, or as a whole ought to be, according to our conception of it. And the reason is very simple, namely, that the church, and all that compose it, from the day of Pentecost and thenceforward, will be already

in heaven, together with the Old Testament saints, raised by the Lord when He comes "in the clouds," raising the dead and transforming the living "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. xv. 51-54; 1 Thess. iv. 14-17). All these are seen in heaven, represented by the "elders," twenty-four in number (Rev. iv. 4 and xx. 4, *first two lines*). The roll, on the contrary, contains a record of what is reserved for this world, especially the enlightened part of it, commencing from the moment when all that is really for God in it shall have been taken out of it "at his coming" (1 Thess. ii. 19).

The question then is, who is able or "worthy" to open the sealed roll, when the time has come to allow the judgments contained in it to be carried out, according to God's estimate of all that goes on in this poor world? Neither in heaven, nor in earth, was any found able even to look upon it. The glorified saints in heaven were not qualified to do it, nor the angels who serve the throne, much less devils, who, when Christ was here on earth, knew that judgment awaited them, and knew Him, when He came in human form (Mark i. 24, 34; v. 7; Matt. viii. 29). Again we read that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father who sent Him" (John v. 22, 23). Besides all this, there is the question of His own death, when He bore the judgment due to us, and on which all His revelation of the Father depends for its efficacy on behalf of sinners (John xii. 46, 49).

From Ezekiel's first chapter we learn that when the temple containing the ark and golden cherubim, which formed God's throne on earth, was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the first head of Gentile power,

He reserved to Himself a throne supported by living cherubim able to fly in heaven, and accompanied with four-faced wheels to run on the *earth*, backwards, forwards, right or left, without turning. Together they formed as it were a moveable chariot which "went and returned like a flash of lightning," and brought the heavens and the earth into connection, the throne being "above them." Daniel also refers to the "wheels" in a similar connection (chap. vii. 9), the whole being like a "fiery flame," as we have had occasion to remark (p. 137). God dwelt, as it were, formerly in the midst of His chosen people of Israel; but since they as a nation had to be set aside on account of their unfaithfulness, He still holds the reins of government in His hand, not over His ancient people only, but over the whole earth. Consequently, we shall find that when the nations, self-styled "Christian," come under judgment for their sin and failure, Israel is in no way forgotten of God, who is able, as the apostle says, "to graft them again into their own olive-tree" (Rom. xi. 21-27), so that the blessings promised to Abraham may be eventually realised by them in full measure. Hence we shall find that, in the Revelation, they soon come into prominence.

The world-power of Babylon had been formerly used of God for the chastisement of His chosen people, when they would no longer listen to the warnings repeatedly given through their prophets; and in like manner Babylon itself was judged seventy years later, when the Lord allowed a small remnant to return to Jerusalem by the order of king Cyrus, and there to rebuild the temple. But the throne in David's line was never re-established in Judea, nor was there any reconstruction of the ark which had contained the tables of the law of Moses. All that

awaits Christ's return in glory. In Revelation xi. 19, the ark is seen in heaven.

The returned captives gradually turned away from God, though in a measure restored under Ezra and Nehemiah; but Malachi's last warnings soon died away; and when the blessed Lord came Himself in human form and apparent "weakness," they finished by crucifying Him, so that He became "the Lamb of God" in reality, available for the eternal salvation of every poor sinner who "turns to Him." The exhortation to turn is not limited to Israel, who had so deeply revolted, but is addressed to "all the ends of the earth" (Isaiah xxxi. 6; xlv. 22).

History, alas, repeats itself. As it was with Israel under their chosen leaders, guilty of the murder of the Son of God, so will it be in Christendom, and universally, as soon as all true Christians shall be removed from this scene. The world will cry, "Peace and safety," when every prophetic and warning voice will be hushed, and then shall come the "sudden destruction," of which the scriptures everywhere speak (1 Thess. v. 2-5). But God will not leave Himself without witness, as we learn indeed as soon as the fifth seal is opened. He will raise up, and work with a faithful remnant of Israel, many, and perhaps most, of whom will have to follow the steps of the Lord to the cross, still "waiting" until the full number of such martyrs shall be completed (Rev. vi. 9-11). He will know how to sustain them in the awful persecutions which will follow their testimony.

Before, however, speaking in further detail as to the action of the throne, we need to consider the complex personality, if we may so express it, of Him who sits upon it. No name is mentioned in chapter iv. 2, but we find from the cry of the living creatures in

ver. 8, the three Old Testament names of Jehovah (represented by LORD in small capitals in our Bibles),—Elohim, “God” (as in Gen. i. 1),—and Shaddai, or Almighty.* In Isaiah vi. 1, most remarkably, it is Adonai, constantly used for the Messiah, or Christ, as in Psalm ii. 4, and generally represented in our Bibles by “Lord” in small letters. That is peculiarly the case in Psalm cx. 1, and the orthography is preserved in the several quotations of this verse in the new Testament. The importance of this is readily felt by our Lord’s use of it, by which He silenced all the cavils of the unbelieving Pharisees in Matthew xxii. 42-45. Any one who owned Him as David’s Son and David’s Lord, was a saved soul; if they did not, they would be dealt with as unbelievers. From that moment the Pharisees dared not ask Him any questions at all.

In Isaiah vi. 1 it is the Lord who sits on the throne; and from the words of the seraphim we learn the name of Jehovah Sabaoth, or LORD of hosts (James i. 4). Similarly it is from the expressed worship of the living creatures that we find the identity of Him who is familiar in the Old Testament, revealing Himself to Abraham as the “Almighty” (Gen. xvii. 1), and afterwards to Moses as “Jehovah” (Exod. iii. 14-18; vi. 2, 3). He is the unchangeable One, ever true to His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God Himself is unseen, dwelling in unapproachable light (1 Tim. i. 17: vi. 16); but it is to the Lord, who, as Son, is alone capable of revealing the Father (John i. 18), that all judgment is committed, “because He is the Son of man” (John v. 22, 27). We have noticed already what is similar in point of fact, in Revelations i. 8.

