

"WORDS OF TRUTH."

Ecol. xii. 10.

"THE ENTRANCE OF THY WORDS GIVETH LIGHT: IT GIVETH UNDERSTANDING
TO THE SIMPLE."—Ps. cxix. 130. •

VOL. III.

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WORDS OF TRUTH.

“PI-HAHIROTH”—THE OPENING OF LIBERTY!

EXODUS XIV.

THIS chapter has a remarkably significant position in the history of the typical redemption of the people of Israel. It lies between the shedding of the blood of the Paschal Lamb in Egypt, in ch. xii., and the song of redemption in ch. xv. We find the people in great distress of soul; “sore afraid,” and crying out unto the Lord, who makes a way of escape for them from the bondage of Pharaoh and Egypt, into the liberty of complete salvation from every foe. They sing the song of victory and triumph with their feet on redemption ground.

The moral lesson which is here must be learned sooner or later by every soul. Many live long enough in the condition which we find in this chapter, supposing this misery and uncertainty to be a proper Christian state. Perhaps only learning on a death-bed the deliverance which should have been enjoyed all their life long. Such are quickened souls too. Souls in which grace has wrought, but who stop short of the ground of redemption, where God begins with the soul.

Now, we find many who have learned Christ's work as far as is typically taught in Exodus xii. in the Passover. They have learned their own sinfulness in God's sight more or less, and have looked to Jesus as their only refuge, and found that His blood was shed for sinners such as they. They have found themselves sheltered from the judgment of God for sin. God has passed over them. But in all this they have not peace with God. They are sheltered from his judgment, but God has still in their sight the character of Judge. I do not believe any soul ever had *peace with God* on this ground; consequently, when a moment of pressure comes, the soul is thrown into the deepest distress and misery.

We find this strikingly before us in this chapter. They

had been sheltered by the blood of the Lamb on the night of judgment and terror. The blood was the sole ground of their safety from the hands of the destroying angel. There was "no difference" between them and the Egyptians. His hand was stayed, not by what they were, but because the blood was on the lintel, and all sheltered under it were safe from the judgment of God. The blood *kept God out*—this was the great thing on that night. God was kept outside—His hand was stayed. But they were still in Egypt, and God was only known as a Judge. Here (c. xiv.) the great question is decided, "Was God to have them now, or Satan?" It was a moment of intense pressure; but a pressure in which they learned to "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." It was a state in which they could not lift a hand or strike a blow. A moment when the crushing pressure of enemies behind, and no outlet of escape, extorted a bitter cry of helpless misery from their inmost souls.

It may be asked, Why did God allow them to get into this great extremity? Could He not have brought them out by the way of the land of the Philistines, which was near, and there have saved them from that people? Why bring them into a place of such dreadful fears and terrors? A place where, with the sea in front, mountains hedging them in on each side, hosts of exasperated enemies pressing behind? What was it for? Why is a soul often brought into this terrible extremity, while at the same time, God has passed over it as a Judge? Because it was with them—it is with us, *a needed lesson*. On the one side, to search our hearts out to the depths and make us learn *ourselves*, and the utter helplessness of man to deliver himself; on the other, to learn *God* in His resources and delivering grace. God allows us to get into these extremities. He allowed Job to get into them in all their bitterness; and when he learned to abhor himself, which he had not till then (Job xlii.), he learned what God was, to one whom he abhorred, in all the richness of that heart of love which spared not His Son to be its exponent and missionary!

Is it not thus on a death-bed? The soul is brought to an extremity which perhaps till then it never knew. It looks into an unending future, and now for the first time is about to face the living God. In a moment of intense pressure like this, it finds itself cast over on the sovereign mercy—the rich and ungrudging grace of God in Christ, and all is perfect.

peace. It has nothing then but Christ, and He is everything. This is why God allows these moments of extreme pressure to come upon souls, over whom He is yearning in tenderest love; because, in no other way can they learn themselves or Him. See Joseph, while his heart was yearning over his brethren, speaking roughly to them—putting them in ward till they learned their guilt for their treatment of him. Thus with God, He abases His people, all the while with the most yearning love, that He may exalt them in due time. He makes them thus learn their utter vileness as men in flesh, and responsible before Him, that they may learn what He is to such, in a love which knows neither measure nor end.

The name of the place where Israel encamped that moment has beautiful significance. It is named "Pi-hahiroth," and means, "The opening, or gate, of liberty." It was such to them.

Do I speak to any soul who has not rejoiced in this wondrous liberty of grace? Awakened surely to the sense of sin and its exceeding sinfulness; with some undefined hope too, that Christ is its only refuge, and yet groaning under the terrible bondage of sin and Satan's power? To will present, yet how to perform that which is good found not. The desire to do good then, and the desire only making more apparent than ever the fact, that a law of sin in the members wraps the soul in its chains of bondage, bringing it into captivity to the law of sin in its members. How many souls are in this state—groaning under a bondage which in unconverted, unawakened days was never known. Now, all is changed, and the heart is tempted to cry out, like Israel on that day, "It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians," than this terrible strait into which they had come. Pharaoh's hosts behind, the Red Sea in front, and no escape on either side. Often in this state would the soul be tempted to desire the former days of careless ease, rather than this terrible state of misery.

All these exercises of soul come at last to a most blessed termination. They are all leading up to the blessed condition in which God *begins* with the soul. But this is not Christian state at all. Christian state is *perfect liberty*. What is so distressing is, to find souls accepting this state, and looking for nothing beyond it. Satisfied to be sheltered from the judgment of Egypt, and going on in Egypt all the while.

The state in which we find Israel—or souls—is not one of conflict, but exercise, which breaks down every hope in self, or from self, casting them entirely over upon Christ. Moses says to Israel, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to-day . . . the Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." (v. 13, 14.) God now takes the matter into His own hands; no more as a Judge, but as one whose judgment had been answered for by the blood of the Paschal Lamb. He is thus at liberty, as it were, to show how fully, with His whole heart and with His whole soul, He was *for* His people. He opens a pathway through the Red Sea—a pathway which had a double effect—to Israel the most perfect deliverance from every foe. Dry shod they passed through the depths, the waters a wall on their right hand and on their left, till their feet stood on the wilderness side of the Red Sea, brought to God Himself in the fullest liberty of grace. *To Egypt*,—the mighty waters returning to the channel through which the Lord's redeemed had come, swallowed up the foe. They "fled against it" without avail. "The waters returned and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them—*there remained not so much as one of them.*" Israel saw their enemies dead upon the sea shore. They saw the mighty work which the Lord did to their enemies. They beheld them no more for ever. Grand and glorious victory—achieved not by them, but by the Lord. Israel had not to lift a finger, to speak a word. They had but to enter into that victory which God had achieved for them alone.

In what way then has God wrought to bring deliverance to His people now? *God has not only provided a Saviour—Jesus—but has raised Him up again who had been slain!* Every whit of his righteous judgment for sin had been borne by His Son, when he entered the mighty waters of death. Every sin of His people had been answered for and put away. Here then is the true character of Christian faith. We believe "on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Rom. iv. 24, 25.) God forsook His own Son when he was bearing the judgment of sin on the cross. There, Jesus "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (Heb. ix. 26.) God came in when every vestige of sin and sins were put away to His glory for ever, and *raised up His Son.*

Reader, the resurrection of Jesus, like the passage of the Red Sea, tells its own glorious tale. I gaze behind into His empty tomb, and find in it the ending of every foe. The end of the sins committed, and the nature which offended God, and broke my heart with its vileness. The end of Satan's power. He has no power further than death. I have died with Jesus there. If I revive myself He still has power. If I am practically dead His power is gone. I have passed by the resurrection of Jesus, into new ground. A shout of victory in my heart for the ending of every foe. I have peace with God, when the judgment is past. But here the type fails to show the magnificence of the victory which I enjoy. It was the *same flesh* which came out into the wilderness, through the depths of the sea, in Israel. We can say, now on the other side of his empty tomb, "when we were in the flesh." (Rom. vii.) *When the flesh was myself!* Now I have got *another* life, a new life in Jesus raised from the dead; which walks in perfect liberty, and brings forth fruit to God.

Beloved reader, the resurrection of Jesus has these two aspects. *To the Christian*, Jesus risen is the eternal witness that our sinful nature and our sins are put away, and that it is God—our God—who has done it in love. *To the world* it is the solemn witness that God has "appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, *in that he hath raised him from the dead.*" (Acts xvii. 31.)

Like the presence of Jehovah on that day of the Red Sea, it was "cloud and darkness" to the Egyptians; it was "light by night" to Israel. To the one it was a savor of life unto life—to the other, of death unto death. We read, "In the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians," &c. (v. 24, &c). In the "morning watch," again, when the soldiers guarded the tomb of Jesus—when Satan's power was put forth to retain Him in His last stronghold, the angel of the Lord rolled back the stone of His tomb, and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. The foe was discomfited, and His people saved. While, on the other hand, he pointed to the grave clothes in the empty tomb, as the sight to calm the disciples' fears, and fill their mouths with a song of praise.

The Lord give my readers to sing this song of victory—

this song of God's triumph over every foe. Christ has made an end of the foe—an end of all that could rise up again between us and the living God for ever. As the risen One He leads this song of praise. Do I still refuse to sing this song? If so, I call in question the efficacy of His work. I seek to have some part in it myself. This can never be. There it stands, His glorious work of redemption. I can neither add to it or diminish its value. God is satisfied, nay, glorified, and the sinner saved, by a salvation worthy of God.

THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES, &c.

BEFORE we look at the next parable, it is well to notice the change from the sea shore to the house. The multitude sent away—only disciples with Jesus. This gives occasion for our Lord giving likenesses of the kingdom very different from those given to the people outside. The multitude gathered on the sea shore heard now for the first time the truths of the coming kingdom expressed in parables, inasmuch that the disciples wondered and asked, "Why speakest thou to them in parables?" The fact was that Israel at that time was rejected, and was addressed, according to the prophet, in parables and in dark sayings. That is, the consequence of their rejection of Christ was beginning to be seen. The time was now come when they should hear, and not understand; see, and not perceive. All that was needed to maintain them in the place God had given was there present. Messiah was there, and repentance had been preached by Him and by John. But they were disobedient; they would not have Jesus. They rejected Him; He rejects them. The Lord Jesus tells them of the kingdom and the form it would take through his absence—the consequence of their rejection. But their eyes are closed, and their ears are dull, and their hearts waxed gross, "lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Judicial blindness and hardness of heart are sent upon them. Such was and is still the solemn condition of the nation unto whom Messiah came.

But there was a remnant who had received the testimony, and to them the mysteries are unfolded. They are the chosen ones, who not only escape the judgment fallen upon

the nation, but are brought into a greater nearness to Jesus. It is now a family tie. The Jews had contemptuously said, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee." Whether it was so or not, it showed their contempt for their Messiah. But it gives occasion to our Lord to declare the closer intimacy which would henceforth subsist between Himself and His disciples. "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." The disciples now take that place.

They had said, "Why speakest thou in parables?" and then the Lord explained in the hearing of the multitude the first parable, which is not a similitude of the kingdom, but which, among other things, gives warning to individual souls and enforces it in these words, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." The judgment upon the nation (v. 11-15), the blessing upon the remnant (v. 16, 17), and the application of the parable (v. 18-23) from the solemn word spoken, if not directly to the multitude, yet in their hearing.

But when they were gone, and Jesus and his disciples are in the house, at once we see the confidence inspired by love and conscious nearness. "Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field." Jesus declares the parable. More, He adds what the parable did not contain, and this is ever the way with the Spirit of God. If He gives visions or parables, he never gives a bare explanation, but always adds important truth.

What a place this is! In the house with Jesus—the world outside. Now there is communion. Jesus *declares* the parable spoken outside to the multitude. To them the kingdom was likened to *a man*. To the disciples it is the *Son of man*. To them it is not given to know; to the disciples it is, and they are blessed. But to explain ever so fully the dark sayings spoken to the multitude is not all the blessedness. Not only are the disciples told that the harvest is the end of the age; that "the son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth: then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father;" that the true king

Christ, the Son of man, will return and establish his kingdom in power and glory on the earth ; but He tells them of a secret thing, hidden in the counsels of the Father from all eternity, of a highly prized remnant that would be found in the midst of the general corruption—so prized that they would be a treasure, a pearl—so valued that all else would be given up so that the merchant might secure it. What a display of Christ's love for the Church. What a testimony of His love for the disciples, to open out to them the counsels of His abiding love, the depths and riches of His grace. But this testimony is for us also. This scene in the house is illustrative of our place of nearness and communion. Not that it sets forth all the privileges we have in being brought nigh to God; but to be with Jesus in spirit is our place now. A Christian may be occupied outwardly with earning the bread that perishes, and that with much anxiety and pain. This forms no barrier to communion with the Lord. The only barrier to this is peace not realized, the heart not at rest. This removed by the grace of God the believer is able to enter in to realize his place *in the house with Jesus*, and to learn God's counsels about *His Son*. For the Lord does not speak to them of their individual salvation. There was no room for doubt; they were already inside. But He reveals to them—to us—His own joy in the hid treasure, His determination to secure the pearl of great price at all cost. And when the end comes, in a third parable, the care with which the good are put into vessels.

So God told faithful Abraham that He was about to consume the cities of the plain. So again Jesus told His disciples, just before He suffered, "I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." We are the depositaries of God's counsels. What a position for such as we are!

How can a child of God, who knows his father's will about the course of this world, and its awful doom, maintain the pretensions and join in the undertakings of men of this world to reform the world, to make it a pleasant place? Can he be deceived by their talk of *amelioration*, of spreading civilization as a means for the world's conversion? Alas! that any should so far forget, not only their place of separation from this world, its fair appearances, as well as its foulness, but that the irrevocable judgment of God is pronounced upon it, as being a thing that will wax worse and worse until its wicked-

ness culminates in open war against the Lord, and that to aid and abet the world in any of its plausible attempts is to give the lie to God's word. Let the Christian seek to gather souls *out of* the world to Christ. This will not only be the saving of a soul, but it will be a testimony to the world that we know that its judgment is sure and near.

The same solemn words are uttered to the disciples which were to the multitude, "who hath ears to hear let him hear." Surely there never was a time when it behoved us to take more heed to the word of God than the present.

God, in His grace, hath opened our ears, and He hath spoken plainly, definitely, about us, about the world, and our place in it. May we hear, and be obedient.

"JUDGE NOT THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED."

MATT. VII. 1.

THESE words are often employed to hinder a sound judgment as to the plain paths of right and wrong. If a person is walking in that which I know by the word of God to be *wrong*, I must judge that he is walking wrong, or give up my judgment of right and wrong. I may trust that he may be misled, or that difficulties and temptations may have overcome him, and consider myself, lest I also be tempted—think the best I can of him—but I cannot put evil for good, and good for evil. There can be no right motive to do what is wrong—to do what is contrary to God's will. There may be ignorance, want of light in the conscience, and I may and ought to take all this into account, but I cannot say that the person is not doing wrong.

Woe be to me, if for any personal consideration I enfeeble my own sense that a wrong path is a wrong one. The saint must be very careful not to allow any sophistry to modify any submission of heart and conscience to God's judgment of good and evil. As regards the Church of God, the Scriptures plainly declare we are to judge "them that are within; them that are without, God judgeth."

There is the imputation of motives to persons, or habit of forming an opinion on other's conduct, which is an evil habit. This is what the Lord guards us against in Matt. vii. 1. But the duty of not allowing evil in the house of God—it is positively commanded to us not to allow it.

Again, many apply this to judge whether people are Christians. But this is founded on a fundamental mistake. It is assumed that people are supposed to be Christians unless proved to the contrary. If the faith of the soul be a personal thing and I value Christ, this cannot be. I am not called upon to be volunteering to pass judgment on the point, whether such and such an one is a Christian; *the person who blames me for saying such an one is a Christian, is judging that he is a Christian of course, which is quite false.* The apostle says, "the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, *then were all dead.*" Believing, then, it is a joy to believe that any one has passed from death unto life. That is not a judgment, through the rejoicing of the heart, that faith in that person has brought him into the blessed place of the child of God. It is a most horrible principle that we cannot know who are God's children, Christ's disciples. *It destroys all godly affections.* If the children of a family were told that they could not know, and ought not to judge who are their brothers and sisters, what would become of family affections? The Lord has said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." How can this be if I do not know who are disciples, and towards whom their love is to be exercised? We must know each other as children of God to "love as brethren." He who objects to judging that such and such are God's children, objects to the love of the brethren. He is rejecting the spiritual affections on which the Lord and Scripture so much insist.

There is a wrong spirit of judgment. If I occupy myself needlessly in thinking of others, and expressing an opinion of them. If in questionable cases I ascribe, even in my mind, wrong motives—nay, if I do not hope in such cases that a right motive is at the bottom, I am in the spirit of judgment, and away from God. If severity of judgment with a person when I am bound to judge he is faulty, possesses my soul—this is not the Spirit of God. But to weaken the plain, unequivocal, and avowed estimate of right and wrong, under pretence of not judging—to deny the knowledge of one another and mutual love amongst the saints, under pretence that we have not a right to judge, is of the enemy, and a mere cover to a man's conscience, to avoid the conscious pressure of that judgment on himself. If saints maintain a divine standard of right and wrong, I must judge them who

do wrong to be doing so. I am not always called to occupy myself about them—then, if unhindered, the spirit of judgment comes in—but if I am, I must judge according to the word of God. If I am to love the disciples of Jesus, the saints of God, “the brotherhood” (1 Pet. ii.), I must know whom they are. If there is a disposition to distrust or to impute motives, then the spirit of judgment is at work, which is not the Spirit of God.

THE SCOPE OF THE GOSPEL.

EVERYTHING we find in the good tidings, or gospel, makes *God's* side prominent. We like to make the sinner prominent because we are thinking of ourselves; but in the gospel we ever find God's side prominent—God's manner to the sinner. It is the extent of His blessings in Christ for the lost one! The Prodigal not only got a new mind, but a new appearance, and a new place. So that it will not do to limit the gospel to the sinner's need. It is not enough to see the judgment removed; but you must see that *all* the thing which was under judgment, is also removed—the sinful nature that earned the judgment of God. Paul says, “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” This complete deliverance from the flesh was never seen fully even in type, till the case of the thief on the Cross. There we see a man a thoroughly changed being. A man dead here, and alive in heaven! It is not only deliverance from the fear of sin and death, but the very leprous body of sin set aside in death for a glorious body.

If I have learned, ever so feebly, the scope and purpose of the Gospel, I am anxious not only to keep clear of sins, but to keep clear of the flesh itself, the nature which produced the sins, and all that to which the flesh would respond.

Look at the story of the Prodigal son, and see what it discloses. It gives us a simple tale of endless blessing. The *Father's* feelings about the Prodigal. It is *He* who runs in the story. The Prodigal wakes up in the distant scene of his disgrace and ruin, from his course; but he only learned the Father's heart from Himself. We lose sight of the *motive* which actuated the Father's heart, and consequently we are weak in learning *what it effects*. In these two points we are defective. The *motive* on the Father's side—the *effect* of the

motive on the Prodigal's. He says to the servants, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." His investiture is entirely new. He is not only new in heart and mind, but new in appearance too. It was not putting a new robe on the old rags. This is what is effected by an imperfect gospel, and therefore imperfect practice comes from imperfect doctrine. He must go into the Father's house, new in heart and mind as well as in appearance. He must go in, in a manner suited to the *Father's* heart and house. Everything had come forth new from it to fit him for his place; it was not restoring anything to him of that which he had squandered and lost. He had borne the image of the earthly; he will bear the image of the heavenly, so that he gets even now an investiture from heaven. A wretched prodigal transferred to the highest place, as well as the highest condition. This tells out its own tale of the heart of God to a poor, ruined sinner.

Dear reader, are you seeking to know the thought of God about you as you seek the things of the world? It is revealed to you in His word; but you don't see it because you are not looking for it as you are for them.

Look at the case of the thief. A man brings himself to an ignominious death—he has not one word to say for himself—and there you see God's Son beside him, revealing the depth of the Father's love to that poor prodigal! That is what the living God, who sitteth in the circle of the heavens, ruling over all, has done to tell out His heart for a poor prodigal. Yet the prodigal's blessing does not stop even there. No; he is to come into the Father's house, to eat with the Father of the fatted calf! How sad to find souls stopping half way. They are content to know their sins forgiven, and go on without the sense of the investiture suited to the Father's house. Yet it is in this sense, I find, *while I journey here*, that God is made known to my soul, as a poor prodigal, so that I may joy in Him! Even here I get the consciousness of being a new creature in Christ; one who is to be conformed fully to the image of His Son. One who is created in Christ Jesus for a new order of existence altogether. Therefore Paul says, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. vi. 14.) I am severed from it, and it from me. Souls here exclaim, Oh, but about my business? Well, you have got the grace of Christ for it too; even a slave is to adorn the doctrine of

God his Saviour *in all things*. You are to carry about the dying of Jesus here, that the life of Jesus may be manifest in your body; an earthen vessel carrying about a treasure; a lamp within a pitcher! You are to go through the ordinary transactions of life in the grace of Christ.

Now, do you believe that if you had *tasted* the joys of the Father's house, anything in the world would have power to detain you here? The brightest thing would pale before them—all your projects and prospects would go.

Poor and feeble as we are, have not some tasted of these satisfying springs? But then, are we living on the earth to manifest down here that we are saved from *it*, from *the flesh*, from all our *ruin*? Saved to walk as Christ, in the power and character of His life? In joy of heart, because in spirit in all that is suited to the Father's house, as having tasted of its joys, and eaten them? Are we marked a singular and peculiar people as we pass through the world?

We ought to be a peculiar people; the exhibition of the divine colours—the life of Jesus manifested in our bodies. Souls sink to a low place when they know not fellowship with the Father and the Son. They lose the sense of having life and incorruptibility for their portion, when they have to do in practice and will with the world and the flesh which is judged. Do you wonder then that they are not happy? They have no sense of present deliverance in Christ—of a place in Christ. Interest yourself for a moment in the grandeur of what God offers you; get a glimpse of that which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, but (which) *God hath revealed unto us by His spirit*,”—(1 Cor. ii. 9-10)—and then tell me, “I will go and look for other things to fill my heart! *You could not*. God unfolds it to you. Will you turn away your eye to a poor fleeting world, soon to be submerged in judgment? We know not how soon the trumpet may sound—very soon it may be! Turn from it then, as the thief turned from it. His eye turned to Jesus as he said, “Lord, remember me.” He appealed to that One who was sent from God—the Lord of life and glory, on the Cross for him. And, oh, what an answer He returned him! “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” In the highest place and condition He had to bestow.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF OUR POSITION IS THE STRENGTH OF OUR PRACTICE.

THERE is nothing that has such practical effect upon a Christian than the sense and consciousness of being *in Christ*. The position to which God calls us, when apprehended in the soul, affects us in everything here below. When we have faith in it we exhibit practically that we are aware of it. If we have a low idea of what God has called us to, we have a low practice. The consciousness of the elevation I am in gives a character to everything in my ways. It is not merely that God saves us. Salvation is true, too. But He brings us into such exaltation—not merely salvation—as into relationship and position before Him in His own Son.

People may say, "I don't deny this." But depend upon it, no one can understand a divine truth, till he begins to practice it. Then he shows that he has got faith in it; his practice proves that faith is there. The smallest bit of practice gives more sense of a divine truth than all the efforts of the preacher to unfold it. People often admire a divine truth, too, who have never accepted it at all. You will rarely find that the person who has accepted it, and lives in it, is spending his time admiring it. He is using and enjoying it.

Now, the thing to produce the colour in us here below is, that we are in Christ. We have the consciousness that He is in the Father, and we in Him, and He in us. (John xiv. 20.) We are, then, "In that day," *i. e.* the Spirit's day, the present time. People look for something that meets their own condition, and relieves it. The common way of presenting the gospel is that it brings *Christ* to *man*, and adds to man, instead of the fact that it brings *man* to *God* in Christ. Hence there is so little consciousness of what the Holy Ghost ministers to us, and practice almost none. I am called not only to know that I am relieved of a burthen, but that I am connected with the person who has relieved me; that is, with the Son of God. If we thus had a right sense of the dignity we are in it would make the thing simple enough. This is not some high thing, to be attained after years of walking with God. It belongs to the simplest soul. Tell me if what is in John xiv. is too high for you. Where are you at all? It is the property of every Christian. People read it when another is going to *die*. Now the Lord gives it to people who were going to *live* here below, and wanted

all that is in it. It contains the remedial things Christ gives to sustain the soul when He is not here. We get power because of His nearness to the Father (12-14), then we get position (20). The sense of the dignity of the position in a soul sets it above everything here. The more you ponder it, the more wonderful it appears. How can I separate from what is here below, the paltry things around, till I get the sense of the dignity I am in? Impossible!

See what poor thoughts we generally form of Scripture. In Luke xiv. the great supper is generally interpreted to mean salvation. Now I don't deny that it is in it. But the great supper is the expression of the *ability* of the person who makes the entertainment. A feast shows the ability of the person who makes it. The Lord shows that nature could have no part in it whatsoever. Nature, in order too; not out of order. There was no harm in a man cultivating an estate, yet the man who was doing so would not have the supper. We know that "the earth hath He given to the children of men," and every one likes to have a bit of land, or something here to call his own, yet it turned away His heart from God. The supper, in Luke xiv., shows the *ability* of the person who spread it; hence, He says, "All things are ready." In chap. xv. we find the best robe given to the prodigal. This was an expression of the *love*. But it was not all that the prodigal got. He got the fatted calf, too; and that was not salvation, surely.

If we turn to Ephesians i. we read in verse 6, "to the praise of the glory of His grace." In verse 7, we read of "the riches of His grace." Now people are generally satisfied with the knowledge of the "riches of His grace." What is "the glory of His grace?" It is God disclosing (verse 3-6) according to His own mind and purpose, that which suits Himself in the action of His heart. *But He leaves you out.* You are brought in, in verse 7; and so people only learn what suits their own need, and have not reached the thought of the heart of the living God as to what suits Himself. The result is that souls have not reached the elevation of what God's thoughts are towards them, and their walk below takes the colour from it. If you enfeeble one you enfeeble the other. We are set here below to bring out the colour of Christ, the heavenly character, in a scene where there is not one single thing that contributes to us. If you want to bring out the heavenly colour you must be in the

atmosphere where it is. Flowers bring forth their richest colours, when most in the sunlight, in the garden. If only the thing was tasted for one moment, people would not, by efforts of giving up this or that, seek to get into the consciousness of it. A nun shuts up the windows that she may not look at the world around. You should be able to look out on all that the world has to offer, with the sense in your soul. "I don't want one beauty in it to minister to me." "I have got something so superlative to it all, that I don't even make an effort to give it up." "It has not one single bit of power over me." Hence it is only a "father" in Christ who "overcomes the world." The "young man" has "overcome the wicked one," but is warned about the world. A father "overcomes," because he knows that Christ is the *Son of God*—one outside this scene altogether—and that he is linked up with *Him*.

You must give the prodigal more than forgiveness; you must give him possession. "*Expectations*" don't make a man rich—"possession" does. Put a man with great expectations into poor circumstances, and see what an unhappy creature he is. Give him possessions, and let him be in the circumstances, and see how little they drag him down. Hence, Paul says, in the midst of all the adverse circumstances, "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Cor. vi. 3-10.) That was the Holy Ghost—the "*Living water*" John iv.), through which he could never thirst.

Be assured of this, that natural blessings always have the tendency of turning the heart away from God, while spiritual blessings draw the heart to Him. Hence Israel is warned in Deut. viii., when in possession of natural blessings, lest their hearts should be turned away from the Lord.

The moment that I learn that I am not merely a recipient from Christ, but that I am actually united to Him in His exaltation above, I have power then to refuse everything here below but His humiliation!

I have not always the sense of *power*, passing through this evil world; but I never can lose the sense of *dignity*. The more feeble we are here below, the more we become the objects of His fullest attentions. I may be poor, and feeble, and unsightly, but, like a helpless child, I have more attentions lavished upon me than any others in the household. What can I do to return it? Nothing, for I am helpless. But the *heart* remains true, and I can be devoted to Him!

Like the poor widow with two mites, the heart was true to Christ, and that was everything! She could do but little; but what little she could she did—and did it with all her heart. She might have had one of the “mites” for herself, and have been esteemed a most estimable person. Like Zaccheus, it would have been the “half” of her “goods.” But she could retain nothing from that in which her heart was bound up, and the Lord took knowledge, not of that which she gave, but that which she retained for *self*, and that was *nothing*! This gave it the savour and odour in His sight. Her weakness was apparent, her poverty undoubted; but the heart remained true; and this was everything to Christ!

THOUGHTS ON VARIOUS PASSAGES.

1 COR. XI. 23-25.

“This do in remembrance of me.”

It is the knowledge and communion I have with Christ before the act of eating the Lord's Supper, which will give me a condition of soul for my remembrance of Him. Instead of remembering Him generating a condition, my remembrance of Him will be in accordance with my condition of soul. Thus, a babe in Christ will only remember Him as far as a babe's knowledge has reached—a young man's and a father's remembrance will be according to their knowledge of the person whom they are remembering. I *must* know a person in order to remember him. I could not be called upon to remember a person with whom I was unacquainted. We know a living Christ, and we remember Him at the moment of His betrayal and death.

The offerings—burnt offering, meat offering, peace offering, sin offering, and trespass offering—give us the varied apprehension of each person who eats; each has his own note of praise when the heart is awakened; and, like a chord of music, all is in perfect harmony and unison. Hence, the individual state of each is in the preparation to the united condition of the assembly.

ROMANS VI. 22.

If we live unto God, there will be the knowledge of what good and evil is in the eye of God. Not simply that you live to Christ as to outward devotedness, but you will get

your heart withdrawn from the influence of the things which drew it formerly away from Him. Therefore, in plain, common life, O let God be everything! Be not like one slipping and getting on, and slipping and getting on—as Christians often are—but be advancing quietly and steadily; increasing in separation to God: then you will have “fruit unto holiness,” yourselves being servants to God.

2 COR. IV. 18.

“We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.”

I do fear that in many, things that are seen, and can be seen, have a stronger hold upon them than things which are spiritual and unseen, and but the objects of faith. How many, like Jacob at Jabbok, can send their all over the *little* brook, but not pass over themselves until their flesh has been crippled.

SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

“C. A. S.” asks; How am I to endeavour to keep “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”? What does it mean?

A.—The Holy Ghost came down from heaven personally on the day of Pentecost, and dwells in each member of Christ individually (1 Cor. vi. 19; Eph. i. 13, 14, &c.); and the saints, thus indwelt, upon earth, form God’s habitation through the Spirit. He dwells corporately in the whole Church. (Eph. ii. 22, &c.) He unites each member to the Lord (1 Cor. vi. 17). Each member to the other members (1 Cor. xii. 13); and all the members to the Head. This is the Church of God—the body of Christ.

This unity has remained untouched by all the failures of the church. It is a unity which cannot be destroyed, because it is the Holy Ghost Himself. He is the unity of the body of Christ.

The Church of God was responsible to have maintained this unity of the Spirit, in practical outward and visible oneness. In this she has failed. The unity has not. It remains, because the Spirit of God remains. It remains even when the oneness of action is well nigh gone. The unity of a human body remains, when a limb is paralyzed; but where is its oneness? The paralyzed limb has not ceased

to be of the body, but it has lost the healthy articulation of the body.

Still, no matter what the ruin may be—no matter how terrible is the confused and unhealthy state in which things are—scripture never allows that it is impracticable for the saints to walk in the fellowship of God's Spirit, and maintenance of the truth. It is always practicable. The Spirit of God pre-supposes evil and perilous days; still God enjoins us to endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He enjoins nothing impracticable. We never can restore anything to its former state; but we can walk in obedience to the word, and in the company of the Spirit of God, who enables us to hold the Head. He will never sacrifice Christ, and His honour and glory for His members. Hence we are exhorted to endeavour to keep the "*unity of the Spirit*" (not the "*unity of the body*," which would prevent us from separating from any member of the body of Christ, no matter what his practice.) The Holy Ghost glorifies Christ—and walking in fellowship with Him, we are kept specially identified with Christ.

In this endeavour, I must begin with myself. My first duty is to separate myself to Christ, *from* everything that is contrary to Him:—"Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. ii. 19). This evil may be moral, practical, doctrinal: no matter what it is I must get away from it; and when I have done so I find myself practically in company with the Holy Ghost: and a nucleus for those who are truehearted likewise. If I can find such; *i.e.* those who have done the same, I am to follow righteousness, faith, peace, charity, with them (2 Tim. ii. 22). If I can find none where I am, I must stand alone with the Holy Ghost for my Lord. There are, however, the Lord be praised, many who have done likewise, and are on the line of action of the Spirit of God in the Church. They have the blessed promise as a resource, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). They are *practically* one, as led by the same Spirit, with every member of Christ in the world who has done likewise. I do not now refer to their absolute union with the whole body of Christ—but of the practice.

The basis on which they are gathered (*i.e.*, the Spirit of God, in the body of Christ); is wide enough in its principle

to embrace the whole Church of God. Narrow enough to exclude from its midst every thing that is not of the Spirit of God. To admit such would put them practically out of the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

This endeavour does not confine itself to those who are thus together—one with the other. It has its aspect towards every member of Christ upon earth. The walk of those thus gathered, in entire separation to Christ, and practical fellowship of the Spirit, and maintenance of the truth, is the truest love they can show toward their brethren who are not practically with them. Walking in truth and unity—they will desire that their brethren may be won into the truth and fellowship of the Holy Ghost. They may be but a feeble remnant; but the true remnants were ever distinguished by personal devotedness to the Lord, who ever specially watched over them, in the most tender solicitude; and associated Himself specially with them!

POETRY—FROM THE GERMAN.

On the Lamb, my soul reposing,
Freedom finds, to praise or pray;
All—yes all! my guilt and sorrow,
Jesus' blood has put away.

Happy rest, yes, peaceful pleasure,
This sweet thought my soul doth bring.
There, where God with joy is gazing—
Gaze I, whilst to Him I cling.

Now my heart thus sweetly resting,
Has forgotten strife and pain,
Calms itself with peace of heaven—
Finds His glory all its gain.

There, my eye the Lamb beholding,
His deep love refreshes me:
In His hand my own is hidden;
Lord, my cup is filled by Thee!

Soon the Lamb's love shall be sounded
Loud in Zion's boundless shore;
And eternal shall the praise be,
In the glory evermore!

"WILT THOU BE MADE WHOLE?"

WHEN all the means which God had addressed to sinners for four thousand years, had failed in enabling them to leave their sinful condition; the Son of God came down from heaven, making no demand upon sinners, but to bestow upon them *eternal life*! The fault was not in the means God addressed to sinners; but the fault was that sinners could not use the means, and thus leave their sinful condition. For instance; the law was holy, just, and good, but it could not deliver the sinner. It found him a sinner, and told him not to be a sinner, and discovered his helpless state. There is nothing gives a poor bankrupt a keener sense of his ruin, than to demand a debt which he has not a farthing to meet. The very demand only gives him a keener sense of his misery.

Then, when the Son of God came down from heaven, He did not accuse sinners for not having life, or for not being able to get life; but that they would not come to Him that they might get it from Him. "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life," is His charge.

God might have swept away all sinners in righteousness, but this would have only shown that He is righteous. God is love! Nobody knew this fully but His Son—He shared the feelings of the Father's heart. "I'll go down," He says, as it were, "and I'll do Thy will—I'll tell the poor prodigals there below, that there is a home and a welcome for them in My Father's heart!" Hence, we find that when He comes, He says it is the *Father's* work—not merely the sinner's work—that He came to do. The Father's work was to remove the obstruction that hindered the love of God flowing out. That obstruction was SIN! God's Lamb comes from God's side to bear the inexorable judgment of a righteous God against sin, in order that God might be enabled to tell out all His mighty love to sinners, according to its own measure! He dies; and having put away sin, He rises again, and communicates life to the sinner. He does so by speaking words, in believing which they are saved. Those who receive His words pass from death to life—those who do not receive His words, He judges by and bye; and when He does, "no man living shall be justified."

Now, the Lord stands in one or other of these two relationships to every soul—to my reader, as his eyes scan

these words. Either as a Quickener or a Judge! What a momentous question then is this—"In which of these relations does He stand to me?"

As a Quickener, He works in company with the Father. God's rest had been broken up after He created the world by sin. He has never rested since. Sin made God a worker to put it away. Hence, the Lord says, (Jno. v. 17) "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The Father and the Son are working together to this end.

As a Judge, He is alone! "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." The Father has not been outraged and spit upon in this world—the Son has. He has not been executed as a malefactor—the Son has. Therefore all judgment has been committed to Him. In a certain sense the Father does judge; *while we are here*. In "*the time of our sojourning here*," we are the subjects of His scrutiny and judgment. (1 Peter i. 17). Final judgment he has committed to the Son. He "hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man." (Jno. v. 27). He executes this alone! Blessed to know He does not judge now; if He did, none would be saved. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Ps. cxliii. 2). People think the Judge of quick and dead will be corrupt, when they think to be let off when that solemn, appalling, inexorable judgment comes!

God presents His Son to us as the One who gives life to poor sinners. He does not charge them with not having life, or with not being able to get it; but He did not like that they should be lost, and He sent His Son to give them life. When we receive life from Him, we pass out of the condition to which His judgment applies; "from death unto life." Those who do not receive life from Him, He judges. The two things are as distinct as possible. He visits the world as One come to give life—dies and bears the sinner's judgment—removes the barrier that sin had made to hinder and check the love of God. Rises again and communicates life. Speaking words whereby sinners might be saved. "These things I say that ye might be saved."

Now, you cannot know Him in both these characters—a Saviour and a Judge. If I know him as a Saviour, I have escaped the judgment. If I must know Him as a Judge, I

shall never know Him as a Saviour. The time for salvation and grace will then have passed away for ever.

Here, then, is the wondrous blessedness and simplicity of grace, by which I may know with divine certainty, that I have *escaped* the judgment and *possess* the life. Not a *hope* of the life. I cannot, dare not hope that Christ spoke the truth. I cannot hope that He has come to die. I may, as a Christian, hope for grace every day, and for glory by and bye, but I cannot hope for life, for this would be to hope that Christ speaks the truth when He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." (Jno. v. 24).

In the beginning of Jno. v., we have a case which illustrates this blessed life giving work of the Son. A poor paralytic lay for 38 years at the Pool of Bethesda, waiting for strength to use the means which were there—the healing virtues of the waters. Jesus came to this poor man—not looking for strength in him. The remedy lay beside him, but he had no strength to avail himself of its healing power. The remedy was of no use, because he had no strength to avail himself of it. Like the law—if sinners could have used it—well. But sin had deprived them of righteousness, which it demanded, and of strength to use it. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." (Rom. viii. 3). The Law could only condemn the *sinner*. Grace comes in; God sends His Son a sacrifice for sin, and condemns the *sin*, and delivers the *sinner*!

Jesus comes to this poor man and says, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Not, "Have you strength?" but "Have you the desire?" It was not asking him to *do* anything; but, "Have you the desire to be made whole by another?" Now he *had* the desire; and even this is a great mercy. Many a sinner if asked had he the desire, really has no desire to be saved. There is no moral connection between them and heaven. If they were asked, would they go to heaven *now*—to-day? they would answer, No! The way they would like to go to heaven would be, to go to the good place in preference to the bad place when they die; but not now. No, they would *stay out of it as long as they can*,

that is the way they would go. Heaven is an atmosphere in which they are not at home. There is no desire in such for change. They are morally paralysed!

