

# WORDS OF HELP

FROM THE  
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH

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*Edited by*  
W. G. TURNER

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## INDEX.

	PAGE
Aaron's Rod That Budded - - - (W. G. Turner)	107
A Good Thing, On - - - (R.E.A.R.)	45
An Arresting Sequence of Names - - (W. G. Turner)	82
Angels, On the Evil - - - (* *)	55
Arm, of Flesh, The - - - (W. J. Hocking)	141
Asking and Receiving - - - (E. Adams)	216
Attracted, Accepted, Acknowledged - (W. G. Turner)	161
Awkward Personal Possessions	(Quartus) 2, 25, 47, 71
Best Last, The - - - (E. Adams)	87
Bible, The - - - (J. N. Darby)	166
Camera and the Eye, The - - (H. L. Birtles)	140
Christ and the Jewish Law - - - (E. Adams)	208
Christian's Commision, The - - - „	199
Christian Life, The - - - (J. C. Burrows)	152
Coming and Appearing of Christ, The	(A German Brother) 109
Common Mistake, A - - - (Trans. T. Howson)	164
Communion with God, On - - - (Editor)	121
Concerning the Christ - - - (J. Mol, Junr.)	13
Dan, The Absence of, in Rev. vii - - - (W.R.H.)	174
Dark Samaritan, A - - - (* *)	168
Disappointments of Life, The - - (J. N. Darby)	23
Discipline, On - - - (Trans, J. S.)	219
Facing the Future - - - (Editor)	181
Faith, On the History of - - - (* *)	30
Good Words for Bad Times - - - (W. G. Turner)	186
Habakkuk, Some Thoughts on - - (Editor) 15, 50, 61	
Heman the Seer - - - (W. G. Turner)	201
Hidden Treasure, and Pearl, The - - (Quartus)	89
His Faithful Word, On - - - (H. L. Birtles)	52
Historical Background of New Testament - (E. Adams)	114
History of Idolatry - - - (* *)	41
Hymn Singing, On - - - (H.C.)	210
Joyful Thoughts, Some - - - (A. L. Scutt)	185
Kingdom and the Church, The - - - (W. Kelly)	175
Letters of Saml. Rutherford, Extracts from	(Alan Fairhead) 193, 206
Marriage, Some Thoughts on - - - (Quartus)	154

10

10

10

# WORDS OF HELP

from the

## SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH

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### For the New Year

**T**HE opening year speaks to the believer both of the One Whose years fail not, Whose presence is promised to His people all the days of the years of their pilgrimage; and also of that future when time shall be no more. The assured presence of our Blessed LORD enables us to go forward confidently, since He knows the way He taketh, and our privilege is to walk with Him now through time, and dwell with Him when time shall be no more.

Then in a changing world, what a stay it is to the heart to know the One of Whom it is written, "*Thou remainest*, and Thou art the SAME." Earthly ties of nature and affection are, alas, in this world of sin and death often severed, and we have to travel on alone maybe so far as these relationships are concerned; earthly friends change with changing years; indeed we ourselves are conscious of change. But the Unchanging One abides in all the warmth and understanding love shown us at the first, for "JESUS CHRIST is the SAME, yesterday, and to-day, and forever." In the New Year as He was through the old.

"My presence shall go with you," said the LORD to His timid servant about to tread an entirely unknown path, "and I will give you rest." We, too, may claim this with fullest confidence, for He has said again, "Lo, I am with you all the days even unto the end"; and again, "I will never leave thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee."

Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us gird up the loins of our minds, and looking off unto JESUS the Author and Completer of faith, run the race set before us with patience, confidence, cheerfulness and hope until the course is finished, and the crown won.

## On Some Awkward Personal Possessions

By QUARTUS

**T**HERE are some things we cannot get rid of try how we may. Some things that are personal, private belongings, uncomfortable possessions some of them, too. Yet they may become of priceless value to us.

To name them as they occur will but throw into greater relief one's inalienable ownership of certain things the possession of which entails responsibility to God and man and a great measure of personal discomfort at times.

My *conscience*, my *memory*, my *sins*, my *character*, my *fears*, my *past*, my *future*—to name but a selection from them—how intensely proprietary is the interest in them!

(1) *My conscience.* A child's definition of conscience as "Something inside which pinches you when you know you are doing wrong" is not altogether beside the mark. In Scripture we are told that conscience is God's witness to right and wrong within man (Rom. ii. 15). Everyone has a conscience, some have a *good* one (Acts xxiv. 16; 1 Tim. i. 19, 1 Peter iii. 16); some have a *bad* conscience, defiled, evil (Titus i. 15; Heb. x. 22); some consciences are spoken of as being *seared* (1 Tim. iv. 2); while there are also *purged* consciences. St. Paul speaks in 2 Cor. iv. 2, of "commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." So every man [and woman] has a conscience which needs to be adjusted by the standard of the truth. If conscience condemns me, what about the real condition in the sight of God? When tested by the true standard the true values are seen. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things (1 John iii. 20). Sometimes a hymn is sung which says,

"When conscience charged and justice frowned,  
'Twas grace removed our fear."

## 3

This is true of all who having pleaded guilty in God's presence have received the full, free and immediate pardon He confers upon all who then accept His mercy in CHRIST JESUS our LORD.

But human reason could never logically conclude that guilty sinners could justly escape the due penalty of their misdeeds. The fact that God is good and merciful does not prove that He can righteously pardon sinners. Indeed it is expressly stated: "The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and *will not at all acquit the wicked*" (Nahum i. 3); also in Hab. i. 12, we hear the prophet addressing God filled with an overwhelming sense of His Majesty as "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and *canst not look on iniquity.*"

Yet, as ever, it is "the entrance" or opening up "of God's word which gives light" on the dark problem of man's sin and destiny while at the same time revealing the grace and goodness of God in "devising means that His banished be not expelled from Him" (Cf. 2 Sam. xiv. 14).

Hence we are not surprised to find in what was most probably the earliest written book in the Bible, these gracious words "Then He is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom" (lit: an *atonement*). Job. xxxiii. 24. Also, when the One, Who was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world to be the LAMB of God, the Redeemer of mankind, appears in the fullness of time He explains His presence and His mission by saying, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten SON, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (St. John iii. 16).

Further, when the atoning sacrifice of the Incarnate SON of God had been actually accomplished, accepted by God, and witnessed to by the HOLY SPIRIT on account of the exaltation in glory of the Crucified SAVIOUR, then the Apostle Paul — made a minister of the gospel — thus explains it: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time, CHRIST died for the ungodly." As

though this magnificent declaration of truth of such vital importance to sinful man were not enough, there is the great revealing secret of the love of God to men disclosed. "But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us" (Rom. v. 6, 8).

Now, it has become possible for a man to possess a *purged* conscience, to have no more conscience of sins, to be sprinkled from an evil conscience (Rom. x. 2, 22). The one full, complete OFFERING, "the offering of the body of JESUS CHRIST once for all," has perfected for ever before the holy eye of God all those who are sanctified. And it is this one Offering, single and complete, by which we [believers] are sanctified, i.e., set apart to God. "The blood of JESUS CHRIST HIS SON cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). Either the work of perfect sanctification was done by the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Divine Sin-bearer on the Cross, or it never will be done. The repentant sinner believing on the LORD JESUS CHRIST is saved (Acts xvi. 31), and with humble gratitude and life-long contrition can enjoy a *purged* conscience, being sprinkled from an evil conscience, and with no more conscience of sins, because the SAVIOUR has borne them away, can sing:

"No more we dread God's wrath;  
His perfect love we see;  
And, FATHER, in confiding faith  
We cast our souls on Thee."

While the Jew at his most solemn moment of approach to his God "found a remembrance of sins every year," the Christian in his most solemn act of corporate devotion is called to rejoice in the remembrance of Him Who has for ever put away his sins by the sacrifice of Himself. When conscience charged and justice frowned 'twas grace removed his fear. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS" (Rom. v. 24). Hence with a worshipping spirit he can join to sing:



“FATHER, Thy Name our souls would bless,  
As children taught by grace;  
Lift up our hearts in righteousness  
And joy, before Thy face.”

Have we this blessed confidence in our approach to God? The only conditions are a belief of the truth as to one's own personal need and God's amazing provision for it in CHRIST which leads to true repentance towards God and faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST. To any exercised reader of these lines we would say:

Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor of fitness idly dream;  
All the fitness He requireth  
Is to feel your need of Him.

(Next month (D.V.) “My Memory.”)

## On One Cause for Thankfulness

A SUNDAY SCHOOL teacher, a man of fervent piety, simple faith, and real earnestness in his work, used frequently at the Teachers' Monthly Prayer Meeting to commence his prayer with: “LORD, we thank Thee that Thou hast not put us off from Thy service yet, but dost still keep us on.”

The recollection of this good man and his prayer vividly returns to the mind of the writer at the beginning of another year. For one of the wonders that comes upon us in moments of retrospection such as the opening year induces, is the marvel that the LORD keeps some of us still in His service. Were He like ourselves we should long since have been dismissed in disgrace or sent home that we might no longer be cumbering the ground, and filling posts that more faithful servants might better fill. Some of us would have been discharged for sheer indolence; others for our pride, and

## 6

the parading of it in His service; most of us for our lack of His spirit of love towards our fellow-servants; many of us, alas, for our cold-hearted, almost perfunctory performances in His service. Treatment such as this might justly be meted to us (the writer's own heart being witness) if we had our deserts.

Instead of this, our ever gracious LORD bears with us still; and through GOD's mercy we are again exhorted to "be zealous and repent" (Rev. iii. 20), and yield ourselves more whole-heartedly to Him in loyal, loving diligence.

Our LORD and MASTER presents Himself before our spiritually languid hearts with the searching, humbling enquiry once addressed to a penitent Apostle, "Lovest thou Me?"

This He does to stir up our affections afresh, so that the almost dying embers lying upon the altar of our poor hearts may be fanned into a burning flame of loving devotion, as we recall His own patience with us and His dying but undying love towards us. How is this to come about?

Excluding all others from our attention, we realise how intensely personal and individual are His words. Lovest *thou* Me? Lovest thou *Me*? He and I. My LORD and myself. His enquiry addressed to me. It arrests attention; it quickens memory; it stirs deep feeling; it touches me in the most sensitive spot of my being. For, as a background to the Gracious Figure Who asks this so simple, yet so significant question, there arises Bethlehem with its manger-cradle; Nazareth with its lowly cottage home; the Wilderness of the fierce Temptation by the devil; the Pilgrimage through the world enduring the contradiction of sinners; Gethsemane with its awful gloom; Calvary with its bitter desolation; the silent Tomb in Joseph's garden—until as the question again reaches the heart, "Lovest thou Me?", the penitent, contrite one exclaims:

"Was ever love like Thine?  
Was ever sin like mine?"

Then, lo! the same gracious Voice that makes enquiry as to my love to Himself is heard again, speaking words of consolation and cheer. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word."

The Apostolic penitent to whom our LORD's question was first addressed replied in language equally suited to ourselves to-day, "LORD, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Then "feed," "tend," "shepherd," "occupy till I come," is the word to the reinstated servant; and we would say in the words of a servant who was called to rest only a few years ago:

"We worship at Thy holy Feet,  
For we to Thee belong;  
Our life, our peace, our all-in-all,  
Our never-ending song.

We worship at Thy holy Feet,  
And long to serve Thee still;  
Take Thou our hearts, our lips, our lives,  
And mould them to Thy will."

After we had done all, we should still be unprofitable servants, but the joy of His happy service is one that none who know it would willingly forego.

So, girding up the loins of our minds, we would enter upon another year with purpose of heart to cleave to the LORD and to serve more whole-heartedly and diligently than in the days that are passed. Thankful indeed may we be that in the language of that Sunday School teacher at the Prayer Meeting we can still say, "LORD, we thank Thee that Thou hast not put us off from Thy service yet, but dost still keep us on."

W.G.T.

## Towards Better Results

*(Some Pointers)*

**T**HE churches in English-speaking countries are rich in money, talent and organisation, and are often active in making known Scripture truth and the real Gospel. But the results seem out of proportion to the effort, time and money expended.

### CAUSES, OUTSIDE AND WITHIN OUR CONTROL

To the question "Why?" we may not be able to give a complete reply, for the world situation is complex, our knowledge is very limited, and there must be the mysterious and unknowable element in the operations of the Eternal SPIRIT.

And some of the known factors lie outside the control of the churches. The Great War demoralised the world—as war always does. For four or five years the foul war spirit swept over the nations like a wave of poison gas, distorting the vision, deadening the conscience and hardening the heart. Millions of the flower of Europe's young manhood were killed. Millions were injured in health, defiled in conscience, embittered in spirit, and wounded in faith.

The world-wide decay of real religious belief is being accompanied by the spread of atheistic or agnostic materialism, and, in some countries, by a pseudo-religion of the worship of the State. And for years a rationalistic criticism of the Bible has been attacking the foundations of Christianity.

For these reasons appeals grounded upon the basic doctrines of the Christian Gospel often fall upon deaf or contemptuous ears. And outside attractions reduce the attendances of children in the Sunday Schools, and the parents give little or no support to the teachers.

But we are chiefly concerned with our own responsibility. Here the causes of the paucity of results suggests the remedies, and both can be mentioned together.

## CONSECRATION

Even GOD's children can neglect *the Bible*. Bible study, however, is not to be an *end*, but a means to knowing GOD and His will, and a help to doing it. Mental apprehension is not spiritual appropriation. We may inherit the vocabulary of power but not the fact of power. Other things being equal, the ministry that is most charged with the spiritual truth of the Word of GOD will be the most truly successful.

*Praying* is working. It is doing definite business with GOD, by which His sway over hearts and lives is extended, and the forces of evil routed. "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word," is the secret of apostolic success.

How much time and spiritual energy do we put into our prayers? That we know we should pray more and yet find it so hard to do so, indicates the value placed upon this ministry by the great enemy of souls. Prayer intelligent, spiritual, unselfish, intense, costly—is at least as important as Bible study, at all events among Christians reputed to be "strong on doctrine."

Most important of all is *a surrendered life*. No surrender to the LORD can be adequate or even sincere if there is not confession of sins and determination to forsake them. Made in the presence of His holy love, honest, detailed confession to GOD is a surgical operation, issuing in soul-cleansing and peace. Prominent among the sins of religious people are jealousy, resentment, evil speaking, pride—"spiritual" or otherwise—love of power, worldliness and paralysing unbelief.

Do we make certain that when we contend, it is for a good and useful principle? Or it is really a *prejudice*, made important to our feelings because wrapped up with our pride and our personal or family prestige? Is not the real cause of strife among Christians with minds of their own often a personal animus that is glad to use a difference of view as the occasion of contention?

For believers to leave one place of meeting for another may be a small thing; what *does* matter is the bitterness of spirit that usually accompanies and results from the

separation. It is from this inner defilement that the word bids us cleanse our spirits; for it not only causes personal unhappiness (it costs more to resent injuries than to bear them), but helps to lower the spiritual work of the whole church. (See Hebrews xii. 15.)

High-grade *worldliness* may accompany much knowledge of the Bible, of our standing "in CHRIST," and of objective truth generally. CHRIST did not found a religion of the poor, God "provides us richly with all things for our enjoyment," and worldliness is a matter rather of the spirit than of our actual possessions. At the same time the Epistle of James and the New Testament as a whole give no warrant for regarding a high standard of living as "the outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace"!

Worldliness is not only disloyalty to the LORD, but it drains away a great amount of time, money, strength and talent which might be pressed into the service of the Gospel. As 2 Timothy ii. 4 reminds us, to simplify the life makes for greater effectiveness.

So much depends upon the depth of our consecration. Are there any unsundered areas in the life? Have we obeyed Romans vi. 13 and xii. 1, and do we seek constantly to maintain an attitude of yieldedness to the LORD and His will? God gives Himself wholly to those who give themselves wholly to Him.

The fulness of the SPIRIT's grace is for those who are fully yielded to the LORD JESUS. Unless they follow a common tradition, teachers not seldom disagree in their terminologies expressing the *varied* operations upon the soul of the sovereign HOLY SPIRIT. Rather than criticise the theories of others by which they endeavour to explain spiritual experiences which to us may seem unusual, we should seek a greater measure of the vitalising grace of the SPIRIT for ourselves. All agree that the HOLY SPIRIT makes good in us the presence and fellowship of CHRIST, enables us to realise spiritual truth, and empowers for victorious living and effective service. Oh, to know more of the Divine energy working in and through us!

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## CO-OPERATION.

Very much depends upon the "climate." A vitalised church creates an atmosphere where the unconverted will be blessed. So that to help a Christian to do the will of God may be regarded as indirect evangelism.

But Christians have often opposed revival, especially when it has come outside their own circle, or in ways different from their expectations. We do not like to be disturbed in our accustomed ways and manner of thinking!

Believers are side-tracked when they waste valuable time arguing about difficult and delicate details of doctrine or of prophecy, and when they are more concerned about the conservation of the traditions of their group than about the progress of the Kingdom of God. It is an evil thing to disparage what God is doing outside our own circle. In Acts xi., Peter silences his tradition-minded critics by saying, in effect, "*Look at the GOD-wrought facts, brethren.*" If God is blessing elsewhere, should it not set us enquiring? During the Welsh Revival, "sectarianism melted in the fire of the HOLY SPIRIT."

According to New Testament church principles there is to be, not dictatorship, but leadership, or "shepherdship," fellowship and co-operation. Each Christian is a fresh thought from God to the Church; he is a limb in the Body of CHRIST, and has a special position to fill and a special function to carry out. Each is to make his contribution for the good of the whole. (See Ephesians iv. 16.)

The least costly and most effective form of church arrangement is where companies of Christians are organised on Scriptural, free, and simple lines. But *form* does not secure *power*, and the New Testament lays down the *principles* rather than the *methods* to be observed. A spiritual movement that was born in early Victorian days naturally possesses the weight, solidity and restraint that marked those comparatively peaceful times. Life to-day is far more rapid, restless, colourful and exciting; hence the younger generation may seem

to their elders to be lacking in stability. The Divine SPIRIT, in His quest for man's salvation, graciously uses the methods that are especially adapted to each generation.

#### CONCENTRATION

David Livingstone's statement of consecration points to an ideal of *concentration*: "I will set no value upon anything I have or may possess except in relation to the Kingdom of CHRIST. If anything will advance the interests of that Kingdom it shall be given away or kept according as to whether the giving or keeping it will most promote the glory of Him to Whom I owe all my hopes for time and eternity."

Neither the assembly nor any gathering of the church is an *end* in itself. The special aim of the meeting may be worship; or to help believers to know and do the will of God; or the conversion of the unsaved. All church activities that have no direct or indirect bearing upon one or more of these three aims are a *waste* of time, talent and money.

Few have a "passion" for souls, but all can wait on the LORD for a real concern for those outside the Kingdom of God. And it is the business of *every* believer to make his or her contribution to Gospel effort.

Concentration means intensity. Mere excitement is useless. But the SPIRIT of GOD acts upon the feelings as well as the mind and the conscience. And although youthful exuberance is prone to exaggerate, it is far less "of the flesh" than is rancorous criticism or deadening unbelief.

#### WHEN WE COME TOGETHER

Too many meetings end with themselves; they result in little permanent blessing. The meeting is not an entertainment to be enjoyed, nor a performance to be criticised. It is a co-operative effort to help Christians or bring the unconverted to CHRIST.

Where there is a spiritual glow there will be little desire for fault-finding, whereas when the atmosphere is cold or worldly, defects are far more likely to attract



attention and arouse criticism. Need our minds be fretted just because the machinery does not work with clock-like regularity? Orderliness is the mind of the LORD, but so are life and liberty. There is something better than to have "a good time." Has a seed-thought of Divine truth gripped our spirits? Have we been helped to believe and obey better?

During a special mission or "campaign" the energies of the Christians are focussed upon the blessing of the unconverted. But every Gospel service should be regarded as a mission to non-Christians. Do those who attend realise their responsibility for the success of the meeting? Are they concerned about the unsaved in their midst? Do they pray during as well as before the service?

And when the meeting is over, does their concern continue? Do they avoid light and irrelevant talking lest someone who may be on the point of deciding should be hindered by their unconcern?

We usually get what we aim at. If we do not work for conversions, shall we get them? Are we justified in expecting them?

To every believer has been committed the ministry of reconciliation, the ministry of intercession, and the ministry of self-denial. Through this three-fold ministry flows the energy of the SPIRIT. The remedy for our spiritual poverty, individual and collective, is in our own hands. *Do we desire spiritual power and spiritual results with sufficient energy to be willing to pay the price?*  
E.A.

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## Concerning the Christ

(Matthew xxii. 42—New Trans.)

**I**N Matthew xxii. we are told in what manner our SAVIOUR passed one of the last days of His life here on earth. The different parties of the Jews plotted against Him, and on that day they came to Him with questions which had no other purpose than to catch

Him in His own words. The LORD answered all those questions one after the other with unsurpassed wisdom.

Then all at once *He* turns to His inquirers and Himself puts a question: "What think ye concerning the CHRIST? Whose Son is He?" That question did not mean quite the same thing as we mean by it, if we should ask it now.

The Jews, to whom he posed that question, certainly would not take it up as one at all concerning Himself. The LORD simply asked them their view of the MESSIAH, Whom they expected and to Whom their Scriptures witnessed. It was only a question in reference to their expectations concerning the MESSIAH. At once they reply: "The Son of David." "But," the LORD replies, "how then does David in Spirit call him LORD, saying, The LORD said to my LORD, Sit on my right hand until I put thine enemies under thy feet? If therefore David call Him LORD, how is He His son?"

They had put to Him difficult questions; here is one which quite disconcerts *them*. "And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day to question Him any more."

However, let us not think now that the SAVIOUR tried to pay the Jews with a return in kind, and to lay a snare for them. Such manners He left to His enemies. But He wanted to show them that they did not understand their own Scriptures; that things were written of their MESSIAH which they had overlooked. They did not understand that the MESSIAH was not only David's Son, but also GOD'S SON, and therefore David's LORD. To this truth the SAVIOUR tries to open their eyes. The name CHRIST or MESSIAH is for us now not the name of One Whom we are still expecting as such, but of One Who has come, with Whose history we are acquainted. For *us* the question of the LORD means: "What think ye concerning the CHRIST?" precisely as if He asked: "What do you think of Me? For Whose Son do you take Me?" Understood in this manner, the question is still most important. It is not a theoretical question,

but a quite practical one. Finally, we do not give the answer with words, but with our life yielded to His obedience.

Two answers are given to this question. The Pharisees give one answer. They said: "He is David's Son." And they were blind to the fact that He was GOD'S SON, too. He was to them only David's Son. Also a man, very excellent, yea, a prince, as mighty as the earth ever saw. But yet a man, and a man only! The other answer is that the CHRIST was David's Son indeed, but at the same time David's LORD; He was also GOD'S SON.

Let us listen for a moment to three witnesses about the CHRIST. The first is of GOD. When the LORD is standing at the bank of the Jordan baptised by John, still unrecognised by the people, through all those thirty years which lie behind Him, for "In the midst of you stands Whom ye do not know"—then God breaks silence and the Voice is heard out of the heavens: "This is My beloved SON, in Whom I have found My delight."

We may also listen to the witness of a devil, which is a very remarkable one: "I know Thee who Thou art, the HOLY ONE of GOD" (Luke iv. 34). In all the past centuries there had been no man who had not succumbed to the seductions of Satan, but now he has found his superior, and has to witness in spite of himself: "Thou art — the HOLY ONE of GOD." Finally, we listen to the witness of a man. Simon Peter followed the SAVIOUR for three years. During that time he watched Him in keen expectation. So he is competent to judge. Tell us, Peter, what do you think of your MASTER? And without any hesitation he answers: "He is the CHRIST, the SON of the living God" (Matt. xvi. 16). There you have the unanimous judgment of GOD, of a devil, and of a man. Heaven, hell, and earth witness that JESUS is the SON of God.

Dear reader, we also ask the question of you. What do you think concerning the CHRIST? Whose Son is He? I think you want courage to contradict that triple witness. Read the Gospels without prejudice. Let the Person of the SAVIOUR, as He meets you in the Holy

Scripture, influence you, and ask yourself: "Is it possible that He was only a man? Can a man, however excellent and high-minded, do the things He did? Can a man speak like He spoke? When a man spoke words of Himself like these: "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the FATHER unless by Me"; or, "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it," should you not think it arrogant of him in the highest degree, if He were not more than a mere man? But if you say in your heart: "He is the SON of God," that truth is so powerful that you must help to propagate it. You are obliged to choose: *pro* Him or *con* Him. We cannot remain neutral. What *do* you think of the CHRIST? Your answer will finally depend on the answer that you give Him to another question—this: What do you think of yourself? Do you consider yourself honest, religious, perhaps pious? Have you no feeling of your sin and guilt? Then you don't feel any need of a MEDIATOR and REDEEMER. But if you have fled in the distress of your sins to Him as the LAMB of GOD, laden with the sin of the world, then the question: "What do you think of the CHRIST?" has been decided for you. Then you kneel, with Thomas, before Him and, worshipping, you call out: "My LORD and my God!"

Then, as Paul, you do not want a higher title of honour than "bondman of JESUS CHRIST." And it becomes your greatest joy to battle for Him, to suffer and to devote your life to His glorious service.

J. MOL, Junr.

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## Some Thoughts on Habakkuk

BY THE EDITOR

**H**ABAKKUK was the prophet of "faith" in times when "faith" seemed almost about to expire. The days in which he lived and prophesied were bad in every sense of the word. The political situation had

become hopeless; social conditions were incurable; religious conditions had reached almost to the stage for which "there was no remedy," as the inspired Chronicler puts it. The national conscience had ceased to function when the last prophet of the age immediately preceding the Captivity appeared. His prophecy falls into three divisions, almost indicated by the chapters of the book.

In chapter i., the prophet unburdens his perplexed mind to his God.

In chapter ii., the divine comfort and vision are given.

In chapter iii., the psalm of exultant hope and joy fills the page.

(I)

The abnormal state of the world has always been a sore puzzle to thinking men. Not only men who walked in the light of revelation as did Habakkuk, nor men like ourselves who are privileged above any previous dispensation in having the written word and the indwelling SPIRIT; but thoughtful pagans themselves witnessed to their perplexity at the turn affairs took in their times. Ovid, the famous Latin poet, who lived on into the days of our LORD's youth, said things had now gone so awry that he was tempted to say there were no gods now in control of affairs. Brutus, some hundred years subsequent to Habakkuk, condemned virtue as being non-existent on account of certain, to him, quite inexplicable events. Pompey the Great, when overcome by Cæsar, declared that mist had now come over the eyes of Providence. Asaph, too, in his great experimental psalm of self-disclosure (Psalm lxxiii.) confessed that his feet had well nigh slipped as he had been sorely tempted almost to blasphemy, when he considered the apparent reversal of standards of right and wrong. In the sanctuary, the place of nearness to God, he found the problem solved by the consideration that this life is a state of trial and probation. Things may stagger godly folk to-day. To merely mention Russia, Japan, China, Germany, Rumania, and Spain is sufficient to awaken a sense of baffled understanding of the ways of God in His providence and moral government of the

world. At least that is in the minds of those who are not easily satisfied with copy-book maxims, and second-hand piously-sounding reflections. "It is good for me to draw near to God," was the inspired conclusion arrived at by Psalmist Asaph, and the Prophet Habakkuk, in his first chapter, also takes his way to the presence of God to pour out his turbulent, perplexed thoughts, his anguished heart, his bitter complaint, before Him.

What a great, good, gracious God the LORD JEHOVAH reveals Himself to be to His troubled servant in his distress. "This God is our God for ever and ever: *He will be our guide, even unto the end*" (Ps. xlviii. 14) (R.V.).

The prophet felt a moral shock, which we, in our different degrees, experience when we see some glaring spectacle of triumphant evil and unrighteousness. We somehow instinctively feel as Asaph did, that goodness and happiness should coincide. This does not spring from our own experience because there is much we meet in daily life which seems to contradict it, to baffle it, to shake it, to perplex it, both at home and abroad.

So it was with Habakkuk, living in days when the Chaldean conqueror was sweeping along in his violent course and threatening to take Judah in his victorious stride. Then, and now, the spectacle of a selfish conqueror of apparently endless resource and full of cruel resoluteness, sweeping little nations off the board and treating men and nations as pawns in his game or as "fish for his nets," as Habakkuk says, fills the beholder with amazement and consternation.

Moreover, the knowledge that the condition of his own nation called for dire chastisement for their almost unpardonable sins weighed heavily upon the prophet's heart. The unthinkable calamity was, however, that a worse nation than themselves should be God's rod for corrections. He cried out of violence and lawlessness on the part of Judah, to be met by the surprising revelation that a nation filled with craft, cruelty and

pride, such as the Chaldeans, should be used to chastise them. He is astonished in his very soul. "O LORD, Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Wherefore holdest Thou Thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up a man that is more righteous than he?"

So he feels the problem sore, and, like Hezekiah before him, and many another since his days, goes up to the watch-tower, to the mountain, where, alone with God, he can spread out the perplexity which fills his whole moral being because of what he beholds on every hand. There he gets his answer. There he learns the need of seeing time against the background of eternity. There he learns that the present holds the promise of the future. There he learns that faith and patience are the hall-mark of the spiritual life.

"Art not Thou from everlasting?" "From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God" (Ps. xc. 2). So the first and chief lesson for the pilgrim of faith is taught that faith's horizon is bounded by eternity. Job, in affliction, uttered the wise word that has re-echoed in the hearts of the godly from his day to ours, "Lo, these are parts of His ways" (Job. xxvi. 14), the fringes, or the borders only; and James, in his epistle, completes the story, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the LORD [of the LORD's ways with him]; that the LORD is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (St. Jas. v. 11).

"What I do thou knowest not now" is followed by "but thou shalt know hereafter" (St. John xiii. 7). Also, in the classic passage dealing with God's fatherly correction in Heb. xii. 11: "Afterwards" is the hinge upon which the door of mercy and blessing turns.

Habakkuk's perplexities and problems for his faith's trial arose from the apparent contradictions in God's known character and His present dealings. "Thou canst not look—Thou lookest!" "Thou holdest Thy tongue," while craft, cruelty, pride and oppression are rampant. Almost does he cite the complaint of Asaph in Ps. lxxiii., referred to earlier in this paper.

But in the watch-tower, in the attitude of heart and

the place apart, the true position for the strengthening of faith by the vision and voice of God, the prophet hears the great principle for faith, "The just shall live by faith." "If thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God," said our SAVIOUR to the sisters at Bethany, enunciating what ever had been, and all the time of our earthly pilgrimage must be, the attitude of faith. Outward retirement from the noise, bustle, confusion, distracting things; inward meditation as the soul waits only upon God; and earnest expectation, for He will speak, He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. These are the trio that are indispensable to the vision and the voice being seen and heard. Then the prophet was reminded that the vision was for "an appointed time"—God's time; "that it will surely come"—not tarry indefinitely, and that "the just shall live by faith."

God's promises reach a long distance and comprehend vast agencies for their fulfilment. "Blessed are they who in all circumstances confide in His word, and commit themselves to His keeping."

"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."

The prophet sought light and correction, both of which every truly intelligent and godly soul earnestly desires. Both were speedily granted him and the vision of gloom and of glory led him, in chapter iii., to compose a psalm of exultant joy and confidence in His God.

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



## An Effectual Prayer

*Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me. (Psl. l. 15.)*

“**N**O,” said the lawyer, “I shan’t press your claim against that man; you can get someone else to take the case, or you can withdraw it, just as you please.”

“Think there isn’t any money in it?”

“There would probably be a little money in it, but it would come, as you know, from the sale of the little house the man occupies and calls his ‘home.’ And I don’t want to meddle with the matter.”

“Got frightened out of it, eh?”

“Not at all.”

“I reckon the old fellow begged to get off?”

“Well, yes, he did.”

“And you caved in, I suppose?”

“Well, yes.”

“What in creation did you do?”

“I believe I shed a few tears.”

“The old fellow begged hard, you say?”

“No, I didn’t say; he didn’t speak to me.”

“Well, may I ask, whom did he address?”

“His FATHER in heaven.”

“He took to praying, did he?”

“Yes, but not for my special benefit. You see, it was this way; after finding the little house, I knocked on the outer door which stood ajar, but no one heard me, so I stepped into the little hall, and looked through the crevice of the door in to the sitting-room, and there upon the bed with her silver head high on the pillows, was an old lady who looked just like my mother did when I last saw her on earth. I was going to knock again when she said: “Come father, begin. I am ready now.” So down on his knees went the silver-haired man, still older, I suppose, than his wife; and I couldn’t have knocked then for the life of me. Well, he began; first, he reminded

God that they were still His submissive children, mother and him, and no matter what He saw fit to bring upon them, they would not rebel against His will. Of course, it was going to be hard for them to go out homeless in their old age, especially with poor mother so sick and helpless; but still they had seen sadder things than that. But oh, how different might it now be, had even one of their boys been spared to them! Then his voice somewhat broke, and a thin white hand stole from under the coverlet, and moved softly over his snow-white head. Then he went on to repeat that nothing could be so sad again, as the parting with their three sons—unless mother and himself should be separated!

But at last he fell to comforting himself with the fact that the gracious LORD knew that it was no fault of their own that mother and he were threatened with the loss of their little home, which to them meant beggary and the almshouse—a place they prayed the LORD to deliver them from entering, if consistent with His will. Then he quoted a number of promises concerning the safety of them that put their trust in the LORD. Yes, I should say he begged hard. In fact, it was the most thrilling plea to which I ever listened. And in conclusion he prayed for God's blessing upon those who were about to demand justice."

Pausing a moment in silence, the lawyer continued slowly, saying, "And I believe I would rather go to the poor-house myself than stain my heart and hands with the blood of such a prosecution as that."

"Little afraid to defeat that prayer, eh?"

"Bless your soul, man, you could not defeat that prayer. I tell you, he left it all subject to the will of God; yet he did not fail to make known his desires, claiming that we had been commanded to make our requests known unto God. But of all the pleading I ever heard, that was the most impressive. You see, I was taught that kind of thing myself in my childhood and why I was sent there to hear that prayer, I am sure I don't know—but I hand the case over."

"I wish you hadn't told me about the old fellow's prayer," said the client, uneasily.

"Why not?" asked the lawyer.

"Well, because I greatly desire the money that little place would bring. But like you, I also was taught the Bible straight enough when I was a youngster, and I hate to run counter to what you have just related. I wish you hadn't heard a word about it, and another time I wouldn't listen to petitions not intended for my ears."

The lawyer smilingly said, "You are wrong again, my dear fellow; it was intended for my ears, and yours, too; and God intended it. I remember hearing my aged mother sing about God moving in a mysterious way."

"Well, my mother also used to sing the same," said the client, as he twisted the claim-paper in his fingers. "You can call there in the morning if you like, and tell mother and him the claim has been meet."

"In a mysterious way," added the lawyer, smiling.

*"More Things are Wrought by Prayer Than This  
World Dreams of."*

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## The Disappointments of Life

*(Translated from the French—found in J.N.D.'s Bible.)*

*"THIS THING IS FROM ME."* (1 Kings xii. 24.)

**T**HE disappointments in life are in reality only the decrees of love. I have a message for thee this day, My Child; I will whisper it softly in thine ear, in order that the storm-clouds which appear may be gilt with glory, and that the thorns on which thou mayest have to tread may be blunted. The message is short—a tiny sentence—but allow it to sink into the depths of thine heart, and be to thee a cushion on which to rest thy weary head—"THIS THING IS FROM ME."

Hast thou never thought that all which concerns thee, concerns Me also? He that toucheth thee toucheth the

Apple of Mine eye (Zech. ii. 8). Thou hast been precious in Mine eyes, that is why I take a special interest in thine upbringing. When temptation assails thee, and "the enemy comes in like a flood," I would wish thee to know that "this thing is from Me." I am the God of circumstances. Thou hast not been placed where thou art by chance, but because it is the place I have chosen for thee. Didst thou not ask to become humble? Behold, I have placed thee in the very place where this lesson is to be learned. It is by thy surroundings and companions that the working of My will is to come about.

Hast thou money difficulties? Is it hard to keep within thine income? "THIS THING IS FROM ME." For I am He Who possesseth all things. I wish thee to draw everything from Me, and that thou depend entirely upon Me. My riches are illimitable (Phil. iv. 19). Put my promise to the test, so that it may not be said of thee "yet in this thing thou didst not believe the LORD thy God." Art thou passing through a night of affliction? "THIS THING IS FROM ME." "I am the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief" (Is. liii. 3). I have left thee without human support that in turning to Me thou mightest obtain eternal consolation (2 Thess. ii. 16-17).

Has some friend disappointed thee? One to whom thou hadst opened thy heart? "THIS THING IS FROM ME." I have allowed this disappointment that thou mightest learn that the best Friend is JESUS. He preserves us from falling, fights for us in our combats. Yea, the best friend is JESUS. I long to be thy Confidant.

Has someone said false things of thee? Leave that and come closer to Me, under My wings away from the place of wordy dispute; for I will bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day (Ps. xxxvii. 6).

Have thy plans been all upset? Art thou crushed and weary? "THIS THING IS FROM ME." Hast thou made plans, and then coming, asked Me to bless them? I wish to make thy plans for thee. Thou couldst not

perform it alone (Ex. xviii. 18). Thou art *but an instrument* and *not* an agent.

Hast thou desired fervently to do some great work for Me? Instead of which thou hast been laid on one side on a bed of sickness and suffering? "THIS THING IS FROM ME." I was unable to attract thine attention whilst thou wast so active. I wish to teach thee some of My deep lessons. It is only those who have learned to wait patiently, who can serve Me. My greatest workers are sometimes those who are laid aside from active service in order that they may learn to wield the weapon of prayer.

Art thou suddenly called to occupy a difficult position full of responsibilities? Go forward, counting on Me. I am giving thee the position full of difficulty for the reason that JEHOVAH thy God will bless thee in all thy works and in all the business of thy hands (Deut. xv. 18). This day I place in thy hands a pot of holy oil. Draw from it freely, My Child, that in all the circumstances arising in thy pathway, each word that gives thee pain, each interruption trying to thy patience, each manifestation of thy feebleness may be anointed with this oil. Remember that interruptions are Divine instructions. The sting will go in the measure in which thou seest Me in all things. "Therefore set your heart unto all the words that I testify among you this day . . . for it is your life" (Deut. xxxii. 46 and 47).

## On Some Awkward Personal Possessions

By QUARTUS

(2) MEMORY

THE faculty with which one forgets things" was a somewhat quaint definition, of this sometimes awkward personal possession, given by a bright young person. Yet memory is sometimes photographic, recalling with startling distinctness what one had hoped was buried in oblivion. Is this not so? At any rate, Pharaoh's chief butler in the story of Joseph found it to be so.

"I do remember my faults this day," he exclaimed, though the said faults dated back beyond two full years.

Scripture teaches us that not only in time but in eternity memory will be active, and may be a ceaseless source of discomfort to its possessors. "Son, remember, that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." "In thy lifetime," but now to find, after death and burial, the faculty of remembrance neither dead nor buried. So Dives remembers his father's house to which he is destined never to return; and the five brothers also whom he wishes could be warned to escape the doom that is his.

Whatever else, therefore, we leave behind when we lay aside the human vesture which has clothed us in the days of our fleshly pilgrimage, we shall carry forward into the new realm of existence—*memory*. Pharaoh's chief butler's fault of careless forgetfulness and base ingratitude had a tardy remembrance in a day when he could in some measure right the wrong. The remembrance of Dives, however, came too late for any such reparation to be made to Lazarus, or any personal amendment of life. "Son, remember"—sounded to Dives, the rich man of the story in St. Luke xvi., a note bespeaking a too late regret, remorse and despair. "Remember now thy CREATOR in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." This is the inspired advice of the disillusioned old king who, having drunk at all the wells of earthly satisfactions, recorded that "under the sun" all is vanity and vexation of spirit. So he urges the youth of his day, and of all the days to come, to "Remember now thy CREATOR in the days of thy youth." *So to remember Him* that never afterwards would they forget Him. This calls for decision of purpose;

"In the glad morning of my day,  
My life to give, my vows to pay,  
With no reserve, and no delay—  
With all my heart I come."

Such a resolve, such a remembrance of the CREATOR Who is also the REDEEMER, can only truly spring from a real acceptance of Him as SAVIOUR and LORD. Then, from a deep sense of His great love, the youthful heart can truly say:—

“Just as I am, Thine own to be,  
Friend of the young, Who lovest me,  
To consecrate myself to Thee,  
LORD JESUS CHRIST—I come.”

What a part memory will play, too, in the after-life of the believer, especially at the Judgment Seat of CHRIST.

“When I stand with CHRIST on high,  
Looking o’er life’s history:  
Then, LORD, shall I fully know,  
Not till then, how much I owe.”

What is done *now* will be seen *then* in its real character, the motive as well as the actual deed. How we shall remember then much that we are so apt to forget now!

A speaker of a bygone day used often to play upon words in order not only to arrest the attention of the hearer, but also to fasten the truth like a nail in a sure place. Take the word “remember,” he once said, and after dilating upon the faculty and responsibility of memory, he proceeded to behead it of the first syllable, thus reducing it to “member.” After impressing upon his believing hearers the privilege of being a member of CHRIST’s body, he then further denuded it of its initial letter. This left the word as “ember,” which, he went on to say, too often, alas! described many professors who once were burning and shining lights in the Christian fellowship, but who had long since ceased diffusing either light or warmth. This kind of warning is not out of date even in this year of grace. *How we need to keep ourselves in the love of God.*

Finally, what a treasure a memory may be if stored with the word of God. When we consider that in passing out of this scene memory will accompany us and remain part of ourselves for ever, what solemnity and importance attaches to this most personal possession—*my memory.*

(Next month (D.V.) “My Sins.”)

## On Watching and Waiting

*"Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors" (Prov. viii. 34).*

**I**N Old Testament days godly men watched and waited for their promised MESSIAH (1 Peter i. 11); in these days believers are called to watch and wait for the blessed hope, the coming LORD. More than one word is used in the original of the New Testament to describe what the translators render as "awaiting," "waiting for," or "looking for."

Of three of these the first we will consider here is given in a Greek Concordance as

TO WAIT FOR, TO EXPECT.