* God’s millennial name is Most High, as given in Psalm lxxxiii. 18, “the possessor of heaven and earth” (Gen. xiv. 18, 19, 22).

Such is the blessed One who is about to open the seals, and reveal what the roll contains, having already gone through judgment on behalf of His redeemed, as He alone could know and feel it, being "the Lamb," and yet the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," the root as well as the offspring of David (Rev. v. 5: xxii. 16).

W. J. L.

Questions and Answers.

- (i.) a. What is the kingdom of heaven?
- b. What is the kingdom of God?
- c. What is the kingdom of the Father?
- d. What is the kingdom of the Son?
- (ii.) What is the difference between the judgment of the harvest and the vintage (Rev. xiv. 15 and 18)?

H. B.

(i.) a. "**Kingdom of Heaven.**"—This expression (or, to be more exact, kingdom of the heavens), is found only in Matthew. It is more dispensational than kingdom of God, though the latter is found in some passages in other gospels where Matthew employs the former. It is taken from Daniel iv. 26, where the humbled king had to learn that "the heavens do rule" (see also Dan. ii. 44 and vii. 27). Christ, the king, having been rejected, we have now the kingdom in "mystery"; it is not yet openly set up, but it exists wherever the gospel is preached, and every one who acknowledges Him is in it: hence it takes in all profession. The keys of it (not of the church) were given to Peter. Had the Jews accepted Christ it would have been set up then, but we know that God had other purposes in view, namely, to gather out of all nations a people for His name, who are united by the Holy Spirit to a heavenly Christ on high.

b. "**Kingdom of God**" is more moral than dispensational. Hence we read in Romans xiv. 17, "The kingdom of God . . . is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," and in 1 Corinthians iv. 20, "The kingdom

of God is not in word, but in power." The gospel of Luke, which was especially written to present God's grace in Christ to Gentiles, employs this term very frequently. In the Acts and elsewhere, we find the apostle Paul preaching the kingdom of God; this refers to the gospel he preached, the truth concerning a glorified Christ: in a word, Christianity. It is a general term, and covers all the others.

c. "**Kingdom of the Father**," which is peculiar to Matthew, is more the *heavenly* side of the millennial kingdom. We find in the prayer, "Thy Kingdom come," *i.e.*, the Father's kingdom. Again, in Matthew xiii. 43, the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father; and in Matthew xxvi. 29, the Lord speaks of His joy and that of His own in a future day in the kingdom. In the millennium there will be the kingdom *on* earth, and the glorified saints will reign with Christ *over* the earth: so that the kingdom has a heavenly and an earthly side.

d. "**Kingdom of the Son**."—In 1 Corinthians xv. we find that Christ must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. Then the Son, as man, delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), may be all in all. This, of course, is after the close of His millennial reign.

(ii.) **The harvest** is discriminating judgment, the **vintage** is indiscriminate judgment. At the harvest the grain is sifted: the good is gathered, the chaff and worthless grain is thrown away. But in the vintage, all the grapes are trodden in the winepress. Judgment is God's "strange work," but judgment must take place so that God's majesty may be vindicated, and the earth purified from the wicked and rebellious. Those who are found in open rebellion against Christ when He appears are judged indiscriminately, as we find in Revelation xiv. 20; xix. 20, 21; Isaiah lxiii. 1-6, etc.

Fragment.—Religion without God is the cruellest and most relentless enemy of all testimony to God.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

“BLESSED for Ever.”—This expression is found three times in the New Testament. In Romans i. 25 it is applied to God as Creator; in 2 Corinthians xi. 31, it is applied to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; in Romans ix. 5 it is applied to Christ. But we shall find on comparing them that it is to Christ, and to Christ alone, that the strongest form of the three is applied, “Who exists and subsists over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.” It is, perhaps, the fullest declaration of divine supremacy found in the Bible. Not that the Father and the Holy Spirit are not equally God, but Christ, having become man and taken the humble place, needs most of all to have His glory safeguarded against those who would detract from the truth of His person as divine.

* * * * *

Laodicea.—In the case of Laodicea (Rev. iii. 14) the inscription differs from the rest, inasmuch as it is the character of Christ in Himself, apart from the saints, instead of His relationship to them. Christ remains the same, although the church is gone to ruin. God could put His Amen on Him, if the church fail ever so much. And He is available for every opened ear. Nothing is owned by Him, but He rebukes and chastens. He is outside, standing at the door, yet ready for *any one* who has ears to hear. All good is shut up in Him. As for the professing church, there is entire, definite, final rejection; not a hope of restoration is held out as a whole, but positive judgment is threatened, however love may work still, as with Israel of old, towards individuals.

* * * * *

A Word for the Times.

IT is much to be desired, as we consider what is passing in the world at the present moment, that we should enter intelligently into the mind of God about it all. It is the Christian's privilege to have communion with God and to understand what His purposes are in those things which He allows, and which affect His people in so many ways.

One cannot but believe that God has much to say to us, as well as to the nations, in the sad and solemn events connected with the war. No doubt it has been allowed of God as a judgment upon the world for the sin and unbelief which have been so apparent, though so little felt and acknowledged by men in general; but, besides this, He has surely much to say to believers, many of whom need our prayers and sympathy in their bereavements and sorrows.

Peter tells us that "judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Pet. iv. 17), for it is an invariable principle that God begins with that which is nearest Himself. But we find an important principle in Ezekiel ix. 4, namely, that He takes note of those that own His hand and bow under His discipline, and that "sigh and cry" for the sins of those who profess His name. This is surely our right place and attitude.

Not that we should be discouraged or cast down, for we know that "God is faithful" who will not suffer us to be tried above what we are able to bear, but will with the trial make a way of escape.

Daniel gives us a very good and profitable example of one who stood for God in an evil day; and the features which marked his life and path are well suited to help and encourage us. He was a man truly separated to God from the world. Though in the

midst of that corrupt and idolatrous city, Babylon, and raised early to a high position in the kingdom, he always maintained his place apart from the course of this world with all its allurements and attractions.