With this poor man there was the desire, and the Lord comes to him, and makes him feel his impotency—brings out the fact that to *will was present* with him; although, how to perform that which is good, he found not. "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming another steppeth down before me." It was not, "Sir, I am not able to get in;" but, "Sir, I have no man to put me in."

Now, there are many who look for strength in themselves to lay hold of Christ's work. They know his work is perfect, and the very thing they need, but they are searching within themselves for power to apply it to themselves. Searching if they have got the right kind of faith; or looking to feel it. They must learn that the work of Christ applies to the *ungodly* state of a sinner, and when he has no strength to avail himself of it. God applies the work of Christ to us when we are *without* strength. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. v. 6).

We find a soul in this state in Rom. vii. *There is* the desire for deliverance there; and that desire is perfect misery. It is not a desire to go to heaven—"to depart and to be with Christ"—but to be delivered from a body of sin and death. It passes through very deep exercises and discoveries. Useful ones too; till it learns, not only that there is no good in it, or even a hope of good; a much deeper thing than to learn, "I have sinned;" but a great deal of evil; and that it never can either deliver itself, or lay hold of Christ's work for deliverance. It discovers, at length, that it must have a deliverer—some one to pull it out of the mire. Suppose I am floundering in a deep ditch, every plunge putting me deeper, and some one comes and pulls me out; that is not pulling myself out, or saving myself. It is all the difference in the world between my working my own way out of a sinful condition, up to God; and God coming down to deliver me! *This is what Christ has done!*

Are there those whom I address who *have* a desire for change? The desire is present misery; yet it is a mercy the desire is there; they are not morally paralysed—dead.

If so, it is of God, and a real mercy. If you want to work for deliverance, it won't do. You would thus turn Christ out of a Saviour into a Judge. If I want to work, I deny Him as a Saviour; but if I have learned that He has come to work for me—to give life to the dead—to save the lost—I have passed from death to life!

If I have life from Him, I have learned Him as a Saviour, and He won't judge what He has done. To be sure, I must be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. But, how do I go there? Why, as the Judge Himself. He has come and fetched me there, so that I have "boldness in the day of judgment."

Fellow sinners—In what way do you know Him? As a Quickener or a Judge? Be assured of this, that you must know Him one way or other; you are without excuse. If you have received His words you have life—"you hath he quickened who were dead." "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." It has been applied to your souls now, and will be to your mortal bodies, by and bye. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." There is no confusion here. There is a life resurrection and a judgment resurrection.

Have you then received His words? If so, you have escaped the judgment. He does not judge His own quickening work in you—you have "passed from death unto life!"

THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES OF THE KINGDOM, &c.

THE Lord had told his disciples that the righteous should shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. This could not have been had there been no rejection. All the righteous would have been established in the Messiah's Kingdom on the earth. But the rejection and death of Jesus has had two consequences, (we do not say *only* two;) it necessarily brought judgment and vengeance upon the nation, it has also called into existence glories and positions of glory which otherwise could not have been. His own people having put it from them, the kingdom could not now be of this world.

The present heirs must have their position elsewhere; and according to the principles of divine grace, a better place than the one on earth is provided for them. When evil has come in and frustrated the grace of God, the blessing is never restored in precisely the same way. If God in His righteous government interferes to delay promised blessing, that which He gives in its stead always exceeds the first promise. The saint who has failed, when restored to communion with God, always enters into richer and fuller blessing, thus verifying the word that "where sin abounded grace did much more abound." If Abraham, at the call of God, left his home to wander, he knew not whither, was it not to possess a land flowing with milk and honey? If Job, when tried, endured the loss of all he valued, was he not afterwards abundantly recompensed? So here there were those who received the Messiah, but owing to the nation's rejection, the kingdom could not be set up. And another and a better thing is provided, a higher place than the earthly kingdom. They shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Here is a reward outside the world, and whether the field be purged or not, their position in the kingdom of their Father would be unchanged.

This leads the Lord Jesus to show how they are viewed while yet in this world: His estimate of them. They are a *treasure*. They are in contrast with the field as a whole, which is not a treasure. Once part and parcel of it—children of wrath even as others—but now separated, though as in the body still in it. The old connexion broken, and a new one subsisting between them and their Father, their place now is to witness to the grace that saved, and the power that keeps them, and to endure patiently and joyfully the hatred and persecution which necessarily follow. Accordingly it is with sole reference to the righteous that this parable is spoken.

I do not think that the "righteous" are confined to the church. It is the kingdom which is the prominent subject of this chapter, and all that are saved previous to the millennium, are included in the "righteous." Of course, the church is among them with a peculiar position. But here as righteous, the saints before Pentecost and those after, are viewed under the same aspect—they are a treasure; and there is a common aspect of their future glory; they shall shine as the sun. "The kingdom of the heavens is like

unto treasure hid in a field ; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." But in this parable it is evident that the kingdom of the heavens presents a very different aspect from that of the previous similitudes. How is this? Because, while the tree and the leaven are but manifestations of the tares sown in the field (ver. 25), the treasure and the pearl represent the good seed. These are pictures of the real heirs of the kingdom ; not of that nominal thing of the world, where although the true children of the kingdom are found, yet are they so *hidden* from view, that the only stamp given to the huge thing, is that of tares.

What a contrast! No power and dominion here. No putting forth of branches to form nests for the birds. Nothing here like affording protection and sheltering nations by its power. On the contrary, a treasure is that which demands and needs protection, a guard and keeper, that it may be secure from thieves. Nor is there anything like the energy of leaven permeating the mass. The prominent idea is the extreme desire of the man to possess the treasure he had discovered. The wondrous fact presented to us is not the value or greatness of those whom the Lord calls His treasure, but His love to it. This it is which most of all marks our portion in this world ; let what may happen, we are the objects of His special love here below.

There are three things in this parable—The treasure hid in the field, the purchase of the field in order to possess the treasure, and the immense cost. It is the picture of a man who converts all his property into ready cash, and spends the last farthing in buying the field. When we look at the reality under this similitude, how astounding it is. We know from the Lord's explanation (v. 38), the field is the world, the material world, not the present order of things as in v. 40 and 49 ; and the word here rendered field, is generally used for uncultivated, wild, and unproductive land. In this unpromising place a treasure is found. Jesus alone could discover it. Of course, we know that there could be no treasure here, any more than good ground in the first parable, without the Spirit of God first producing it. There is no question how it came there. It is simply a fact stated symbolically, that the Lord Jesus has a treasure in this world. If we turn to other scriptures, we learn that those who are now through wondrous grace a treasure, were in

nothing different from the surrounding mass. "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Nothing but grace has made us different from others, from what we *were*; and nothing but the preciousness of the sprinkled blood makes us a treasure. Yet, even to provide an atonement for us, is not enough for God. He will have us near Himself in this world, and accordingly His Holy Spirit is given to each to form us according to His will. And Christ's work for us, and the Spirit's work in us, are both necessary to make us what we are to Him. The Father loves and takes care of all. A sparrow falls not without His notice, even the lilies of the field are clothed by His care. The field at large partakes of His bounties; but the righteous alone are a treasure. I believe the church is specially, but not exclusively, in view, here. It is the kingdom including all the redeemed, not the peculiar privileges of the church as compared with other saints. The treasure is in contrast with the field; just as the wheat was with the tares. And if the field by and bye comes under the judgment of God, we know that no saint, whether of Old or New Testament times, will be judged. They all then must necessarily be of the treasure, and all are included in the name "righteous."

"Hid in a field." This gives no foundation whatever for the notion of an invisible church. It is the sin and shame of the church if it is invisible. There is not a word in scripture to show that God intended it. On the contrary, the proper position of the church is to be "the epistle of Christ, known and read of all men." An invisible church is the invention of men to enable the professing church to shake hands with the world. In point of fact, there is a sad failure of testimony on our part, and just so far as it lacks vigour, so does the line of separation between the church and the world become indistinct. In one sense the church was hidden, for it was never revealed till about to be established. It was God's purpose, but hid for ages in his unrevealed counsels. Now each saint is a light-bearer.

May it be our earnest care to have a clear bright light in the midst of the increasing darkness.

But this is a similitude of the kingdom as it now exists in mystery, and as a treasure it is hidden, it is not now manifested as such. That is, the condition of the righteous ones as forming the true kingdom here below, is one which does not show to men the reality and nature of it. That which man has made, is in some respects manifest enough. The idea of a great tree giving shelter to birds, or of three measures of meal completely leavened (I speak here of its developed presence, not of its hidden working), is quite inconsistent with secrecy. Neither could be a hidden thing. While that a treasure should be hidden, is just what we expect. And in fact, those who are now in the kingdom, are for the most part, the humble and poor, sometimes the persecuted and slain. That such are the representatives of the kingdom and a treasure to Christ, never occurs to the world. Men know that there are believers in Christ, and are shrewd enough to discern between a real believer and a mere professor, but that such should be a kingdom, such despised ones, is to them fanaticism and madness. Well, we do not wonder at it. The world walks by sight, and neither the royalty nor the glory are visible, and the heirs themselves appear much more like bond-slaves than kings. It is only when He appears that we shall be displayed in all the glory His grace has conferred upon us. At present, the real character and destination of the "treasure" is hidden. The world only sees a poor, despised, and down-trodden company (I refer not to those—alas too many—who walk with this world and enjoy its good things, but to those who, in the midst of scorn, endeavour to keep aloof from the world and its vain show). Jesus says they are His treasure. We are in the kingdom that shall never be moved. And we are there, not as subjects, but as kings and priests. Truly, mysteries of the kingdom. Jesus is gathering now out of this world, those who shall be heirs, not subjects of the future kingdom. He is gathering kings and priests. We shall reign with Him. As kings and priests the world does not recognize us, indeed cannot. Is it a marvel that the world knows us not? We have not yet put on our royal robes. We are despised, and many of our company have been wanderers in sheep-skins and goat-skins, tormented, concealed in dens and caves. Never-

theless, in the midst of all this distress, what a testimony the Spirit of God bears of those who have thus suffered—"of whom the world was not worthy" (see Heb. xi. 38). The world having no hope beyond this life, says of us—"of all men most miserable"—Jesus says, My hidden treasure!

That which the tree sets forth, is the exceeding publicity of the external worldly thing. The vile, shameless harlot clothed in scarlet, sits upon the beast, and challenges the glory of the world. The treasure for which the field is bought, is hid. It was for its sake alone that the field was bought. He could have it in no other way.

(To be continued, D. V.)

THOUGHTS ON CONSCIENCE.

CONSCIENCE, or the capacity of judging good and evil—in its primary exercises, may be considered as a natural faculty. God took care that man should possess it when he departed from God; and man on his part knows he has it. Scripture recognizes the fact, when distinguishing between Gentiles and Jews, in Rom. ii., "for when the Gentiles which have not the law,—do by nature the things contained in the law, . . . are a law unto themselves—their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the mean while, accusing or else excusing one another." In this state, mankind would have continued, had not God brought in light, for the conscience—partial light at first—but light suited to the position in which men stood with their Creator, and with one another; considered, moreover, as moral creatures. This light was introduced by the law—and the commandments, with which every one is familiar, advanced the range of conscience, according to what the Mosaic claims demanded.

This experiment of law was tried on the Israelites—the nation of which it is geographically written, "when the Most High separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." This nation, He put governmentally under law—and the effect of this standing, as distinct from all surrounding nations, was necessarily two-fold. Morally, as Jews in the flesh, this increase of light on natural conscience, is described in that well known chapter, Rom. vii., "the law is spiritual, but I

am carnal, sold under sin"—and again, "what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." What could increased light disclose, but this impotency to do the good which the conscience owned, and the enlightened mind desired to reach, but could not—and what must be the moral condition which would lead such a one to exclaim "O wretched man that *I am*, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." It is important at this stage to remember that light put into the hand, does not increase the physical strength of the man who holds it—and so the law of God might, and did lead many to say "the commandment is holy, just, and good"—but with this confession, "how to perform that which is good, I find not."

These are the *moral* results of the law upon the consciences of those under it—but we said they were two-fold. The other aspect is important, as connected with external conduct, and the government of God in the midst of Israel; but as this is historical, and manifest in the dispersion of that people on account of their disobedience, when Jehovah took them in hand, it needs no enlargement. The breakdown was complete—morally, as men under the law, they only gained the knowledge of indwelling sin—and governmentally as subjects, they were driven out of Canaan by their transgressions. "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." We may now pass on from the natural conscience of a Gentile, and from the enlightened one of the Jew, to the enquiry, what is conscience in a Christian? In answering this, it will be necessary to look at the state before God, in which the law left those who were under it, for a command to do a thing, or not to do it, brings no *moral power* for obedience—and this is an important consideration.

In effect, what could law be to a fallen creature, but condemnation—it detected the sin it forbade, and convicted the man in whom it dwelt as a transgressor, and left him under the curse. Death alone can justify the righteousness of the law given, or the government of God as regards the transgressor—unless there are reserves with God, which can meet the proved emergency, by introducing a Substitute and Sacrifice. It is at this point, when the fulness of the time was come, that God sent forth His Son. Redemption by the blood of Christ has been wrought out for the lost and undone, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the

law, being made a curse for us." Christianity comes in upon the accomplished work of Christ on the cross—where "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Here we find the elements of Christianity, and of faith towards God, through what His Son has done to separate the holiness of God from all question of sin, the curse, and the law.

The principle of *grace* is now established (instead of the law) as the new standing with God—and a Christian is a man who is saved freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. A believer's conscience, is therefore a conscience "purged by the blood." Another principle also finds its place and exercise, "the just shall live by *faith*"—so that we read of "holding faith, and a good conscience" as linked together in Christianity, in contrast with the law, and works of Judaism.

Once more as to the believer, he is not only purged from dead works to serve the living God, by the blood of Christ—but he gets the answer of a good conscience before God, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Thus we see the conscience of a Christian is a good one, not by the denial of sin committed, nor of indwelling sin; nor by an attempt to reach the good, which is not in him by nature—but by faith, in the sacrifice and death of Christ, who bore the penalties of disobedience in the judgment of God, which the blood satisfied. A Christian is not a man trying to improve his standing before God; how can he do this? "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father," forbids such a thought. He is a man who has the two essential elements of liberty brought to him—*life*, in a risen Christ, and *power*, by the indwelling spirit. A believer, therefore, made free from the law of sin and death; and free in conscience and heart, to worship in the holiest where God is; and where the Great High Priest has sprinkled the blood, draws near with boldness.

In the increasing discovery of what God is, and what Christ has been made of God to the believer, and what the Holy Ghost is that dwells in him, as the temple of God—such a one is called to the new employment of glorifying God "in his body, and in his spirit, which are God's." Moreover, the apostle who insists on our standing and security before God, and our fellowship with Christ—when taking us back

into the spheres of men and things, says if ye be *led of the Spirit*, ye are not under law. Another and a different power has taken possession of us: again, "this I say, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh" is our real liberty, and emancipation from evil. Such a man will take his place among men as before, but with a conscience of good and evil according to God, and learned in the sanctuary and its balances.

How different is a spirit-taught conscience—one exercised in the word, after the example of Christ: "The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned"—but *this* the law could not produce. On the contrary, it disclosed to man the humbling fact, that sin had sunk him below his own perception of good and evil—that "he was sold under sin."

Christianity reveals to a man the precious fact, that he is redeemed from the corruptions of his own nature, and from the consequences of transgression, by the cross of Christ—that he is a new creature, by being born again of the spirit—and by union with an ascended Christ, in life and righteousness by the Spirit of God. The conscience in such a one, must be elevated according to the ways of God in grace, and therefore, we find "as many as walk according to this rule, (the rules of a new creation) peace be on them." The Christ who is our life, will be the only example to those who possess life in Him by the Spirit.

Besides this, the light which was introduced by the law to show the man under it, that he could never use it as a title to life—gives place (now that we have life) to the light in which God has displayed Himself, and which He is; our communion with the Father and the Son, is in this light—where no darkness dwells. Light is no longer known as the detector of the causes of wretchedness, in a fallen nature—but as the revealer of what is perfect and unclouded—and we are by grace, where it is "if we walk in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Moreover, we are children of light, and are exhorted as those who are of the day to be "sober, putting on the breast plate of faith and love." Possessing a life which dwells in light, and displays itself in love, our moral elevation is according to the power which has made us this in Christ—we are carried beyond ourselves by the grace which has established us in this fellowship.

Whatever the law may have wrought in the enlightened conscience, we are very far beyond this, when we see that our new responsibilities run along on the line of our present relationship with the Father and the Son, by the Holy Ghost—as “sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life.”

In conclusion, we have seen that conscience in a natural man was confined within its own ranges and instincts—that conscience in a Jew was enlightened, and brought into a larger sphere where God had come in by law, and claimed the devoted love of the creature. Further, that conscience in a Christian, is altogether of another kind, because united to faith, and under the action of God's Spirit, which makes a believer one with Christ in a new nature. The man *himself* is changed; and as long as he lives in consistency with Christ, conscience can only approve. What has it to judge in a man who is led of the Spirit, and who walks in the Spirit? He may fall *below* his normal and practical condition, and disturb his conscience and compel it to judge him in his steps, upon moral questions of good and evil, which have become mingled in his daily life—but why? because he has sunk lower than conformity to Christ.

One reason why conscience has so much to do with us in our daily walk, is because the life we live in the flesh is not distinctly “by the faith of the Son of God.” When the developments of life in the power of the Holy Ghost are manifest, what can the outward expression be, but Christ? When he is not reproduced in the believer, conscience and the grieved Spirit will discover and judge the actings of the flesh, which hinder the springing up of life to the proper height of its fellowship in the light—or the outflowing of life in its true devotedness to Christ—and for Christ's sake, to those in the darkness. Where all is dead practically in us that has been judicially dealt with in Christ's death, and kept under the power of death, life is free to develop itself in what is proper to it and according to God. Life in us is then realised to be what Jesus said, “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. B.

NOTES OF READINGS ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

IN the epistle before us we find the grand and systematic statement of the Spirit of God as to the ground of the relationship, and the manner in which a sinner, saved and justified, is brought to God in Christ. Necessarily, then, before entering into the work of Christ, and action of God in justifying the sinner, and bringing him to Himself, it examines the state of the sinner in God's eye, whom He is about to justify.

The epistle divides itself in the following manner:—Chap. i. 1-17 is a preface, in which the apostle tells us the nature and character of the Gospel, and his desires towards the saints at Rome. The Gospel is the gospel of God—the good tidings of what He is Himself—His power in salvation to every one who believes. It is the righteousness of God, when man had been proved to have no righteousness of his own. God, in the free acting of His grace and love, was righteously consistent with Himself; not compromising His nature in any wise, in justifying the ungodly, and bringing him to Himself in the Son of His love.

Verse 18 is complete in itself. It tells that the wrath of God is revealed *from heaven*—not now in temporary and partial judgments *on earth*, as known to the Jew, such as the deluge, judgments on Egypt, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, &c. (see Luke xiii. 1-5). It is now revealed from heaven on “all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;” *i.e.*, Gentiles, “Who hold the truth in unrighteousness;” *i.e.*, the Jew more especially, but in principle it holds good towards all. It affords the thesis, or subject matter of, from verse 19 to 20th verse of chapter iii. In this division he shows how this wrath of God was deserved and earned by all men, Jew, Philosopher, and Gentile. Mark this, the wrath is only “revealed,” not yet manifested.

In the close of chap. iii., from 21st verse, the apostle shows how God had met this state of things in His own righteousness, in virtue of the death and blood shedding of Christ. Justifying freely in His grace those who believed in Jesus. Presenting this righteousness “unto all;” this is its *aspect*. Then its *effect* “upon all” that believe. The question of *sins* is taken up from this point to chap. v. 11, the true character of Christian faith, *i.e.* in a God of resurrection, who had

raised up His Son, "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." Righteousness was by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

From chap. v. 12, to the end of chap. viii. the question of "sin" (a sinful state, or condition: a nature) is the subject.

Then the second grand division of the epistle commences chapters ix.-xi. Here he is reconciling the doctrine of "no difference;" sin having obliterated all distinction between a Jew and a Gentile, with the fulfilment of the special and *unconditional* promises made to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to David, &c.

The third marked division is from chap. xii. to the close of the epistle. This is occupied in practical details founded on the previous teaching.

We will now look more into the details. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, speaks of himself, in the first verse, in two characters. A "called apostle"—(omit the words "to be" in verses 1-9). His calling was that of an apostle, as the calling of those in verse 9 was that of saints; they were saints by the calling of God. He was also "separated unto the gospel of God." The historic account of the first you get in Acts ix. That of the second in Acts xiii., when the Holy Ghost said "Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them." God had separated him from his mother's womb, &c., as well (Gal. i.); but this separation to the gospel was a definite thing in Acts xiii.

Here let me say a little as to the course of events which led to the moment when the gospel of God was communicated to Paul; and this remarkable vessel called of God, to be its pattern and exponent.

We know something of the history of God's varied trial of man, as recorded in scripture, from the garden of Eden to the ninth chapter of Acts. During this time He tested man in various ways, to see if by any means he was recoverable from the state of sin into which the fall had plunged him. Before the flood He left man to himself; preserving a line of witnesses throughout. The result of this was that He filled the earth with corruption and violence (Gen. vi.); and God swept the whole away by the waters of the flood. Noah found grace in His sight, and himself and his family were reprieved out of this judgment, and the earth was re-peopled in his family. Men gave themselves up to idolatry after this judgment; the man in whose hands the government of the earth

was placed (Noah) having failed. The knowledge of the one true God seemed lost. God then chose one man, Abram, to be His witness, and in him the nation of Israel that sprang from him. They were to be His witnesses in the midst of an idolatrous world. This nation, after centuries of bondage, are redeemed, and brought out of Egypt, that the Lord might dwell amongst them. (Exodus xxix.) Under *grace*, from the time of their redemption till the 19th chap. of Exodus, they take upon themselves the keeping of the *law*, saying, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do." Accepting the law as the conditions of their relationship with the Lord. They break it ere it was received through the law-giver; bow down and worship the golden calf, and fail. (Exod. xxxii.) The Lord then gave them the priesthood. As soon as the priests are consecrated they offer strange fire before the Lord (Num. xi.) Israel is, at last, brought into the land of Canaan, and established with a mighty hand. But here again they fail—sinking down to serve the gods of the nations that were there before them. (See the Book of Judges.) He then sends prophets to recal them to the observance of the law, and them they stoned. Last of all God sends His Son, saying "They will reverence my son when they see him." You know how He was treated. They cast Him out, and crucified Him. On the Cross, in the surpassing grace of His heart, He prays for His murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they *know not* what they do." This special grace is answered in the opening of the Acts of the Apostles. Peter, by the Holy Ghost come down at Pentecost, says—"And now, brethren, I wot that through *ignorance* ye did it, as did also your rulers." And he calls upon them to repent, and God would send back Jesus (Acts iii. 19-21), their slain Messiah, and establish the kingdom they had before refused. He gives them thus another trial—the offer of the Holy Ghost that Jesus would return. The answer to this proposal we find in Acts vii. where Stephen is stoned. This act sums up the guilt of man under trial for 4000 years. Stephen, in a few words, sums up the history of God's patient trial of man in the peculiar and special culture of the nation of Israel. "Ye stiff necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have re-

ceived the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." Thus, a broken law, slain prophets, a murdered Christ, and a resisted Spirit, give us the result of God's trial of man! Sin had risen to its appalling height in crucifying the Son of God. His grace had risen higher and higher till it superabounded in the offers of mercy, rising triumphantly over the sin; and the grace of God, as far as having a response in man's sinful heart, is exhausted.

At this moment there was a man standing in the crowd which was thus sending a message after the rejected Christ—saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." This man was the expression of the hatred of man's natural heart under a religious character, to God and good. His heart was filled with a quiet determined purpose against that blessed name. That purpose was to wipe out the name of Jesus if he could from the face of the earth! The daring rebellion of this man—this chief of sinners—against the testimony of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, witnessing the exaltation of the despised Jesus of Nazareth, had reached its culminating point. We read of him "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." "Being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." At this moment a light shines out of the highest heaven on him, from the face of Jesus Christ in glory, and envelopes this man: stops him in his career of madness. The God of all grace asserts the Potter's right with this chief of sinners, to make of him a "chosen vessel" unto Himself. His mouth is closed for ever after with the riches of the grace, of which he was the exponent and expression. Sin had come to its culminating point, and the grace of the living God—unsought for by this man—claimed him as its own! It was to him that the richest unfolding of the gospel of God is announced in all its fulness.

But to return. He says, "separated unto the gospel of God." This definitely took place in Acts xiii. 2, when "the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

Here too we may notice, that everything, as the gospel itself, comes from God's side. It is "the gospel of God," "the power of God," "the wrath of God," "the judgment of God," "the righteousness of God," "the wrath of God," "the glory of God," &c. This gospel had been promised before, but it had not come. The subject of it was Jesus—David's

son according to the flesh—but God's own Son in power, by resurrection of the dead. If we leave out "the" in verse 4, before "resurrection," it gives the sense more accurately. Jesus is declared Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness which characterized Him in life—and by resurrection, whether His own or of the dead (Lazarus &c.), whom He raised.

SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

"J. K. M."—If it be true that the Holy Ghost was not given to dwell in the bodies of believers, to unite them to Christ in Old Testament days; and that the personal presence of the Spirit in man after Pentecost, was a new thing previously unexampled in the word and ways of God; what is the meaning of Isaiah lxiii. 10-11, "His Holy Spirit within him;" also 1 Pet. i. 11, "The Spirit of Christ which was in them?"

A:—Everything good that ever was wrought from the creation of the world, was done by the power of the Holy Ghost. He moved upon the face of the waters in the Creation. By Him, souls were new-born. He inspired the prophets to write, or to speak God's mind. Bezaleel was filled with the Spirit of God, to prepare the Tabernacle, Ark, Vessels, &c. (Exodus xxxi. 3.) David was instructed by the Spirit of God in preparing the pattern of the Temple for Solomon. (1 Chron. xxviii. 12-19.) The saints were guided and instructed by Him. David prayed that the Holy Ghost might not thus be taken from him. (Ps. li. 11.) Noah preached righteousness by the Spirit of Christ. John Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. To multiply instances is unnecessary. Still all this is far from *dwelling* in them.

The statement in John vii. 39, cuts in a clean line between the saints before the Lord's glorification, and since that time. Had the Holy Ghost been given then, God would have been sealing souls in a state short of the consciousness of redemption; and thus accrediting such a state. Consciences were unpurged then, (although God was known in grace;) and the Holy Ghost could not have sealed and accredited such a state. When the work of redemption was accomplished, and the soul thus introduced into the liberty of grace, the Spirit of God could then take up His abode and

dwell in the body of the believer, as a seal of the perfection of Christ's work. We see this clearly brought out in type, in the case of the consecration of the Priests. The High Priest was anointed with oil, (the Holy Ghost in type,) without sacrifice; this was typical of the perfection of Christ's person; the Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape like a dove upon Him. The Priests, Aaron's sons, were anointed after sacrifices; this was a figure of the perfection of Christ's work in which they stood. Habits of thought have confounded the state of the Saints before the day of Pentecost, with those since that time. Alas! too, souls are not free—they are not enjoying the liberty of grace which the Holy Ghost ministers to them now; and consequently they accept a state short of christian liberty before God. They limit their experience to that of a godly Jew, under law, before redemption. They have almost come to the state of the men of Ephesus in Acts xix.: "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost:" *i.e.*, whether He was come yet or not. Nothing can be clearer than the line drawn by the Spirit of God in John vii. 39, between believers before the glorification of Christ, and since that time. Before that time all that was ever done in or by a saint, prophet, or otherwise, was by the power of the Spirit acting in the vessel for the time. Now He *dwells* in the body of the believer, as in a temple, (1 Cor. vi. 19) seals him, having believed, (Eph. i. 14) until the day of redemption. (Eph. iv. 30.) He may grieve the Spirit of God, but he never can lose Him. Besides all this, it was an action of the Holy Ghost, in whatever way it took place, in the Old Testament times. This is a different thing from His descending personally from heaven on the day of Pentecost, and dwelling amongst men. His person and presence upon earth is as distinct as that of the Lord Jesus when here. *In* the believer individually, and *in* the church corporately. The Lord's promise of the Comforter—the Holy Ghost, was that He would not only be *with* them, (not for a limited time, as Christ had been;) but in them as well; and that, "for ever." To this end it was expedient that He should go away. If He went not away, the Comforter would not come. (John xvi. 7.) The passages you quote have reference to the action of the Holy Ghost in the vessel, whether of a prophet, or otherwise, at the time.

THE THREE SUPPERS.

1.—“The Great Supper.” (Luke xiv. 15-24.)

IN blessed contrast to the heart of man, so full of self-interest and self-exaltation, the Lord Jesus in this passage unfolds to us *the heart of God*.

One of those who sat at meat, on hearing of “the feast,” and “the resurrection of the just,” exclaims, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” The Lord Jesus, in reply, tells them of *One* who even now had spread a great supper, at which all who desired might partake. It cost Him dear to be able to announce such a feast; yea, even the blood of His own Son! That sinless, perfect One, had even to “taste death” and judgment, before that great supper could be spread. He died: He rose: He ascended to heaven—thus accomplishing a work which satisfied every claim of God’s righteousness against sin. God’s love can thus freely send forth and say, “Come, for all things are now ready.”

Until now the best robe could not be presented to the prodigal, for God’s righteousness was not vindicated until the Cross. Until now the shoes (comfort for the travel-worn pilgrim’s feet) could not be given him, till purchased by the death of Jesus. Nor could the ring, until now, be put on his hand, nor the fatted calf partaken of; for the veil must be rent, that the prodigal might be called into fellowship with the Father and the Son. The veil was not rent until atonement was accomplished. But now “all things are ready.” The Father’s loving hand has all prepared that His heart had planned, and the Holy Ghost has come forth with the summons, “Come,” “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek,” to those “in the field,” and then to those in “the far country.”

Dear reader, how are you treating the summons of Him who has spread the feast? Do you say in acts, if it be not in words, “My earthly things, my fields, my house, my shop, are too engrossing. I have no time to think of God’s invitation or of the blessings He has prepared for those who come.” Surely you will not say, with another, “my attention is so taken up with the skilfulness with which I conduct my business, the efficiency of my operatives, the first-class character of my workmen, who cannot do without their master’s eye, that God’s invitation has no charms for me.” Or do

you take the place of the one who says, that natural affection so engages my heart—family ties that I cannot think of breaking in upon, so engross me with their pressing interests that I have not even a moment to think of Him who beseeches me. Ah! dear reader, do not let Satan persuade you to be so foolish as to reject God's invitation for the poor toys with which he beguiles and keeps you from seeking first "the treasure which faileth not."

But the rejection of His ambassage only draws forth the greater earnestness on the part of the provider of the feast, that every seat should be filled. "The poor of the flock" (v. 21) are now His care, like the Samaritan woman of John iv., and those of her city. Ah! there was no refusal there. The sense of need is met by the sense of pardon and joy in the Holy Ghost.

But yet "there is room." The poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind (v. 21) are brought in to be made a "royal priesthood," (comp. Lev. xxi. 16-21), and have taken their place at the bountiful board.

Now comes this invitation to us, poor "sinners of the Gentiles," and it is not merely "go out and *bring*," but "go out and *compel*." Note the anxiety of the Father's heart to embrace "sons." He is not content to have His ten thousands of angels to do His bidding. Nothing will satisfy His love but to bring "many *sons* to glory!" Surely, therefore, none can say, "there is no invitation for me." "Them" includes every inmate of the highways and hedges; every stray sheep; every lost piece of money; every prodigal. Take a prodigal's place then, lost, helpless, and rest in this finished work of Jesus. Rest in Him who is the expression of His Father's love; in Him "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." "All things," then, are yours. You *have* the pardon of your sins; the present possession of eternal life. You are already brought into the presence of the One whom you can, by the Spirit, call "Abba Father." You are at home and graced before Him, and in the light, and joy, and blessedness of communion with Himself and with His Son you have the fulness of joy. (1 John i. 3, 4.)

2.—"The Marriage Supper of the Lamb." Rev. xix. 1-10.

So far for your present possession—thus far the supper of Luke xiv. Now let us turn to another scene. Not, as we may say, the supper of *grace*, but the supper of *glory*. Not

the supper that we enjoy now, blessed as that is, but that which we shall enjoy when we shall see Him face to face, and know even as we are known. *That* is the Father's repast prepared for the poor prodigal. *This* is the banquet spread for those who share the bridal glory of the *Lamb*. The supper is a different one, but the guests are *the same*. They had once sat down, at the time of conversion, at the feast of grace on which we have dwelt. When their pilgrim days are done they shall enjoy the marriage supper of the Lamb. "Espoused" we are now—(2 Cor. xi. 2.)—"presented"—(Eph. v. 27)—we shall be *then*. With Him where He is; beholding His glory! What a scene of praise it is! "Every voice," the "much people," "the four-and-twenty elders," "the four beasts," and "the great multitude" have but the one cry, "Alleluia!" The bridegroom has come, "the wise" have gone "in with Him to the marriage," and the marriage supper is spread, and surely then the wife's enjoyment will reach its climax, for she will be in the immediate presence of her Lord!

Dear reader, can you say "I have a perfect title to sit down with Him there—I read it in His precious blood?"

3.—"The Great Supper of God." (Rev. xix. 11-21.)

I must now ask you to turn with me to another scene, and read of another supper; not that of the Father for His prodigal children, nor that of the Lamb for His chosen bride, but "the great supper of God." A solemn scene of judgment for those who have not taken their place at the other. God gives instantaneous reception to the first supper to all who receive His testimony concerning His Son. But His righteousness demands the everlasting destruction of all "who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and therefore we find in 2 Thes. i. 6, that it is a *righteous* thing with God to recompense tribulation to them who trouble His people, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them who know not God; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power when He shall come." And thus we find the Lamb, of whose supper we have spoken, coming in Rev. xix. 11, in *righteousness* to judge and make war; indignation in His look, the emblem of universal dominion on His brow, His very raiment indicating vengeance.

Ah! poor fellow sinner beware of the fate of the elder brother of Luke xv. The Father's utmost entreaties fail in softening his heart; he remains outside though the Father has repeatedly pressed the invitation on him. What then is the result to those who refuse His invitation? They become the victims of the righteous judgment of Him whom they have rejected; and, finally, the occupants of the place of torment, where they seek in vain for a drop of water to cool their tongue. (Luke xvi. 24.)

The judgment of all flesh, of Rev. xix. 21, will be followed by the judgment of the raised and wicked dead of Rev. xx. 11-15, and throughout eternity a part in the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone, which is the second death. The part of thousands who have heard and refused the invitation to the Father's supper, who allowed "the god of this world to blind their minds, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. iv. 4.)

Dear reader, have you taken your place at the great supper of the grace of God? or is this to be your fate? D. T. G.

THOUGHTS ON THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

THE history of man by nature begins with his birth, and ends with his death. Joy and festivity flow from his birth; amid the tears of his friends his history closes here. The history of Lazarus, as presented in this chapter, is the reverse of all this. Commencing with his sickness and death it ends with his life in resurrection. At the beginning of the chapter his sisters are distressed at his sickness, and weep for his death, at the close he is with them alive from the dead, and the cause of their sorrow removed.

A picture then we have of resurrection. Death, the end of man's existence here, is not the end of man. That door which no mere human power can open, and which, when once it closes on its victim, seems to enclose him within its portals for ever, can be pushed back, and man be set free from the grasp of death. There is a power superior to death, there is a voice which can be heard in the grave. The child of God can look forward to life beyond death, resurrection from the dead, and the closest personal communion with his Lord. Lazarus died and was buried, but he came forth from the grave, and sat at meat with Jesus in his own house. So

will the sleeping saints one day rise and drink with their Lord the wine new in the Father's Kingdom. But, whilst we trace in the history of Lazarus the outlines of resurrection, we must remember the great difference between that of Lazarus and the hope of the sleeping saints. He came back from the grave, they will rise from it. He returned to earth, they will ascend to Heaven. He died again, they will live to die no more. So, whilst an illustration of resurrection from the dead, as living again on earth, we may see here pictured the future resurrection of the people of Israel. They will be called nationally out of their graves, the dead bones be united bone to his bone, and the nation be resuscitated at the word of the Lord. But more is met with than all this, for this history is intended in harmony with the rest of the Gospel to teach us what the Lord Jesus is, and can be, to His own ; that whilst He is absent from us, we should be able to reckon on Him for all that we need. His person, His heart, His power are all three exhibited in this chapter, that His people may learn to confide in Him as one who has gauged the full measure of their sorrows, and is not only able but willing to enter into them.

Perfect Man, as well as Son of God He is. The perfection of His manhood He manifested to the disciples beyond Jordan, the reality of His Godhead He announced to Martha outside the village of Bethany. The messages of the sisters moved Him not to go to Bethany, because He thought first of God's glory ; the death of Lazarus decided Him to go there, because the time for God's glory to be displayed had drawn near. "This sickness is not unto death (*i.e.*, death is not the ultimate object of it) but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." This was a new view of death, which He, who is the resurrection, first brought forward. In death, the consequence of man's sin, the enemy seemed to have triumphed completely. Through death, the act of God in Government towards His sinful creatures, His Son should be glorified. What an answer at once to the oft put question, Why did God allow sin to enter the world ? He might have prevented it, and so manifested His power ; He allowed it to enter that He might display His glory. But how ? Would He triumph over the creature He had made, who is crushed before the moth ? He will be glorified, not by consigning man to the grave, but by displaying to all the universe that He can righteously raise up His saints from it.

What glory will surely accrue to Him on the resurrection morning when all His saints who have died—the evidences of the devil's successful machinations against Adam and Eve—shall arise from the grave to die no more—the witnesses to all creation of the perfection of the work of His Son! To be faithful to His Word, death must be the lot of man as such; to be faithful to His Son, resurrection must be the everlasting portion of His saints. It was to all appearance a great achievement on the part of Satan to make God pronounce sentence on those he had drawn into sin; but the glory of God was displayed, when resurrection from the dead could be righteously proclaimed as the sure expectation of those who were subject to death. To set this forth the Lord re-entered Judea, and advanced to the confines of Bethany.

Met by Martha outside the village, He stands to proclaim the reality of His Godhead. Knowing something of Him, but not fully confiding in Him, she expresses confidence as to the result of His prayers. Had she really trusted Him, she would have left Him to act as He would without indicating a line to be pursued. He teaches her, and by her us also, who and what He is. True it is that whatever He asked He would receive. But she has to learn that in Himself, as He stood before her, was all Lazarus wanted. He was, He is the resurrection and the life, the resurrection for all believers who die, the life for all saints who shall be living on the earth when He comes. "I am the resurrection and the life." Martha looked for the resurrection at the last day. He who stood before her was it. Where He was present there was the resurrection. It was not a period of time that needed to elapse ere the dead could rise again, His power, His presence were the requisites; and, when He returns and puts forth His power, this will be gloriously exemplified. But He spake of something new. He intimated what till then had not been the hope of God's saints—resurrection from the dead. For He here speaks only of what concerns God's children, whilst Martha spoke of what is common to all. "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." To Satan was it permitted to wield the power of death. To the Son of God belongs the power of recovery and preservation from it, but only for those who believe on Him. By Martha all this though heard was not understood. Each time the Lord

spoke to her she fell short of the truth, He would teach her; and at last she called her sister Mary, saying, "The teacher is come, and calleth for thee." Did she think that Mary would enter more fully into His meaning? That she had not penetrated it was clear, for at the grave she almost remonstrated with Him for commanding the stone to be removed. "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days." What mattered corruption of the body in the presence of Him who could raise it, for of the body, not of the salvation of the soul, does He in this history speak.