In our English version the same one is variously given as "waiting for" (Luke ii. 25; xii. 36; xxiii. 51); and as "looking for" (Luke ii. 38; Titus ii. 13; Jude 21). To the aged Simeon in Luke ii 25, it was revealed by the HOLY SPIRIT that he should not see death before he had seen the LORD'S CHRIST. In what sense then did he *wait*? Surely as one who expected: the secret of the LORD was with him, filling him with living faith and expectancy. As the Holy CHILD JESUS lay in his arms and the supreme moment for which he had waited so long came, he blessed GOD and said, Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation. Anna, the prophetess (Luke ii. 36-38) spoke to a group of waiting ones "to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Another beautiful example of a "waiting" one is the honourable counsellor Joseph of Arimathea, "Jesus' disciple, who also waited for the Kingdom of God," of whom each of the Evangelists makes mention. To the Jews the cross was indeed a stumbling-block, not so to Joseph. How far his spiritual intelligence went we do not know, but when the new tomb is opened to lay the body of his LORD therein, Joseph is mentioned as one who expects the Kingdom of God, as also did the penitent robber when he prayed, "LORD remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."



It is by our conduct far more eloquently than by our words that we tell to others, and above all to our LORD, how really we are expecting Him. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights shining, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their LORD . . . blessed are those servants whom the LORD when He cometh shall find watching" (Luke xii. 35-37).

We may well "wait" and "look" as those who "expect"; no signs are to be looked for, but "the LORD Himself shall come" and His voice will summons all His own to meet Him in the air (Cf. 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17).

Another word occurring once only yet rendered also as "wait" in 1 Thess. i. 10, is described as

"TO HOLD OUT, TO WAIT FOR AS FOR THE COMING  
OF THE MORN."

Those young believers at Thessalonica enduring bitter persecution and opposition for the sake of the Name of CHRIST are spoken of as "waiting for His SON from heaven, even JESUS." This waiting had a special character in their circumstances, namely, that of holding out, waiting as for the dawn through the long darksome hours of the night. But that the night would end in cloudless day they were confident as they waited for Him; meanwhile they so diligently served the living God that their "work of faith, and labour of love, *and patience of hope* called forth special thanksgiving to God from the Apostle who had brought the gospel to them.

A third word which calls for notice is not unlike our first one, but is described as

"TO WAIT LONG FOR" OR "TO AWAIT ARDENTLY."

The simile of the bride waiting for the bridegroom describes not so much the awaiting an event as the waiting for a person, the object of one's love. Not just a desire to leave a scene of suffering, sorrow, trial and difficulty, but an ardent desire to see the One Who has engaged our affections and won our hearts to Himself. *Waiting for* the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST (1 Cor. i. 7); our citizenship in heaven from whence we *look for* the Saviour, our LORD JESUS CHRIST (Phil.

iii. 21); these are where “to wait long for” and “to await ardently” perhaps more clearly emphasise the familiar words of the A.V.

Not only do we wait and ardently long for that moment of “the Rapture,” but the earnest expectation of creation *waiteth* for the subsequent manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. viii. 19), awaiting ardently that day . . . “and not only they but we ourselves . . . waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies, if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience *wait* for it” (Rom. viii. 25). Blessed is the man that heareth . . . watching . . . waiting.

“We wait for Thee, Thou wilt arise  
 Whilst hope her watch is keeping;  
 Forgotten then in glad surprise  
 Shall be our years of weeping:  
 Our hearts beat high, the dawn is nigh  
 That ends our pilgrim story  
 In Thine eternal glory.

S.G.S.

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## On The History of Faith

A NEW chapter in the trial of man came after the flood when the sword of government was put into his hand, to maintain authority and repress vice; and proof is given that both the governor and the governed were respectively unable, the one to govern in righteousness, and the rest to obey. Human might did not attain so great a degree after the flood as before it, and the deeds of the giants before were admired by those after the deluge, and became the means of developing a latent evil not seen before. Idolatry spread rapidly among men. They who would not bow to their Creator made an image and bowed to it. Three distinct features of fallen nature have been made clear, violence, corruption, and idolatry. Nay, it is not enough to say “features” of fallen nature, these are *the* nature itself, for in every

possible way in which man acts he shows himself in one of these aspects. That such a nature could ever work righteousness was impossible. *And here begins the working of a new principle, in a new form, namely, Faith;* and faith in separation from the world, exemplified in Abram. From that moment the history of the world is made subservient to the history of faith. For it is God's remedy morally to meet all the evil in man. And the character of His dealings with an individual or with a nation is in strict relation to the faith, or the want of it, of those with whom He is dealing. The word abounds in instances of this. The energy of subjective faith was, or should have been, more plainly seen when the object of faith was presented—to the nation of Israel, first by type; the object, CHRIST, was revealed for this end. If His worth and glory were but dimly seen in the types and shadows, yet all His varied excellences were there: only to be seen, indeed, when the True Light shines upon them; otherwise, dark and meaningless. And even when seen in the reflected light of CHRIST, what is that to the full blaze of His revealed Person! And because the revelation in Grace of the SON was needed for the manifestation of God, it was equally necessary that the ruin and sin of man should be brought fully into view, so that he might be shut up to faith. Whether we look at the corruption before the flood, or at heathen idolaters and privileged Israel after, every part of this process was indispensable and preparatory to the due time when CHRIST came into the world. There was faith before this, for Abel brought his lamb by faith, and his view of the Object was necessarily less clear; for no symbol did ever concentrate within itself all that CHRIST is. The efficacy of His work, the glory of His Person, were spread, so to say, over illimitable space, till He came to embody in Himself the whole infinite extent. Just so light was created, the first thing, and before the sun was made there were three evenings and mornings. But when on the fourth day the sun was set in the firmament, it became to this earth the source of light. All

the light now comes from it, though light was first in being. There were many saints that trusted in GOD, as the ALMIGHTY, as JEHOVAH. But JESUS gathers up all the rays of faith; and He is the centre of all, for even as He is the one source of all blessings, which diverge like rays of light from a common centre, so is He now the One Object to which saints now turn, to whom the faith and hope and love and every other holy emotion saints may feel, all converge and meet in Him.

The Church taken to heaven, and GOD's purposes of grace in and by it accomplished, an awful though brief period of judgment passes over the world. The processes of faith are followed by the processes of judgment. For to teach faith, and thus bring souls to Himself, is not all GOD's purpose—an essential part truly. But GOD is going to set His King upon His holy hill of Zion, and when the King is there, all who have rejected and despised Him, who said, "We will not have this man to reign over us," He will break with a rod of iron, and will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. The earth is cleared from all things that offend, and CHRIST's righteous and kingly rule begins in millennial blessedness.

This blessedness is not introduced by the gospel of grace. Between the moment when the special teachings of faith cease, and the glory of CHRIST as King is displayed, is the time when the nations are judged. During that tremendous period, sin will have its fullest development, and these judgments become a divine necessity. Else there could be no joyful time of peace for the earth. *So judgment is first, then peace.*

How baseless the notion that the preaching of the gospel is the means for renovating the earth, for making all things new, and bringing in universal blessing. That all who now believe are supremely blest is most true. Believers are now a new creation, before GOD creates a new heaven and a new earth. But the question is whether the word declares that the millennium will be brought in by the gospel of grace. The only answer is that such is not the declared purpose of GOD. This to some appears a bold assertion. Minds not subject to

the word dislike it as too dogmatic. The truth is always dogmatic, and must be so, or it ceases to be the truth. Both the Old Testament and the New declare that the reign of the LORD JESUS upon the earth will be ushered in by unsparing judgment upon the wicked. The present dispensation of grace will not, as it were, fade away in the bright light of millennial glory, as the light of the stars is lost in the blaze of day, but a dark night comes between in which wickedness and judgment reach their climax. This present dispensation closes under the blackest cloud that ever settled down upon this guilty world. And this is not a mere inference, however legitimate, but the plain statement of scripture, repeated in the Prophets, in the Gospels, Epistles, and the Revelation, which is the special book of judgment upon the earth. The gospel is to deliver from judgment, of which the New Testament speaks in clearer tones than were ever heard before. The New Testament alone declares that wrath is revealed from heaven.

The Old Testament reveals neither grace so sovereign, nor wrath so imminent. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." And it is plain from this that the gospel does not contemplate all believing. The LORD JESUS commanded that the gospel should be preached to all, but a selection is made on the principle of faith. The righteousness of God which is by faith of JESUS CHRIST is truly unto all, for all have sinned; and there is no other righteousness than that which is by faith, *but it is only upon those that believe*. Now "all men have not faith" (2 Thess. iii. 2). Believers are spoken of as *elect, called and chosen* (see 1 Cor. i. 26, etc.) "For ye see your calling," "God hath chosen." If the gospel were the means of bringing in the millennium, would it be said "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble"? would not all be included? It is quite true that in this scripture God hath chosen the foolish, the weak, the base, and the despised, in order "that no flesh should glory in His presence." But the fact remains that God hath *chosen*

those that are counted as nothing, "things that are not," and hath included in His calling not many of the wise and great and noble of the world. To the "called and chosen" God has made CHRIST JESUS to be their wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. The gospel has called them out, and separated them from the world unto God. If the blessings of the gospel are for those whom it separates from the world, how can it be blessing for the world as such, from which it separates?

Believers now are called to heavenly joys, not to earthly blessedness. The earth is left for righteous dealing from a sin-avenging God. When His name is vindicated, then He will bring in His salvation, which in the millennium is not heavenly blessing, but earthly—very different object from that of the gospel of grace now preached; for by it souls are called, and chosen for heavenly glory. Whereas judgment, not grace, purges the earth from its evil that it may receive millennial blessing. We may surely say that, if early peace and prosperity were the intended result of the gospel, it is a manifest failure. Not because the gospel is not GOD's peace for man, but because sin and all evil is so antagonistic, so ingrained in nature, that the gospel of grace brings out all the enmity of man against God. The LORD JESUS said that He came not to bring peace but a sword, that a man's enemies would be those of his own house. This is the natural and sure result of the gospel, where those who receive it are separated from the mass and trained for heavenly glory. For how indeed can the world which loves its own, love those who though in it are not of it? Again, at the first preaching of the word, the LORD JESUS made known in parable that the gospel would not be received by all; only one class out of four received the truth and its blessing. On the contrary, the preaching of the word gave an occasion for the sowing and the growing of tares, and in result the whole field where the good seed was sown would be given up to judgment. Does this give a picture of success to the gospel in the sense of winning the world for God and for CHRIST? *Nay, is it not evident that*

*the power and aim of the gospel is not to win the world, but to win souls for Christ, to gather them to heaven?* Do not the fishermen show the result of preaching, when having drawn their net to shore they cast away the bad? that a distinction is made? Would separation be the prominent feature in the parable of the closing scene of the gospel dispensation if the purpose of the gospel were to bring in millennial happiness? The fact is that, if there had not been good seed sown, there would not have been tares. That is, the gospel of grace has been through its rejection the means indirectly of the worst evil. But when grace is the principle, faith must be the means; and faith implies election. And God has His election from among the Gentiles as well as out of Israel: "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts xv. 13 *et seq.*). In this passage words are used which clearly prove God's purpose in sending the gospel: "To *take out of them*" "the *residue of men*" "from among the Gentiles." Every creature, every created thing, belongs to CHRIST; and grace, according to the eternal wisdom of God, is now calling out a company of redeemed men, and would make them a special witness of the power and love of God; a bride for the SON, a body for the HEAD, companions for the risen man in glory: this is the present work of the HOLY GHOST. The millennium is an ulterior purpose, and in contrast with the present dispensation.

It may be said that the gospel has failed to bring in universal peace through the unfaithfulness of the church. But if the church had never failed, if the first love had never been left, and the first glory never dimmed, it could never have brought earthly blessings for the earth. Had the church rightly any portion on earth save such as the LORD Himself had—scorn and persecution? The church owes its origin as well as its highest blessings to a CHRIST first rejected here and then exalted in heaven, whither the church is soon to follow. How can the saints be the earth's universal blessing—for it is their presence here which is said to ensure it—

when they are so soon to leave it? But the church is not the witness of earthly peace, nor is it the aim of the gospel of grace to bring it in, but to take out a people for heaven. Judgment upon a CHRIST-rejecting world is GOD's revealed way of bringing in righteousness and peace. The indirect but not remote effect of the gospel is truly judgment. And though we know that the revelation of wrath is not far distant, yet the longsuffering of GOD for a little while may delay the judgment for the purpose of salvation; but vengeance is sure. In Noah's day the flood was delayed for one hundred and twenty years that Noah might have a place of safety. Even for Lot the judgment upon the cities of the plain was stayed till he reached Zoar. For, said the Avenger, I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. So when the time comes, when the LORD shall have taken away all His own people, swift and heavy judgment will fall upon "those that know not GOD, and that obey not the gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST." Upon these and not upon the heathen will fall the heaviest wrath.

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## A Warning Word

**M**ANY modern religious writers class the LORD JESUS CHRIST with other leaders of religion, and the true believer instinctively recoils at this insult offered to Him and resents it deeply. He feels that his LORD and SAVIOUR is being (to put it very mildly) slighted, and that thereby the old enemy, the devil, is subtly attacking His true and essential deity. This insidious poison is, of course, only part of a very ancient form of opposition to the Person of our LORD. Indeed, back in the days when He Himself trod the streets of Jerusalem this was greatly in evidence, as St. John's gospel clearly witnesses.

To-day the same old enemy of GOD and His CHRIST is very actively engaged in this evil propaganda both in its gross vulgar form and also in new "spiritual revelations" so-called. For there is a steadily increasing number now of popular well-written books, by well-



known authors, which essay to depict the life of JESUS. In very beautiful phraseology His character is described as sublime and exemplary, but this high-sounding verbiage in many cases only serves to conceal the fact that all acknowledgment of the Eternal Sonship and essential Deity of the MAN CHRIST JESUS is being withheld if not actually denied by the writers.

Not less pernicious, but far more subtly is the evil when presented under the gloss of great spirituality; when those assuming to take up the position of being the only believers truly and properly representing the church of God on earth, yet deny the Eternal Sonship of CHRIST. By the claim to special light such endeavour to cover their guilt, although in reality intensifying it thereby. With quibbling words and grandiose expressions concerning His Deity, these misleaders of simple pious souls yet deny the Eternal Sonship to be revealed truth. God has given us a perfect picture concerning Himself as revealed in His SON JESUS CHRIST our LORD. God is love—and necessarily eternally so. How, in the past eternity, before ages of time came to be, could God have loved if with Him there had not always been that supreme Object of His heart Whom the HOLY SPIRIT in Col. i. 13 calls "*the Son of His love*" (lit. Gk.)?

Again, how could the LORD JESUS Himself when on the earth say, "O *Father*, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was," if he were not the SON of the Father in eternity?

To deny the Deity of CHRIST or His Eternal Sonship strikes at the very root of the gospel of the grace of God, and ruins the beauty and comfort of John iii. 16, for example.

Satan can be as active as "an angel of light" (2 Cor. xi. 11) as he is "as a roaring lion" (1 Peter v. 8), and by his foul breath as well as by his fierce opposition would dim the perfect picture given by God of "the SON of His love." However much ingenious efforts are made to gild or explain it away, evil teaching remains just what it is in relation to the truth of God, namely, insidious poison of which the believer needs to beware, however respectable the vendor appears to be. J.F.K.

## He's Standing on the Shore

LIKE billow following billow,  
 Measured, yet sweeping by,  
 The roll of time goes ever on,  
 A wild monotony!  
 But turn ye from the waters  
 Our eyes are gazing o'er,  
 To where the flush of dawning  
 Is lighting yonder shore.

How slow the night and dreary!  
 Long has the net been down:  
 And greater seems the labour,  
 With little fruit to crown.  
 But who is this? A form is there  
 Like ONE we've seen before:  
 Is it—oh, can it be—the LORD  
 Who standeth on the shore?

The thought of such a vision—  
 It chases all the dark!  
 Now, dancing o'er the waters,  
 Speeds the erst listless barque.  
 He speaks, the net is lowered—  
 'Tis empty now no more.  
 It is the LORD—even JESUS!  
 He's standing on the shore!

Oh, the welcome that is waiting  
 When the boat is pulled to land!  
 The love in those eyes shining,  
 The clasp of that dear hand!  
 And He sets us down beside Him,  
 Around His own spread board,  
 And He makes us with Him sharers—  
 Yes, 'tis indeed the LORD!

O, fisher, toiler of the night,  
 Long though the hours may be,  
 Behind the darkness there is ONE  
 Preparing joy for thee!  
 And see, the light is breaking through,  
 'Tis sunrise on before;  
 The feast is spread, and JESUS waits—  
 He's standing on the shore.

J.R.

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## Book Reviews

*CHRIST and the Created.* By Samuel Gorman (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, London, 2/6).

We frankly admit that neither title nor summary of this book appealed to us. "All great leaders of religion have some kind of creed upon which they build their faith. The Founder of Christianity has His creed," etc. Now whenever writers class our LORD — the LORD of Glory—with mere human leaders of religion, or with great men of the world, all true believers instinctively feel that their LORD and SAVIOUR is being slighted, and at once suspect the enemy of seeking to attack the deity of CHRIST.

We were glad indeed, however, that the book was better than the title or advertisement led us to expect; although the language at times is none too reverent, to our mind. While on the subject of language, we note a plentiful sprinkling of split infinitives!

There are passages which we much enjoyed; and the author succeeds in his object of showing what God in the Person of CHRIST thinks of man. He gives our LORD's mind as to the morality, religion and civilisation of man. In a characteristically lucid style the author makes it abundantly clear that man, if left to his own efforts is hopelessly lost; that his own righteousness in the sight of a Holy God is at best but as filthy rags.

This book is perhaps more suited for the unconverted "wise" man of the world, rather than those who to their

eternal blessing and present joy have tasted of the saving grace of God. We would recommend it to those of our readers who have any of these "wise" men among their acquaintances. J.F.K.

*A Six-Year Plan in Bible Teaching.* By D. A. S. Candy (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1/-).

We can thoroughly recommend this book. It is a slim, handy little volume, the value of which must not be judged either by its size or price.

From cover to cover it is packed with sound, helpful advice for systematic Bible teaching, invaluable to the Christian worker.

What specially impressed us was the practical way in which the author deals with one of the real difficulties of the Christian worker, i.e., that of explaining clearly and simply how to receive salvation. On page 52, e.g.:

"As our last point for consideration, may we suggest that there is need to teach one who is seeking salvation how to receive the LORD JESUS CHRIST into his heart. A good many disappointing experiences are due to the worker's failure to do this. People are urged to give their hearts to CHRIST, or in still vaguer phraseology to decide for Him, and all the emphasis is on *their* side of the contract, but if we will take such verses as St. John i. 12, or Revelation iii. 20, and guide the seekers to receive the SAVIOUR to indwell their hearts and lives—then the emphasis is upon CHRIST and His position and work, and eternal life is seen as the outcome."

The inclusion on page 46 of "A Bird's Eye View of the Bible"—an adaptation from an outline by Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, is another useful feature of this really splendid little book. M.G.H.

## On the History of Idolatry

*(In connection with the names of the days of the week)*

**R**EMEMBER the sabbath day to keep it holy. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work."

The Egyptians dedicated each day of the week to one of their gods. Processions and obscene mirth characterised the homage paid to them. JEHOVAH commanded the Israelites to keep holy the Sabbath day, and the divine reason for the consecration of this day is that God, after the six days' work of creation, rested on the seventh day. After the work of six days the command was imperative to rest on the seventh. It is not a bare permission, but a command, and in effect the prohibition of idolatrous feasts. Working six days and resting the seventh cut off all opportunity for the riotous feasts of idolatry, and the special guard of the law against it is plain. Moreover, we see that idolatry interferes with God's arrangements for the social order of everyday life. Among the heathen, starting from Egypt, every day of the week was consecrated to some idol. The same signification of name for each of the seven days is found in the East, in the barbarous North, and in Rome when it was the great centre of civilization and of the world's power. The same names used by Pagans are retained by Christendom—names in honour of some god, and a proof how wide-spread that form and aspect is, that had its development, if not its origin, in idolatrous Egypt. In our own land, the Quakers made a vain attempt against these pagan names by adopting the terms, First day, Second day, etc.; but they were too deeply implanted to be uprooted by such an isolated body. What is in a name? Nothing *per se*. But the fact of identity of names proves that the stream of idolatry which issued from Egypt has washed the shores of other countries in Asia and Europe.

When the LORD JESUS was here on the earth, He condensed the whole law into two commandments. "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. The second is like

unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. xxii.). If the first and great commandment strikes at the root of idolatry, the second no less denounces the fruits of it. The sins forbidden in the second table of the law are the fruits of the flesh truly, but they flow direct from idolatry; and when the LORD JESUS said "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," He summed up in a word the whole second table of the law. Idolatry forbids none, permits all, sanctions some; for the feasts observed in praise of their idols were the occasions for excess of riot, and debauchery was the incense offered to them. The morality of idolaters is on par with their worship. Their moral sense was governed by superstition: this led to vice that allowed no check.

Honour to parents is the first thing in the second table. The Egyptians, like the Spartans afterwards, paid respect to old age; but this might be paid where there was no honour rendered to parents such as the law enjoined, and of which obedience is the essence. Whether this commandment was commonly observed by the youth of Egypt, or not, we know that filial obedience forms no part of the code of idolatry, nor does it forbid anything that the law of God forbids. On the contrary the two next prohibitions are sanctioned. The Egyptians annually sacrificed a girl, and some affirm a boy and a girl, to the Nile. In cities called *Typhonian* at certain seasons men were immolated. Theft and false witness were venial. Not the perpetration of the crime, but the discovery of it was considered shameful.

Such was the condition into which idolatry plunged mankind. Nor is this the worst aspect of it. It was far worse, and so displayed in Israel and Judah that the images of the gods whose worship sanctioned such abominations were placed in the temple of JEHOVAH. It was lowering the true God to the level of their idols. As with the Gentile so with the Israelite, their gods were not only the deifying of the worst passions of man, but the blinded and perverse mind fastened upon the objects around it, and clothed them with supernatural

power. All that was grand or fearful, all that inspired awe or admiration, was deemed the dwelling-place of a god. Day and night, the winds, the sea were presided over by an imaginary deity. A god was found on the mountain top, and in the gloomy cavern. The smiling cornfield and the dark recesses of the forest, rivers, fountains, each had its tutelary divinity. Gradually, near the sacred places, temples were raised, and a symbol of the god placed therein; then homage paid to it until at last even the imaginary deity had to give place to the material idol. If amid all this darkness there was with some the faintest idea of a sole Power or Being above all, as with the Athenians (Acts xvii.), it was only that he was too high and too great to be concerned with man. A god unknown must have his shrine; but the true God was unknown, for He is so much concerned with man that in His love He gave His only-begotten Son to die for Him, that believing He might not perish but have everlasting life.

If we turn for a moment to secular writers, we find that this notion of an otiose god largely obtained in the East, in India. Among the Hindus, their "Supreme" was so wrapped up in his own perfections as to commit the charge of this world to inferior deities, and therefore in his relation to men and things above in eternal sleep. This was their "Brahm," who, in his primary state, is a being without qualities or attributes, without intellect, without consciousness, without intelligence! A being without these is an impossibility: The Supreme is, *The absolute* NOTHING!! But Brahm awakes to consciousness (how such a nonentity could is a marvel!), and then he becomes omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and exclaims "I am!!!" And this is where the vaunted intellect of man leads us when it prys into the regions above mere matter. Western philosophy does not travel by the same route, but its last stage is not less absurd. For if the Hindu, in his mythological journey back to the Original Cause of all, arrives at eternal sleep; confusion, or chaos, with the eternity of matter is the Ultima Thule of the Pagan west, where was found no other solution of the problem of good and

evil as seen in the present condition of creation, than that each is eternal and was ever in conflict.

Historians say that idolatry as a system was carried from Egypt to India after the age of Joseph, or about the year B.C. 1635, or a little later. That afterwards the same organised system spread from the North-East of Asia to the North-West of Europe, and prevailed throughout this region before B.C. 542. The Hindu doctrine of Brahm seems to confirm this.

GOD's assertion of Himself as "I AM" could never have been conceived by fallen man, and it must have been carried to India from the land where that NAME was first declared. Those who have examined Hindu mythology assert that its fundamental doctrine is one God. (What kind of God it is we have just seen.)

If so, then there is the fact of GOD's revelation of Himself as the ONE GOD, to the Gentile world; the responsibility of the idolater in presence of this revelation, and the perversion of this truth by man, under the power of Satan. Divergent in detail and development as this system became in different countries, its identity as to source is also seen in that time is reckoned by weeks and days of the week are consecrated to the same or similar gods.

The days of the week are thus known (and given in Ency. Metro. Vol. ix. Intro.) in the Indian, Roman, and North European or Scandinavian languages.

1. Andity War=Dies Solis, the Sun's day—Sunday.
2. Soma War= Dies Lunae, the Moon's day—Monday.
3. Mungela War=Martis dies, Thisco's day—Tuesday.
4. Boodha War=Mercurii dies, Woden's day—  
Wednesday.
5. Vrihaspat War=Iovis dies, Thor's day—Thursday.
6. Shukra War=Veneris dies, Frea's day—Friday.
7. Themisker War=Saturni dies, Seater's day—  
Saturday.

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(This, and the companion paper in the February issue on THE HISTORY OF FAITH, are from a series of articles on IDOLATRY, published in the Bible Treasury some fifty years ago. Being in a sense so timely, and timeless, we are sure our thoughtful readers will welcome their reappearance here.)



## On a Good Thing

**I**T is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD," says the writer of Psalm xcii. It is a good thing for the children of GOD to be found praising their Heavenly FATHER and their REDEEMER. Praise is comely for the upright, and the soul that is occupied with praise will find very little time for complaint.

The heading of the Psalm is also instructive: "*A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath Day.*" To the godly Israelite, the rest afforded by the regular return of the seventh day of the week was an occasion for singing praise to the name of the MOST HIGH. How do we spend the LORD's Day? Surely it is well, at the close of each week, before the dawning of the LORD's Day, to think back over His gracious dealing with us during the week that is past. That is a "good thing." There is, of course, a daily recognition of the LORD's grace to us; but it is well to remember, week by week, before we appear at His table to remember Him in His death, how much there is for which to thank Him for all the grace and goodness experienced by us during the week that has passed.

The daily remembrance of His goodness is brought before in verse 2: "*To shew Thy loving-kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night.*" As we rise, it is with a song of praise to Him for His preserving grace throughout the dark watches of the night; and as we lay our head upon the pillow, it is to be with another song of praise for His faithfulness through the day.

If this is true of every morning and evening it is also true of the morning and evening of our life. Verse 13 of our Psalm speaks of "*those that be planted in the house of the Lord.*" Young people, what a privilege is yours who are blessed with godly parents, who have planted your feet in the house of the LORD, who have set them on the right road. To you belongs the promise that you "shall flourish in the courts of our God." Yes, the soul that delights in the things of God will thrive on them. "They go from strength to strength." But

there must be *the personal acceptance of CHRIST as SAVIOUR*. "Every plant, which my heavenly FATHER hath not planted, shall be rooted up," is the solemn word of our LORD.

Then, too, there is a promise for the older ones. Verse 14 tells us that "they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." What a wonderful honour, that the Lord allows his own still to bear fruit, even after their natural forces have become dimmed, and gives them to be "fat and flourishing" in soul; "*to shew that the Lord is upright.*" There is, perhaps, no greater proof, before the eyes of the world, of the faithfulness of God, than to see how He preserves His own. It cannot be gainsaid.

In the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews, we have another "good thing." Verse 9 tells us that "it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." How important this is! Is my heart established with grace? This is a searching question. We may all rest upon a foundation of God's grace and mercy to ourselves (for that is, after all, the basis of our redemption), and yet our hearts may not be established with grace. We may have a knowledge of the scriptures, and be great teachers of the word, but that will not keep our hearts if they are not established with grace. The apostle Peter, in the closing words of his second epistle, urges us to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST. That is the secret. He Who, when upon earth, was the manifestation of grace and truth, is the only One Who can establish our hearts with grace. "It is a good thing" to be thus established.

In 2 Timothy i. 14, the Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy to keep "that good thing which was committed to thee." Verse 13 enjoined him to hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love, and he is called upon to hold fast that sacred charge which had been laid upon him—"that good thing"—by the HOLY GHOST which dwelleth in us. Have you had a good thing committed to you? Hold it fast! The LORD is coming, and His word from the glory is: "Hold fast till I come." An aged brother, just before he departed to be with the

LORD, reminded us that we cannot all do great things for the LORD: all are not called upon to do daring exploits or great service; but, said he, there is a special prize for holding fast.

While our giving of thanks is to the FATHER, and our establishment in grace is the work of the LORD JESUS, the power to hold fast "the good thing" which has been committed to us comes from the HOLY SPIRIT, Who dwelleth in us. Let us, then, not grieve Him, nor quench His power, but allow Him to work in us that which is well-pleasing to God.

With all these injunctions for us, our gracious God does not fail to give us His abundant blessing. In Psalm lxxxiv. 11, we read: "The LORD GOD is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: *no good thing* will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." So let us walk after a godly fashion, and we may be assured that *every good thing* is ours.

R.E.A.R.

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## On Some Awkward Personal Possessions

By QUARTUS.

### 3.—MY SINS.

YES, they *are* my sins, *my* own personal, private property. No one else would own them. I cannot transfer them. If I try to forget them, they persist in claiming close acquaintance with me, even as the royal penitent exclaims in his sorrowful Psalm, "My sin is ever before me."

It is fairly easy for me to philosophise upon the general subject of sin and sinfulness; to say that sin does not arise as part of the necessary order of the universe, but has its origin, or spring, in a personal will revolting against God and goodness. Again, I may entirely accept the Apostolic definition that "sin is lawlessness," and say that the origin of evil and the final judgment of it presents an equal abyss to the human

mind. But when one has said all this there is what Scripture terms "the plague of his own heart," the sour stream running through his own life, and the bitter sense of futility in having missed the mark.

Pondering the confused medley of affairs that go to make up the lives of men, one is arrested by the sound of voices echoing down the corridors of sacred history burdened with the recurring refrain, *I have sinned*.

Sometimes the tones seem sullen and remorseful, as an Achan, a Saul, a Judas utter the words. At other times there is a deep note of penitence or contrition, sounded as the Psalmist, the Prodigal Son, and the Apostle of the Gentiles speak. But whether remorseful or repentant, there is an undertone of sadness or sorrow clearly to be heard, for sin is the worst thing in the world, though, alas, so often lightly committed.

There is a story of the early days of the Christian era of a pious man, who had offended the emperor by the plainness of his speech to him as well as by the rebuke of a holy life. The monarch, considering himself greatly affronted, determined to punish the good man, and asked his courtiers what would be the best way to be revenged. "Send him away into exile," suggested one of them. "Confiscate his goods," urged another. "Cast him into prison, loaded with chains," said a third. "Put him to death," cried a fourth. Another, who knew the old saint better, broke in with: "You are all deceived; you cannot punish *him* so. If you send him into exile, the whole world is his fatherland; if you take away his goods, you will but rob the poor upon whom he always bestows them; if you thrust him into prison, he will embrace his chains and be counting himself happy to suffer for CHRIST's sake if you put him to death, you do but open to him the sooner the gates of Paradise. Sir, I know the holy bishop. If you wish to be revenged, force him to commit what he calls a sin. Compel him to do something he considers to be wrong. For he fears nothing in the world but that, neither exile, loss of goods, nor torments, nor death. That man fears nothing but sin."

In these days the sense of sin seems to be very slight,

and the fear of sinning almost non-existent. Yet sin still remains as the worst thing in the world and cleaves to every one, for "all have sinned and [do] come short of the glory of God." "God be praised, however, that there is a Sacrifice for sins; that sins may be forgiven for His Sake Who died for sinners; that sins are completely blotted out as a thick cloud by God for all who believe His word and embrace His mercy through the redemption there is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD. So that the repentant believing soul may hear, as it were, the Voice of God saying:—

"All thy sins were laid upon Him,  
JESUS bore them on the tree;  
God, Who knew all, laid them on Him,  
And, believing, thou art free."

For is it not written in the inspired and infallible Book, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, *and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*"

"My sins?" enquires the exercised soul, "my sins?" and the look of faith to the Crucified One enables such to sing:

"My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin—not in part, but the whole,  
Is nailed to His Cross: and I bear it no more:  
Praise the LORD, praise the LORD, O my soul."

"His Name shall be called JESUS, for He shall save His people *from their sins.*" Let His people, then, ponder the apostolic word: Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? and his indignant rejoinder, God forbid; far be the thought!

For through defective teaching, or lack of spiritual exercise, some may think that the Saviourhood of our BLESSED LORD is concerned only with the *penalty* of our sins. Such should remember that He saves His people *from their sins.* His Atoning Death has fully met the *penalty* question, for there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in CHRIST JESUS. But what about the *power* of sin in daily, personal life. He Who

*died* to save, now *lives* to keep and to save from the *power* of sin, and will *come* again to save from the *presence* of sin. Meanwhile, *He is able* to keep you from falling, guard you from stumbling—then let us ask ourselves why we fall so often and stumble so much. The question of “my sins” is evidently meant to draw me to my Saviour, and keep me close to Him until the day when “presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”

*Next month (D.V.): “My Past.”*

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## Some Thoughts on Habakkuk

*(Continued from page 20.)*

THE vision was to be seen, and written for others to see; to be read, and recorded for the quickening of faith and the patience of hope. It was to be permanently recorded, for as another has said, “Tradition is uncertain, and may be corrupted. Philosophy is insufficient, and human reason is delusive. The testimony of men would continually perplex and mislead. But the word of God stands for ever, an assurance and guide to all generations.” So the word is always “To the law and to the testimony.”

The vision, with its two-fold message of gloom and joy, with its near and distant applications, was to be made plain in order that it should be understood by the reader and should stir him to action; “that he may run that readeth it,” not as so often strangely misquoted, “he that runs may read.” It is a stirring vision of a five-fold woe and of universal blessing. “How forcible are right words,” says Job, and the words of the LORD are right words energizing those who attend to them.

The destiny of Israel, as well as the doom of their oppressors, being involved in the purport of the vision, it behoved them to become acquainted with it, and so Habakkuk was to set it forth in the boldest and most impressive form, one by which even the most heedless and negligent would be arrested.

The heart of the vision, its basal theme, might perhaps be best expressed as the contrast between the man who is puffed up with self-confidence, and the man whose whole confidence is in God. Whether Jews, Chaldeans or ourselves as individuals, the plain truth is: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith" (Hab. ii. 4).

Any man or race of men which exalts itself against God will have a crooked, uneasy, restless soul and a certain fearful reckoning to face. Whereas he who confides in God, unshaken even when things seem at the darkest, who trusts when it seems impossible to trace His workings, such an one will live, in the fullest and highest sense of the word, and be vindicated at the end.

The five-fold woe, pronounced upon the haughty dispoilers and oppressors, who, in ignorance that they were but instruments in God's hands for correction of His people, reveals the Chaldean character, or five aspects of it. A *plunderer*, a *Babelite*, a *builder*, a *league breaker* and an *idolator*. Rapacity, pride, covetousness, craftiness, idolatry, and drunkenness were the sins which brought down the Babylonian empire, and this is part of the vision.

The vision of glory is in ii. 14: "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." Of this glorious time an earlier prophet had spoken (Isa. xi. 7), giving full details as to when it would be, and if ever such an inspiring vision was needed by the Jewish race it was just when Habakkuk was given the same message in an altogether different setting.

The vision of gloomy woe and of glorious future universal blessing closes with a vision for the present. "The LORD is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him." As the royal psalmist, at a much earlier date, had realized and recorded, "The LORD is in His holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven: His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men," so our prophet, in his day of bafflement and perplexity,

emerges from the dismal gloom of bewildering fears to find the Eternal God still upon the Throne, His glory still filling the temple, His eyes still beholding the children of men. "And the just shall live by his faith."

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

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## On His Faithful Word

*"Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"*

—(Num. xxiii. 19.)

**H**OW comforting to know that when God promises to bless, He will bring it to pass! Satan or man may try to bring God's word to naught, but such efforts will prove in vain. Pharaoh tried to reduce the increase of the children of Israel, not knowing that God had said to Abraham, "In multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore," and the more that the Egyptians afflicted the people, "the more they multiplied and grew." Balak endeavoured to bring a curse upon Israel, but God said to Balaam, "Thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed."

God saw the wickedness of the people of Nineveh, and sent a solemn warning to them by His servant, Jonah, in order that they might repent and so escape the righteous judgment of God against their sins. Jonah foresaw the gracious intentions of God and turned away from Nineveh, refusing to deliver his message, but "the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest," and the mariners had no option but to take up Jonah "and cast him forth into the sea." Now Jonah was to obey; God would have *him* to carry the message, so "the LORD prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." God preserved him there physically and mentally, and he "cried unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly" and finished with



the words, "Salvation is of the LORD," little thinking that there was to be salvation for him and salvation to the people of Nineveh through his preaching. "And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching I bid thee." And "the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah." "And God saw their works that they turned from their evil ways, and God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not."

How brilliant a contrast was JEHOVAH's Servant, His Anointed, Who said, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God," and when here He said, "I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." He was "God's Salvation"; he was born "a SAVIOUR," and JEHOVAH said to Joseph concerning Him, "Thou shalt call His Name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins." But "His people would not have Him, they despised and rejected Him, and brought Him before Pilate that He might be condemned to death, and although Pilate thrice told them that he found no fault in Him, "yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain." But God had sent Him to be a SAVIOUR, and death could not thwart His purpose of blessing, so "He raised Him from the dead." "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a PRINCE and a SAVIOUR, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." CHRIST was to be a SAVIOUR, notwithstanding all that Satan, or the people of Israel, or man could do to hinder or stop it. What had God said? Was His word to be maintained? "It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be my Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest by My Salvation unto the ends of the earth." None other could fulfil this mission in bringing "so great salvation." God had appointed CHRIST for the purpose, and was He to forego His Word? No! the testimony is so clear. "Be it known unto you all, and to all

the people of Israel, that by the Name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth, Whom ye crucified, Whom GOD raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. *Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" And in Abraham's seed, which is CHRIST, GOD's promise to Abraham will be fulfilled; for He will not only save Israel from their sins (which question must be settled first, and to the satisfaction of GOD, Who is holy as well as love) but He will restore them to the land over which David and Solomon ruled, namely, "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates," and CHRIST shall be their King. To-day CHRIST is a SAVIOUR to all who believe on Him, whether Jew or Gentile; and afterwards GOD will again have relations with His people Israel, He will cause them to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to all nations; the King, being the One Who was nailed to the cross, above Whose Head they wrote, "This man is JESUS, the King of the Jews." And this One will be the SAVIOUR of the "great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," which will stand "before the Throne and before the LAMB, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." Then will be brought to pass the promise that GOD made to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

Another wonderful instance of GOD carrying through His purposes of blessing by a chosen instrument is that of Joseph. The two dreams which GOD gave him, telling him of his pre-eminence over his brethren, linked with the fact that "Israel loved Joseph more than all his brethren" engendered envy and hatred on the part of his brethren; and in selling him to the Ishmaelites they thought they had got rid of him for ever, so that the dreams could not come true. But it was GOD's intention to use Joseph for His purposes of blessing, and would He have to choose someone else? No! The one He

had appointed was to carry out His will, and in due time the dreams came true. His brethren acknowledged his pre-eminence, and then he revealed himself as a saviour, and said, with love to them and gratitude to God, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt . . . God did send me before you to preserve life . . . God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." In a figure he had been put to death by his brethren, but raised from the dead by God. All this directs our thoughts to CHRIST, the beloved SON of His FATHER, and was rejected by them and crucified; but God raised him from the dead, and raised Him to be a Prince and a Saviour. We end as we began, *How comforting to know that when God promises to bless, He will bring it to pass.*

H.L.B.

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## On the Evil Angels

THE Word of God teaches us that there are among the angels some who have fallen through rebellion against God. Those angels who remained faithful are called the elect angels (1 Tim. v. 21), holy angels (Luke ix. 26) sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. i. 14). The fallen angels, the demons, as they are called, have an activity which, on the contrary, is exercised for the purpose of doing harm to man. It is important that we be instructed by Scripture with regard to these beings, invisible to our eyes, but who have an existence as real as that of the unfallen angels, and who are also called principalities and powers in order to show their power and cunning, a cunning in evil (Eph. vi. 12 and Col. ii. 15). The great trick of Satan is to deceive men into thinking that neither he nor his angels exist, in order that they should fall the more readily into his snares. Many have allowed themselves to be drawn by unbelief into

this idea. We are surrounded, however, by these evil spirits, and so must combat them. For this reason, God has given to His own a complete armour (Eph. vi. 11-18) and we have a Leader, the LORD JESUS, Who always gives us the victory as we follow Him.

Let us consider what the word of God tells us on the subject of Satan and his angels. In the second epistle of Peter, we read: "For if God spared not *the angels that sinned*, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Peter ii. 4), and in Jude we learn that: "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). These verses tell us that these angels *have sinned*. "Sin is lawlessness (N.T. 1 Jn. iii. 4), it is rebellion against God, and the apostle adds: "for the devil sinneth from the beginning" (v. 8). By sinning, the angels did not keep *their first estate*. What was their first estate? They were sons of God, stars of the morning, bright in the heavens, their dwelling-place. (Job i. 6; xxxviii. 7.) Like the other angels, they were servants of God. They have not kept this happy position, but became lifted up with pride and were disobedient. They have thus left their true dwelling-place, the heavens, the presence of God, before Whom they would not and could not live. They desired to be independent of their CREATOR, and have been banished far from Him.

Their fall was terrible in its result. Instead of being stars of the morning, they are in darkness, deprived of divine light; once they were happy in the joy of a sovereign God, now they are given up to evil, to thoughts of evil, and hence are miserable. They are bound in chains of darkness, in everlasting bonds, to remain for ever in this sad state, in the impossibility of ever recovering their first condition. No salvation is possible for them, no redemption. They are, and will remain, a force of spiritual wickedness, ever opposed to God. Their dwelling-place was once the heavens, now they are in the abyss, the place of darkness into which there never

penetrates a single ray of the light of consolation or of hope. They have to look forward also to the final and more dreadful punishment before which they tremble, and which will be laid upon them at the judgment of the great day. They have actually a certain respite, but they know that it will not last. The devils in a man cast themselves before the LORD JESUS, crying by the mouth of the possessed one: "JESUS, Thou SON of GOD. Art Thou come to torment us before the time?" And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. (Matt. viii. 29; Luke viii. 31). When the LORD will judge the living, He will say to the wicked: Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, *prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matt. xxv. 41). Such is the fate which awaits them at the judgment of the great day.