The real secret of his strength was to be found in the fact that he was a man of prayer and dependence. And he felt and acknowledged the true condition of God's people, and confessed it before Him. He did not cast the blame upon others and justify himself, but with genuine humbleness of heart and soul, he identified himself with the people and said, "*We have sinned,*" "*All Israel have transgressed Thy law.*" He had no narrow thoughts or selfish motives, but embraced the *whole nation*, including himself, in his prayers and confession.

Truly this is the right position for us to be found in to-day. When God's hand is laid upon His people, our only right place is the place of self-judgment and confession. But let us not cast the blame for the present condition of the church of God upon others without owning our own share in it. And let us not fall into that narrow and self-occupied spirit which thinks only of *our* sect, *our* party, *our* body, instead of taking in the *whole body of Christ*, the church of God, in our prayers, our sympathies, and our confessions.

May the Lord enable us to rightly read and understand His meaning in the solemn events transpiring in the world—events which touch so closely thousands of His dear people as well as others—and thus may we not miss the lessons He would teach us! *Now* is the time when faith is put to the test; soon the day of trial will be over, and we shall rest in all the joy and peace of His presence; in the meantime, let us encourage ourselves in the Lord our God and remember the word of the apostle, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

F. G. B.

Some Essentials in Worship and Service—ii.

Psalm xvi.

IT is befitting that God's family should have string-loosed tongues, and that they should be able to say, "He hath done all things well, He maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak" (Mark vii. 37). Any Christian service which slights worship, and which does not flow from a grateful heart, misses the mark.

8. Loving God's House.—"*I have loved the habitation of Thy house, the place where Thine honour dwelleth*" (ver. 8). God's word always leads to this point, to love, with Him, His dwelling-place. This love to God's house burned with ardour in David's soul, and his history provides two outstanding instances of it. First, as here, towards the Tabernacle: he says to Zadok and the Levites, although himself in exile, "Carry back the ark of God into the city; if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me again, and shew me both it, and *His habitation*" (2 Sam. xv. 25). Secondly, towards the Temple: he says of it, "I have prepared with *all my might* . . . because I have set my *affection* to the *house* of my God" (1 Chron. xxix. 2, 3).

The reality of this affectionate preparation is seen in his gifts, computed at many millions of pounds worth of gold and silver, beside brass without weight, and precious stones and marble in abundance.

While there is no single *fixed* spot on earth in this dispensation at which alone men are to worship, nevertheless, there is a place which should command the affection of every Christian, namely, "where two or three are gathered together in My name." The Church has greatly failed in relation to this "place," as

the people did in David's day; yet the Lord Jesus pledges His presence to all those who have Himself and His name as their rallying point. To slight or belittle this Christian privilege of being gathered together "in" or "to" His "name," bespeaks a wrong state of soul, and a lack of fitness for either worship or witnessing.

We cannot over-estimate the importance in the Lord's sight, or to ourselves as believers, of cleaving diligently to the gathering to Him alone, in a simple open way, however great the obstacles in our path. It is felt keenly by many, that as Satan sought to destroy the first "house," so also now he is busy by worldly wisdom, division, and war, to rid the world, if possible, of every testimony to the gathering power, the authority, and adequacy of Christ's name alone, for the assemblies of His people.

May the Lord stir and warm our hearts to love "the house of God, the church of the living God" at large, as well as its local representation—the gathering at the place we live in, however feeble it be (1 Tim. iii. 15), so that the fragrance of Jesus' name and Jesus' presence may, from our midst, go up to Himself in praise, and out to men in testimony.

9. Standing on Divine Ground.—"My foot standeth in an even place; in the congregations will I bless the LORD (ver. 12). Treading the eight steps enumerated, leads him inevitably to this. In Proverbs xxvi. 7 we read, "The legs of the lame are not equal." So also is the man spiritually lame, who neither knows nor enjoys an even place, in his own soul or among God's children (see Heb. xii. 12, 13). This divine ground, or "even place," to-day, is no "grammar of assent," no ecclesiastical patch on which certain associations of Christians collect, and on or off which one may push people at

pleasure. It is the joyful personal experience of the soul whose iniquities are pardoned, who lives under God's eye, enjoys His love, walks in His path, delights to worship Him, to witness for Him, and who loves the company of the two or three who are gathered because the Lord Jesus is there in their midst. Blessed be the Lord for this "even place!"

W. M. R.

"Himself."—II.

Notes of an Address.

FOR the "little while" between believing on "Himself" and being with "Himself" in the Father's house, ample provision is made.

4th Scripture (Luke xxiv. 13)—

"And, behold, two of them went . . . and they talked together of these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them."

He who had just given "Himself" for them, when they "talked together," "communed together," and "reasoned" of these things which had happened, went with them. His company is to be had and enjoyed as in communion with Him. He "*Himself*" will draw near and go with "us."

5th Scripture (Luke xxiv. 27)—

"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

Do you wonder that they said one to another, after listening to "Himself," "Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" May we, on and by the way, receive His words from "*Himself*" as we sit at His feet, learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart, and find rest to our souls.

6th Scripture (Luke xxiv. 36)—

“And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, ‘Peace be unto you.’”

Here we have the presence of Jesus “*Himself*” in the midst of them as He stood and said, “Peace be unto you.” He Himself had made peace. He is the Prince of peace, He speaks peace, He is our peace. He “*Himself*” is able and ready to give any troubled heart peace, even now in the midst of trial, tribulation, and trouble, such as never perhaps has been experienced. “These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

7th Scripture (1 Thess. iv. 16)—

“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

He “*Himself*” is coming for “His own,” those for whom He gave “*Himself*,” when He descended first into the lower parts of the earth, into the dust of death; when He, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot unto God. He does not send angels, nor even the archangel to fetch them, but He comes Himself to take them to Himself.