With Mary we have something further about the Lord unfolded. She, like Martha, accosted Him with the words, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." But unlike Martha she fell down at His feet, and added no more. Surrounded by Jews who had come from Jerusalem to comfort them, Mary, as Martha had done, left them all for Jesus. They could condole with her, but they could not help her. What a picture is this of the emptiness of mere human consolation. Something more is wanted which Jesus only can supply. She turned, therefore, from the whole company of the Jews to the One who was still outside the village. He could comfort, and He could help; and He could show it. Man, in the folly of his heart, thinks it unmanly to weep. He who is Son of God would show He could weep with those who weep. "Jesus wept." He wept, but not because Lazarus was dead, for He was about to raise him up. He wept, surely, as He witnessed the sorrow sin had brought into the world. "He wept." The Jews beheld it, and said, "See how He loved him." He wept really for the living who sorrowed, and not for the dead who rested; and all present were permitted to see Him weeping, that when absent from earth, as He shortly would be, His people should count on His sympathy when in circumstances of bereavement like these two sisters. But He did more. What no human ear could hear, that God heard, and the pen of inspiration has recorded it, He groaned in spirit. He manifested before men how fully He could sympathise with His people in sorrow; but He entered into all its depths, and bore it on His heart before God. Not sin, that He bore on the cross; not anticipation of His approaching death, that He went through in Gethsemane; but the full sense of the sorrows sin had caused, and entailed on the children of Adam. Entering into them all, as none before Him could,

He wept before the Jews, and groaned in spirit before God. Upholding all things by the word of His power, He could yet be occupied with the sorrows of two of His people, and so enter into them as to bear the whole weight of them before God. Many around them were weeping, but surely the tears He shed consoled Mary and Martha more richly than all the attention and sorrow, however real, of their friends.* The Jews and the sisters bewailed their loss. Jesus shed tears, and so manifested how really He felt for them. His heart was discovered to the sisters that day. And blessed be His name, with Him is no change. What He was He is still—

“Who, in each sorrow, bears a part
Which none can bear below.”

From the entrance of the village to the grave of Lazarus they all proceeded, and there He took His place at the grave's mouth as God. Weeping as man, He could command as God. At His Word they removed the stone, but Lazarus stirred not. All outward impediments to His leaving the grave were rolled away, yet he remained within. Man had done all he could, but Lazarus needed something more. He needed what none but the Lord could do for him—impart life to the dead body: and here something fresh meets us. The stone rolled away, language of thanksgiving was heard as they stood round the grave's mouth. This was surely something new in the world's history. How often, however, since has thanksgiving been mingled with weeping at the funeral of a believer. The Lord gave thanks that He had been heard of the Father, for the consequence would be the immediate resurrection of Lazarus. We give thanks in the knowledge of resurrection from the dead, and for the revelation of the condition till then of all the saints who sleep through Jesus. But, how fitting was it that from Him, who is the Resurrection and the Life, by whose atoning work His people will be raised up from the grave, such language should first proceed.

Sleeping still in the cave, though the stone was rolled away, Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with

* Of the sisters and their friends we read, *κλαίοντες*, of the Lord *ἐδάκρυεν*. Once do we read of Jesus *ἐκλαυσε*, when He bewailed the fate of Jerusalem. Luke xix. 41.

grave-clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin." Till Jesus cried Lazarus was dead. When He cried life returned, and no impediment could hinder its full action, for with his grave-clothes still around him he came out of the cave, and took his place once more among the living. It was no vision. They saw him, they could handle him, they all saw him free from the garments of the tomb. The power of the Lord was exerted, and he was free. For the living and for the dead the Lord was needed. The sisters could learn what He was to them in their sorrow. Lazarus proved what He could be to him who was dead. And this history meets our condition likewise. We may see what in bereavement He can be, or, if entering into death, what He will do. Whilst living His sympathies we may often want, if we die His power we shall need to prove. He will not fail His people in sorrow, He cannot leave any of His members one moment longer than the appointed time in the grave. —C. E. S.

GUIDANCE.

I BELIEVE there is nothing that Christians are so wanting in as having the Lord's guidance and leading in the minute as well as the important details of life. "I will guide thee with mine eye" is the normal condition. The "horse" or the "mule," which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, is more frequently the case with most of us. We need the "bit and bridle" of circumstances, to force us into the path and action which is according to His mind; we have it more frequently than the guidance of His eye. It won't do to say, "What would Christ do in such and such circumstances? How would He act?" This won't do. Because more than likely He never would have been found in such and such circumstances. I may have brought myself into a position by a train of circumstances which it took years to bring about, and in which Christ never would have been found. This is, therefore, no rule. If we were always morally in the course of things as ordered of God, this might do. But who is there? Who has ever walked so as to have this place constantly before Him? Christ is our life. The Holy Ghost dwells in us in power. To "walk in the Spirit;" to be "led of the Spirit," is the normal condition of the Christian who has Christ for his life. But to enjoy

this, and use it, we must have Christ continually before the eye. That One in whom "self" was forgotten. His life was one of obedience when tested to the uttermost. His course was one in which everything was brought to bear against Him, and there never was found one single disposition to shrink from that which His Father willed. He not only delighted to do His will; but bowed in meekness and submission to the Father's will, when found in a path of rejection and reproach. But not only this—His life, in all its motives, went up as a sweet savour to God. God—His Father—was the spring of all. He lived because of (on account of) the Father. (John vi. 57). Even when loving and giving himself for us, it was "an offering and sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour." (Eph. v. 2).

How then are we to have that guidance we so much need? I believe there is one very simple and healthful test, which will be found of much value when we seek to know His mind in any course or difficulty. We cannot say, "I would like to do as Christ would;" because He might never be in the circumstances. It is to search our hearts before Him—in the secret of His presence—with the question, "What is my motive in this course? Is it *self*, or *Christ*?" Paul gives this as a divine spring of all our actions—"The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). The dying, suffering, mighty, everlasting love of Christ, constrains the new man, to live to Him who is alive and was dead. Not to *self*, but to *Christ*. Self is unrecognised, ignored, refused. The motive, the spring, and governing action of the whole moral being is "Christ." A useful question then is—"Is this self, or Christ?" "What is it that governs the desire?" Is it a living Christ that controls, constrains a nature which loves to be controlled and constrained? binding a heart with the unutterable love which poured out His soul unto death, to give expression to what was behind?

I believe if there is a true searching of the heart thus as to the motives which influence it in a certain course, it will be found that self is more prominent than we would like to acknowledge even to ourselves. But it will be found too that at times (should it not be a normal state?) the desire

is really of the Lord; when we walk near Him, outside self, this will be ever so. There is no hesitation then, or doubt on the soul, as to the course. The thought and desire is suggested by the Spirit of God, and in harmony with the will of the Lord. Conscience and heart approve. Self is not the governing power. At times, however, self is there, and the heart has to decide as to where the motive has sprung. Self is refused; and it is felt as really denial of self for Christ. Faith is tried in these cases, too; and when there is decision for Him, and self is denied, the soul is invigorated by the consciousness that "Christ," not self, was really the motive which governed the heart; and this is its own deepest joy.

There are cases when we feel compelled to act, and when the necessity for action is right; but when there is not that seeking Him to know how we should act, we find ourselves in the course of action, and then we seek that guidance as to detail, which we know we need: perhaps the circumstances arousing the heart more fully into action before the Lord, who so orders that we may learn our want of dependence in the first instance. By failure and defeat we are brought to look at the spring, and seek the guidance as to the root of things which should have been had in the starting—then all goes well, and we are afraid to trust to ourselves—the Lord's will is the governing spring of all.

Israel, in Judges xx., illustrates this. There was a sin to be dealt with, and conscience is righteously aroused into action. They do *not* ask the Lord at starting how the thing is to be met. When they were in the midst of action *then* they ask counsel as to details—(ver. 18)—"Which of us shall go up first?" The Lord answers, and they are discomfited twice. There is failure when they expected to have victory. Then they come to the root of the matter and enquire *if* they shall go up, or if they shall cease?—(ver. 23). This is what should have been the root of the matter in seeking guidance; but they were not near the Lord. How often have we to learn thus!

I think Romans xiv. 7-12, very important as to this living to *self* or *Christ*. We shall have to give an account to God as to it by and bye. The motives that actuated us here, (self or Christ), will come out then. How blessed then to be enabled ever to give a *divine reason why*, for all our actions.

The great secret of all is living closely to the Lord—the soul constantly in His presence. When there is this habitual

turning of the heart to Him at all times—the habit of referring everything to Him. It comes from a sense of distrust in oneself—“no confidence in the flesh.” The heart thus expresses its dependence upon Him, and it is guided and kept in such a divine sense of being directed of the Lord that nothing can equal. Trifling circumstances, which on other occasions would seem too minute for a thought, are found to be the indications of a guiding hand, which the heart, while it adores Him for them, dare not even allude to, to another. It feels that they had passed between the Lord and itself, and that it was for oneself alone—another could not appreciate it. Circumstances then in His hand, establish the heart, and confirm the conscious leading one has had from him. A letter is received confirming what had been laid upon the heart previously, and the event is felt to be the delicate touch of One who guides and cares for us.

I do not think circumstances are the best thing however. There are times when one has gathered the Lord's mind in such a way that it must go on without a sign of any kind. Faith is thus tried and drawn out more distinctly to count upon Him.

Paul fails in making good the dissension about the Law at Antioch. (Acts xv). He, Barnabas and others, go up to Jerusalem about the question, being sent by the others. Here was plainly an outward guidance; quite unmistakeable. Yet when we come to read Galatians ii., we find he had had a revelation about it from the Lord. Here there was the Lord's gracious guidance to His servant, confirmed by the pressure of circumstances through others. This case is plain: yet how sweet to find ourselves in His gracious hands. How blessed to live near Him—the heart peremptory with itself in refusing that which it knows would interrupt this intimacy. How sad to see the case of a Saul. (1st Sam. xiv. 18, 19, 37). The energy of flesh bent upon its own way, and with the outward form of seeking the counsel of One whom he only sought as far as it would minister to self, and his own importance. On the other hand, how sweet to see a Nehemiah—one whose heart habitually turned to God at all times. (Neh. ii. 4, &c.) “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and He shall direct thy paths,” (Prov. iii. 5, 6), is a healthy counsel. One who does so habitually, learns, in the little things of life, a guidance as unerring and

distinct, as if His voice spake to one's soul; and finds the truth of that guidance as plainly indicated by things in themselves trifling; and yet, when used by Him, are the unmis-takeable indications from Him to us, which the heart understands as passing between the Lord and itself, for the loss of which nothing could compensate.

WHAT CHRIST EFFECTS FOR US.

Jno. I. 29-39.

IN the first chapter of John's gospel, we have an account of whom Jesus Christ is. John brings Christ down here—He displays God upon earth. We learn in the chapter not only whom He is, but an intimation of what He effects; now, (v. 29-42) and in the future. (v. 43-51.) It is important for us to know *what He effects for us*; if we have not some idea of what He proposes, we do not seek for it.

Reader, what is it you are looking for, in the secret of your heart? Of what nature, I ask, is the deliverance you are seeking? Satan knows better than you what you want; and hence we read, as to the way of corruption that is in the world, "Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them." (Prov. v. 6.) Souls have not retired into the secret of God's presence, and pondered there, "What does God propose to do for me?" Hence we find that souls are not seeking what God proposes to accomplish; and there is defective practice. It is not that souls are *enjoying* the extent and scope of what His purposes are to accomplish—who *does* enjoy this, according to its height? but they have not glimpsed at it; and they are reducing it to the sense of their own mind. When we have tasted it in the fullest measure, we then find how meagre are the thoughts we have about it.

John Baptist points out Christ as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." This is whom He is. Then we find what He does, next, He "baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Then again, there are two witnesses as to what He effects for others. "The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus."

Is the eye of your soul arrested as you hear the announcement, "Behold the Lamb of God?" How an earthly prince can arrest the eye of the multitude! Here is God's Lamb. He calls you to gaze upon Him. He is not come to

judge the world, but to save! What is your idea about what God has announced Him to do? It is not merely to discover man's wickedness—('tis true He does this too;) but God announces that He has come to bear sin away,—not merely of a *man*, or of a *person*,—but of the *world*! Sin has caused the distance between God and man. He has come to bear away the whole thing; and that from *God's side*. Abel takes the other side. He brought a lamb. Just as if he said, "God is righteous,—I am a sinner,—I can't approach Him without a sacrifice; I must have one, not chargeable with my sin; and having a personal excellence when bearing the judgment of my sin,—this is what His righteousness requires." So he brought the "firstling of his flock," and the "fat thereof." The fat could only be seen in death. It was the personal excellence of the victim. This only expressed that which righteousness required. It was the confession of it. It was man who offended God—He should have produced the sacrifice. He could not get one. What would it have availed me if I gave "the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" I must get a sacrifice like Abel. One presenting a personal excellence—available—before God. A life for a life merely, won't do. Suppose I owed ten pounds, and some one came and paid ten pounds for me; that won't do. This might free me, but would not show me what God's righteousness required. It was the personal worth of Christ which came out in His death. The fat of the sacrifice was only seen in death. Hence "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." God's Son, was God's Lamb—He comes in and bears the judgment of God. The wonder is, and the blessedness is, that the Lamb came from God's side. God was about to make good the offence of man in His own way, and on his own terms. The person who offends another ought to make the reparation. You find people coming to God with the thought, perhaps unconsciously, in their hearts, of "presenting Christ to God." See some hymns too, which talk of our laying our sins on Jesus which have this thought. It is a wrong thought—you could'nt lay your sins on Him. *God did so*. This is another thing. *We* are bound to repair the offence against God. Instead of that, *God* does so. His own Son comes down, from His own side, as if to say, "I will be thy Lamb."

There are two things connected plainly with this thought:

1st. God must be perfectly satisfied with the way He has made the reparation. If I had provided it, I must ever be uncertain how it has answered; but the moment I learn that *God has done it; I know that He is satisfied!* 2nd. That the Blessed God did not desire that there should be a distance between us. It hindered Him revealing His love.

Suppose I have a dispute with another, and that I don't like that it should be so; and that I repair the thing *on my own terms*, I can never call in question the reparation.

This shows us the heart of God. He did not like that this terrible distance should subsist; God's Son knew this, and said, "I will go and be your Lamb." "Lo I come to do thy will, O God." He came, and put away *sin*, by the Sacrifice of Himself; and that from God's side too, to make a clearance of sin for God. "I know His heart," He says, as it were; "and I am straitened till it be accomplished." Can you not imagine for a moment a father yearning, and longing, that the barrier might be righteously removed between him and his prodigal child! When we think of it for a moment—the Son of God had come, and had found the prodigal under sins—He knew God's heart was yearning to embrace and kiss the prodigal. He only knew it. He dies, and bearing the judgment, removed the obstruction. Hence, God's love is righteous, and consequently there must be continuity in His love; there can be no want of permanence in it. The barrier is thus removed; but only as a means to an end. What then is to come out? The love of God in all its excellence! A river of blessing, with the dam which hindered its flow, removed. It longed to get over; God's Son only knew this,—and shared the Father's love,—He comes and dies that it may flow out in all its blessedness!

Now what does He propose to do having removed the barrier? He baptizes with the Holy Ghost. This was a new thing. Not to leave me where I was but to change my condition. Not merely paying my debts, and leaving me in the same state. This is what He explains in part to the woman of Samaria. It was not what God *required*, but what God *gave*. A well of water springing up into everlasting life—possessing which you never thirst. It wants nothing—looks for nothing, here below.

Now see what happened to those who did receive Him. What did they when John pointed Him out? "They followed Jesus." What happened? "Jesus turned and

saw them following, and saith to them, What seek ye? "What is the object you have before your eye? The action of grace had made them follow; and now they must learn, "Where dwellest thou?" They looked out for a continuance with Him. Not merely to be saved by Him. Not merely to get relief for sin and yet remain apart from Him. His answer is "Come and see." I find where that is in Eph. ii. Risen with Him I abide with Him,—where He is,—He is my life. I can't belong to the thing He is risen out of. I must either belong to Him who is risen out of all here; or I must belong to that order of things out of which He is risen; and which is under judgment. Hence, if I belong to Him, I am only passing through it here. I get the tastes of the person with whom I am living—assimilation to Him with whom I dwell—in a sphere where all things are of God—all things are new. He has spread a supper for His Son, which declares His ability—and prepared a robe for me which marks His love.

The soul that knows that it is introduced into that bright scene of joy—that has responded to His "Come and see," finds the world a darkened place. If it has never tasted it, it only shows that the world is filling the heart, and not the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. Things that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.)

The Lord give His people to ponder in the secret of their hearts, what are the purposes of His love; which He proposes to effect for them, for His name's sake. Amen.

NOTES OF READINGS ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

PAUL now goes on to tell of his having received grace and apostleship—the interest he felt in the Romans, &c.

In v. 16, 17, he is not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power in salvation to *every one* that believes. Its character was "*the righteousness of God,*" when man had no righteousness for Him; revealed on the principle of faith—not law or effort from man of any kind; and wherever there

was faith in man, it was appropriated. It is "on the principle of faith to faith."

Now begins a detailed examination of the state of man to which the gospel applied. He begins with the world before the flood (v. 19, 20); what might be known of God as Creator, leaving them without excuse. Then the heathen world (v. 21-32) after the flood. For it was then that idolatry began to overspread the earth. Men did not like to *retain* the knowledge of God which they possessed, and He shut them up to their desire (v. 28). Here let me say a word on this deeply solemn truth—God giving up a sinner to what he desires. There are cases of God hardening the hearts of men, and shutting them up to what they wished. 'Tis true in this chapter of the heathen; true in Isaiah vi. 9, 10 of the Jew; and true in 2 Thess. ii. 11, of the professing Christian world. Yet, in all these cases, He only exercises this solemn power when men have hardened their hearts first against Him. We find in ch. ix. an instance cited in Pharaoh, whom God hardened; and, if He did, Pharaoh had first hardened himself against God,

In the opening of ch. ii. we have the case of those who were doubly condemned—first on condemning the evil that they saw in others, and practising the same things themselves. They reasoned and moralized about these things, and did the same. The judgment of God, which is according to truth, would overtake them, and they would not escape. The goodness of God meanwhile was leading them to repentance, if they had an ear to hear.

v. 6-16 give us the aspect of the throne of God in righteousness; teaching us that *the consequences and issues of the course that man pursues here in this world are sure*. If he sought for "glory, honour, and incorruptibility" (this is the true word for "immortality," which we have in verse 7), "eternal life" would be the sure result of such a course. On the other hand, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," is most surely the issue of the course of those who are "contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness." If the former was the case, we know that it was *grace* that had wrought; but he does not here speak of the moving power.

In the day when God would "judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ," each would be judged according to the light and privileges he had enjoyed. "As many as have sinned with-

out law (*i.e.*, the Gentile, &c.), shall also perish without law : and as many as have sinned in (*i.e.*, under) the law (*i.e.*, the Jew) shall be judged by the law." The "work of the law" was to condemn those under it—to give the "knowledge of sin." The *conscience* of the Gentile did this "work of the law," in condemning him (v. 15). Conscience is *the sense of responsibility united to the knowledge of good and evil*. God took care, when man fell, that he should bear away this "conscience" from His presence ; every man possesses it. Who ever has lived up to his knowledge of good ?

From ver. 17 to ch. iii. 18, the apostle takes up the case of the Jew : showing that his advantages only brought him in more responsible, and more guilty than those who did not possess them. They had the law, and circumcision, and "the oracles of God," and they used these things to minister to their pride ; and became worse than the heathen around them, who possessed no such advantages. "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." (ch. ii. 24.)

Some might ask, "What advantage, then, hath the Jew ?" in the presence of such a sweeping condemnation of the race. Paul gives him credit for all he had, and his advantages were many. "The oracles of God" were committed to them. But if they were unfaithful, God's faithfulness remained the same (ch. iii. 1-8). If every man was a liar, let God have His own place—"let God be true." Yea, even their unrighteousness commended His. The Jews, then, were *not* better than the Gentiles, even though possessing the advantages they had—advantages which more distinctly demonstrated their guilt. The Jew would gladly have heard of the vile and abominable wickedness of the Gentile ; and looked with abhorrence upon it ; but when the very oracles, of which they boasted, told forth the solemn thought of God about themselves, in the words now quoted by the apostle (v. 10-18), their mouth was closed for ever. As if he had said, "You talk of the oracles of God, which you possess ; let us hear what they say of your own selves."

"In verse 19, he sums up the whole race—Jew and Gentile. The conclusion of his whole argument from ch. i. 18. Thus, "*every* mouth" is "stopped," and "all the world" is brought in subject to, or under judgment before God.

How blessed, beloved reader, to have God's verdict so plainly before our eye. We need not wait till judgment-day to know it. It is given to us now, that we may accept

it as our true state. How blessed to bow to His solemn, sweeping condemnation. Our mouth stopped by God Himself. No need to say, when forced to it like Job (ch. xl.), "What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." It was bitter to him to learn it—it is bitter for us to learn it. Yet a necessary and wholesome lesson. But it is *God* who has Himself stopped our mouth, and left us not one word to answer. It is ever His way to reduce us to our true place of utter vileness, as irrecoverably and hopelessly bad and evil in His eye, and then to disclose to us how He has devised a way to bring us back through redemption, by Christ's precious blood, in such a way as brings glory to His own name. This is what He now does, having first laid bare the state of all men in His sight.

One could suppose for a moment, as to ver. 19, the world, after its 4000 years of probation and trial, under the eye of God, as if it were enwrapped in a pall of inexorable judgment, out of which not one soul could rise—not one soul presume to have a shade of difference from his fellow, and God disclosing the grandeur of the way of His own righteousness in justifying the ungodly through the blood shedding of His Son Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

"L. H," Jersey.—In Eph. i. 1, we read, "To the saints, . . . and to the faithful," &c. Are these two classes of persons, or is one the standing and the other the walk?

A.—The word "saints" is a general term applicable to all who are Christ's, at any period of the history of God's dealings. But the Spirit of God has been pleased to add the word "faithful." This word may be rendered "believers." It is to be found in the following passages, amongst many, in the New Testament. 2 Cor. vi. 15, "He that believeth," or "the believer." 1 Tim. iv. 10-12, "Specially those that believe," or, "specially believers," and "Be thou an example to the believers." These examples will serve to show that the word may be truly used in this sense. The Epistle to the Ephesians contemplates only the saints since the accomplishment of redemption, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, teaching truths peculiar to them. It is from God, who has Christ, now both God and Man, in His presence. "Saints" and "faithful" are used of the same persons; the former signifying their condition with reference to the world, the

latter giving them a special character as having believed in Christ Jesus. The Patriarchs, &c., had hoped in faith for One who was to come; those before the mind of the Spirit in Ephesians had believed in One who had come, and had wrought redemption, and was now a Man in the glory of God: and who not only had believed, but who were faithfully maintaining the faith they had received; for, when Paul was writing, Christianity, and especially the doctrines he had enunciated, were beginning to be unpopular, not in the sense of the benefits of salvation and redemption, but in the holy and separate walk they inculcated, as the calling of the Church of God. The apostle contemplates this state of things in the mode of his address to the Ephesians and Colossians.

ALONE!

"Jesus said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." (Mark vi. 21.)

This, *this* is rest, Lord Jesus,
 Alone with Thyself to be,
 The desert is a gladsome place,
 With Thy blest company.
 Oh! sweet to hear Thy tender voice
 Bidding me "Come apart."
 Such rest for throbbing aching mind--
 Quiet for weary heart.

Yes. This *is* rest, Lord Jesus,
 Alone with Thee to be.
 And when I sigh for fellowship,
 To find it all in Thee.
 Thy saints on earth—how dear they are
 Their love is passing sweet,
 But I would leave them all to sit
 Alone at Thy dear feet.

Such precious rest, Lord Jesus,
 Alone with Thee to be,
 Thy secret words of love to hear;
 Thy look of love to see.
 To feel My hand held fast by thine--
 To know Thee always near,
 A happy child alone with Thee,
 My heart can nothing fear.

This, *this* is rest, Lord Jesus,
 Alone with Thee to be,
 The desert is a happy spot.
 With Thy blest company.
 Amid the throng I might forget
 That I am all Thine own,
 I bless Thee for the "desert place:"
 With Thee, my Lord, alone.

"WHERE SIN ABOUNDED, GRACE DID MUCH MORE ABOUND."

THERE is one precious truth which stands out in relief, in God's dealings with sinners, which I desire to press upon my reader's soul. It is this: The moment a sinner is in the truth of his state, or that he has (in other words) got a true sense of his state as a sinner before God—God has nothing for him but grace!

Many a sincere and honest soul has never discovered this—never has found out for itself the God with whom it has to do—the God of all grace, who has to do with sinners in their sins, as a Saviour. Such are trusting, and praying, and hoping for the mercy of God; and at the same time they are turning Him into a *Judge*, instead of apprehending Him as a *Saviour*; because they are hoping that God will consider their condition at some future time, more worthy of His grace than now. Thus constituting Him a Judge of the state in which they would be fit to receive His grace. Grace has to do with sinners in their sins.

How the heart in such a state tries to hide its true condition from Him, as from itself. If it had discovered its true state, which sooner or later it *must*, it would thankfully be cast over on His richest, fullest mercy. It would find that God, so to speak, only desired the truth of one's state of ruin to be known and owned, that He might fill the soul with the sense of His unfathomable and limitless grace!

Now, God has very plainly revealed the judgment which hangs over the sinner. A judgment, while as yet unexecuted, is not one whit less sure. The long suffering and sovereignty of God, in still averting the blow, is salvation. But still the sword of divine judgment is suspended over every sinner who is without Christ! Who knows how soon the thread on which it hangs may be snapped, and the wail of an eternity of woe rise up from the inmost depths of the soul of a (then irrecoverably) lost, self-ruined sinner!

We have a very beautiful illustration of the work of God in grace, in the 21st chapter of 1st Chronicles. We find that David had sinned a terrible sin—Satan stood up against the people of God, and to carry out his ends, had used David as his instrument, and provoked him to number Israel. The result was that the nation fell under the judicial dealings

of God, and the sword of judgment was unsheathed against them. He might most righteously have allowed the judgment to take its course; but instead of that; in sovereign mercy, He stays the blow (v. 15), and reveals the judgment to David and the elders of Israel; the "angel of the Lord standing between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem." (v. 16.)

What a vivid picture of the poor sinner, led away captive by Satan, and under the impending sword of the just judgment of God. Why has not the blow fallen? Why has not the mercy of God been long since exhausted? Simply because God in His own sovereign mercy has stayed the blow—not willing that the sinner should perish for ever in his sins.

Mark the attitude of David and the elders of Israel. Clothed with sackcloth; and fallen on their faces, owning the righteous sentence. Fit and beautiful attitude of the true repentance of a sinner towards God!

Have you ever been in the dust before God, with the sense in your soul of what you are in His sight—lost—ruined—utterly undone? No extenuating causes pleaded.—no desire to conceal the grand truth of your state. An utterly ruined sinner, over whose head hangs the wrath of a justly offended God, against sin. No hope to be better lurking in the mind. No suggestion from the heart as to how God was to act; like the Prodigal who wanted to suggest to his father how he was to be allowed back into his house. But the heart and conscience fully alive to the truth of the condition one is in, and the sense in the soul that it deserves nothing but the impending blow of judgment.

Mark the result: The way is now open to the full display of God's provisions of grace. Christ comes in and charges Himself with the whole case. Behold Him in the last moments on His way to the Cross, as we read of them in John xviii. 4-11. "Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? and they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

Here we find the Blessed Lord Jesus standing in the breach, and presenting Himself as the victim, to answer for the guilty; and in the full intelligence of what he would have to bear for them before God—and what God required so as to establish His righteousness—"Knowing all things that would come upon him." The true David says (as it were), "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? Even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand be upon me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued." (1 Chron. xxi. 17.)

What a fitting substitute was the true David for His people. *He*, sinless and spotless—*They*, guilty and ruined. He alone could answer for, and atone for their sin.

The Lord now instructs David what is to be done that the plague might be stayed. "The threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite," is now to be the scene of the rich display of the unfoldings of grace triumphing over sin, and the place where the punishment due for the plague of sin can be averted, and the sin put away, as afterwards Calvary must witness the savour of the sacrifice of Christ. "And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the Lord; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offerings. And the Lord commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof." (1 Chron. xxi. 26-27.)

What a wonderful scene! The sweet savour of the sacrifice of Christ ascending to God from the Cross. A sin-hating God hiding His face from His Son when made sin. The whole earth darkened for three solemn hours. (Mark xv. 33.) The whole moral nature of God displayed there—His righteousness against sin—His love to the sinner—His truth vindicated—His Majesty displayed—all His moral character so brought out, as nothing else could ever have done! Just as the Lord owns the sacrifice which David offered in Ornan's threshing-floor, sending fire from heaven to consume it. So does God display His satisfaction in the atonement for sin which His son offered, by rending the veil which heretofore concealed Him from the sinner. Then turning towards a fallen world He beseeches men to be reconciled to God! (2 Cor. v. 19. &c.)

How righteously then, poor trembling one, has He not commanded the sword of judgment which hung over your

head to be sheathed? Because His judgment against your sin has been borne by Jesus. Is your face in the dust now before Him, and your heart full of worship and praise, as before it was filled with terror, under the dread of the impending sword of judgment? Will you believe this? Believe how it is that the moment you are in the truth of your condition before a sin-hating God, He has nothing but the riches of His grace for you? Turn then your eye away from yourself, and behold the sword of divine judgment against sin, satisfying itself in the atonement which Jesus offered to God; the sword of impending judgment which hung over your head, sheathed at the righteous command of Him whose satisfaction is without limit in Christ! If God is thus satisfied, so should you; and the *full assurance* of faith, is that only which does honour to the sacrifice of Christ. Your satisfaction rests in the satisfaction of God. In ordinary things, the person who has been offended and outraged, is the one who is to be satisfied—not the person who offends. How much more when it is God who was outraged and offended by your sin; but who has declared His full satisfaction in Christ for all you are, and all you have done.

The Lord give you to rest peacefully before Him in His own gracious thoughts toward you, for His name's sake. Amen.

HEZEKIAH AND PAUL.

Isaiah xxxviii. 1-20; Phil. i. 23.

I DESIRE to direct your attention to the contrast between King Hezekiah and the Apostle Paul, in the scriptures we have read.

In the one, we have a picture of human misery, caused by the announcement that he must die; in the other, we find what grace can effect for a soul in the power and possession of eternal life in Christ. When the Lord announces to Hezekiah that he is to die, his state becomes the most pitiable which it is possible to witness. All his links were connected with *this* world, and when they were about to be broken, he summons language to describe his misery. He bids creation, as it were, tell out the agony of his condition; and the fact of his being a really good man makes his case the more pitiable.

What a contrast to this is the Apostle Paul in Phil. i. 23. Worn in the service of Christ ; now confined in prison at Rome, he rises before us as a magnificent picture of what grace can effect for a soul in the consciousness of its possessions in Christ. He longs to "depart and to be with Christ ; which is far better." He desires to leave this present scene, because all his links are above and beyond it. King Hezekiah's links were only with earth ; his hand was full of earthly blessings ; as a Jew, he was a successful man because in divine favour and having God with him in his works. Sennacherib did not come against him for two years after this sickness ; but his misery now consisted in his being called to depart out of this scene. If I have all my links here, and none in heaven, it can be no light thing to me to break them—to see them all go to pieces. Souls have but little real sense of what death is. It is the ending of everything here. What must it be to those who have the judgment of God before them ? It is not judgment that Hezekiah fears ; it is the simple fact that he is losing connection with the scene which is the sphere of all his blessings. With him it is that he is called to leave the scene where all his links and blessings were—with Paul it is that he desires to depart and to be with Christ in the scene where all his links and blessings were. Is it any wonder then that there should be such a difference between them ; or that Paul should long to depart, since it was to be "with Christ" ? "Blest with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" was his portion. He had found what Christ is, and how He changes every feature in this scene, and loosens every tie the soul has with earth. Hezekiah had to find this out—Paul had perfectly learned it ; he had done with things *here*, and was looking for blessings *there*. Which place would you take—Hezekiah's place or Paul's ? Would you be like Hezekiah, who was blessed with every blessing on earth ? His life one of prosperity ; up to this everything went well with him. God's hand was lavish in its favours to him ; and yet such is now the misery of his condition when called to die, that all the power of language is summoned to depict it. The heart melts at the description of the misery of the man : "I reckoned," he says, "till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me." Oh ! see what a great man is brought to ; see the positive nothingness

of one so lately basking in all the brightness of earthly prosperity! No wonder that poets describe death as the most awful thing in nature—"The King of Terrors." No wonder when man, the most matchless work of God is brought to dissolution. Is it a trifle that it must go to pieces? No! people may trifle *about* death, but it is no trifle when man is brought to meet it, and to face the judgment which lies beyond.

Death and judgment rest on this whole scene. The heart knows that everything here, however bright and attractive in it must go. Then where are you? Have you got your links in heaven?

God had to break every link for Hezekiah, and to bring his soul into the sense that all here was gone, that he might find what resurrection really was. This he found when he said "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit." God's way is to bring a soul into a sense of its condition.

See the Philippian jailer. (Acts xvi.) The Lord sends a great earthquake, and a man who a little before was full of his own authority; who had overstept his orders; not only casting Paul and Silas into the inner prison, but making their feet fast in the stocks. This man, so satisfied with his own sense of power, suddenly finds the whole thing going to pieces, and he draws his sword only to use the remnant of his power for his own destruction. This is what a soul is brought to when God lays bare his condition. The eternal future comes before it. Can he face it?

It is well to look at these things solemnly. The sentence upon man is death; and after death the judgment. What an unaccountable thing! the potter makes a man in His own image and after His likeness; the most beautiful vessel God ever formed. It acts according to its own will, and God says, as it were, "I will break it to pieces." Here is a vessel most singularly blessed and honoured, and God says to him, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." What! Must he give up all the things with which God has surrounded him? Must he pass from the height of eminence; from the place of kingly distinction to the darkness of death? How is the announcement received? Hearken—"Like a crane, or a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." To this was Hezekiah brought in view of death.

Now mark how differently another man looks at it, though he too is a Jew. Simeon comes to the temple and takes Christ the blessed babe in his arms, and says, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." (Luke ii.) He can now connect himself with another scene altogether; he can let the things here pass from his notice. Why? Because he has got the Lord in his arms; he has possession of Him. He knows that to him was born a Saviour, even Christ the Lord.

Have you thus got possession of Him? If you have, you will not easily let Him go. Every one you meet now-a-days will tell you that they believe in Christ; but talk to them and you will find that what they live for is *themselves*; their *pleasures* and their *money*. If they had possession of Him—If they had found Him as the One who had delivered them—*He* would be the one object of their hearts. Love possesses the thing it loves, it never rests till it does so. "We love Him because He first loved us." It was revealed to Simeon that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ; and when he does see Him, he has done with all things here—clean done with them, and says, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word."

God's Son came to bear the judgment for me. He has "abolished death," and "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Tim. i. 10.) You may say you believe that, but do you *possess* Him? Do you believe that He is *your* Saviour; and has abolished death for you?

Look at another example in Acts vii. 55. Here is a man not only like Simeon, who had Christ before his eyes, but who "being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." They were gnashing on him with their teeth, and about to stone him. Was he afraid? No. The very Holy Ghost who had revealed to Simeon, that he should not see death before Christ came; that same Holy Ghost fills Stephen the Martyr, and he looks up, when surrounded by his murderers, and sees "the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." *No—he was not afraid!* He had a link there in the glory. *All* his links were there; all here were gone! They stoned Stephen, calling upon and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" So safe, so calm, so satisfied was he, that "He kneeled down, and cried with a

loud voice" Was it for himself? No! but *for the people that were murdering him!* He had no need to think about himself, for Christ had thought about him; and he had got life in Him. He passed out of things here, on the wings of the new creation, and in the power of the Holy Ghost, reaching up to the place where all his links were.

This is indeed a contrast to Hezekiah. This is what the apostle Paul was practically brought to in 2 Cor. iv. 8-10, "the dying of Jesus." He could say as it were, "I am living in my own death, I have got a life out of it all." People are cultivating various things here; but he was cultivating his own death. Was not this wisdom? Let Hezekiah answer. He proved that every link formed with earth must be broken, that the soul may find its entire rest and satisfaction in God. People seem to think one loses by being occupied with Christ. They pity one who cannot enter into their joys. Oh! it is they who are to be pitied! I have untold joys of which they know nothing. They must one day lose all *their* joys, and perhaps be brought like Hezekiah to chatter like a crane or a swallow! People's trials are because they connect their blessings with *earth*; and God is forced to put them through experience—He must put every one through it. The moment I *look* for anything in *this* scene to be the proof of God's mercy to me, I must go through the experience of Hezekiah; I must surrender the things here. Nor these alone; I must surrender not only the *things* that would connect me with earth, but I must surrender *myself*. I must not only have a sense that the blighting hand of death has passed over the scene, and that I stand alone in it like a blighted tree, with all its branches withered; but the tree itself must fall,—the root must go. This is another page in our history. Is it to put a soul to needless pain, that God does all this? No! it is to bring out to it the blessedness of Christ—to open out what Stephen knew—and what Paul knew.

I ask you who are converted, to put the question to your souls before God, "Am I like Hezekiah, looking to God for blessings on earth? or am I like Simeon, or Stephen, or Paul?"

Testing is the harvest time of faith. The crops must grow before; but it is at harvest they are put to the test. The Lord in mercy lead our souls to see the solemnity of these things. I thank God many are rejoicing in Him, and

know how bright it is to look up and say, *Jesus is there*. I have a link there. My links are in the glory of God. I can look up without fear or shame, because Jesus is there; and he has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. I can let things here go; I can carry about the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in my mortal flesh.

One word more. Don't deceive yourself by thinking that you believe in Christ, if it is only profession. If you do, you will make him prominent. Look at the woman in the house of the Pharisee (Luke vii.) Nothing would stop her from coming to Him. Her heart could not be checked; it had such a sense that He was the Saviour—the one to meet her need. He must be the controlling object of the heart. If you believe, depend upon it, He will be so. He gives you a link with glory, but no links with earth. He connects you for ever with the bright glory of the Father's house, so that, like Paul, you can say, "I long to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." God grant every one of us may be able to utter the same words in the presence and ear of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for His name's sake. Amen.

THE LORD'S PATHWAY IN LUKE XXII.

In this particularly fine and solemn chapter, we may see the Lord in four connections, so to speak,—with the *sorrow itself* that was awaiting Him,—with *His disciples*,—with *the Father*,—with *the Enemy*.

Verses 1-23.—As far as He is seen here, He is seen as looking directly, fully, and advisedly at the sorrow that was awaiting Him. He sits at the Paschal Table, the witness of His coming sufferings, and He tells of His body given, and of His blood shed; at the same time refusing *for the present* the paschal cup, the expression (as I judge) of Israel's joy on the accomplishing of their redemption.

Thus we see Him in full, advised anticipation of His sorrow, looking at it directly and without the least shrinking; refusing a single thought that could qualify or reduce it.

Verses 24-38.—In this part of this great chapter, we see Him with His disciples, but we must remember, carrying in His bosom the full sense of the sorrow He had just been foreseeing and counting on.