As Michael is at the head of the holy angels, so is there at the head of the fallen angels one who excels in greatness and in wickedness beyond all the others: he whom scripture calls Satan, or the adversary, who is opposed to God. It calls him also the devil, i.e., the accuser; and the serpent, because he is a deceiver and used this animal to address and to seduce Eve; and that old serpent, because he has from the first drawn man into evil. He is also called the dragon, because he makes use of the powers of the world to do evil. (Rev. xii. 3, 7-9; 2 Cor. xi. 3; Gen. iii. 1.)

In Ezekiel xxviii., verses 11-17, we learn, under the figure of the King of Tyre, what Satan was before his fall and what caused his fall. He was "the anointed cherub to protect" and he lacked no quality, he was "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." He reflected the various rays of the glory of God as represented by the precious stones and gold (see Ex. xxviii. 17-20; Rev. xxi. 18-20) which were his adornment. His place was Eden, a place of delight; the garden of God, not on the earth but in the heavens where he rejoiced in the presence of God (see Rev. ii. 7, where the paradise of God is mentioned in contrast with the earthly paradise). Joy, a joy of harmony produced by a heavenly music, met

him and filled him on the day when he was created, for he was not only a creature, but a creature ornamented with the most excellent of the gifts of God. He occupied an eminent place of power, in the midst of other angels, authorities, principalities and powers; he was in the holy mountain of God. What lacked there in the greatness and excellence of this creature of God's?

He was, therefore, perfect in all his ways from the day he was created, until iniquity was found in him. Beholding the excellence of his gifts and the splendour of his beauty, his heart was lifted up within him, his wisdom was corrupted; full of pride, he sinned (1 Tim. iii. 6), he rebelled against God. What has been the result? Having profaned, or polluted, the divine sanctuary, he has been cast down from the high position he once occupied, cast out from the mountain of God. His glory has been taken from him and he has become the prince of darkness, taking with him in his disobedience and fall, other angels, principalities and authorities, who have become the rulers of darkness, the power of evil (Eph. vi. 12), acting under his orders against God (Rev. xii. 7, 8). His power has become a formidable energy for evil; his superior intelligence only serves him for making plans to oppose God; his intelligence, otherwise divine, has become an intelligence of perversity inventing deceits to seduce man. Created to protect, he busies himself only to destroy, as his name, Apollyon, the destructor, indicates (Rev. ix. 11; Jn. x. 10). Originally an angel of light, he has become an angel of darkness, knowing how to disguise himself as an angel of light in order to deceive souls (2 Cor. xi. 14). Formidable being! He is ever with us as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter v. 8). He is more powerful than we, but CHRIST is stronger than he; CHRIST has vanquished him, *and we, clinging to CHRIST, having nothing to fear.*

When did the fall of Satan and his angels take place? Scripture does not fix the time, but we know that it was before the creation of man. Indeed, as soon as Adam and Eve had been put into the Garden of Eden to dress

it and to keep it, Satan entered there and, in the form of a serpent,, seduced Eve, who drew her husband into her disobedience. Satan thus possessed himself of the heart of man and rules it by means of lusts.

Since then we have the history of Satan in connection with the earth and with man dwelling there, a story which the Bible gives us as that of a being, powerful and formidable in his wickedness. The earth has become the place where he exercises it unceasingly (Job. i. 7-22; ii.), having access all the while into the heavens where he accuses man. As a result of Adam's sin, Satan and his angels have overrun all the domain put under man. They work in an opposition which is continuous and more or less open against God, deceiving man, drawing him into evil, and seeking ever how to counteract the plans of the grace of God for sinful man.

It was he, Satan, who urged on Cain to kill his brother, Abel. Cain was of the wicked one and slew his brother (1 Jn. iii. 12) we are told, and since then the two types of men have been on the earth, the children of God and the children of the devil, each characterised by likeness to their father, those marked out by righteousness, truth and love, and these by sin, falsehood and hate (1 Jn. iii. 8-10; Jn. viii. 44). The LORD says of the devil: He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it. Is this not something to make us shudder if we have to say: Inasmuch as I am not a child of God, I am a child of the devil? There is no middle place; it is one or the other. Children of GOD *become such by faith in CHRIST JESUS.*

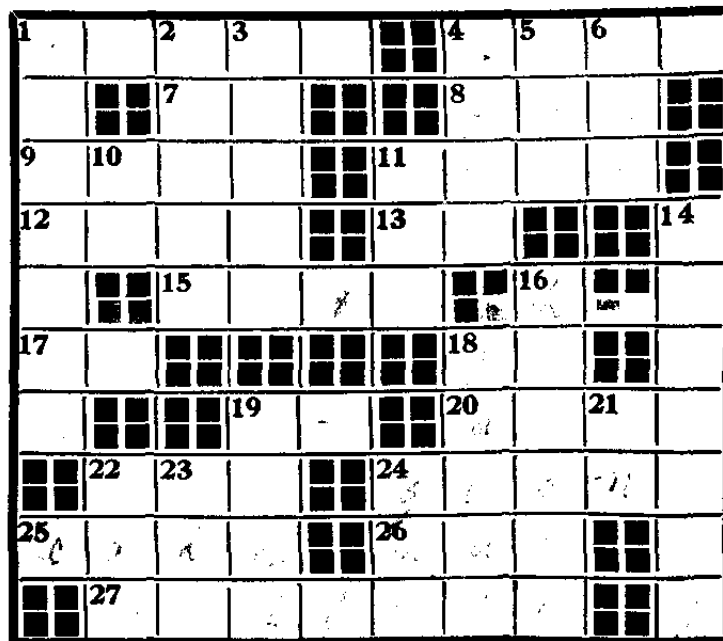
# SCRIPTURE CROSSWORD

## ACROSS.

1. Moses' brother.
4. Ruth worked for him.
7. Half of Edom.
8. A servant of an High Priest lost this.
9. A city of ancient fame.
11. Another name for people.
12. A king of the Amalekites.
13. Alternative.
15. Centre part of a church.
17. The capital of Moab.
18. Opposite of "abide."
19. Saint (abb.)
20. So let it be.
22. Blind Bartimeus wished he could.
24. David slew one.
25. The disciples responded to it.
26. The disciples had to do this to their nets because they were full.
27. "Whose cheering beams ——— eternal day."

## DOWN.

1. He was known as "The friend of God."
2. Paul was this and proud of it.
3. Letter of Greek alphabet.
4. Name of Baalam's father.
5. Baby ass beheaded.
6. This kept a lot of people dry.
10. King of Bashan.
11. Enemy.
14. Godly.
16. Worship.
18. He was Paul's host at one time.
19. The Christian should forget this.
21. Half of Eden.
22. The rich young man of the New Testament was this.
23. An Old Testament priest.
24. 26 across jumbled up.





## Some Thoughts on Habakkuk

*(Continued from page 52)*

THE bewilderment and perplexity of chapter i. has given place in chapter ii. to the two-fold vision of gloom and glory. Two feelings now fill the prophet's heart. He knows that on Israel God's wrath is to be manifested at the hands of the Chaldeans, the pitiless invaders of his beloved country, while yet beyond the storm of trouble, God's purpose fully holds. These two thoughts are now blended in chapter iii., in the psalm with which Habakkuk ends his prophecy, and all is forgotten but the love of God for His people. God being Who He is, and known in relation to His people as a REDEEMER-GOD, it may very confidently be affirmed by them, as always by all His saints, that

“His love in times past, forbids us to think  
He'll leave us at last in trouble to sink.”

Discipline? — Yes. Destruction? — No, “for His Name's sake.”

It is the vision of the LORD in His holy temple which has stilled the raging storm in the prophet's heart. The human spirit has been awed and hushed as upon it has come the truth uttered by an earlier psalmist: “Thy throne is established of old: Thou art from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their waves. The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh Thine house, O LORD, for ever.”

The majesty, the greatness and power of God, the purpose and promises based thereon, together with the great responsibilities of so privileged a position as that occupied by Israel, all pressed anew upon the prophet's spirit, and the beautiful and sublime outburst of praise in chapter iii. is the result. Outwardly, circumstances remain unchanged; inwardly, so great is the change that he now finds it in his heart to make his prayer, compose his psalm, and exultantly sing of mercy and

judgment. Thus with the voice of prayer and praise, and in the power of that faith which has accepted the answer of GOD as to the issue of the chaotic tangle of human affairs, Habakkuk rejoices in GOD and counts upon still further blessing.

He recalls what GOD had done for the people when indeed they were not a nation. He had appeared on their behalf during their wanderings between Teman and Mount Paran—the two boundaries of their journeyings. Their history was a record of how, from the beginning to the end, He had led them, fed them, guided them, protected them and preserved them. The chaos and contradiction of present circumstances must be sought for elsewhere than in any lack of His care for them. His purpose, too, of blessing through them still stood. As in Christendom now, so in Judaism then, forgetfulness that “holiness becometh Thine house, O LORD, for ever,” led to the sad and sorrowful plight in which they found themselves. “But the just shall live by his faith,” whatever the days in which his lot is cast. Hence we find our prophet, taught and inspired by the SPIRIT of GOD, is lifted by faith above present troubles, and sending his song of triumph to the director of the temple music, saying at the same time that he, the writer, should also take part with his stringed instruments in the performance of the song of praise. Like a triumphal ode for some great victory, this beautiful and sublime outburst of prayer, praise, remembrance and exultant confidence in GOD is to be rendered to the LORD Who is ever in His holy temple.

As a writer of a bye-gone generation beautifully reminds us, “We are too apt to deprive ourselves of the lofty consolations and mysterious inflowings of power which we are meant to possess, by not opening our eyes to see, and our hearts to receive, what is really the central blessing which CHRIST gives, the communication of actual Divine life, which is meant to dwell in, and manifest itself triumphantly through our weakness. I can do all things *in* CHRIST Who strengtheneth me.”

The psalm into which the prayer of Habakkuk so

naturally merges is of a wild enthusiastic measure, expressive of joy and triumphant confidence in God. The title he gives it is somewhat vague, occurring once only besides. But a gem of thought is revealed by Pusey's note: "Habakkuk's title would mean, as we should say, 'set to music of psalms of this sort.'" In modern tune books, no doubt, such effusions would be marked "P.M." or "Irregular"; but that deep, worshipful, exultant "*psalms of this sort*" still rise up to God from the hearts of His people when passing through circumstances of trial and perplexity who can doubt? "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD GOD is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments."

"There is nothing finer," says J. N. Darby, "than this development of the thoughts of the SPIRIT of God, the sorrows and anxieties produced by Him, the answer of God to give understanding and strengthen faith, in order that the heart may be in full communion with Himself . . . In sum, in this prophet we have (for the comfort of the faithful heart, which loves God's people because they *are* His, and hence is distressed by the wickedness found among them, and still more by the judgment which falls upon them) the answer of God, explaining His ways to faith, and His sure faithfulness to His promises. He knows the oppressor, but the just must live by faith."

Now it pleased God that this word to Habakkuk, "the just shall live by his life" should be explained and expounded by the HOLY SPIRIT through the Apostle Paul. In the days of Habakkuk, six centuries before CHRIST came, it became, so to say, a *proverb*, a short, familiar sentence expressing a deep truth; as time went on and darkness deepened and difficulties multiplied, it would be a secret *encouragement* to the faithful few who trembled at God's word; then it would be a *doctrine*, a thing firmly believed and taught; and finally, a *sure hope* like a star gleaming brightest as dawn approached.

Now "the just shall live by faith" and faith is the attitude of heart without which it is impossible to please God, or to hold communion with Him. Also, as Saphir says, "Faith is the link between God's fulness and strength and our emptiness and weakness." Therefore on every showing the importance of faith is stressed.

In the three great epistles for which St. Paul takes the phrase as his text, Romans, Galatians and Hebrews, he shows that besides the general principle that "the just shall live by his faith," and the personal application, there is a practical outcome of first-class importance. In Rom. i. 17, "The *just* shall live by faith" leads to a clear statement of how a man may become *just* in the sight of God. In Gal. iii. 11, "The just shall live by *faith*," not by works of law, but by faith of JESUS CHRIST. In Heb. x. 38, "The just shall *live* by faith," for yet a little while and He that shall come will come and will not tarry. So the whole course of a believer is covered by this word. But note the Spirit's development of the truth. In the first mention "*it* will surely come, *it* will not tarry," and the last one, "*He* that shall come will come and will not tarry." The light is clearer, the vision is more distinct, not *it* but *He*, a Person fills the picture, He by Whose atoning Sacrifice ungodly sinners dead in sins may through believing be made *just* before God; He Whose Coming for and Appearing with His saints will solve earth's problems for ever. Now "the *just* shall *live* by his *faith*." In the hard, toilsome way, always uphill, that fronts the people of God, we have the File Leader, the Author and Completer of the life of faith, Who has endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself; Who has been tempted in all points as we are, sin apart; Who has entered in as the Forerunner and upon Whose sympathy, succour and unfailing interest we may confidently count all the days of our pilgrimage. Looking off unto Him we live by faith.

## From Sadness to Gladness

**W**ITH heavy hearts, the two disciples whose story we read in St. Luke xxiv., had turned from the Holy City to plod the eight weary miles between it and their home in Emmaus. Recent sad events had left them with their dearest and most cherished hopes completely shattered; and their conversation as they walked and talked served only to reveal and add to the bitterness of their disappointment. They "communed and reasoned together," we read, and "Jesus Himself drew near and went with them."

The sadness of their expression, and His question regarding this, led to an outburst of confidence to this Stranger Who seemed to understand exactly how they were feeling. To this sympathetic fellow-traveller they pour out the whole story, until their heart-felt (though really, had they but known, quite unfounded) grief called from His lips a friendly and loving remonstrance: "O foolish ones! so slow to believe all that Moses in the Law, and the prophets did write!"

They had, however, unburdened their weary hearts, and now it was surely His turn to speak, and forthwith began the best Bible reading ever given, or likely to be given. Old Testament scriptures, hitherto dim and dull to them, began now to live, and shine with wonderful light and meaning as He quietly opened them up. The Interpreter was there and with the master-key unlocked the treasures of exposition and application. Events which had occasioned their sadness and to their recently limited vision seemed so hopelessly wrong, were brought into focus, and, seen in their true perspective, disclosed unimagined beauty and meaning.

But the village is reached, all too soon, alas! And as they stand outside their house, the Stranger Whose words have caused their very hearts to burn within them, makes as though to go further. With one voice they urge Him, they constrain Him, saying, "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to tarry with them. Not only did they want

Him to stay because He had so far solved their difficulties, throwing fresh light upon the whole circumstances, but although quite unaware as yet of His identity, they were greatly drawn by His company.

Things now move very quickly, for their invited guest becomes the host, and "took bread and blessed it, and brake and gave to them." Something familiar in His action arrested their attention—they had seen just that way of doing it before—and immediate recognition followed—"they knew Him."

But scarcely had they recognized him before He withdrew His visible presence and ceased to be seen of them. So certain, however, were they of the reality of His presence as their Risen LORD, that with hearts no longer heavy but aglow with the new-found joy, they set off to retrace their steps to Jerusalem. The others must be told, and such good news could brook no delay. So with light hearts, if somewhat tired bodies, back they go to share the joy and to get it increased in the company of the disciples. For as they tell how He was known to them in the breaking of bread, JESUS Himself came into the midst and said, "Peace be unto you," and when He had so said, He showed them His hands and His side. Do you not think these two felt amply rewarded for the journey back? What mingled thoughts, too, when they heard His voice and saw His wounded hands and side! How gracious too, that no word of reproach for their lack of faith fell from His lips; and that regrets which might easily have worked sadness were simply dispelled by His kindly sympathy.

The LORD still changes His people's sadness to gladness by the same method of opening up the Scriptures; and still uses the loving communication of what we have learned from Him to others. But what do we *really* want of Him? To solve our difficulties; to answer our prayers; to make the Scriptures plain to us; or, above all else, that He may come in and sup with us?

ALAN F.

## On Unity and Variety in the Church

**A** HINDOO and a New Zealander once met on the deck of a missionary ship. They had been converted from their heathenism, and so were brothers in CHRIST, but they could not speak each other's language. They pointed to their Bibles, shook hands and smiled in each other's faces; but that was all. At last, a happy thought occurred to the Hindoo; with sudden joy he exclaimed, "Hallelujah!" The New Zealander, in delight at once, cried out, "Amen!" One touch of grace makes the whole Church kin.

### THE "ONE NEW MAN"

What is the explanation of this kinship of spirit? "By one SPIRIT are we all baptised into one Body, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free." One and the same HOLY SPIRIT indwells all believers, therefore all believers are one. People of all nationalities, of all conditions, high and low, rich and poor, educated and ignorant; of all dispositions, impetuous and cautious, hopeful and despondent, pliable and obstinate, weak and strong—are being gathered out of the world, to constitute the Divine masterpiece, the glorious "one new man," the Church, of which CHRIST is the Head. These all share a common life, walk in the power of the same faith, enjoy the same hope, and are knit together in the bonds of the same love.

### ALL LIFE IS VARIED.

Man's thought is for uniformity; God's thought is for variety in unity. It is in harmony—the blending of suitable differences—that we see completeness, perfection.

The Bible is the Divine Library, containing a large number of books written by various writers, at various times, in various styles, and presenting truth in various aspects. It contains history, poetry, allegory, prophecy, books of national statutes, hymns, collections of proverbs, memoirs, letters; yet all this variety of matter and style is fashioned into a sublime unity by the inspiration of one and the same Divine Author.

Nature displays the same principle. No two leaves

on the tree are exactly alike. The green of the foliage blends with the blue of the sky. There are seven different colours in the one rainbow which spans the heavens with its arch of glory. There is amazing variety here, but no real confusion, for behind all is the master-mind of the one Divine-Architect.

The human body is a very complicated organism, consisting of a great number of different members brought together into one living whole. The more nearly a man's physical organisation approaches perfection, the more complete is the harmony of all its parts. In the spiritual body which we shall presently inhabit there will be no jarring, no friction, no weakness, for the blending of its various elements or members into one harmonious whole will be perfect.

The human body is a type of the Church. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in CHRIST, and every one members one of another." Each believer has a special soul quality that will abide for ever, and will distinguish him from every other member of the Body of CHRIST. Each one of us is a fresh thought from GOD to the Church. Every individual, however obscure, can say, "When GOD made me, He broke the mould."

In that great day when the LORD "shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," the unity and variety of the Church will be exhibited to the universe. Then no civil war will mar the perfect co-working of its various members. It will be in tune with itself and the universe. It will enjoy a perfect correspondence with environment, and a perfect harmony within. The "music of the spheres" will find its highest counterpart in the melody of the worship and activities of the countless members of the redeemed family when forever indwelt, controlled and energised by the one SPIRIT of GOD.

#### VARIETY OF SERVICE AND CHARACTER.

Seeing, then, that we have all been made to differ from each other, GOD has provided a many-sided ministry to meet our varied needs. "Now there are



diversities of gifts, but the same SPIRIT . . . But all these worketh that one and the self-same SPIRIT, dividing to every man severally as He will." To-day God has His evangelists, His pastors, His teachers, His missionaries, His rulers, His "helps"; and every individual of the rank and file has some gift or gifts to be used for the good of the Church and the world.

Did the reader ever know a Christian, to whatever fellowship he belonged, in whom he failed to see *a measure of Christlikeness*? No true-hearted believer will answer "Yes." But how different is the blending of moral and spiritual graces in each soul! We think of the spiritual and practical energy of a Paul; the impetuous devotion of a Peter; the burly courage of a Luther; the disciplined and tireless zeal of a Wesley, and even among ordinary believers the same phenomenon is seen. There are characters that resemble a mountain, whose shapely and well-rounded contour is almost entirely concealed by a wealth of beautiful and varied vegetation. Their lives are beautifully balanced; the sharp corners have become rounded off, the hollows filled in, and the rough places made smooth. Others are like a towering mountain peak, whose severe and rugged outline stands out clear and sharp against the sky. Both the qualities and the defects of these are outstanding and command attention.

We live in a day of co-operation; a day when a multiplicity of different influences are at work. Some are sowers rather than reapers; others are reapers rather than sowers. The patient and faithful class-leader prepares the way for the missionary, who leads to CHRIST souls who, already impressed with the truth of the gospel, are just waiting for a final word. Each is as necessary as the other. Some, of the intellectual type, mould the thought of students and others by their writings, and leave an impression upon the minds of future generations. Others, of the active type, do more and are more prominent when alive, but their influence largely ceases at death. Each of us, however obscure, student as well as man of action, has his contribution to make. "*To every man his work*"—and also his method.

Besides the grace of God and the degree of faithfulness on our part to His will, there are several natural factors that help to decide the distinguishing features of our character and service. The age in which we live, economic position, education, surroundings and occupation, all leave their mark. We are all influenced more than we think by tradition, national, social and ecclesiastical. We may, in fact, have full fellowship with a brother's heart, but only partial fellowship with his head. And there is temperament, which leads each one to lay unconscious emphasis upon certain doctrines and duties. Each of us apprehends and presents God's truth somewhat differently from everyone else. No one should be a mere echo of other people.

*"Every man shall bear his own burden."* The gospel emphasises individual duty. *"Take heed to thyself."* Let each one for himself seek to maintain faith and a good conscience by *responding to all the truth.*

And then let us dwell upon the eternal unity into which all our fellow-believers have been brought by the HOLY SPIRIT, while at the same time recognising the wonderful variety of which the same SPIRIT is the Author. In this way we shall be saved from an uncharitable and prejudiced criticism of those who differ; and, with hearts enlarged by a spiritual glow, we shall cultivate that brotherly sympathy towards them to which we are exhorted in the words, *"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."*

The poet Cowper tells of a hungry nightingale that is about to make a meal of a glow-worm, but is deterred from its purpose by the argument of its would-be victim. The glow-worm ends its expostulation by saying:

"'Twas the selfsame power Divine  
Taught you to sing and me to shine,  
That you with music, I with light,  
Might beautify and cheer the night."

E.A.

## On Some Awkward Personal Possessions

By "QUARTUS."

4.—MY PAST.

**M**Y past—is it a handicap or a help? Is it an asset or must I reckon it a liability? It all depends, and depends upon myself, too. Having bought sad experience at the heavy price of failures, mistakes, follies and what not, shall I blunder along on the road of life repeating the errors of my past like Solomon's fool in the Book of Proverbs? Or shall I spend the rest of my days bemoaning my folly and diligently cultivating a kind of inferiority complex, to the discomfort of all and sundry? Obviously, neither course is for the glory of God, nor for the good of others with whom my lot is cast in His providence.

If by faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST my past is under that precious blood, covered for ever by His atoning merit, then God has assured me that He will never bring it up against me, and by my baptism unto CHRIST's death it is reckoned dead and buried.

But, nevertheless, I live, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Let me use my past by way of incentive in the present. Where I failed before, let me now *watch* as well as pray that I fail not again at that point. Knowing my weakness, let me avoid all occasions of indulging it. But best of all, perhaps, was the advice given at an open-air meeting when a rude heckler persisted in shouting, "The way to heaven, Bishop, quick?"

Clear and prompt came the reply: "Up to the Cross, turn to the right, and keep straight on."

To another, worried about the past though certainly on the heavenly road, the same wise and witty servant of God said, "Keep your face to the sun and you won't see your shadow." Looking to JESUS, looking off unto JESUS solves the problem of the past for such as sincerely do this. "No real believer can lose sight of the past and its call for thanksgiving."

## On Ruin and Restoration

(Nehemiah xi.)

**A**T the beginning of this chapter there is portrayed for us one of the most precious characteristics of the reawakening wrought by divine grace in the remnant which returned from the captivity. They looked upon Jerusalem as the centre of the testimony of God on earth at that time. It was necessary that all the people should realise its value in the eyes of Him Who said: "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands, thy walls are continually before Me" (Isa. xlix. 16). The faithful must needs gather themselves in the holy city (v. 1) around the sanctuary, where, on the basis of sacrifices offered on the altar, the presence of the LORD could be enjoyed although the glory had gone. The whole land of Canaan is called "the Holy Land" (Zech. ii. 12), and Jerusalem "the Holy City" (Dan. ix. 24; Matt. xxvii. 53), also the "city of the great King" (Matt. v. 35). This is true in spite of the actual desolation of this country and of this city on which the eyes of God rest constantly and which He has set apart to be His dwelling-place. The day will come when the iniquity of this country will be taken away in a single day and then "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD"; "thou shalt no more be termed forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate, but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah, for the LORD delighteth in thee and thy land shall be married" (Isa. lxii. 34).

There was space in the holy city. We read elsewhere in this book that "the city was large and great but the people were few therein" (ch. vii. 4). One must, however, have a heart for the things of the LORD and for the good of His people to give up one's life to go and live there, as the city was then in ruins and offered few, if any, advantages to its inhabitants.

In the midst of the ruin of the Church to-day, God has a testimony around which He calls upon all His own to gather. If we wish to take our place there, our

affections must be centred on a heavenly object, the glorified CHRIST now scorned by the world, Who Himself calls us to gather around His banner in order to follow Him in the path of shame and suffering. Moses, walking by faith, refused the honours of Pharaoh's court, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. xi. 26).

In the time of Nehemiah, many Jews preferred to remain associated with Babylon, or with the world in one form or another, rather than follow the path of suffering, of struggle and separation, in which the feeble remnant which returned from the captivity had to walk if they would shelter behind the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem. In the same way to-day, many children of God do not know the privilege of being identified with CHRIST rejected by the world, and prefer to live at ease among those who hate Him and reject His cross.

We read that the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell in Jerusalem (v. 2). All appreciated the devotion of those who sacrificed their own interests in order to range themselves thus around the banner of Zion, but perhaps not everyone had the courage and power of self-denial necessary to do it themselves. It is not unusual to find Christians who think much of the faith and consecration of heart of those who walk in the path marked out by the Word, without having themselves the spiritual energy needed to imitate them. Jonathan dearly loved David, but he never left his father's house for him; and instead of partaking of the sufferings, and later of the exaltation, of the anointed one of God, he was associated with Saul in his ultimate ruin. Let us take to heart the lesson afforded by the history of God's people, so that we may follow in the footsteps of those who by faith were strangers and pilgrims in the earth and showed clearly that they were seeking a heavenly country. Wherefore God was in no wise ashamed to be called their God, "for He hath prepared them a city."

We then find the names and enumeration by classes

of those who came to inhabit Jerusalem, as well as the mention of those who inhabited other parts of the country. All these details show us what a deep interest God took in the re-establishment of the blessed centre of His testimony. This city, called by His Name, was to be set apart once more as His dwelling-place; that is why, as we have already said, it is designated in several passages "the Holy City"; for, in spite of its actual desolation, it will one day be purified of its iniquity so that God will dwell there with His people. "Afterward thou shalt be called City of righteousness, the faithful City" (Isa. i. 26). "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her for a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zech. ii. 5).

In view of the position which this city occupies in the heart and the thoughts of God, we must not be astonished at the blessing which he conferred on those who had at heart its restoration: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee" (Ps. cxxii. 6). It was as true in the days of Nehemiah as in the glorious days of Solomon that "the LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Ps. lxxxvii. 2).

In order to be recognised as forming part of the people of God and consequently as having the right to dwell in Jerusalem, it was necessary to prove one's descent from Abraham. Those who, during their sojourn in the land of exile, had been careless in not preserving the records which established their rights were therefore debarred from their privileges. This was notably the case with priests who were deprived of their position. The governor said to them "that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim" (Ezra ii. 63). For 70 years they had dwelt in Babylon. Knowing the influence of such a centre of idolatry and corruption, we shall not be astonished that they and their children had forgotten the land of their fathers, and that Jerusalem had ceased to be "preferred above their chief joy" (Ps. cxxxvii. 6). Through mixing with the nations they had lost their genealogy. Those who, on the other hand, were faithful to JEHOVAH, had jealously guarded

the preservation of their rights. They considered their descent from Abraham as their most precious inheritance, because this placed them amongst a people favoured by JEHOVAH and in the midst of which He had made His abode. They were not like Esau, who gave up his birthright; in all their tribulations, on the contrary, they clung to it as being the title, given by God, to all their national hopes.

At all times it is important that the saints should preserve their genealogy. The Christian can do so only by walking in obedience, in the power of the SPIRIT, Who makes us able to cry: "ABBA, FATHER," thus witnessing with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. viii. 16). In order to have the right and the privilege of taking our place at the LORD's table, we must give proof of our genealogy, that is to say, by manifesting its fruits we give proof of that divine life by which we are part of the family of faith. We cannot read hearts, and carelessness and worldliness in those who would take part in the testimony of God here below make it difficult to give this proof. Souls in this case are in the same position as those Jews who carelessly lost their genealogy and who, as we saw, lost their place as priests. When the LORD comes in His power, He will not leave out one of His own from the blessings which are the fruit of His work on the cross. Until then, it behoves each one of us to prove by his walk that he is of the Assembly. In a day of general profession, it is necessary that the sanctity of the LORD's table be preserved and that those who come to it walk in fear; otherwise they cannot be known as having their place in His testimony.

In giving the number of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, this chapter gives us the seven classes of persons of which they were composed. First, Israel. Although only two tribes, Benjamin and Judah (vv. 4 and 7) had come back as tribes from the captivity, the SPIRIT of GOD continually reminds us that there is no change in the thoughts of GOD with regard to the twelve tribes. These form a whole which will be manifested in the glory of the kingdom when "the Israel of God" will be led to

repentance and faith. Then, in perfect harmony, this restored and blessed people will exalt the grace of its God and will prostrate itself before Him Whom they have long rejected and will proclaim His glory before all the universe. Thus, even in the day of dispersion and humiliation, some representatives of the ten tribes were amongst their brethren to show that God did not forget His purposes towards all Israel, which will be saved in a coming day as a people, and will form the Israel of God (Rom. xi. 26).

In a day of ruin, the faith of Elijah laid hold of the thought of God as to the unity of the people, and caused him to make an altar of twelve stones representative of the twelve tribes, in spite of the division of the kingdom (1 Kings xviii). It is the same to-day with regard to the unity of the body of CHRIST, which exists in virtue of its union with the Head glorified by the HOLY SPIRIT. We must proclaim this truth and apply ourselves to manifest it while keeping the unity of the SPIRIT in the bond of peace (Eph. iv. 3).

Secondly, the priests. The first class, called Israel, embraced the people as a whole, seen according to the thoughts of God as the object of His grace, and as inheritor of the blessings promised to Jacob, who became Israel, a prince with God. Then we have the priestly family descended from Aaron and whose service was of a particularly high type because its object was the maintenance of Israel's relationships with God on the ground of the sacrifices which typified the perfect excellence of the sacrifice of the LAMB of God. We all have to-day the privilege of exercising this priesthood, be it towards God, as a holy priesthood offering up sacrifices of praise, the fruit of the lips giving thanks to His name (1 Pet. ii., 5-9; Heb. xiii. 15); or towards men in showing forth the blessings we have received from God as a royal priesthood.

Seriah was prince or ruler of the house of God (v. 11) among his brethren, who, to the number of eight hundred and twenty-two, did the work of the house (v. 12). In the Assembly there are "overseers" who, without being officially appointed to this charge, are given by



the LORD to exercise this service and to see to the good order of His house. To do this they must have a moral character, and show Christian virtues which command respect from all and give them the necessary authority to fulfil this oversight (1 Tim. iii).

Thirdly, the Levites, whose numbers were much restricted. In a day of ruin, those who consecrate themselves to the service of the LORD and thus fulfil the functions of the Levites are few in number. It requires self-denial and spiritual energy to be devoted to this service which entails suffering and sorrows which are sometimes very grievous. If the heart clings to the LORD, strength will not be lacking to those who seek to do His will.

In the present day all believers bear the double character of Levites and of priests. We enter into the sanctuary to worship, and we *go out* "to show forth the praises of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light." We thus become as a "royal priesthood," the dispensers of the goodness of God. Let us forget neither one nor the other of those services which are committed to us. Those whose lips are open to praise the LORD from a heart filled with His love, will be also those who will be best fitted to fulfil their duties as Levites, either in good works (Heb. xiii. 15, 16), or in words of grace in making known the gospel to those who are still strangers to it.

There were, in the service of Levites, those concerned with "*the outward business*" of the house of the LORD (v. 16); this answers somewhat to the service of ministers or deacons (1 Tim. iii. 8), who are occupied with the temporal needs of the saints, and their outward circumstances. Although there are no officially-charged overseers or servants, the LORD raises up brethren who have the heart to do the duties in the Assembly for the good of the saints. If these duties are faithfully carried out, it may be that those who do them acquire "a good degree" and the LORD may lay upon them the ministry of the Word, either for the edification of the saints, or for the preaching of the gospel (1 Tim. iii. 13). We have a good example of this in Stephen and in Philip,

who, chosen to "serve tables" (Acts vi. 5), become powerful instruments for the preaching of the word to Jews and Gentiles (Acts vii. 8).

Fourth, the singers. Matthanias, the chief of the Levites, "began the thanksgiving in prayer" (v. 17), with others who were associated with him. In the wilderness such a service had not been set up. It was only when the kingdom had been established in power under David, the anointed of JEHOVAH, that praise was realised in Israel; some of the Levites were appointed to minister before the ark of JEHOVAH their GOD (1 Chron. xvi. 4). David committed this service to Asaph and his brethren "To praise JEHOVAH." This genealogy of Matthanias, who had the same duties, is traced up to Asaph, showing how in the smallest details the faithful remnant had it on their hearts to set up again the established order as given by either Moses or David, searching for this purpose in the word to find all the necessary instructions. In a day of ruin like ours, this same word is the safeguard of faith. We have but to go back to what has been since the beginning, rejecting traditions, and all else that is the fruit of man's own will.

The service of Matthanias is a precious one to realise in the Assembly. We may even here send our praises towards heaven. To give public expression to the worship of the gathered saints requires a heart in communion with the LORD and led by the SPIRIT Who makes use of those whom He will for the service. When the kingdom will be set up in power under the King of glory, joy will be complete and hymns will sound forth from all sides. In the heavens and on earth there will be one voice in ascribing glory to the LAMB (Rev. v.).

Fifth, the porters (v. 19) and their brethren that kept the gates. Theirs was the responsibility of admitting to the city only such as had the right to enter and of refusing those who were not qualified to go in there. This was thus one of the most important posts for the safety of the city. There are also to-day guardians at the doors of the Assembly of God. For, although it is true that every believer, every member of the body of

CHRIST has his place at the table of the LORD, those who have received from Him the wisdom and moral authority required to discern the state of souls must satisfy themselves that such are in a fit state to be received into the Assembly. Looseness and negligence in this respect have had the most deadly consequences in many companies of saints gathered around the table of the LORD, and have even led to the ruin of these in some cases. It is therefore of the greatest importance that faithful and experienced men be charged with the service of porters in the Assembly.

Sixth, the Nethinims (v. 21), whose name signifies *given*, were probably the descendants of the Gibeonites, made "hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of JEHOVAH" (Jos. ix. 27). To these were added the Midianites, given by Moses to the Levites, who "kept the charge of the tabernacle of JEHOVAH" (Num. xxxi. 47). Of a foreign race, their bondage in Israel had become a source of blessing for them, since they are seen to manifest a touching interest in the service of the sanctuary to which they had been consecrated; whilst in this day of reawakening, when the greater part of the children of Israel were still living in the land of the Captivity, they had returned to rebuild the altar of JEHOVAH (Ezra ii. 58). We can see in them a figure of the Gentiles who will be in obedience to the great King, and who will enjoy with His people the blessings of His reign under His sceptre of peace.

Seventh, the servants of Solomon (v. 3) were also of foreign race. All who remained of the nations who were dispossessed of Canaan, "upon these did Solomon levy a tribute of service unto this day" (1 Kings ix. 21). Like the Nethinims, they occupy an honourable place in the restoration of God's people returned from the Captivity. This proves to us that divine grace rises above every barrier and lifts up the beggars "to set them among princes and to make them inherit the throne of glory" (1 Sam. ii. 8).

The remainder of the people, "the Levites and the priests were in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance" (v. 20). This restoration is a figure of that

which will be realised when the MESSIAH will reign in glory, and which, being based on His work of redemption, will be unchangeable for ever. In the time of Nehemiah, the government of GOD was exercised on the people because of their past ways. We read with sorrow that the singers depended for their maintenance on a fixed portion which was given them because of "the king's commandment concerning them" (v. 23). This reminds us that Israel had lost their independence and that "Lo-Ammi" (not My people) was written on them. Pethahiah, of the children of Judah, "was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people." He informed him of all matters which concerned the needs of the Jews, a feeble image of Him Who ever liveth to make intercession for us before GOD; Who defends the cause of His own; and Who, in His grace and power, intervenes on their behalf until the day of His glory.

Let us remember again how important it is that we, like this faithful remnant, prize our spiritual genealogy. Thus it is that the believer makes his "calling and election sure" (2 Pet. i. 10), not in the heart of GOD, but in his own heart. Paul, the Apostle, could write to the Thessalonians: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of GOD" (1 Thess. i. 4). Their faithful walk was decisive proof for him and other believers.

Let us add that all those of Israel who went willingly to offer themselves to dwell at Jerusalem (v. 2) saw according to the thoughts of GOD the Zion which He loved and which He had chosen for to dwell there. This was the case at least with the men of faith of that time. We have need to enter into the thoughts of GOD with regard to the Assembly, dear to the heart of CHRIST, in spite of its actual ruin, in order to be able to pray for it, to labour for its good, and to suffer with it: "For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our GOD, I will seek thy good" (Ps. cxxii. 8, 9).

*(From the French.)* A.H. and J.S.

## On Trusting

**H**OW blessed to know that in spite of all that is going on in the world the LORD is keeping, and will keep, him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him: because he trusteth in Him (Isa. xxvi. 3.).

The LORD would not have us take anxious thought, but just leave all to Him and put all our trust in Him. Then well may we exclaim with the Psalmist, "Let all those that put their trust in Thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because Thou defendest them." "The LORD is round about His people," and nothing can happen to them without Him, nothing can come to them but what His love allows.

Oh! that we may be looking to Him all the time; as an honoured servant of GOD said, "Faith never looks at circumstances, but looks straight to God" and "God honours faith." Let us "cleave to the LORD with purpose of heart," seeking grace to "*live* CHRIST," and so grow into His likeness. He will be everything to us, if we will only let Him. One has said, "Only think of the possibilities of our lives, the plainest, commonest of them, if we had all of CHRIST that we might have. We need faith to lay ourselves in CHRIST's hand as the chisel lays itself in the hand of the sculptor."

We know not how near we may be to that blessed time when faith will be changed to sight; while we are waiting for our LORD to come. May our hearts be engaged with Himself, seeking to serve Him, too, with all our powers until we see Him face to face,

"For ever to behold Him shine,  
For evermore to call Him mine,  
And see Him still before me;  
For ever on His face to gaze,  
And meet the full assembled rays,  
While He His FATHER thus displays  
To all the saints in glory."

## An Arresting Sequence of Names

*"A city of Samaria called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus being wearied with His journey sat thus on the well" (St. John iv. 5, 6).*

**P**LACES are interesting but persons very much more so. Samaria, Sychar, Jacob's well—the mention of the latter occurring again and again in the story—are places of historical interest, recalling passages in the history of the Jewish nation, and yet more remotely in the actual lives of the patriarchs from whom that nation descended.

Even in the days of our LORD Samaria was a very ancient city with a record running back over nine centuries; while Sychar itself dated back to a period earlier still by another eight or nine hundred years. So Jacob's well possessed great antiquarian interest for the Samaritan people apart from its, to them, religious associations with "our father Jacob."

But persons being of greater importance than places, the arresting sequence of proper names in the text at the head of this paper is very striking. Jacob, Joseph, JESUS. This is specially so, as not only in our English version is this the order in which they occur, but in the original writing of St. John this sequence is strictly followed. Let us consider what appears to be the significance of this.

### I.

#### JACOB

Of all Old Testament characters in the line of faith Jacob had perhaps the most chequered career of any. That he was deeply conscious of this appears in his own review of the past, given in Gen. xlvii., when standing in the Egyptian court.

"How old art thou?" enquires the Pharaoh, looking at the venerable figure of the bearded patriarch.

"And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years

of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

"Few and evil," so he describes the days during which the tangled affairs of his life had been woven.

What with Esau, Laban, Dinah, Reuben, Simeon and Levi, and, above all, Rachel's death, which the lonely-hearted man mourned all the days of his life, Jacob had certainly seen days of distress, of difficulty, of deceit and disappointment. His own youthful ambition and trickery; the domestic disasters and disappointments of his home life; the almost intolerable strain and burden of mid-life, of which he so bitterly complained to Laban, "These twenty years I have been with thee; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from me . . . thou hast changed my wages ten times, and surely thou hadst sent me away now empty, but GOD hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight"; all these combined to make Jacob feel that "few and evil" just about described the chequered course he had pursued and the tangled web of his affairs.

Yet the patriarch could also affirm that "GOD ALMIGHTY appeared unto me and blessed me"; and acknowledge that "GOD blessed me and redeemed me from all evil."

Though separated by many centuries in time from his erring daughter in our chapter, who claims him as "our father Jacob," there is a distinct family likeness in character and circumstances between them. As her story unfolds the tangled web of domestic disasters, bitter disappointments, blighted hopes and disillusionment clearly comes into view. Her life has been a very chequered, unsatisfactory career; yet when the tale is complete she confesses in different words truly but the same fact as Jacob did, that "GOD ALMIGHTY appeared unto me and blessed me." Her burdened heart sighs, "I know that MESSIAS cometh, which is called CHRIST:

when He is come, He will tell us all things." Then God ALMIGHTY, God Incarnate, appeared unto her: "I that speak unto thee am He."

But earlier in the conversation, as our LORD patiently, gently, but firmly unravels the tangled skein, we find surprise, curiosity, prejudice, desire, religion, self-discovery, realisation of God's grace, just as centuries before in Jacob at Bethel and Penuel.

"What is thy name?" asks the August Wrestler of Jacob at Penuel. My name is Jacob—supplanter—deceiver—worthless.

"Go call thy husband," says the August Stranger at Jacob's well. "I have no husband," replies Jacob's erring daughter. "She went her way and said unto the men of the city, Come see a man which told me all things that ever I did—is not this the CHRIST?"

So much for Jacob, and she who claimed him as her ancestor.