These seven Scriptures concerning “*Himself*” are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. The meditation upon them, and other passages where

"Himself" is found, will well repay those who love His name, and for whom He gave Himself.

"Not all things else are half so dear
As is His blissful presence here,
What will it be in heaven?
'Tis heaven on earth that we can say,
As now we journey, day by day,
Himself has borne our guilt away,
Our sins are all forgiven.

But how will His celestial voice
Make each enraptured heart rejoice,
Of saints in glory near Him!
When we no longer absent wait,
But, like Him in His glorious state,
Where naught our bliss can e'er abate,
With joy in heaven shall hear Him!"

U. G.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

Blindness.—There is no blindness like that which results from resisting the light, and in presence of the light not renouncing one's own will.

* * * * *

"The God of Patience."—He is the God of patience and, blessed be His name, of comfort too. How great His patience with us all! What a name to give to God, perpetually bearing with us; with our stupid, ignorant, and often inconsistent hearts, and occupying Himself with all our little trials to comfort us!

* * * * *

"Five Loaves and Two Fishes."—"Bring them hither to Me," said the Lord. Oh for more simplicity in thus bringing every lack and every scanty supply to Him whose it is to provide, not for us only, but for all the exigencies of His love; to reckon on Him more habitually as One who cannot act beneath Himself!

The Cross.—What a work for the glory of God! The moral import of the cross for the glory of God is a subject which, as we study it, becomes ever more and more magnificent—a never-ending study. It is, by its moral perfection, a motive for the love of the Father Himself with regard to Jesus. “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again.”

Lights.

OF the heavenly Jerusalem above, which will illuminate the city Jerusalem below in the millennial day, it is said, “Her *light* was like unto a stone most precious,” etc. (Rev. xxi. 11). The particular word here used for “light” is only found in one other place in the New Testament, namely in Philippians ii. 15, “Among whom ye shine as *lights* in the world.” It is used by the LXX. in Genesis i. 14 for the lights which God set in the firmament of heaven. What lesson may we gather from this? That the Christian ought to be morally *now* a heavenly light in the world, as the church will be actually *then*, when displayed in the same glory with Christ.

The Way.

“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

Jesus, the Truth, the Way,
My sure unerring Light,
On Thee my steps I stay,
Guide Thou my path aright!

My Wisdom and my Guide,
My Counsellor Thou art;
O never would I leave Thy side,
Nor from Thyself depart.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XI.

THE WEEPING PROPHET.

THE slight reference to the prophet's "weeping," on page 141, seems to call for further examination, so that we may enter more completely into the solemnity of the scene before us. We must not forget that his standpoint is *heaven*, whither he was invited to go (chap. iv. 1) as soon as his testimony to the churches on earth was closed. The saints in heaven were represented by the "twenty-four elders," according to the full number of the priests' courses, and also of the officiating Levites for the service of song, appointed by King David (1 Chron. xxiv., xxv.). But instead of having to describe in detail *their* blessedness, John is absorbed by the sealed book in the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne.

This is very important for the right understanding of all that follows, for John was "in the spirit," and no longer on earth, to be occupied with things which, like the prophets of old, he could see or hear of, amongst those after whom his heart yearned. Isaiah (xxii. 4-14), and Jeremiah (ix. 1, xiii. 17) had indeed found more than enough to call forth many tears in the days of their testimony.

Similarly, in our own time of the church's history on earth, may we not say that any who care for the Lord's personal glory find plenty around them to make them weep, as the Lord Himself intimates (Luke vi. 21; John xvi. 20). James also, in his Epistle, confirms this (chap. iv. 9).

But in heaven, who could weep in presence of the glorious scene which enraptured John's soul as he

contemplated the throne and those that surrounded it, "having every one of them harps" to emphasize their praises? As to them, no thought of possible failure in the future could ever arise; for their position and all that concerned them depended, not on their own efforts, but on the infinite efficacy of the blood of the Lamb.

Is there not here a voice for our own individual consciences, leading to self-judgment, if we put the question to ourselves, Are *we* as anxious to know the Lord's mind and purpose as we are to get acquainted with what touches our own position or interests in this world? John was absorbed by the glory of the Lord; and the fact that there was a roll, written on both sides, showed that everything about to be revealed was fore-ordained and settled, and therefore in no way dependent upon the course which future events might take, as is the case in earthly matters, however great the master-mind which may be seeking to control and order them. Is there with us an intense longing to know what the Lord is doing, and will do at a time when there can be no more any revival or return to abandoned truth in a perverted Christendom? Surely our hearts ought to be moved by longing similar to that which made John weep!

With God, everything is settled beforehand; yet His patient long-suffering delays judgment, especially in its severer forms, in the interest of any who might be found looking to Him, with a true desire to repent. Judgment always was and is "His strange work" (Isa. xxviii. 21). His delight is in mercy, even towards rebellious Ephraim (Jer. xxxi. 20; 2 Sam. iii. 31-33); He has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). And He always promises a future time of restoration and blessing.

So with John, greatly beloved, as Daniel had been before him (ix. 20-28, x. 19), he needed cheering in his affliction, that he might learn what was recorded in the Scriptures of truth with reference to the end of this present scene, *after* that all the godly ones who love the Lord shall have been removed out of it; for that will be the state of things at the moment of which we are speaking. All the saints who compose the church in its entirety and completeness will then be in heaven *before* the last judgments begin—as well, no doubt, as those of the Old Testament.

At the same time, we must not hastily draw the conclusion that no others will be there eventually. For the twentieth chapter of the book speaks in verse 4 of *two* other companies, who will also “live and reign” with Christ during the “thousand years” of His kingdom—those seen to be martyred, when the fifth seal is opened (chap. vi. 9), and also those spoken of in chapter xiii. 15, who are strengthened to remain faithful, and who “die in the Lord” (chap. xiv. 13), during the final persecutions, before the last judgments are poured out upon the godless world. At that moment the Lord Himself, will finally come in power, “with ten thousand of His saints,” and put an entire end to the present state of things previously to setting up His own kingdom (Jude 14, 15; Rev. xix. 11-21). At that time also Satan himself will be bound and shut up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years (chap. xx. 1-3).