But it is, beloved, a great sight which these versès give us of Him. I mean in this character. When any trouble is upon us we judge right easily and without rebuke, that we may think of ourselves. But here, Jesus thinks of others. The condition of His disciples is the anxious, diligent object of His various affections and sympathy. He warns them where their souls are getting wrong. He lets them know that He was praying for them, and providing strength for a coming hour of need and weakness. He teaches what changes they must now reckon upon, and how they must get themselves ready—thus, carrying as His heart did, a grief which might well have commanded or absorbed, He could, as though all were quiet within, spend His various cares, His sympathies and attentions, on those who were around Him.

If there be a moment in human history when selfishness is even vindicated by our moral sense, it is the moment of personal grief. We instinctively allow man to think of *himself* in such a moment. But at no other moment was the Lord Jesus even more thoughtful of others than in the hour of Luke xxii.

It was not the hour of Sychar's well,—It was not the two days spent amongst the Samaritans,—It was not the season when Mary was sitting at His feet; or when the family of Bethany was at the table with Him. It was not such a moment as when the Centurion accosted Him in the language of a faith greater than what He had found in Israel; or as when the poor woman touched Him in the crowd; or as when the Syrophenician clung to Him in spite of apparent slight and indignity. Such occasions were moments of deep joy to the heart of Christ, and no wonder; to speak as a man, He was free to wait on the occasion, and serve them, and think of others in them and through them. But it is the *Paschal* Jesus we get here. It is the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It was natural for this Jesus of the house of Bethany to sit and teach,—but this was the Jesus of the last Passover; and knowing, as one does, the absorbing selfishness of times of sorrow, this path of the mind of Christ through this part of this solemn chapter reflects something perfect and beautiful.

Verse 39 46.—Here we have the same Jesus in company with the Father,—the *same Jesus*.

He had just been serving His disciples in all the various conditions and need in which He found them; warning them,

praying for them, teaching them, providing for their blessing in every way. And so now He is surrendered to the Father's will, with the same self-sacrifice as He had been serving them. The moment is full in its terribleness, but the surrender of Himself to it is perfect. The mission of the angel to *strengthen*, tells that the cup was not to be taken out of His hand. He knew this, and felt it in the agony of that solemn hour. But nothing touched the spirit of self-sacrifice. The will of the Father was supreme with Him now, as the need and conditions of His poor disciples had just been, and He surrenders Himself to it all.

Verses 46-71.—In these closing verses, we find our Lord in His last condition in this chapter, as the prisoner of His enemies. We have already seen Him in the gaze and near sight of the sorrow itself,—Then in company with His disciples, making their need and blessing all His thought, as though He had no sorrow of His own,—Then in communion with the Father,—and now in the midst of His persecutors. There was nothing here for Him. A mad and rude rabble, set on wickedness, was making Him their sport and their captive; and then a wily and murderous, though in its way, refined Court of Elders (in its character more contrary to His spirit even than the others), purposing His death under guise of law and religion. But in Him it is a blessed path we trace. He had been in communion with the Father. He had met this hour *there*. He had surrendered Himself, as we saw, and in that surrender there is victory, in that communion there is strength. And now that He is in the battle-field itself, He is more than conqueror. He may be borne through files of the enemy. He may meet the occasion in different characters of it; but all is strength and calmness of spirit. He challenges Judas the leader. He restores the wounded ear of one of the servants. He addresses the heads of the multitude. He has His eye upon Peter for good, when Peter was giving Him to feel at that moment that His disciples would take their place amongst His enemies. He answers the Elders and Priests. And in the full triumph of His soul He anticipates His kingdom and glory. This was treading the field of battle like a Conqueror. All was perfect calmness of heart. There was no agony or sweat of blood here. No falling on the ground. O how deeply the soul judges that that could not have been His way among the people, though it was equally perfectly His way

before the Father ! He had indeed already met the occasion in communion, and now He is only above it.

Such was His journey through this chapter ; we see the path of His soul through these distinct stages. Was ever anything like it ? We have need to be set to right in the time of trouble—at least if one may speak for another. The Psalmist had such need in Ps. lxxiii., and again also in Ps. lxxvii. Poor Job was conquered. It touched him and he fainted, though he had often before strengthened others. The stoutest, as an old writer says, are “knocked off their legs.” Peter sleeps and Peter lies,—and our own poor hearts again and again have told us secrets of ourselves in such moments. But in sorrow, the like of which never was tasted, Jesus is borne through every change of circumstance and connection, and all is sure to be perfection. Gold it was indeed ; and when cast into the furnace, it comes out the same mass as when cast in, for there was no dross.

What a sight ! what faith ! It is found unto admiration in our eyes, beloved ; and unto what acceptance was it found with God !

I feel as though I could not look at it, or speak of it longer. Having just traced this brilliant path of faith, tried in the furnace, to the end, I must leave it. My own heart is so unacquainted with it. May the good Lord strengthen with might by His Spirit ! “If thou faintest in the day of adversity thy strength is small.”—J. G. B.

THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES OF THE KINGDOM, &c.

WHATEVER title Jesus had as Creator over the world, He could only have the treasure by buying it, and to buy that He must buy the world also. Mere creation title could not avert judgment ; could not turn aside the inflexible justice of God which had decreed death to the sinner. The treasure in the field must be given up to destruction, as well as the field at large, unless the Creator acquire a new title to possess it, beside that of creation. The treasure, albeit a treasure, must share the fate of the field. The question was, how to secure it. Could it be secured without reference to the field ? The wisdom of God declares that the best way, perhaps the only way, was to

buy all the field, as well as the treasure; and thus, in the new character of buyer, have unlimited control over the whole field, and secure possession of what He so prized.

The Lord Jesus has thus a new title over the world, and which in no way weakens His rights as the One by whom, and for whom, all things consist. The rights and title of purchase are superadded, and they are stronger than those of creation. Otherwise, the whole field would have been destroyed. Now by the right of purchase this world still goes on. I think it is an inexpressibly solemn thought that this earth bears a relation to God, which no other part of the whole universe does. Men have bowed down to the sun, have worshipped the moon, and the stars. Poets have sang the beauties of the starry heavens, and all men have more or less been moved with the sight. Nay, the inspired psalmist sang, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work." Yet amid all their glory I venture to say that not one of these vast masses of matter, to which the earth is comparatively small has the place in the counsels of God, and upon which His eye is so intently fixed, as this very earth. The reason is manifest. What other planet or star has been bought? In what other sphere has a treasure been discovered? and a treasure which could be bought only by giving up all else? Impossible that there can be more than one such treasure. The price that was paid for this could only be once paid. For none but the Son could redeem. There is but one way of redemption, the blood of Jesus. And He having once died, dieth no more. And it is here that He died, in Calvary. That one spot, pre-eminent far above all other spots where man makes his little display. It was here God made His display, when His glory, His truth, holiness, hatred of sin, love of the sinner, yea, where Himself was displayed as no creative act could. The sun was ordained to give light by day, the moon and the stars to rule the night, to mark the seasons. But the earth was the centre of the created universe, not even the centre of a system, only a poor planetary attendant of the sun, the earth was ordained to be the platform upon which God would work His greatest work, which can never be undone, never repeated; even exacting the uttermost farthing from Him who had voluntarily become liable, asserting Himself to be God in delivering up His well-beloved and only begotten Son to death.

Now, such a display as this must have its peculiar consequences for man, the inhabiter of this earth. We repeat, it must bring him nearer, or drive him further from God. Everything is affected, every relationship is modified. For this display of wisdom, love, and power, on the cross of Christ, is in another aspect the buying of the field. If Christ glorified God when He hung upon the cross He also acquired titles and powers which only the cross could confer, and His rights over the world, as the buyer, are far more terrible to the unsaved than His right as creator. For great as the sin is of rebelling against the Creator, much more terrible is the sin of despising the blood and denying the authority of Him who bought them. It is this which aggravates their guilt, which must intensify their punishment. As the buyer, and having unlimited authority over the field, the Lord Jesus sends His servants into all the world to announce, authoritatively that "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." It is the Lord Jesus, who having acquired new glory by the cross will judge the world, and pronounce the doom of each soul unsaved.

*But to acquire these glories and power was not the motive for buying the field. At least that which the Spirit here gives as the motive, is the desire to possess the treasure. All the other glory and power necessarily follow. If nothing less than His blood-shedding could secure the treasure, His blood once shed must secure for Him every other possible glory. The things invisible as well as visible, in heaven as well as in earth, all must be placed under the lordship of Him who died on the cross.

It is from that cross that the present long suffering of God flows, involving the continuance of the present age. And although men of the world seem to have things pretty much their own way, the eye of the purchaser is upon His treasure; and all things being now in His hand, He secretly overrules all for this one object—the treasure. When that is taken away out of the field and brought into His Father's house, then the long deferred sentence will overtake the guilty world.

The truth that the field is bought as well as the treasure, is sometimes overlooked. Buying is sometimes confounded with redeeming. The world is bought, the Church is redeemed. No redeemed soul can perish. Every man, saved

or not, is bought, and as such owes allegiance to the master that bought him. Just as a slave that is purchased owes service and obedience to his new master, in whom are invested all the rights of the former. So here all the rights of God, as Creator, are made over to and vested in the Lord Jesus as buyer.

Peter who, through fear (never through want of love or faith), denied his Lord, speaks more strongly than any other of the sin of denying. In his first sermon he charged the Jews with denying and killing the Just One. And in his epistle he warns the brethren of the false teachers who bring in damnable heresies, and deny the Lord (the Master) that *bought* them, and thus bring upon themselves swift destruction. In a word, Redemption clears us from all guilt and condemnation; purchase does not break one fetter, but increases the guilt of those who reject and deny the Lord that brought them.

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot.” (1 Peter i. 18-19.) His blood, so precious in God’s sight, is the price paid for us. And it is the same price which was paid for the field. There is nothing so precious in heaven as the blood. Nothing of such value in God’s estimation—without blemish, without spot. Our words and thoughts fail us, we cannot conceive the immensity of the price. Well may we boast in that which God makes His boast.

Such is the view given us here of the kingdom of the heavens. In that vast mass of things which is presented to the world, there is, to the eye of faith, hidden from sense the secret thing which moved and stirred the depths of His heart; and to develop which He allowed the formation and growth of that evil thing which claims the homage and admiration of the world. These alone, the true heirs, own the sovereignty of Jesus, and because they own it now, while the world rejects and scorns, they shall, when the kingdom is set up in glory and power, by and by, *reign* with Him. “And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” “Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. xii. 28, 29.)

SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

Q.—"L. H.," Jersey. Ephesians i. 8, "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence?"

A.—God has fully unfolded to us, in verses 3-5, His *calling*, as suited to His own counsels, and His own heart; which is "to the praise of the *glory* of His grace." In these verses He does not take into account our sinful condition, but lets us know His own thoughts as to the way He desires to have us in His presence, as purposed eternally in His own counsels in Christ. In verse 7, He takes into account that we are sinners, needing redemption and forgiveness, and acts according to the "*riches* of His grace," which (grace) He has caused to abound toward us, "in all wisdom and intelligence" (as it may be read), in making known the mystery of His will, which He purposed in Himself, for the glory of Christ. He treats us as friends (compare Jno. xv. 15, as illustration), in the place of intimacy and nearness. These counsels we learn in ver. 10.

Thank God we are placed in such a position, and called thus to share in His counsels as to Christ; not merely because we shall share the glory with Him (ver. 11), but because His glory is everything to us, and has a real interest in our hearts.

Q.—Was Peter wrong in going a-fishing, and did he not draw others into it? What is the lesson?

A.—It is plain that Peter's going a-fishing was not in keeping with the commission given to him by our Lord in the previous chapter, "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you." No doubt it was Peter's suggestion which disclosed a similar weakness in six more of them; in that Peter afforded a vent for the exposure of their weakness, so far is he chargeable with their offence. What a great matter a little fire kindles! But he who applies the torch, is of course the one chiefly to be censured. The lesson I gather from it is, that no amount of acquaintance with Jesus, such as the disciples had; or no amount of intelligence without His personal keeping, or the power of the Holy Ghost;

(which these seven were not enjoying at the time), will preserve one on the line, or divert one from earthly interests, in some form or other.

Q.—What are we to learn by the Lord addressing Peter afterwards as “Simon, son of Jonas?”

A.—I believe it is to show, that He is addressing him as the *man*—the natural man;—as he was in nature. Is he in nature still? Can the man in nature reckon on his love to the Lord; or does he see his weakness, and will he cease to trust on the son of Jonas? The Spirit tells us that it was “Peter” who replied to our Lord’s question. If you will read carefully Gen. xlviii.-ix., you will see this principle carried out in the names “Jacob” and “Israel.” “Jacob” was his name in nature, “Israel” what God had called him. It brings the interchange of names most forcibly before us, as carrying a divine meaning.

When He said to him, “Lovest thou me more than these?” it was “more than *the disciples*.” Peter had professed, “Though all shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended.” He had made a greater profession in fleshly confidence than all the others, and had fallen more grievously than any of them. It was this appeal which touched him to the very quick.

Q.—How is one to know that one is baptized with the Holy Ghost?

A.—By faith, founded on the Word of God. It is a positive result to every one who has believed the gospel of salvation. “In whom after that ye believed (or having believed) ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,” &c. (Eph. i. 14). “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,” &c. (1 Cor. xii. 13). Besides, there is the absolute consciousness of it, in union with Christ. The consciousness of the believer is, “In that day ye shall *know* that I am in my Father and ye in me, and I in you” (Jno. xiv. 20). This is not merely a new nature; all must have it to possess the other; but positive union with Christ by the Holy Ghost, received on believing, as well as *union* with all believers here upon earth. Do we not know this? We meet those whom we have never seen before, and are conscious of a closer tie than that of father or mother, brother or sister in the flesh.

If I am to ask a man how he knew his body was joined to his head; he would tell me that he had the positive sense of it. As my hand is united to my body, and acts directly with reference to the welfare of the whole body, not merely for itself in particular; so a member of Christ never has a mere exclusive capacity, or in his own individual interest; and the more he acts as a member of Christ's body so far is the whole body served, or the reverse. If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Cor. xii. 26.) What is the "perfect man?"

Q.—"Wm. C." Skreen, asks for an explanation of Eph. iv. 13. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." What is the perfect man?

A.—The object of ministry by Christ's gifts, (see verses 11 and 12,) is the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ, till each, and all should arrive, in one uniform basis of faith, and the full knowledge of the Son of God, to the state of full grown men. Not remaining in the unhealthy state of babes, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. "A perfect man," means simply "a full grown man"—the fulness of Christ Himself being the measure of the stature desired; the Christian growing up to Him in all things. This is placed in contrast to the state of a babe. *The state of soul of the individual* is what is in question in verses 13—15.

You will find the word rendered "perfect" in this verse, in the following passages; 1 Cor. ii. 6, "Them that are *perfect*." "Let us therefore, as many as be *perfect*." Phil. iii. 15., "Every man *perfect* in Christ." Col. i. 28. "Strong meat belongeth to them that are of *full age*." Heb. v. 15. There are many other passages in which it occurs. The thought is "full grown."

THE STUDY OF THE WORD.

I AM daily more convinced that the study of the Word is the only sure way to growth and strength. The true way to get interested in the Word is to feel you need its counsel to guide and succour you. The Word is the only thing for

faith to cling to ; and it is in depending on God's Word, *because it is God's Word*, that the soul is strengthened in God, and not from the blessings, merely, which flow from keeping the Word. If we felt it more a journey of faith, we should be more unceasing in seeking for the Word, as the trellis-work on which our faith might climb.

FRAGMENTS.

BEFORE we are consciously in the glory, we are never on a level with the position we hold here below, while we have only this position to sustain us. We must look *above* our path to be able to walk *in* it. A Jew, who had the secret of the Lord, and who waited for the Messiah, was pious and faithful according to the law. A Jew, who had only the law, assuredly did not keep it. A Christian, who has heaven before him, and a Saviour in glory, as the object of his affection, will walk well upon earth ; he who has only the earthly path for his rule, will fail in the intelligence and motives needed to walk in it ; he will become a prey to worldliness, and his Christian walk in the world will be more or less on a level with the world in which he walks. The eyes upward on Jesus will keep the heart and the steps in a path conformable to Jesus, and which, consequently, will glorify Him and make Him known in the world. Seeing what we are, we must have a motive about our path to be able to walk in it. This does not prevent our needing also, for our path, the fear of the Lord, to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, knowing that we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

The presence of God without a veil, and of sinners without sins, prove the efficacy of Christ's sufferings.

"THE GLORY OF THAT LIGHT."

"There shone from heaven a great light round about me. . . . I could not see for the glory of that light." (Acts xxii. 6-11.)

"But we beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

LORD, let the glory of that light
Which shone round Saul, shine o'er us too;
To blind us to each other sight,
To glorify the good and true.

As like to one* who boldly dared,
On the bright noon-day sun to gaze;
With eye unshrinking, forehead bared,
Uncovered to the burning blaze.

Who, when he turned his eyes away
From off the too resplendent sight,
Still saw before him, night and day,
The glories of that wondrous light.

Still saw where'er he turned his eyes,
First sight at morn, last view at night;
New ever-brightening suns arise,
Shedding o'er all their dazzling light.

So, Saviour, let us gaze on Thee,
Thy matchless grace, Thy wondrous love;
So close our eyes to vanity,
Fill us with gleams from heaven above.

Lord, keep us as we journey on,
For ever walking in that light;
And give us strength to gaze upon
The unveiled glory of *Thy* light.

That so, e'en tho' *unknown to us*,
Our face may catch the wondrous rays;
And light from Thee reflected here,
May still return to Thee in praise.

That "Christ," in *all* we do and say,
Before the world may brightly shine;
That self be mortified each day,
And each desire die to Thine.

So with the power of Thy love
Blind us to every earthly sight,
That ever in us from above
May shine "*the glory of that light.*"

But if in asking thus, perchance
Unknown, we ask some bitter loss—
The severing of some earthly tie,
The raising of some heavy cross—

Still help us, Lord, amidst it all,
At *any cost*, to follow Thee!
And let us never further fall
Than where Thy glory we can see!

A. S. O.

* Sir Isaac Newton.

"ADAM," OR "CHRIST."

GENESIS III., AND JOHN XX. 19-22.

WHAT an immense contrast there is between the "first man" in the third chapter of Genesis, and the Lord Jesus Christ in the twentieth chapter of John! the "last Adam," as He is emphatically called in 1. Cor. xv. "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul,"—"The last Adam, a quickening spirit." "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Nothing is more momentous than the fact that there are only two men; each the head of a race, and nothing more momentous than the question:—To which man—to which head—do you belong? If you belong to the one, it is death and eternal judgment; if to the other, it is eternal life and glory. How simple; yet how great the issue! You cannot belong to both. You must be disconnected with the one in order to be connected with the other. "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." Nothing can be more definite, and nothing more simple than the question between us and God: To which man do you belong?

In Genesis iii. we find the first man involved in and under judgment, as driven out of the presence of God; and in John xx., we find the second Man having come out from under judgment, and in resurrection; having abolished death; triumphing over it—having, through death, destroyed its power,—and delivering them, "who through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage." You cannot conceive anything greater. Turn to the man in Genesis, and there see him bringing in the terrible inexorable judgment of God upon his race—a judgment which impends over every one of us;—and then turn to the Man in John xx., and see the Blessed One—the Son of God—having come down here to bear that terrible inexorable judgment; and having borne it, rising out of it, and breathing on His disciples as the life-giving Lord! Look at the one, and then look at the other! See Adam set in the garden of Eden, in the midst of the display of the thought and interest of God about him. God tells him not to eat of a certain tree. God put him under an interdict. If I want to discover whether you are controlled by me, whether your will is subject to mine, it is little matter what is the nature of the interdict. Ought not

the creature to be subject to the Creator? And if God is righteous, to go contrary to His nature must be unrighteousness. Can God suffer unrighteousness in His creature, which was made in His own image? It was not a question of its being a great offence or a little offence. Can God, the righteous God, countenance a creature who sets up a will of his own? If Adam only *pointed* at the tree when God told him not, he would have set up a will of his own; and if God had allowed it, He would have allowed the existence of a will contrary to His own.

This was no small offence, and He could not have fixed on a smaller penalty than He has done. If your soul does not get hold of what God in righteousness requires, you never will know what He has accomplished in His love. If you don't see the penalty and the position in which the first Adam placed you—driven out from God, and under judgment and condemnation,—you will never see the fulness of the blessed position in which the "last Adam" has placed you in Himself before God—you must understand the one in order to appreciate the other. The man who understands the terrible nature of the judgment, is the man who is practically more distinguished than others in his occupation with Christ. He has entered into the gravity of his own position, and into the magnificence of the deliverance wrought for him by the Saviour.

What is righteousness? It insists upon this:—that judgment be executed. To forgive, merely, is not righteousness. God's righteousness demands that judgment should be executed according to His nature. And on account of the penalty, death reigned from Adam to Moses; and after death the judgment. But now we find that "*grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.*" The righteousness of God demands that there must be a final settlement, and execution of that which offended against Him.

To be *judged* is to be *lost*! Why? "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Ps. cxliii.), is the answer. The life of a sinner must go in death, and after death the judgment. It is a forfeited life, and if we were to give up our life to-morrow, it would not save us, because it is a *forfeited life*.

How then am I to be saved? "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned *sin* in the flesh!" The whole thing must go in judgment. The

thief (Luke xxiii.) died as a thief; his life is not restored to him, for that would be to annul judgment, it must go, but another life is given to him. His own death is a matter of necessity; not God's own Son dying beside him takes him out of judgment. Life in the last Adam—Christ, the Son of God,—is given him. In Adam he died; in Christ he lived. God's Son comes down from heaven and meets the whole thing in His death on the cross. Mark the contrast in this blessed One—the "last Adam," to "the first man Adam." He can say, "I have glorified thee ON THE EARTH. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John xvii. 4).

In John iii. 14, the Lord in figure brings out what He does Himself in order to bestow eternal life. In Num. xxi. the people were all dying from the bites of the serpents, and Moses is told to put a serpent of brass on a pole, that every one that was bitten, when he looked upon it should live. One feeble turn of the eye brought life. Now this was a figure to tell out the grace in God's heart, to exemplify God sending His own Son, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." See the condition of the Israelites—they were dying from poison; nothing could be more melancholy, but if the eye turned to the brazen serpent, be it ever so far off, it brought life. *He looked! He lived!* Of what was this typical? The great purpose of the heart of God. His own Son would come and take the place of judgment. He was here for 33 years alone, a solitary One. He was a Man among men, but He was entirely separate from all—a Nazarite. Beautiful expression of the heart of God to man in his pathway here. But in the end we find Him saying, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (Jno. xii. 24). He bears the judgment, and what is the result? "much fruit." He has gone down to death; He has borne that terrible judgment, relentless in its execution. Who can fathom it? Have you measured the extent of that inexorable judgment that rested upon man? Have you seen that the one who has borne it is God's own Son? His work was not only to establish righteousness, but to disclose the heart of God. He says, "I have glorified thee on the earth." He has removed every barrier out of the way that God may express His love according to the delight of His heart for a poor prodigal! Looking at Christ on the cross, I know what the love of God is; the love that was down in the folds of His heart was fully revealed.

How is it now with you? Are you still connected with the one under judgment, or are you connected with the one who came from God? The only one who ever could disclose the love of God's heart? He was the only one who knew it; and He says, as it were, "I know thou desirest to set those captives free. I will go down, I will bear the terrible judgment that righteousness demands—Lo, I come to do *Thy will*." Can any one contemplate with an unmoved heart that God's own holy Son bore the judgment of God for sin? *But He did!* He surveyed it beforehand, with fear—with anguish; but He says, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Why? Because He knew the love of His Father, and His will; and it was His joy to do it—nay, it was His delight! Now He is risen in all the stupendous power of the last Adam. "He dieth no more." He has got dominion over death; He has the "keys of hell and of death." He has abolished death, and now He stands in the midst of His disciples, and says, "Peace be unto you." See the position He puts you in, and what you gain from the last Adam—Peace! There is an end of every hostile element. Why? Man's nature was the hostile element, and that is what has been judicially put out of the way. Souls fail to see that if righteousness have not full sway, there could not be peace or an offer of it. But God's righteousness has had its way, and has been carried out in the sacrifice of Christ; and so God's love is free to take the thief to Paradise!

The sinner's judgment has been borne—the old man has been crucified with Christ. Righteousness and peace cannot kiss each other, if righteousness itself is not perfectly satisfied. The element of disturbance is the thing to be judged, and if it is judged it is gone for ever. Then He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." This is a new order of existence, in which there is "no condemnation,"—"the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

Can any say, while seeing this new order of life, "I prefer to continue in the old thing?" If a man believes in this wonderful order of existence, is it any wonder to see him devoted? Nay, it is a wonder if *he is not*.

The Lord lead our souls to remember, that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Believers can say, even now, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,

who shall change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto his body of glory." Then tell me—can you be occupied with the Adamic existence? I press on each conscience the question, Do you belong to Adam or Christ? Man's man, or God's Man? You are under condemnation as connected with one, or you have obtained eternal life by believing in the other.

"SHEW ME NOW THY WAY."

EXODUS XXXIII. XXXIV.

THE study of this passage brings out very clearly the position in which grace sets us with God, and the blessed confidence it gives us in God; and at the same time the effect of a mixture of grace with law, leaving us really under the latter; at any rate as to our state of mind, where the atonement is not applied, though really all exercise of grace depends on it.

To arrive at a clear understanding of both these states as depicted to us in the passage, we must carefully distinguish between Moses and Israel. Of Moses it is said, "I know thee by name, and thou hast found grace in my sight." He stood in grace. The effect of this I will consider further on—I turn first to Israel. Israel had just made the golden calf. As a formal institution they never came under strict and absolute law. God had spoken to them out of the midst of the fire, and they had undertaken obedience. But before Moses had come down from the mount, they had made the golden calf and broken that first link of all: "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." Moses consequently never brought the two tables of the law given of God into the camp—how could he place them beside a golden calf?—but broke them at the foot of the mount, and left the camp—setting up anticipatively a tabernacle of the congregation outside the camp; and there God met with Moses and talked with him face to face, as a man talks with his friend.

But he is told to go up to God again in the mount; and here we may look at the state of Israel. He had told them, "Ye have sinned a great sin, and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." He does so, "and Moses returned unto the Lord and said, Oh this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold; yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin;

and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." They were put fully under law; each man responsible for his sin, which is most righteous of course as law and judgment, but atonement was not made, but personal responsibility left everything on the individual. Blessed be God, Christ has not said, "I will go up . . . peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin;" He has made a perfect atonement (and thus gone down), and sat down on the right hand of God. But this was not so here. Who indeed could do it but He?

However, the people are, through the mediation of Moses in a measure as to present dealings, put under grace. The people humbled themselves, and they are spared, and God's presence goes with them. God retreats into His own sovereignty to be gracious and show mercy. So surely it always is. As Jehovah He then declares His name: not the gospel founded on accomplished redemption, full forgiveness, and acceptance in Christ, who has wrought it; but the terms of God's forbearing mercy in His government of Israel.* "Jehovah, Jehovah Elohim, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty (just what God does through Christ by the atonement); visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon *the children, and upon the children's children* unto the third and to the fourth generation." Such are the terms of God's dealings with Israel on Moses' intercession, while they were put back under law, and the latter and commandments renewed. It was, as I have said, a mixture of grace and law. Grace that spared, and as a present thing forgave, but put back under law again, under which, as a strict and absolute rule, Israel had wholly failed.

And such is a vast part of current Christianity: admitted failure under a broken law, mercy that has spared and as a present thing forgiven, and then men put back under law as a rule of life to keep it.

But Moses could not make atonement, and Israel was put back under law, though spared in mercy. But Christ has made atonement we all blessedly know; and "when He *had*

* I do not doubt all three, as every mercy is founded on atonement. See Rom. iii. 25.

by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." There was no "peradventure" here. He finished the work His Father gave Him to do, and is glorified *as Man* at the right hand of God, in a glory He had with the Father before the world was. Hence the gospel is a ministration of righteousness—the righteousness of God is revealed in it. Men are not under law, but under grace.

Remark here that it is the law, here as then added to grace in the ways of God, which the apostle calls the ministration of death and condemnation. The first time Moses came down from the mountain his face (the circumstance the apostle alludes to) did not shine. When he had all God's goodness pass before him and came down the second time it did.

Still, as we have seen and as is evident, this people, though spared by grace, were put back under law; and this was the ministration of death and condemnation of which the apostle speaks. For in fact, if atonement be not made, grace only makes transgression worse, at any rate in the revelation of God, even in partial glory, with law must be condemnation to a sinner. Law after grace, in a word, is what the apostle teaches us is condemnation: law after atonement is worse than absurd. It is putting away the sin, and then putting under it: or making the law of no authority and no effect. But vague grace-sparing, and then law, is the state of multitudes of souls; and that is what the apostle tells us is death and condemnation in its nature, and indeed the veil is soon over the reflexion of grace to the soul (*i.e.*, the perception that exists of grace is soon lost).

The difference between Moses and Israel is touchingly alluded to in 2 Cor. iii., where it is said, "When it shall turn to the Lord the veil shall be taken away." For Moses, when he went into the sanctuary, took it off. But it is done away in Christ.

The people then were under law.

Let us now turn to Moses who had found grace in God's sight. First we find single-eyed desire towards God and His way. It was not, A safe way across the wilderness; but "Show me now *thy* way," and that "that I might know thee." This is single-eyed and beautiful" (xxxiii. 12, 13), and this is the way, as in John xiv., of finding practically grace or favour in our walk, as Enoch did. But then he can intercede, "This nation is thy people:" for he did not

separate himself at all from their interests, and wanted God's presence with them. God meets what is in his heart: "My presence shall go and I will give thee rest." He will not call the people indeed "My people," but there will be His presence (through Moses' faith), and then in the way rest.

Moses at once presses on the manifested grace, "If thy presence go not, take us not up hence." He must have God's presence, and he brings the people in. This only (16) separates evidently a people to God, a notable point. Thus it is known that favour rests upon them, for Moses is emboldened by grace, yet just in word and thought in the place of faith, "I and thy people have found grace." It is by his mediation, for that was the true exercise of faith with a heart for God's people; but the same faith will say "*Thy* people," and that is granted too.

Then (for he cannot see the face of God, that for sinners was in atonement, and Christ, the blessed One, alone could do it), the goodness is passed before him, when the glory of His face had passed by, and sovereign mercy, as we have seen, spares. This is the blessed confidence of grace, only we have to say that now we can look at the glory in the unveiled face of Christ, because atonement is made, and the glory is the witness of acceptance and of sin put away.

But there is more as to this grace. We have seen how God is with us in grace in His own way, and knowing Him. But we shall see it meets the evil of our nature. This is shown in the most striking way in this passage. First, God had said, "I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee," for thou art a stiff-necked people. He could not tolerate sin in His presence, and He would not go at all, though He would now let them go up as spared. This gave occasion to the pleading of Moses which we have considered, who felt the value of God's presence. It was everything to him, in holy desire; he could not do without it: and holy boldness through the grace shown him, for he had found grace, and was told so, he claims and obtains it. And now he stood in grace and known goodness; and when all the goodness had passed before him, he says, bowing his head to the earth, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord (Adonai, not Jehovah), let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people," the very ground God had given for cutting them off.

And could we go: could we get the better of our stiff neck of our flesh, and get safely through the wilderness, if God were not with us?

But oh, what a change grace has made. Here is the very reason for consuming in just judgment, the motive for asking God to be with us.

How complete this grace! God, in whose present grace we stand, is our resource against the evil in us, which was the just ground in itself of cutting us off. How very perfect and complete this grace is, and the ground of God's relationship with us. Here, too, though it rests on the Mediator, as we know it does, yet Moses brings the people fully in—"go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin; and take us for thine inheritance." His faith is very beautiful here, and faith knows God, and indeed it only.—J. N. D.

THE COUNSEL OF MAN AND THE PURPOSE OF GOD.

JOHN XL 47-53.

WHEN the devil entered the garden of Eden he professed himself to be man's friend. When the Lord Jesus was on earth He was called in derision the sinner's friend. The devil told Eve as her friend what she ought to have, and how to get it. The Lord Jesus told sinners what they wanted, and how they could enjoy it. Was the devil's profession of friendship true? Is not the character of the Lord Jesus as the sinner's friend, fully manifested? This chapter shows it out, and is enough to settle the doubt, if any could exist, in the mind of a single individual.

Lazarus had died, and the Lord raised him up from the dead. Thereupon the rulers of Israel were stirred up to put Jesus to death. But why did death exist at all? Sin entered into the world, and death by sin. Lazarus who deserved death had been recovered from the grave, the Lord who was holy was to enter into it. At the grave the Lord showed Himself as the sinner's friend, who could reverse the righteous doom that man deserved. He had the power to kill as well as make alive. The devil had the power of death, but he could not recover a single individual from it. He could kill, and he desired to do it, even to kill Him who had raised up Lazarus; but resurrection was beyond his power, foreign to his designs. Who then was man's friend?

He who had received the power of death, and delighted to exercise it, or He who could kill, but could also recover man from the just consequence of his guilt?

The death of Lazarus was an event which awakened the sympathies of many; the resurrection of Lazarus was an event which aroused the fears, and stirred up the enmity, of the rulers in Israel. Told by those who witnessed it what had taken place, they summoned a council to consider what should be done. "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." Satan, who had counselled Eve to her ruin, led on these misguided men to carry out, as far as possible, not their wishes, but his. They wished to save their national existence, he wished its extinction, and led them to take steps to that end. They owned that Jesus did miracles. This fact should have made them ponder their actions. They had forgotten God's provision to keep Israel from being led astray by false prophets. His miracles should have called attention to this, which would have kept them from the evils of the devil. "If thou shalt say in thine heart how shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously." (Deut. xviii. 21-22.) Such were God's directions to which, had they given heed, they would have been saved from the sin of compassing the death of His Son. The Lord had declared beforehand that Lazarus would be raised up. He told His disciples of it before they re-entered Judæ. He told Martha of it when she met Him, though she misconstrued the meaning of His words. He announced it publicly, when, to her remonstrance at the grave's side, He answered: "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God." He thus intimated beforehand what He would do, and He did it. The glory of God was seen when Lazarus walked out of the tomb.

The resurrection of Lazarus accomplished, the death of the Lord Jesus was decided on—If now left alone all will believe on Him. That could not be suffered by Satan, for his power over the people would be annulled. It could not be suffered by the Jews, for the Romans would be alarmed,

and their national existence be jeopardized. Such was their reasoning; plausible to them, fallacious and worse. Little did they think whither they had drifted. Little knew they how entangled they had become in the meshes of the enemy. For who were they who had thus spoke, and what was it they said? They were the descendants of those whom God had redeemed and brought out of Egypt. They formed part of God's earthly people. What language for them to use, what reasoning for them to adopt! They had forgotten that God was their Redeemer, and they had abandoned the ground of being part of His redeemed people. Truly against the Romans they had no strength: but what strength had their Father against the hosts of Egypt or the iron chariots of the Canaanites? What a victory Satan had gained, when such reasoning could pass current among the descendants of the conquerors of Canaan. Had any asked them who they were, would they not have maintained they were the people of God? Yet they had practically surrendered that ground, when they met in council, shut out God from their thoughts, and devised for themselves a plan of conciliating the Romans to preserve their nationality and land.

Where was Satan's friendship for man? He was leading on the Jews to their destruction under the specious guise of preserving their place and city; and as he acted then, so we may trace his acts now, as the distinctive truths of Christianity are surrendered or ignored by those who profess to be members of the Church of God. Redemption accomplished, salvation known, the Lord Jesus abiding in glory, the Holy Ghost abiding on earth, are truths distinctive of Christianity. Are not these ignored or practically denied by many? And what is the characteristic of the movement around us but the onward sweep of that wave of error, which is really antagonistic to these cardinal articles of our faith.

To return, the chief priests felt something must be done, but the High Priest it was who told them what they should do. "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." Neither he nor they understood the real meaning of his words. As High Priest he prophesied. The words he uttered were not his own, though he affixed his own meaning to them. Could they have crucified the Lord if they had known the object of His death? They thought only of offering him up as a

holocaust to appease the Romans; the words of the High Priest really shadowed out the offering up of Himself to God.

From the counsels of man we are turned to the counsels of God, for, being High Priest that year, Caiaphas was the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost. Observe the language of Caiaphas, "one man;" and the language of the Evangelist, "Jesus." Caiaphas spoke of the need of a death, whilst pointing to the Lord as the one to be sacrificed; the Evangelist interprets his words, and tells us that the death of Jesus alone could suffice. The High Priest thought of preservation from a Roman war, John points out that it was deliverance from God's just wrath. There was the need for his death that God should deal in mercy with the people; there was no need for any sacrificial death that their enemies should be overcome. They looked only to man. God had respect to their sins before Him.

But what an admission this was, that Jesus should die for that nation, an admission which should sink into the heart of every self-righteous soul, for it proclaims in language clear and forcible the impossibility of man obtaining an unchallengeable standing before his God by anything that he can do. Had any been able to make good their standing before God it would have been the nation of Israel. For fifteen hundred years they had been in possession of God's law, and for centuries had the daily burnt offering ascended up from the brazen altar—yet a man to die for them, even Jesus, was needed; for all their sacrifices, however perseveringly offered up, could never put away sin. What their sacrifices could not accomplish they really needed. Jesus must die for the people. They required a sacrifice, they required a substitute. They required one who was without sin, and in Him alone could the requisites be found. Of their real need, however, they were ignorant, so thought only of the Romans. God knew it, and in His goodness provided for it.

To preserve their national existence they decided Jesus must die. To continue in possession of the land they compassed His death. He died. They carried out their will, and found themselves exiles, wanderers, homeless, countryless; the objects of the world's scorn; the subjects of Gentile oppression. It was needful that Jesus should die to preserve the nation for a future day. God's holiness they

left out of account, but He could not. God's protection they renounced, but He did not cast off the people. He would save Israel, not from the Romans, but from His just wrath to preserve them as His people on earth, and a future day will disclose to that nation the absolute necessity of that death, and how impossible it was for their forefathers by that to be shielded from the power of Rome. Their plans will be proved to have failed, God's counsels will yet take full effect.

But further, He died not for that nation only. There was a positive need of His death for Israel, as made apart from the general character of His atonement. The efficacy, however, of His death extended beyond them. "Not for that nation only," says John, "but that also He should gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad." Seeing the multitude attracted to the Lord, they decided on removing the head, in order that the ever increasing crowd of followers might disperse. Dispersion they aimed at; gathering together God proposed. Never did man more miscalculate the effect by his actions. His counsel came to nought, his devices proved to be of no effect. Nothing that he hoped for was effected by the death of Christ. Nothing that God intended by it could be frustrated. Gathering, not scattering, resulted from it, such a gathering as never before had been witnessed. Satan hoped to destroy the nation, and to stop the spreading. The Jews hoped to conciliate the favour of their rulers. Both were signally confounded. God's purpose for Israel, however, will be surely made good.

But here the thought comes in, Do souls practically own God's designs for his saints now? "to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." In glory this will be displayed, on earth now this should be owned, for by the death of Christ it was brought about. Shall we wait for the glory ere we own it? At Pentecost and after, believers manifested it; at the Lord's table believers declare it (1 Cor. x. 17). No failure on man's part can hinder the reality of it. Christ died for this end; but failure on his part to own it hinders the manifestation of it. God has declared His purpose of gathering together into one the children of God scattered abroad. Shall we own this, and help forward the manifestation of it, or, like the Jews, shut God out of our thoughts, and devise desires for ourselves,

and form unities of our own, on ground of our own choosing? As nothing that the Jews hoped to effect by their act did really come to pass, so nothing that man can devise against the Church of God can really remain steadfast. But God has counselled and executed His counsel. Shall we enter into His mind—wish to carry it out? How cheering to witness the unchanging purpose of God about His people and about His saints. Nothing diverted Him from His purpose, nothing could mar or annul His counsels.—C. E. S.