## II.

### JOSEPH

Jacob—Joseph—JESUS. The deeper significance of the sequence of these names appears as we consider that of all Old Testament characters Joseph presents the clearest picture of the LORD JESUS CHRIST in every way. The beloved son of the father—hated by his brethren—betrayed and sold for twenty pieces of silver—falsely accused and condemned—cast into the dungeon where the iron entered into his soul—exalted by the Supreme Authority to the highest position in the kingdom—made the ruler to whom all had to bow the knee—given a mystic name meaning in various languages Revealer of secrets, Food of life, Saviour of the world, and becoming the sole channel of provision for needy, starving, dying men of all the countries (Gen. xli. 55-57).

"When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried unto Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go to Joseph: what he saith unto you do. And the famine was over all the face of the



earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands."

Here is seen Joseph as the Revealer of secrets as he deals with his own brethren until they confess their guilty secret. Here is seen Joseph as the Food of life for the famished peoples. Here is seen Joseph as the Saviour of the world, for all must go to him if they would escape starvation through the famine.

Is it difficult to the enlightened eye to see this picture of long ago dissolve, revealing beneath it that of the greater One of Whom it is written: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"? (Acts iv. 12).

### III.

#### JESUS

Jacob—Joseph—JESUS. JESUS the Revealer of secrets, "for GOD will judge the secrets of men by JESUS CHRIST" (Rom. ii. 16).

JESUS the Saviour of the world, for "the FATHER sent the SON to be the Saviour of the world (1 John iv. 14).

JESUS the Bread of life, for "I am the Bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst" (St. John vi. 35).

The woman, Jacob's daughter, meets the true Joseph, the Revealer of secrets—not in a day of judgment, but in a day when He had come that men might have life.

The result of the meeting is apparent by her own confession—"A man which told me all things that ever I did."

Boasting of "our father Jacob" and his ancient well, she now hears of a springing well of *living water*—not a mere fountain sometimes dried up, as was Jacob's well, a rain cistern, although very deep: and the men of the

city, hearing Him themselves, exclaim: "We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the CHRIST the Saviour of the world."

True Revealer of secrets, true Bread of life, true Saviour of the world, He fills the page, and He alone, without rival or peer in heaven or on earth. Jacob, Joseph, Jacob's well all pass on, JESUS alone remains in these wonderful characters as the true substantial reality.

From this we may learn:—

1. It is a *happy experience* for some to be in the Presence of this One, the true Revealer of secrets, since He understands all the secret longings of the soul; all the sorrows of the heart; and the almost inarticulate desires for pardon, peace, purity and power to live aright.

2. It is a *solemn experience* being in His Presence, for others, for the secret sins, the smothered rebellious spirit, the wilful neglects and refusals are all known by Him; and there is a day when GOD will judge the secrets of men by JESUS CHRIST.

3. It is a *blessed experience* to be in the Presence of the Bread of life, the Saviour of the world, and to claim Him as my own Saviour—"the SON of GOD Who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*." To be able to echo the words of the men of that city, "We have heard Him ourselves and know that He is the CHRIST, the Saviour of the world."

Jacob, with all the tangled web of circumstances, the many disappointments and disasters of life; Joseph, with all the foreshadowings of One greater than himself; JESUS, the Revealer of secrets; the Bread of life, the Saviour of the world—with the gift of living water, the water of life, for whosoever will to take freely, how interesting the sequence becomes. Jacob—Joseph—JESUS—JESUS CHRIST, the SAME, yesterday, and to-day, and forever.

W.G.T.

## The Best Last

*"Thou hast kept the good wine until now."*  
(St. John ii. 10.)

THESE words, spoken by the ruler of the feast after he had tasted the "water than was made wine," made a lasting impression on John's mind. It is God's way to keep the best wine until the last.

This principle is illustrated in the account of the renovation of the earth and of the creation of the various forms of life, as we have it in Genesis i. Vegetable life is followed by animal, and that is succeeded by man, the crown of God's creative process. Made in the image of God, and capable of communion with his Maker, man is a kingdom, a world, in himself.

The same truth is confirmed in the structure of the Bible, recording, as it does, the progress of Divine Revelation to man. In the Old Testament God is partially revealed, but fully in the New, in the person, work and teaching of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And there is progress within the New Testament itself. Contrast, for instance, the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount with that of the Upper Room. In the Epistles our LORD's utterances, as recorded in the Gospels, are worked out in full by the apostles under the direction of His SPIRIT. And the Apocalypse, with its unfolding of judgment and victory and the city of God, makes a fitting end to the Word of God.

Christian experience should be a continuous progress. John speaks of "babes," "young men" and "fathers." Peter's exhortation to grow in grace applies to believers of all ages. "For one look at self take ten looks at CHRIST," said the saintly M'Cheyne. Yes, but let us take the one look at self. Occasional spiritual stock-taking is an excellent and wholesome exercise. Each of us is in God's school, and the ways of learning include *observation, meditation, suffering, and obedience*. Among marks of Christian progress the following

may be mentioned: assurance of salvation; increasing purity of motive; acting from principle rather than from impulse; greater broad-mindedness of the true sort; less relish for the world; a deeper peace in the midst of the things that happen; and the organising of the whole life around God and His will in the spirit of loving service.

A ripe saint bore this testimony on his eightieth birthday: "When I was converted, more than sixty years ago, I thought that nothing in the Christian life could excel the experience which was then mine. I was mistaken. To compare my experience then with my experience now is like comparing moonlight with sunlight, water with wine."

And "the best last" applies to the future as compared with the present life. *Now* we are at school; *then* we shall be at home. *Now* there is conflict; *then* there will be complete victory. *Now* we are subject to all the limitations and infirmities of the time-state; *then* we shall enjoy to the full the liberty of the sons of God. "*Now* we see through a glass, darkly; but *then* face to face."

And when we see our adorable LORD face to face we shall realise that He has indeed kept the best wine till last.

"Like a river glorious  
Is God's perfect peace,  
Over all victorious  
In its bright increase;  
Perfect, yet it floweth  
Fuller every day;  
Perfect, yet it groweth  
Deeper all the way."

E.A.

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Satan disputes every step forward we make in the Christian life. Our great enemy aims at blurring our vision of CHRIST and blunting the power of God's truth on our souls. We need to *fight through*.

## The Hidden Treasure and Pearl of Great Price

(St. Matthew xiii. 44-46)

By QUARTUS

**T**REASURE trove, while not unknown in our own country, is very much more common in Eastern lands. In times of civil commotion men would bind their valuables in a bundle, dig a hole in the garden or field, and bury them, intending to retrieve them later when things became more settled. So that in the days of our LORD there would most probably not be a market-place or workshop in Galilee where such stories as this, of a man unexpectedly finding a hidden treasure, would not be told. The original owner having died, or been unable to return and claim his property, it would lie hidden until one day a man ploughing, or using a mattock, would discover it.

Merchant men, travelling jewellers, traders in precious stones would also be a quite common sight as they passed from place to place in pursuit of their calling. Pearls of rare value were well known in ancient days. Indeed only some half-century before our LORD spoke these two parables Julius Caesar is reported to have presented Servillia, the mother of Brutus, with a pearl worth over £48,000; and Pliny tells of a supper at which Cleopatra and Antony were present when she was adorned by two rare pearls worth £80,000. Stories of treasure trove and of pearls of great price would therefore be familiar to our LORD's hearers and would illustrate the heavenly meaning of the teaching given.

Two things common to these stories of the HIDDEN TREASURE and the PEARL OF GREAT PRICE are the joy and eagerness of both the men to obtain the object of their desire, and also the price which in each case they were prepared to pay. This delight, desire and determination clearly characterises their actions. "For joy he goeth

and selleth all that he hath"; and "he went and sold all that he had," is how our LORD puts the matter.

He uses this to illustrate the delight He had in the sons of men (cf. Prov. viii.); the desire He had to possess such for Himself (cf. Titus ii. 14); and His determination to pay the price, however costly, to achieve this desirable end (cf. Heb. xii. 2; 2 Cor. viii.). "For the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame." "For ye know the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

#### THE FIELD

The field where the hidden treasure was discovered our LORD plainly says is the world. "The field is the world." In an earlier parable spoken upon the same day this was plainly stated. There also it is referred to as "His field," and "Thy field," and the owner as being the SON of man. But in this parable we learn at what a price he acquired it—"all that He had." But was not the field His own already? All things were made by Him, and why, then, speak of buying the field? The answer is, of course, that while all belonged to Him as the Creator, the Word by Whom the worlds were made, yet it is as SON of man He purchases the world that He may as SON of man possess the treasure His eye discerns as being hidden therein.

The Apostle Paul reminds believers that we are "bought with a price"; the Apostle Peter speaks of unbelieving men as "denying the LORD that bought them"; the whole fact being that He had bought the whole world for the sake of the elect souls hidden therein whom He has also redeemed by His precious blood. "Thou hast given Him power [authority] over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." By right of creation and purchase all men belong to Him, and should rightfully own His claims; but it is those, and those only whose sins are forgiven through faith in His blood, who can claim to be numbered amongst the redeemed of the LORD.

## THE HIDDEN TREASURE

We have already hinted at this, but a closer attention to this subject is needed. A treasure may consist, as a treasure trove hidden in a field most probably would, of many things, coins, valuables gathered together, which, singly or together, would be of special value to its owner. What, then did our LORD mean by it here?

In the Old Testament, five times over, *the people of Israel* are specially referred to by GOD *as a treasure*, "*My peculiar treasure*" (cf. Ex. xix. 5; Deut. vii. 6; xiv. 2; xxvi. 18; Psl. cxxxv. 4); and in the New Testament those who now compose *the church of God* are mentioned twice over in precisely the same manner (cf. Titus ii. 14; 1 Peter ii. 9).

Thus in Scripture, seven times and seven times only, that is a complete mention of GOD's treasure in the world is made. So the Kingdom of heaven is likened to a man finding a treasure hidden in a field—"the field is the world," and the man is the SON of man, our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

So far as *Israel* is concerned, the treasure still lies hidden in the field, to be brought out at a future day when the SON of man shall come in His glory, and as CHRIST the King shall sit upon the throne with all nations gathered before Him, and the Jewish people, of whom "as concerning the flesh CHRIST came," then acknowledged by Him as "My brethren."

But whether viewing Israel as the elect nation, or individual souls of men chosen in CHRIST before the foundation of the world, the world is the field in which all were hidden; and the One Who alone truly estimates the value of the human soul is He Who became Man in order to pay the price whereby richest blessing for Israel and the Church is alike secured.

## THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

This figure is vastly different from the preceding one of the treasure. A pearl does not represent a number

of things, but is one, a whole, marked by unity, purity, beauty and light.

The merchant man seeking goodly pearls in the parable one day sees one which in his eyes is simply priceless from its great size, perfect form, exquisite beauty and dazzling light. This he so desires that he determines to possess it at whatever cost to himself. Now a pearl is drawn out of the sea, formed by wounding, beautiful in appearance, having a value only to be properly appraised by an expert. Yet our LORD says the Kingdom of heaven is likened to a merchant man finding one such, who "went and sold all that he had and bought it."

What in the Kingdom of heaven can answer to such a description, except that company of persons, drawn out of the sea of nations; one body in Him Who was wounded for our transgressions; formed by the Spirit into one indissoluble unity—"there is one body";—and marked by CHRIST as possessing in His eyes unity, purity, beauty and light? Peter the Apostle in Acts xv. 14, says, "GOD did visit the Gentiles (the sea of the nations. Cf. Psl. lxxv. 7) *to take out of them* a people for His Name"; and Paul the Apostle writes of all such, "For by one SPIRIT are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one SPIRIT" (1 Cor. xii. 13).

As CHRIST the SON of man is He Who sees treasure in the field, so is He the Heavenly Traveller seeking and finding what is regarded by Him as the pearl of pearls. "Even as CHRIST also loved the church, and gave Himself for it . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephes. v. 25-27).

Unity, purity, beauty and preciousness in His sight are the marks of the pearl of great price which He has drawn from the sea of the nations to be His own peculiar treasure.



From heaven He came and sought her  
 To be His holy bride;  
 With His own blood He bought her,  
 And for her life He died.

So our blessed LORD in these two tiny but exquisite gems of parables shows His delight in the sons of men, His estimate of the value of the souls of men, His desire to have a company in purity, unity, beauty and light as a people for His own possession, and the sacrifice He made to secure this.

May we ever remember that being formed for His praise it is our bounden duty and happy privilege to show forth the excellencies of Him Who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. May we never forget the great price he paid for our redemption; and often with ever-deepening contrition and brokenness of spirit as we behold that great sight, the lonely thorn-crowned Figure throned upon the tree of shame, the Just One for us the unjust ones, let us reverently, gratefully, kneel in spirit at His feet and say, "The SON of God loved me and gave Himself for me." Then and thus will the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to Him our LORD and our REDEEMER, and we shall gladly join to sing:—

Thou, Thou alone art worthy,  
 For Thou the Lamb hast died;  
 And made us—once lost sinners—  
 Thy body and Thy bride.



"The Old Testament speaks to us as well as the New; the Epistles as well as the Gospels; the truths which relate to our fellowship with the Father and the Son, and the truths which teach us unworldliness; and those which teach us honour and love—*we need all the truth.*"—H.F.W.

## From Passover to Pentecost A.D. 57

(Acts xx.)

By THE EDITOR

**I**N the year A.D. 57 the Apostle Paul, now on his third and last missionary journey, spent Paschaltide—Easter as we should now say—in the company of his beloved Philippians. The Passover fell that year, almost to a day as this year, on April 7th, and the Apostle remained with them a whole week, until the days of unleavened bread were over.

It is interesting to follow him during that spring as he travels from assembly to assembly with his eight companions whose names are given, visiting Berea, Thessalonica, Apollonia, Amphipolis, until he reaches his earliest gospel station in Europe, Philippi..

Here he would be welcomed by his old friends from whom he parted five years before, who, however, always had him in their hearts, while he also thanked God upon his whole remembrance of them. Sweet and sacred indeed is the bond of Christian fellowship, and this these Philippians fully realised, and expressed from time to time by sending their loving gifts to minister to his necessities.

The succeeding weeks until Pentecost, or Whitsuntide as we say, being the last free period of the Apostle Paul's service so far as the record goes, are of very great interest. They incidentally afford inspired glimpses of early church life with its lesson for our own times.

Leaving Philippi, he set off, intending to spend Whitsuntide—Pentecost—in Jerusalem, visiting Troas and Miletus by the way. Arriving at Troas on the fourth Monday in April, he stayed there over the next Sunday, leaving early the following morning. His stay here affords us a sight of an early church custom in Apostolic days. No doubt he and his friends spent the week in visiting the saints in Troas and its suburbs; but to the Apostle,

as indeed to every SPIRIT taught, obedient believer, the great occasion of the week would be the assembly on the LORD's day for "the breaking of bread."

Only a very short while before this he had written to the Corinthian assembly reminding them that they, as all believers, were baptised by one SPIRIT into one body; and that "the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of CHRIST?"

Now at Troas he waits until the day when this unity made and maintained by the SPIRIT of GOD was to be locally expressed. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached [discoursed] unto them."

Here we have the usual custom of the church of God at Troas, and the unusual circumstance of that particular occasion. Without any sort of explanation, "the first day of the week" and the coming together of the disciples "to break bread" are recorded as a simple matter of a fact occurring week by week.

The LORD's Day and the LORD's Supper then held their right place in the hearts of the LORD's disciples. Not Paul's presence, nor Paul's discoursing, however helpful and valuable to the saints, was the gathering power or centre in those Apostolic days; but the Presence of the LORD in the midst, and His expressed desire to "Do this for a remembrance of Me," it was which brought the disciples together on "the first day of the week to break bread." This privilege is still ours, but is it valued by us as it should be?

The LORD's own service, on the LORD's own day in the LORD's own way should surely be prized by all who name the Name of the LORD.

Paul had a firmly rooted and clearly expressed objection to his presence in the gathering being made even the occasion of special collections (cf. 1 Cor. xvi. 2), differing thereby sharply from modern ecclesiastical ideas. In this vastly more important matter of the LORD's Supper doubtless he would have expressed himself more strongly still. In the "breaking of bread" it is the once abased

**LORD** Who fills the entire picture for the devout soul; Who He is and what He has done occupies the whole attention, leaving no room for any man save "JESUS only" with ourselves.

But the providential happening of the Apostle's presence that April Sunday was used for the edification, encouragement and exhortation of the flock of God. This, of course, is all in divine order, but the point to be grasped is that then "the disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread." Paul and his company left Troas on the Monday, but on the next **LORD's** day the disciples there came together "to break bread." It was the custom of the early church so to do, and is recorded that disciples to-day may ask for "the old paths" and walk therein.

On that Monday morning while his eight companions went by sea to Assos, Paul chose to go afoot across the promontory, a distance, roughly, of twenty miles. Most probably, like many another servant of the **LORD**, he desired a season of solitude and reflection in His **MASTER's** presence. Conscious, no doubt, of dangers looming ahead (Acts xx. 23); and, tender-hearted pastor that he was, feeling the special needs of the assemblies recently visited, he seized this opportunity of solitary communing with his **LORD**. What true servant has not known something of this?

Joining the ship at Assos, he continued his journey to Miletus, arriving on the Friday. Deciding, after all, not to call at Ephesus for the delay would prevent his arrival at Jerusalem by the feast of Pentecost, he sent for the Ephesian elders to come to him.

They came over on that Saturday, and their earnestness in responding to his request—some thirty-six miles of travelling—was only equalled by the earnestness with which he charged and exhorted them, finally commending them "to God and the word of His grace," the unfailing resource for the faithful in that and every succeeding age. This farewell discourse, one of immense interest and importance to ourselves to-day, is the only discourse of

the Apostle on this third and last missionary journey which has been preserved to us by the SPIRIT. He reviews his ministry among them, its spirit and scope of teaching. Great subjects are mentioned, faith, repentance, the gospel of the grace of God, the Kingdom of God, and the whole counsel of God all pass in review. Faithful warnings as to dangers from without and dangers from within are spoken; his own example of service well known to them is then reinforced by an otherwise unrecorded saying of the LORD which He Himself had so perfectly illustrated when here. "Remember the words of the LORD JESUS how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Then on the seashore what a tender and tearful parting as they knelt and prayed! They and he were deeply moved, and yet in their most touching farewell they sorrow "most of all that they are to see his face no more."

"Daughters of Jerusalem," said our LORD on a far more solemn and sad occasion, "weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and your children."

Well might these Ephesian elders have wept most of all for themselves and the flock committed to their charge had they only truly pondered Paul's warning words, "Of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them."

Faithful words of warning, however, are often relegated to a secondary place, and *we* need to be on our guard lest we forget. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves . . . watch and remember," were words which some, but not all, heeded, otherwise our LORD would not a little later have said, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

Then the Apostle resumed his journey, making steadily for to be at Jerusalem by Pentecost. The April and May of A.D. 57, so eventful for him, hold profitable lessons for us if only in the cases and places glanced at in this paper.

## The Gem

By SIR EDWARD DENNY

**G**EM of the deep, within its rugged shell,  
Spotless and pure, and exquisitely white,  
Lurks the rich pearl:—Thus love, O LORD, will dwell,  
Love to Thy Name! where our defective sight  
No beauty finds, while Thou through all canst see,  
And prize the jewel that belongs to Thee.

LORD! Thou art love—and shall we dare contemn  
The feeblest soul where Thou art pleased to dwell?  
Where love divine, that pure and perfect gem,  
Dim and unpolish'd now, shall far excel  
Yon orient sun, when sorrow's night is past,  
In its full lustre unobscured at last.

What brought the SON, O blessed FATHER, down  
To dwell, to suffer, die at last on earth,  
But love divine? In Thine eternal crown  
What gem of nameless all-excelling worth,  
Most brightly shines—irradiates all above  
With its pure beams? What jewel, LORD, but love?

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## Book Review

By J.F.K.

Lectures on the Epistle of Jude, by W. Kelly. New  
Edition revised by W. J. Hocking. (*C. A. Hammond,*  
*3 and 4 London House Yard, Paternoster Row,*  
*London, E.C.4. Paper 1/6, Cloth 2/6).*

**A**FEW days before reading the above we were asked  
by a well-known Christian teacher why Mr. Kelly's  
works were not revised and brought out in a more  
readable form. We hope the present effort in this  
direction will meet with the ready response it deserves,  
and thus furnish sufficient encouragement to Reviser

and Publisher to bring out other of these valuable works.

The importance and solemnity of this Epistle is felt as it is so clearly expounded in this volume. It forms, as a whole, a terrible indictment of the days in which we are living, and but for the beautiful closing verses would almost seem overwhelming by its severity.

Mr. Kelly insists, that, contrary to the belief held by many, "the spirit of the present day is as bad or worse as in any age since the LORD died and rose. There is one thing that marks it—LAWLESSNESS. A want of respect for everything that is above self, and a determination to have one's own way." How strikingly descriptive of to-day!

The verse that is perhaps more on the author's heart than any other is the third, namely, "that we should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints," and this is the theme of the greater part of the book. And this faith is not, as Mr. Kelly points out, a mere mist or a theory, but a very tangible reality. We are called out to be a separate (but united) people where there is no nationality, pride or prejudice.

The author has some very direct things to say to the "Brethren," which we shall do well to take to heart. Let us quote a few of his own words:—"It is a long while since 'brethren' first began, but there never was a time when we are more called to see whether we are really contending earnestly for the faith once (i.e., 'once for all') delivered to the saints." Deceivers are everywhere on the increase, and Mr. Kelly urges us to stand fast. Brethren yield, he says, to the amiable fancy that gross evil is impossible in their midst. But why so? Surely such assumptions are not only stupid in the highest degree, but unbelieving, too. "It ought to be evident that, if anywhere on the face of the earth Satan would work mischief, it is exactly among such as stand for God's word and spirit. Where superstition is tolerated, and rationalism reigns, he has already gained ruinous advantage over the religious and the profane. If any

on the face of the earth at the present time refute both these hateful yet imposing errors, his spite must be against them. The reason is plain. We have no confidence in the flesh, but in the LORD; and to that one Name we are gathered for all we boast, leaning only on His word and the Spirit of God. There never was a more foolish idea, perhaps entertained by some of us, that whoever might go wrong this could not happen amongst those called 'Brethren.' Oh, foolish brethren, to flatter themselves in such a way as that! Why you, we—for I take my place along with you in it altogether—we are the persons most liable to have the highest-flown expressions and pretension to the greatest piety, while there may be an enormously evil thing going on. How are we to judge of such things? By the word of God. And you will always find that those that are carrying on in that way slip from the word. They want something new, something that will go on with the times, something that will make the Brethren more popular, something that will get bigger congregations, and all those things that are flattering to human vanity; the consequence is that they are naturally afraid of the word. No wonder. No one ever quarrelled with the word of God, if the word of God did not condemn them. Every person who loves the word owes to it all his entrance into blessing; he derives all from that precious word and that precious word reveals CHRIST. Consequently we should not be occupied about pleasing others and about their work, but with CHRIST. And we want all God's children also to be occupied with CHRIST as the *only ground of any solid and sure peace.*"

These are telling words, surely, for each and all, but we can rely upon Him Who is able to keep us from falling. This blessed fact remains our consolation and our joy in these ever-darkening days. We hope that this little volume will be read by many; they will certainly find it profitable.



## Prominent—Picturesque—Powerless

By THE EDITOR

**I**N one pretty Sussex village the most picturesque and prominent object is the most useless thing in the district. Towering above the village on the top of the hill stands a windmill, one of the proper old-fashioned style, pictures of which adorned the story-books of our youth. To the traveller, whether by road or rail, these outstanding objects on the landscape, with their great arms or wings spread to catch the breeze and set in motion the mills beneath them, always suggest the charm of the countryside. He does not dream of complaining of either their prominence or picturesqueness, for are they not the outward and visible signs of inward energy and usefulness?

The windmill in this particular village is simply a relic of bygone days, and a reminder of what has been done in the place when corn was ground, millers, carters and bakers being kept busy. To-day the arms of the windmill are nailed to the sides of it, and while from a distance it looks as picturesque, and *is* as prominent as ever, its working value is nil. *It stands upon the old ground but is quite useless.* No corn is ground, no flour is milled, no bread is baked, no hungry families supplied from it. Like one with a name to live but in reality for all useful purposes dead, and existing as a relic and reminder of what was once done in the place. Prominent still, picturesque and admired in the eyes of some, but powerlessness spiritually and for all practical purposes of feeding and blessing others useless.

These were the thoughts stirred by the sight and inspection of the useless windmill in a pretty village.

Eloquence, personality, literary ability and geniality may lead to prominence and picturesqueness in the sight of man, but "the LORD looketh upon the heart," "by Him actions are weighed," and the words of the royal penitent in Psalm li. are still true, "Behold Thou desirest truth in the inward parts."

Not what men think but what God knows of us, is what matters supremely. May we have the same ambition as the great Apostle, who wrote, "Wherefore we labour ("are zealous," J.N.D.; "ambitious," R.V.) that whether present or absent [in or from the body] to be ("agreeable," J.N.D.; "well pleasing," R.V.) accepted of Him" (2 Cor. v. 9).

"Truth," that is soundness "in the inward parts," to which God alone has access, where in the innermost shrine of the being, He alone is worshipped, loved and feared with holy fear. Not money, position, nor reputation even among the brethren being sought, but whole-hearted desire to know His will in order to do it for His glory. Well may we pray, "Search me, O God, and try my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked [way of grief] in me; and lead me in the way everlasting."

It is salutary for us to remember that the fig-tree in our LORD's solemn parable (St. Luke xiii. 6-9) was standing *upon the old ground*, but, being *fruitless*, was simply and only *cumbering the ground*. The dispensational application of the parable to the Jewish nation must never blind those who profess to stand on the old ground to its moral significance for ourselves. For in this respect the ancient parable of the fruitless fig-tree and the modern story of the useless windmill both have a message to those who "have ears to hear." Is it not so?

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CHRIST shows His wonders in the deeps, not only of the sea, but also of human needs and necessities. As George Herbert sings:—

"When winds and waves assault my keel,  
He doth preserve it, He doth steer,  
Even when the boat seems most to reel.  
Storms are the triumph of His art;  
Though He may close His eyes, yet not his heart."

## Two Present-Day Subjects for Prayer

By A FRENCH BROTHER

### I.

**"S**EEK the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace" (Jer. xxix. 7).

During the last year, when Christianised nations were prepared to hurl themselves one upon the other, many children of GOD have asked if the LORD was not going to fulfil the promise given to the Church: "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. iii. 10). They were expecting to see the Church taken up in the twinkling of an eye.

But GOD has still prolonged the time of His patience. He has heard the numerous prayers which were addressed to Him by multitudes of Christians in every land. In answer to these prayers, He has moved the hearts of the great ones of the earth towards peace at the right moment, as it is written: "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will" (Prov. xxi. 1). He has had pity on this poor world, as at another time on Nineveh, which had repented at the preaching of Jonah. He has had pity on His dear children scattered amongst the various nations which, under the leading of the "prince of this world" who "was a murderer from the beginning" (John viii. 44; xii. 31), have prepared the most murderous machines to destroy mankind. He has spared us the horrors of bloody conflicts, praised be His holy Name!

In a time near at hand, however, as we know, "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences and earth-

quakes in divers places" (Matt. xxiv. 7). In the present state of things a spark will be enough to set the powder afire. But as "Enoch was translated that he should not see death" *before* the flood which put an end to the ancient world (Gen. v. 24; Heb. xi. 5), so will the Church of CHRIST, that is, the whole number of His redeemed ones, be caught up to heaven before these times of distress mentioned in Matt. xxiv. and in many other passages of Scripture.

The Church awaits this "blessed hope" (Tit. ii. 13). "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" (1 Thess. iv. 16-17). "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51-52).

Until that moment, and for as long as the day of God's grace and patience shall last, we have to remember the words quoted at the beginning of this paper, which were given of old by Jeremiah the prophet to the Jews, who had been carried away captive among the nations. Let us pray much that peace be maintained between the nations, so that we should profit thereby to strengthen ourselves in communion with the LORD, living in expectation of His coming, *and in separation from the world*. May we thus build up our defences in the years of peace like Asa, king of Judah, in his time (2 Chron. xiv. 6-7), for, if we allow ourselves to be weighed down with the surfeitings and cares of this life (Luke xxi. 34), our God may perhaps permit painful circumstances to be our lot such as we already see in other lands, in order "to awake us out of sleep" (Rom. xiii. 11-14).

This leads to the second subject of prayer:—

## II.

“I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of GOD our SAVIOUR, Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. ii. 1-4).

Elsewhere we are exhorted to account “that the long-suffering of our LORD is salvation” (2 Pet. iii. 9, 15). We have thus to pray for all men, while warning them of the judgment to come, to the end that some may yet turn to the LORD in these closing days of His grace and longsuffering. But the apostle exhorts us to make supplication, especially for kings and for all in authority, “that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”

If we go back to the time when this epistle was written, when the saints were being persecuted by the authorities, we may understand the importance of this exhortation. There is, however, *the danger of forgetting it while the authorities are favourable* and we can confess the name of the LORD and preach His Word without risk of persecution. Apart from exceptional cases which were regional or temporary, it has been thus for nearly a century as far as the testimony of the LORD is concerned. According to His promise to the church of Philadelphia: “Behold, I have set before thee *an open door*, and no man can shut it; *for thou hast but little strength*” (Rev. iii. 8). He has been giving to His own everywhere, with but few exceptions, favour from the authorities. He has been opening to them the door to proclaim the truths which from the beginning had been brought to light.

In our days, however, the doors are now closing one after the other; and the liberty to meet together according to the commandments of the Word has already

been withdrawn in certain countries. The enemy would like to suppress the testimony of the LORD on the eve of His return and to hinder the faithful from remembering Him around His table. How much need we have to cry to: "Him that hath the key of David, that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth" (Rev. iii. 7), that He may still maintain for us "an open door." It becomes us, also, to humble ourselves in His presence, acknowledging our failures, and how little we have appreciated our privileges by which we might so greatly profit and walk according to the truths He has given us to know. How often, also, has the meeting been neglected for paltry reasons while really we were absent because we were taken up with something of this world!

Of course, *we have been no more faithful* than those of our brethren who no longer have liberty to meet together! May their circumstances serve to warn us, lead us to take stock of ourselves and to judge in the holy presence of the LORD all which does not glorify Him in our ways *individually and collectively*. May He grant us also to be more conscious that there is *not the least power* in us, that "without Him we can do nothing" (John xv. 5), that we may have a very real dependence on Him. It is because the saints of Philadelphia had "little strength" that the LORD had set before them an open door which no man could shut. "His strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9), and our security is in feeling our extreme weakness.

In weakness itself is our safety  
 When naught without Him is desired;  
 For then, in His goodness and mercy,  
 The weak with all strength is inspired.

J.S.

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The look of CHRIST as He turned and looked on Peter on the night of the betrayal brought both *self-discovery* and *self-recovery* to him.

## Aaron's Rod that Budded

(Numbers xvii.)

**A**ARON, in the preceding chapter, had already stood between the living and the dead to make an atonement, and the plague was stayed. Now he is to be confirmed in his priesthood as the man whom God has chosen. Twelve rods are taken, one for each tribe of the people, and laid up in the silence of the sanctuary before God. Moses' rod, the rod of authority, is not included here, and Aaron's rod is simply the rod of the tribe of Levi.

On the morrow when the twelve rods are brought out to view it is found that a miracle in the realm of nature has been wrought, for Aaron's rod had budded, blossomed, and brought forth ripe almonds. It was a unique happening, confessedly a miracle, and is recorded in that special Old Testament book of the wanderings in the wilderness which the HOLY SPIRIT, through the Apostle Paul, tells us is both historical and typical.

"These things happened," this is the *historical* affirmation of the New Testament; "for our *ensample*," there the typical significance is stated.

The God Who could bring life, beauty and fruitfulness out of death is the God of resurrection. Aaron's rod that budded, blossomed and brought forth ripe almonds in the dark night of seclusion, and was afterwards laid up in the sanctuary, was an emblem of resurrection, unique, a type of the resurrection of CHRIST from among the dead. By this miraculous happening Aaron was openly designated as the man of God's own choice for the priesthood.

In this, and in his rod, Aaron is a type of CHRIST the true maker of a *real* atonement for the sins of the people of God; the Rod out of the Stem of Jesse; the Man Whose name is the Branch; the Priest and King, He Who was declared SON of GOD by resurrection of the dead. Once dead, now living, and laid up in the heavenly sanctuary a Priest for ever, in the power of

an endless life of beauty and fruitfulness, He still, to use the figurative language of the type, buds, blossoms and brings forth ripe almonds.

Amongst the Hebrews the almond tree was known as the "hastening" tree because of its early budding when the cold of winter had scarcely passed. Its name actually has the significance of the "wakeful" tree because it waked out of its wintry sleep before others. The fruit of the almond tree was reckoned very early as among some of the choicest fruits of Canaan, and as such was included by Jacob in the present sent to the all-powerful Egyptian governor (Gen. xliii. 11).

Bearing this in our minds, we see the appropriateness of Aaron's rod bearing almonds if, as it was, a God intended type of the true Rod, the true Maker of atonement, the true Priest ever *wakeful* in His intercession in the heavenly sanctuary, and the coming King Who will *hasten* the Kingdom at the appointed time.

CHRIST in resurrection life, beauty and fruitfulness was "the first to rise from among the dead," "CHRIST the firstfruits" (1 Cor. xv.).

CHRIST in resurrection life, beauty and fruitfulness is CHRIST the Great Priest—ever wakeful to the needs of the pilgrim host travelling through the wilderness, saluted by God as Priest for ever (Heb. v.).

CHRIST in resurrection life, beauty and fruitfulness is the coming King—"My King on My holy hill of Zion," says GOD, Who will hasten the coming day when the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

Typical, too, in a secondary but very real sense, of all Christians as risen with CHRIST is Aaron's rod "that budded, blossomed and brought forth ripe almonds." For *all* true Christians are described as being—

- (1) A kind of firstfruits of GOD's creatures.
- (2) A kingdom of priests.
- (3) A company who shall reign in life by Him.

Further, the life, beauty and fruitfulness believers possess in our RISEN LORD are:—

- (1) Fellowship with GOD—a fellowship of life.
- (2) Beauty of holiness by the HOLY SPIRIT.
- (3) Fruitfulness in service to the LORD CHRIST.



Truly the Anti-type of Aaron's rod has indeed budded, blossomed and borne fruit by the night of death and resurrection from among the dead. Once cut off, dead but now alive for evermore, He lives by the power of God. "And may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS, that great SHEPHERD of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through JESUS CHRIST; to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." W.G.T.

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## On the Coming and the Appearing of Christ

*"Like unto men that wait for their LORD."*

By A GERMAN BROTHER

THE hope of the soon coming of our LORD JESUS, which brings such cheer and encouragement to the heart in the midst of the difficulties and trials of the way, has also a voice to the conscience, and we do good to say often to ourselves: Am I really waiting for the SON of GOD from heaven? Am I living like one who is daily expecting his MASTER?

Only then will the truth of the LORD's coming again be of practical value to us, when it exercises this blessed influence on our walk and ways.

In those days, when the LORD addressed these words to His disciples: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning: and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their LORD" (Luke xii. 35, 36), the loins had to be girt if one wanted to be free to work and serve. Every true service to the LORD flows from love which desires to serve Him, and this can only be where there is communion with Him. *Love is diligent and spares itself no pains.* It finds nothing too hard; it spends itself in the service of others.

In addition to girded loins, however, the burning lights are required. If a lamp is to be useful and shedding forth a *clear* light (without which it is useless), it must be provided with the necessary oil and must be trimmed continually. God has left His people in this world that they should shine as lights in the darkness around them. Among them there are lights which burn with a clear light, some also which flicker a great deal, and *some* which are well-nigh extinguished. To which of these classes does the writer and reader belong?

The LORD adds: "And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their LORD." This does not mean that we should be men *who do nothing* but simply hold firmly to the *teaching* of the LORD's coming. It is possible that we might hold tenaciously to this doctrine and defend it against all who would deny it while at the same time having the heart cold and without the joyful "Amen" in answer to the call of the LORD JESUS: "Behold, I come quickly."

If we are really "like unto men that wait for their LORD," the fact will have an influence on all our walk and ways.

Will a person seek honour and esteem in this world, or aspire to accumulate wealth if he actually expects the LORD at any moment? The hope of the soon coming of the LORD is a matter for the heart, and will be realised in the soul in fresh and living power just in the measure with which the heart is occupied with it. If a mother who has not seen her son for some years suddenly receives a telegram that he is on his way back to the home, she will think of this night and day. The expectation of seeing the beloved son will even occupy many an hour when she might be otherwise asleep. What is the reason for this? The answer is simple: *her heart is in the matter.*

This watching and waiting position is one the LORD values. He wants to find us thus when He comes. To those who are found waiting the word is: "Verily I say unto you that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

## III

The LORD JESUS served us in the past when He walked on earth and suffered for us on the cross; He serves us now as our High Priest and our Advocate; and He will serve us in the future. When that day of glory comes He will, as it were, prepare the table for us in heaven and then come forth Himself and entertain us with the heavenly blessings.

Would it not be a blessed thing, dear reader, if we were to consider a little, in their context, the passages which speak of the coming of the LORD? This is often done, but remembrance is needed to stir up our pure minds (2 Pet. i. 12, 13; iii. 1). Let us turn first of all to the well-known words of the LORD JESUS in John xiv.: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again," etc. Let us put ourselves for a moment in the place of those to whom these words were personally addressed. What an overwhelming blow it must have been to the disciples to learn that their LORD was on the point of leaving them and of returning to heaven! As Jews grown to manhood and trained in Jewish hopes, they had ever looked for earthly blessings. They had believed that JESUS was the MESSIAH and their minds sought after the glory of His kingdom and His reign. Some of them had even sought a special place in this kingdom. With one stroke, however, all their hopes were shattered. A MESSIAH living on this earth could alone bring about the fulfilment of their expectations. *We* know that it was needful that He should walk that lowly path which led to the cross. How otherwise could we have a part with Him in His glory?

It is touching to see how the love of CHRIST lights up all of this part of the Gospel of John. He sought to comfort their troubled hearts with the assurance: "If I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again,*" not, of course, to set up the kingdom, but "to receive you unto Myself"! To be there where He is and to behold His glory is the blessed promise which we wait to see fulfilled. There is so much that is personal in this comfort, and that increases its preciousness considerably. "*I go away,*" "*I will come again,*" "*I will*

receive you unto Myself.” When we recall that our blessed LORD spoke these words just before the day of His sorrow and death, our hearts are moved. How blessedly and affectingly the words speak to us who are so near to the hour of His coming! “Yet a little while and He that shall come will come and will not tarry”! (Heb. x. 37).

In 1 Thess. iv. 13-18, His coming is before us. The Thessalonians were a happy and serious-minded company of young believers, not long converted and therefore not yet fully instructed in the truth. When some of them died, others of them were afraid that such would lose the blessing of the coming kingdom. The apostle did not wish them to mourn as others who had no hope. He showed them that the next wonderful experience which is going to take place is the meeting of the LORD with *all* His own in the air. When this takes place, not one who believes on Him will be absent, be such dead or alive at His coming. The one will be raised, the other changed. “For if we believe that JESUS died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in JESUS will GOD *bring with Him*” (verse 14). How could even *one* be missing, for whom He utterly destroyed the power of death?

Further on in his teaching the apostle speaks of “times and seasons.” We must distinguish between “the return of CHRIST for His own” and “the day of the LORD” or His “coming to earth for judgment.” These are two distinct events which occur at different times.

In 2 Tim. iv. 8, the apostle speaks of a “crown of righteousness,” and he says: “which the LORD, the righteous JUDGE, shall give me *at that day*: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love *His appearing*.” The context in which this crown is spoken of shows us clearly that the subject is not the saints being caught up to meet the LORD in the air; it is rather the appearing of the LORD in glory when He comes *with* His saints to be glorified and wondered at by every creature (2 Thess. i. 10).

So we see again that the truth of the coming of the

LORD has a very serious side. When He comes *for* His own, *every* redeemed one shall be taken up to meet him in the air. Nothing is said about responsibility or reward. It is quite otherwise in connection with the coming of the LORD *with* His saints. This coming takes place later after every believer has been manifested before the judgment seat of CHRIST, and has received his reward. The bride meets her BRIDEGROOM, the redeemed meet their REDEEMER, and the MASTER meets His servants and His maid-servants. In the latter case the whole history of our lives will pass before our eyes, and each shall receive a reward according to their works. This is a solemn fact and reminds us of our holy responsibility.

As a true and devoted servant of GOD, Paul could say that henceforth there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness. The recompense which he expected he called a crown of "righteousness" because it would be a righteous thing on the part of his LORD to give him this crown. He expected it from the hand of the "righteous JUDGE" and adds that the same crown will be given to all "who love His *appearing*." That is, His *appearing*, let us note, and not His *coming* to take us home to the FATHER'S house.

Do we love this *appearing*, that is, that view of His coming when all the results of our lives and of our service and conduct as believers in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation will be brought to light? It is a solemn question. If we walk daily in the light of the judgment seat of CHRIST, we shall be able to answer the question as the apostle did.

"The coming of the LORD" is spoken of in various ways in Scripture. As with all truth, we find here also *grace and responsibility in harmony with one another*, and we shall not let the joyful and blessed cause us to forget the serious. This spurs us on "to be firm, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the LORD." We know that our labour is not in vain in the LORD (1 Cor. xv. 58).

“Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

“He which testifieth these things said, Surely I come quickly. AMEN. EVEN SO COME, LORD JESUS.”

*(From the German. T.H.)*

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## Glimpses of the Historical Background of the New Testament

**T**O us Christian believers the first century A.D. is the most important period in history, and some knowledge of the conditions of life at that time is necessary to a proper understanding of the New Testament. The three principal races of the civilised world were then the Romans, the Greeks and the Jews.

### THE ROMANS

The Romans were a stern, cruel, majestic race. They were the masters of the civilised world. They are represented by the iron in the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream as recorded in the Book of Daniel. They excelled in war, in statesmanship and in law. Unlike the Greeks, they were not much interested in what lay behind the facts of life, and their mentality could be represented by the straight line. A glance at the map of the ancient world will show how straight the Romans built their roads, remains of which are to be found here and there to-day. Mark's Gospel is the Gospel of action; its simple record and its swift movement would make a special appeal to the direct, forthright, vigorous Roman mind.