“Wars and rumours of wars” are terrible enough, as we find to our cost at the present time, but these are all warnings, and fall short—far short—of what is yet in store for this godless world notwithstanding a nominal Christianity, in which there is comparatively little left of the spirit of Christ as seen in the days of His apostles upon earth. Wars come as a warning from

God, though they are but meagrely understood as such, the Lord always adding, when foretelling them, "The end is *not yet*" (see Matt. xxiv. 6; Mark xiii. 7; Luke xxi. 9). The most interesting sign of the "end" is in the promulgation of the gospel amongst *all* nations (Matt. xxiv. 14). And that is surely very encouraging for all those who are engaged in this blessed work.

We may add that, after the Lord's reign of a thousand years, there will be a final trial of the state of things morally, so that the secrets of all hearts may be revealed at that moment. To this end Satan will be "loosed out of his prison," and he will once again deceive the nations, in gathering them for the last time against "the camp of the saints and the beloved city." Fire will come down from God out of heaven to devour them, after which will take place the final judgment before the "great white throne" (Rev. xx. 7-15).

Every sort of trial will then have been given to the human heart in every possible condition; *first*, before the deluge, for 1656 years; *secondly, without law*, for rather more than half that time, after the flood, until it was given to Israel on Mount Sinai, 1490 years before Christ came. That interval was characteristic, in the *third* place, by being "*under law*," but was based upon the promises made to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When the fore-announced birth of Christ took place the canon of the Old Testament was closed. *Fourthly*, we find ourselves in the Christian dispensation, under the action of the Holy Ghost, given consequently upon the Lord's death and resurrection, ten days after His ascension to heaven. We are now drawing to the close of this period, which has lasted more than 1900 years, and are awaiting the *fifth* period, a thousand years, when the

LORD will reign over this world "in Mount Zion, before His ancients, gloriously" (Isaiah xxiv. 23). That will terminate in the judgment which will usher in the eternal state spoken of in Revelations xxi. 1-8.

Let us note that in answer to John's weeping, his attention is, by one of the elders, directed to "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," referred to by Jacob on his death-bed, when he foretold what should befall his children "in the last days" (Gen. xlix. 1, 9, 10). All power is in His hand, who is the true "overcomer," as we see in His *last* word to the churches, given by the Spirit (Rev. iii. 21, 22). And so here He "hath *pre-vailed* to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." He is the "Root of David,"—not merely King by descent, as David's son in Matthew i. 1, and in the following verse 6, where David is the *only* one in the genealogy so-called, and that twice over, but also as the one and only antitype of all that David was figuratively, as the object of God's special choice (1 Sam. xvi. 1, 10-13). That was surely in contrast to Saul, who, on account of his great height, was the acclaimed choice of the people; nevertheless, he quailed before Goliath, who was much taller than he; and Goliath was slain by one stone from David's sling (1 Sam. x. 22-24, xvii. 11).

More than this, the enigma of His descent from David was, at the close of His ministry, presented by the Lord Himself to the Pharisees, as the final question which silenced all their infidel reasonings: it was already set forth by David himself in the Psalm (cx. 1), wherein he owned Him as his "Lord"; so Jesus asked them, "If David call Him Lord, how then is He his son?" (Matt. xxii. 41-46). Luke gives it also, and Mark adds that David spake "by the Holy Ghost" (xii. 36).

The word "prevailed" is very important here, because, in the following verse, He is seen as the Lamb "as it had been slain," thus showing that every blessing for His saints depends upon His death, without which He must have abode absolutely "alone" (John xii. 24). But when the precious "corn of wheat" dies, it brings forth much fruit. Consequently also, in the final rebellion of those whose names have never been written in the "Lamb's book of life," it is the Lamb who overcomes them, for He is "Lord of lords and King of kings." The "chosen and faithful" are seen to be with Him (Rev. xiii. 8, xvii. 14). What a comfort it is for us to know that our portion *with Him* dried John's tears! He was given to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne, as well as in the midst of the twenty-four elders.

We may add that the opening of the seals, which succeeds the "new song" sung by the "elders," and the praises ascribed by the angels, and then by all creation, to the Lamb, prepares the way for His unfolding God's purposes with reference to the future of this earth, *after* the church has been taken from it.

When the last seal is opened there is silence in heaven, and the seven trumpets that follow carry us on to the end when, in chapter x., the "Lion" takes possession of earth and sea, and His great power, about to be manifested, becomes the theme of the elders' thanks and worship (chap. xi. 15-18). The last "half-week" of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. ix. 27) is found here; and the remainder of the Revelation takes up explanatory details, until we come to the setting up of Messiah's kingdom in chapter xx.

W. J. L.

Landmarks of Inspiration—I.

THERE are many striking proofs of God's hand in the Bible, and this even in the divine ordering of the events of which it speaks and the commands and laws we find recorded in it. Every careful reader must have noticed the remarkable unity of design in all its varied parts; in the use of numbers, as well as in other respects. Let us look a little at the number twelve: we must be brief for lack of space.

Twelve is the well-known number in Scripture signifying *government in the hands of man*, of which Israel was the centre until the complete failure of the house of David, when it was committed to the Gentiles in Nebuchadnezzar.

Thus we find the twelve sons of Jacob, heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. On the breastplate affixed to the ephod which the high priest wore were the twelve stones, and on the shoulder-pieces the two stones, with the names of the twelve tribes engraved on each, in their order. Precious type of our High Priest on high, who, in all the ordering of God's house and according to all the value and worth of His person and His office, bears our names before God continually!

The twelve loaves on the golden table of shewbread in the holy place, with the light of the lamps shining over against it, manifested by the Holy Ghost that administrative power in man of which Israel was the vessel, but which can only be made good actually in Christ (see Zech. vi. 12, 13).