THE LEARNING OF OURSELVES.

It is sweet to know that peace with God, and our meetness for heaven, *never* depends in anywise upon what is in ourselves. Christ has made peace, by the blood of His cross (Col. i. 20). He announced it as made after He rose from the dead; and we come into all the fruits of His work without any effort on our part whatsoever. God has applied His work to our souls when even without strength to accept it. I rejoice to see a deep exercise of soul, as I know that He is applying that work. The very exercise proves this—a natural man would not have any. This terrible breaking-up work goes before peace with God. But God is only bringing us to know, not only that we have done *evil* things, but that in us dwells no *good* thing. We often think in these exercises how cold we are—how dead; how there is no love; how fond we are of the world—of things around us—of everything but Christ; no desire for the study of the Word—for spiritual things—much for worldly things. Surely it is bitter work to learn ourselves thus: saddest of all to find that in our flesh dwells *no good*; and more, that there never will be any. To will present all the while, but how to perform that which is good not found. But we are going through a process to cast us over on the rich and sovereign grace of God, who, as soon as we give up hopes of being better, allows us to discover that the “I” who would do good is really “Christ in us,” and not ourselves. Then “Christ in us” can work and bring forth fruit. Then He can produce the love and godly desires we so sadly discovered lay not in us. Grace deals with us as worthless.

You say, “I feel I don’t love God—how cold I am—I have no desires after Him—but I find I have desires after everything else.” He says, “Herein is love, *not* that we

loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10). These exercises prove that God has quickened your soul into life—life is working, and what you need is liberty—not doubts. It is never said, "Hereby doubt we;" always, "Hereby know we." You want to get your eye *off* yourself totally, and get it *on* Christ. Look within and you will find nothing but doubts. Look on Him who is in heaven, you will never get one there. Satan tries to keep you looking within—he knows if you cease to look there you *will* get free. 'Tis quite true that in our hearts there is that which troubles us much more than actual *guilt*: *i.e.*, that we can find nothing *good* in them. 'Tis a humiliating discovery in the face of such love as His has been to us. Still we *must* learn it, and when it is learned, *then* He is free to produce in us good fruit when we yield ourselves unto Him. It is the most distressing thing to learn the deadness of our hearts in presence of His perfect love; but learn it we must, and then we turn away from ourselves—never looking there again for anything—to Him, and the heart learns that *all* its fresh springs are in Christ. If it were not so, we *would* have *something* to glory in, and grace would not be grace.

SUMMER AND WINTER.

"COMMUNE with your own heart upon your bed and be still." (Ps. iv. 4.) What a blessed word! We lose considerably, both in reading and hearing, from not conferring with our own hearts upon the truth we may have received, or at the time felt to be applicable to us.

The ant is set before us as an example of one who prepares for the winter. Now we find that God provides us with provisions for some dreary time that is coming; but instead of being like the ant, when the winter comes, want comes on us like an armed man (Prov. vi. 11); it is not only winter, but we have no food, and all because we only enjoyed ourselves (which sleep expresses) during the summer. Nothing reveals this to us, if we at all judge ourselves, so much as the great difference between us in summer and in winter; in the former we seem to enjoy everything, we could almost imitate the lark; but when winter, the frost and pitiless blast supervene, all the supposed spiritual joy of the summer's day is gone, and we can talk and think only of the

inclemency of the air which surrounds us. This painful discrepancy or exposure of our want would not occur if we really had stored provisions, suited for the exigence to which we are exposed. The apostle could say that he had learned in whatsoever state he was therewith to be content; he knew how to be abased and how to abound; he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him. (See Phil. iv. 11-13.) I believe the soul ought to say, when it takes in any truth, "Some day I shall want it, now let me see how it fits me, and whether I have it from God; in a word, that I have made it as much my own as the money in my purse—as the strength by which I can do anything, or any other acquisition of which I have real possession." Better a soul should feel how unprovided he is for winter, than that he should lie down and try to slumber over it. It is very hopeful when a soul feels how it has neglected to provide for the day of trial; that if ever a summer again occurs he will not, through God's grace, fail to make use of it.

Receiving truth without pondering or self-judgment, only leaves the soul, in the end, more barren; simply for this reason, that you weaken your appreciation of anything if you find that it only charmed you, but had no place of abiding use or benefit to you.

How happy one might be, pondering alone the thoughts and ways of our Lord. Stormy days will come; but if we are diligent now we shall only prove, in those dreary times, the truth and excellence of His counsels. A clean animal must ruminate; feeding well will not do, the other must follow.

Meditate and find the true applicability of all you hear and learn to yourself, and what one really learns (certainly in Divine things) one never forgets.

Be a large dictionary to yourself, to explain every word the Lord may drop into your soul, and be able to tell the meaning.

NOTES OF READINGS ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

(CHAP. iii., ver. 20.) The conclusion Paul arrives at, after his elaborate argument ending with v. 19, is, that "by deeds of law" (*i.e.* works of any kind as presented from man to God in this state of sin) "shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of *sin*." That is, it brought

out and disclosed the fact that there was a nature (sin) in man which liked to commit sins. Why has my reader committed sins? Because he has a nature that likes to do so. The prohibitory character of the law discloses this grave fact. A child may have no desire to go out of doors; its parent desires it not to go; all its efforts are directed now to go out. The prohibition discovered that there was a nature there that would push its own will against the prohibition, and break it down if it could. If I forbid a person who is not doing it, to do a wrong act, I assume by the prohibition that he is about to do it, or has a nature that would. Instead, then, of being a way of life, it discovers *sin* in a sinner who has left God. It discovers the will of a sinner, which is there, as opposed to God, a will which Adam set up against Him in the garden of Eden, and which we inherit ever since.

(Ver. 21.) But now a righteousness entirely of another character, inasmuch as, instead of being man's by law, it is God's righteousness through faith of Jesus Christ; "unto all" (this is its aspect,) but "*upon* all them that believe." As wide as the sun's rays, shining on the evil and on the good, which none can question as doubting if they had an interest in them—as wide as God's love to all; so is this righteousness presented to sinners. But more; in its application or effect, it is, "upon all" that believe.

Now the law and the prophets had witnessed of this righteousness. For instance, "He shall receive righteousness from the God of his salvation." (Ps. xxiv. 5.) "In the Lord have I righteousness." (Isaiah xlv. 24.) "Hearken unto Me, ye stout hearted, that are far from righteousness, I bring near My righteousness." (Isaiah xlv. 12, 13.) Many other passages witnessed to this.

Mark, too, how God connects His righteousness with the *blood* of Christ, not with His *life*, or keeping of the law, here upon earth. (See v. 25.) Surely He did keep the Law. It was in His heart, while there was much more there too. He magnified the law and made it honourable. But this has nothing to do with God's righteousness. God is righteous in His nature, and hates evil. He must judge it when He meets it. But He is love too. If He had acted in righteousness merely, He would have driven away all sinners to perdition, but where then would be His love? If He had acted in love merely, and spared all sinners and brought them to heaven, where was His righteousness? In His love He anticipates

the day of judgment, and gives His Son to bear the sins He would otherwise have to judge. He makes His Son a mercy seat through faith in His blood, and the poor sinner who comes to God in his sins, finds that God in the magnificence of His own righteousness justifies Him for all he is, and has done through the blood of Christ. God now declares His own righteousness at "this time;" it existed in the purpose of God, and hence He gave promises to which faith clung. It is now manifested in the gospel. God's righteous sentence has been executed on His Son for sin. He was glorified in the fulness of that work of the Cross. When the sentence was executed, and the demands of righteousness satisfied, God's estimate of the work, which had so glorified Him, was to raise up the Man who did this work, from the dead, and place Him in the glory of God. God now justifies the ungodly in full consistency with His own nature. We are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ, who has been set forth as a propitiatory, or mercy-seat, and by faith in His blood. The blood shedding of Christ proves how righteously God had passed over the sins of the saints of old, having it in view. Now, His righteousness is shown, not in forbearing with, but in justifying the believer in Jesus. The question is now answered, can man that is a sinner, approach a righteous God in himself? In himself he cannot. But Christ has been made a sacrifice for sin. He has answered for all we have done in the old man, and all we are. We had not merely come short of what Adam ought to have been; or what the law required; but now that the glory of God is revealed, we have come short of it; we could not stand before it. No use pleading that God is love, which is quite true; but when we face the glory of God in ourselves, we are undone. Sin has levelled every distinction; "There is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But we find that God has come in, and by the blood shedding of Christ has met the case, and solved the question of good and evil for ever, in the Cross. Thus, His righteousness has full sway to justify according to itself, those who believe.

Where is boasting then? Could a Jew boast over a Gentile? No. All were guilty—there was no difference between them. God in grace had treated them alike, and justified those who believed. Works of man had no place in this grand scheme; "Therefore," (says the apostle) we "con-

clude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." He is the God of the Jew as well as of the Gentile, but in grace. Grace which justified both on the principle of faith. Faith owned the law's full righteous sentence in condemning, and by no means clearing the guilty; bowed under its decree, and found the law's curse had fallen on Jesus when He was hanged on the tree. Thus, its claims were established,—its majesty was upheld, and God was honoured who had given it. Instead of being made void by faith, the law never had received such a glorious vindication as in the death of Christ.

SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

"D. M. A." Deal. What is meant by eating and drinking "unworthily," of the bread and the cup, in 1st Cor. xi. 29?

A.—The "unworthily" refers to the *manner* of partaking of the Lord's Supper, not to the person who partakes. Every believer, unless excluded by some discipline for sin, is worthy to partake, because he is a Christian. The work of Christ has made him meet for heaven, and worthy to partake of that which calls to mind his Lord in the solemn moment of death, sinbearing, and judgment. If he bring unjudged sin, or carelessness to it, it is to profane the death of Christ, who died to put sin away from God's sight for ever. The Christian cannot be condemned for sin (the world is condemned); but Christ having borne his sin, God does not condemn him for it, although He cleanses him practically from it by chastening. It never escapes His eye—and while He never imputes it for condemnation, still He never passes it over, and if we do not judge it in ourselves, He deals with us for sin by discipline, which may reach to sickness unto death, as verse 30 shows.

If we eat the Lord's Supper with unjudged sin upon us, we do not discern the Lord's body which was broken to put it away; thus we partake of it unworthily, and God cannot allow such carelessness. Grace makes us worthy to partake, but the government of God, administered by the Lord over God's house, deals with sin or carelessness. Still, if we scrutinize our own ways, and judge ourselves, we are not judged of the Lord. Judging ourselves for failure, is our course, and then *eating* the Lord's Supper. Some have thought they should *absent* themselves from the Supper when

they have failed. But He does not say "Let a man judge himself and so let him stay away," but "so let him eat." Staying away is mere self-will. It is not enough to judge the mere *action*; it is *ourselves* we should judge. The state of our heart which allowed the failure, should be subjected to scrutiny and self-judgment. If I am a child, I judge my *ways*, if they are unsuited to my father; but I do not set about to judge if I am a child, when I fail; but how naughty I have been as the son of such a father. I may behave very unworthily of my kind father, but my behaviour is not the ground of the relationship. I cannot be a naughty child unless I am a child: and the relationship is the ground of self-judgment, that I may behave myself suitably to the relationship, and to Him who is my Father.

NOT MY WILL BUT THINE.

Father, Thy will be done!

I ask Thee not to take away

The bitter cup,

But meekly bow my head, and say

Hold Thou me up,

Oh, Thou most Holy One.

Father, Thy will be done!

Though hard and sore the trial be,

I will be calm,

And seek no comfort, save in Thee.

Thou hast the balm,

Oh, Thou most Holy One.

Father, Thy will be done;

I cannot murmur at the blow

Struck from above,

Because my sorrowing heart doth know

'Twas sent in love,

Oh, Thou most tender One.

Father, Thy will be done!

Though earthly props and comforts fail,

Be Thou my stay;

Keep me within the riven veil

From day to day.

O, Thou most gracious One.

Father, Thy will be done!

May this be ever on my tongue

Till Jesus come;

When I shall sing the Lamb's new song

In that bright home,

Where tears and trials are unknown.

C. A. W.

"RECKON YOURSELVES DEAD."

THERE are two great truths we have to learn as to God's ways in salvation with us. First, That "Christ died for our sins," and put them away; and secondly, that we have died with Him. This latter truth is at the bottom of all true liberty. Many souls have learned the first who have not learned the second. There are thousands, too, who have never even learned the first of them. Even that, when we were nothing but sinners, God loved us and gave His Son to die for our sins. He has died and put them away. God Himself has cleared us, and justified us, and set us in divine favour before Himself, and given us to rejoice in hope of His glory: and in all this there is not one thought but that we were sinners, and needed grace; and He saw our need and revealed His grace to us. All this depends upon what *God is to us*, not upon what *we are to God*. It is mixing up these two that produces all the unhappiness and want of certainty you find in souls. I begin to think of what He has been to me, and then I begin to think of what I am to Him, even since I heard of His love, and I am uncertain and miserable. I see His love, and then I say, why I don't love Him after all. My heart is cold and dead. I love the things of the world a great deal more than I love Him; and after all I would like to love Him, and I can't do it. Many souls are in this state. But the secret of all is, that they are mixing up their own thoughts and feelings with the redemption that is in Christ, and consequently they have no real solid peace. What such want, is to be taken off their own estimate of self to God's estimate of Christ. Thus Christ takes the place of their estimate of self, and the soul is at rest.

There are two ways in which we learn the gospel of His grace. First, a soul goes through a deep legal process—deep exercises of soul before full forgiveness is known, and then when it has learned it, all is bright and clear. Another way is, a soul hears the gospel preached—full free pardon and forgiveness announced—and receives the message, but without the knowledge of self, or an evil nature within. By and by it begins to discover that there is the same old evil nature within as ever, no change in it—it is just as dead in divine things as ever, and alive in worldly things. Perhaps even a fall has come, and he begins to conclude he was not converted at all—that there was no true work of God in his soul.

The very joy of a first conversion which we are apt to have—a very real joy too, has thrown the soul off its guard, and the sense of entire dependence is lost—the joy has taken it off its dependence, and it has fallen perhaps into sin. The first beginning of a fall is the loss of the sense of dependence on God. The characteristics of the new man are dependence and obedience. When there is not dependence, we get away from direct reference to God, and then disobedience follows.

Now, not only has Christ died for us, but we have died with him. This is true in God's mind for every believer; but the two things are quite distinct. If I say, "God has forgiven me through Christ," it is exceedingly simple. Many souls know this, that do not know the other. Even the natural man who has not got forgiveness, can understand it. But to go and tell a man he is dead, he will reply, "What is the use of telling me that when I am alive." The more sincere a person is the more difficult it is for him to say, "I'm dead to sin." Yet God says, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vi. 11). *It is this that is the great subject of the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.* In the early part of the epistle we get the terrible condition of man unveiled in the presence of God Himself. Terrible, because so true. Sinning, law breaking, and God-hating characterizing all men—Jew and Gentile—all under sin, all under judgment. "All have sinned and come short," of the duty of man? nay, but "of the glory of God." Sinners must now have to say to God, every mouth is stopped and all the world guilty before Him. No use for a man covered with guilt talking about wanting help. Help won't do when he has to face God as a judge. Hope for the day of judgment is all a delusion. Hope will then be over for eternity. Those who then will be judged will be lost for ever and for ever! But Christ died for sinners—died in perfect love, and pity, and goodness, for vile, lost, ruined sinners. He died "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." He brings us into God's presence as a conscious thing *now*. God cleanses, and pardons, and justifies the vilest sinner who trusts in Him. The cross proves how righteous He is in doing so. Christ offered His blood to God, and its sweet savour so fills His presence, that He entreats sinners to come in—washed and cleansed by it. Can you doubt its value in God's sight? Impossible. God never imputes one shadow

of sin to the soul which trusts in Him. Christ was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. He came back from the grave after leaving them all behind Him. All that I am, all that I have done as a child of Adam, is put away for ever. "Where sin abounded" in me, "grace did much more abound." All the believing one's debts are paid by Jesus. God sees not one shadow upon him who trusts in Jesus. If the enemy accuses, God says, "Who is he that condemneth?" I don't see one spot, or stain!

But all this does not give me a new place with God now. God has put away all that was against me, because Christ took upon Him all that I earned, and died for me in love. Still, though cleansed, I have not by this got into a new place before Him. And now I learn another thing here—I learn not merely that Christ died for my sins, and put them away, but that *I have died with Him*. The nature and condition in which I stood before God is thus, to faith, ended in the cross of Christ. It is easy to see that each man has his own sins as a sinner, and they never can become another's. But all are of one common lump when you look at them in the nature in which the sins were committed; and even when I find my sins are forgiven, I find the same nature there, unchanged as before. This is what so troubles souls. I begin to look how this can be, and I find, "By *one* man's disobedience many were made sinners." It is not merely the many sins which each has done, but "*one man's sin*" has given me this nature. It is unchanged though I'm forgiven, and I may fall into sin again. This is what troubles a soul more deeply than actual sins. Now, this nature never can go to heaven. It becomes a question, not merely of things *done*, but of this nature, what I *am*. He does not forgive a nature. Even suppose I have learned that He has forgiven my sins—what I have done, there is no forgiveness of a nature. A mother forgives her child when it has been naughty; she does not forgive the nature that produced the naughty thing. What is now to be done? How am I to be delivered from an evil nature for which there is no forgiveness. It must die. I must reckon it dead. "Our old man was crucified with Christ. . . . reckon ye also yourselves to be dead."

It is not simple to be able to say, "I am dead." If Christ has borne my sins, they are all put away; that is very intelligible; but it is not easy to say, I am dead to sin. It supposes a soul thoroughly subject to God. Sin has no

dominion over me, if I reckon myself dead. We are never called to die to sin in Scripture. We have to mortify our members that are on earth; but to believe that we *have* died in Christ. One who thinks he has to die to sin has not understood that the flesh lusts against the Spirit to the very end. The will of the flesh never dies; and surely I don't want the new nature to die.

Now, the soul often goes through a deep painful process in learning this. When I learn, not only that I had *sins*, but "that in me—that is in my flesh—*dwelleth no good thing*." Not, merely, that I have done bad things which are all blotted out, but that the mind of the flesh is incorrigible; it is enmity against God. When left to itself, the flesh brought in the flood; when it got the law, it broke it. When brought into the presence of Christ it crucified Him. When the Spirit dwells in us it lusts against Him; and if a man is taken up to the third heaven, when he returns to his consciousness as a man down here again, all that can be done is to send him a thorn in the flesh to buffet him. The mind of the flesh is not merely *carnal*, but *enmity* against God. There is no remedy for it—it won't die. What then is to be done?

If I find a wild apple tree, I don't dig about it and prune it to get fruit. I cut it down and graft it; but I never think of making *it* better. I graft it with a good kind of apple, *then* I get fruit. And, moreover, I don't call it by the name of the old tree; I call it by the name of the new graft. God grafts us. He judged the old man in the cross of Christ. He looks for no fruit from it. To Him its existence is ended there: it is cut down. Faith thinks God's thoughts as to it. A believer is one who accepts God's thoughts instead of his own; and he is right! He grafts the old tree after cutting it down in the cross, and gets fruit. He gives us Christ for our life. Faith says, "I am crucified with Christ"—the old tree is cut down. "Nevertheless I live; yet not I"—not the old tree now; it is cut down—dead. "But Christ liveth in me;" the new life, the implanting of a new graft. I then have Christ really living in me—the life of Christ becomes the true "I." The old stump is there, and if I'm not watchful it will sprout up again. It is the same old tree—not removed by grafting; and never will. So we don't talk of dying to sin, but of living "Christ"—the true "I." Now I reckon myself dead to sin, and alive to God in Jesus Christ, who is my life.

But, what Christ is it who is my life? It is He who died. Then I've died in Him: and here is what exercises the honest soul. It exclaims, "But I can't say I'm dead—I feel I'm alive." You have not learned that God's word is more true than your thoughts. I accept His thoughts, and I say, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." When a soul has learned that by a humbling painful process, God then lets him see that Christ is his life; the true "I"—Christ is his standing before God.

When it is a question between my experience and God's word, it is not so simple. When I bow to it, and give up all hope of being better, you say, "I give it up—I can't master it," then all is peace. I can then say, "When I was in the flesh." "I have left it; I am in the Spirit before God. I am not now a child of Adam, but a child of God; though I've got a child of Adam in me to contend with. As I had the life of the first Adam, I *have* life in the second Adam. But the first Adam is no longer 'I.' It broke my heart. I longed to do good, and could not—sin was too much for me. The law was good, and I could not keep it. I hated the sin. The law came and said, I can't let you lust now, and it condemned me. I hated the sin, and the law cursed it. It was no use trying to get peace by progress and victory over myself." It is deep humbling work to go through those experiences necessary to find out that I have died with Christ. The law was good, and conscience owned it as God's authority. It has power over a man as long as he liveth; but I have learned that I have died. The gaoler has not died, but the prisoner has. The gaoler has no dominion over a dead man.

Beloved brethren, we never learn this till we are brought to the miserable condition that makes us cry out, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Then I give up hopes of doing so myself, and the next moment I can say, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is all done. I'm delivered—I'm set free. Thank God, I can reckon it dead. I have died with Christ—died in that wherein I was held, that I might be married to another, even to Him who is risen from the dead, in order to bring forth fruit to God. (Rom. vii. 4.) I am partner with Him who is risen. Not merely are my debts paid, but what belongs to Him is mine. I have got His riches, His peace, His glory, His joy. I have a right to reckon myself dead, because I'm one with Him who died for me. You can't charge

sin upon a dead man; therefore, "He that is dead is justified from sin." (Rom. vi. 7.) He sinned when alive; but now he is dead. There is no accusation against such in the presence of God. God has condemned the nature in the cross of His Son. I find the nature in me; but I know God has condemned it in His Son (Rom. viii. 3), and I condemn it too. I am dead and done with it. I don't now try to manage it. I reckon it dead—then sin does not reign in my mortal body. The new "I" is free to live to God. If I reckon myself thus dead, how many things I have to deny—to mortify? See how it detects the conscience and searches the heart. Let it live—let it show itself for a moment, and you lose Christ's blessed company along the way.

The Lord give us then to know, that not only has Christ died for us, and put our *sins* away, but that we have died with Him, and we are justified from *sin*. Alive now to God in Him who is our life, we have a new place before God, in which we have positive possessions in Him; all things that He as man in glory possesses are ours. There is a new "I," and for faith and for God the old "I" is gone for ever. I have not merely my debts paid by my kind Father, when I came home a poor spendthrift and prodigal, but He has taken me into partnership, when I had not a penny to bring in; and I can call all His mine now. I have a right to do so, because Christ is my life. He has won my heart in lowliness, and cleansed my conscience in death. But more, I've died with Him, and am now united to Him in a new place, to live to God with no motive but Christ! All that's His is mine. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

THOUGHTS ON PROVIDENCE AND SATAN.

THOSE who are satisfied with the bare knowledge of God in relation to themselves, which the outward range of their daily mercies affords; and who are instructed by the truth, and by Christ, in the faith of what God has revealed in the Scriptures, are in great danger of not discovering the workings of Satan, by means of these natural blessings, or what is called Providence.

This danger arises from the ever-flowing goodness and bountifulness of God, "even to the unthankful and the evil," pledged as He is, by gracious promise under the Noah cove-

nant, that "seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."

Satan can originate nothing of himself that is different from himself—"he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because 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." He must therefore take advantage of what God is, and what He bestows in long suffering mercy and grace upon His creatures; as the material by which to work against Him—and even make this absolute goodness of God, an assailable point for mischief, through the active wickedness of fallen human nature, which always supplies a link to him in his enmity, further to discredit God, and by means of His love, alas! so that mankind "glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." Human selfishness too (which being what it is) can duly gain its support from the abuse of these external mercies so abundantly supplied, and come within its grasp; lends its hand willingly or unwillingly to this craft of the devil.

The result of "the Preacher's research is solemnly stated in Ecclesiastes vii., "Lo this only have I found, that God hath made man upright: but they have *sought out* many inventions." This apothegm however, is no longer supposed to be a challenge, or a reflection upon the world's progress; but is accepted as a compliment to human genius, and as an encouragement to modern perseverance. Man, fruitful as he obviously is in expedients, must be on this very account a witness against himself, since this ingenuity can only be displayed, by inventions to ameliorate *his own state*; or to modify the circumstances in which he finds himself placed, by some cause or other superior to what he is, and out of which he is impotent to extricate himself. "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give God a ransom for him that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption."

Adam could never have known a want unprovided for, till by his sin against God, he was driven out from Paradise. to suppose otherwise would be a reflection on the Creator, and that *He* could rest from all his works where the creature could find a lack. Call this genius—and inventive genius if men please so to dignify themselves, with Cain at its head—or let man elevate himself into a second cause by his "ways

and means," in the scientific ranges of a creative or productive power—yet the question remains, *what* gave this opportunity for its exercise? And when this point of self-sufficiency is reached, and by such methods as these, man only throws himself more off from God? Moreover, by this abuse of his natural and external mercies, both personal and relative, he joins issue with Satan in the line of his devices; and this forms the primary but common ground of their combined action, which delivers over to "the course of this world—to the prince of the power of the air—the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

The result of this confederation is, that these gifts bestowed by Providence (or natural mercies) are taken and used by the receiver as a warrant and means for independence and pride or ease with a deepening forgetfulness of their Giver, and ending in a denying of the claims of God, so "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; *then* he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation." Such a state of things as this, must sooner or later bring in *judgment* if merely to maintain the government of God upon the earth—though *grace* will make this its own opportunity for discovering the hidden resources of God's wisdom and love in human redemption, by a full and eternal deliverance.

The original sin, which took man out of the hand of the Creator, when an innocent being—put him into the power of Satan as a sinner, and with an evil nature! What must progressive history be, founded on this double rebellion? save as God brightens up the dark pages of its records, by promises and types, and shadows "of good things to come." By sovereign and effectual grace He brings in this remedy for the rescue of the sinner, and the maintenance of His own holiness. The grand reserve of God, is Jesus Christ, the Son of his own love!

Man, in the fruitless search after the happiness he has lost, little thinks he is leaving it behind him, by still "going out (like Cain) from the presence of God" the only source of blessing, present or eternal; nor can there be either permanent peace, or personal security, till we are brought by gifts (certainly by "His unspeakable gift") to God Himself—till in fact we begin with Him, where He *now* begins with us. Providence cannot supply these wants, nor reconcile a sinner to God. The cross of Christ is the only one meeting-place for exigencies such as ours—the place of Satan's defeat and of our salvation.

Mere gifts of whatever kind or range, can never put us outside the enemy's power, nor plant us inside the circle of the coming glory ; but an association and oneness through grace with a risen and ascended Saviour and Lord does place us where the devil has neither title nor dominion. We are beyond the reach of the enemy, with Christ and through Christ, with God, and by means of His own gift, in grace, but with the giver, "the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Blessed portion, "the Egyptians whom ye have seen *to-day*, ye shall see them again no more for ever."—B.

THE GAOLER AT PHILIPPI.

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God ; and the prisoners heard them."—*Acts* xvi. 25.

WEeping may endure for all the night, and joy shall surely come "in the morning," but God does not wait till the morning to gladden the hearts of those who trust in Him, and put into their mouths a song of joy and praise. "The Lord will command His loving kindness in the day-time, and *in the night* His song shall be with me." Psalm xlii. 8. These holy men were in circumstances of peculiar discouragement and trial, being hindered by Satan from going forward in that cause they so rejoiced in; even the fulfilling of the ministry they had received of the Lord Jesus, "to testify the gospel of the grace of God." He had, by a vision, guided them into those parts, but had now permitted them to be imprisoned; moreover "many stripes" had been laid on them, and they were cast into the "inner prison." But their confidence in God was still unshaken, and because His loving kindness was better than their liberty, their lips as well as their hearts praised Him. Dear reader, do you know this loving kindness of the Lord, that enables His people to say, "I will bless the Lord at *all* times?" You can sing in the evening when the lights are all burning, and your gay companions round you, but can you sing for joy at *midnight*? When all around is dark and gloomy, what then? Is the *end* of that mirth "heaviness?" Have you no spring of joy in your heart that makes it leap with gladness, when circumstances are adverse; when sickness and pain are wasting your body; when heavy clouds hang over your prospects, and surrounding things have lost their power to charm you?

Then listen to a simple tale of how a poor unhappy sinner, who had never known true joy, was made to rejoice, with all his house, in newly found pardon and peace with God.

Paul and Silas sang with their bleeding backs, and their feet made fast in the stocks; and the other prisoners hear them, and doubtless they wonder greatly at the unwonted midnight song. But are they the only hearers? The gaoler lives hard by; has not he caught the sound, and crept in the night stillness to the dungeon door, to listen to the vesper melody? Ah, no! he is asleep. He hates the men and their testimony, and the blessed one of whom they testify; and he is right glad to have had it in his power to "thrust them into the inner prison," and now he has forgotten them in slumber.

But One beside the prisoners hears the midnight song and supplication of these captives. He who "giveth songs in the night," and who listens ever to the songs of His servants whether raised in prayer or praise, hears "from heaven His dwelling place," the words of His bound ambassadors down in that dungeon; nor does He listen with indifference, for soon He sends a ministering spirit swiftly down to loose their bonds. An earthquake shakes the prison to its foundations; the massive doors fly open, and the manacles of every person within its walls are instantly unfastened. The keeper wakes in terror from his sleep, and finding what is done, at once concludes that all his prisoners are fled. He knows that none but God could work thus wondrously, and sees that He has interposed, whom in his malice towards His servants he had shown but too plainly, He despised and set at nought. His conscience, as his body, has been asleep, but now he is fairly roused from his indifference, his conscience loudly accuses him, and now he madly plunges into despair and is about to destroy himself. But again God in His wondrous mercy interposes, and He stays the murderous hand. Paul has not fled. He does not count his life or his liberty dear to him, so that, in freedom or in bonds, he may but serve his master's pleasure. And his master's pleasure at this moment is that this unhappy slave of Satan shall be delivered from his thralldom, and made to rejoice this night and for ever in the knowledge of His beloved Son. So Paul cries out to him "do thyself no harm, for we are all here." He wished no harm even to the one who had so cruelly treated him, for he was a faithful follower of that

blessed One, who, in an hour of still more unrelenting cruelty, had called for only mercy and forgiveness on behalf of his murderers. The man is astonished; manifestly the finger of God is here also, and he sees it with trembling. His dread despair now gives place to intense desire to know more of these holy men and their doctrine. He calls for a light, and springing into that inner cell falls down before the apostles, whom a few hours since he thrust in there, while, quaking with half abated fear, he cries, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Ah! interesting question. He has now discovered and confesses that he is lost, and needs, and desires to be saved, and as Christ Jesus "came into the world to save" such lost ones, the ready response is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou *shalt be* saved, and thy house." And the poor penitent does believe, and straightway he is saved, and saved eternally. And now witness the marvellous change that has come over the man. Who can doubt it, for see, the very person whom, in the evening, he rudely thrust into that dismal cell, he has now, before the morning light, brought into his own house, himself washing their stripes, and setting meat before them. But the light of a new day has dawned into his soul, for he who, as the willing slave of his worst enemy, could never before have known true peace, now rejoices with all his house, and the new day shall never know a shade of evening, for "in ages to come" this saved sinner shall only prove more fully the depths and "exceeding riches" of that grace he first tasted on this eventful night.

Beloved reader, in *which* of the varied conditions of soul in which we have seen this man do you yourself stand at this moment in the sight of God? Do you, like him, suppose that any interference on your part will hinder his testimony in the world; as if the Creator of the ends of the earth should be thwarted, or His word bound, by casting two of His messengers into an inner prison? By and bye, He will "arise to shake terribly the earth," and where will you be then, or what shall **your** puny strength avail you? But are you more like him in his slumber of indifference? Do you suppose that because your sins do not trouble you, they are no offence to God? Ah! your indifference shows you do not know what God thinks about sin. Surely it is no light matter in *His* sight, or He would not have spared His Son from His bosom, and visited *Him* with wrath because of it, when in the place of the sinner's substitute. Sleep no longer

with the question of your sin unsettled, lest bye and bye you lift up your eyes for the first time "*being in torment.*" Again it may be you *have* been roused, and know yourself a sinner, unfit for the presence of a holy God ; and you listen to Satan, who tells you there is now no hope but only despair. So he told the gaoler, and he was about to destroy himself, but there *was* hope for him in believing the gospel, and so, dear friend, there is hope for you, if with your heart you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. God knows better than you do, all about your sinfulness, but it is *He* who tells you in His word, that He "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life."

BOLDNESS IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

I. JOHN IV. 17.

JOHN says, teaching us under the Holy Ghost, "Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). A most wondrous and very blessed Scripture.

John himself afterwards experienced the boldness of which this Scripture speaks, in a very remarkable way ; he had his own doctrine made good to his spirit by the same hand that brought him the doctrine.

In the Isle of Patmos he was introduced to a day of judgment. The Revelation he got there of the Lord Jesus Christ was a revelation of Him in judicial glory. He saw the Son of Man standing among the golden candlesticks, with white garments, eyes of flame, a voice as of many waters, a countenance as of the sun in his strength, and with feet as though they burnt in a furnace. A solemn, terrible exhibition of Christ in the day of judgment all this was. John falls to the earth as one dead. But the Lord tells him not to fear, speaking to him as the One who had been dead and was alive again, having the keys of hell and death. That is, He imparts to the spirit of His saint, then in the presence of judicial glory, all the virtue of His own condition. Jesus was there, through death and resurrection, holding in His grasp all the power of the enemy, for He had the keys of hell and of death. Such an one speaks comfortably to John. He imparts, as I said, the virtue of His own condition to His saint, though in a day of judgment. "As" He himself was, "so" would He have

John to be, even in the place of victory, the other side of judgment. (Rev. i.)

This was surely wonderful and full of blessing, and John at once feels the power of it and acquires "boldness" in that "day of judgment." For, though the Son of Man is still before him in the same attire and character as he had already seen Him, in judicial glory, with eyes of flame, and feet as though they burnt in a furnace, and a countenance like as the sun shineth in his strength, John has boldness. And then he listened to the voice challenging the Church again and again, but he remains unmoved from beginning to end.

This is very beautiful, and has a great character in it. But still more: another scene of judgment succeeds this, of the Son of Man walking among the candlesticks, and John is yet in the presence of it.

He is carried or summoned by the sound of a trumpet to heaven, preparing itself for the execution of judgment. The thrones were there, thrones of judgment—for the elders are seen clothed in white raiment, befitting those seated in judgment. Voices, lightnings, thunders, instruments of wrath, or witnesses that the Lord was rising up out of His holy place for judgment, proceeded out of the throne; and from thence, as we proceed through the book, all that succeeds is in character, trumpets, vials, fire, smoke, earthquakes, and other terrible sights and symbols, enough to make another Moses quake, as in the day of Sinai. But John maintains the "boldness" he has already acquired, and all through is as unmoved as the divine creatures or crowned elders themselves. They were on high, but he was still in "this world;" they were glorified, but he still in the body; yet he is as calm as they. As they were, so was he. And when the terrible sealed book is seen in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, and a loud voice, as of a mighty angel, challenges all to loose it; instead of dreading the moment when such an awful volume should be opened, he weeps because no one was found equal to do so. He longs to have the secret of the throne disclosed. The day of judgment has no terror for him. He is "as" Christ, and has "boldness."

But this security, God's own calmness and assurance in the day of judgment, has had its witness, or expression, in different forms, again and again, in the course of God's dealing with his elect. As in the time of the flood, in the day of the overthrow of Sodom; at the time of the Exodus; and also at the time of the passage of the Jordan.

These were days of judgment, but the security thrown round the elect on each of them was divine; it was God's own safety which He then imparted to His people. They were in the world when its judgment was executing, but we may say, "as He was so were they." His safety was theirs.

The "Lord God" shut Noah into the ark with his own hand ere the waters began to rise. The waters were there the instruments of Divine wrath, but the Divine hand had shut the door upon Noah; and surely these waters of judgment could no more prevail against the *hand* of God, than they could against His *throne*. And therefore, as the Lord was, so was Noah. Their safety was a common one, wondrous to tell it: so even such an one as Lot in another day of judgment. He was saved so as by fire—out of the fire. A salvation in no wise glorious to himself. He suffered loss, for his works were all burnt up. But the angel said he could do nothing till Lot was fully and clean delivered from all possible danger from the judgment. The angel *could do nothing till then*; and, I ask, was not this Divine security?

In the night of Egypt, He who carried the sword had already appointed the blood. He, to whom the vengeance belonged, the judge who was conducting the judgment, had ordained and pledged the deliverance: "When I see the blood, I will pass over." Was not this imparting His own security to His people again? The Lord must deny Himself—and this He cannot do—or Israel must be safe. Israel may have the same "boldness" in that "day of judgment" as the Lord himself in the world through which the sword was going.

So, in the passage of the Jordan. The waters were there, as in the day of Noah, ready to overflow their banks, as in the time of barley harvest. But the priests were in the midst of them, and the Ark or Presence of God. And there they stood, the ministers of God in the presence of God, till all the people had crossed the river. Jesus was in the vessel, and He must sink if the disciples did. The safety of the Ark was the safety of the camp. As it was, so were they. Nothing less than Divine security was that of Israel amid the swellings of Jordan. The judgment of Canaan was about to begin, but Israel was in God's sanctuary.

All this sweetly witnesses how the Lord imparts Himself, or shares His condition with His elect—and that, too, in the day of their most solemn necessity, so to speak. He is

beyond judgment, above it, the executor of it; but the value of His own place He communicated to those elect ones in days of judgment.

But this boldness of ours has a new character in it. It flows from "perfect love." God has put the value of the Son of His bosom upon us; and it is not possible for love to take any higher counsels, or do any more wondrous works than that. The love that has set the value of the Son upon us is a *perfect* love; and our boldness, therefore, is conferred not merely by the *hand* or by the ordinance, of God, but by His *heart*. Noah, or Israel, or even Lot, in their several days of judgment, might have said, "as He is, so are we." God's safety was theirs. But we rest our security now with the love of God, as they did into the hand or ordinance of God. The security is equal, but ours is the witness of a nearer, more affecting title. Ours is personal—Noah was in the Ark; we are in God. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God," and in a new sense we say, "as he is, so are we." We are *loved* as He is, not merely *secured* as He is. We bear an element of full personal affection, investing our spirits, as well as an element of boldness. J. G. B.

LOVE UNTO THE END.

John xiii. 1-38.

It is plain that Jesus is here addressing Himself to those who were then around Him, but what we see here of Jesus attracts the soul to Him. That which attracts the sinner, which gives him confidence, is what the Holy Ghost reveals of Jesus.

I desire that we should be occupied with what we find in the first verse—that is the unchangeableness of the love of Christ—a love which nothing has slackened nor enfeebled. If we think of what the disciples were, of what the world was, and of the adversaries, we shall find that Jesus had a thousand reasons to lead him to give up loving. We see around Him three sorts of people—the disciples, those who were indifferent, and the adversaries. These last are more especially the children of the Devil, those who, seeing that the lord was about to take the kingdom and reign over all things, said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." There are some who have in the depths of their hearts the certainty that Jesus is the Christ, and who will not have Him. The adversaries can draw the indifferent along with

them. All that was in this world tended to destroy the love of Jesus, had it not been perfect and unchangeable; *for nothing wounds love more than indifference*. By nature we love sin, and we desire to use all that God has given us in order to satisfy our lusts. Jesus saw all that; He saw the vile condition of the world, and He said, "How long shall I suffer you?" When we are in the light of God we judge of sin thus.