The various people and races included in the Roman Empire were united to form one political whole. The Romans had unified the civilised world by breaking down the barriers of the states which they conquered and absorbed, and so made it easier for the Gospel to penetrate into all parts of the Empire. Rome in the first century while still extending her conquests, was decaying morally chiefly through slavery, luxury and the degrading superstitions from the East.

The haughty and sceptical Pilate and Gallio were typical Romans of the ruling classes. The New Testament brings before us the better sort of Roman officer, with his habits of discipline, and his appreciation of real human worth and sometimes of higher things (cf. Matt. viii. 5-9; Acts xxvii. 43; Acts x. 2). During the early centuries of our era Christian men often saw that the business of the soldier is out of keeping with the mind of CHRIST, and refused to bear arms. And this expressed the attitude to war of the Christian Church as a whole in those early days.

#### THE GREEKS

The Greeks were the cleverest people of the ancient world. Their minds were versatile, subtle and keen, and Grecian mentality could be portrayed by the curve. They were curious about all forms of life; and their restless mental activity was always seeking after "wisdom," as Paul points out in his letter to the Christians living in the Greek city of Corinth. The Greeks were the scientists, the philosophers, the artists and the traders of the ancient civilised world.

Macaulay says that ancient Greek was the finest language that has ever existed. Although Latin was the language of government, of the army everywhere, and of the ordinary people in Italy and other parts of the western half of the Empire, Greek was commonly used, especially throughout the eastern half of the Empire. Rome, which had subdued Greece by force of arms, was in its turn influenced to the core by the culture, philosophy, and language of its more intellectual rival. Even the Jews of the Dispersion could not but be influenced by the subtle and pervasive Greek thought.

#### THE JEWS

If the Roman was the man of rule and of law; and the Greek the man of thought and of language; the Jew was the man of revealed religion. With the circle symbolising his conscience towards the ETERNAL, the Jew stood for faith, duty and righteousness. He was never tired of listening to the recital of his national

history: of God's call of Abraham, the ancestor of his race; of Moses the great leader and lawgiver; of the rule and wealth of David and Solomon; of the flaming utterances of the statesmen-prophets of his people.

He resented the arrogance of the Roman, and, if a conservative Jew of Palestine, looked with indifference, if not disdain, upon the philosophies of the Greeks; for had not the true God given His Law to Israel centuries before Greece or Rome had any existence? The Jews were to the Greeks what the Roundheads were to the Cavaliers in the days of Cromwell and Charles I. Naturally tenacious and obstinate, they clung with a fanatical intensity to the Law of their fathers.

Accustomed to the typology and symbolism of their Law, the spectacular appealed to them, and they were continually demanding a "sign" to authenticate the message of CHRIST and His apostles (cf. Matt. xii. 38, 39; 1 Cor. i. 22). "Not many of our old race get converted," said a Jew to the writer; yet numbers do obey the Gospel, and often show deep fervent devotion to CHRIST their MESSIAH and SAVIOUR, and exceptional skill in expounding the Scriptures.

With the Jews of the first century religion and patriotism went together. They felt that they were at the same time the favourites of heaven and the sport of heathen tyranny. The people as a whole reflected the attitude of the Pharisees towards non-Jews. A murderous hate was aroused by any reference to God blessing other people as well as, or rather than, their own nation (Luke iv. 25-29; Acts xxii. 21, 22).

There are various references in the Gospels to the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. Both terms were popular with the Jews of our LORD's time, especially the latter. The "kingdom" was interpreted to mean a good time coming; a time of earthly rule and splendour with material prosperity under the leadership of a political MESSIAH. At the very outset of His public ministry our LORD was tempted to fulfil this worldly MESSIANIC hope of His people. On one occasion they wanted to make Him a "king," but He withdrew, for their thoughts were quite wrong. He announced that



the kingdom was centrally the rule of God in the hearts of men on earth. The surprise of Nicodemus was evident when told that entrance into the kingdom was only by a spiritual birth; he had to learn that only the new man can be a citizen of the new Jerusalem.

CHRIST was not a MESSIAH after His countrymen's heart; and after a while the people began to fall away from Him. Yet the rulers of the nation accused Him to Pilate of setting Himself against the Emperor, although it was His very refusal to use political action which had lost Him popularity with the crowds!

Even our LORD's own followers had much to learn of the meaning of their MASTER's teaching, as after His resurrection we find them asking the question ever uppermost in their minds, "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" As for the Jewish people, they having rejected their own MESSIAH were abandoned to their patriotic enthusiasm, and this precipitated a conflict with Rome. In A.D. 70, Jerusalem was captured amidst frightful loss of life, and the Jewish *nation*, as such, practically ceased to exist. It is one of the most terrible instances of Divine retribution in the history of the world.

The whole atmosphere of life in our LORD's day was *religious*, but not *spiritual*. Some, like Simeon and Anna, the disciples of the Baptist, Nicodemus, and the Bethany family, were seeking higher things; the majority, filled with pride of race, and satisfied with hard, half-truths about God, were simply absorbed with worldly things.

The Sanhedrin was the supreme Jewish Council. It was responsible to the Roman government; practically it was independent in both religious and civil affairs. At the Council meeting mentioned in John xi. 47-53, the death of CHRIST was decided upon, and henceforth they sought ways and means of accomplishing their object.

The Pharisees were the popular party in the Jewish religious government of that day as they represented the national hopes of a subject people. They were exclusive, proud, formalistic, and too often eaten up

with envy and selfish ambition. Our LORD's chief denunciations as recorded in Matthew xxiii. were against those whose religion consisted in outward observances, ceremonial and ecclesiastical correctness, and neglected the true life of the soul. There were others, like Gamaliel, Paul's tutor, who were more broad-minded; some, like Nicodemus, were no doubt dissatisfied with the hollow religion of their colleagues; yet all stood firm for the national recognition of God.

The Scribes are often associated in the Gospels with the Pharisees, to which party they mostly belonged. They were the official *teachers* of the Jewish Law, which they applied together with their traditions with fastidious exactness to the details of every-day life. In Acts xv. 10, Peter calls attention to the bondage which this entailed. Some, however, even of these were not far from the kingdom of God (Mark xii. 34).

The logical reaction from superstition is infidelity, and this introduces the Sadducees, who were the second party in the Jewish ecclesiastical government. They were much under the influence of Greek thought; rejected the tradition of the elders; and devoted themselves chiefly to material interests. They were sceptical of spiritual influences and doubtful about a future life. They were the rationalists of the day, as the Pharisees were the ritualists.

The publicans, who figure so largely in the Gospel records, were not inn-keepers, but tax-collectors. They had to send a certain sum to the Imperial Exchequer; anything over this they could possibly squeeze out of the people they were allowed to pocket themselves. They were a social class, but being Jews, were heartily detested for doing the dirty work of the Roman oppressor. Yet one of our LORD's apostles, the writer of the first Gospel, was a publican, as also Zaccheus, the Jericho official, a chief man among the publicans, who became a disciple.

The synagogue was practically the Jewish chapel, and the centre of Jewish religious life and education, both in the homeland and among the Dispersion. During his missionary travels Paul always made for the

synagogue first; it was a kind of half-way house to the heathen, and where he could always find as common ground belief in the true God and in the Jewish Scriptures.

#### THAT OLD WORLD—AND OURS

Palestine in our LORD's day was always in a more or less disturbed state. From time to time there were outbursts of the national spirit (Luke xiii. 1; Acts v. 35-37). Intrigue and bribery were rife on every hand. True, the Jews were favoured in being allowed to live under their own laws, but behind the local government was the iron rule of Imperial Rome. The world itself was also an armed camp. Punitive expeditions were constantly coming and going. Rebellion was crushed with ruthless severity. The civil power rested quite openly upon military force, and in practice martial law ruled everywhere.

The strong might have a good time, but were in danger of the assassin's knife or poisoned cup. The weak went to the wall, for in that dark old world there were none of the laws and customs of our modern social conscience that at any rate make life so much cleaner, safer and more comfortable for the ordinary man and woman to-day.

The humanitarianism of to-day simply did not exist in that hard old world. There was no proper sanitation; no hospitals; no health insurance; no state aid for the unemployed or the poor and the aged; no free meals for children, and little free education. In New Testament times many of the Christians were slaves. Slavery was recognised as an essential part of the social structure. The slave might be well or badly treated. He *might* even be private secretary to his master, tutor to his master's children, and heir to his master's possessions. On the other hand he might be tortured and killed at the whim of his master or mistress. He had no political rights, and was, in fact, the absolute property of his owner.

We moderns cannot properly visualise a world where there were none of our mechanical contrivances and conveniences; no newspapers; no books in our sense of

the word; no telegraph, no telephone, no postal service in the modern sense; no trains, no steamers, no motor cars, no roads as we know them in Britain to-day; no wireless, no gramophones and no cinemas.

But the modern world has its own difficulties. The nations are interdependent as never before, so that trade depression and unemployment afflict all parts of the civilised world. Our wonderful modern machines are able to turn out more than enough for everybody, yet mass production exists side by side with want. And the very machines in which men boast increase unemployment by taking the place of human hands.

The standard of life to-day is, of course, very much higher than in that dark old world. We are far better cared for, but we have more cares, and are far less able to do without things, and more sensitive to pain. We have far more means of recreation, but are cramped and worn by the din and rush of our complex and mechanised civilisation. And with the decline of Christianity and the spread of atheistic or agnostic materialism, the sinister moral features of that dark pagan world are fast reappearing in our midst. "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" abound. "A form of godliness also side by side with a denial of the power thereof" can already be clearly discerned.

In the first century men had largely lost their faith in the old pagan religions. It was a time of scepticism and cynicism. Men were "fed up" with life; their hearts were hard, weary, and hopeless of human aid. Amongst godly Jews there was the wistful longing for the promised MESSIAH, and even among the heathen there were here and there vague expectations of a Divine Deliverer. Roman rule and order, the Greek language, and the far-flung Jewish colonies all helped to make the world ready for the *great crisis of human history* and the supreme act of God's self-giving love. The "*fullness of time*" mentioned in Galatians iv. 4, had come, and the clock of history struck the "due time" when "CHRIST died for the ungodly." What a mercy for mankind!

E.A.

## Communion with God

*(An address given in the Guildhall, Winchester, at the Christian Conference on Tuesday Evening, May 30th.)*

BY THE EDITOR

ONE great danger besetting the people of God in every age is that of unconscious hypocrisy, formalism in spiritual things. To draw nigh with the mouth and honour with the lips, while the heart is far away, is simply to be acting a part in the presence of Him Who desireth truth in the inward parts. Thus to speak in prayer and forget that when we pray we speak to God; to utter words of praise in singing hymns without making melody in the heart in the LORD; to read the word of God and not hear the voice of God speaking in it; to essay to minister the word to others and yet to be only a dealer in unfelt truth; to preach the gospel without any passion for souls or thrill of heart at the message proclaimed; to give money without any real sense of obligation and sacrifice—all this is but to, unconsciously maybe but very really, play the hypocrite, to be a drawing near with the mouth, honouring with the lips while the heart is far off, engaged with other things. Surely this is a thing to be abhorred by all the faithful people of God; yet alas! a thing which we all find ourselves in danger of doing.

While on the one hand many and severe warnings are given in the word of God against this danger, on the other hand there are also set out very plainly the conditions under which any child of God may enjoy the rich blessing of a realised communion with God. "For thus saith the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My word" (Isa. lvii. 15; lxvi. 2).

Here is the divine assurance and promise which indicates the road along which true spiritual satisfaction may

be found by any fulfilling the conditions, whatever present circumstances or difficulties may be.

It is the timeliness of these reassuring words which make them so very timely. Any saint in any age may take hold of them and prove their wonderful truth. They are *timeless* because of the Speaker, the One Who inhabiteth eternity, and *timely* because of the abiding need of the human spirit for communion with the Father of our spirits. How eagerly should we covet and cultivate the possession of the character which brings the soul into the full enjoyment of this high privilege and most gracious blessing.

May we consider, first the *Speaker and Giver* of these promises and assurances. "*The High and Lofty One*"—this is peculiarly characteristic of Isaiah's vision of God in ch. vi. "*That inhabiteth eternity*"—the King Eternal, everywhere and everywhen present. "*Whose Name is Holy*"—the character of Him Whom the cherubim worship as the "Holy, holy, holy," Lord God of Hosts Whose glory filled the whole earth. "*I dwell in the high and holy place . . . with him also*"—the high and humble abodes of Deity. "*To revive the spirit, to revive the heart—to renew, to regard the humble,*" "the poor, the contrite ones who tremble at My word."

What majesty and mercy, what greatness and graciousness these words reveal, as the interest of the High and Lofty One is shown in the affairs of the lowly, humble, contrite ones.

Let us consider next, *The assurance and the promise*, taking the latter first. "*To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word.*"

The word rendered "look" has here the significance of a fixed interest, of a close regarding, of an attentive observation, and might be read, "To this man will I look *attentively.*"

Now "the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy," "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in behalf of those whose heart

is perfect toward Him." "The eyes of the LORD are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers." Prophets, Psalmists, and Apostles agree in their testimony to God's attentive regard for His people generally; but here it is a special regard to be shown to certain, and to be only enjoyed by them. This surely is what we would covet for ourselves. "To this man I look." "With him will I dwell"—and "dwell" here means abide, stay, tabernacle. The promise and assurance are strangely reminiscent of our LORD's own word, If a man love Me, he will keep My word, and My FATHER will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him." Something different from, and over and above the general experience of the average disciple is clearly here suggested. It is conditional, though even then entirely of free grace on our LORD's part.

So here, the promise and assurance of the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity to dwell with, and specially to regard the humble and contrite ones who tremble at His word is plainly something other than the fact of His presence at all times with His people. It is special, and subject to certain conditions. What these are we may learn from the characters of those to whom the fulfilment is assured. "To this man"—*which man?* "With him will I dwell"—*with whom?* The right answers to these two simple questions should lead to a right attitude on our part, that we may possess this inestimable blessing. There are four things stated in our two verses of scripture to be carefully noted. 1. Him that is poor. 2. Of a contrite spirit. 3. Of a humble spirit. 4. Trembleth at My word.

To be poor in the sense of the word here does not mean to be financially hard-up, as we say. It refers to being "afflicted" or "oppressed" spiritually. To be of a contrite spirit is to be bruised in spirit on account of failure, one's own first, then that of others. To be of a humble spirit is to make self low, to be lowly minded. To tremble at God's word is to be troubled, exercised by it in one's own soul, to be affected by it.

As an illustration of "him that is poor," once when

in conversation with a business man, he drew attention to another who was passing, saying, "Do you see that man? He is a strange man; he is a millionaire, a single man, generous to a fault, living in a very modest way, but he spends his time sympathising with God over the bad state of things in the Church and the world. A singular man," he added reflectively. I knew the man, and the other's appraisal of him was a pretty accurate one. "Sympathising with God over the prevailing evils in the Church and the world." He was one of the "poor" referred to in the text, and no doubt entered into the blessed experience promised and assured to all such.

In the Chapel of the Ascension, near the Marble Arch, London, the walls and roof are covered by a series of pictures painted by an artist once in fellowship. On his death the executors made the building over to the Established Church as the best way of preserving it for the use of the nation. The pictures are intended to illustrate the whole of the Scriptures, and incidentally, are well worth seeing. In connection with our subject, let us take a turn down the corridor of sacred history and look at the portraits of some of the great family of faith to which by God's grace we belong, if true believers. See how many of them were poor, contrite, humble, tremblers at God's word, who received the special blessing promised to all such.

Here is ENOCH—who walked with God and pleased Him, and knew it. "*He had the testimony that he pleased Him.*" A "poor" man oppressed and afflicted by the conditions of ungodliness prevailing in his day; a man deeply exercised by the word of God; a man who separated himself from what was displeasing to God; a man, in short, who was "poor, of a contrite spirit and trembled at God's word." Hence in that dim, distant, antediluvian age, Enoch was one to whom God looked attentively, with deep interest, and gave courage, comfort and continuance by communion with Himself in a special way. He walked with God and was not, for God took him.

ABRAHAM, the Friend of God—a man of deepest humility, who said, Behold, *I have taken upon myself to*



speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes; a man so exercised by the word of God as to leave home and kindred and become a pilgrim and stranger on account of it; a man of such obedience and faith that it was counted unto him for righteousness; a man to whom God could look *attentively*, and assure of such blessing as filled his heart with comfort, courage and continuance in the path entered upon by faith.

Look next at MOSES—a man with whom the LORD “spake face to face as a man with his friend”—a humble-hearted, lowly-minded man; afflicted by the state of God’s people; broken-hearted in meekness at the pride and ambition of the leaders among them; trembling at the word of God in deep spiritual exercise at the failures and rebellions of God’s people; his contrite humility leading him to take the lowest place before God and desire to be blotted out for God’s glory. “To this man will I look” is the promise, and Moses had the joy of its fulfilment centuries before it was actually recorded, because of the Speaker Whose words are ever timeless and yet timely.

JOB and DAVID—separated by centuries, yet sharing the same deep experiences of affliction, contrition and humility, and alike exercised through the word of God, are examples to us of the kind of character that inherits these promises and assurances. They are men to whom God looked attentively and amply blessed with comfort, courage and continuance by communion with Himself, as they fulfilled the conditions. Hear them speaking: “What I know not teach Thou me.” “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself,” says Job, the poor, contrite, humble trembler at God’s word. “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” “My sin is ever before me.” “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity.” So prays the poor, contrite, humble-hearted David, as he too trembles at the word of God. The sequel is found in an earlier Psalm, where he celebrates the blessedness of the forgiven man, whose sin is covered, and to whom the LORD will not impute iniquity. For true to His, as yet unwritten, promise and

assurance, God, *Who looks with attention to all poor, contrite, humble tremblers at His word*, assures the royal penitent, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go; My eye shall be upon thee—I will guide thee with My eye." Again what comfort, courage and continuance comes from communion with God.

ISAIAH, who records these gracious words, is also an exemplification of them. Disgusted and spiritually afflicted by the prevailing evils among the people of God in his day, he denounces them in bitter, scathing terms. Then, when the old king dies after a long, peaceful reign of half a century, Isaiah, closely in touch with the royal court, is perplexed and disturbed. He goes up to the house of God, and there, the vision of "the High and Lofty One Who inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is holy," and the ordered worship proceeding undisturbed by earthly chances and changes, so impresses him with a sense of what *he* is, that he who so confidently pronounced woes upon his sinful neighbours now—listen to him speaking, "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen *the King*, the LORD of hosts."

Afflicted and oppressed by the evils of others, he now became of a humble and of a contrite heart and one who trembled at the word. To him, from the throne of glory, by way of the altar came what gave him comfort, courage and continuance by communion. "Whom shall we send? Who will go for Us?" "Here am I, send me." Low enough and contrite enough now, to be used by God.

DANIEL and EZRA present a rather different aspect of the subject. Both these godly men are deeply afflicted and oppressed by the condition of the people of God, but in very different circumstances. To the one it is the *captivity* of the people that exercises him, to the other it is their *failure after the return* from Babylon.

DANIEL—a man against whom no defection of any kind is recorded in Scripture is one occupying a position of prominence and importance in the world, and is yet

one to whom God looked with *attentive interest to a special degree*. He is a humble-hearted, deeply-afflicted man spiritually; one who finds the captivity of God's people a real burden upon his spirit; a truly contrite man *confessing his sins and the sins of his people*, one who also intercedes for them; a man who reads and understands the word of God, and whose whole life is definitely shaped by it. His windows are opened towards Jerusalem. He loves the gates of Zion. His body may be in Babylon, his spirit is in the Holy City, from which he is exiled. Fluctuations in circumstances do not affect the orientation of his citizenship. Holy, humble, contrite, afflicted, prayerful and exercised by the word of God, he too very fully realised the comfort, courage and continuance that came from communion with God. "*O man greatly beloved,*" exclaims the angel of God to him.

EZRA possesses, however, a singular interest for ourselves to-day. He is one who in a day of failure even after the Return from the Captivity reveals himself to be a man that trembled at the words of the God of Israel because of the transgression of those that had been carried away. He was genuinely afflicted *because of the fresh failure of God's people*; so contrite and broken-hearted by the general ruin, that he rent his garments, fell upon his knees, spread out his hands and said, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God."

Fasting, separation from all doubtful associations, confession both of *personal sins* and sins of their fathers, listening to the word of God, and lowly worship, marked the revival of the spirit of the humble and the revival of the heart of the contrite ones upon this occasion. Once more the promise and assurance were fulfilled as comfort, courage and continuance sprang from communion with "the High and Lofty One Who inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy."

Turn now to the other wall in this inspired portrait gallery, that upon which the full light of accomplished redemption falls, and for a moment contemplate the spiritual features of three Apostolic men.

PETER—"first Peter," always so placed in the list of

names of the Apostolic college, becomes, too, one of the first of Apostolic penitents. "I am a sinful man, O LORD," he exclaimed when in the presence of CHRIST. It is Peter who weeps bitterly over his awful self-discovery. It is he who casts himself upon the All-knowing LORD to confirm his own affirmation of love. "LORD, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." It is Peter who humbly exhorts those who have obtained like precious faith to "humble themselves under the mighty hand of GOD." It is he who bids all to "gird themselves with humility." It is he who speaks of the importance of the word of GOD and its value for believers. He is one to whom the LORD looks *attentively*, and who having received comfort, courage and continuance thereby, reminds us that the eyes of the LORD *are* over the righteous, and His ears *are* open to their prayers.

PAUL—as we stand a moment before his portrait, in the light of his own inspired writings discloses the graces of humility, contrition, broken-hearted affliction, poverty of spirit, soul exercise in trembling at the word of the LORD in a marked degree. "*Not meet to be called an Apostle.*" "*Less than the least of all saints.*" "*The chief of sinners.*" "*An injurious man.*" "*I persecuted the Church of GOD.*" "*A blasphemer.*" "*When Thy martyr Stephen was killed I stood consenting to his death.*" "*I obtained mercy.*" "*The grace of our LORD was exceeding abundant towards me.*"

And he meant every word of it all, did this holy, humble, afflicted trembler at GOD's word. But he also records how in his case the ancient timeless promise and assurance were found to be "Yea and Amen in CHRIST JESUS to the glory of GOD by him," in a most timely way.

Comfort in extraordinary measure; courage to an amazing degree; continuance, spite of hardship, handicaps, opposition, desertions to the very end. "All men forsook me, nevertheless the LORD stood by me." Of course He did, for with such He delights to dwell.

"Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble

spirit to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

JOHN—furnishes us with one more Apostolic illustration of the great theme. On a rocky, sea-girt island in the Ægean, on a LORD's day morning, this lonely, aged, friendless exile is thinking of the days of long ago in Galilee, of the LORD Whom he had loved, and Whose special love he had known. Times have changed for him, but the timeless promise and assurance is to become most timely to-day. He is afflicted by the afflictions of the people of God; a brood of tiny Anti-Christ's have appeared on the scene to harass the Church; Diotrefes the self-important is scattering ex-communications amongst the faithful who refuse his dominance; the other Apostles have passed away; the hoped-for return of the LORD has not yet taken place and John feels all these sorrows and burdens; he is a poor man, of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at the word, being always guided and exercised thereby and—does he remember the word of the LORD JESUS which he himself transcribed, “If a man love Me, he will keep My word, and My FATHER will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him.” “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word.” He hears a voice like the sound of many waters; he turns to see the Speaker, and in awe and worship falls at His feet as dead. To John also came fresh comfort, courage, continuance, by this blessed communion.

Finally, we must challenge our own hearts as to whether *we* are the kind of persons likely to experience such high privilege as that promised and assured in the verses in Isa. lvii. 15; lxvi. 2.

There are the same timeless promises as timely in our day as ever. There are the examples of those in the family of faith who have enjoyed the comfort, courage, continuation in communion which come from fulfilling its conditions. The same conditions for receiving this blessing stand good to-day for ourselves. “For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with

him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." Now do these characteristics attach to ourselves in any way? Are we of a humble spirit? Of a contrite spirit? Are we so conscious of the evils abounding that we are really afflicted by them? Do we tremble at God's word, trouble ourselves by it, allowing it to correct, instruct and convict us? "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Do we feel our need of comfort, of courage, of continuance, and so are prepared to welcome this high privilege of realised communion with God? No more unconscious hypocrisy, no more spiritual formalism, but unsparing judgment of ourselves and confiding dependence on Him. Thus may we also enjoy the abiding presence of the FATHER and the SON with us. "If a man love Me, he will keep My word, and My FATHER will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

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## A Servant's Testimony

**W**HEN Captain von R. was killed in the autumn of 1914, there was deep sorrow throughout the whole regiment. He was beloved, and parents whose sons were under his command had thanked God because they knew that their service was done where bad language was not heard, nor was the name of God blasphemed.

A friend was having a conversation with him on the Scriptures, some time before his death, when he excused himself because of some duty which had to be done. He asked his friend to wait as he would be back soon. The friend began to look at the many good books which lay on the table, but soon the many photographs on walls and table attracted his attention. He knew the whole family whose photographs were there with those

of relatives and friends, among them generals and military acquaintances. Among them was one he could not understand. It was that of an ordinary soldier; it occupied a place in the middle of those on the table. As the friend was closely scrutinising it, von R. came in.

"I know what you're thinking," he said with a smile. "You are wondering why that ordinary soldier should have his photo there!"

"That's so. He hasn't a single distinction."

"Well, that photo will always have the place of honour with me. That man is my friend. He did me the greatest service that one man can do to another. He led me to the SAVIOUR and has been God's instrument for my conversion. He is my only 'batman'" (servant).

Captain von R. then went on to tell that his servant had not spoken of the LORD JESUS, but had apparently spoken much *with* the LORD. It touched him, to see the care of the lad for his officer, how he waited upon him in spite of orders to go to bed at his usual time. Even when the officer was not in a good mood, the servant had everything right. His behaviour resulted in the officer being brought to the LORD. It came about in a very simple way. The officer had always been an honourable man and upright. When he considered his servant, how he quietly, dutifully and happily went on his way, and compared him with himself, he had often to admit that he himself did not come off best in the comparison. The servant was happy. Of that there could be no doubt. In spite of all the good appearances, however, the officer was not; but at bottom was a very dissatisfied man. It so happened that the officer one day asked his servant right out as to the ground and source of his joy and strength. Straightforward and clear, like his life, came the testimony of the servant. In simple words he related to his captain the story of God's *love* in CHRIST and of the redemption wrought by the LORD JESUS CHRIST. GOD blessed the simple testimony. It was not long until von R. understood that the shameful death of the LORD JESUS on Calvary was for the *glory* of GOD and for *our eternal salvation*. When he saw this,

he bowed in child-like faith and rested on the testimony of God: "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,*" and received this wondrous gift of free grace.

The silent testimony of a life lived for the LORD bore fruit. When the time came to speak, the words were given to the simple soldier, and being confirmed by the life he lived, they were blessed to the soul of the high-born officer who would otherwise have been beyond the reach of any words spoken by a person of common rank.

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## What Do You Talk About ?

**L**UDWIG RICHTER, the great German painter, tells a story of his childhood. An acquaintance of his father's came on business and when the two older men had finished serious talk, they began to speak a little more loudly so that the lad of 15 or 16 heard them as he worked nearby. A blasphemous, unclean jest against one of the parables of the Gospel came from the lips of the acquaintance. Like a sword, the words seemed to cut into the young soul. Doubt as to the stories had never seemed to him possible, yet he saw that his father said nothing to oppose the blasphemer so that it seemed as though the older folks had no confidence in what his school-teachers taught the lad to be the truth. He had the feeling that something had been taken from him, which never could be replaced.

No further evil resulted as far as Ludwig Richter was concerned, for, by God's grace, he grew up to be a true Christian, but how often have such evil words fallen into young hearts and produced sad results!

An old Persian parable tells of two brothers who were called from their homes to their dying father. As they rode together Ali said: "We'll have to go a little more slowly, your horse is getting tired."

To a Persian, every word against his horse is an insult to himself, and Ismael answered angrily after his brother had kept on repeating his insinuation about the horse.



Finally Ali, to prove his assertion, challenged his brother to a race, to see which was the better horse. After a terrific gallop, Ali's horse drew ahead under the cruel driving with spur and whip. "Liar! Boaster!" cried Ali, "don't you see now that my horse is the better?"

In blind rage, Ismael drew his bow and shot his brother in the neck. With a cry, Ali sank from his horse. Weeping, the other ran to him, withdrew the arrow, and staunched the bleeding and then, when Ali was fit to be lifted, he put him on his waiting horse and slowly continued the journey. It was a sad experience for them both. When, at last, they reached their father, they found he had died.

Sadly the two brothers returned later to their own homes. "Do you know what you can never take back?" asked Ali suddenly.

"Yes!" answered Ismael, "the arrow that has left the bow. When I saw it fly, I would have brought it back, but it was not in my power to do so."

"That's true," answered Ali, "but I was not thinking of the arrow, but of the spoken word. *It can never be taken back after it has passed one's lips.* I would have given much to have been able to take back mine; but it was too late."

The word of God says: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." James speaks of the tongue which is "set on fire of hell" and "full of deadly poison." One mocking word can make another person also a mocker. How different with three women at Bedford who talked together as they sat. John Bunyan heard them speak, not about the faults, real or imaginary, of which so many constantly talk, of their neighbours, but of the things of heaven. Thus did the unseen hearer derive benefit from their conversation. Through the grace of God, it led to his conversion. As a converted man he was able to write a book which has had the widest and greatest sale of any other, with the exception of the Bible itself. John Bunyan remembered in gratitude as long as he lived the three women whose talk was so blessed to him.

The LORD JESUS once asked His disciples: "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" He was not indifferent as to what the disciples talked about. Nor is He indifferent to-day as to our conversations. What must that Listener hear from the lips of those who profess to be following His footsteps! Perhaps they have just been singing:

"Oh, make us each more holy,  
In spirit pure and meek;  
More like to heavenly citizens,  
As more of heaven we speak!"

When the LORD put the question to His disciples, they held their peace, "for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest" (Mark ix. 33, 34). They were ashamed!

We *must* speak of home and business matters in our daily life. In these things, however, we *can* be "in spirit pure and meek." Those who say of their gossip: "We say only what is true about others; no name is spoken in a wrong way," are seldom delighted to know that *others can treat them in the same way*, but let us consider the question of the LORD as asked of ourselves. "He has called us from darkness into His wondrous light."  
(From the German, T.H.)

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## Remarks Upon an Interesting Criticism

BY QUARTUS

**I**T is not often that a secular journal deals so sympathetically with a spiritual matter as is done in the following criticism of a recent volume reproduced here. We believe it will interest our readers.

### "UNITY IN CHRIST"

ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY. By S. Angus. John Murray. 6s.

Behind all the varieties of theological expression and ecclesiastical divisions there lies a unity of experience

that is shared by all Christians alike, for the Christian, whatever his ecclesiastical allegiance, aims at being able to say with St. Paul, "I know whom I have believed." The final evidence for the truth of his religious life is found not in what he has learnt or been told by others, but in what he has himself found true *in communion with God*. Whatever he may affirm about CHRIST and whatever details of the three creeds he may accept or reject, his religious life is something that has come to him through CHRIST; he may use sacraments or not, but "*Abide in me*" represents the supreme point of his experience. But there is a still further unity; for what the Christian is aiming at, whether he accepts the leadership of Catholicism or of some obscure Protestant sect, is the reproduction in his own life and, as he can influence it, in the life of the world of the moral values that he finds in the life and teaching of CHRIST. His aim for himself and his world is Christlikeness.

These two aspects of fundamental unity among Christians provide Professor Angus with the theme for this important book. It is important not perhaps because it says anything fresh, but because this essential unity is something that needs constant reassertion. What Professor Angus pleads for is that this unity of experience and aim should be allowed to influence Christians to the overcoming of their differences. Creed and churchmanship, he insists, are secondary, for it is life that matters; and though the difficulties, as no doubt he would agree, are enormous, the more frankly this unity is recognised the better chance there is that good will may overcome them.

Whether his own method of overcoming them is likely to be successful may be open to question, for it is little more than, on the one hand, to lift Christianity from its historical credal basis, and, on the other, to discount the value of the institutional forms. It is a road that has frequently been suggested, but which has so far proved impracticable, but nevertheless at a time when Christians in many countries confront a hostile civil power a book like this, with its courageous insistence upon the pro-

found unity that lies behind the divisions of Christendom, might do something to bring nearer the open union which all thoughtful Christians desire."

The foregoing extract from *The Times Literary Supplement* must stir the heart of every thoughtful Christian believer. UNITY IN CHRIST, the title of the criticism of ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY, is such a reality that one longs to see its practical manifestation publicly. Yet experience teaches us that although we readily recognise our brethren in CHRIST when He and He alone is the subject of our conversation, there is a restraint put upon us by denominationalism which prevents the free interchange of Christian fellowship and the public testimony to Christian unity which are according to our LORD's mind. Undenominationalism is not the remedy, and equally surely Interdenominationalism does not provide the cure for the unhappy divisions among Christian people.

There is one body, and one Spirit by Whom the unity of the body was formed on the Day of Pentecost, the birthday of the Christian Church. And the duty of every Christian believer is to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Not by amalgamation, nor by federation can this be accomplished, but only by every true member of CHRIST making visible the unity which already exists. "The foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, the LORD knoweth them that are His; and let every one that nameth the Name of the LORD depart from iniquity." If this were simply carried out without reference to ecclesiastical traditions of any kind, the true ground for expression of UNITY IN CHRIST would be discovered to be where one had not to take on anything contrary to Scripture, nor surrender anything that is according to Scripture. The LORD JESUS owned as the gathering centre for His people now on earth, as He is assuredly owned by them as such for heaven; the HOLY SPIRIT, CHRIST's Vicar on earth indwelling and guiding the whole body; and the Holy Scriptures bowed to as the sole Directory for worship, fellowship and service; these

would quickly demonstrate to the world our real UNITY IN CHRIST.

“No more to see Thy chosen few  
By selfish strife divided;  
But with them drink the living stream,  
That gave them hearts united.”

## A Short Meditation

(Heb. xiii. 8)

**L**ET us meditate for a little while upon Hebrews xiii. 8, “JESUS CHRIST the Same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.”

By faith we hear “a voice from heaven saying, ‘This is My beloved SON, in Whom I am well pleased’ ” (Matthew iii. 17).

We think of the name “JESUS,” and we hear the angel of the LORD saying to Joseph, “Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the HOLY GHOST. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew i. 20, 21).

We learn that the name “JESUS” is the Greek form of the Hebrew “*Jehoshua*,” which means “*God my Saviour*,” and what a volume of truth at once unfolds itself to our hearts.

Then we pass on to “CHRIST,” and we read in Matthew i. 16, “Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born JESUS, who is called CHRIST,” and we learn that the Greek word *Christos* means “anointed,” and that the title implied in it shows Him to be the Prophet, the Priest, and the King. All three of these, prophets, priests and kings were typically anointed with oil, and JESUS was anointed with the HOLY SPIRIT, Whom the oil typifies, and is officially “THE CHRIST.” Surely we have here a gloriously profitable subject for meditation as we think of Him in each one of these offices, Prophet, Priest and King.

Next we find that there is no change in Him. He is the same for the past, present and future. The Eternal

God appears in time in this blessed person JESUS CHRIST; and the life of God is revealed in Him, and is imparted in a new birth by the HOLY SPIRIT acting through the word of God to every believer in the LORD JESUS CHRIST (John iii. 3-15). "JESUS CHRIST is the Same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

*Yesterday* speaks of the past; and when we think that "A thousand years in God's sight are but as *yesterday* when it is past, and as a watch in the night" (Psalm xc. 4), and that "One day is with the LORD as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter iii. 8), we realise that *Calvary is but yesterday* in God's estimation. Then we hear John's inspired words in the Revelation, "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, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven SPIRITS of GOD sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne" (v. 6, 7), and we think of John the Baptist's introduction of Him to us, "Behold the LAMB of GOD which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29).

It is but *yesterday* since He died for me, and I realise that the only One Who never deserved to die bears the marks of death in resurrection. He could say to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger and behold My hands, reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless but believing."

*To-day* refers to the present, and we read in 1 John ii. 1, "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the FATHER, JESUS CHRIST the Righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the whole world." So I learn that the One Who died for me *is still interested in me*, and pleads my cause on the grounds of the eternal efficacy of His own sacrifice, and my heart goes out continually to Him in thanksgiving and praise.

Finally the words "for ever" point to the *future* and bring before me His own blessed words, "FATHER, I will

that they also whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am: that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me: for 'Thou lovest me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24); and I think of what He said about His FATHER's house and the many abodes there; preparations being made for me, and the promise of His return to receive me to Himself (John xiv. 2, 3). In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, I may pass from time into eternity to be for ever with the LORD, and for ever like Him (1 Corinthians xv. 51-57).

Then again by faith I hear a voice from heaven saying, "This is My beloved SON in Whom I am well pleased, hear Him," and with these words ringing in my ears, and producing an echo in my heart, I can be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the LORD (1 Corinthians xv. 58).

After all, what is my life, however long it may appear to be? "It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away" (James iv. 14). But "JESUS CHRIST is the SAME, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

" 'Tis but as yesterday  
That JESUS died,  
And on the Cross for me  
Was crucified

'Tis but as yesterday  
He in the grave was lain,  
But the dark sepulchre  
Could not Him detain.

'Tis but as yesterday  
He rose again,  
And to the faithful few  
Appeared—did not remain:

'Tis but as yesterday  
That he ascended high,  
And is at God's right hand  
No more to die."

G.S.P.

## On the Camera and the Eye

**G**OD has given us each a wonderful gift, the gift of memory. How solemn, too, is the consideration of the fact that we retain our memory in eternity! Every man that has ever had memory will have it for ever. It may be temporarily suspended through illness, or through an accident, but it will re-awaken in eternity.

And what a gift of love it is for the believer to-day, as we remember all the way the LORD our God has led us.

Again God has loaded us with benefits, and one of the chief of these is sight. Your wonderful eyes are like a camera that takes in every little detail that enters the lens; but the camera cannot understand what it sees, while your God-given eyes have not only sight, but with seeing you have perception; you understand what you see. Put a camera in front of an open book, and, if properly adjusted, every letter, every word will be shown on the negative, but the camera does not understand. Put the book before your eyes and unconsciously they will immediately adjust themselves and you will read, say, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"; and what you see are not only letters and words but words that have a meaning, and that you understand. From now you will never forget this truth about what God says we are in His sight; it will be stored in your memory in eternity. You open the Bible again, and see more letters, more words; this time: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners." With your God-given intelligence you add this saying to your first portion and discover that, although you are a sinner, yet God has sent a SAVIOUR for sinners, and if for sinners then for you! Then the question will come to your mind: How am I to avail myself of this salvation? The answer will be found by reading in the Bible, "Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved." Then on another page, "LORD, I believe." Then your memory links together the four Scriptures thus: *A sinner—a Saviour for sinners—instructions for the sinner—the sinner's response.*

H.L.B.



## The Arm of Flesh

*The Substance of some Remarks on the anointing of Saul (1 Sam. viii. 21, 22; x. 1-9; 2 Cor. v. 14—vi. 1).*

By W. J. HOCKING

THE futility of depending upon the natural man to carry out the will of God is taught by both example and doctrine throughout the scriptures. An Old Testament prophet declared, "Thus saith the LORD, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm" (Jer. xvii. 5). A New Testament apostle wrote, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. viii. 8).

Among many historical examples of carnal failure, Saul, the son of Kish, is a conspicuous instance. His biography shows in much detail how vain was the attempt of a natural man to rule the people of Israel in the fear of God and according to His will. In contrast, the history of his New Testament namesake illustrates how acceptable to God is the service of a man who had learned to have "no confidence in the flesh."

In the New Testament teaching, the fundamental truth underlying man's natural capacity is revealed. It is stated without qualification that the mind of the flesh is "enmity against God" (Rom. viii. 7). The flesh cannot be improved nor adapted to render willing and acceptable service. Its efforts are those of an enemy and a traitor to God.

Our LORD said, "That which is born of the flesh is *flesh*." And on account of its implacable hostility to the divine life and the divine will, the basis of all acceptable relationship to God is the new birth — the birth "from above." Accordingly, the passage read from 2 Corinthians teaches the necessity of a new creation. Before a man can serve God, he must be entirely and differently re-conditioned—"a man in CHRIST JESUS," old things passed away, all things become new, all things of God. In one word, there is a new creation.

To this class, who are no longer in the flesh but in CHRIST, GOD commits the word of reconciliation to be announced by them. They walk not after the flesh, but after the SPIRIT, and are the ambassadors of CHRIST, as though GOD by them was beseeching men to be reconciled to Himself. It is a ministry which is foreign to the flesh, and in which the arm of flesh is unavailing.

#### SAUL'S ANOINTING

In the case of Saul, the flesh was on its trial with regard to wearing the crown and wielding the sceptre. The story of his anointing by Samuel seems to indicate that his call to the kingly office was perfectly in order, and that GOD approved of him as a man fully qualified to sit upon the throne of Israel.

But the truth is that Saul's qualities for his office were only external. He lacked the inward quality which is subservient to the will of GOD. Saul was never a man after GOD's own heart, as David was. However, because of his fine physique and soldierly bearing, accompanied by successes in battle, he was one after the people's heart, and they eagerly welcomed him as their leader and ruler.

GOD granted their wish for a king, and by him He purposed to demonstrate the inefficiency of the flesh, both in the nation itself and in the man that suited their tastes as king. Samuel, therefore, was bidden to anoint Saul to be captain over Jehovah's inheritance. Anointing was the formal indication on GOD's part of His acceptance for kingly office, as the priests, the sons of Aaron, were anointed before their service about holy things in the tabernacle of JEHOVAH.

But the vial of oil poured on Saul's head and the kiss of Samuel, though they constituted him king over Israel, in no wise altered the nature of his flesh. The LORD's word to Nicodemus indicated that flesh could neither see nor enter the kingdom of GOD, much less rule in it to the glory of GOD. And Saul's after-career proved that as he began so he continued to be a man "in the flesh" to the end.

## ISRAEL'S FLESHLY HASTE

The people had been coveting to have a king like the neighbouring nations. They said to Samuel, "Make us a king like them" (1 Sam. viii. 6). They were discontented with JEHOVAH's personal rule over them. They rejected Him, and desired such as themselves to govern them, as other peoples were doing.