There were twelve stones left in the river Jordan when Israel crossed, and twelve taken up out of it, one for each tribe. The ark (type of Christ) had gone down into that river and dried up the waters, and the people passed over dryshod. Thus there was the com-

plete witness, before ever they took possession of the land, that Israel had triumphed, but triumphed in the victory of Another.

In the New Testament we have the twelve disciples or apostles whom the Lord chose to be with Him, and to go forth to preach. Their primary place was connected with Israel, and they appear in the twelve foundations of the city in Revelation xxi. They will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the day of the Kingdom, when the Lord will intervene in power, and take up the government of this world.

In the feeding of the multitude with five loaves and two fishes we find twelve baskets full of fragments were taken up. Here there is a typical picture of that day when the true Messiah, Jehovah the King of Israel, will meet the need of His people, and satisfy His poor with bread.

But it is remarkable that, as regards the Church of God, as distinct from Israel, we do not find the number twelve. The only exception, if it be one, is that of the twenty-four (12×2) elders in the Revelation. These "elders," no doubt, include both the Old Testament saints and those of this dispensation, and the figure is drawn from the twenty-four courses of priests instituted by David. When it is a question of government so far as the church is concerned, her place will be that of association with Christ in the blessing and glory of His rule.

Lastly, we have in Revelation xii. the woman, figure of Israel, crowned with twelve stars; and the city, which is the display of glory over the millennial earth (chapter xxi.), showing both in its measurements, its twelve foundations, its twelve gates, its twelve manner of fruits of the tree of life, etc., the same figurative significance of the number twelve.

Thus we have the plainest evidence that throughout the Bible, even in its use of numbers, there is the impress of one master hand. It is the work of one presiding Author—God, by His Spirit.

We hope to look at the number seven on another occasion.

F. G. B.

The Outlook.

IT looks as if the present year were about to close under the shadow of the terrible war cloud which still lies upon Europe. The loss of our dearest relatives and friends still seems likely to continue, and the end of the trials and hardships which the war entails is not yet in sight. As the prophet Isaiah repeats four times over in chapters ix., x., "For all this God's anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still."

"For lo," says the prophet Jeremiah, "I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by My name, and should ye [the nations] be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts . . . the LORD hath a controversy with the nations" (chap. xxv. 29, 31). And just as God raised up the Assyrian of old to chasten Israel, saying, "Ho Assyrian, the rod of Mine anger, and the staff in whose hand is Mine indignation" (Isa. x. 5, R.V.); and again the Chaldeans later on, "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation" (Hab. i. 6), so, we believe, He has permitted Germany to begin this war, and to have a measure of success, for the chastisement of the nations as well as of herself.

But God's judgment is always a solemn thing, and it becomes us to consider it with a chastened spirit. Amidst it all, the man of faith finds his refuge in God Himself—the very God of judgment; "The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him" (Nahum i. 7).

Thank God there is a controlling power: there is "One who hinders" the full development of evil, the Holy Ghost in the Church (2 Thess. ii.). Our Lord

Himself said to Pilate, at the very hour when the forces of evil seemed paramount, "Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above" (John xix. 11); but God allowed the power of the world and Satan to have an apparent triumph for the moment, only to be for ever broken in His death upon the cross.

And, if we consider the aspect of the political world as it is—nation engaged in deadly strife against nation—the state of things in its religious aspect is surely equally serious and grave. For years past the growth of the apostasy has been plain and evident to every soul enlightened by the Word of God, and it is hastening on with rapid strides. "They have gone in the way of Cain." Cain was the man of violence, who, out of jealousy, killed his brother. He had his religion, but it was a religion which neither acknowledged his own sin nor the true ground of approach to God by sacrifice and the death of a victim.

Then there was the "error of Balaam," who professed to do the work of God for "reward." It points to the great ecclesiastical system of corruption such as we see it in Romanism, Ritualism, etc.; ever on the increase. And, finally, the "gainsaying of Core" is open rebellion and deadly opposition to Christ (of whom Moses was a type) both as "king" and priest. All these elements of apostasy are in evidence now, and are increasing towards their final issue.

But, to come nearer home, what about true believers? Alas, we see the Church of God in great weakness and sadly divided. We may be sure there is a root-cause for these things, whatever apparent causes may appear on the surface. Is it not largely accounted for by the worldliness and want of faithfulness to Christ on the part of His people, leading to a lack of desire for

the Word of God and prayer? Oh that we might take these things to heart in this solemn and closing hour of the Church's history on earth!

But we must not close our brief word as to the present outlook without lifting our eyes from earth to heaven, to look and watch for the rising of the "bright and morning star." It is Jesus Himself, in all His unchanged love, His unfailing grace, His affection for His Church; and He too has long, long waited for the moment of His return.

And oh what a blessed and cheering prospect He holds out—far more than pen or tongue can describe! To be changed in a moment into His image in glory; to see Him as He is; to gaze upon that face once so marred more than any man, but then radiant with all the glory of heaven; to behold the display of His glory in the Father's house above, the very home of divine love itself, and where all the purest and deepest joys of His redeemed ones centre in His adorable person. Again we say, What a prospect lies out before the Christian! May it have a real living power deep down in our souls to-day!

"Every Word."

"**M**AN doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live" (Deut. viii. 3). Here we have the only true, the only safe, the only happy attitude for man, namely, hanging in earnest dependence upon "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD." Blessed attitude! we may well say there is nothing like it in all this world.

It brings the soul into direct, living, personal contact with the Lord Himself, by means of His Word. It

makes the Word so absolutely essential to us in everything, we cannot do without it. As the natural life is sustained by bread, so the spiritual life is sustained by the Word of God. It is not merely going to the Bible to find doctrines there, or to have our opinions or views confirmed; it is very much more than this; it is going to the Bible for the staple commodity of life—the life of the new man. It is going there for food, for light, for guidance, for comfort, for authority, for strength, for all that the soul can possibly need from first to last.