What parents would not wish their children to avoid the corruptions they know themselves? Because Jesus knew the sad condition of man, grace constrained Him to come and deliver him out of it. God sees everything. In His compassion He takes cognisance of everything in order to meet our necessities. But what does He meet? Indifference of heart. The heart of the natural man sees something contemptible in Jesus; he cannot acknowledge his condition, and he will not be indebted to God to draw him out of it. He prefers to remain indifferent to the God who loves Him; and let us remember that *nothing disheartens love like indifference*.

Jesus met with hatred also. All who did not love the light, because their deeds were evil, hated Jesus. Pride, carnal confidence, self-will, everything in man, repelled God! There was nothing in pollution, in indifference, and in hatred, which could attract the love of Jesus. This love might have been driven to despair, when Jesus saw, for example, that Judas was betraying Him.

If any one were to betray us, we should be too much self-occupied to think of those who were not betraying us—not so with Jesus. Although iniquity abounded, Jesus displayed all His love, but at last His disciples forsake Him also. Those who loved Him were so selfish, and so enslaved by the fear of man, that Jesus could not reckon on them. Man's heart is such that, even if one loves Jesus, still his heart is worth nothing. Jesus had to love in presence of a hatred which was never slackened. He loved us even when we were covered with pollution, indifferent, filled with hatred to the light, and having refused it a thousand times. He who knows himself best knows best how true this is. If we treated a friend as we treat Jesus the friendship would not last long! What a contrast we shall find if we consider how different what Jesus found our earth was from what He enjoyed in Heaven. There He had the love of the Father,

and in presence of that perfect love the purity of His own could not be manifested, because there were no obstacles. But here, below, remembering what He has left, He loves His own, even in their pollution; nothing disheartens Him, but this pollution draws upon them His compassion. The object of grace is iniquity and evil. The indifference of His own showed to Jesus all the extent of their misery, and the need they had of Him. Man's hatred only proved that he was lost. God came down to seek man, because man was incapable of seeking God. How much God has borne with! What indifference, what treachery, what denials! People would be ashamed to act toward Satan as they act toward the Lord! Nevertheless nothing stops Jesus. He loves His own "even unto the end." He acted according to what was in His heart, and all the evil of man only afforded Him an opportunity to manifest His love. The Lord has done everything necessary to place the soul in relation with God. Sinners as we are the grace of God has come to seek us. Righteousness and the law demand that sin and the sinner be taken out of the way. John the Baptist demanded repentance—that was a beginning of grace, but pure grace far from saying to man, "Leave thy condition to come to me," *comes itself to man in his sin*, in order that God may be manifested as He never could have been had there been no sin. Grace applies what is in God to the necessities produced by the ruin in which we are. Jesus loves "unto the end."

What a comfort to know that Jesus is everything we need for all that we are! This places us in the light, and leads us to confess the evil that is in us, and not to hide it. Grace alone produces sincerity. A man who has a part to play likes to appear strong, even when he is weak. Grace produces truth, and makes us confess our weakness and infirmity.

In Peter's place we should have acted as he did, if we had not been kept. Jesus loves His own "in the world," in their pilgrimage, in their circumstances, in spite of their misery, their selfishness, and their weakness. All Satan's efforts, and all that was in man, were well calculated to hinder the love of Jesus, nevertheless, "He loved them unto the end."

Can you say, "I have a share in this love, notwithstanding my weakness. I have understood the grace and the manifestation in Jesus of the love of the invisible God." Have you confessed that it was necessary that Jesus should

come into the world in order that your soul should not go where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth? Have we made up our minds to acknowledge ourselves to be what we are? This is unpleasant to the flesh; it is like Paul's "thorn;" there was something which is telling him constantly, "Thou art weak;" and this is exactly why God allows it to remain. Is the flesh so mortified in us that we are satisfied that Jesus should be everything, and we nothing; and that we rejoice to see our weakness since it must manifest the power of God in us.

Jesus has forgotten none of our necessities. The heart which is freed from selfishness thinks only of the things which love desires to do. Thus, Jesus on the cross does not forget His mother, but commends her to the disciple whom He loved.

SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

"SOPHIA."—Does John xiii. 2-4, and Matthew xxvi. 20-26, refer to the same supper? Was Judas present? And if so, (since unbelievers should not be admitted to the Lord's table) why did the Lord, who knows the secrets of all hearts, admit him?

A.—There is no reason to suppose that the two passages do not refer to the same supper, or paschal feast. Judas was present surely; and during its continuance Jesus instituted, that which Scripture afterwards calls the Lord's Supper. The institution of the feast did not reveal other features, which were subsequently introduced into it when it became the symbol of fellowship in the Church, afterwards formed by the descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven at Pentecost. (Acts. ii.) It was then the church of God began to exist. When redemption was accomplished, and Jesus ascended to heaven as man; the Holy Ghost descended from heaven to dwell in believers, and in the church of God; baptizing all Christ's members into one body, and uniting them to Christ in glory. The Lord's Supper was the recognized symbol of the fellowship of the body of Christ. The first institution of the supper did not embrace what was afterwards revealed unto Paul the apostle as to this. He writes, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? *For we, being many,*

are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread (or loaf.)" 1 Cor. x. 16-17. This was a feature added to the first institution of the supper. One loaf was that which represented the communion of all who were united to Christ, and baptized into one body by the Holy Ghost. In 1 Cor. xi. 23-26, Paul distinctly informs us that he had a special revelation as to the supper; and of course we should expect it to be so, as he alone had received the truth about the Church of God. Now the church—the body of Christ—is only composed of believers, members of Christ. When they gather together, as such, in His name, to eat the Lord's Supper, it precludes all thought of unbelievers partaking of the supper amongst them. Even those who are Christ's, and whose walk does not comport with the holiness and truth that becomes the house of God, are precluded from the Lord's table. This makes it simple that no unbelievers should partake of it. If Judas did so, it was before the church had any existence, and before the supper had certain features attached to it, as subsequently added through the apostle Paul.

"B."—Is it a correct expression, *i.e.* Scriptural—to say that the Righteousness of God is His gift, as life is?

A.—Romans v. 17 is clear as to this, where it speaks of righteousness as His gift:—"Much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the *gift of righteousness*, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ."

"FOLLOW ME."

JOHN XXI.

IN John we see the confidence and simplicity of love. Though he makes little noise, he always follows Jesus. He incessantly expects Him, and thus he recognizes Him even before Peter—the most zealous of disciples. It is only his intimate acquaintance with Jesus which gives him this advantage. Love is calm, and finds its enjoyment in its object. John passes through few painful experiences like those of Peter. The perfect love of Jesus banishes all fear from His disciple; it slays also the activity of the flesh, and keeps his heart engaged with its object.

John is neither jealous of Peter, nor restless about his brother who is on his way to death. Peter on the contrary

disquiets himself about John ; who in the meantime is occupied about Jesus, and remains perfectly calm and at rest even while following his master, whom he is accustomed to follow, and gaze upon, and listen to ; Jesus needs not to say to John, "Follow me."

FRAGMENT.

In our service for Christ, we commonly resemble scholars who display an immense diligence in tracing a quantity of lines, among which the master's eye will with difficulty accept two or three passably good uprights. Thank God we have to do with one who will recognise all He can.

"THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, COME."

THAT blissful morn is drawing near,
When Christ in glory shall appear
And call his bride away.
Her blessing then shall be complete,
When with her Lord she takes her seat,
In everlasting day.

The days and months are gliding past;
Soon we shall hear the trumpets blast
Which wakes the sleeping saints.
The dead in Christ shall first arise ;
When we with them shall reach the skies,
Where Jesus for us waits.

What wonder, joy, and glad surprise,
Shall fill our hearts, as thus we rise
To meet Him in the air.
To see His face—to hear His voice,
And in His perfect love rejoice ;
Whose glory there we'll share.

No more deferred our hopes shall be ;
No longer "through a glass" we'll see,
But clearly "face to face."
We'll dwell with Jesus then above,
Whom absent we have learned to love,
Rich samples of His grace.

Oh ! may this hope our spirits cheer
Whilst waiting for our Saviour here ;
He said "I'll come again."
Oh ! may our hearts "look for" that "day,"
And to His word responsive say,
Come Jesus Lord.—Amen.

G. W. F.

GOD'S LAMB.

JOHN I. 29.

"Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

HAVE you, dear friend, ever gazed upon the Lamb of God, whose person and work are brought before us in this passage? The Eternal Word—the Creator—the Light—the Life—the Word made flesh—the only begotten of the Father, is here exhibited to us as God's Lamb!

This was not a title which would be quite foreign to the minds of John's hearers. It had been the delight of God before His Son came into the world, to set before the faithful way-marks by which they might be encouraged amid the darkness and wickedness around.

Just as the finger-post encourages the weary traveller as he passes through some lonely scene, telling him that the road he traverses leads to the desired end, so these bright gleams of light in Old Testament times tell us that God had not forgotten His people, and that He would make good His primal promise spoken in Adam's hearing of the Deliverer, the seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head.

Let us revert to a few of them—take Genesis iv. for instance—Sin had entered the world when "the Lamb of God's providing" comes in type upon the scene—Abel recognizing the distance that existed between man and God, and bowing his head to the righteous sentence of God as to sin, owns that nothing will avail with God but the life of a sinless victim, and therefore he takes the "firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof." He saw that the righteousness of God demanded a substitute for sin which had none in itself and who could therefore bear its judgment in death: he submitted himself to that righteousness, and his "more excellent sacrifice" obtained for him the witness that he was counted righteous according to God's estimate of his gift (Heb. xi. 4).

Dear reader, have you bowed to His righteousness, and learned that God accepts the sinner who does so according to *His* thoughts of the sacrifice of the Lamb of His own providing—His own beloved Son?

Let us look at another. The moment had come for the trial of Abraham's faith, and the son in whom the promises of God were centred must die. Obedient to the word of God, the father hesitated not a moment, early in the morning he started forth on his sorrowful journey to offer up his only

son. Faith triumphs over difficulties: he believed that He "was able to raise him up even from the dead." In simple confidence then he trusted God, and in reply to Isaac's inquiry, he says "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

The decisive moment came—the altar was built—the wood was placed in order,—Isaac was bound and laid upon the altar; and the hand stretched forth to slay his son—when the voice of God stayed the blow—"Lay not thine hand upon the lad," and turning about he beheld "a ram caught in a thicket by his horns"—another moment suffices to offer him *instead of* his son; and he rightly named the place "the Lord will provide."

In Exodus xii. we find God displaying to us another picture of His interference in grace to shield man from the impending judgment. *That* night He was about to pass through the land of Egypt to execute judgment. But His people must be spared, and therefore a mode of shelter from judgment is proposed to them; by sprinkling upon the lintel and door posts of their houses the blood of "a lamb without blemish." They believed in the coming judgment—they obeyed the directions given—they took the lamb—they killed it—and with the blood upon the door post and lintel they sat down in security and fed upon the one whose blood was the sole ground of their safety on that awful night of judgment; resting simply on the word of Him who said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." How plainly does this point us to the "lamb without blemish and without spot," by whose precious blood His people are redeemed. (1 Pet. i. 18, 19.)

Dear reader, have you discovered that you can be sheltered under the blood of God's Lamb, in calm undisturbed security, knowing from His own word that "when *He* sees the blood He will pass over you?"

We are at our journey's end, for these types and shadows have conducted us to the brightness of the presence of "the Lamb of God" Himself—waymarks now are no longer needed; finger-posts are passed and well nigh forgotten in the presence of the glory of the Lamb of God. In obedience to His Father's will He had come (Ps. xl. 7, 8). In obedience to the same will "He is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter," and crucified. God presents Him thus as an object of faith for all who will receive Him.

But there was one important difference between the sacrifices of Old Testament times and the Lamb of God. In old times the offerer had to bring his lamb—he was an actor in the proceedings; and without his activity there could be no sacrifice. Not so now—it is *God* who has provided—*God* who has brought His Lamb—*God* who has accepted Him—man could have no share in the work, for the plan had been devised of God, and of God has been accomplished. The sacrifice is of God's providing, therefore the sinner's acceptance is according to the value God sets upon His own Lamb.

Have you, my reader, entered into this, can you say, "I am accepted according to the value God sets upon His Lamb, that in love He provided for me?"

Mark now the character of His work.—It is two-fold—He "taketh away the sin of the world;" and He "baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Can anything be more complete, more suitable to the nature of God than this? Not merely do I see my sins removed but I see sin itself dealt with in Christ, when He as God's Lamb bore its judgment—bowed His head and died! How complete a work!—*Sin itself* dealt with in all its horrible enormity. 'Tis unbelief alone which deprives the sinner of an interest in the work accomplished by the Lamb of God.

But this is not all—His work being finished He rises and ascends up where He was with the Father, to give us a more abundant blessing than before. Those who have received Him are now baptized with the Holy Ghost. Thus uniting them to their absent Head and Lord. "By one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free" (1 Cor. xii. 13). And thus we who have believed are linked to Christ, and to each other.

Now mark the way in which those who first heard the message of glad tidings received it, and through abiding with Jesus received strength to testify of Him—"The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus."

How simple and beautiful! "Faith" came "by hearing" (Rom. x. 17). They heard the word—they received Him—they believed in His name, and all things were but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Him—as in Saul's case the sevenfold crown of fleshly glory (Phil. iii. 5, 6), was cast aside in the presence of the more excellent glory of the Lamb of God! They received "power to become the sons

of God," and followed *Him*: and they *abide* with Him. This was the place that Mary chose (Luke x. 39-42). This again was the place that John took, not because he had a better right to it than Peter, but because he loved it more (John xiii. 23); and this is the place that we have an equal right to share; for Jesus says "Abide in me" (John xv. 4).

If you know anything of it dear reader, are you cultivating that habitual nearness of heart to Christ: that continual dependence on Him; that constant outflow of affections towards Him of whose changeless love you are assured? To cultivate this, beloved, the result will be, peace flowing "as a river" and abundant fruitfulness. Remember, without Him you can do nothing—and service though outwardly dazzling is worthless, unless flowing from abiding fellowship with Him—habitual nearness of heart to Christ!

Now comes their testimony—"One of the two . . . was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother—he first findeth his own brother Simon and saith unto him we have found the Messiah . . . and he brought him to Jesus."

May we learn our lesson from this too—and go forth fresh from the presence of our Lord to win those who are "without God in the world" to Christ. We may well delight to tell of the One whom we have found; surely like the woman in John iv. we may say, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did;" or like the Mary of John xx., we may tell of the One who is now ascended to His Father and to our Father, and to His God, and our God. 'Tis thus we know our ascended Lord; may we so testify of Him that those around us (and "thy friends" first, Mark v.) may know the Lamb of God in the glories of His person, and in the virtues and excellencies of His work! D. T. G.

FRAGMENT.

If we have not unlimited confidence in God as our Father, we have not found our place. All our relationships are known, not by the intelligence placing us in them; but in the exercise of affections flowing from the consciousness of being in them. A child addresses his father as such, and why? A servant his master as such, and why? Because they live in those relationships. If our souls have not unlimited confidence in God to go to Him with our very follies, we do not know "the Father."

A WORD TO TROUBLED SOULS.

THERE are many souls passing through the deep exercises which all must learn before solid peace with God is known. For such I write these lines. They find the heart filled with evil thoughts—the conscience laden with sin—all but despairing of forgiveness and peace. Efforts innumerable have been made to throw off such a state; all found to be ineffectual. There is no power to pray: everything a burden. Many are passing through these deep waters. Is it not strange to say to such that it is well that even this is so? It is an indication that life is working in the soul—it is not dead. This is a great mercy; for if there was no new nature there would not be the discovery of the terrible evil within. Sooner or later all must learn this lesson. Some learn it by degrees—some quickly, but when once we discover the terrible and hopeless evil of one's nature, we are glad to be cast upon the full sovereign grace of God, and then all is peace. The soul may have been going on for years in quiet; floating on in the stream of profession without reality; no exercise of conscience. The conscience (like Job's) never having been in God's presence—a change has come; it can't tell how. God has permitted it to get into these deep waters, to learn, not only that it has sinned, which is easy enough, but "that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." It is one thing to know that I have done *bad* things; but quite another to learn in God's presence, that in me dwells no *good* thing; and what is more, *there never will!* It is when we come to such a strait as this that we find that the *total* condemnation of a sinner, and the sovereign grace of God go together, and I am free! I learn that my acceptance depends—not on what I am to God—but, what God is to me, when I am nothing but badness, and never can be better. I find then that God is perfect love to me when He knows *far more* of my wretched heart's corruption even than I do myself—deeply as I have loathed in my soul the workings of an evil heart; and have felt the sin that is too much for me. I then find that the mind of the flesh is not merely carnal, but *enmity* against God—is not subject to the law of God, *neither indeed can be.*

God's grace is greater than my sins—greater than the evil nature that did the sins—and He has accepted Christ for all I have done and am. No one could look at Christ dying on

the cross and say, "He is not enough for my sins:" yet *God gave Him to put them away*. How wonderful! God has accepted the offering Christ made for sin—No one would dare to say that God has not accepted what Christ has done. So that if it is a question of what you are, as a sinner, you are lost and shut out for ever! But if it is a question of what Christ has done; why He has been accepted of God and gone into heaven. If you could simply see this, all is peace with God. Not peace with yourself—conflict plenty, and exercises innumerable; but cloudless peace with God! If you mix up what you find in yourself with what Christ has done, you will never get peace. God has shown His love in giving His Son to die for sinners when He knew well there was no mending them. He knew the worst thought in your heart when He did so. Christ has charged Himself on the cross with what I am and have done, as a sinner; and God has accepted the satisfaction Christ offered to Him. You may (as you do) feel the wretched vileness of your heart very deeply. So much the better. The more deeply I feel my wretchedness the better. But Christ died *not for my virtues*, supposing I had any, but for my sins—for all I am and had done, and God has accepted Him for me, and I am free!

My acceptance never depends on what I am to God in anywise. He has proved I was nothing but badness, and that I could not be mended. He has shown Himself as nothing but goodness when He knew He could not mend me—that I was incorrigible. You see it was just this with the prodigal when he awaked in the far country. He discovered he was perishing; and his misery was sorrowfully increased when he thought of his good kind father, whose abundance flowed out to the servants in his house, and when he knew he had *no right* to it. He made his trembling journey of misery and uncertainty—making up by the way what he would tell his father; and how he would try and get in as a servant. He might reason how it would be with him at his journey's end, before he met his father; but when he met him all uncertainty and reasoning was over. His acceptance into the house depended upon what *his father* was; not what *he was*—he was all rags and filth—a wretched spendthrift who had squandered away his patrimony with harlots and profligacy of every kind. His father ran out and fell on his neck *when his rags were on him—not off him*.

This is the way you learn what God is to you. What you want to learn is that bad as you are, you will *never* be better; and moreover that God knows it, and has given His Son to die for the foulest and vilest sinners in love and goodness, when He did know it.

If once you got your eye upon Jesus who is gone up to the right hand of the majesty on high "when he had by himself purged our sins;" and that He looks down in love and tenderness upon every poor contrite trembling soul—no matter how vile they are, provided they are miserable in their vileness (surely you are this), you will find that your peace with God depends upon what Christ has done, and what God is to you, in spite of your sins, so to say. You will never then refer to your own heart to get the evidence of your acceptance. You will find that the more full and complete your acceptance is, because of what Christ has done, the more deep will be the sense of the intolerable character of the nature you carry about with you—for which He was judged. You will then be learning it in the consciousness of that grace which does not impute it to you, because God had imputed it all to His Son when He was made a sacrifice for sin. All then is cloudless peace! Conscience will not be quieted by service, and thoughts, and reasonings. *They* will not bring peace to your soul. You get peace by giving up all hope in yourself, and being cast over upon what God has done for you, and is for you in Christ; and that in all your vileness. There is no use trying to combat with what you find in your own heart. It would not bring you peace, even supposing you *did* subdue these workings. The *nature* they came from is there; and you can't change your nature. *God* has condemned it in His Son upon the cross, when He bore the judgment for you. He has ended the whole thing there and then in His own sight; and He seeks to lead you into the same thoughts as His own about it. Faith is simply the taking God's thoughts for your own. His are right—your's are wrong. *You* will deceive yourself—*He* never will. Faith accepts His thoughts. He desires that your conscience should be purged, so that knowing all the evil of your heart, as He knows it, you may stand in the light of His presence, and boldly too, purged and cleansed by Christ. You hate it—so does He; He gave His Son in love, to purge away the thing He hated. Thank God, you say, He has purged it away. Instead of condemn-

ing me, as I know I deserved, He has cleansed me so perfectly that I can stand in His presence happily, as fit to be there.

The life, or new nature, by which you have discovered your vileness, is thus set free to delight itself in God. The will and affections of the old man will never turn to God. The new man ever will. As long as you are not free, it is all, "I—I—I!" because you are referring to your own state the question of acceptance and peace with God. When you are free you will never more mix up the question of acceptance and peace with God with what you are, but while you hate your evil nature, you will know that your acceptance depends on what Christ is, not what you are.

The Lord give you to know true liberty and joy in His presence, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Amen.

"MY SOUL LONGETH FOR THEE."

God appeared to Abraham as "God Almighty." (Gen. xvii. 1.) To Israel He reveals His name as "Jehovah." (Exodus vi.) To us He reveals Himself as "Father." "To us (Christians) there is but one God, the Father." (1 Cor. viii.) In the Millennium He will be the "Most High" in connection with Melchizedec.

In Psalm xci. we have an example of three of these names—Almighty, Jehovah, and Most High. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of Jehovah, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust." We have here the soul dwelling in the secret of the Most High, and thus having Abraham's God-Almighty. Jesus says, "I will say of Jehovah He is my refuge; I will take Israel's God. The answer is, 'Surely he will deliver thee.'" The result is the triumphant declaration of what He is to the soul that rests in Him. In perfection it is the experience of Christ; but also of each confiding soul (in measure of course) however alarming the circumstances may be through which it has to pass. This Psalm brings out the Old Testament names of God; but 2 Cor. vi. 18 shows us that He says to us, "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith Jehovah Almighty." The God of the Jews and of Abraham is our Father.

In the Psalms we do not get the thought of Father, we have many good desires, and of separation to God, but not the relationship of Father. This relationship is in consequence of the blessed Son having become a Man, and having accomplished redemption, we are brought into that relationship by the Spirit of the Son. It did not exist before. He says after He rose (Jno. xx.) "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend to *my Father* and *your Father*, and to my God and your God." We never know how to walk right with God till we consciously get hold of this relationship, that we are really children of God, not merely as born of God, but as having the Spirit of His Son. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father." (Gal. iv.)

These two great principles run through Scripture, namely, confidence and relationship. The former is very fully brought out in the Old Testament Scriptures, especially in the Psalms. The latter, as we have seen, did not come out till after the Lord's resurrection, though hinted at in the earlier part of the gospels.

In Ps. lxiii. we have a different thing. Not trials and deliverances, nor circumstances of any kind, but what God is found to be, by the soul which begins to prove what this world *really* is—"a dry and a thirsty land, where no water is." This too, in perfection, is the experience of Christ. "Oh God, thou art my God; early will I seek *Thee*: my soul thirsteth for *Thee*, my flesh longeth for *Thee* in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." It is a soul awake to this fact, that in this wilderness there is not a spot on which it can rest, and that if satisfaction is found it must be found in God alone. Oh! how little do we realize this; how little do we suspect all the props on which we lean from day to day—the springs from which we drink—the Christian intercourse—letters—the thousand daily comforts! Christ alone could say, "*all my fresh springs are in Thee!*" He "looked for comforters, and found none." Still, the heart must come to this, that it is in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; and when it does so, it turns with longing to God, and finds Him everything.

In Ps. lxiii. there is no thought of "the tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts." It does not leave the dry and thirsty land, but it finds the all-sufficiency of God; and having tasted that it *longs* for more—"To see *Thy* power and *Thy* glory."

Christ had seen it in the Sanctuary, and could desire again to share that glory which He shared with the Father "before the world was;" "As I have seen thee in the sanctuary." One who has tasted of this can find satisfaction in nothing lower, but finds it all in God. The joy then is such, that one would not for worlds change anything. It is because things are what they are that the soul has found what God is, and finds His "loving kindness better than life." No circumstances can occupy the heart; the lips are filled with praise. "Thus will I bless thee while I live—I will lift up my hands in thy name." As in Rom. v. we have what might seem enough. For the past, forgiveness and justification; for the present, access by faith into grace; for the future, the hope of the glory. Is not this enough? Nay, there *is* more. "Not only so, but we *joy in God*, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus "my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips."

Still a moment will come when we will remember that all this is not heaven! It is having God *in spite of everything*; but this is not rest—there is no rest here. God may give us momentary rest of heart here, as we find in Numbers x., the ark left its ordered place in the camp of Israel, and went three days' journey in the wilderness before them to find out a rest for them. Grace gives us that rest of heart now. We are not to be weary in well-doing, but we are to "labour to enter into that rest." Some like to say, as to Heb. iv. 3—"do enter," as though it were by faith *now*. We do this, no doubt, but it is not the point here. Verse 10, which connects our rest with that of God, proves that it is future, for we rest from our works (not rest of conscience from legal works, or rest of heart by faith, but actual rest) from *good* works, as God did from His—*good* ones of course. "This is not your rest"—we labour to enter in; and the soul longs for that place where with ungirded loin and unshod foot she can give herself up to delight in all around; when all will be consonant with the divine nature, of which she has been made partaker, and she in harmony with all around; when it will be no longer God *in spite of everything*, but God *in everything*—God there is "all in all." Not only nothing that defileth is there; but "nothing that *maketh* a lie." There is plenty that maketh a lie around us now in the church and in the world.

This brings us to Psalm lxxxiv.

"How amiable are *Thy tabernacles*, O Lord of Hosts!" This is *Jehovah*, and the soul longs for His dwelling place—wearies, fains for His courts. No circumstances contrary there—no dry and thirsty land. All is pure, and all of God. Still knowing what God is, heaven would not be heaven without Him. "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." It is true that the city has "no need;" but that is because "the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Rev. xxi.) v. 3—"Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young." This is the confidence of God's people—that the poor weak things find a rest with Him. The Lord encouraged His disciples thus in Matt. x. 29-31. Abraham pitched his tent and built an altar unto the Lord. If you go into the world you can have no altar there—God may keep you safe when the famine comes, but you will have no altar there. Whenever you go astray all the time is spent for nothing till you get back to the place you left.

"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee." "They rest not day and night saying Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." The twenty-four elders were in a more blessed place when they were prostrate before the throne (Rev. iv.) than when they were crowned and seated on their thrones; because, when crowned, they were enjoying their own glory; but when prostrate, they were enjoying His glory and worshipping Him. The next best thing to being there is to know our own weakness. Weakness is a sensible thing, one feels it. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee." *That* is the thing to keep us safe here, for His strength is made perfect in weakness. How far can each one say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon me!" "In whose heart are the ways." Such a soul knows that the only thing it has to seek in this world is not *a way* to get on in it, or *any way* through it, but *God's way out of it*. As with Moses to say, "I beseech thee show me now *thy way*." Christ and His path is the way. "The valley of Baca," or as we say, "the vale of tears," is the place which becomes "a well" to such an one; instead of looking for compassion or sympathy, it becomes a well filled with bless-

ings from above. Every fresh difficulty becomes a fresh spring of blessing, and calls down blessings from above—"the rain also filleth the pools." He learns in the difficulty more of himself and of God. Some desire "to see *their* way clear." God's way is for you to take the step which lies at your foot, and then He will show another. If you meet with difficulties, well, He has said, "In this world ye shall have tribulation." Suppose I am going home, and one said, "you are to pass a bog and a high wall," I would be very glad when I met them—they would show I was in the right road. Such go from strength to strength. There will be a continuity of it. They that wait on the Lord renew their strength. Every victory braces for another conflict, and the end is sure. "*Every one* of them in Zion appeareth before God." These poor weak things are each and *every one* "of more value than many sparrows." The hairs of their heads are all numbered, and "not a hoof shall be left behind!"

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

THIS is a very solemn subject, and yet it is one most satisfactory the better we understand it. I believe every act of our lives will be set forth there; so that God's grace and dealing with us with reference to our own acts will be known there. It is said in Rom. xiv., "every one of us shall give account of himself to God." The judgment seat is there referred to in connection with the admonition to the brethren, not to judge one another with respect to a day, or eating meat. I am disposed to think that only the deeds will be matters of manifestation; but so much is *every* act of our lives dependent on inward feelings, that it is in one sense hard to distinguish between deeds and thoughts. Acts always declare the strength of the thought or feeling. I believe all our doings shall be detailed there—not to us as in the flesh for condemnation, but to unfold to us the grace which has dealt with us, regenerate and unregenerate. In God's counsel I am called before the foundation of the world, and therefore I apprehend that our whole history will be detailed there; and in parallel line, the history of His grace and mercy toward us. The why and the how we did this or that, will be declared then. It is declarative, and not judicial for us. We are not in the flesh before God—in His

eye, blessed be His name, we are dead; but then, where we have walked after the flesh, we must see how we lost blessing, what a loss it has been to us; and, on the other hand, His ways toward us all, in wisdom, mercy, and grace, will be fully known and comprehended for the first time. Of course, there will be no replying, but each history will be like a great transparency. How you yielded and how He preserved; how you slipped, and how He rescued; how you approached danger and shame, and how He by His own hand interposed. I believe it will be the bride making herself ready, and I regard it as a wondrous moment. There will be no flesh there to receive condemnation, but the new nature will enter into the transcendent love and care, which in true holiness and justice, even in grace, have followed us *every* step of our journey. Passages in our lives, now utterly unexplained, shall be all seen clearly then. Tendencies of our nature, which we may not think would lead to desperate issues, and to curb which we may now be subjected to a discipline which we have not interpreted, will be fully explained there; and still more the very falls which distress us sorely now will be shown then as used to preserve us from worse. I do not believe that we shall get anything like a full view of the evil of our flesh till then. How blessed to know, that then, not only in the purpose of God it is done with, but it clings no longer to us; and, on the other hand, I believe the display of His grace individually to us will be so magnificent that even the sense of the evil of the flesh that were ours, if it were possible to intrude, will be prevented by the greatness of the other. Why do we not deny and mortify our members when we remember that hour! The Lord enable us to do more to the glory of His grace.

The subject leads the soul into a very full sense of our individual place, to think of each giving an account of himself to God.

I do not know that the judgment seat of Christ is used oftener than in Rom. xiv., and 2 Cor. v. In the former, to prevent private judgment; in the latter, to provoke to present well-doing and self-judgment, in view of that day.

FRAGMENT.

Ritualism takes up the religious side of nature. *Infidelity* takes up the profanity of nature.

THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES.

IN looking at the parables of the grain of mustard seed which became a great tree, and of the leaven hid in three measures of meal, we saw that the sphere of the kingdom was the same in both, that is, it was the external visible thing patent to the eyes of men. The one giving the outward secular power, and men seeking its protection and shelter; the other presenting a principle or doctrine which thoroughly pervades that which is submitted to its influence.

There is a similar relationship between the hid treasure and the pearl of great price. They are God's estimation of the good seed which the man sowed in his field (ver. 24), the former two being the development and manifestation of the tares sown by an "enemy." Now since the field became so overrun with tares as to give it the appearance of a *tare field* rather than of a wheat field—these were bundles of tares, "bind them in bundles"—the space occupied by the good seed was comparatively small. So here, the good seed being before the Lord's mind, the sphere is much narrower than the whole external "field." But inasmuch as the good seed are really the heirs of the Kingdom, this comparatively small portion gives a similitude of the Kingdom. The righteous ones who are saved during the time of Christ's session at the right hand of God. We have had them in the treasure, we have them again in the pearl, different pictures of the same thing, both displaying the wondrous grace and purpose of God towards them. In the treasure they are looked at in their aggregate capacity, a number of individuals; in the pearl they are viewed as one; the idea is, *unity*: and therefore, even if the "treasure," in a general sense, may include all saints up to the millennium—its proper signification is the saints now gathered, who are in their kingdom character hidden, the world does not recognise them as the future kings and priests of the coming Kingdom. In the pearl we are restricted absolutely to the church of God, and therefore, the day of Pentecost and the rapture of the saints are the two termini which mark off those whom the Lord here looks at. The treasure shows us the saints in individual glory, the pearl shows us the church of God in its united corporate glory. The treasure shows us the Lord's appreciation of the saints—a man finds what is a treasure to him, another might consider it of no value. Treasure does not necessarily convey

the idea of intrinsic, but of relative worth, i.e., what the estimation of the possessor is, but the pearl does give the thought of value and of intrinsic worth. One might delight in the possession of the commonest pebble; but in itself it is worthless. The pearl has a value in itself. Both are true of the saints of God. They have a relative value, for they are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ: they have a real value too; there is a *worth* and a *beauty* (communicated of course) set forth by the image of a pearl. And this is the thing before us now.

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it," (ver. 45-46).

The kingdom is here looked at from a church point of view, and I apprehend for this reason—that all who are the true children and heirs of the kingdom, from Pentecost to the rapture, are also much more than that, and the lesser blessings of the kingdom are merged in the greater privileges of the church; all that relates to the heirs now or in the future must of necessity as far as it goes, assume a church phase and character.

We need not notice beyond a passing thought, the doctrine of those who make every believer whether before law or under law, as well as those since the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, members of the church of God, who destroy every distinction between the condition of believers in the New Testament, and that of all previous believers. If these distinctions are not of God, if they are not found in His word, we will be loudest in condemning them. To put our own notions in the place of God's word, will bring His judgment upon us. If the word plainly reveals the superior position and privileges of saints during the present time, those who deny them are not only injuring their own souls, but what is of greater moment, they are denying the truth of God, and doing dishonour to the Lord Jesus, who has now accomplished eternal redemption, and sent the Holy Ghost down here to attest both it and its results. One of which is the superiority of the present standing of believers. If we are simple and really desirous of knowing what the Word teaches, there will be no doubt upon our minds as to this point. Scripture is plain and positive upon it.

The language and experiences of saints before Pentecost

are in contrast, not in harmony, with those of saints after that event. So much so, that not only not in the same body, but neither at the same time could they exist. And we do not find any assembly of believers, called the assembly of God till in Acts xx. 28. Now it is clear from Scripture that the Church did not exist when our Lord was here upon earth. Peter said, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my Church." It was a future thing. This confession is the foundation of the Church. But Christ must be present before He can be confessed. And it is by His death and resurrection that He was demonstrated to be the Son of the living God. Therefore we truly say—Christ dead and risen is the foundation. Before His death there could be no foundation, and therefore no superstructure; the disciples who gathered round Him while here, were the living stones which were to form the new building, but they were only cemented together and formed into the Church when the Holy Ghost descended at Pentecost, for there must be a builder as well as a foundation. Christ Himself builds, but it is by the Spirit. Paul was raised to proclaim these two truths—Christ the foundation, and by the Spirit, the builder. More than this, Paul tells of the hope set before the Church of God, Christ would come for it. It was his mission to declare the coming of the Lord for all His saints, as a thing distinct from His coming in judgment upon a godless world. Every saint, both sleeping and waking, will be caught up, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. The rapture will close the existence on earth of those who have confessed Jesus to be the Son of the living God. This the word plainly declares.

There is but only one other assembly spoken of which had any relationship with God, and that is the congregation of Israel, called (Acts vii. 38) the church in the wilderness, but most of that assembly were unbelievers; and their relation to God was external, not vital; carnal, not spiritual. It is plain that what is predicted of the Church of God cannot apply to the "Church in the wilderness."

When the Lord Jesus rises from His seat at God's right hand it will be to descend into the air to meet the saints both dead and living; all from the beginning of the world will be there. But those who are converted between Pentecost and the rapture will have a peculiar place, higher and distinct from all else. And this leads to the question, and one more

important for the believer cannot be : What is it that distinguishes believers during this present time from all others ? Many are startled and shocked at the question as if it implied that we were personally more faithful than Abraham, more meek than Moses, or more devoted than Samuel. No, it implies nothing of the sort. It cannot be doubted but that we have much more light and truth revealed than they. Yet one purpose why the Spirit records their faith and good works is for our imitation. Whether we ought not in presence of greater blessing to be more faithful and holy is a solemn consideration for our own souls. But even though in all personal godly qualities, we come very far short of the Old Testament worthies ; there is a better place reserved for us (Heb. xi.), and they without us shall not be made perfect. This better place is not due to superior personal piety, but to the sovereign will and purpose of God. The objectors to this truth are in fact more occupied with *self* than with God's word. And to be occupied with self, whether as worthy or as unworthy, keeps one from being occupied with Christ and the things concerning His kingdom.

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

SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

"A. N. L."—Does sealing take place immediately on believing ; or, is it possible for a person to be a believer and not be sealed *in this dispensation* ?

A. Sealing takes place at once on believing. Eph. i. 13 is plain on the subject : "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation : in whom also, after that ye believed (or 'having believed') ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." The Apostle connects sealing with "the gospel of *your salvation*." God's salvation is announced by the gospel ; I have believed in the gospel of *my* salvation, and forthwith I am sealed by the Spirit. A saved man is one who has no doubts. Scripture never speaks of a man being "*saved*" who has any. We must not confound the state of many *quickened* souls with those who have *believed*. The action of God in quickening and in sealing are as distinct as possible. He quickens a sinner who wants life ; He does not seal a sinner as such, surely ; that were to seal him in his sins ; nor does He seal a quickened soul in his misery. He does not seal Peter when

he cried out "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke v.); or when the soul is crying out "O wretched man that I am." He seals a believer; and "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" not doubts, and bondage, and fears.

These two actions of the Holy Ghost are never, as far as I know, synchronous—they do not happen at the same moment; while on God's part there is of course no reason why it should not be so. Many cases testify as to this in Scripture.

The disciples were quickened before the day of Pentecost, yet they were not sealed till then. The Samaritans received the gospel and were quickened before Peter and John came down, and they were not sealed till then; ("as yet he was fallen upon none of them." See Acts viii. 5-17.) "There was great *joy*" we read, and there is often this without *peace* with God. Peace is a full and perfect word; it is far more than joy. A soul that has peace with God has been sealed by the Spirit. Paul was quickened by a voice from heaven (Acts ix. 4), and yet he did not receive the Holy Ghost till the third day after, when he had gone through all the deep work in his soul for the three days. (See v. 17.) Cornelius was a devout man, one that feared God, and prayed to God always—a *quickened* soul. He is told to send for Peter to hear words of him, whereby he and all his house would be *saved*. (Acts xi. 14.) God does not call him a *saved* man, as merely quickened. When Peter comes he does not tell him he must be born again, which as a sinner he needed and had been, but he points him to Christ, and they accept the message, and the Holy Ghost fell on them. You get the same thing in Acts xix.; those at Ephesus who were quickened souls had not as yet received the Holy Ghost.

It is not possible for a person to be a *believer* in the present dispensation without being sealed. There are many *quickened* souls who are not sealed, but no Christian ever *dies* and passes away from this scene, where as to personal peace the Holy Ghost is since Pentecost, without being sealed. This is why you see cases in which there was no liberty, or peace with God, enjoyed during the lifetime, with occasional gleams of joy; and yet when on a death-bed they have got perfect peace with God, and are sealed.