GOD had known that the nation would have this hankering after a king. Before Israel crossed the Jordan Moses warned them (Deut. xvii. 14-20), and advised them to have only the king, "whom the LORD thy GOD shall choose." Now, in the impatience of their flesh, the people could not wait for JEHOVAH's choice, but came to Samuel, saying, Make us a king. Accordingly, JEHOVAH, Whose authority over them was thus ignored, told Samuel to "hearken unto their voice, and make them a king" (viii. 22).

It is true that in Israel the times were most difficult. The affairs of the nation were in a state of disorder and utter lawlessness. The people were in shameful servitude to their idolatrous neighbours. The worship of JEHOVAH at Shiloh was corrupt. The priests abused their office, and were guilty of open sin. The ark of God itself had been captured by the Philistines, and even lodged in the house of Dagon, the heathen god.

As natural men, it was easy for the children of Israel to discern that the times were out of joint, and it was a natural impulse for them to desire a king to remove what oppressed them, and to govern them firmly and effectively. They longed for a visible leader to go before them, and they forgot and forsook the invisible God Who had brought them out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders.

Israel had their way. They got a king from the tribe of Benjamin, Saul, the son of Kish, a man head and shoulders above his fellows. They were pleased, for flesh admires flesh. But JEHOVAH had chosen a king out of the tribe of Judah. He meant to give the sceptre to David, the son of Jesse. Had the people waited for David, they would have seen JEHOVAH "*give strength*

*unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed,"* in the words of Hannah's song (1 Sam. ii. 10).

We, too, beloved, often find ourselves bewildered in the present scene of moral and religious disorder. Many in their dismay take refuge in a listless despondency. Some with more energy feel that some steps should be taken to rectify matters, and even propose some scheme of adjustment or improvement. But all plans based merely upon human diplomacy and expediency are foredoomed to failure. They rest on the flesh.

It is overlooked that our God is fully aware of the activities of evil in the church and in the world. It is forgotten that God has formulated His own plans for the correction, condemnation, and removal of these dominating evils, and, moreover, that He has already chosen and appointed His own Man for the execution of His plans for righteous government.

Let us not make plans of our own for rooting up the tares in a fleshly haste for the harvest. Let us not seek to anticipate the rule of God's David by setting up a Saul of our own choosing. THE ARM OF THE LORD will prevail in due time, but the arm of the flesh must fail and perish.

#### JEHOVAH'S INSTRUCTION TO SAUL

Though Saul was not the man whom God had chosen "to fulfil His will," He did not withhold His formal appointment by His prophet Samuel. At the same time, JEHOVAH gave Saul special instruction suited to his new duties. From the lips of Samuel, the anointed king had the opportunity of learning the folly of trusting in the flesh and the wisdom of complete confidence in God. If he could not find his father's asses without consulting the man of God, how much less could he govern a kingdom without submission to JEHOVAH and a reverence for His law?

The ultimate failure of the son of Kish was known to God, but in His wisdom Saul was permitted to occupy the throne, and to demonstrate in himself that the arm of the flesh could not wield the sceptre to the glory of

GOD and to the well-being of the people. In due time JEHOVAH would place the sceptre of righteousness and peace in the hand of His King, His elect Servant, His Chosen One.

It is a principle of GOD's ways with men that the false precedes the true, as also that the things of the flesh are contrary to those of the SPIRIT of GOD, though they are often close counterfeits. CHRIST was the true Prophet raised up of GOD like unto Moses, but Balaam was a false prophet. CHRIST is the true Apostle and High Priest of our profession, but there was a false apostle, Judas the betrayer, and a false high priest, Caiaphas the murderer.

In like manner, Saul was the false king after the flesh, but he was followed by David, raised up of GOD to be a type of JEHOVAH's own King whom He would duly set upon His holy hill of Zion.

#### THE SIGN OF THE SEPULCHRE

Samuel poured oil on Saul's head, and told him what would happen to him as he went on his way as the anointed king of Israel. The events would have a spiritual significance to which he would do well to take heed as the voice of GOD to him, regarding his new career.

First, Saul would learn from two men at Rachel's sepulchre that the asses he was seeking had been found. This service for his father was ended. He was freed to enter upon the entirely new service for which he had been anointed by Samuel.

But why was it ordered of GOD that he should receive this news from two witnesses at Rachel's sepulchre? Surely, that he might learn that the path to power and glory begins with grief and pain.

Here was the burial-place of the mother of Benjamin, the father of Saul's tribe (Gen. xxxv. 16-20). Rachel brought forth the child with much pain and sorrow, and with her dying breath named him Ben-oni, the son of my anguish. The weakness of flesh foresaw only a life of sorrow for her offspring, who was the cause of her own death.

Her prophecy was true, but faith in the father saw beyond the vision of the flesh. Israel named the child of his old age Benjamin, the son of my right hand. Jacob looked on to the exalted glory of the Coming One. Sufferings would come first, but glories would follow. This was GOD's way to the throne at His right hand. Let Saul, the man of flesh, take heed to the unfoldings at his forefather's birth.

How significant was this first sign to the anointed king! Oh, if he had taken to himself the truth between the lines of the figure! He had been called to rule over Israel, to be the captain over JEHOVAH's inheritance. He must know that the way to all dominion and glory begins in the place of weakness, of sorrow, of death, for the flesh.

This fundamental law was foreshadowed in the sepulchre of Rachel, and was fulfilled in the tomb of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. There for the believer life in the flesh ends, and there life in the SPIRIT begins (Rom. vi 4; Col. ii. 12). Would Saul judge the flesh as God judges it?

#### THE SIGN OF BETHEL

But Saul had more to learn. First, he must know the incapacity of his own flesh, and then what man should render to GOD at all times. Accordingly, Samuel said he would meet by the oak of Tabor three men going up to GOD at Bethel, the house of GOD, with their offerings to Him.

Here again were circumstances on which Saul should have seriously reflected. It was a day of spiritual disorder in Israel, when every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judges xxi. 25). The worship of GOD at Shiloh, near Bethel (Judges xxi. 19) had fallen into neglect, confusion, and abuse.

It was striking, therefore, that Saul should meet three men who were not following the multitude to do this evil, but who still honoured the GOD of Bethel, and sought to obey the law and bring to Him the offerings commanded by Moses. They were three faithful witnesses in Israel of the worship due to JEHOVAH's name, and their hands were filled with gifts to lay before Him.

Samuel spoke of Bethel rather than Shiloh where the tabernacle actually was. Bethel was a place full of hallowed memories, which could teach Saul many a needed lesson.

At Bethel, God had appeared to Jacob when he was leaving the chosen land with a staff only (Gen. xxviii. 14-19). There God renewed to the fugitive the promises He had made to Abraham and Isaac. After his wanderings, Jacob came back to Bethel, and erected there an altar to JEHOVAH (Gen. xxxv. 1). So Bethel was the house of God in Canaan even when Saul's fathers dwelt as strangers in the land of promise.

Now the people were in the land, but both people and priests alike had departed from worshipping JEHOVAH and honouring His house. Yet Saul was given to see three men who feared JEHOVAH and had gone back to the faith of the patriarchs. Their faces were towards Bethel, not Shiloh, where the ark no longer stood in the tabernacle.

Neither were the worshippers going up to Bethel empty-handed. One carried three kids, another three loaves, and the third a bottle of wine. The animals were for sacrifices to JEHOVAH, and they rightly and fittingly are named first, because of their importance.

Each of the three men would have a kid to present to JEHOVAH as an offering for himself personally, the three being brought by one man as a joint offering for the little company. Whether this was so or not, worship has both an individual and a collective aspect, but either is acceptable only when in spirit and in truth. Flesh cannot participate, and the men do not give Saul a kid.

Nor do they invite Saul to share the bottle of wine. Wine is the symbol of joy arising out of the possession of God's blessings and God's inheritance. This drink-offering was prescribed for Israel when they entered the land, and not before (Num. xv. 7). It is not mentioned in Leviticus among the offerings to be made during the wilderness journey.

Wine signifies personal joy in God (Rom. v. 11), and is a fruit of the SPIRIT (Gal. v. 22). It could not be shared by a man in the flesh, as Saul was. "The heart knoweth

his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy" (Prov. xiv. 10); and Saul was a stranger, if he would but own it.

The three men, however, had a gift for Saul. They would "salute" him, and give him two out of the three loaves of bread. There was "bread enough and to spare" in the house of God at Bethel—ample sustenance for the life of the man about to be king, a loaf for himself and a loaf for his people. At the same time, did not the gift recall the saying of Moses that man should not live by bread alone, but by every word proceeding out of the mouth of JEHOVAH?

#### THE SIGN OF THE PROPHETS

A third sign would be given to the newly-anointed king. When he came to the hill of God where was a garrison of the Philistines, Saul would meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with music and prophesying.

What sight could impress upon Saul the chaotic condition of the nation more vividly than the sight of the bitterest enemies of Israel occupying the hill of God? Gibeah, or the hill of God, was the scene of the dishonour of JEHOVAH's name and the triumph of His foes.

Yet in this very place of Israel's reproach Saul was given to see how God was prevailing over the presence of the enemy. Saul should meet there not a single prophet but a company of prophets, coming down from the hill with instruments of music, jubilant with JEHOVAH's praise.

Moreover, these men were prophets. Through them the word of JEHOVAH was being conveyed to the nation under the very eyes of the Philistine garrison. Did not this sign declare to Saul that the power and antagonism of the world, the flesh, and the devil cannot suppress the power and activity of the SPIRIT of God? Would Saul also learn the lesson of the impotence and ignorance and uselessness of his own flesh in the service of God? Alas, we know he lived and died a man in the flesh!



## THE SPIRIT COMING UPON SAUL

The prophetic office was to some extent bound up with the kingship of Israel. David, when he reigned, would be a prophet (Acts ii. 30); this external qualification also was vouchsafed to Saul. Samuel said that when he met the company of prophets, the SPIRIT of JEHOVAH would come upon him, and he would prophesy. As the oil had been poured upon his head, so the SPIRIT would be given him that he might be the mouthpiece of God to his people.

The gift of the SPIRIT was JEHOVAH's endowment to Saul so that he might fulfil the official duties of his regal office. It is not said the SPIRIT entered into him, but came upon him. The oil was poured on his head not in his heart. He was not born from above, but made an instrument of earthly government. The man who sought his father's asses was set to rule JEHOVAH's people, as David who shepherded his father's flocks was exalted to feed the chosen nation of Israel.

## TURNED INTO ANOTHER MAN

Saul was turned into another man, but not into another kind of man. The man in the flesh did not become what the New Testament calls "a man in CHRIST." When he was turned into another man he was still the old Saul, though exalted to be the head of the twelve tribes.

The change to another man was external. He was endued with the qualities necessary for the government of the nation. Above all, "the SPIRIT of JEHOVAH came upon him," and this in itself indicated that he was "turned into another man." Moreover, we read that when Saul went away from Samuel, God "gave him another heart" (verses 6, 9). This was the heart to understand the law of God, and to administer it with equity to the people. But it was not the new heart and the new spirit that loves God and seeks its pleasure in doing His will.

There is no evidence in scripture that Saul was born of God by the HOLY SPIRIT. He had every outward advantage for the office of God's vicegerent in Israel, but his heart was unchanged. Saul remained a man in the

flesh. His mind was at enmity against God; it was not subject to the law of God, neither indeed could be. He had no new life, no new nature, nor was he begotten again of God.

#### THE SIGN OF GILGAL

The final sign in this series was Samuel's instruction to Saul to go to Gilgal, and there await his coming to offer sacrifice (verse 8). Gilgal was the place where the flesh was judged by circumcision, when Israel first entered Canaan, and the reproach of Egypt was rolled away (Josh. v. 2-9).

Now in Gilgal the obedience of Saul to the word of the prophet was to be tested. He was to tarry there seven days for the arrival of Samuel and the offering of burnt offerings and peace offerings. As a reward of this patience, Saul would then be told what he must do.

Self-government in obedience to God's word is a primary qualification for national government. Both patience and obedience were perfectly exemplified in the LORD JESUS, the true SERVANT OF JEHOVAH. But we are not told that Saul even went to Gilgal. He broke down at the very first test.

We know that on another occasion Saul exhibited his disobedience and self-sufficiency at that very place, Gilgal. Instead of waiting seven days for Samuel, he offered the burnt offering himself (1 Sam. xiii. 8-14). He acted in the haste of the flesh, but JEHOVAH then turned from him as an incompetent ruler of His people.

In our worship and in the sacrifice of our praise, let us beware of the impatience and the intrusion of the flesh. Let us wait for our Samuel, and not worship in a hurry. When He strikes the note, the flame of the burnt offering will ascend in the excellency of His own Person to God, a sacrifice of a sweet savour.

Let us also heed the instructions given to Saul, and learn for ourselves the lessons set before him. Let us remember that the flesh profiteth nothing, that it cannot please God, that in it dwells no good thing. At the same time, when we accept the condemnation of the flesh in us, which God has revealed to us, the HOLY SPIRIT will do mighty things through us in humble worship and hearty service.

## Sometime—Somewhere

UNANSWERED yet? the prayer your lips have  
pleaded

In agony of heart these many years?  
Doth faith begin to fail—is faith departing,  
And think you all in vain these falling tears?  
Say not the FATHER hath *not* heard your prayer,  
You *shall* have your desire sometime, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? though when you first presented  
This one petition at the FATHER's throne,  
It seem'd it could not wait the asking,  
So urgent was the heart to make it known.  
Though years have passed since then, do *not* despair,  
The LORD will answer you sometime, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? Nay; do not say *ungranted*;  
Perhaps *your* part is not yet wholly done—  
The work began when first your prayer was uttered,  
And GOD will finish what He has begun.  
If you will keep the incense burning  
His glory you shall see, sometime, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? Faith *cannot* be unanswered;  
Her feet are firmly planted on the Rock.  
Amid the wildest storms she stands undaunted,  
Nor quails beneath the loudest thunder shock.  
She *knows* Omnipotence has heard her prayer,  
And cries, It shall be done—sometime, somewhere.

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When once we come really to know God, we know Him as love. Then, knowing that everything comes to us from Him, though we be in a desert — no matter where, or what the circumstances—we interpret all by His love. I may be called on to pass through pain and sorrow and trial as part of His discipline; but everything that comes from God, comes from a source and a spring in which I have confidence. I look through the circumstances to Him; and nothing can separate me from His love (Rom. viii. 31-39).

Where God is but little known, and where there is not therefore confidence in His love, there will be repining at circumstances, and murmuring and rebellion.

## The Christian Life

(Rom. v. 1-11.)

**I**T has seemed to me whilst at the meeting for the Breaking of Bread how the above passage is really an epitome of the whole Christian life and therefore of the utmost importance for every believer reaching from the very beginning, i.e., the New Birth, till all the members of CHRIST on earth shall be safely at home with CHRIST our LORD in those heavenly mansions which are already prepared for us.

To begin, the apostle draws a conclusion from all that has preceded in the epistle concerning saints. He says as we are justified by faith we have peace with God; what the sinner needs above all things is peace with God, and that we have by faith without any works of our own at all: and faith shows that there is the New Birth, for without *that* how could there be faith in us by nature; but having believed, having rested in faith on our SAVIOUR and His work on the Cross, everything is cleared up, all our sins are dealt with, and we have forgiveness and peace.

The result at once is that we are given a standing before God in His grace, and the consequence is that we have given to us the rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. Though this is so, yet it is true that many, through not understanding or not being taught what is ours, may for years lack this their joy. But possessing what verses 1 and 2 tell us "not only so" comes in showing that grace will work in the believer, so that we can actually glory in tribulations. This, of course is difficult, for naturally we would never rejoice in tribulations. But what is the result when grace has so worked that we can glory in tribulations? We learn patience and wait upon God as to His will and pleasure about our tribulations. And has not this often been exemplified and is now in suffering saints? We wait for God to show us His will and pleasure about our tribulations, Who will do so, and as He sees fit remove them. Our patience indeed is an experience which we need of

God's ways, and, as verse 4 tells us, produces hope that maketh not ashamed, the love of God by His SPIRIT being shed abroad in the hearts of His children.

This is what we need most in a day like this, with evil abounding and for a while triumphing, and men's hearts failing them for fear of what is coming. For it is this knowledge of God's, so free and inexhaustible, which removes fear from our hearts. This is commended to us (verses 6-8) in that while we were sinners without hope CHRIST died for us.

Having dealt with the Christian life by showing what grace provides during our earthly pilgrimage, verse 9 goes on to the future, "having been justified by His blood," i.e., cleared from everything against us, "we shall be saved by His life." Therefore "the wrath to come" will not, indeed cannot, touch us, for we shall be safe in our heavenly home when it breaks upon a guilty world, and as it will specially upon a guilty Christendom.

But verse 11 reaches a climax indeed in "not only so" that as we have been reconciled we are enabled to joy in God. *Reconciliation* is the right word which the text reads here instead of atonement, fully dealt with elsewhere (see Heb. ii. 17), where "*atonement*" is the right word in the text. That guilty sinners and ungodly ones should be able to rejoice in a God Whom they were afraid of, and alienated from by sin, is the wonderful result by faith of the perfect and complete work of our LORD and SAVIOUR. As by grace each one is enabled to enter in his or her measure into what the SPIRIT OF GOD has given us in these 11 verses, how well it is for us and for our joy to see ourselves provided for in all circumstances from the first moment of the new life till we, raised or changed, have been translated into the glory awaiting us.

J.C.B.

## Some Thoughts on Marriage

*"There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the Mother of JESUS was there: and both JESUS was called, and His disciples, to the marriage" (St. John ii. 1, 2).*

By QUARTUS

MARRIAGE, though dating many centuries before Christianity, is singularly illustrative of this at its very highest. The HOLY SPIRIT, through the Apostle Paul in Ephesians v. 22-33, teaches that Christian marriage in some sort signifies the union subsisting between "CHRIST and the church."

At the marriage in Cana of Galilee our BLESSED LORD confirmed by His presence and blessing the original institution made by GOD in the state of man's innocence. The water blushing into wine by His will, may surely be illustrative of how He can make the water of human joy become like wine of heavenly bliss for those who desire and welcome His presence on such occasions. It is significant, too, that this first sign which "manifested forth His glory" was of a creational character as was also the institution of marriage by GOD for the comfort and continuance of mankind.

While we are told that "marriage is honourable in all" yet all are not married, but very few indeed are those not interested in marriage. Any building upon any day where a wedding is being held becomes a real centre of interest for the time being, even for those who have no particular interest in the persons whose wedding day it happens to be.

There are some who remain single to be free to devote themselves to special work; some also on account of aged or infirm parents and relatives; others again by the will of GOD for His service in work best accomplished in freedom from earthly encumbrance of any kind. Of these, to name an ancient and a modern example, the Apostle PAUL in the first century, and J. N. DARBY in the nineteenth, may be cited as instances of men who could not have done the work they were

called to do except in freedom from nature's closest tie. But as our LORD said: "All men cannot receive this saying, save them to whom it is given" (St. Matt. xix 11). It is interesting to note in passing that Peter the first named of the Apostolic band in every list was himself a married man, and one chosen to give advice and instructions on

#### CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE.

It is this aspect of the general subject of marriage which concerns Christian believers. To such He ever says: "Ye call Me MASTER and LORD: and ye say well; for so I am" (St. John xiii. 13). It follows therefore that on this as indeed on every other subject His words are authoritative and binding upon the conscience and obedience of His disciples. At the wedding in Cana of Galilee the MOTHER of our LORD, in her anxiety to display His power and to help their friends, went beyond her province in one way, but also gave most excellent and fruitful advice to the servants: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, *do it.*"

Let us note, first, what He says as to the *indissolubility of marriage*. Turning to St. Matt. xix. 4-6, we see that to the original Eden enactment He adds His confirmation with an additional injunction of permanent obligation. Having affirmed that God "He which made them at the beginning . . . said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh," our LORD proceeds by His own authority to add, "Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Marriage is therefore a lifelong contract. If this were sufficiently reflected upon by those considering such a step, surely graver thoughts would intermingle with those glad ones so natural to the occasion. Divorce is disallowed by the LORD save for one grave sin by which the marriage tie has been already broken.

In the second place, let us carefully observe our LORD's *personal attitude towards infants and little children, the legitimate fruit of marriage*. The special

context or setting of His attitude and sayings in this connection repay close consideration. It is when the most awful abuse of marriage and of divorce as a remedy or alternative are being discussed by the Pharisees, and when even the disciples themselves are questioning the advisability of the married state, that the LORD JESUS takes little infants up in His arms, lays His hands on them, blesses them, and calls little children to Himself. Hear Him saying, "I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father Which is in heaven."

Watch our blessed SAVIOUR, too, as He calls a little child to Himself to give the disciples a needed lesson in humility and childlike trust. Note the stern look and tone as He speaks of all who cause one of the little ones to stumble. (Cf. St. Matt. xviii. 1-14; xix. 13, 14; St. Mark x. 13-16; St. Luke xviii. 15-17.)

In each of these cases the circumstances of place, time, actions and words are startlingly significant—at least to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. Some reading these gospel stories may see simply pages of printed words in a book; anointed eyes behold God in CHRIST revealed by act and speech. To such our LORD's interest in little children, and in parents with domestic sorrows on account of their children, is a revelation of God's interest in that state of life which He Himself instituted at the beginning of man's history for the comfort and continuance of the race.

Thirdly, the fact that it was the Apostle Peter, himself a married man as we have seen, who was led by the LORD to give instruction to Christian husbands and wives as to how best they could enjoy married life, is, to say the least, significant. The importance of knowing this arises partly from the fact that marriage is the first link in a chain, the other end of which is hidden far out of sight. When this first dawned upon the writer of this paper it came with almost overwhelming force. It was to be for life—"so long as we both do live." One immediate result of this was a kind of truce in the courtship stage for about three months to seek by prayer clear and certain guidance. Nearly forty years of happy married



life proves this was granted. But the prospect—"so long as we both do live"—and the thought of the days which lay ahead gave a sobering touch even to the happy anticipations as one thought how easy it might prove for the most promising union to be marred. This makes the Apostle's word so urgent in its exhortation to "dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; *that your prayers be not hindered.*"

The death-blow of married love is given by the neglect or forgetfulness of this apostolic exhortation to Christian husbands and wives. Finally, the true character of Christian marriage as given by another Apostle may be summarised as: In the LORD, of the LORD, for the LORD.

#### CHRISTIAN PARENTHOOD

It has been often said by teachers and authors when dealing with the subject of Christian marriage, its privileges and responsibilities, that "Eve was not taken from the head of Adam, to be above him, nor from his feet to be trodden upon, but from his side to be for the society, help and comfort which the one ought to have of the other. This is in great measure a true philosophy of married life. No couple can ever expect the joy which a happy marriage is meant by God to bring, if they shirk the duties entailed, and seek to evade their natural responsibilities. Yet, alas! it is fairly common knowledge that many professing Christians do this, and then wonder at, and for a time — until conscience becomes atrophied—groan over, their ineffectiveness in Christian work, lack of spiritual joy and power, and loss of real communion with God. Then they often sink into mere non-practising professors.

Some have been known to state plainly that they do not wish nor intend to be bothered with the responsibilities of parenthood; that they want to have a good time; that they cannot afford children; that it will interfere with their pleasures. The majority of professing Christians, let us hope, take a healthier and cleaner view of the powers entrusted to them by their MAKER,

for one, but only one, yet certainly one of the purposes of marriage which is the continuance of the race, and all attempts to defeat this object are to be shunned.

The other course of conduct gradually deprives the sacred union of husband and wife of all its higher meaning, for the mind and spirit become dominated by the body. Then the road to self-indulgence is trodden until it becomes the way of married unhappiness with loss of love and real respect the one for the other from honourable self-control not being in exercise. There are probably exceptions to this.

A great teacher, a profound scholar, a man, too, of exemplary piety of the last century, himself a husband and father with full share of domestic trials, once wrote: "Live day by day, for that Day (the Day of account); love day by day, with that Day before you; love as ye shall wish that ye had loved in that Day . . . love meanwhile, with a tender forbearing love . . . cherishing one another, denying each, self, for the other, as CHRIST loved our souls more than Himself, helping one another along the narrow road which leadeth unto Him.

"This love shall grow with years, it shall be refined and purified by sickness, and the wasting of the body; it shall not decay, much less die, even after the body's death. So shall the love in this life be the prelude of the love in life eternal."

Thus writes the Christian man to Christian people of married life, of the highest kind of human love. "Male and female created He them, and blessed them." Thus sexual tendencies are part of the endowment of the race, part of our very nature, and are not wrong, but right. Of themselves they are not sinful, nor are they even an imperfection. They may be misused or abused, but marriage finds not a mere outlet for them, but their proper purpose according to the design of the CREATOR. Outside the bonds of marriage they have no lawful use. Within the bonds of marriage the ruling is mutual love and self-control. In this, as in all else, the Christian must be governed by right reason, and must beware of over-indulgence to the hurt of his own soul and body

and to the hurt of his partner's soul and body. For as it is possible to eat and drink too much without gluttony or intoxication being even dreamed of, it is equally possible to give way to excess in matrimonial acts. It is spiritually fatal to let the body rule, so that the fruit of the SPIRIT "self-control" is not in exercise in a professedly Christian man or woman.

Such modern horrors as are unhappily flaunted before the eyes almost everywhere advertising means of family limitation and "birth control" are simply damnable and soul-destroying in their effects. Nature itself cries out against such misdirection of energy, and brings down its own inevitable punishments on such as disregard its law *whatever religious profession may be made*. Weakened character and mutual estrangement are but part of a price of the crime to be paid in this world, to say nothing of the next, where the question of "wasted" life will assuredly have to be faced.

If the parents of JOHN WESLEY, or of GEORGE V. WIGRAM of Englishman's Greek and Chaldee Concordance fame, had been of the mind of some of our modern "birth reformers," what a loss it would have been to the race! As a great Christian leader of to-day has said: "The only check upon population known to God, the Church, or the Bible, is the check of self-control."

Life is a sacred thing. Fatherhood, motherhood, childhood and home are sacred words; and Christian parenthood is a trust from God of far-reaching effects. Relax that real sternness which befits the Christian life, and the danger of turning the body which is a temple into a profaned thing becomes acute, and scarcely to be avoided.

From the Editorial of a leading Christian journal dealing recently with our subject we cite the following pithy, pungent paragraph: "The Victorians had large families not merely because they did not know how to avoid them, but also because they believed God intended them to have children; whereas in these days most married couples have a clearer idea of the practical disadvantages of children than they have of the will or even the existence of God."

There are arguments advanced by worldly people which carry weight with them apparently, but as St. Paul says, What have I to do to judge them that are without?

These thoughts are offered for consideration by Christian believers who profess to desire to live their lives in the will of God. To such we would add a final word that we are called to glorify God in our mortal bodies," and

"They who trust Him wholly,  
Find Him wholly true."

How much of the arrest in spiritual life and work is occasioned by the HOLY SPIRIT being grieved by, not sins of ignorance, but wilful transgression and unholiness? For is He not the Spirit of purity and love?

That there are many to whom the foregoing will not apply we do not question, those who for various reasons are deprived of the crowning blessing of married life. Such will be in fullest agreement with our paper. In any case, we have sought to set this vital matter before such as it may concern, in the light of Scripture.



Our being denied the privilege of carrying out work—which in the sincerity of our hearts we planned for the glory of God—as was David (1 Kings viii. 8, 17), should not prevent our working heartily where God permits us to work. Words can hardly express the disappointment David must have felt when told that he was not to build the temple, but after hearing this he "went in and sat before the LORD God" (2 Sam. vii. 18), and then started to "make preparation" for the building.

Surely the joy he had in seeing the place, and in giving instruction to Solomon, with the offerings which in his trouble he "prepared for the house of the LORD" (1 Chron. xxii. 14), fully compensated for the disappointment.

## Attracted, Accepted, Active, Acknowledged

(1 Chron. xi. 10—xii. 22.)

**I**N this Scripture we have a roll of honour—a roll of ancient chivalry. David's men, the record of their names, exploits, and rewards—men who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, or as the marginal reading, "men who held strongly with him," sharing his exile and his exaltation, too. Four simple descriptive phrases sum up the story, Attracted to him; accepted by him; active for him; and acknowledged by him.

David, the deliverer of the nation from the giant enemy, was an outlaw and exile, but also the Anointed King, and God's chosen man, though still rejected by the mass of the people.

The *attraction* he had for some, however, is seen in that to Adullam, Ziklag, and the wilderness of Judah came:—

Men who were in distress, in debt, and discontented, or bitter of soul.

Men who separated themselves to David. xii. 8.

Men who came to offer their allegiance, love, and life to him.

Men who believed that the cause of David was the cause of God.

All came exercising faith in the rejected man who was to be the coming King. They recognised him as the Anointed One; they looked to the future when he would be vindicated; they counted Saul's honours as valueless; they esteemed the reproach of David's present position having respect to the exaltation to which he was destined in God's purpose.

Their *acceptance* by him was very gracious; "he received them"—"he became a captain over them." They were his band, led by him, governed by him, cared for by him, protected by him, as he reassured one of

them by saying, "Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life, seeketh thy life: and with me thou shalt be in safeguard."

Their *activity* for David is shown by the long list of exploits performed by them, ranging from slaying three hundred men, to killing a lion in a pit on a snowy day, and in one instance standing fighting until the warrior's hand clave to his sword. Valiant men, brave hearts, mighty warriors were they all, having become so in the service of their rejected King. Their activities may be grouped briefly under three heads:—

1. Definite combat with, and victory over, his foes.
2. Definitely holding on, and standing their ground.
3. Definitely refreshing him by their personal devotion.

What a contrast is presented between the least of these and Jonathan with all his wealth of woman-like affection and tenderness! The heart of love is sacrifice; and the measure of our giving is always what we retain for ourselves. The widow's mites given in the gospel story and our LORD's remarks thereupon settle this for all time. Jonathan practically gave up nothing at all for David, neither the society of the court, home comforts, nor substance. Yet he loved him.

Their *acknowledgment* by David is seen in the rewards, general and particular, granted them in the Kingdom.

First, their names are owned by him, and placed on record. He is not ashamed to acknowledge them when no longer despised of the nation, but owned as its Anointed King.

Secondly, positions in the Kingdom are assigned according to their deeds. There are distinctions and differences of degrees shown as their various deeds are enumerated by the chronicler.

*All* who shared his hardships, reproach, rejection and suffered with him are seen in the Kingdom; but there are *the first three*, and *the second three*, and *the thirty chiefs*, and *one specially honoured* above the *thirty chiefs*, though not attaining to *the first three*—he is set over the King's council.

So in the record of David's Kingdom, the rule men-

tioned by St. Paul centuries later is followed, "One star differeth from another star in glory." "Every man in his own order." Jashobeam, Eleazar, Shammah are *the first three*, for great and doughty deeds stand to their credit. But *all* are acknowledged, *all* are recognised, and *all* are rewarded by King David when upon the royal throne in his Kingdom.

All this, apart from its historical interest, has a most practical lesson for every Christian believer. There is another King, One JESUS; great David's greater Son and LORD. To-day He is refused by the world, rejected by men, "disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious." To those who believe in Him He is also precious. And the Christian believer is one who gathers to the Exiled LORD, the rejected One by the world; esteems His reproach having respect to the recompence of the reward; chooses to suffer with Him and His people; knows Whom he has believed; and has been drawn by His love to Him from the service of the ruler and god of this world, to live for, to love and to serve the Captain of our salvation.

Three marks of a real Christian believer are personal attachment to CHRIST; personal allegiance to CHRIST; and personal activity for CHRIST.

Finally, in all our activity on account of our allegiance and attachment to CHRIST we shall have to combat, as David's heroes did, Egyptian hosts that would seek to make us forswear our loyalty; Moabites—like lions seeking to frighten us from confessing our allegiance! lions in snowy pits of uncomfortable situations where fierce passions lie ready to leap out upon us; and also Philistines encamped by the very wells of Bethlehem to draw us from our simple personal love to Him.

But the voice of the Captain of our salvation speaks reassuringly to our fearful hearts, and fills the old-time words of David with fuller meaning, as He says, "*Abide thou with Me, fear not: for he that seeketh My life seeketh thy life: but with Me thou shalt be in safeguard.*"

W.G.T.

## A Common Mistake

**D**URING an evening meeting a preacher noticed that a lady kept her eyes fixed on him. He went among his audience at the close of the meeting, as was his habit, and came soon to the lady whom he had noticed.

"You are a believer, I suppose?" he asked.

"No! I can't say that, but I should like ~~to~~ be one. I have been seeking the LORD JESUS for three years now."

"There is surely some misunderstanding on your part." The lady looked at him wonderingly and somewhat distressed, and answered: "Don't you believe me?"

"Of course I do; but it astonishes me that a sinner who wants to be saved requires three long years before really finding the SAVIOUR. For the SAVIOUR Himself is standing there and His only desire is to win for Himself the soul that seeks Him. You know, of course, His kind invitation: 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.'"

"But what must I do, then?"

"Your mistake seems just to be that you want to *do* something, while all you need to do is to believe in your heart on the LORD JESUS."

"Oh, that word believe! believe! believe! It has made me absolutely tired. I simply don't know, either, what it means to believe!"

"Well, let us take another word and say 'trust' instead of saying 'believe.'"

"So if I say 'I will trust myself to Him,' will that save me?"

"No! That won't save you either. You could say that thousands upon thousands of times and still get no further than you are. It's not a matter of your saying 'I will trust Him,' but of your *actually trusting* Him."

"Well, then," she said, "I trust myself to Him . . . .



but," she added at once, "I don't feel myself any better for that."

"Ah! now I know your difficulty! For three years you have been seeking a *feeling* instead of the LORD JESUS. Just let your feelings go, and say as Job did: 'Behold, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him!'" (Job xiii. 15).

For a moment or two she looked at the speaker in silence. Then she laid her hand in his and answered: "Sir, I do trust myself to the LORD JESUS. I lay my life in His hand, and leave to *Him* the task of saving me."

Next evening she was in the same place, but her face was bright. At the close of the meeting she went with others into the small room adjoining the hall. The preacher, entering the room, just saw her put her arm round a friend and heard her say:

"Do you know, you just need to trust the LORD JESUS in order to receive the knowledge of forgiveness of sins and to have full peace. I have experienced it."

JESUS, I *will* trust Thee,  
 Trust Thee with my soul,  
 Guilty, lost, and helpless,  
 Thou canst make me whole;  
 There is none in heaven  
 Or on earth like Thee;  
 Thou hast died for sinners—  
 Therefore, LORD, for me.

JESUS, I *do* trust Thee,  
 Trust without a doubt;  
 Whosoever cometh,  
 Thou wilt not cast out;  
 Faithful is Thy promise,  
 Precious is Thy blood;  
 These my soul's salvation,  
 Thou my SAVIOUR GOD!

(From the German. Trans. T.H.)

## The Bible

*The following from the pen of the late JOHN NELSON DARBY, an independent translator of the Bible, whose "painstaking research exceeding that of most, if not of all," astonished the Revisers who used his New Testament in their work, will be of interest to our readers.*

**I** HAVE a profound, unfeigned (I believe divinely-given) faith in the Bible. I have, through grace, been by it converted, enlightened, quickened, saved. I have received the knowledge of GOD by it, to adore His perfection—of JESUS, the SAVIOUR, joy, strength, comfort of my soul. Many have been indebted to others as the means of their being brought to GOD—to ministers of that gospel which the Bible contains, or to friends who delight in it. This was not my case. That work, which is ever GOD's, was wrought in me by means of the written word. He who knows what the value of JESUS is, will know what the Bible will be to such a one. If I have, alas! failed in thirty years' arduous and varied life and labour, I have never found it fail me. If it has not failed for the poor and needy circumstances of time, through which we feebly pass, I am assured it never will for eternity. "The word of the LORD abideth for ever." If it reaches down even to my low estate, it reaches up to GOD's height, because it is from thence: as the love that can reach even to me, and apply to every detail of my feebleness and failure, proves itself divine in doing so—none but GOD could do this, and hence it leads me up to Him. As JESUS came from GOD and went to GOD—so does the Book that divinely reveals Him come *from* and *elevate to* Him. If received, it has brought the soul to GOD, for He has revealed Himself in it. *Its positive proofs are all in itself. The sun needs no light to see it by.*

I avow, in the fullest, clearest, and distinctest manner here, my deep, divinely-taught conviction of the inspiration of the Scriptures. While of course allowing,

if need be, for defect in the translation and the like, when I read the Bible, I read it as of absolute authority for my soul as God's word. There is no higher privilege than to have communications direct from God Himself.

My joy, my comfort, my food, my strength, for nearly thirty years—have been the Scriptures received implicitly as the word of God. In the beginning of that period I was put through the deepest exercise of soul on that point. Did heaven and earth, the visible church, and man himself crumble into nonentity, I should, through grace, since that epoch, hold to the word as an unbreakable link between my soul and God. I am satisfied that God has given it me as such. I do not doubt that the grace of the HOLY SPIRIT is needed to make it profitable, and to give it real authority to our souls, because of what we are; but that does not change what it is in itself. To be true when it is received, it must have been true before.

And here I will add, that although it requires the grace of God and the work of the HOLY GHOST to give it quickening power; yet divine truth, God's word, has a hold on the natural conscience from which it cannot escape. The light detects the wrong-doer, though he may hate it. And so the word of God is adapted to man, though he be hostile to it—adapted in *grace* (blessed be God!) as well as in truth. This is exactly what shows the wickedness of man's will in rejecting it. And it has power thus in the conscience, even if the will be unchanged. This may increase the dislike of it; but it is disliked because conscience feels it cannot deny the truth. Men resist it because it is true. Did it not reach their conscience, they would not need to take so much pains to get rid of and disprove it. Men do not arm themselves against straws, but against a sword whose keen edge is felt and feared.

Reader, it speaks of *grace* as well as truth. It speaks of God's grace and love, Who gave His only-begotten Son that sinners like you and me might be with Him, know Him, deeply, intimately, truly know Him—and enjoy Him for ever, and enjoy Him now; that the con-

science, perfectly purged, might be in joy in His presence, without a cloud, without a reproach, without fear. And to be there in such a way, in His love, is perfect joy. The word will tell you the truth concerning yourself; but it will tell you the truth of a God of love, while unfolding the wisdom of His counsels.

Let me add to my reader that by far the best means of assuring himself of the truth and authority of the word is to read the word itself.

J.N.D.

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## A Dark Samaritan

*A "bye-product of Christianity" might very well be the title of the following paper sent us by the SOUTHERN RHODESIAN PRESS BUREAU. It is an interesting account of a South African native Christian, not doctrinal, nor ecclesiastical, but simply practical. He may probably know less than some of our readers, but are we as practical in doing good to all? (Cf. St. Luke x. 37.)*

*"I will show thee my faith by my works" (Jas. ii. 18).*

A FEW months ago a Southern Rhodesian native called in at the Native Commissioner's Office in Rusape and quietly asked for help.

It was not an unusual occurrence, since Native Commissioners' offices in Africa are constantly receiving requests from natives "on the scrounge."

But David Sakutomba was not like other callers. His unassuming attitude, so different from the precocious swagger of most educated natives with which Commissioners are familiar, was quickly noticed, and the ear of the white man was willingly given to his story.

David wanted help for his hospital in the Chiduku Native Reserve.

"But there is no hospital in the Reserve," it was pointed out. And then followed the story of David's work to alleviate the ills of his people who were far from a Government clinic.

David was a teacher in one of the Chiduku Mission

schools and had received in training a smattering of instruction in elementary first-aid. Noticing the minor ailments of his pupils and other natives on the Reserve, David started a small dispensary, buying bandages, ointments, lint and medicines with his own savings.

His reputation as a reliever of pain and sickness soon spread throughout the Reserve and his hut was constantly besieged by patients. His small stock of medical stores soon disappeared and he was forced again to resort to his savings.

He resigned his job as teacher and, with his own hands, built a hut for a larger dispensary and several other huts as wards for those patients who had to be treated as in-patients.

He was always busy. Not only were his wards full but he had to treat two hundred out-patients each month as well. Nor was this all, for he visited all patients who could not come to him.

His wife was fortunately a trained midwife and his daughter had also had a little first-aid training.

After two years of this work he had exhausted all his funds—and so he came for help.

The Native Commissioner was impressed. He quickly got in touch with the local Medical Officer and together they went back with David to his "hospital." So satisfied were they with what they saw that they made immediate representations to the Government, who, with similar promptitude, equipped the hospital with new supplies and took the clinic under their wing, appointing David as salaried superintendent.

But David, financial security assured, did not rest content. He had enough patients for another fourteen wards—so he built them. He also built a larger brick dispensary. And, busy though he is, he still makes time to go out lecturing to natives of surrounding kraals on such matters as personal hygiene, cleanliness and the elementary principles of aiding the sick.

What influenced David to take up his work? His hospital is hung with pictures of CHRIST healing the sick.

## Whither Bound?

By QUARTUS

**"D**O you know, men, that during all my forty years at sea, I never once met a ship that wasn't bound somewhere!"

So spoke a sea captain as he addressed an audience of sea-faring men, and a broad smile spread over their faces as the foolishness of the thought struck them. But their amusement quickly vanished as he utilised such an evidently foolish assertion to place an equally evident, though soul-searching truth before them.

"But would you believe it possible," he continued, "that though during all my life's voyage, I've never met a human ship (men like you and me) which wasn't bound somewhere, and yet when I've asked many of them what port they were bound for they couldn't tell me—they hoped it was heaven?"

Statistics show that every twenty-four hours some 90,000 people pass away from this world in normal times, this number being greatly increased in times of war, earthquakes and such calamities, and each with an immortal soul and an account to be rendered at last of the deeds done in the body while here. This should make one think, and think deeply.

Having occasion to be in Woolwich the writer was uncertain as to the way to the house he was to visit. Hesitating for a moment at the corner of a street, a pleasant-faced elderly man enquired if he could be of service.

"Well, I am not quite sure of the road to so-and-so."

"Oh! I can put you right," said the old man. "I am a native of Woolwich, born and bred here, sir. Straight up the turning opposite, first to the left, then across the road, take the first to the right, and you'll be there."

Thanking my old friend for telling me the way, I remarked: "Now, do you know the way to heaven, by any chance?"

A look of bewilderment overspread his benign coun-

tenance as he confessed his ignorance. "I really don't; no, I don't." Then perhaps to change the subject he bade me remember his direction, "as it's so easy to miss your way if you are a stranger in the place."