And let us specially note the force and value of the expression “*every* word.” How fully it shows that we cannot afford to dispense with a single word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. We want it all. We cannot tell the moment in which some exigency may present itself for which scripture has already provided. We may not, perhaps, have specially noticed the scripture before, but when the difficulty arises, if we are in a right condition of soul, the Spirit of God will furnish us with the needed scripture; and we shall see a force, beauty, depth and moral adaptation in the passage which we had never seen before. Scripture is a divine, and therefore exhaustless, treasury in which God has made ample provision for all the need of His people, and for each believer in particular, right on to the end. Hence we should study it all, ponder it, dig deep into it, and have it treasured up in our hearts, ready for use when the demand arises. . . .

And we should further give special attention to the expression, “OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE LORD.” This is unspeakably precious. It brings the Lord so very near to us, and gives us such a sense of the reality of feeding upon His every word, yea, of hanging upon it as something absolutely essential and indispensable.

It sets forth the blessed fact that our souls can no more exist without the Word than our bodies could without food. In a word, we are taught by this passage that *man's* true position, his proper attitude, his only place of strength, safety, rest and blessing, is to be found in habitual dependence on the Word of God. . . .

Again, Moses says to the people, "Set your hearts unto *all the words* which I testify among you this day, which ye shall *command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law*. For it is not a vain thing for you; because *it is your life*," etc. (Deut. xxxii. 46, 47).

Thus, from first to last, through every section of this precious book of Deuteronomy, we find Moses, that beloved and most honoured servant of God, urging upon the people the solemn duty of implicit, unqualified, hearty obedience to the word of God. In this lay the precious secret of life, peace, progress, prosperity, all. They had nothing else to do but *obey*. Blessed business! Happy, holy duty! May it be ours, beloved reader, in this day of conflict and confusion, in which man's will is so fearfully dominant.

The world and the so-called Church are rushing on together, with appalling rapidity, along the dark pathway of self-will—a pathway which must end in the blackness of darkness for ever. Let us bear this in mind, and earnestly seek to tread the narrow path of simple obedience to all the precious commandments of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thus shall our hearts be kept in sweet peace; and although we may seem to the men of this world, and even to professing Christians, to be odd and narrow-minded, let us not be moved, the breadth of a hair, from the path indicated by the word of God. May the Word of Christ dwell in us richly, and the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, *until the end*!

C. H. M.

“If Ye Love Me”—“If Ye Loved Me.”

IF ye love Me, keep My commandments” (John xiv. 15). They were to walk in obedience. This characterises discipleship up to the present time. Love desires to be with Him, but shows itself in obeying His commands.

“If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father” (John xiv. 28). He gives us to be interested in His own glory, in His happiness, and, in it, to find our own.

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 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.

“Be Careful for Nothing” (Phil. iv. 6).—In all things God is our refuge, and events do not disturb Him. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows everything, He knows it beforehand; events shake neither His throne, nor His heart; they always accomplish His purposes. But to us He is love; we are, through grace, the objects of His tender care. He listens to us and bows down His ear to hear us.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XII.

THE ROOT OF DAVID.

AT a time like the present, of terrible conflict amongst the nations and universal suffering, the hearts of men are naturally absorbed with considerations appertaining thereto, as to which side will prove the stronger, how best to attain the end in view, and such like questions. It is therefore not an easy thing for the Christian to keep free from these influences, and sufficiently so to maintain in thought, as in the presence of God, his true place as a follower of the rejected "Nazarene." Do we bear in mind as we ought His closing words to His disciples in John xv. 19, 20: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord: if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also."

In closing the second epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle reminds them that Christ "was crucified through *weakness*," though He lives "by the power of God" (chap. xiii. 4). And this is the real key to the closing book of the Bible, which we have been considering so far, in its practical application to the Church, *before* taking up the judgments destined to follow upon the opening of the "seals,"—judgments which will fall upon this world *after* all that is really for God in it shall have been taken out of it, in order to enjoy the place *with Christ*, which is prepared for those that love Him (John xiv. 3).

Now the prominent feature in the Revelation, especially from the fifth chapter to the close, is the "**Lamb**." The word used is peculiar to the book (with the exception of John xxi. 15, where the Lord makes use of it, in designating Peter's service): it means strictly "a little lamb," not exactly referring to sacrifice, though His *blood* is mentioned four times, and even five, if we include xix. 13—but as setting forth *weakness*, in contrast to the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (chap. v. 5, referring no doubt to Gen. xlix. 9; and compare Rev. x. 3). For power and strength are duly ascribed to Him both by the angels and by all creation (chap. v. 12-14). Both "lion" and "lamb" refer, of course, to Him.

We cannot too much insist upon the fact that the character and portion of the Church is *heavenly*, through the knowledge of the Saviour, given and maintained by the Holy Ghost; He promised it to His beloved disciples: "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you" (John xvi. 14). It is quite true that when He reigns we shall reign with Him; but the source of our present joy, and the secret of power for a holy walk, depend rather upon His being *personally* known as the **Redeemer**.

As such, He is also the "morning star," which *precedes* the rising of the "Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings" (Mal. iv. 2). David was inspired to look on to the latter, in his "last words" (2 Sam. xxiii. 4). An intimation of it is also found in Matthew's account of the transfiguration scene, as well as in that wonderful verse of chapter xiii.: "Then shall the *righteous* shine forth as *the sun*, in the kingdom of *their Father* (xiii. 43; xvii. 2). The "offspring" or "son" of David refers to this, and is very prominent in the same gospel (see i. 1, 6; xii. 23; and finally xxii. 42, by

which the Lord silenced the cavils of the Pharisees, quoting Psalm cx. 1).^{*} All this, in as far as the *earth* is concerned, clearly refers to the *future* portion promised to those who will be blessed under His direct rule, during His millennial kingdom, of which Jerusalem will be the appointed centre in that day.