I think we use the word "believer" too indiscriminately, for every state of soul in which God is working. A believer in Scripture language is one who is sealed. Scripture allows

but one basis, or normal condition, for Christians. When we come to look at the condition of souls we find that in many cases they are not there; while there is no reason on God's part why they should not be.

“C. Somerset.”—What does the number five signify in Scripture?

A. Five seems to be used to signify that which is *relatively small*; the number characterizing weakness. In Lev. xxvi. 8, we read, “Five of you shall chase a hundred.” The very smallness of Israel, if faithful, would easily discomfit their enemies in power. In Isaiah xxx. 17, on the other hand, it is said of them in the time of their judgment, “At the rebuke of five shall ye flee; till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill.” In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, we find that after the midnight cry they were broken up into fives—weakness—in the interval between the hope of the Lord's coming being revived in the Church, and the shutting to of the door. We find the Lord (Matt. xiv., Mark vi., Luke ix., and John vi.) feeding the multitude from *five* loaves and two fishes. He is equal to the demand, no matter how scanty the supply, at times of peculiar moment in the gospel history. Paul says, “I had rather speak *five* words with my understanding . . . than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.” (1 Cor. xiv. 19.)

There are many other places “five” is used in Scripture, but these passages will help to an understanding of its meaning as a symbol.

“R. P.”—What is the meaning of, “But ye have obeyed from the heart the form of teaching into which you were instructed? (Rom. vi. 17, N. T.) &c.

A. The disciples in Rome had given proof in their practical ways of the Apostle's doctrine in this chapter by walking in the truth, that the old man had been crucified with Christ. They were counting themselves as dead with Him, and alive unto God through Christ. Thus sin was not having dominion over them, and as set free from its slavery they had become slaves to righteousness (he speaks after the manner of men.) The heart was thus free to yield itself unto God in practical obedience, the conscience being at rest before Him.

I do not believe the thought you express is in the passage.

Their practice corresponded with the true spiritual meaning of their baptism, which was "unto death." Baptism is never put as obedience in Scripture. It is always the act of the baptizer, never that of the baptized. It is never the sign of what a man is already, or of an inward state.

Q. What is the moral use of the words, "For many are called but few chosen," in the different contexts, Matt. xx. 16, and Matt. xxii. 14?

A. I apprehend that the two passages show the contrast of the external effect, and internal power. Matt. xxii. 14 is pretty plain. The gospel message, as men speak, had brought in a crowd, and where the true wedding garment was not, he who had it not was cast into outer darkness.

The application of xx. 16 is less immediate; it is more the general principle. It connects with Matt. xix. 29, 30; there reward is declared to be the fruit of sacrifice, and to guard against enfeebling grace this parable is added, when, though there was appointed reward for labour, we are shown to be no judges of it. For those, though coming last, if God calls them to it, who will be first. For there may be a great appearance of labour and yet God not own it. It is still the contrast of the outward appearance, and those whom God has chosen; the fruits of His own grace, and not of following apparent principles by man, while only self is there. Only here it is labour and reward brings it in; in xxii. external calling of grace.

DEATH IS OURS.

"'Tis not
 "So much as e'en the lifting of a latch—
 "Only a step into the open air
 "Out of a tent already luminous,
 "With light that shines through its transparent walls."

FRAGMENT.

It needed that Christ should be broken before there could be a "man in Christ." But the "man in Christ" must be broken before there can be the practical exhibition of Christ in the man!—W.

GRACE BESEECHING—MAN DESPISING.

It is deeply important that our souls should apprehend the ground on which God deals with us as sinners now. It is not simply that men are sinners—that they have sinned without law and transgressed under law—Gentile as well as Jew,—God does not allow that to be the final ground on which He has to say to our consciences. *He has dealt with man besides—there* has been a testimony of God to those who were already sinners and law-breakers. John Baptist came testifying of the threatened judgment of God, and called upon men to repent. So that it ceased to be a question whether men were sinners or not (they were this already), but whether they would continue in hardness and impenitence of heart when He did so. The Jews thought they would escape as Jews—but there is no respect of persons with God.

In Romans i. and ii., where the Apostle goes over the ground of convicting man of sin, he takes another ground as well. He speaks of despising the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God was leading them to repentance; and he adds to it another dealing of God which has not yet come, viz.: wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. (chap. ii. 4, 5). These two ways and dealings are entirely distinguished.

God may take the natural conscience—the knowledge of good and evil possessed by every man—and show his horrible wickedness. “When they knew God they glorified him not as God, . . . wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness . . . (and) vile affections. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind,” &c. (chap. i. 21-32); or, He may take the law, as in chap. ii. 12-29. Those with whom He has dealt according to these two grounds, He will judge according to these two grounds. “As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law, . . . in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”

Neither of these is exactly your case. All of you have heard of the “goodness of God”—of the “accepted time”—of the “day of salvation.” Men were sinners before Christ came, and law-breakers before He came; but His coming was a final test of man. He did not come requiring anything of

man, but came dealing with man in the way of grace. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, *not imputing* their trespasses unto them." Now "He hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." The time will come when judgment must begin, but now men are under the time when God is reconciling sinners to Himself. The day of wrath will surely come, but "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." If you are not reconciled now, you must be waiting for the day of wrath. So that the question now is, not whether you are guilty before God, but whether you are still despising the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long suffering in dealing as a Reconciler beseeching you. This is the solemn case in which you stand.

Christ's coming into the world did not leave the question as to whether men were law-breakers, sinners, or no—(it has been much more brought out since)—He came into the world when there were both law-breakers and sinners; and the question then was, Were they going to *remain* so? Whether they were despising the riches of the goodness and forbearance and long suffering of God? He came to win the confidence of man's heart to God. Charming never so wisely! And sinners were "like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." Surely if God has "charmed," it was "wisely." He has done all that could be done to win the heart of man back to Himself! and man would not be won—he despised it.

It brought things to an issue when God had come into the world, and the world would not have him. They *were* against God. If they were not *against* Him they were *for* Him. His coming in was the greatest test there could have been, and the world was found against Him. Do you suppose it is less so—that it tests your heart less—now that He has died for us in love, than when He was here and lived for us in love? There has been this additional unspeakable act of love, and this makes the case more urgent than ever. Grace has thus been manifested, and it is the time for the *dispensing* the goodness of God.

Light has come into the world. Christ was the *light* of it when He came. He was *love* too, and for His love He had hatred; but still He was love as well as light; and the question

was, "Are you going to follow me?" The light made everything manifest. So if God in perfect grace and blessedness was *in the world* and only drew out *hatred*, it proved how contrary man was, to what God was.

It was not that there was any good in the sinner, or any good in the sin, but His presence here took away the false pretension to righteousness. The light came in and tested our state, and if we were not turned from darkness to light it only brought out the opposition of the heart of man to God.

If you are a gross sinner it is evident *that* is not the way to prepare yourself for judgment. If you are not, is there, when Christ is presented to you, no turning away from Him? Is there nothing else more attractive to your heart? Does your heart turn towards the light that has come in? Light comes and searches the conscience, and says, "Have you got affections to be satisfied—to be made happy for heaven? Have you got desires unsatisfied? then turn to me!" The person turns away—he does not like the claim of Christ upon his heart!

The two-fold solemn effect is this: he *hates* the exhibition of God in grace, in Christ, seeking to win his heart; and he *despises* the love that beseeches him to be reconciled in spite of the hatred! These two things are going on now all around. Men's hearts are tested. Christ is presented, and the result is, He is either light, or He is slighted.

You hear that He died for sinners, and you say, It is all true. But has there been the slightest giving up of your heart to Him? *Not a bit!* There is not a vanity in this world, not an amusement you would not rather give your heart to than give it to Christ. It does test the heart. I don't speak of those openly criminal but of those to whom Christ does become the test. God deals with you in *perfect grace*. He says, "There is my Son, He who is my own delight; has He got the smallest place in your heart?" His miracles may be admired, His love admitted—all admitted as a fact—and there may not be the smallest answer of heart to the things of Christ!

It shows so completely what the heart of man is. Let a man converse on any subject he pleases in society, it is borne with as a matter of courtesy. It is courtesy to listen to a man talking about any subject he is accustomed to, and at home with—but let a man bring in Christ, and speak of Him, and it is not tolerated. He is not allowed a place in society.

You are told at once it is "not the time." But *when is the time to speak of Christ? Never!*—when man can follow his own thoughts and his own pleasures.

Such is man. Of course a vile sinner is called to repentance; but I speak of that which we meet with every day. God has been dealing with the world as a Reconciler, and he remains despising His goodness—and *Christ* is the test. He will own God—he will own providence—he *will not own Christ!* The tree is bad—the whole tree. You must make the tree good and *then* his fruit will be good. Therefore God brings you to see that your whole condition is bad. He calls upon you to judge it in connection with Christ. Then you will find that in you, that is, in your flesh, dwells no good thing.

Every knee must bow to Jesus by and bye. When He was here in grace they saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. I do not doubt that you must confess that this is the case with your heart—that you see no beauty in Him to desire Him. You would shrink from saying when He is presented to you, that there is no beauty in Him. You shrink from that, and I'm glad of it in a sense. But you do say and feel that there is no beauty in Him that you should *desire* Him. You desire things around, plenty. You hear people say, "What harm in this, or that?" There was no harm in the trees of the Garden; but when Adam was using them to hide himself from God, there was harm in them. No harm in music; but when I get Cain using it and building his city, there *was* a great deal of harm in seeking to make himself comfortable without God. This is what you see men doing now: a man cultivating his garden and talking of learning God in creation, and Christ forgotten. Thus men take God's mercies and use them to make themselves comfortable without God—*this is the harm!*

This brings us to another thing. What is the ground on which God leads us to be reconciled? What is God's way? "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) And God is calling on men to be reconciled through the work of Christ—His being made sin. Why should He have been made sin if there was no sin? Why had He to bear the wrath, if there was no wrath? It is not by a threat of judgment God appeals to your heart. That by which He appeals is that Jesus Christ—His blessed Son—

has been "made sin for us." Much as there is in the day of judgment which is coming to terrify men, He calls us to repentance by showing to us the perfectness of that love that caused Him not to spare His Son. He sets forth the fact that God was thus in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and now is beseeching you by us to be reconciled to God, for He hath made Him to be sin! How does this appeal to your heart? Is there a response? Or are you despising it? The cross of Christ proves that you are under wrath—under the guilt of it. It testifies that you are in ruin and death, but also testifies that you might escape. Are you *despising* it? Is it the case that all that God *could* do has found no echo—no response in your heart?

When I come to look at the cross, what do I find? I find that God Himself is looking for me there. Not merely that I am a sinner, but that God has wrought for me in the cross of Christ. I had no part in it but my sins and hatred (not of course the blessing coming from it)—nothing but my sins and sinfulness. Man had no other part in the cross of Christ. He came in love, and for His love He had hatred. The very people who had been helped and healed by Him, cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him." But what is more, that is *my heart*. It is most humbling to think of it.

Suppose a person finds this out. Suppose he was the very one who held the spear that pierced Christ as He hung on that cross yesterday. Suppose he finds out "*He loved me*" when there was no good in me,—he has found a grace that has dealt with his whole case—a grace which caused God to take him up, and instead of putting *him* away in judgment, has put away *his sins* in grace? He has no need for goodness to come to Him. God is looking for badness; as at the cross the crucifiers of Christ (as we all were) were there, for whom He died—those whom God loved, and for whom He was giving His own Son to die, because they were under the sentence of death and judgment! This was the way God dealt with sinners, while the hatred of man was demonstrated in crucifying Christ.

This makes me see an absolute goodness in God that rises *completely* above my badness. Thus He has wrought according to His own nature of holiness and of love in not putting away the sinner, but in putting away his sin!

He calls men thus to repent. He tells you that the very wickedness you have been guilty of has been the occasion of

His showing His love in putting it away; and now "He hath committed to us the word of reconciliation, as though God did beseech by us, we pray in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." He says again, "I have heard thee in a time accepted;" and "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." What time is that? Where is the proof that God is doing so? The resurrection of Jesus is the proof God has positively accepted Christ's work as finished, and now declares salvation. God who gave His own Son in infinite *love*, has raised Him, and set Him at His own right hand in infinite *righteousness*. The whole question of sin and God's glory has been perfectly settled, and proved so by His setting Christ at His own right hand in righteousness; and He calls now to repentance by showing the riches of His goodness in doing so. He tells you of the love of God, but He tells you also of a finished work that love has done, so that you may come to Him without fear even though you be the *chief of sinners*!

If you cursed and swore—blaspheming the name of Christ—still God calls *you* to repentance. What was the education Peter and Paul got to be apostles? One tried to destroy Christ's name when he did not know Him; the other cursed and swore he did not know Him when he *did*! After all this, what do we see them doing? Peter stands up before all the people and says, "*You have denied the Holy One and the Just.*" They might well have turned upon him and said, "*You knew Him, and yet you denied Him.*" But his conscience was perfectly clear before God. So we can go and say to the people, who are all lost in their sins, "The very sins you commit we have committed ourselves; we can talk to them about *their* sins because *we are saved*!"

It has ceased to be the thought that a man is to go on in a certain course of conduct, and his case to be decided by and bye. God has stepped in and dealt with the world, guilty without law, and guilty under law, in perfect grace. *That* point is before your conscience *now*, and the hindrance is that you *despise it*! Your sins are no hindrance; God is satisfied as to how Christ has answered for His claims against you. But you say, "I would like to go on in the broad way"—then, of course, you despise the goodness of God. It is not now a question to be settled by judgment; but the question has been settled, and grace reigns through righteousness, and God has proved His acceptance of Christ's work in raising

up Christ and setting Him at His own right hand. I come to God then by Him, as white as snow! I come to God knowing that He is perfectly satisfied, because I see Christ is in glory in consequence of it. It is not then leaving you to yourselves to see if you will be good—you are wicked. It is not testing and trying what man *is*, but sending salvation because man *is not* what he ought to be. What peace this gives! There is conflict, plenty, but peace is made. I have to overcome Satan—myself—the world. But the combat was with sin; and Christ has fully met it; put it away and peace is made.

Test yourselves then with this. Have you got this peace? Stable as the throne of God Himself? If so, may you so walk in this perfect peace with God, seeking for glory, honour, incorruptibility, and eternal life. Amen.

THE RIBBAND OF BLUE.

Num. xv. 37-41.

AMONG the distinguishing marks by which the children of Israel were to be known from the rest of mankind, perhaps none were more significant personally than “the ribband of blue” upon the fringes of the borders of their garments. Nor are we left to conjecture its import and value, either to the eye of Him who commanded it, or to the thoughts of those who wore it—for, in truth, Jehovah’s nation then, or the church of God now, are a peculiar people, from the first step of their calling to the last. Precious stones, gold, silver, and the ribband of blue, designated the people that God called out “to make them a nation on the earth.” Added to those *personal* pledges were the visible proofs by day and night, in the pillar and the cloud, that every movement of the camp was to be at the bidding of Him who was guiding them to “His holy habitation.” This favoured nation was also to be God’s witness to the nations around; the people, therefore, were to be exempt from those diseases which were the common lot of mankind. Besides this, their land was to yield its increase and nothing to be barren in their midst—“five of them were to chase a hundred, and a hundred of them were to put ten thousand to flight.”

“The “ribband of blue,” which thus marked off this people outwardly in the flesh, witnessed of their moral nearness maintained by obedience to the law given them for their

education, as well as to His statutes and judgments for their political government. Indeed, a closer examination of this scripture tells us so, and that the ribband was designed to be admonitory and commemorative—"it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them." The admonitory character of this scripture is too obvious to need confirmation, and the reasons self-evident to an exercised conscience, who judges what sin is in the flesh. Yet while much of the ministry of Israel, and in later times necessarily all the ministry of the prophets, was admonitory, because failure had come in—still there was the service of Aaron and the priesthood, which embraced what was commemorative, like the Passover and the earlier feasts of the Lord—and what was anticipatory, like the blowing of the trumpets and the yet later feasts of Lev. xxiii. When the conscience of the people was thus awakened and exercised towards God, on the promise of recovery by obedience ("thou shalt remember and do"), their faith was also confirmed by priesthood and sacrifices, upon the ultimate ground of sovereign grace and blessing—for ever and anon God was wont to proclaim Himself, "*I am the Lord your God which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am the Lord your God.*"

This identification of God with his people, was indeed their proper peculiarity, and it is the first thing to be recognised and borne in mind by us likewise, as we travel onward to meet Him. When the Israelite looked upon "the ribband of blue," it was the abiding witness to him of Jehovah's faithfulness, though conscious oftentimes of his own failure in not walking up to its character and claims. If the people judged themselves by this heavenly blue in the light of Jehovah's love (of which it was the token) they would seek conformity to His mind in a fuller obedience to His statutes and laws. If, on the other hand, they discovered distance and contradiction by *only* looking at themselves, and snatched this ribband from their garments, it would be a denial of the unfailing grace of the God who bade them wear it. What a moment for the soul when conscious of its shortcoming!

But we must also add the *prohibitory* character of this ribband of blue, "that ye seek *not* after your own heart, and your own eyes, after which ye need to go a whoring." Here it is that the axe is laid at the root of the tree; for the flesh, the nature itself is now in question—the *heart* and *eyes*.

Solemn lessons are thus brought to light, as those best know who are now called to learn what the "truth is in Jesus," and who "have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Judaism could only detect indwelling sin and put the guilt of it upon the conscience, and point to the incoming remedy, "the faith which should afterward be revealed." Christianity teaches another lesson and begins with Christ; and for us to reach conformity to Him must be by death to the flesh through His cross, and redemption by His blood. Believers *now* are born again of the Spirit, that they may bring forth fruit unto God and walk as children of the light. What a privilege to justify God (however humbling it be to man in the flesh) in what He has so lovingly and patiently brought to light, that in "the fulness of time" He might bring in His Son and turn every eye to Him, as the embodiment of all that is heavenly bright and blue.

Prohibitions or lessons, both commemorative and admonitory, though equally witnessed by the ribband of blue, were seen and understood by a people in the flesh under Moses—but only to make the painful discovery that the man who wore it on his garment needed something more: "for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. . . . But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Nevertheless, the ribband could witness and point faith onward to a future day, when Israel will be brought under the new covenant and under Christ as their Mediator, when all around and in them shall be alike consistent with this heavenly colour and character in their bright history of millennial glory—"Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." In the meanwhile, it is for Christians, as such—men knowing their heavenly standing and calling, under the anointing of the Holy Ghost—to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ."

The natural life of man, surrounded by all that God had given, and watched over as Israel nationally was in Canaan, gave way, and the people, alas, broke down under the weight of the blessing! "The ribband of blue" is now dispensationally hid, as between Jehovah and His earthly

people, and they are no longer His witnesses on account of their unfaithfulness. When John the Baptist came as the forerunner of Christ to the nation of Israel, he was in the wilderness, and "his raiment was of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins." What a contrast! So when the Messiah Himself came into their midst, He was there as the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and had not where to lay His head. When He served them in His ministry of love, it was by healing their sick, opening the eyes of the blind, casting out devils, and preaching deliverance to the captives. Again what a contrast! Finally He wept over Jerusalem, saying, "Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

While the nation continues in its impenitence, and the vail is upon their hearts instead of the ribband of blue upon the fringes of their garments—while the Messiah is hidden in the heavens waiting the latter day of earthly glory, when the land shall again be married—what is God doing? Another race of people is called out to know this rejected One at the right hand of God, as the head of His body, the church. What is the *new* characteristic of this people? They "bear about in their body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in their body." *This* is the new badge and token of identification with Christ—"for which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day,"

May we understand better than ever the ribband of blue of earlier days—only accepting the antitype, as *we* are now taught to connect it with Christ, our rejected Lord, and wear it in his absence, the token that *we* "are not of the world, even as" He was "not of the world"—till He comes, and we are changed into His likeness. B.

FRAGMENT.

The heart that knows anything of following the Lord wholly, has acquired a sense and a force which none of his interests or concerns can rival, or to which they can have any resemblance. Like the Holy anointing oil of the sanctuary, or the Holy perfume; there must not, and there cannot be successfully an attempt to make anything like it.

THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES, &c.

(Continued from Page 137.)

BUT what are the special privileges of this select body? What blessing is contained in the being a Pearl, which is not also in being a Treasure? To be redeemed with such a price is sufficient that we should be a treasure to God. Christ's most precious blood makes us that; and in this view, all the saints that ever were, being redeemed by the same precious blood makes them also a treasure to God. There need be no intrinsic value in us; the immense price paid gives a relative value to us; the immense price paid gives a relative value, and makes us a treasure. For God gave the most precious thing He had in order to have us. But the mere fact of redemption does not *per se* make us holy and without blame before Him in love. Something else was needed for this. And I think two things are before us—that God would have us so that He might delight in us, and, that only in this way could there be obtained (if, I may say so) the full value of Christ's blood, which it is the righteousness of God to give Him. “He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.” To buy a world was but a small thing, and not worth the price. Even to have the treasure in all its relative preciousness to God, is not a full return for the immense price, not a full return to Him who gave all that He had. His blood demanded something more even as regards them than their salvation and glory hereafter. We have the full return in the Church of God—as far as can be regarding man. As regards God we cannot say save in the words of scripture, that God was fully glorified in Him—in the Church we see more than salvation. Salvation, new-birth, and glory, are blessings common to all believers. But the Church is united to Christ as Head; His body, the fulness (complement) of Him who filleth all in all. Now the body must be partaker of the same nature as the Head. Well, we are quickened together with Christ, and all believers now, whether Jews or Gentiles, are made one in Christ—“for to make in himself of twain one new man,” (Eph. ii. 15)—that is, the church as the body and Christ as the head, make one new man before God. What can be more expressive of unity than this? So God delights in us as the body of Christ. But God can only delight in that which resembles Himself. He delights perfectly in Christ, who is the express image of His person. Now, having brought us so near to

Himself—the very nearest of all his creatures—He must, in order to have pleasure in us, make us like Himself as regards our moral qualities. Accordingly we are not only before Him in Christ, which proves His infinite love to us, but “He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be *holy and without blame* before him in love” (Eph. i. 4)—that is, God will have us like Christ, conformed to His image, morally now as well as in body hereafter. Love brings us before Him, and He would delight in us. We could not be admitted there if He could find no pleasure in us. He is holy in his character, unblameable in His ways, love itself in His nature. God gives to us of His nature that we may be like Him morally. And we are there in Christ, and therefore the object of His perfect love. We are such now in this world, and although the old nature is in us, yet by the energy of the Holy Spirit indwelling in us we are able to overcome and keep under the works of the flesh, and to manifest day by day His life.

How prone we are to make excuses for our failure because the flesh is in us. But the Holy Spirit is stronger than the flesh, and He is in us so that we may not do the things we would. If we fail, let us confess to God and not seek for excuse. He has amply provided for every temptation.

Now, to be holy and without blame is the perfection of moral beauty in God’s sight. Christ was all that through His life; and we are to walk in His steps. It was manifested in Him in that He never did His own will but always the will of His Father. None could convict Him of sin. The Spirit dwells in us for the purpose of producing this beauty. The same Holy Ghost that was given without measure to Him is given to us. All His life here was in the power of the Spirit. The same Spirit that dwelt in the Lord Jesus when He was down here, now that He is ascended as Head, dwells in His members. But there is more than mere individual beauty—there is the beauty of the whole as cemented together in one body—and it is this which makes the church a pearl, and, as the Lord says, a pearl of great price. We can conceive very ugly stones so builded together as to form a beautiful building, or on the other hand beautifully moulded stones forming a mean-looking hut. Here is the building of God, each stone is fashioned with utmost care—divine intelligence, and skill—and the temple rises before His eye in all the beauty He can impart. For we are *in*

Christ. He is the head, the church is His body. The body will be—must—be a fitting complement of the head, else it would be derogatory to His beauty and glory. Wondrous as the thought is, the exigency of our position as His body necessitates that we should be morally fitted for the place. A fitness most surely due to His grace and the energy of His Spirit,—we being in ourselves all unfit and unworthy. But it is due to Him that not a flaw, neither spot nor stain, should be found in His body.

This then is the wondrous fact before God. A company of sinners who were once dead in trespasses and in sins, are quickened by the Spirit of God; not only pardoned, justified, and having life from God, but knit together so as to form one body, to be His habitation through the Spirit. This is the highest and greatest effect of grace. The blood of Christ can produce no greater blessing for man while on earth. God, by His spirit, dwells in the Church as truly as ever the cloud of His presence was in Solomon's temple. That the Spirit dwells in each believer is most true and precious, and is a much more needed ~~thing~~ for our own peace and walk before Him. Indeed it is the spring and power of each one, being holy and without blame. But it is not the same thing as the Spirit dwelling in the church. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost," (1st Cor. vi. 19). Here we have the former truth. The latter is as clearly given (Eph. ii. 19-22), "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

Believers lose their national, natural standing. It is flesh which boasts of this. We are welded together by the presence of the Holy Ghost, so that the whole forms *one* habitation of God through the Spirit. Take the two truths together—each believer a temple of the Holy Ghost, and the company united together in one body, like stones in a building, for God's habitation—and we have what the Lord Jesus here calls the pearl of great price, and the Spirit in the epistle, the church of God. This is revealed to us as the greatest result of redemption upon earth. When

the church is in glory, the indwelling of the Spirit will not be more real than it is now. Most surely it will be more manifest. Then the purpose of God will be fully, perfectly accomplished. Not a moral quality in the Godhead but will be perfectly reflected in the glorified church. Every communicable beauty will shine in it. Then, and then only, will be seen by an admiring universe the fullest riches of His grace and glory in the holiness, the unblamableness, and the beauty of the glorified church. The pearl will, can only be displayed in its lustre then. And there will then be only one pearl—nothing in the heavens like it. It is God's greatest work, to the praise of His glory.

(To be continued D. V.)

THE PERFECT MAN.

Luke xxii. 39-46; xxiii. 33-49.

OUR blessed path, beloved brethren, while waiting for God's Son from heaven, is to feed upon Him as the bread that came down from heaven. In the midst of the toil and tossings and buffetings which are the portion of God's people while in this world, He gives us Himself as the food for our hearts. Thus, all that He was as Man while here below, becomes most precious to us; but in order to feed upon Him as an incarnate Saviour, we must first know Him as crucified.

In the gospel of Luke the Lord Jesus is specially brought before us as the *Son of Man*. It has been often remarked the contrast there is between John's gospel and Matthew's. In John He is the *Son of God*—a divine person; whether in Gethsemane or on the cross, you do not get suffering at all. The same scene is spoken of in both; but in Matthew you get the other side. You find in John, when the soldiers came to take Him, "as soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground," (xviii. 6) but He gives himself freely to them. If not for that, He had only to walk away and leave them lying there; but He gave himself up for His Father's glory, and showing His love for His own—"If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." (xviii. 8) He puts himself forward that they may escape. So, on the cross you do not find in John the words given by Matthew, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He gives up His own spirit. "Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be

fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar, and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost." He *gave up* His own spirit.

In Matthew's gospel you get the other side. In Gethsemane He "prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" (xxvi. 39) and when on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." (xxvii. 46)

In Luke's gospel there is what might at first appear a difficulty to the mind, but it brings out Christ in a special way, so I speak of it here. In Luke there is more suffering in Gethsemane than in any other gospel; and on the cross *none at all!* Why is this? Because, as Man, He is above all that He is passing through. The character of the Lord's sufferings in Luke would lead us to remember, for the precious comfort of our souls, that He was *perfect Man*—sinless of course, but a Man. When risen, He says, "Behold my hands and my feet that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." (xxiv. 39) He would bring home to the soul all the blessed truth of how thoroughly He was man. Look how that is marked in Gethsemane, "When he was at the place, he said unto them, pray that ye enter not into temptation." (xxii. 40). In Luke you find Him constantly praying as man—perfect man, obedient and dependent. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. iv. 4) In Luke we find Him "all night in prayer to God." (vi. 12) At another time "He went up into a mountain to pray, and as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered," and He was transfigured. (ix. 28) In Gethsemane, "He kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father if thou be willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless, not my will but thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him, and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly." There you get *the Man* again. Mark how in this gospel there is more development of His sufferings than in any other. "Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly." The more He felt the depths of that dreadful cup which He was to drink, the more earnestly He prayed.

With us, too often, the trouble that fills our minds turns us away from God, but "He prayed more earnestly." The agony brought Him to God; and that is just the right thing. "And his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray lest ye enter into temptation. And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" There you have in the disciples man in his infirmity; in Judas, man in his hatred and wickedness; and in Christ, man in his perfectness. The poor disciples were sleeping for sorrow while He was praying "more earnestly, being in an agony." When we come to the cross in this gospel, we find no trace of the agony. He had gone through it in spirit in Gethsemane, and is then above it all.

I am not now speaking of His atoning work, but of His death. "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice"—without feebleness—"yielded up the ghost" (Matt. xxvii. 50). In Luke I find these words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." There you have the perfect, blessed, unclouded consciousness of the man, giving up his spirit in full confidence to his Father. This characterises all that Christ was on the cross. He is above all the circumstances—so completely above them, that His occupation is with others; His first word on the cross is, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." The wretched malice and hatred of men had led to His crucifixion; but the poor Jews knew not what they were doing. They outrage and insult Him, "they parted his raiment and cast lots;" they "derided him saying, he saved others, let him save himself;" "the soldiers also mocked him"—the very malefactors "railed on him." And what do I find?—that He was above it all! He can turn to the poor thief hanging beside Him with these words, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." There was a blessed work going on in that poor malefactor's heart; in all the agonies of the cross, though believing Him to be the Lord, he seeks no present relief at His hands, but says, "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." And the Lord answers him, "To-day

shalt thou be with me in paradise." He shall be with Him when He comes in the kingdom—and surely He will so come—but He is now shewing the place He is taking as having put away sin, and says, No, you shall not wait for the kingdom, you shall be with me to-day in paradise!

"And it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth:" all was dark, but He brought light into it. "And when he had cried with a loud voice he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." You may call this faith or confidence in His Father. There is this difference with us, if we have seen Jesus at the right hand of God, we can say, like Stephen, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit;" but He could say "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit." This blessedness He had as man, though passing through the bitterness of the cup of wrath—going into it to its fullest depths. In Gethsemane the agony was such that "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood." There, He passed through it all with His Father, so that when He came to the cross He was above it all. In a certain sense that is our place, if we could only go through every trial beforehand with God, bringing God in spirit into it as He did, we should when the trial came have God with us in it. Ours are little trials when compared to His, but they test us and try us—no doubt of it—but the principle is the same; we should follow Him in our path, and if we take the sorrow or trial to God, even if it put us in an agony, (as it may, for presenting it to God makes it more acute), we can carry that agony to Him, we shall find that we can be above the circumstances with men when we have gone through them perfectly with God.

Christ's obedience was perfect. His human nature, as you see in Hebrews (ii. 20), was perfectly tried, but always perfect in the trial—all was perfect in Him. It is good for us to study what Christ was—really to meditate upon it, and get the benefit of it to our souls. "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." (Phil. ii. 8, 9)

We have to feel the need of abiding with God, and God with us. If you want to get the graciousness of Christ—if you want to grow in likeness to Him, you must feed upon Him. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him" (John vi. 56).

The Lord give us, in the consciousness of all the sin and wretchedness and misery that is in ourselves, so to feed upon Christ, that our hearts may be filled with the blessed sense of what He was ; that we may be able the more to understand the love and grace of God.—Amen.

THE LAST DAYS.

IN these days the unity of Christ's body by the Holy Ghost, and separation from evil, are vital points of testimony for Christians. One is the original and abiding condition of the Church's existence: the other, faithfulness to its nature and characteristic of that faithfulness in a special manner in the last days. To me it is that (both) or nothing. One is the special purpose of God as to us connected with Christ; the other, His nature. The notion that we can be wittingly associated with evil and be undefiled is an unholy notion—a denial of the nature of holiness,—and in the world, the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. The character of Christ with Philadelphia is, "He that is holy, He that is true." The keeping His word, and the word of His patience, is what is commended in the saints. An open door, and only a little strength, but special association with Christ the Holy One, and the truth, in the midst of a degenerate people.

Things are going on so rapidly in these last days that Christians will be cast on their own ground, and we shall need the Word to be an authority, and it is a divine one.

I have been struck lately with the evidence of antagonist powers in the Acts. We know it, but it came out then distinctly. Apostolic power of the Spirit might overcome, and be greater than what was in the world. So it was, and it delivered, but the power was there; and when masses seemed anxious for the word of *grace*, they rose up and drove the *truth* away, and remained in possession of the world, at least, all who did not overcome by personal faith. When this ceased to be the case, the Church itself became corrupt—Satan would cast some into prison—Antipas, a faithful witness, be slain where Satan dwelt, and there the witness was. Soon it became Thyatira, and Jezebel, the mother of children, and then the remnant had to abide the Lord's coming; and (ecclesiastical blessing) being replaced by the kingdom, and the Morning Star ours.

I have no doubt that in the present breaking up of what

did seem steadfast to man, and in the rapid progress of evil, a testimony to the truth, however simple, by those who are not shaken when all around is, and who have, in the midst of acknowledged weakness in themselves, found peace and rest and stability by the truth, is of the greatest value, and may be a help to thousands. Hence, I rejoice in the wide dissemination of writings which proclaim the truth and unfold and lead to the study of the Word; and I can say this, though some of them should not be without defect in judgment, and should be deficient in exactitude of expression.

THE HEART OF MAN.

DID you ever in the light of Scripture consider what the heart of man is? You will tell me it is a wicked thing. Aye, that it is; but it is not only capable of wickedness, it is incurable, desperate; conceive a man taking stones in his hand to batter and beat a face shining like an angel's! Could you conceive it? Look at the priests in the temple in the presence of the rent vail; they plotted a lie. Look at the soldiers in the presence of a rent tomb; they consented to a lie. The riven waters of the Red Sea did not cure Pharaoh's heart; the shining countenance of the martyr Stephen did not cure the heart of the multitude; a rent vail did not cure the priestly heart, and a rent tomb did not cure the populace's heart. Is this a picture of the heart you carry? You may have different habitudes, but the flesh is the same in all, not only evil, but incurable. Tell me what will you do with a heart that has been proof against those things?

SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

"B," Islington.—What is the distinction between the anointing and the sealing of the Spirit?

A.—The anointing is the action of God, by the Holy Ghost, in sealing a believer as His. If I am to put a mark on something belonging to me, it is then marked as mine. It is the distinction between the putting on of the mark, and the fact of its being marked. God anoints us with the Holy Ghost, and the person who has been thus anointed is sealed.

"THANKS BE TO GOD, WHICH GIVETH US THE VICTORY
THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

1 Cor. xv. 57.

CHOOSE for me, Lord! the time is wearing fast,
And sure I am to be with thee at last:
But, whether as a sleeping one to rise,
Or, living, wait to meet Thee in the skies;
Thou knowest, Lord—my heart can leave with Thee
The ordering of my lot, whate'er it be.

If death Thy purposed way, ev'n death is *mine*,
Since I am "Christ's"—Oh! power of love divine!
The Lord of Life thro' death destroyed my foe,
That I His full deliverance now might know.
Still as a stone the enemy shall be,
While I pass thro' the waterfloods to Thee.

But, Lord, I'll need Thee when the billows swell:
My mortal frame—Thou knowest it full well:
Need Thee I do in all things—who but Thou
Could'st have upheld and succoured me till now?
Yet poor and needy howsoe'er I be,
The Lord my Saviour thinketh upon me.

Thou art *my Life*, my everlasting stay,
And canst Thou fail when heart and flesh give way?
Not only peace, but victory, Thou dost give
To all who simply on Thy name believe.
No more the King of Terrors—Death shall be
A servant to conduct my soul to Thee.

Let but my heart be conscious Thou art nigh,
Nor ever let me turn from Thee mine eye,
Till, as the purchase of Thy precious blood,
That brought me once, a guilty one, to God,
Th' appointed moment come, upspringing free,
My happy spirit finds its home with Thee.

Nor shall Thy triumph be imperfect, Lord;
My sleeping dust shall hear Thy quickening word;
Filled up the deep desire of every heart,
When, like to Thee, we see Thee as Thou art!
Lord Jesus, come! and take Thy saints to be
For ever in the Father's house with Thee!

FRAGMENT.

If the Church, as a whole, is weak, individual faith is exercised in an exceptional manner; and more immediately upon God Himself. There were no Elijahs and Elishas in the reign of Solomon. No one was caught up to heaven in his palmy days.

THE FATHER SEEKING WORSHIPPERS.

(John iv.)

IN this chapter we have the blessed ways of God's grace in dealing with a sinner. Jesus is here in a world where sin is, and here to bring in grace which is above all the sin. But it is more: it is the soul brought to worship the Father in the blessed relationship in which the Son of God was here to reveal Him; and not only so, but to worship Him as *God*, who in His nature is revealed. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." It is thus a soul brought to the personal knowledge of God in the relationship of grace as the Father, revealed by the Son. It is, consequently, the same knowledge as we shall have in heaven. It is not one kind of knowledge here, and another in heaven. No doubt there is growth in intelligence, I admit all that; but as to whom is revealed, and what is revealed, there is no difference between what is known now and what will be known in heaven, because it is the same God and Father we shall know for ever!

When we turn to the woman's thoughts of worship, all was confused. She speaks of the Samaritan's worship, and the Jew's worship, and she knew not what she worshipped. In fact, she only speaks of worship to turn the conversation when the Lord began to probe her heart. There must be salvation known before there can be any true worship. You cannot worship a God you don't know, and whose presence would cause you to fly from Him as Adam did in the garden. It is not questioning the fact that God is to be worshipped by His creatures—of course He is. It is due to Him—your duty to Him. Quite right to own and feel the obligation; but the thing is, you are unable to do it because you are a sinner. The only worship that man can offer is Cain's worship, which originated in hardness of heart. He was so indifferent to his condition as one banished from Paradise, and the ground cursed for his sake, that he brings the very fruits of that curse as an offering to God.

Mark, it is quite right to worship, but you must be in a state to do so. But you find some men acting in ignorance of this. They own the duty to worship God, without any sense of their state as sinners before God. It is quite the same with the law. Of course it is a duty to obey the law of God. But if a man takes the ground of keeping it, he has denied his condition as a sinner. He owns the duty,

but does not own what God's word declares. "There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that seeketh after God." "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth *no good thing*." It is like a child whose place is to be in his father's arms; but he has been very naughty. Of course he ought to be in his father's arms, but what he ought not to do is to think that he can be there as if nothing had happened. It is hardness of heart if he does not see this.

Now God took care that when man eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he should get a conscience. Persons talk of the law written in the heart of man, and all that fine kind of thing, but man got his conscience by his fall. It may be terribly blunted, and nothing deadens it more than false religion, but still there it is in every one. A blessed thing that it is so, for God works on it to bring the soul to know what God is, when He deals with the sinner in grace. But it is a mistake to mix up conscience and the law. If there had been no law, man would have known good and evil. Don't you think a son would have known he had done wrong to murder a father, though he had never heard of the commandments? If a boy pilfers from his comrade at school he knows he'll get into a scrape if found out, but he knows, too, *the thing is wrong in itself*. Conscience in a man makes him know good and evil, and the law coming in only tacks on God's authority to conscience. Before Adam fell he had not the knowledge of good and evil. There was nothing evil in eating the fruit unless God forbade him. There was no harm in the thing in itself, but forbidding it was solely an expression of God's will, and he got the knowledge of good and evil by disobeying God and eating of the tree. It is a blessed thing that man has this conscience, for it is what God works upon in grace to bring in the revelation of Himself. Nothing perverts this knowledge of good and evil more than false religion; still, however depraved, conscience is there, and the effect of the revelation of God to the soul brings into the conscience the remembrance of all that wherein we have sinned against Him. Therefore, to draw near as a worshipper, I must know that work whereby God has put away sin, and how I have got entirely freed from sin by the work of Christ. As we read in Hebrews, "That the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins."