Again thanking him for his kindly interest, I told him it was not easy to miss the way to heaven if one really wished to know it; and repeated the old, but true story of the man who demanded of the preacher at an open-air service in Victoria Park, "the way to heaven, Bishop, quick."

Like a flash came the ready answer from the preacher: "*Go up to the Cross; turn to the right; keep straight on.*"

This so pithy retort is a plain and clear direction surely for any lost sinner seeking the way of salvation. We are all by nature and practice, too, lost and on the wrong road, the way that seemeth right but the end thereof is destruction. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way," says the Scripture of truth. And there never would have been any possibility of finding the way of pardon, peace and power had not God in mercy sent His Son to the world by sin undone. We must have remained astray and away having no hope in this world nor the next but for God's love and CHRIST's sacrifice. Now the message of redeeming love comes to all who will receive it, for:—

"There before us stands the Cross,  
Two arms outstretched to save;  
Like a watchman set to guard the way  
From an eternal grave."

It is to the SAVIOUR Who willingly gave His life "a ransom for all" that this message both directs and invites you. He it is Who suffered "the Just One for us, the unjust ones, to bring us to God."

Once in the end of the age He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It was the love of God that sent the LORD JESUS CHRIST into the world to save sinners, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. If such a sacrifice was necessary how great the danger must be in which every

unsaved sinner is at this moment. Since nothing less than the self-giving, the sacrifice of the SON of GOD could righteously meet the need and condition of sinners, such as we are by nature and by practice, then, *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?* There is a *great danger* whether you believe it or not. There is a *great salvation*, thank God, for: "There is plentiful redemption in the blood that has been shed," for it is the precious BLOOD of CHRIST, the LAMB of GOD, the bearer away of the sin of the world; and:

"The work of CHRIST is so complete,  
Its glory nought can dim;  
The place where GOD and sinners meet,  
And thousands meet with Him."

There is a *great neglect*, for, alas! thousands of poor lost sinners are drifting tempest-tossed on the sea of time down to an undone eternity. The winds of pleasure and gusts of the world's fancies and vanities are carrying others swiftly and it may be unconsciously to the doom of the lost from which CHRIST died to save men. There is a way of salvation, but it is being neglected—by you?

Think once again in this, the day of your opportunity, and "because there is wrath, *beware.*"

There is a *great welcome* awaiting the returning prodigal, and the more undeserving one feels the greater certainty there is of blessing, for:

"The good for nothing hopeless ones  
Find mercy on the spot;  
For so the glorious message runs—  
To him that worketh not."

Go up to the Cross with faith in the Crucified SAVIOUR; turn to the right; and, remembering that conversion is only the first step, keep on trusting Him, looking to Him, confessing Him and following Him along the path of life till the journey ends with Him in the glory of the FATHER's house above.

With an open ear, a receptive heart, and a responsive will accept the message that comes from God Himself:



"As I live, saith the LORD, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth: turn ye, for why will ye die?"

The moment one believes the testimony that God has given of His SON perfect assurance comes as we see the all-sufficiency of what He is to the poorest, weakest or vilest sinner that truly trusts Him. Nothing to do, nothing to pay, everything to receive by putting out the empty hand of faith and accepting the gift of God. *Have you done this?*

When we say that conversion is only the first step on the upward road, we are remembering that to the gracious invitation of our LORD, "*Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,*" He proceeds to add, "*Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light*" (S. Matt. xi. 28-30).

That is to say, there is a rest *given to all who come to Him*, a rest of conscience, a freedom from the heavy burden of sin; and the intolerable load of seeking deliverance by works of law. But to this is added the offer of a daily, hourly discovery of inward rest as His yoke is accepted, His company kept, and His word obeyed. This is to be found, discovered day by day.

There is pardon, peace, and power for walk and witness to be found in the One Who died to save us, Who lives to keep us, and Who one day will come to receive us to Himself that where He is, we also may be.

To the question "Whither Bound?" the simplest true believer may confidently reply:

I have a home above  
From sin and sorrow free;  
A mansion which eternal love  
Prepared our rest to be.

The FATHER's gracious hand  
Has built this blest abode;  
From everlasting it was planned;  
The dwelling-place of God.

The SAVIOUR's precious blood  
 Has made my title sure;  
 He passed through death's dark raging flood  
 To make our rest secure.

The COMFORTER is come,  
 The earnest has been given;  
 He leads me onward to the home  
 Reserved for us in heaven.

### The Absence of Dan in Rev. vii.

THE reason why Dan is omitted from the list of tribes in Rev. vii. is a striking one, and worth our close attention. False relationship was the bar in his case, since GOD never loses sight of the principles He established at Creation in respect of marriage. The hardness of man's heart blights every gracious provision, but GOD established marriage to foreshadow His SON's coming glory.

Let us briefly review the circumstances leading up to the first mention of Dan, the progenitor of the tribe called by his name. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel were in each case husband and wife in the sight of GOD. Hagar and bondage were not GOD's ordinance but the work of the flesh. Sarah was barren; Rebekah was barren also, but in the case of the latter Isaac entreated the LORD—hence “in Isaac shall thy seed be called” was the word to Abraham. But Rachel, who was also barren, asked not of GOD but simply followed the example of her grandmother Sarah. As Ishmael was the result in Sarah's case, so was Dan in the case of Rachel.

GOD, Who, as we have remarked, never loses sight of His own established principles, cannot make up His jewels after this fashion, and hence Dan is left out of the list of the twelve tribes in Rev. vii., and the firstborn of Joseph takes his place. Dan is not, however, disinherited (Cf. Ezek. xlviii. 2), and Rachel might well call his name Dan, meaning GOD hath judged me, for here

we find the truth of the matter. There is a fitness, too, in the portion of Scripture where dire judgments are being inflicted because of idolatry, to leave unsealed the first and most idolatrous of all the tribes. (Cf. Judges xviii. 30.)

W.R.H.

[In passing it is also interesting to note that none of the names of the sealed tribes are in the actual order of natural birth. The latter is given in Gen. xxix.-xxxiv. as Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph, Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin.

In Rev. vii. the order is Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph, and Benjamin.

It is the LION of the tribe of Judah Who is the LAMB Who is in the midst of the throne, Who feeds them and leads them now that they are the sealed servants of our God joined with the great multitude which no man can number who stand before the throne, ascribing Salvation to our God and unto the LAMB.]

## On the Kingdom and the Church

(Matt. xviii.)

**A** MAIN design of the HOLY SPIRIT in this Gospel is to mark, not only the true glory of the MESSIAH presented to Israel, but the consequences of their rejecting Him who was not more surely Son of David and Son of Abraham than EMMANUEL and JEHOVAH. Hence here only do we find "the kingdom of the heavens," here only in the Gospels "the church."

But as our LORD in Matt. xvi speaks of building His church or assembly as a future thing, so uniformly is the kingdom of the heavens said to be "at hand," never come. Indeed it is one pointed difference from "the kingdom of God" (though of course substantially the same, and so corresponding in Mark and Luke), that this last phrase admits of a moral force (Matt. vi. 33), and might be applied when CHRIST exercised its power

as a present thing (Matt. xii. 28); whereas "the kingdom of the heavens" is a state of things, which supposes MESSIAH's rejection in order to His glory as Son of man on high. Accordingly in the great cycle of parables in chap. xiii. the first is not a likeness of that kingdom; for the Sower is viewed as on earth. When He from heaven carries on the work of the world, the kingdom of the heavens is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. It was that kingdom in mystery according to the Gospel whilst the Son of man is above; it will be that kingdom in manifestation according to the prophets when He comes on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

The very aim of the first similitude is to show that under the kingdom in mystery, the crop is spoilt by the enemy, darnel being mixed with the wheat, till judgment come in the consummation of the age. It will not be so for the millennial age when the kingdom, ushered in by a judicial clearance, is established in power. Matt. xvii. 24—27 in no way teaches the contrary, but witnesses to His divine rights, which He shares in grace (as far as this can be) with His own, without at all denying the necessity of the cross to free the disciples from Judaism or of His ascension to bring in the kingdom of the heavens. Conversion so as to become like little children is inseparable from being "born again," as John iii. puts it, and goes with real entrance into the kingdom. Now as always is the heart purified by faith. It is the character of those actually blessed, when JESUS though come is rejected and does not reign manifestly. It is not the means or title to enter, which is and will always be of faith according to grace, never by works or making sacrifices, though faith working by love does deny self and suffer.

Obedience of faith is preeminently demanded now. Rom. i. 5, xvi. 16. Rom. ii. 7—10 is not another way of salvation for another day (which is strange doctrine), but GOD insisting on moral reality before He develops the grace which can justify the ungodly through faith in CHRIST. The very terms "glory and honour and incor-

ruption" imply Christian knowledge by the gospel, and neither a past state nor a future. The believer profits by such warnings as Matt. xviii. 6—10; unbelief explains them away for another time and other people, and will surely pay dear. "We (not others by and by) must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God," say the apostles. If we heed Paul, we must now preach the kingdom, the gospel, and the church, all deeply (though I say not equally) concerning Christ's glory. The LORD was not referring to the crisis, but to all the time while He is away, any more than in the beginning of Luke xii. or the end of xiv. His own grace in saving the lost is the pattern of all loving care for the least and weakest, while He urges unsparing self-judgment, which are conspicuously, if not distinctively, Christian principles.

Chapter xvi. gave us, on the evident and unbelieving rejection of the Messiah, His promise of the church, and to Peter His gift of the keys of the kingdom, the new and two-fold order of things which we know since Pentecost in contrast with Judaism, not future but present. So here in chapter xviii. we have the spirit suitable to the kingdom, and practical ways for those within the assembly or church to be founded as distinct from the synagogue. Those the disciples deeply needed to learn, and we too. The allusions to the law, and Jewish imagery, do not touch this in the least, being found everywhere. It is the Christian, and the assembly, as the disciples would ere long walk in the power of the SPIRIT, far indeed from the earthly righteousness of the law. Every intelligent reader has seen that the passage does not go beyond the offended saint who seeks to win the offending brother, even to the point of bringing him before the assembly. Putting away is not spoken of here, but in connexion with wicked leaven in 1 Cor. v. What the assembly may do is not said, but that if the offender will not listen to it, he becomes, to the brother who in vain sought to win him, as one of the heathen or the publican. The individual's line is pursued to the end, which closes the account. Only in

this connexion we are told most solemnly of authority to bind and loose, and also of assured answer to united prayer, all being set on the blessed ground of the LORD's presence with even two or three gathered unto His name.

The various parts form one whole, the order is perfect; and the provision of grace is bound up with that which is most vital, the LORD's presence in the midst of two or three gathered to His name. Inspiration has nothing to do with the case, but authority from CHRIST for His own to act in His absence. Neither "Verily," (verse 18), nor "Again," (verse 19) severs; but as the one draws attention to the heavenly sanction of what they do judicially on earth (with which compare 1 Cor. v. and 2 Cor. ii), the other assures of the FATHER's making good their requests in one mind, both having the blessed guarantee of the SAVIOUR's presence in their midst *if* gathered to His name. The whole characteristically savours of grace to and in the church throughout, if but two or three were thus gathered.

Nor can any authority be higher than His there. An apostle or a far less than he might rouse the saints to their responsibility; but it was theirs to bind and loose, as well as to expect answers from the FATHER, because He (CHRIST) is in their midst. I do not speak of power as in Acts v., or as in 1 Cor. v. 5, and 1 Tim. i. 20, but of authority to act in His name—of course by His word in obedience. To put obedience in opposition to authoritative action is erroneous; it is obedience of His word on the contrary which gives firmness no less than humility. And the greatest of the apostles writes; "To whom ye forgive anything, I also": not, To whom I forgive, ye must, as man rising up against the LORD soon made it in the world-church.

So, in John xx. 23, the disciples were charged of the LORD, as receiving the HOLY SPIRIT: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Some divines, we know, have misapplied this to inspiration; others to miracles; but it is the inalienable place of grace and holiness which

the saints have as GOD's assembly here below to represent CHRIST, in that divine love which is superior to evil where faith is discerned, and in that holy jealousy which discerns unbelieving evil under the fairest forms. As an eternal question the LORD alone decides; but we speak of the assembly as here privileged, and now as ever bound, to act for Him in the SPIRIT according to His word.

Hence our being in the church is quite consistent with our being also in the world-field of the kingdom of the heavens, where wheat and darnel both grow together until the harvest.

A renewal of inspiration for future saints seems as dangerous a doctrine as taking away the kingdom and the church in Matt. xviii. from those who wait for the SON OF GOD from heaven.

W.K.

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## To Correspondents

*E. S., Nova Scotia.* Many thanks for your letter, and the great encouragement of knowing how much *WORDS OF HELP* is appreciated by you and others living in your Empire outpost.

*E. O. H., Westbank, B.C.* Your kind words are a great cheer, and many thanks for sending same. The conditions and difficulties you mention are, alas! equally prevalent here. Feeble but faithful must be what characterises us in "a day of small things," with a very strong infusion of the Philadelphian spirit, *brotherly love*. There is a path wherein to walk to the glory of GOD in the worst of times; one where nothing contrary to His word has to be accepted, and nothing according to His word refused or neglected. The late Mr. William Kelly impressed upon the writer when a very young believer, "Remember He expects you to be both a good churchman, and a good gospeller"; adding, "For CHRIST loved the Church and gave Himself for it; and the LORD is not willing that any should perish." To look around, as one has remarked, is distracting, to look within is depressing, but to look above clears our vision, quietens our fears, and strengthens us to go on. Two or three *can* remember the LORD in His own appointed way, and even one isolated servant can serve Him acceptably. But fellowship is sweet to the Christian heart, and yet where through circumstances this may be denied or withheld, then He, Who alone can sympathise fully, draws near as to John in Patmos with His "Fear not, I am He that liveth;

I became dead ; and behold I am alive for evermore." While He lives we shall never want a Friend.

*A. B., Hastings. What is the difference between redemption and being bought with a price ? Is everyone redeemed and bought or are some only ?*

There is a difference and distinction taught in Scripture between "redemption" and being "bought with a price." All who are "redeemed" are "bought," but all who are "bought" are not redeemed. To the Corinthian believers the Apostle writes that they are "washed, sanctified, justified in the Name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our GOD . . . are members of CHRIST . . . body the temple of the HOLY SPIRIT . . . bought with a price and therefore to glorify GOD in your body." These are evidently those who are redeemed, for in Ephes. i. 7 we learn that "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." The song of the redeemed, too, is always to Him Who "hath washed us in His blood"; Who "wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." The precious blood of CHRIST is the price of our redemption, and, as purchased and redeemed, all believers through faith in His blood, have the forgiveness of their sins. But in 2 Peter ii. 1, we read of some denying the LORD *that bought them*, who bring upon themselves swift destruction. These "shall utterly perish in their own corruption." Of these it also proceeds to say "the latter end is worse than the beginning," and such cannot be numbered among the redeemed, although "bought by the LORD." "It is *purchase*, which is universal, not *redemption* which is limited to those who have in CHRIST the forgiveness of their offences through His blood. In the parable (Matt. xiii.) too we read that He bought not only the treasure but the field."

*H. S., Catford. Is not a servant of the Lord free to go and serve Him where he pleases ?* Most certainly if you spell the "he" in your question with a capital "H." We are the LORD'S *servants*, but in our emancipation from human control, which we gather underlies your question, must never forget that we are *not our own* to do, go, say, what and where we please, but His bondservants to ascertain His will and then carry it out with diligence.

*B. C., Horley. How would you deal with an awkward brother who hinders everything in a gathering ?*

Pray for him ; put up with him ; love him, and patiently hope for the change. A very esteemed brother, still through GOD'S goodness with us, replied pertinently in a rather trying meeting to the question, "But how, dear brother, may we grow in grace ?" by saying, "One way, I suggest, would be to attend meetings such as these." Awkward brothers, of which most gatherings possess one or more, are GOD'S tools for fashioning the others in "patience, meekness, love, and every beauteous grace." So cherish them warmly, for they really harm none but themselves.



## On Facing the Future

By

THE EDITOR

**I**N one sense we are always facing the future from the moment we appear on the scene. In another sense there are crises from which we date epochs in our lives, when the future has to be faced under entirely new conditions, or so it seems. These are certain periods when on account of happenings foreseen sometimes, but oftener not, we say to ourselves, things can never be quite the same again.

In the life of Joshua this occurred when, on account of the death of the revered, trusted, experienced leader of God's people, Moses, new and heavy responsibilities devolved upon him. "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel." (Josh. i. 2.)

This epochal-marking statement is immediately followed by a reassuring one. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." (Josh. i. 5.)

Joshua had been born in Egypt, and as he grew up to manhood had witnessed and shared in the bondage and degradation of his race. On that ever-to-be-remembered Passover night, he had been personally sheltered by the blood of the paschal lamb. At the Red Sea he had shared in the great deliverance; and, as one of that host redeemed from bondage to Pharaoh by blood and by power, had joined in the great song of redemption and anticipative triumph then raised by Moses.

A short while later we find him taking his part in the fierce warfare with Amalek, and soon sharing to a marked degree in the service and testimony in the wilderness. (Ex. xxiv. 13; xxxii. 17-19; xxxiii. 11). In the last of these scriptures he is described as "a young man [who] departed not out of the Tabernacle."

His zeal for his master's honour is mentioned for our instruction in Num. xi. 28, and throws into beautiful relief the real character of Moses. At the same time Joshua had to learn that before such zeal could be effectively used for GOD it needed discipline. He was to become one of the most perfect characters in the Old Testament, as a type of the true Joshua, the Captain and Prince and Leader of our salvation.

His faithfulness in presenting the minority report of the spies in the face of fierce and furious opposition and physical violence is recorded in Num. xiv. 6, where he and Caleb are both commended by GOD and assured of entry into the promised land. All this has, or should have, a resemblance in our own lives as believers.

Now, in Josh. i., he is facing the future, and is to know life under entirely new conditions. It was not yet written "My times are in Thy Hands," but the fact of this was to be a stay to his heart whether directing the campaign of conquest, presiding at the division of the land by lot to the tribes of Israel, or in old age retiring to his estate in the highlands of Ephraim, reaffirming "As for me and my house we will serve the LORD. (Josh. xxiv. 15.)

"They shall still bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing ; to show that the LORD is upright." How truly these words were exemplified in the life of Joshua ; and how earnestly should we pray that they should be illustrated in our own lives should our LORD tarry yet longer. To see an old believer, going from strength to strength, holding on his (or her) way to the end, brings glory to GOD and encouragement to His people.

But to resume, at the time of crisis Joshua was told that the life planned for him was to be one of conflict, of conquest, and of companionship.

The land swarmed with foes ; difficulties would be encountered ; obstacles have to be faced ; nevertheless the victory was sure to the faithful warrior, and a personal GOD was pledged to be a very present help. "I will be with thee : I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." "Only be strong and very courageous." Strength would be

required to resist and surmount the inevitable temptations which would arise. Strength would be needed to fulfil daily duty, and to bear up under any failure and all disappointments, as well as to recover energy expended. "Be strong"—but how? Here the immense importance of Bible reading and Bible feeding comes into prominence. As soon as there is a Book that is known as "the law of the LORD" all success is made to depend upon reading and meditating therein. (Josh. i. 8.) (cf. Psl. i. 2, 3; Jas. i. 25).

In these days of stress with our future lying under the shadow of heavy war clouds with all the consequent dislocation of social, domestic and even spiritual affairs, we need to lay hold upon the reassuring word which, though uttered to Joshua in far-off days, is still, Yea and Amen to the glory of God in us by CHRIST JESUS. "I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

Yet who can truly say *our* future is lying under the shadow of any kind, for sooner than we may imagine the LORD Himself shall descend from heaven, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of GOD, and the dead in CHRIST shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the LORD in the air, and so shall we ever be with the LORD. Wherefore comfort one another with these words"; and so go forward steadily, calmly cheerfully facing the future, knowing that *our* times are in His Hands.

By waiting on the LORD in prayer, and by meditating upon His holy word, and observing to do we shall find that as our day so shall our strength be. With CHRIST and the Scriptures, and the HOLY SPIRIT making both real to our inmost souls we can face the future with its conflict and conquest in the sure companionship of Him Who has said in both Testaments, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, 'The LORD is my Helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.'"

## A War-Time Service for all Believers

**T**HERE is a service of inestimable value to our fellow creatures in this and all the lands affected by this present distressing war. This service is one moreover to which every believer is called (see 1 Timothy ii. 1, 2), and may be termed *the service of prayer and confession*.

Prayer is nowhere spoken of in Scripture as a gift, neither is confession. Both are *the duties of a Christian* in a world of persons away from GOD, and in a sphere where the children of GOD are scattered and divided in shameful confusion.

Let us therefore pray—

- (a) That it may please the LORD to bring to a speedy end the present strife among the nations.
- (b) That nations and individuals may make confession of sin before GOD.
- (c) That thankful acknowledgment may be made of GOD's goodness and mercy in His Providential ways.

Also let us confess—

- (a) That as children of GOD we have completely failed in maintaining a united testimony and walk of faith before Him in the world.
- (b) That in spite of man's guiltiness before Him and his rejection of the Gospel, it is GOD's mercy and longsuffering (being not willing that any should perish) that have prolonged until now the day of grace and salvation for mankind.

If such be daily the language of Christian hearts before the Throne of Grace, who can tell what abundance of good our GOD may yet send in answer to those who thus diligently wait on Him? Let us seek grace to be so minded that in quietness of mind and liberty of spirit we may be occupied in the blessed service of prayer in this day of world-wide trouble.

“Prayer moves the Hand that moves the world  
And brings deliverance down.”

G.H.

## Some Joyful Thoughts for a Christian Whatever the Circumstances Today

*(By one shut-in for years)*

*To-day* is another day in which to love GOD and to serve Him.

*To-day* is another day in which to thank Him, and to praise and bless His holy Name for all His goodness.

*To-day* is another day for the HOLY SPIRIT Who dwells in me, to work in me to the glory of GOD.

*To-day* is another day in which the LORD JESUS CHRIST will supply my every need and the need of all who trust in Him.

*To-day* is another day in which to be both glad and grateful that the LORD JESUS CHRIST died instead of me and set me free from my sins so that GOD will not remember them any more.

*To-day* is another day nearer to that day when He will come ; and to the day when He will reign as KING of kings and LORD of lords here on the earth.

*To-day* is another day in which to do GOD's will more perfectly.

*To-day* is another day for me to be patient, loving, kind, sweet-tempered, peaceful and serene in all circumstances by His gracious help.

*To-day* is another day in which to show love to everyone I meet and do them as much good as possible.

*To-day* is another day nearer to the time when all evil, pain, sighing and sorrow will be done away.

*To-day* is another day nearer to when there will be only love, wisdom, joy, health and perfection.

Praise GOD for another day and some of the thoughts it suggests to a Christian mind.

“When morning gilds the skies,  
My heart awaking cries,  
May JESUS CHRIST be praised !

A.L.S.

## Some Good Words for Bad Times

*"For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion : in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me ; He shall set me up upon a rock."*—Psl. xxvii. 5.

*"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."*  
—Isa. xxx. 15.

THE background and general setting of these verses is one of present peril acutely felt ; of perfect provision made for "the time of trouble"; and of the personal privilege of knowing it to be available in the hour of need.

In the Psalm it is the individual who speaks of personal peril and personal assurance of help. "*He*" and "*me*" occur three times over in the verse. In this inspired song of confidence, "*though war should arise*," he is (what a writer of the last century described as) resting "in the thought of two and two only supreme and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my CREATOR. The narrow luminous circuit goes and returns between these two, *He* and *me*. Either the word *certitude* has no meaning or David is completely assured of God's personal, present and permanent interest in him and his affairs whatever the present perils of "*the time of trouble*."

Alexander Peden in the bad old Covenanting days in Scotland prayed in a "*time of trouble*" when to outward eye no escape seemed possible, "Cast the lap of Thy cloak, LORD, over puir auld Sandy"; and GOD covered His child with His pinions, and under His wings His servant found refuge. A thick and bewildering mist sprang up causing the persecutors to miss their way and lose their prey. When Peden returned he saluted the brethren with the Scots metrical version of a verse in the 32nd Psalm—

"Thou art my hiding place ; Thou shalt  
From trouble keep me free."

Surely it was not written by inspiration without meaning. "He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shall thou trust : His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night :

nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. . .because thou hast made the LORD which is my refuge thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

It is helpful ever to remember that the individual child of GOD is not lost in the mass of the great family of faith. Our blessed LORD took occasion to stress this in the days of His flesh. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your FATHER . fear not ye therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." (St. Matt. x. 29-31.) "Are not *five* sparrows sold for *two* farthings, and not *one* of them is forgotten before GOD."

Could the case for insignificant individuality be better stated, or the minute interest of the FATHER more clearly affirmed? So much for the Psalmist's recognition of *He* and *me* which is recorded for the saints of GOD in any "time of trouble."

"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" was spoken in a day of national peril to a people who had forgotten that GOD was "a very present help in trouble" nationally, in making "wars to cease" as the Song for the sons of Korah puts it. There too, the same advice was given as by Isaiah the prophet. Said the Psalmist, "Be still, and know that I am GOD; said the Prophet, "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength," GOD being always "the hidden Source of calm repose."

But the prophet's words were disregarded while in a parallel case the psalmist's were regarded and found sufficient for a situation of overwhelming national peril. "The alliance with Egypt, which had been purchased with the treasures of Jerusalem, and the toilsome journey of the Jewish ambassadors into the heart of Ethiopia, was shattered by the battle of Eltekeh, while the overthrow of the army of Sennacherib before Jerusalem proved that trust in GOD was the only defence the rulers of Judah needed, and that their strength was, as Isaiah had declared, 'to sit still'."

Even during the church dispensation in which our lot is cast while the times of the Gentiles are running out, it is well to remember "that the MOST HIGH ruleth in the Kingdom of men." The first great Gentile ruler to whom world power was delegated by God had to learn this and through a very drastic experience, as also did his successor.

So that even for the Christian believer *this fact is a factor to be reckoned with in national affairs.* Also that the MOST HIGH Who ruleth in the kingdom of men is a righteous GOD Who loveth righteousness.

Therefore "in quietness and confidence shall be your strength," as prayers are offered to Him Who still ruleth in the kingdom of men, and Who everywhere hath sway.

#### PERFECT PROVISION FOR TIME OF TROUBLE

Two figures of speech are employed in Psl. xxvii. 5 to illustrate the perfect provision he has found for "*the time of trouble.*" "He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock." A tent and a rock, one movable, the other immovable.

Yet, as another has said in this connection, "A flimsy tent may be the surest of all refuges in the desert, if reception into it means that the traveller is under the powerful protection of a Bedouin sheikh. Or, as in the latter part of this verse, a rocky fastness perfectly impregnable against enemies may be the figure employed. In either case it is the presence and favour of GOD which provides all that is needed. One who enjoys the intimacy of this high communion need fear neither foe nor storm."

One further measure of comfort may be gleaned from the fact that it is *He* Who shall hide me, *He* Who shall set me up upon a rock. His interest in His people never flags; His patience with them never wears out; His love for them is an everlasting love; for "the ETERNAL GOD is thy refuge, and underneath are the EVERLASTING ARMS."

Let us then embrace the personal privilege of changing our strength in "*the time of trouble*" by verifying in our own experience day by day that "this GOD is our GOD for ever and ever: He will be our guide even for evermore (R. V. margin)."



Thus if the present peril leads us to more fully apprehend and appreciate the perfect provision for our times, our minds will be kept in perfect peace because we trust in Him.

### OUR PRESENT PRIVILEGE

All the foregoing could have been, and doubtless was in some instances, enjoyed by believers living in Old Testament days. The position and privilege of the Christian believers are, however, immeasurably superior to those of pre-Christian times. We may still experience "*the time of trouble*," for we are not exempt from the general lot of mankind. We may still know the security of being hidden in His secret place, and of being established as upon a veritable rock. But as Christians we have the HOLY SPIRIT indwelling us because we belong to CHRIST; and this even the best of the Old Testament saints never knew. To some of them He came to clothe them with power in the performance of special duties, but as to dwelling within them the witness of the Evangelist in John vii., is conclusive. "The HOLY SPIRIT was not yet given, because JESUS was not yet glorified." Now, consequent upon the Atoning Sacrifice of the Incarnate SON, His glorious resurrection, and joyous ascension, the status of all the children of GOD through faith in CHRIST JESUS is advanced beyond that of any of the children of GOD before the Cross. The relationship remains for all are children born of the SPIRIT, but Christians are sons, that is positionally, and as such have the SPIRIT of GOD within, whereby they cry "ABBA, FATHER" which no Old Testament believer ever did. As the sons of GOD they await the day of manifestation in glory for which the whole groaning creation also waits. Now, "*in the day of trouble*" though we may have to experience our full share of it, yet we have the understanding sympathy of our LORD to comfort our hearts and to fill us with that peace which filled Him during all the time of His earthly journey. "My peace," says He, "I give unto you."

Let us accept it, and thus know what it is really to be

hidden in the secret of His tabernacle. Then we also have the assurance of the FATHER's love, "For the FATHER Himself loveth you," said CHRIST.

Finally, it is, as we have seen, our privilege to have that HOLY SPIRIT Who *makes us know* the things that are freely given us of GOD, and Who helpeth our infirmities. "In quietness and confidence" therefore "shall be your strength" enjoying the blessing of an untroubled heart in a most troubled world.

W.G.T.

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## Steadfast and Progressive

OUR LORD associates His teaching with Himself. It is to "Me and My words" that we are to be faithful. The Bible is the only original source of information about CHRIST. In the New Testament GOD's last word has been spoken. There is no new revelation. Through the apostolic church was produced for us, once for all, our final, infallible seat of authority—the "commandments of the LORD." "From the time that the voice of the apostles was hushed, the religion of the Church became the religion of the Book."

And so the earnest exhortation runs, "*Continue in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of.*" The influences of the SPIRIT of GOD accompany the trenchant theology of the New Testament; philosophy and mere ethics are useless as a rope of sand to bind the "strong man" or to strangle sin. It is the old Gospel and the old Gospel alone that is the remedy for man's sin and need, as 1,900 years of experience have proved.

Our inspired Text-Book abounds in exhortations to steadfastness. The church in busy, rationalistic Corinth is encouraged to "*Stand fast in the faith.*" The devoted Thessalonians are to stand their ground and maintain a firm grip on the teachings of the apostles. Titus is charged to hold tenaciously the "faithful word." Timothy, in his spiritual father's last message, is bidden to "hold fast the form of sound words."

To remain truly conservative it is vital that we should submit to the supreme authority of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and should ever acknowledge the paramount importance of the spiritual. The HOLY SPIRIT is the Preserver of Divine truth in every age.

But "*let us go on*" urges the HOLY SPIRIT in the epistle of progress. Christian progress is not a matter of age; growth should be life-long. There can be life without health and movement without progress. Even the greatest of the apostles had to confess that he had not yet "attained." God's children are not to remain in spiritual babyhood, but are to press on to spiritual maturity. What we are now is more important than what we started at. "He who ceases becoming better will soon cease to be good."

If we grow, we change—in some respects. "I don't change," said one proudly. Was the meaning that there was no progress? Was it that there was nothing to repent of, nothing to change the mind about, nothing to do better? Since the New Testament was completed there has been no progress in the *communication* of Divine truth; but there should be constant progress in our *apprehension* of it.

Our ideas of progress are of course coloured by our own special emphasis, by our special conception of Christian privilege and duty, by our temperament, our education, our surroundings, and by the special work to which the grace of God has called us. As we grow we gain a firmer assurance of salvation; our motives become purer; we act more from principle and less from impulse; we know more of true humility; we become more truly broadminded, that is, more ready to receive all the truth; our love for God and men deepens; we have less relish for the things of the world; we have more abiding peace in the midst of the things that happen; and the whole life becomes more and more organised around God and His will.

As we grow, fear tends to be displaced by higher motives. A child needs "sanctions," such as the threat of punishment and the desire for reward, the thrill and incentive of competition, to help him to learn his lessons. But spiritual progress means advance from these elemental motives,

and from the cramping authority of rigid *rules* to the freedom of godly *principles*. It is GOD's wish that we should exchange the bondage of the schoolmaster for the holy liberty of the sons and daughters of God.

Full deliverance from the trammels of the time-state must wait until we reach the next world. But as we advance we increasingly follow what we venerate instead of what our natural hearts desire. True liberty is freedom to do the will of God.

Steadfastness and progress are not contradictory ; they are supplementary. Each is the complement of the other. Together they express full-orbed Christian privilege and duty.

There can be no change in the faith "once delivered." Here we must be staunchly conservative. But there is to be the change that always accompanies growth in knowledge and obedience. We are to keep on the lines ; but we are to keep moving along those lines. The giant oak is the same tree as the tiny sapling ; it is rooted in the same spot and possesses the same life. But what a difference in stature between the giant and the child ! The foundation of the building must be firm as granite ; upon this unshakable basis can then be erected the superstructure, storey upon storey, detail after detail.

If one leg of a pair of compasses is firmly fixed in the paper, the other leg can safely be moved to the utmost limit, and whatever the distance between the two limbs, a perfect circle will always be described. But if the first leg is unstable and shifts, the result is confusion and failure. There must be firmness at the centre, and freedom at the extremities.

Peter's closing word is an exhortation to be both conservative and progressive : "*Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.*"

E.A.

## Extracts from the Letters of Samuel Rutherford

*(With some account of his life and times)*

### THE LOVE OF CHRIST

“THE least intimation of CHRIST’s love is sweet, and the hope of marriage with the Bridegroom enableth me to wait joyfully ; and when I think of this, I feel that winters, and summers, and years, and days, and time do me a pleasure, that they shorten this untwisted and weak thread of life, and carry me past my sin and miseries to be shortly with my Bridegroom.”

\* \* \*

“I never knew, by nine years’ preaching, so much of CHRIST’s love, as He hath taught me in Aberdeen by six months’ imprisonment.”

\* \* \*

“I bless His great name whom I serve in the SPIRIT, that I find CHRIST to be sweet and excellent, even in His reproaches and His cross.”

\* \* \*

“Learn daily both to possess and miss CHRIST in His secret smiles ; He must go and come ; because His infinite wisdom thinketh it best for you : we shall be together one day.”

\* \* \*

“Fye, fye upon us, who love fair things as fair gold, fair houses, fair lands, fair pleasures, fair honours, and fair persons, and have so little love to CHRIST.”

\* \* \*

“If this whole world were in the balance, it could not weigh against CHRIST’s love : men and angels cannot fathom it.”

\* \* \*

“Oh ! to think that CHRIST should be so large in sweetness and worth, and that we should lose our love so miserably as not to bestow it upon Him.”

“It is not niceness, shyness, or coldness of love, that causeth CHRIST to withdraw under a curtain and a veil, so that you cannot see Him; but He knows you could not bear a high spring-tide of His felt love, full sails, and a fair gale always.”

\* \* \*

“I am sure they never won CHRIST who were never sick at heart for Him—too many *whole* souls think they have met with CHRIST, who had never a wearied night for the want of Him.”

\* \* \*

### AFFLICTION AND ADVERSITY

‘I would not be without the sweet experience of the consolations of GOD, for all the bitterness of affliction : nay, whether GOD come to His children with a rod or with a crown, if He come Himself with it, it is well.’

\* \* \*

“The thorn is one of the most crabbed and cursed weeds that the earth yieldeth; and yet out of it springeth the rose the sweetest of flowers, and the most delightful to the eye that the earth hath : your LORD shall make joy and gladness out of your afflictions ; for all his roses have a fragrant smell.”

\* \* \*

“I knew and saw Him with you in the furnace of affliction; for there He wooed you to Himself, and chose you to be His.”

\* \* \*

“One year’s time of heaven shall swallow up all sorrows, even beyond all comparison.”

\* \* \*

“And if all the sad losses, trials, sicknesses, infirmities, griefs, heaviness, and inconstancy of the creature, be expounded to be (as sure I am they are) the rods of the jealousy of a Husband in heaven, contending with all your lovers on earth, though there were millions of them, for your love, to fetch it home to heaven, single, unmixed ; you will forgive (if we may use that word) every rod of

GOD, and not let the sun go down on your wrath, against any messenger of your afflicting and correcting.”

\* \* \*

“His children must often have the frosty cold side of the hill, and set down their feet among thorns ; but His love hath eyes, and in the meantime is looking on—our pride must have winter weather to rot it.”

\* \* \*

“When the LORD’s blessed will blows across your desires, it is best with humility to strike sail to Him, and to be willing to be led any way our LORD pleaseth.”

\* \* \*

“I know, as night and shadows are good for flowers, and moonlight and dews are better than a continual sun, so is CHRIST’s absence of special use, and it has some nourishing virtue in it, and giveth sap to humility, and putteth an edge on hunger, and furnisheth a fair occasion for faith to put forth its hand, and lay hold on what it seeth not.”

## SAMUEL RUTHERFORD

c. 1600-1661

Mr. Samuel Rutherford, a gentleman by birth, was educated at a grammar school and graduated to the University of Edinburgh. Here his talents were recognised and he was recommended by his professors for “his eminent abilities and virtuous disposition.” At 21 years of age he obtained his M.A. degree, and two years later became Professor of Philosophy in the University. For misdemeanour he was dismissed in 1623.

According to his own statement “he had suffered the sun to be high in the heaven” before he became seriously religious. It was in 1627 that he began to study theology and in the same year was called to be a minister at Anwoth, in the shire of Galloway. There he laboured diligently, rising usually at 3 a.m., spending the forenoon in devotion and study and the afternoon in visiting the sick and othere ministerial duties. Multitudes flocked to his Church. Because of one of his writings he was summoned in June, 1630, before the High Commission Court in Edinburgh

for non-conformity with the Perth Articles, but through the intervention of GOD the charges were dismissed.

About this time, he lost his first wife after an illness lasting thirteen months and he himself was prostrate with a fever for thirteen weeks.

The publication of Mr. Rutherford's first book entitled "*Exercitationes Apologeticae pro Divina Gratia*," with its pronounced Calvinism galled the episcopal clergy to the very quick for the argument of that book cut the sinews of Arminianism. Therefore the Bishop, Thomas Sydeserf, could endure no longer and summoned Mr. Rutherford before the High Commission Court for his non-conformity with the five Articles of Perth and the fore-mentioned book which it was alleged reflected on the Church of Scotland. On the 27th of July, 1636, he was discharged from exercising any part of his ministry within the kingdom of Scotland under pain of rebellion and was sentenced to confinement at Aberdeen.

Most of his famous letters belong to this period and in one of his letters he expresses how greatly the consolations of CHRIST did abound with him in his sufferings, when he says—"I never knew before that his love was in such measure. If he leaves me, he leaves me in pain, and sick of love, and yet my sickness is my life and health. I have a fire within me." In Aberdeen he remained upwards of a year and a half.

At a Glasgow assembly he was restored in 1638 to his parish and appointed to be professor of Divinity at St. Andrews. He was also one of the Scots Commissioners, appointed in 1643 to the Westminster Assembly. Staying four years in London he was very much beloved for his faithfulness and zeal in going about his Master's business. He published about this time "*Lex Rex*" and several other learned pieces. The business of the Assembly being over, Mr. Rutherford resumed his duties in St. Andrews.

Upon the death of the learned Damatius in 1651, the magistrates of Utrecht in Holland, having heard of the piety and zeal of Mr. Rutherford invited him to the divinity chair there, but he declined. He chose rather to



suffer affliction in his own native country and to continue with his charge and flock in a time of danger. It has been written of him about this time that "such was his unwearied assiduity and diligence, that he seemed to pray constantly, to preach constantly, and to visit the sick, exhorting from house to house ; to teach as much in the schools, and spend as much time with the students and young men in fitting them for the ministry, as if he had been sequestered from all the world besides, and yet withal to write as much as if he had been constantly shut up in his study."

After the Restoration of Charles II took place in 1660, events began to change and the fore-mentioned book, "Lex Rex," was burned in public and he was deprived of his office and charged with high treason. His days, however, were numbered, as his health had broken down. During the time of his last sickness, especially when his end drew near, he often broke out into a kind of sacred rapture, extolling and commending the LORD JESUS. It is said that some days before his death he was heard to say "I shall shine—I shall see Him as He is—I shall see Him reign and all His fair company with Him : and I shall have my large share ; mine eyes shall see my REDEEMER, these very eyes of mine and no other for me : this may seem a strong word, but it is no fancy or delusion ; it is true, it is true ; let my LORD'S name be exalted, and if he will, let my name be ground to pieces, that he may be all in all."

*(It is hoped to publish classified extracts from Mr. Rutherford's letters which contain much that is helpful and practical.)*

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## Communion

FROM earthly cares, and human thoughts,  
 LORD, keep my spirit free,  
 That I may know the secret joy  
 Of fellowship with Thee.

In touch with Thee, the CHRIST of GOD,  
 For this, my spirit longs ;  
 Then "Faith," tho' all the way be rough,  
 Will sing her loftiest songs.

In touch with Thee, the FATHER'S SON,  
His treasure, His delight ;  
This makes the pilgrim's heart rejoice,  
E'en through the darkest night.

"Hope" lifts her longing eyes to Him  
Who occupies GOD's throne ;  
And finds direction all the way,  
Because that way's "His own."

In touch with CHRIST, outside men's dreams,  
But with our "MASTER" one ;  
Our deepest joy to know His mind,  
Who all GOD's will hath done.

Tho' weak indeed, yet keep us, LORD,  
In constant touch with Thee,  
Thus, by Thy SPIRIT, shall we learn  
The FATHER's thoughts of Thee.

S.T.

## Is God for Me ?

WHEN HE GIVETH QUIETNESS WHO THEN  
CAN MAKE TROUBLE ?

Job xxxiv. 29.

**I**S GOD for me ? I fear not, though all against me rise ;  
O call on CHRIST my SAVIOUR, the host of evil flies.  
My friend the LORD ALMIGHTY, and He who loves me, GOD,  
What enemy shall harm me, though coming as a flood ?

I know it, I believe it, I say it fearlessly,  
That GOD, the HIGHEST, MIGHTIEST, for ever loveth me ;  
At all times, in all places, He standeth at my side,  
He rules the battle fury, the tempest and the tide.

*And if in lonely places, a fearful child, I shrink,*  
He prays the prayers within me I cannot ask or think ;  
In deep unspoken language, known only to that Love  
Who fathoms the heart's mystery from the Throne of  
Light above.

His SPIRIT to my spirit sweet words of comfort saith,  
 How GOD the weak one strengthens, who leans on Him in  
 faith ;  
 How He hath built a City, of love, and light, and song,  
 Where the eye at last beholdeth what the heart had loved  
 so long.