The church's portion is of another order, depending, not on the promises made to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but directly on what the Lord is in *Himself*, and what He wrought and suffered at His first coming—as He expressed it indeed to the dying thief, “To-day thou shalt be *with Me* in *paradise*” (Luke xxiii. 43; compare Zechariah ix. 12, which speaks prophetically of a “double” portion).

The suffering of the Lord on the cross is, consequently, the corner-stone of the gospel which the Christian has to preach: “How am I straitened,” He said, “until it be accomplished!” (Luke xii. 50). The “corn of wheat” must needs “die, in order to bring forth *much* fruit” (John xii. 24). We must remember, too, that after His resurrection, the Lord never showed Himself to the Jewish people, but only to His own disciples, whom He had chosen to be His witnesses (Acts x. 40, 41).

As “offspring” or *Son* of David, Jesus inherited, and will make good to Israel, all that was promised to their fathers; but as the “Root of David,” He is the divine origin and source of it all. And this can be known and enjoyed only by those who know Him as the “morning star,” seen by the watchers when as yet there is no other sign of the coming day; for it is no longer seen after the sun has risen. The “bright and morning star” expresses what He *is* in His own person;

^{*} See David's “last words,” *after* the song in 2 Sam. xxii., “He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, the tender grass springing out of the *earth*, by clear shining after rain.”

and it is to Him that the invitation "Come" is addressed by the Spirit and "the Bride" (xxii. 1-17).

Christ is also called the "Root of Jesse" in Romans xv. 12, quoted from Isaiah xi. 10, but in connection with governing the nations in the future day of His kingdom. He is, in fact, called in the prophecy both *Root* and *Branch* (see verse 1). But that again tends to give further force to Rev. xxii. 16, where He is both "Root and Offspring," inasmuch as it brings more definitely before us David as a personal type, rather than what he was historically as king. The root is hidden, unseen, as indeed in John xii. 24, referred to above by the Lord Himself when announcing the *necessity* of His death.

It is interesting to notice that, in his "last words," David brings in Jesse, his father's name (2 Sam. xxiii. 1). It carries us back vividly to the history of his being chosen, when absent from the other members of the family, "keeping the sheep," at the time when Samuel was sent by God to anoint one of Jesse's sons (1 Sam. xvi. 4-13). He was a great contrast to Saul, who was taller than any of the people and readily acclaimed by them, though afterwards unable to fight with the giant Philistine, whom David, "the son of Jesse," slew (1 Sam. xvii. 56-58). Saul did not even recognise David, though he had previously played the harp in his presence (verse 15).

We may here remark that the "elders," already referred to (page 137) as representing the whole company of redeemed souls from the beginning of man's history, *disappear*, as a representative class, with their closing "Amen; Alleluia," as soon as the Bride and the marriage of the Lamb are mentioned (chap. xix. 4). At that moment, every one takes his appointed place, not only individually, each one "according to his works"

(chap. ii. 23), but more especially in their different categories—*Christians* as forming “the Bride,” and the Old Testament saints, like Abraham and John the Baptist, as “friends” of the Bridegroom (John iii. 29; James ii. 23). The last “Alleluia” comes from “a great multitude,” in answer to the call to praise which issues from the *throne* itself (xix. 6-9).

There is also another sense in which the Lord may be truly considered as the “Root of David,” in connection with the “last words,” which we find recorded in 2 Samuel xxiii. 1-7. This may indeed be clearly seen by a consideration of the fifteen “songs of degrees,” four of which are attributed to David, and another one, cxxxii., of unknown authorship, is all about David, in connection with his desire to find a suitable “habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.”

The whole series refers prophetically to the future instalment of “Israel,” not of Judah only, in the land promised to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This will take place at the close of the present state of things, when the various powers of evil, working under the instigation of Satan, will be finally dealt with, and the Lord Himself will come, as promised, upon the Mount of Olives, in order to set up His *millennial* kingdom (Zech. xiv. 4, 5; Acts i. 11).

In the passage above referred to, David distinctly says: “The Spirit of Jehovah *spake by me*, and *His word* was in my tongue.” It was therefore not merely an expression of his own feelings, but a divinely given prophecy of the rising of “the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings” (Mal. iv. 2; and compare Rev. xxii. 16).

From this point of view we may indeed discover the true “Root” of all that David was privileged to disclose. We notice first of all that it is David who

introduces Jerusalem in Psalm cxxii. 2, 3, 6; that is developed in the remaining two of the five verses that speak definitely of the *city* (cxxv. 2, and cxxviii. 5). Secondly, after the cursory mention of the troubles that befell "Zion," in cxxvi. 1 and cxxix. 5, it is David who speaks of its final blessing in Psalm cxxxiii. 3.

We must not forget that when David brought up the ark, which had been for years hidden away, after having been removed from the tabernacle in Eli's time, it was to *Zion*, the *citadel* of his royal house, that he brought it, as recorded indeed in Psalm cxxxii. 13. The temple in which it was subsequently placed by Solomon was on Mount Moriah, purchased by David from Ornan the Jebusite (2 Chron. iii. 1); but the king's palace was on Zion. Thence will be the final "blessing" of Jehovah, who will "dwell at Jerusalem" (Ps. cxxxv. 21; compare Ps. cxxviii. 5, and cxxxiv. 3).

Consequently, underneath David's words, so to speak, we trace the Spirit's allusion to the blessed Lord Himself, to whom all the Scriptures bear witness (Luke xxiv. 44). David was not able to teach the forgiveness of sins, as we through grace understand it in the gospel; but he was allowed to fall and be restored, that he might feel and express the necessity for pardon, and its blessedness. He sets it forth in detail, as given to no one else, in Psalms xxv. and xxxii., and shows how "righteousness" and "salvation" are inseparably joined together in Psalms xxiv. 5; xl. 10; li. 14; lxxi. 15. This is blessedness indeed.

W. J. L.

"Go to thy Bible, soul perplexed,
And all thy fear shall be remote;
How calmly shines the ancient text
Above the turbid modern note."

—*Langridge.*