PAUL GERHARDT.

## The Christian's Commission

*"As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you."*

(John xx. 21).

THIS commission concerns primarily the apostles, who were first in privilege as in suffering, but it applies to every believer to-day. Each Christian has been sent into the world for a definite object.

The words "as" and "so" suggest some parallels between our LORD being sent by the FATHER, and our being sent by CHRIST.

In John's Gospel the LORD JESUS often refers to His being sent by the FATHER: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me"; "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent Me"; "I must work the works of Him that sent Me." And Paul, in describing his conversion, tells how the LORD JESUS had said to him, "I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles." The burden of the LORD's commission lay heavy upon him: "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." One of the two great motives that actuated Paul's ministry was a sense of responsibility to the One Who had sent him.

On the other hand, our LORD came willingly. He "on wings of love came down." Paul could never forget the wonder of CHRIST's amazing love to him: "Who loved me and gave Himself for me." The apostle's second great motive in service was the sense of his SAVIOUR's love: "The love of CHRIST constraineth us."

Every believer is both a pressed man and a volunteer. In actual experience this involves no contradiction. We are sent and yet we go willingly and gladly.

And the LORD JESUS was sent to glorify the FATHER:

"I have glorified Thee on the earth : I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do"; and Paul's deep ambition was to fulfil the ministry which he had received from CHRIST, to the glory of His Name. This ambition should be ours, too. Nothing satisfies so fully as to know that we are here for the glory of GOD. "The chief end of man is to glorify GOD and enjoy Him for ever." We can go no higher than that ; it is the "summum bonum" of life here and hereafter.

What will be the effect on our souls if we are gripped by the fact that we have been sent into the world for a definite purpose ? We will name three results.

There will be a deeper *humility*, *rest* and *serenity*. We shall not fret against the Providence that has not accorded us five talents, but shall seek to use what we have, in the fear of the LORD. To do the will of GOD is success. Moses was the "meekest" or most disinterested of men. The heart that bends will never break. John Newton's idea of the two angels is well known : if one were commissioned to govern a kingdom and the other to sweep a crossing, each would be equally satisfied with his GOD-appointed task. To know that we are in the current of the LORD's mind furnished the answer to the prayer : "I would not have the restless will that hurries to and fro."

And if we are sent to live our life and do our work, we shall have holy confidence and hope. For the LORD's authority will be behind us. We will not have gone on a warfare at our own charges. As His instrument and His voice our work and our witness must accomplish something for His Kingdom.

If it is thrust home upon us that our life is a mission, our impetus will come from GOD. There will be a driving force in our lives. We shall not be like so much flotsam and jetsam floating aimlessly on the waves, but rather as steam vessels urged forward by a mighty inward force following a definite course, bound for a definite destination, and fulfilling a definite service in the KING's business. Our lives will not be a patch-work of effort to-day and apathy tomorrow, but will continually be charged with the energy of concentration and the force of unity. E.A.

## Heman The Seer

**T**HE spacious days of David and Solomon produced a number of remarkable men somewhat like the Elizabethan era in England. Of these by no means the least remarkable was this grandson of Samuel the prophet, Heman—Seer, Sage, Singer and Psalmist.

Heman was known as “the Seer in the words of God” for David; as a Sage of outstanding wisdom; as a Singer, being specially so designated; and as the Psalmist who wrote the saddest psalm in the whole psalter. He also has the distinction of being a man of God whose whole family followed in his steps. Fourteen sons and three daughters were brought up far more successfully, spiritually, than those of his royal master. For we read that all the family of Heman assisted their father in the service of sacred song in the house of the LORD.

Like his grandfather, Heman was gifted with the spirit of prophecy and recognised as

### THE SEER.

Now a seer is just a man who sees, but who sees what others fail to observe; and Heman was “the king’s seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn” [“to exalt His power,” New Trans.].

How arresting are the words “in the words or matters of God”! David the King was a man of affairs, a man whose attention would constantly be engaged in the matters of the Kingdom, in his own matters, in matters of public and private affairs. But there were the matters of God, the words of God, and in these, so likely to be overlooked or unheard, Heman was the Seer “to exalt His power.”

Reading between the lines of the record of Heman’s story, we cannot fail to see in him one, who from his youth up, and throughout a long married life with all its consequent domestic demands and cares, had been kept close to God’s school for seers by the discipline

and experiences which had been his. When later we proceed to consider the sad Psalm of his with its recurrent personal pronouns we may perhaps get a glimpse of the way the LORD had led him.

The school for seers like the school for saints is one wherein lessons are learned that fit the learner for responsible positions in the Kingdom.

Says the Apostle: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." And by Heman's sad psalm, written late in life, one would gather that he had been a most exercised man, a true scholar in the school of affliction.

But with a happy, gifted, godly family, and a chief place among the servants of God in the sanctuary and an important position in the State, we might in a hasty survey conclude that there could be very little space for chastening and spiritual exercise in such a happily placed life. Still Heman lived *with Heman*; and for saints of old as for saints of to-day "to know themselves and God" is the great and most soul-searching business possible. Did not a brother psalmist of Heman cry out: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"? The man who is to be a seer in the matters of God, to exalt His power, must perforce often pray this prayer. This I suggest Heman did. It has been remarked by another that the Husbandman is never nearer the branch than when engaged in pruning it, sharp and cutting as the process is. Also that the Hand of the Potter never presses more firmly than when shaping the vessel to His own design. Did not the blessed Apostle write of God Who comforteth us in all our tribulations that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble"?

All who are called to be "seers in the words of God to exalt His power" travel along this road. "*None but God and myself knows what is in my heart*" is an

Arab proverb, and it is the secret spiritual exercises between the child of GOD and his FATHER, between the soul and the SAVIOUR, between the servant and the MASTER, which alone qualify one for being "a seer in GOD's matters to exalt His power."

#### THE SAGE.

A sage is a wise man, a man of gravity, discernment and discrimination. Heman was just such an one. Indeed, to throw the great wisdom of Solomon into relief, the sacred chronicle affirms that the young king was wiser than . . . Heman. From this we gather that Heman already on the accession of Solomon had a well-recognised reputation as an exceptionally wise man. "Sweeter than sugar" we say; "bitter as gall"; and "wiser than Heman," would rank with the same sayings, emphasising the fact that Heman was known as a man of wisdom and understanding.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that keep His statutes." Here is the key to Heman's sagacity; and while the contrast between the wisdom of Heman and the wisdom of Solomon is stressed at the beginning of the king's reign it is not the whole story. A good start is half the race, but a good finish is the whole of it. Solomon's dazzling display of wisdom when "he feared the LORD" at the beginning did not prevent his disgraceful display of folly at the end, because he did not "keep His statutes." The record of Heman, the Sage, has no mention of similar forgetfulness, but the contrary is suggested by the story. He is the same man as Sage, as Seer, and sees into his own heart, and increases in wisdom and understanding by keeping God's words and exercising himself to exalt His power.

#### THE SINGER.

Heman, the Singer, comes into prominence with his colleagues Asaph and Ethan when appointed by David to arrange the vocal and instrumental music of the temple service "after the Ark had rest." Ere the actual

temple was erected, while the Ark rested in the city of David, Heman, the Singer, and his friends were appointed to sound the loud cymbals and lead the praise. Not simply a burst of *praise* as at the Red Sea when Moses sang of the glorious triumph of God's power, but *thanksgiving* is the dominant note in David's new psalm that day. "Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the LORD."

As Heman tunefully joining in the song of thanksgiving and praise for national mercies beholds his entire family engaged in the same holy service, does not his thanksgiving take on a deeply personal character also. "Both young men and maidens; old men and children: let them praise the Name of the LORD: for His Name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven."

LORD, how delightful 'tis to see  
A whole assembly praising Thee!"

Heman, the Singer, would feel that he had something to sing about, something to praise the LORD for, both as a member of the people of God and in his own domestic circle.

Yet his lot was cast in the dim twilight before the Dayspring from on High had visited us; while ours is set in the full blaze of the sunshine of accomplished redemption, with the full knowledge of God in CHRIST and the indwelling of the HOLY SPIRIT to enable us. Well may we say:—

"How pleasant is the sound of praise!  
It well becomes the saints of God;  
Should we refuse our songs to raise,  
The stones might tell our shame abroad."

Heman the Seer in the words of God; Heman the Sage acting with wise discretion and sagacity in all affairs; Heman, the Singer, leading the praises in the sanctuary, in each of these aspects furnishes us with food for spiritual meditation but even more so as



## THE PSALMIST.

A master of music, a sweet singer, yet the writer of the saddest, loneliest, most entirely heartbreaking psalm in the whole of the psalter.

Says WILLIAM KELLY: "Where can we find such a strain of profound sorrow and sense of wrath with no glimmer of light beyond the opening words? Israel to be blessed must pass through this, and have CHRIST'S SPIRIT and sympathy with them in it. What could law do for those under it but press its terrors unto death? His SPIRIT felt it in grace."

J. N. DARBY said that from the age of eighteen until he was twenty-five he practically lived in the eighty-eighth Psalm, his only ray of light being in the opening words, "O LORD GOD of my salvation"; and spoke of the seven years of bitter exercise thus passed before emerging into perfect peace with God.

ALEXANDER WHYTE wrote on this sad psalm of Heman: *'My soul is full of troubles'* says this great Seer, speaking about himself in the eighty-eighth Psalm. What led Heman to speak about himself in that way to a people who could not understand what he said, we do not know. What led Heman to speak and to publish abroad this most melancholy of all the Psalms we are not told. He speaks in this Psalm as he was moved to speak by the HOLY GHOST: but more than that we do not know . . . or it may have been that there might be a Psalm grievous enough for our LORD to recall and to repeat it during His three hours darkness on the cross."

With his recurring personal pronouns Heman the Psalmist runs down the whole gamut of sad, sorrowful, lonely, distracted, terrified, troubled undertones of human experience. Yet when he sat down to commit this so sorrowful psalm to writing, he begins "O LORD GOD of my salvation," and his whole soul is echoing the prayer of an earlier Psalmist, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation."

Exactly when Heman wrote this so sad psalm we do

not know, but we know that he was also a Seer in the matter of God to exalt His power; a Sage of recognized wisdom and discretion, and Singer, who led the praise and thanksgiving. Did the deep harrowing of the soul, and searching of the spirit of Heman precede all this? Possibly; for such a soil as this psalm is a most likely place to produce these rich rare fruits in a godly soul.

W.G.T.

## Extracts from the Letters of Samuel Rutherford

*(continued from page 197)*

### ON GROWING WEARY

“**S**ANTIFICATION and mortification of our desires are the hardest part of Christianity. It is natural to us to leap for joy when we think of the New Jerusalem; but to obey and work out our own salvation, and to perfect holiness is the troublesome and stormy north-side of our way.”

\* \* \*

“Only let us not grow weary: the miles to that land are fewer and shorter than when we first believed. Travellers are not wise to quarrel with their host, and complain of their lodging: it is a rough way but a fair home.”

\* \* \*

### ON ONE'S OWN HELPLESSNESS AND NEED.

“There is no sweeter fellowship with Christ, than to bring our wants to Him.”

\* \* \*

“O, how sweet it is for a sinner to put his weakness into **CHRIST**'s hand, to resign his sick soul to such a physician, to lay his weakness before Him, to weep upon Him, and to plead and pray.”

\* \* \*

“I am **CHRIST**'s ransomed. His relation to me is, that

I am sick, and He is the Physician of whom I stand in need."

\* \* \*

"The only thing that commendeth sinners to CHRIST is extreme necessity and want."

\* \* \*

"He delights to take up the fallen and to heal the sick. Binding up of wounds is His office: many a whole soul is in heaven, which was sicker than ye are."

\* \* \*

### ON FAITH

"It is true faith indeed to believe without a pledge, and to hold the heart constant; and when we doubt to run 'to the law and to the testimony' and to stay there."

\* \* \*

"Many lay false foundations, and take up conversion hastily and have never a sick night for sin. And this maketh loose work; I pray you dig deep."

\* \* \*

### ON SERVING THE LORD

"Oh if I might speak to three or four herd-boys of my MASTER I would be satisfied to be the meanest and most obscure pastor in this land. But He saith 'I will not send you—I have no errands for you'; my desire to serve Him is sick of jealousy, lest He be unwilling to employ me."

\* \* \*

"CHRIST's servants have the hardest part of it now, yet in the presence of my LORD whom I serve in the SPIRIT, I would not exchange CHRIST's prison, bonds, and chains, for the golden chains and lordly rents of the men of this world."

\* \* \*

### THAT CHRIST MAY BE ALL IN ALL

"If I should tell you from some weak experience what I have found in CHRIST, you or others would hardly

believe me. I thought not the hundredth part of CHRIST long since that I do now, though alas! my thoughts are still infinitely below His worth."

\* \* \*

"It is my daily growing sorrow that He doth so great things for my soul, and He never yet got anything of me worth speaking of."

\* \* \*

"Happy is your soul if CHRIST keepeth house and command all within. Keep Him and entertain Him well; cherish His grace and let Him direct you in all things."

\* \* \*

### DOUBTS.

"Doubtings are your sins, but they are CHRIST's medicines, which, as a Physician, He maketh use of for the curing of your pride."

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

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## Christ and the Jewish Law

**R**EFERENCES to the "law" are very frequent in the New Testament. All its writers, with the probable exception of Luke, were Jews by birth. Paul was trained as a Jewish rabbi, and his thought naturally moved within the thoughts and phraseology of the law of his fathers. Our LORD and His apostles spoke primarily to the people of their own day, and the Jews of the first century were passionately devoted to their law.

We should be careful, even if the Jews were not, to distinguish two parts in the Jewish law, first, the Divine revelation of the Old Testament as a whole, but especially the enactments which GOD gave to Israel through Moses, and which are recorded in the Pentateuch; and, secondly, the mass of explanations and additions outside the Bible, made by Jewish

religious teachers all down the centuries, and gathered up in the Talmud. Our LORD rebuked the Jews for making the Word of GOD of none effect by these *human traditions*.

Then again, it is useful for us to divide the God-given law into three parts: *the civil law*; *the ceremonial law*; and *the moral law*—bearing in mind, however, that as originally given and as recorded in the Pentateuch, the three parts were bound up together.

The civil law was intended to govern the national life of the Hebrews, and gradually died out, especially as they were often and for long periods subject to foreign rulers.

The ceremonial law contained very elaborate instructions relating to worship in the Pentateuch. We are told in the New Testament that these things served as pictures and signposts pointing on to CHRIST, the LAMB of GOD; so that when He appeared *there was no longer any use for them*.

As regards the moral law, our LORD did not cancel it; He “fulfilled” it by developing it (see Matthew v. 17). His “*I say unto you*” set aside certain details of the Jewish law, as in divorce. But the new teaching did not oppose but surpassed the old. CHRIST took the moral law of the Old Testament, lifted it out of its historical setting of ancient Hebrew *national* life, and expanded it so as to embrace the thoughts and motives of the heart. He summed up the Decalogue in two commandments: love to God and man. The germ of His teaching is in the teaching of Moses and the prophets. He expressed the great *principles* that lay at the heart of the Divine instructions of the Old Testament.

Christianity was planted in the soil of the Jewish religion. The old prepared the way for the new, which was better than the old. What was *permanent* in the religion of the Hebrews was taken over into Christianity; what was *temporary* passed away.

E.A.

## On Hymn Singing

**N**OW the subject of hymn-singing is one on which the Scriptures say very little indeed. I suppose the reason is that the HOLY SPIRIT never recognised the probability of Christians calling in question what is so instructive and universal, and withal so reverent, holy, and blessed an exercise. The word which gives us "hymn" only occurs six times in the whole of the New Testament; four times as a verb (*hymneo*) and twice as a noun (*hymnos*). In Matt. xxvi 30, and Mark xiv, 26 the original is:—"And when they had hymned." In Acts xvi. 25 it is:—"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and hymned to God." In Heb. ii. 12 we have "In the midst of the church will I hymn to thee."

These are the only instances in which the word is used as a verb, but it is used as a noun in Eph. v. 19, and Col. iii. 16—"Singing in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

I am not going to write a paper on "Hymnology;" as it might be unprofitable and certainly is unnecessary for our present purpose; but I wish to give a clear and decisive answer to the question:—"Is there any Scriptural warrant for singing hymns at the LORD's Table?"

In order to have a right understanding of any subject under discussion, it is well to attend to the real meaning of terms. What then is the definition of a hymn? Rose's edition of Parkhurst's Greek and English Lexicon to the New Testament says that the word *hymnos* means a hymn, a song in honour of God, as among heathen of the gods; or a celebration in verse of some hero, and his exploits. So the more general Lexicon of Liddell and Scott, &c.

Let us look then at the word as it occurs in the New Testament. In Matt. xxvi. 30 and Mark xiv. 26 we have these words:—"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives."

Now we must bear in mind that the LORD had been speaking to His disciples many things concerning Himself and them. He had been telling them how that He was going to suffer and to die, and how in giving Himself thus to die on the cross, He was fulfilling that Pass-over of which they were then partaking, after which paschal supper He Himself instituted what is called the LORD'S SUPPER. He gave them the bread and then the wine, telling them to eat and drink in remembrance of Him. See also 1 Cor. xi. It was at this very supper (the same which we repeat every LORD'S day morning) that they sung a hymn.

I do not go into the question as to what sort of a hymn it was, interesting as it might be in its proper place; but it is sufficient to know that they sang. And I ask, if they sang then with the LORD in their midst, was that not a precedent of sufficient weight to warrant our doing the same, supposing there were not another verse of Scripture on the subject?

It is useless for my object to offer any comment on the word in Acts xvi, as it will be said that they were singing, not in the assembly, but in a prison. But I ask you to turn to Heb. ii. 12, where we have a quotation from Psalm xxii., a psalm which every Christian admits is in view of suffering and of glory, a prophecy of the experiences of the LORD Himself.

In the first part we have "the sufferings of CHRIST" and in the second "the glories that should follow." (See 1 Pet. i and Matt. xxvi. and xxvii.) In verse 22, He is seen standing on the resurrection side of the grave, saying "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the congregation (or assembly) will I sing praise unto Thee." This is what we see so beautifully carried out and practically fulfilled in John xx. in the words "Go tell My brethren that I ascend unto My FATHER and your FATHER, to My GOD and your GOD," and then farther on He is seen "in their midst."

If we turn now to Heb. ii. 12, we shall find the HOLY

SPIRIT quoting this passage from the psalm and applying it to CHRIST saying:—"In the midst of the church (or, assembly) will I sing praise (or, hymn) unto Thee." Is this nothing to or for us? Is it a mere historical fact, or a living reality to faith? Did He only fulfil it then? Is it not abidingly true now? or do we fail to believe it?

If it be true that CHRIST is in the midst of the assembly, hymning to GOD, shall we refuse to join with and follow Him who thus leads our praises? Is it not our chief joy on earth?

But it may be said that we can praise God without putting our words into metre and singing out of a humanly composed hymn-book. It may be argued that, inasmuch as our experiences must come infinitely short of CHRIST's, it interferes with the SPIRIT's action if we give such expression to those experiences, because in so doing we confine Him, as it were, within the covers of a printed book.

My answer is,—that, on the very first occasion of the LORD'S SUPPER with the LORD there personally, He Himself joined with the disciples in singing a hymn. Moreover, if the hymn they then sang was one of the Psalms, which corresponded with the circumstances the blessed LORD was then passing through, as most Christians think, His entrance into its depth must certainly have been infinitely beyond the experience of the disciples, yet, He did not on that account discourage their singing it. If, on the other hand, it was a humanly-composed hymn, an uninspired breathing of a godly soul, suitable to express the disciples' experiences, He in grace condescended to identify Himself with them in their experiences and sang with them. Whichever way you take it, it condemns the fastidiousness of those who decline to sing a particular hymn, either because it may be beyond them; or else (which is far more frequent) because *they think themselves beyond it.*



But it is sometimes objected that, when the LORD sang with the disciples, it was under a different dispensation. But surely they do not so speak of the LORD'S SUPPER, which began on that very night in which the LORD took and brake bread saying "Do this in remembrance of Me." It was the inauguration of this precious institution; and if the LORD on that occasion set us an example in the breaking of bread, He also set us an example in singing a hymn at the time.

Again, as if the example of the Master were not enough, we find on referring to 1 Corinthians xiv. that it was customary for the early Christians to sing in their church assemblages. In that chapter the apostle is speaking of various things which ought, and others which ought not, to be done in the Assembly, not privately but when come together. He had already spoken of the things concerning their private life in previous chapters; but now he turns to things actually occurring when the church assembled; such as, speaking with tongues, and to edification; singing or praying, understood or not. While giving directions for the right doing of all things, he says:—"What is it then? I will pray with the SPIRIT, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the SPIRIT, and I will sing with the understanding also."

What is the inference at which we must arrive as to such words? The only conclusion which to me seems true or even possible is that singing at the LORD'S SUPPER, or in Assembly meetings, was the divinely and approved customary practice of the saints in those early days. The Apostle does not deprecate any of the things which he mentions, whether praying, prophesying or singing; he merely gives directions that they shall be done in the SPIRIT, and so in a decent and orderly manner. Verse 26 of the same chapter is another illustration of this. "How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, everyone of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation: let all things be done unto edifying." Did he tell them they

were not to have their psalms, their doctrines, etc? No; but he insists that they were to be exercised to edification, and in accordance with the order and comeliness suitable to the occasion, thoroughly subject to the LORD. In short they themselves were to be led of the HOLY SPIRIT. CHRIST was present in their midst.

In Eph. v. 19, and Col. iii. 16, the Apostle tells us to speak to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,\* singing, and making melody in our hearts to the LORD; and I am told that this means that we are to do so (not in the assembly but) in the family or in private company. But surely if it is well to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs in my heart, it is also good to express the feelings of the heart by voice and lips; and if it is good to do so at home, it is also good to do it elsewhere, and not by myself only but also with others; and, lastly, if I can do it to the LORD at all, I can surely do it when assembled at the most precious and solemn meetings of all. Indeed, as we have seen, *Scripture warrants all this without reasoning.*

There is one other remark I would make before closing this paper, and it is this:—that although I think what some sneeringly call a “humanly composed hymn-book” to be of God, nevertheless, like every other privilege, it has been abused. But are we going to abandon a true and happy privilege because some are unwise enough to abuse it? It is sad to think that any saint could desire to abolish the hymn-book and so reduce the assemblies to melancholy and incongruous silence; but we do need that hearts should be exercised as to the too free and unspiritually minded use of it. The principles of the New Testament demand that every brother in the assembly (who is not

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\* Attention is here confined to the principle. It seems that as of old as now metrical compositions among Christians varied in character. This is as it should be. All are not equally elevated: praise, thanksgiving, experience, etc. The SPIRIT alone can guide rightly when and how to use each.

otherwise disqualified) be open or at liberty to be used by the SPIRIT to give out a hymn, engage in prayer, or give thanks, etc. *But those principles give him no license to do so when and how he pleases.* There is a wide difference between liberty and license, yet this difference is far too often forgotten. It may be too that brothers who are most free with the hymn-book are seldom or never heard in prayer or happy service of the word. This fact alone ought to weigh with those who give out hymns to be sung at the Table of the LORD.

H.C.

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## The Way of Joy

**T**HE way of joy! Fain would I know that way!  
 Right gladly would I tread it every day!  
 But mine is sorrow's way. The dark clouds lower,  
 And grief and pain oppress me every hour;  
 Discouragement and weakness hem me round,  
 My labours seldom with success are crowned.  
 Thus spake my heart, for I was much opprest  
 By weariness and failure sore distress.

My soul, look up! Faint not, nor faithless be,  
 This way of joy is surely meant for thee.  
 To be from sorrow free! Nay, thou shalt know  
 What 'tis to sorrow, yet rejoicing go.  
 Should grief and pain oppress, be not cast down,  
 God doth not willingly afflict His own;  
 All things together work for good, we know,  
 To them that love Him; He hath told us so.  
 Though weak and failing, yet be not afraid,  
 Think of that strength in weakness perfect made;  
 Though work seem vain, we should not weary be,  
 In season due we shall the harvest see.

What is the way of joy? This wouldst thou know?  
 Then list to ONE Who speaketh soft and low—  
 "I joy to do Thy will: for this I came,

My God! although it lead to cross and shame,  
 I came from heaven to do, not Mine own will,  
 But Thine, My God! Thy purpose to fulfil."  
 Then—"I have done the work Thou gavest Me:  
 'Tis finished, FATHER. Now I come to Thee:  
 Through Thine own name, O Holy FATHER! keep  
 Those Thou has given to me, My ransomed sheep.  
 Thus in the world I speak, that they may know  
 My joy fulfilled in them e'en here below."

## Asking and Receiving

WE need to pass, in our prayer life, from an experience of asking to one of claiming. Our prayer is often too languid; we need more energy of spirit in laying hold of the Divine promises by a definite act of faith.

It was a venture of faith when we first committed our souls into the SAVIOUR'S keeping. And the act of committing ourselves to God's promises is also a venture. But God seldom gives feeling to help us to believe. When we have faith to act, the action verifies the faith.

We need to cultivate a positive expectant attitude towards God. "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." The prayer of faith believes that it receives, even before the manifestation arrives from the unseen world. We are to reckon on the promises; we receive the amount named on the cheque after we have endorsed it; that is, after we acknowledge that we have received it!

"Praying through" means emerging into the assurance that we have been heard, that we are receiving, in advance of the event, the thing asked for. Faith becomes assurance borne in upon our spirits, a joyful appropriation. And then we cease to pray. We have passed from the experience of asking to that of receiving.

E.A.

## The Old Year

By THE EDITOR.

**W**E began the year with praise, thanksgiving and hope; our experiences as the days, weeks and months have rolled by have not stilled the praise, silenced the thanksgiving, nor dimmed the hope. Still with the Psalmist we can say: "The God of my mercy shall prevent [precede] me . . . . for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy . . . . because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee."

It is of His mercy we are not consumed; and since as day by day He commands His lovingkindness in the day time, so the God of my mercy or [as the R.V. marg:] my God with His mercy, sustains, supports and satisfies the desire of every living thing. "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness."

This does not mean that all days have been alike, but it does mean that as our days so has our strength been. If we have used the time aright we have learned many useful lessons; have had many new experiences by which we have grown in grace, in patience, in knowledge, too, of our LORD; have been brought maybe through the very furnace of affliction losing nothing in the process save certain hampering bonds. Praise and thanksgiving therefore become us.

Hope, too, still sings her song of expectation, "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." The Advent Hope still sustains the Christian pilgrim for "yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come."

And how will recompense His smile  
The sufferings of this little while!

So we close the old year, as we began, with praise, thanksgiving and hope. But surely with a deeper note of praise for His excellent greatness; a more heartfelt note of thanksgiving for His wonderful goodness; and a brighter hope as we draw nearer its realization; since new experiences have given us a deeper insight into His knowledge, love and care. Is it not so?

## The Virgin Mary and the Angel Gabriel

(Luke i. 34, 38)

**I**T seems at first sight very strange that the Virgin Mary should answer the Angel Gabriel in the way that she does in Luke i, 34, when he announces to her the nativity of the promised Messiah, who was to be born of her. Why, it may be asked, should she throw any difficulty in the way? Did it not occur to her that she was about to be married to Joseph, to whom she was betrothed at the time? And this being the case, what hindered her from concluding that the child would be their offspring in the ordinary and natural way.

We are not however, I believe, to view it in this light at all, inasmuch as Mary evidently understood that He, whom the Angel described to her in such remarkable terms—the SON of the HIGHEST, the descendant of David—the KING, whose kingdom was to have no end, was NONE LESS THAN THE MESSIAH HIMSELF, who, she knew through the Prophet Isaiah, was to be the promised *seed of the woman*, to be born of a *Virgin*, which being the case, she of necessity inferred that she herself was that one, the Virgin foreseen by the prophet. Her enquiry therefore bears upon this. She meant not in reality to throw any difficulty whatever in the way or to insinuate a doubt as to the truth of the promise; but rather to elicit the very answer she got, so that she was by no means surprised when the Angel told her of the supernatural character of the birth of the infant of which she was to be the Mother, that He was to be the HOLY ONE of GOD emphatically, and be in a peculiar sense, the SON of the HIGHEST, and not her child in the ordinary way, which she must inevitably have thought had she been less instructed in Scripture, less in communion with God than she was. “And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the LORD; be it unto me according to thy word.”

E.D.

## On Discipline

*"Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth" (Heb. xii. 6).*

WHAT a deep mystery is God's discipline of His children! One shrinks at the very mention of the word! This passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews, however, presents to us one of the most precious statements of the word about the care of His love towards His own. Let us give it some consideration since it introduces us to a most profound part of Christian experience. It brings us face to face with the wonderful grace of God, Who uses the mystery of suffering for the enrichment and the unspeakable blessing of His children.

Let us remark, first of all, that *the discipline of God is educative*. Such is the meaning of the expression: Dealing as with sons. The words *son* and *Father* are repeated nine times in this passage. God is speaking to His own; we are His own children by faith, in CHRIST JESUS (Gal. iii. 26). He has brought us into His great family. And now, after having saved us, He educates or teaches us. Our citizenship and the glory are on high; here below are the sufferings. Justly He bestows or uses the sufferings we experience in order to prepare us for His glory. What sweetness and what precious things are given by this portion of His word, so often little understood, when we look at it in this literal meaning.

*And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh*

*which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. (Heb. xii. 5-12.)*

The object of discipline is purification. Does God wish to bring it upon us? Is His discipline a paternal revenge for the wrong-doings of His children? We often think that it is so; *but this is entirely wrong.* Verse 10 shews that purification is the main object of God's discipline. He seeks to take away from us all that hinders our being like the LORD JESUS. He seeks to produce His own holiness in us.

A visitor was watching a silversmith heating silver in a crucible. The fire became more and more intense, and the smith kept looking in the crucible. The visitor asked: "Why do you watch the metal so closely? What are you looking for?" "I am looking for my own reflection," was the reply. "When I see it in the silver, I stop heating, for the work is done." The smith put fire under the silver in order to purify it and make it perfect. Is the discipline of God to vent His wrath upon us? No! much rather is it a means used of the love of God *to purify us.* The furnace, the sufferings, the anguish of chastening have a meaning: God seeks to see in us a reflection, the reflection of His SON. *He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son.* (Rom. viii. 29.) By means of chastisement He removes from us, while here on earth, all that clouds this image. To cleanse, to purify the heart, such is His object, in all discipline.

Like all true parents, God sets a standard by which He models the lives of His children. This standard is the LORD JESUS. The great purpose of God is that



CHRIST be formed in us, so that God's will is perfect. The child, however, must learn to submit, for how can the will of the FATHER be accomplished in the slightest if the child's will does not yield? Would not the work of the FATHER be otherwise rendered of no effect? You can get everything from an obedient child, but not from a disobedient one. That is why the first great lesson GOD seeks to inculcate is *obedience*. *Though He were Son, yet learned He obedience by the things He suffered.* (Heb. v. 8.) Have you not noticed that this is true in the lives of all God's children? Is not the pathway of suffering the birthplace of obedience? Is not the grace of complete submission wrought in us more in the place of suffering than in any other? The spirit of obedience, of perfect submission, is produced in the furnace and in the crucible as it cannot be in any other experience in life. How many amongst ourselves, men or women of strong will, have found how true this is?

Thus, by destroying your plans and causing you cruel disappointments; by suffering caused by grief when loved ones have been torn from the family circle though very dear to you; by suffering due to loss of temporal benefits or to broken fortunes; by sufferings endured on account of the wickedness or the sin of others; by sufferings which appear at times to break your faith and your heart, does the God of love and compassion seek to enrich your life with the highest blessing, that of a will in submission to the will of God. What a beautiful attitude is that of a soul so formed! For such a soul, this is more precious than silver or gold; than of satisfied wish or ambition; than all the charms of friendship; than all the praise of men or than celebrity itself; yea, more precious than the realising of every earthly desire or the crowning of the greatest effort. It is richer and deeper than all other blessing, for it consists of knowing oneself hidden, or enveloped completely in the will of God or to move, so to speak, in that will at all times and under all circumstances.

It is this which GOD seeks to teach us by discipline. From this secret state of peace and assurance, the world can never remove us and GOD makes us often to attain it through tribulation, disappointment and suffering. Nothing which brings us into a life of dependence on the will of GOD can be acquired at too great a price. Such an experience is of incomparable value.

Now that GOD has brought us into the place of obedience, He can use the rich result of His discipline, which is *the Fruit; afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit* (verse 11). *(From the French, trans. J.S.)*

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## The Sons of the Prophets

(2 Kings vi. 1-7)

**I**T was probably not long before this that Elijah had said to GOD: "I, even I only, am left," when he felt himself alone and friendless in the midst of his nation. Elisha is in a different position. GOD had been probably gathering out twos and threes (ch. v. 22) of the sons of the prophets around the prophet and man of GOD until now their presence in the land was seen and known. The false and mercenary servant was gone from the prophet's house.

Many hard things have been said about the sons of the prophets. Here we find them where they should be found; the nation might still be away from GOD, but the sons of the prophets are not ashamed to be with the man of GOD, nor are they *narrowly exclusive as though there were no others like themselves*. "Let us go," they say, "unto Jordan, . . . and let us make a place there, where we may dwell." Their number had increased, and they show no desire to prevent this going on.

Jordan placed limits upon them. It stood between them and the outside world, a reminder of the fact that GOD's power had brought them, as a people, to Himself

through a path which was marked by the Ark of the Covenant going on before, yet there they would go.

"Let us go, we pray thee, and take thence *every man* a beam." There was work to do. In consultation with the one around whom they were gathered, they had thoughts of fellowship with one another in the work, anticipating no idlers, and excluding none from activity in fellowship. *Every man* was thought of, while there is no word of comparing one with another.

The man of God puts a little test upon them. He answers: "Go ye!" They had all said: "We dwell with thee" (v. 1). Now *one* says: "Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants." Is it not so to-day amongst ourselves? Are there not those individuals whose whole desire in life is, that the presence of the LORD should be known and enjoyed in the midst of the saints? God grant that we shall honour such, and know them. How often we read in New Testament times of the reluctance of the saints even then to act properly towards these guides! The thought has been often expressed that ours is a privileged place in that neither we, nor those whom we have known personally, ever knew the Apostles in the flesh. Had we known them, we should have heard the usual tales against them, as against all who serve the LORD amongst the saints, and should thereby have been influenced in a fleshly way with regard to their inspired writings. Not being able to fix our attention on the faults of the Apostles, we are left more free to be influenced by the SPIRIT in learning from their word. Those who are in much contact with the LORD's servants to-day always stand in this danger; they may be occupied with the servant, to praise or condemn, and lose the value of what is CHRIST-like in them. We who see them only on visits are better off, for we are often left free to see nothing but that which the LORD would have us see and know in them, namely, likeness to Himself. Let us remember Phil. iv. 8, and Mark vi. 4.

The man of God answered: "I will go." So it is with our LORD; He is ever ready to go with the feeblest and commune with them. The two on the way to Emmaus

were "fools and slow of heart to believe," but they loved Him, and talked together of such things that they could continue freely with in talking to the Stranger Whose conversation made their "hearts burn within" them. Nor does the LORD ever disdain those who have a heart for Him, and those who are with them share in the blessing. Even Paul, when he had but lately made mistakes at Jerusalem and had even had to apologise for his error before the chief priests and their council, was not left to bemoan his faults. The night following the LORD stood by him, and said: "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." He might have been thinking that he had failed to testify now in Jerusalem, but the gracious LORD gives comfort and consolation when it is needed.

So the prophet "went with them. And when they came to Jordan they cut down wood. But as one was felling a beam the axe fell into the water; and he cried and said: 'Alas, Master! for it was borrowed.'"

This is an experience that many must have. Those who are children of "brethren" are often described in the same language as is used in speaking of the sons of the prophets. Such a one was told by an older brother: "Children of brethren never make 'good' brethren!" He replied: "Do you not mean 'seldom,' instead of 'never'?" Another old brother laughingly said: "Ah! he wants you to leave room for him." It was no laughing matter to the young man, however. On his knees before the LORD he saw himself go astray in self-will, as others had done, and nothing *in himself* to hinder this. He saw all power for service gone. Fear for his own weakness had deprived him of his "axe head" with which to carry on. What could he do? The strength to go on was not in himself; it was lent him, "it was borrowed."

Then the LORD put to him the searching question: "Where fell it?" What had brought him to his knees and to the consciousness of his own powerlessness? His own self-confidence had done it. It had come as a shock

to him to learn that he could not find anything in himself on which to depend, and that others expected him to go down as some already had. There was resentment and chagrin; mortified pride. "Where fell it?" is a searching question, but when he showed the LORD the place, confessing all his thoughts and ways at the moment when he was made to feel that all power of service was borrowed, the LORD began to act.

There came to him on his knees the thought: "Where did these two brethren get their power for faithful service?" It was not from their faithfulness in coming from sin or system to the place where the LORD had placed His Name; but—ah! here was a revelation!—they received their salvation at the Cross of Calvary. There they had to come as he himself had done. There all distinctions vanished, for all were dead in trespasses and in sins, and must find life and all things in the LORD Who had died for them. His sinking heart revived.

The prophet "cut down a stick and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim." The young man saw the hand of the LORD, the Crucified One, in all things. *From the place of death came every qualification to serve.* The two old brethren had been saved as sinners, had been made children of God, in exactly the same way as himself, and the same LORD was able to do the same for him. Could such a weak creature as he go on?

"Take it up to thee," the prophet said, and this, in effect, was the word of the LORD to the young man. "He put out his hand and took it," confident in the LORD, not in himself, that the work would go on, and he would have his service in the midst of it.

At the same time, so conscious was he of his own weakness, he asked the LORD that He might assure him that he would be kept amongst those gathered to His Name as long as he would live on this earth, and the LORD gave him that assurance.

Do we ever think that the axe head did not fall again? This young man's did. *There came a time when he found that those who talked loudly of truth and of discipline applied these only to others whom they dis-*

*liked, and did not spare the character of those who opposed this; those, too, who harped on the need of love to those not with us, did not often love those who were nearest them. Hypocrisy and unreality with loud profession of honesty and reality so poisoned the atmosphere that he would fain flee from it and have done with such people.*

Shame filled him when he discovered that he was thinking of going from where the LORD was. He saw that pride and self-confidence had filled him, making him forget that he was even as others. Yes, sin was in his heart, sin for which the LORD had died on Calvary. "Where fell it?" was asked of him again. Again he had to look back to the Cross and see where all of himself was judged in the death of the LORD JESUS. What humility and grief filled his soul!

With chastened spirit he took again the "axe head" and went on with his work as the LORD bade him. How good and gracious is the LORD! He is always the same; unwearied in patience, unchanging in His love, He is ever ready to respond to the cry of His own.

You who are children of Christian parents remember that the idea is false that experience of sin, or of sects and systems, is needed to make one appreciate the truth and remain faithful. Only the LORD can keep. If we are always in exercise before Him, He will speak to us in the way we need. At the Cross He will show us the end of ourselves (and of every other human being), and teach us that we must become like John in Rev. i. 17. When anything happens to stop us being able to go on with the service we are engaged in, He does not discuss *others with us*, or ask who was to blame *in our opinion*; He simply asks this searching question: "Where fell it?" Then there comes to the mind all the feelings of the heart and the thoughts that followed them at the moment when we lost the power to go on. Always we learn how far short we come and with shame we "begin to take the lowest room," in the presence of the LORD. We always find ourselves looking at the Cross and so learning afresh what it means. *There* no room is to be

found for self-exaltation or pride, but we learn what an *awful thing sin* is, however insignificant it may have seemed before.

As we pray for other Christians, let us remember that the FATHER teaches His children (1 Thess. iv. 9), and we are not to interfere, but to understand that the LORD knows all, and cares for His own wherever they may be and whatever they may do. May he keep us all in the place where we confess and remember that our "axe head" (the ability to do the work) is "borrowed," and may we remember from where it was borrowed, and from Whom. He never upbraids, is always our loving LORD and MASTER, full of understanding and compassion. How sweet to know Him and to read of His ways with His servants in all ages! We shall soon have what we long for: the opportunity to praise Him fittingly as the HOLY SPIRIT ungrieved shall lead, and in the FATHER'S house! No wonder our hearts cry, "Come, LORD JESUS!" He answers: "Behold, I come quickly!" while our hearts reply: "Even so, come! LORD JESUS!"

T.H.

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## Darkening by Our Own Shadow

**I**T is said of the great sculptor, Michael Angelo, that when at work he wore over his forehead, fastened on his cap, a little lamp, in order that no shadow of himself might fall upon his work. We need to take care that no shadows of ourselves, of our pride, our ambition, our self-seeking, shall fall upon our work for CHRIST. To seek to win souls that we ourselves may have the glory of success in Christian work, is to dim and darken the beauty of all we do, and also to make ourselves vessels unfit for the MASTER'S use. We are ready for this most sacred of all ministries only when we are content to be nothing that CHRIST may be all in all.

## The Vessel

By SIR EDWARD DENNY

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*"Filled in all the fulness of God."—Eph. iii. 17.*

*"We learn in suffering what we teach in song."*

*"A few more breathings in this dull and oppressive element, then all will be health and buoyancy, strength and gladness, purity and peace."*

O H! is it come—the sweet and blessed calm,  
Foreseen and hoped for through those darksome  
years

Of anguish and of dread? Here, here at last,  
I, a deep vessel in the shoreless sea  
Of Thine own fulness, O ETERNAL GOD!  
Filled in that fulness, find my prayers, my hopes,  
All, all fulfilled, and nothing more to crave.  
The bright reality, the thing itself,  
Transcends all thought, eclipses every hope:  
Dwelling in God, by God indwelt, I know  
Love in its fulness, life to me is bliss,  
All, within, beneath, around, above,  
Speak but of Thee, and tell me what I am,  
The happiest of the happy! O THOU peerless ONE!  
Great GOD revealed in flesh, the living link  
'Twixt GODHEAD and my soul! be Thine the praise,  
The loving worship of a loving heart  
Rich in Thyself, for, oh, however filled,  
Howe'er exalted, holy, undefiled,  
Whatever wealth of blessedness is mine,  
What am I, LORD! an emptiness, a nothing.  
Thou art my boast, in Whom all fulness dwells  
Of the great GODHEAD, Thou Whose Name I bear,  
Whose life is mine, Whose glory and Whose bliss,  
All, all are mine.