Now, dear friends, till your conscience is thus purged you cannot worship God. I don't say there may not be craving

desires—a going out of the heart after Christ—all that I grant. But there can be no worship till you have salvation. How is it thus with you? Are there not some here whose consciences are not purged? Well, you take up a kind of worship; you profess to draw near to God, but you would fly from Him if He were to come in where you are carrying on your worship. Mark, I don't say *He* would drive you out; *you* would run away from Him. Just as with Adam, the voice of God walking in the garden did not drive Adam out, he ran away and hid himself in the trees of the garden.

Now just take the Lord's prayer as a simple illustration. You say it—it is what you have been taught from your childhood. The kind of habits we have all been brought up in. Mark, I don't accuse you of insincerity, but I ask you, when you call God your Father, do you know Him in this relationship? Then you are one of God's children! Oh! no, you say, I could not take that ground. Again, with the words "Thy kingdom come." What do you mean by the Father's kingdom? Why, you have not one distinct idea about it; all is vagueness. Well, if that kingdom comes it will be heavenly glory, but the day of judgment must precede it. Are you ready for that? No! you can't say you are saved from "the wrath to come." I take the Lord's prayer as a common illustration of what your worshipping God really comes to. You own the duty, but you have got a conscience which would make you flee from the presence of God whom you profess to worship.

In this chapter the Lord had gone away from Judæa into Samaria because He was rejected. God was in the world, come there in grace, and the world would not have Him. The chapter opens with His leaving Judæa—the place of which He says in this chapter "salvation is of the Jews." We begin then with a rejected Christ. There is no gospel without a rejected Christ. If you call yourselves Christians you are owning this. For you own that Christ has been crucified, and what does that mean but that the world has rejected and turned Him out. As the prophet says of the way the nation treated Him, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" "He is despised and rejected of men, and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him." Put "Christian" for "Jew" and it is just the same story now. I don't say there may not be the outward confession of His name, and

respect too, to the outward cross. But if you are honest you will say of your heart, "It does not desire Him." You know, dear friends, this is as sure of you as it was of the Jews. You may have the outward form of Christianity, but you know you have no desires after Christ. When you are alone do you find your heart going out in love for Him? Even a Christian finds it hard to keep this desire for Christ fresh, for he has the flesh in him, and the flesh has no desire after Christ.

The Lord says to His disciples when the Comforter comes "He shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me." It is not a class of sinners, but the whole world is under sin, proved guilty all alike of the rejection of Christ; and if an individual is taken up in grace like the woman here, the same thing comes out in detail. She is convinced of her sins in the presence of Christ.

Have you been brought to this, beloved friends? Not only that you are sinners, but that you call yourselves Christians, and yet have no desires in your heart after Christ?

This is a worse condition than the heathen. They never heard of Christ to despise Him; but here we find those who take the ground of being Christians. They say, we believe in Christ, that He is the Son of God, and that He came here to suffer and die. What then? The very one that owns this religiously, goes away and amuses himself as if it were nothing at all. God is not only saying to you now, as He said to Adam, "Where art thou?" (which was man at his best, and yet man got away from God); but since the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost is asking, "What have you done with my Son?" as God said to Cain (where we have man at his worst) "Where is Abel, thy brother?" You have to answer "I have turned Him out of the world." If you say "My fathers did it, but if I had lived in their days I would not have done it," you are a Pharisee. You bear witness to what has been done, and pride yourself on being better than others. Well the end will be, if you take that ground, you will come off worse than the publican.

I grant there are differences. Everybody has his tastes; one follows pleasure; one ease; another money. But the thing is, God has been into the world in grace in the person of His Son to win the hearts of sinners to Himself, and though you profess to know it all, it has not won yours.

The next point is that the grace that is in Christ, thus

rejected, rises, blessed be God, completely above and over it all. We see Him in this chapter cast out of Judea, but nothing chills His love. He has come into our circumstances—taken the lowliest place—known by the proud world as “the carpenter’s son” for many years. We see Him here rejected and despised, and in His circumstances, “wearied with His journey,” sitting at the well’s side in the heat of the noon-day sun, which in that country is terrible heat. But there was no chilling of His heart for the lost—He sat there to save. He stoops to ask drink of a wretched woman, for He had nothing to draw with; and although He had created the water of the well He would not work a miracle for Himself. He never worked miracles for Himself but for others. He had taken the place of perfect lowly dependence, and He asks drink of a Samaritan—of one belonging to a people which were everything that is bad. They had made a mixture of religion, adding the worship of Jehovah to their own idolatries. They were—what shall I call them? What we should now say were half heretics, half apostates; and the Lord was sitting talking to one of these people whose personal character was all that was evil. It is not that judgment against sin will not come—it must come. But before it is executed, we have in Christ love, that is above all the sin, come into the place where the sin is. It is God displaying Himself in grace, and not revealing righteousness in judgment.

This was the error of Job’s friends. They were looking for God bringing in righteousness in this way in punishing iniquity. That day has not come. Not that God does not restrain the evil passions of men. We can thank Him for the magistrate to keep down the evil, and prevent the world being an impossible place to live in through the violence of men. But God has not revealed Himself yet in judgment. God has been in the world in grace. As we read “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” It is not judgment, but God come into the evil, and come there active in love, and so it is still; for though Christ has been cast out, the Holy Ghost has come down to carry on the testimony of God’s love. Love that goes after the lost. You may reject the love and be lost, but there the love is. You may be like the elder son, who won’t go in to share the love bestowed on the prodigal, even when the father went out and entreated him.

Is there only a true want in your souls, dear friends, towards God? There is Christ to meet it. If man had no heart for Christ, Christ had a heart for man. He had come into a place where He could say, salvation is not *of* Samaria, but that was not saying salvation is not *for* Samaria.

There was nothing but sin in the woman, but He creates a want in her heart. She had lived a shameful life, it was the result of her character. Doubtless there was natural energy and self-will in her, and as it always is where this is the case it brings more misery; and she was miserable. Her sin had isolated her; she came alone to draw water, not wishing to be with the other women, and hear their gossip. She was too miserable for that kind of thing, and she came alone. But God, too, was alone there! and she was to meet Him, and have her tale told out in His presence when He was come to meet her in perfect grace. And, beloved friends, it must be so with us. Our tale must be told out to God some day. If not now, in perfect grace, it will be by and by in judgment. How wonderful! How blessed! All the sin brought out in the presence of One who brings in the love and grace of God now, which is above all the sin.

Yet, alas, she does not understand a word about it. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." The Lord tells her of the gift of God. God was there to give salvation. It was not a question of salvation being *of* the Jews. It was the *grace* of God bringing salvation to the lost, as the Lord said to Zacchæus, "This day is salvation *come* to this house." So here, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Christ was there, and He was there to give eternal life. It is not God come requiring that we should labour for it. He comes to give! If you are labouring you have not got what God gives.

But you may say, If God gives to a vile woman like this He makes nothing of morality. It offends your good opinion of yourself that He should talk thus to such a woman, Ah! you are a Pharisee, and the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you; so yours, after all, is a poor case. You must toil and die, because you won't stoop to Christ's gift. He had come to reveal the Father in grace, and He gave that which springs up in joy to the Father. It is a well in us, which springs up to God in joy, who has

brought us to know Him, as revealed in grace and love. Do you know God thus? Do you know what it is when no eye but His sees you, so to have that knowledge of Him in grace as the Father in your heart, that joy and gladness springs up to Him?

The woman understood not one word about it. Christ had to go on with her in patience. She had not this new life, and so she had no intelligence about it. Now, dear friends, God deals with you in patience, but is there a want for Him in your soul? Or are you like this woman, who did not know what Christ and heaven could *give*, and had only known the misery of sin? I don't ask you about your lives; hers was a shameful one. I doubt not yours may be outwardly proper. But everyone who does not know Christ, has either a disappointed heart, or a heart seeking what will disappoint it!

It was contrary to man's thoughts that God should stoop so low, as to sit thus talking to a vile Samaritan woman. The disciples marvelled that He talked thus with her. It was not fit, they thought, for a Rabbi. Very likely! But it *was* fit for God in grace!

The woman's heart is closed to all He has said. She can't get above her daily toil. "Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." But the Lord goes on. And now we come to the next instruction. Her conscience must be reached. "Go, call thy husband." A little word will do when He speaks. The Lord was not dealing with her as a judge. He was there in perfect grace; but grace tells terribly when sin is on the conscience. Like the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, and Adam hides himself. God had not spoken to drive him out; God was there, and he fled from Him. So here with the woman. "Go, call thy husband." Immediately sin is before her, and she tries to evade by answering, "I have no husband." The Lord's reply made her know that He knew all about her. Immediately she perceives that He is a prophet. I am Master of what I know. Here was a stranger who knew all about her, and God is known thus by the conscience. She was exposed in the presence of One who knew all that ever she did.

Has the word of God ever brought you to this, dear friends? Have you ever seen a man that has told you all that ever you did? Has your memory ever been active in

the presence of God? You must be laid bare some day. Either in judgment, when mercy is over; or now in perfect goodness in a day of grace. Have you been brought now to God, so that you have taken your place as condemned, and what must come out in the day of judgment has come out now? Has that goodness of God led you to repentance? Not merely outward sorrow for sin, saying, "We are all sinners" in a general way. But have you confessed your sins to God from a need you had of being reconciled? Have you ever had a visit from God? I don't mean by dreams or visions; but has God so spoken to your consciences as for you to have known Him and yourself together?

The woman now turns to worship. The Lord tells her that salvation was of the Jews; the Samaritans worshipped they knew not what; but the hour was coming, and now was, when the true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for it was no longer a question of what man ought to be for God, but of what God is for the sinner. "The Father *seeketh* such to worship Him." As for man's worship it was all worthless. You may get a machine to do ceremonies if you only are clever enough to make one. As we read in the prophet of the outward worship of Israel. God calls it, "bowing the head like a bulrush." It is utterly worthless. You must have to do with God who knows you, and whom you must know if you would worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is not God requiring worship—all very true, as man's duty—but the Lord is here in grace, and out of the abundance of His heart He says, "The Father *seeketh*" worshippers. He is not regarding forms of worship, but He is seeking vile, broken-down sinners to make them worshippers. He is not seeking the Pharisee. His worship proceeds out of himself. He thanks God for what *he* is; here it is *God* who is revealed as giving living water; going on with the poor dull heart to bring it to repentance, that there might be a want there for what He was giving. It is no longer seeking good in man. God had tried him without law, and He had to drown the world with a flood; He tried him under the law and he broke it; sent His own Son in grace, and they rejected Him. What was left for the world but judgment? All is over with it. But now there is the judgment of the world—not executed, but pronounced: "Now is the judgment of this world." God brings in His grace for the world that is under judgment;

and so it is when He works in the individual conscience. He brings out all the sins, but He is there to give eternal life. So with the poor woman! Where did He find you? I speak now to believers. He found you in your sins; but the one who has reached the conscience is the one who has come and given Himself for the sins. Directly the woman's sins are out in His presence, as the prophet, she wants to know Christ. "When he is come," she says, "he will tell us all things." He will say who are saved and who are lost. Ah, says the Lord, "I that speak unto thee am he." If He is known to her conscience as a prophet, He will reveal Himself to her as the Christ that she needs—the Christ who could save; whenever the word of God reaches the conscience, Christ has been there. What Christ? Why, the Christ who gave Himself for the sins which He brought to light. The cross puts all the sins away. He puts you into the truth about yourself, that He may put you into the grace which has taken the sins away.

There must be the ploughing up of the conscience, and there is God's patience in His dealings with us individually, until the soul is broken down and submits itself to His righteousness: but when once there, it is not a question about making peace—the peace has been made: "Having made peace through the blood of his cross." "Who when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." Why is He sitting there? It is because "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." He *will* rise to judgment; but as to the question of our sins, the apostle says, "After he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God."

Are you, beloved friends, thus reconciled to God? We cannot worship Him until we are saved. When I think of what Christ has done, I can say, All is settled. God has given Him in love for my sins, and has accepted Him in righteousness. Thus God is revealed, and the sinner is brought in truth in His presence to know Him there in grace. What a poor thing it is to live in a lie; to have a bad conscience in order to keep up a character. It is always so. Men are walking in a vain show, disquieting themselves in vain. Dear friends, is it always to be so—always to live in a lie? Or is it a good thing to be out in the presence of God, where I find that perfect grace has visited me, to present me in Christ in perfect righteousness

to God. What a place to be in ! To be thus, in Christ, all out before Him, and all put away by Himself in perfect love, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, "because as he is, so are we, in this world."

Now what was the effect on the woman ? She left her waterpot—what she had once lived for, occupied her no more. She was now occupied with Christ, in contrast with her cares ; and as she had had all out before God ; she can go out boldly to *the men* and say, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?" She had got Christ and had forgotten her waterpot. She had everything settled with God, so that she had nothing any longer to conceal. There is no fear of man where there is the fear of God ; so she goes to tell *the men*—before this she avoided the *women*. This is the practical effect of the revelation of Christ to the sinner.

Is Christ, beloved friends, thus in your hearts ? Has He so entered that He has taken the place of the things which kept Him out ? The Lord grant that it may be so. Amen.

HOW DEATH WORKS.

I BELIEVE we have to learn death in two ways : in the first, as judicially under it, but judicially delivered from it before God, through Christ, and therefore in Him, with God. He reckons us dead, and therefore exempted from the judgment entailed on us as children of Adam, for if we were not dead in His sight we could not be free from His claim on us as men in the flesh, and therefore our enjoyment of our new position, in Christ, is checked and compromised by feebleness of apprehension of His imputed death. In Christ's death I find I am reckoned dead, but alive from the dead in His life. If judgment and death is entered for me there is an end of judgment, because death is the utmost penalty, so that, as touching judgment, there is nothing to trouble me ; "The sting of death is sin," and that has been met in death, I take the place of death in Christ, while I have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life. If I see not this death, I fail in seeing my true and happy place before God.

But there is another death that I am called practically to pass through, which has no connection in the way of pro-

moting the other. I mean that the death in which God reckons me is not promoted by my attainment in practical, moral death, simply for this reason, that God, reckoning me dead, is the fruit of Christ's work and of His grace to me; whereas practical death is learned in my walk down here. Now, at baptism we have been baptized unto the death of Christ; and at the Lord's Supper we go still farther—we feed upon Him in His death—we have communion with His blood. Now the expression of both the one and the other is in consonance with the place of death grace reckons us in hence, if we were morally dead, all would go smoothly with us, and it is plain that to be so is simply in accordance with our profession, as well as natural to our true position. Some take their normal place, and die easily, but yet we see they had to die. Paul died more easily than Peter; Abraham than Jacob, but we see that each had to die, and no doubt each of them felt the pains of death—I mean that they felt they must yield. I believe the agony Abraham felt going up Mount Moriah is not to be told or understood, unless by one who has travelled some part of the road. Who can tell how much Paul endured in seeing Jerusalem cut off, and seeing, as his life closed, how much of his work was unavailing? John tastes of moral death in Patmos. There can be no practical entrance—for residence as in one's country—into Canaan, unless through Jordan. There is no abiding or assured portion for our souls in Heaven, but as we have died here, there may be a fluctuation, like the two and a half tribes, but that is a painful, profitless interest and acquaintance with our heavenly treasures. We are always touched where we feel most, simply because then there is more tie or link through nature to that which for our blessing is judged, and which, as judged, we profess to be dead to, but not being dead to it, if we become not so by seeing our position through grace, we must learn it, and then, mark me, we must take the place where actual death would place us. Paul must not object to the prison, nor John to Patmos, nor Abraham to Mount Moriah, nor Jacob to, "as for me, Rachel died by me in the way." They are in the place of death, and submit to it thoroughly; if they had not, they were not dead.

Fellowship with the sufferings of Christ must necessarily be ours, as we walk *with Him* down here; but our old man *through grace* is crucified with Him, and therefore, if we do

not die to it, through the self-same grace, it is provided, that it must die to us, and thus occurs the difference in our experience at different junctures.

When we die of ourselves we die privately, but not with less pain; but when we are put to death, it is more visible, and we are longer in learning to take our place as dead. There is no deep, real possession of our portion above with Christ, but in proportion to our death here. I realize the one in the ratio that I have learned the other; but remember, we are not dead when we feel we are dying!

A PURPOSE OF HEART FOR CHRIST.

JOHN XII. 1-8, XX. 1-18.

THE LORD comes out in the first few chapters of John as the *Attractive One*—the magnet, drawing solitary ones to Himself in an irresistible manner. *Why*, they could not tell; only they followed Him. (see John i.) In these two scenes in John xii. 1-8, xx. 1-18—we get the counterpart of this. Hearts which had been drawn to Him; when the fitting time was come, coming out and doing things far beyond their intelligence or light. Mary (John xii.) loved the Lord, so did Martha—only differently. Martha loved Him according to the *circumstances she was in*, Mary loved Him according to what He was *in Himself*. (See Luke x., John xi.)

She had a purpose of heart for Him, and this led her as to what she did here in this sweet scene. Oh that there was this purpose of heart found in the Church of God in these days! I want to see it, dear friends; I want it myself; I want it for you. Mary loved Him, and love will do anything that puts honour on its object. But more than this, I think she looked up to God to know how she might be used to honour Jesus. Her heart is one of God's channels to unfold truth. She was in the wake of God's thoughts—all she did was *in season*. In the grumblings of the disciples we find the principles of human nature—niggardliness as regards Him. The "gather up the fragments that remain," is God's principle—viz., that there is more when all is over than when they began. It is always so with Him.

See Mary Magdalene (John xx.)—the same principle was there: a *purpose of heart* for Him—shewn out differently,

it is true, but bringing her in deep blessing, as it always does. Hers was love without intelligence; her mind knew the spot where He was—she had seen Him buried. (Luke xxiii.) Her heart was *with Him dead*; and she rises *early*, and comes to the spot—this spot where He lay, dearer than all else to her now, for the One who had so captivated her heart was there, although *dead*, as far as she knew. She comes, and finds *Him gone*. Her heart, broken before, breaks afresh; and in her despair she runs and tells Peter and John, although they could not help her. It was strange she went to them. Had she reasoned, she would have said—"Why are they not here also?" Out they came, and then John believed—not that the Lord had risen, but only *that the body was gone!* Then the disciples went *away again to their own home*—a low state of soul. Mary's home was the sepulchre, for *He* was there; hence she comes early, and stays and weeps. Mary fetched them out of nature's scenes; and then, the full purpose of heart being wanting, they go back to those scenes. When they find Him gone, they "went away again unto their own home."

But Mary was rivetted to the spot; nature forgotten; self forgotten—all fear was gone as to what people might think of her strange doings—all fear of the keepers gone: her object, "My Lord!" God's hand is again behind her, guiding her again. Hers was a heart that could be a channel for Him to use; so He keeps her to get rich blessing for herself *first*. This spot was very dear to her. Her heart was in a state for all that honours Christ to pass before it; so she *sees angels*, and by them God touches the spring of her heart. "My Lord!" Even angels do not distract her—she soon turns from them; but, next to Christ, what can she see better than angels? Surely nothing. God causes her to see even that; but they cannot meet her heart. Then *Jesus* meets her. Her blind love draws Him to her: He cannot keep that loving heart any more waiting. *He* was her object, though dead; and she seeks Him dead—little thinking He was alive, and come to tell her all his love. Living, she knew Him well. She sought him *dead*; love had blinded her eyes. "*Mary*," reveals Him to her—spoken as of old. The *same old tone*; yes, the same Jesus! "My Master!" falls from her lips. The severed link is joined again!

Then she gets the place of messenger about the resurrection; no little thing. Did she seek it, or want it? No!

Purpose of heart procured her this noble place. He having sent her, she goes away happy. Joy is her heart—not simply in it: she was conscious of His glory in the message, and His approval of the love which had brought her there to bear the message—personal devotedness, though she did not know it. Her *object* did it all. His intention is to teach us Himself in resurrection. Our joy is to be henceforth in heaven. He says, as it were, “I have a place prepared proper to me before my Father. Go, tell this to my brethren; but they may be quite at ease, for my Father is their Father—my God their God: not down here, but up there.” She gets this by purpose of heart.

Is all the truth given since the day of Pentecost: the truth of the Spirit—Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians—to lower this attention for Christ, to lower this purpose of heart? No; oh no. Which would you rather have been—Peter, James, or John, or *Mary Magdalene*? The three had many opportunities of gaining knowledge; the woman had a *heart*, a heart for *Him*. I would rather have been Mary. Christ *ought* to have had His feet anointed—He ought to have had some one watching at the grave. It was God’s purpose, for Christ was worthy. Blessed be God, *there were hearts in those days in full fellowship with God about Christ*. A man acts from his heart, not from his intelligence.

May the Lord give His people this purpose of heart for Christ, for His name’s sake. Amen.

THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES, &c.

(Continued from page 154.)

NOR is this all. Moral beauty is not the only thing. It is that which makes the one church to be the one pearl. But this priceless gem has a setting of glory. It has a glory from its own qualities, but has also a glory which does not flow from quality but from position. That position of glory is not yet in our possession, but it is ours, and we are viewed as if in possession. The Lord Jesus speaks to His Father of us as if we had it—“The glory which thou gavest me I have given them, &c.” (Jno. xvii. 22.) Whatever glory Jesus acquired, earned, or was given to Him of the Father, that is given to the church. Hence if we see Him on the throne we see the church with Him on the throne; as He is now sitting

with the Father on His throne, so the church will sit with Him on His own throne. (Rev. iii. 21). And the church will partake of His joy, throne, and kingdom. What is there of power and dominion which will not be His? Are not things in heaven, in the earth, and under the earth, to confess Him, bow to Him? Well, all this glory the church, the bride, will share with Him. And we may say that the highest, sweetest, best of all glories to Jesus is the being head over all things to the Church. It is meet that such a gem, as God calls a pearl of great price, should be set in glory. And in that pearl the fruit of His own love and grace displaying His own nature, the beauties of holiness and purity, and set in the splendour of the glory of Christ, will be the full accomplishment of His own purpose before the world was.

The Lord Jesus, while looking at His disciples here, yet connects them with the beauty, purity, and glory, in which they will soon be displayed, and to accomplish which He sold all that He had.

But what a picture we get here of God; of God as He was manifested in Christ. He was seeking pearls. God was seeking a way wherein He might display Himself, as no mere act of creation could. And here it is not the seeking for the vile and worthless to bless and save them, true and *precious as that is; but it is the seeking for what will adorn, for what has beauty and can attract, and what can afford delight.* He finds this pearl, and there is nothing like it. The thought in the parable is not how the Church is made a pearl, but how God can most display Himself. And He has incorporated the saints of the present time into one body, that they might be the vessel of this high and special glory, and His habitation for ever. Whatever glories there may be above, whatever His delight in the angelic hosts, they are not equal to the Church, they are not His habitation. In other creation some attribute is shown, His glory is seen in the firmament, His power, His wisdom, but He Himself is not there. In the Church He shows Himself "that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace." He dwells not in the angels, they are not a corporate body. The Church is, and always will be so. It will never be dissolved; it will ever be the habitation of God.

When all dispensational dealing shall cease, and the name

of Jew and Gentile, and all other national appellations are gone, when the eternal state begins, the Church will still retain her distinguishing trait as the dwelling of God, and, as the tabernacle of God, will dwell with men upon the new earth.

This is *the pearl*. To accomplish that mighty work which was needed to have such a pearl, Jesus gave up all that He had. God could not be displayed in a higher way. Here every attribute shines—righteousness, grace, majesty, love, power, and wisdom—yea, God Himself. And shines more than in any other way God could devise. It is to the praise of His glory.

FRAGMENTS.

If we would break with the world, and take up the cross properly, it would give us the enjoyment of the full power of communion with God at once; if not, we must learn, by its daily mortification in the desert, what flesh is. If we think to escape danger by leaving the path of faith, we shall surely get into sin. Israel found the same Anakims in Canaan, the giants still there, when they got into the land at last, that frightened them at the first, and hindered them taking possession.

Success often takes us out of the place of communion; because it is *our* success, when we do not acknowledge God in it.

SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

1 COR. v.

You ask, Are the two last verses of 1 Cor. v. practically applicable, *now*, to those gathered together separate from evil, according to 2 Tim. ii. 19-22? And, Is it correct to refuse obedience until power come in?

To the first, I reply, that the word of the Lord abides for ever. Its authority never ceases, and obedience is always due to it. Power has nothing to do with it. Grace is needed to induce the heart to obey, but obedience is always due. The direction relative to tongues has not lost its authority. Were there tongues, it would apply. But its

authority remains. This clears up at once the question as to 1 Cor. v. "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person," has its own simple authority that nothing can take away. It applies to an assembly including all saints professing to own the Lord everywhere (see address of the Epistle, c. i. 2); and whenever a wicked person is found in an assembly, the case it applies to is there, and it is a simple matter of obedience.

There are acts of power; as, "I have judged to deliver to Satan." Paul does not say, "Do you do it?" he does it in all the solemnity of the assembled saints; but there is no command, but a personal act of power, as Paul says elsewhere, "Whom I have delivered to Satan." (1 Tim. i. 20.)

The declaration or exercise of a personal act of power, has nothing to do with the abiding authority of a command. The power may not subsist—the command does. That it requires the help and grace of the Lord to act upon it, is no more than is true of every command in Scripture. To apply the ruin of the visible assembly to sanction disobedience, is a principle wholly unallowable. I cannot appoint elders; it is not a question of obedience, but authority; and I have not that authority: the assembly had it not when Paul was there, nor can they assume it now. But they were bound to obey the command then—they are so now. Wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, Christ is; and there is the "within" and the "without." It is a clearing of the conscience of the assembly: "Ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. (2 Cor. vii. 11.) Otherwise, the assembly would be the positive sanction, and by Christ's presence, of the association of Christ and sin; and it would be far better there should be no assembly at all than that.

2 Tim. ii. 19, &c., gives us the general principle, of everyone who calls himself a Christian departing from iniquity, purging himself from false teachers, and walking with those who call upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart. It is individual duty when evil has come in.

As to the second question, it is practically answered already. In bestowing power, God is sovereign. When the Word has spoken, I am bound to obey. To "refuse obedience until," is to disobey; to assume on my own will, authority—not wait till God chooses to do that which rests on His will.—J. N. D.

"A Learner" asks: "If the Old Testament saints had eternal life, what was the object of renewing the sacrifices year by year?"

It could not be *then* said that they had eternal life. It was only brought to light through the Gospel. (2 Tim. i. 10, Tit. i. 2, &c.) We know that they were all born again, but there was no revelation then as to the distinction between two natures. They had the conscience of the "old man" unpurged, and the desires of the "new man"; but, looked at as men in the flesh, they were under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the Father. Under Judaism, they were servants under the law as a schoolmaster, until Christ, and Christian faith, had come. (Gal. iii.) "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son unto your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." That which the sacrifices pointed to and typified had not come: the continued repetition of the offerings showed this. That of which the brazen serpent was a figure had not taken place. "The Son of man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have *eternal life*"—now named for the first time. In only two places in the Old Testament is it named; and even there it is in view of the future. (Psalm cxxiii. 3, Dan. xii. 2.) The Son of God had come and had displayed eternal life in Himself. It "was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" in the Son; a Moses or a David could not display it, and it was reserved for Him to speak first of that which He alone could display. He takes away the typical and oft-repeated sacrifices, unsatisfying to God, and leaving man's conscience unpurged; establishes the righteousness of God against sin; and God, glorified at what He had done, puts Him, as man, in the glory of God in righteousness. Atonement was made, reconciliation accomplished, and now God in righteousness gives eternal life to every one believing on Jesus. "God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." (1 Jno. v.) Our whole state as sinners—what we were, and what we had done, was thus dealt with judicially on the cross, once and for ever; and Christ, risen out of the judgment, is our life—we are quickened together with Him, having been forgiven all trespasses. (Col. ii. 13.)

A new nature, capable of enjoying God, was imparted by the Spirit, through faith in the word of God, at any time. The recipient of it was born again. Now, more can be said: we have eternal life in Christ—Christ lives in us; and this eternal life brings us into fellowship with the Father and the Son, which could not be till the Father was revealed in Him, and the Holy Ghost given by which we enjoy it.

“M. W. K.”—1, What is the meaning of “The author and finisher of faith?” (Heb. xii. 2.) 2, Is there any difference, and what, if any, between the words “Faith of Christ,” or “of the Son of God;” and “faith in Christ Jesus”? Has 1 Peter i. 21 any relation to this subject? &c.

1. The Lord is spoken of here as the one who had run the whole career of faith as a man on earth, until He sat down on the right hand of the throne of God. The cloud of witnesses of ch. xi. might fill up their little niche in the career of faith, and be an encouragement to those who were called to walk on the same principle; but there was one who had gone through the entire course, from beginning to end of the pathway. If the fathers had trusted in God and were delivered, He had cried and was not heard. All—even the cup of wrath—must be drained to the bottom before the answer came. He looked for comforters, and found none—His friend betrays; His disciples flee away; Peter denies Him. Forsaken of God, because made sin, He treads with unflinching step the wondrous pathway, looking to the joy that was set before Him, till He sat down on high—the “Captain,” or “Leader, and Finisher of faith.” We look steadfastly upon Him, and are not only encouraged, as by the other witnesses, but are sustained and strengthened and upheld in the race that is set before us. In contemplating Him, the new man is in vigour and activity, and the weights and besetting sins are laid aside with ease.

“Author,” in this passage, is the same word as that translated “Captain” in c. ii. 10, and “Prince,” in Acts iii. 15, and v. 31.

2. The expressions are substantially the same. There is, however, a nice shade of difference. In Gal. ii. 16, 20, we have the *characteristic way* by which we are justified, and by which we live—viz., “on the principle of faith,” Christ being the object of it—in contrast with “works of law.” So “we live,” also, by “faith” in the “Son of God,”

as the object and motive and spring of our life.

In G. d. iii. 26—"Faith," here, is the *object* of the apostle's argument, in contrast to "the law"—Christ being He who is the object of this faith. 1 Peter i. 21 has no relation to this subject.

WELLS IN THE VALLEY OF BACA.

Ps. LXXXIV.

LORD JESUS, it is sweet to rest
 Alone with Thee,
 To lay my head upon Thy breast,
 And think of Thee.

I thank Thee for this desert place
 I share with Thee,
 And for the rich exceeding grace
 I have in Thee.

It does not seem a barren waste
 When Thou art here,
 To cheer me with a bright foretaste
 Of joy up there.

And as from strength to strength I go
 Through Baca's vale,
 Thy streams of life and grace, I know,
 Will never fail.

Lord, Thou hast filled my pools with rain
 From God's deep well,
 And of its living springs, I fain
 Would ever tell.

Oh, take me to the Fountain Head,
 On yonder shore,
 That I may praise Thee there instead,
 For evermore !

C. A. W.

THE LORD'S COMING.

SOME may say, 'I wait for the Lord to come, and *not* for death:' so, truly, say I. But *that* is NOT the question; nor is the statement thus made the real expression of what is in the mind of the maker, at least in many cases. *That* for which Christ waits, the Spirit and the bride of Christ also wait; and as the Spirit and the bride say "Come," so does He most surely say, "Behold I come quickly." But that is not *the least* in question. I wait for Christ *until* He comes. But the question is (that which some overlook), Am I to wait for His coming *here* in the wilderness? or am I, absent from the body and present with the Lord, *there* to wait for His coming?

A WELL OF SPRINGING WATER.

(John iv. 1-30.)

WE can hardly estimate sufficiently the importance of this Scripture, because it shews the condition and position in which a new-born soul is placed by Christ, and therefore brings out the largeness of God's purpose towards a poor vile sinner. In the woman of Samaria we find one without title to a single blessing, and the Lord is here opening out to this poor lost one the purpose and blessing for sinners which had lain deep in the heart of God! It is not so much opening up His work for the sinner, as the issue, the result in the sinner, the good of His work to such, and if I do not know this, I do not know the place of unparalleled blessedness in which He sets me. It is the extent of this present blessing of which souls are ignorant. True, the work of Christ in putting away sins must be done, or there could not be the full result of it made known. But it is in the result of the work that I reach the full extent of the blessing in which He proposes to set us now.

There is no way by which God could bless souls now but through the death of His Son. "The Son of man *must* be lifted up."

He who could create a world, who healed the leper, who raised the dead, who could do everything, even He cannot save a soul unless He die! In the second chapter of this gospel, we find the Lord Jesus is on earth among men; but man is under judgment, and there is no getting him out of it. When Christ is at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, He finds the wine is out. Man's brightest day is a failure! When He goes to the temple, He finds it is a house of merchandise. Man is a failure *in His own state*—a scandal in his *relation to God*. He is irreparable. It is not merely that man as man could not recover himself; but God's trial did not recover him. He tried *every* means to do so, and all was useless. Why? because he is under judgment. There is not capacity for recovery, no constitutional stamina for it. Jesus would "not commit himself" to man, "for he knew what was in man." The sinner must be set aside in the judgment of the cross. This is what chap. iii. brings out. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." And, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal

life." The keeping of the law would have prolonged man's life; the word was "Do this and live." "The man that doeth these things shall live in them;" but it would not have imparted *eternal life*. Eternal life is life in the Son of God. We have forfeited our lives in judgment, but through the grace of God we are given instead, life in God's own Son. My own life goes in judgment, but Christ offered up His life for me, and besides this, He met the judgment of God. God now gives me the eternal life in Him who was my Substitute, and that Substitute is the Son of God! "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath *not life*." (1 Jno. v. 12.) God puts man clean out in judgment; and what comes in? God's own Son risen from the dead. Head of a new creation; a thoroughly new thing! He it is who says to this woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

We have three things brought out here. (v. 10-24.) First, The gift of God. (10-14.) Secondly, that our state is exposed by the *light*. (16-19.) Thirdly, the character of the relation and position in which we are placed before God. (23-24.)

First, "If thou knewest the gift of God." What is this gift? It is eternal life; and this life is in His Son. You may say, "I know I am saved." But I ask, Is that all? Is there nothing more? It is not merely that I am delivered, but I have got the life of the Deliverer. The moment I reach God, man is put out; the moment I get what God is giving me in Christ, man disappears—vanishes out of sight like a dissolving view. Many a man does not owe a farthing of debt, and yet he is poor. You may know that you owe nothing, that Christ has paid the debt of your sins for you, and yet you may not know your riches in the possession of life in the Son of God? Many Christians know they are freemen, but do not know their riches in Christ. So they are as ready to try to get the world as ever they were, and so they spoil their Christian profession. For while they can talk of being saved, they are looking about for something to minister to them in this scene, to satisfy their heart, just because they do not know the blessedness of the gift of God. This gift was what Christ is propounding to the poor woman of Samaria, and which the indwelling of the Holy Ghost makes known to us now. "Whosoever drinketh of this water

shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It is not a question of what man should do now to be saved. It is God's *gift*. As the Lord says, "The water that *I shall give!*" It is not merely freeing a person from a weight of debt—that is the first thing surely—Christ not only bears the judgment, and takes the weight of my sins away; but what does He *give* me besides? the Spirit of God—the living water—springing up into eternal life, so that I NEVER THIRST! The Saviour *dies* to pay the debt. Every Christian acknowledges the good of His death; but *what does He live for?* What have you got by His *life*? "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the *death* of his Son, *much more* being reconciled, we shall be *saved by his life*." (Rom. v. 10.)

The first offering we read of in Scripture is Abel's. He offered "the firstlings of his flock, and of *the fat thereof*." Abel sees what the righteousness of God demands, and owns, as it were, "I am under judgment, and God's righteousness requires a victim not chargeable with my sin, to bear my sin; and not only so, but there must be the *fat*—the excellency of the animal also." Thus the excellency of Christ was brought out most distinctly in His death. It is not only the burden of sin is removed, but the life bestowed of Him who has done so. "If thou knewest the *gift of God*." God having taken off the weight and burden of sin, what is to be the result? "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." NEVER THIRST! we must not allow the word to be weaker than it really is; God does not use exaggerations. Can you say, "*I never thirst?*" People reply, "*I shall* be able to say that in heaven." But Christ says, it is to be so with you now! Do you believe what He says? He says so to the sinful woman, without title and without repute, and what is more, He shews her that He would like her to receive it. He would not only like to relieve her conscience by presenting salvation to her, but it is as though He says to her, "I want you to be a participator in the fulness of the blessing which I am propounding; I am labouring for your blessing—toiling for you!" He makes it manifest to her that He takes an interest in her welfare. He makes it manifest to her soul that He desires to be the communicator to her of the blessing of which He spake.

Oh, let us not make any qualification as to what this wondrous blessing is. Why have not all Christians the enjoyment of it? Because they do not expect it—do not look out for it; and blessing does not come to those who are indifferent to it.

The Lord first awakens in the soul of this poor woman a desire for the blessing, and then bestows it. So, when the need for it and the value of it is awakened in your heart, then you will get it. God makes no demonstration of interest to you greater than you are able to accept. Well, *there are* souls who can confirm the sincerity of God's statements, who can say, "I have tasted of this water, and I have got what is superior to everything. It puts me in a place in which I do not want anything to be added, for it is one incapable of addition! It is a *region of satisfied desire!*" If you tell me you have not got it, I reply, the word is, "If any man *thirst* let him come unto me and drink." Your eye must be occupied, not only with the wondrous *work* He did, but with the *one who did it*; and when you are occupied with Him, your soul will know that the life of Christ is of such a character, that it makes you superior to everything in this wide world, and independent of everything too!

He knows the whole of your secret history; you cannot have peace in His presence unless you can let His eye dive down into the inmost depths of your heart—to search out what you are, and disclose how lost you are without such a Saviour. Then, knowing what He is to you, you can, like this woman, talk to others of the way He has made room for the blessing in your heart. (v. 28-29.) There is no blessing without Him. The moment the character of this life comes out, He shews us that it can only be known entirely outside everything human. He says to the thief, "*To-day you will be with me.*" He takes him out of every connection he had here. He does not restore his own life, but gives him another—a new life—when He had died and delivered him from the consequences of his sin.

The third point is, the relation this wondrous gift introduces us into with God. (see verses 20, 21, 23.) "The hour cometh, and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." It is not the worship of distance, but that of the nearness of relationship. It is the soul occupied with an object that *delights it*—not seeking for anything,

but in the full sense of having got everything—the *cup is full!* You can say then, I have got the enjoyment; I know the joy; I am in the region of satisfied desire; I am put by the Spirit of God into the full result of the work of Christ, where there is no room for want. He has given me His own life, which is superior to everything; and God, who is the foundation of all blessing, becomes the object of my adoration! Blessing God is the expression of the worshipper. Why? Because God hath blessed him! You must be a recipient of the highest order, or you cannot be a worshipper of the highest order. “The Father seeketh such to worship Him.” But alas! Christians are not even looking for this; they are often as ignorant of the fulness and character of the gift of God, as a sinner is of salvation. Let us not make light of the blessedness of the condition in which He places us. You don’t make light of Christ’s having come into the world to be the bearer of sin; but that alone will not make you consciously *rich*, it will make you righteous, but not rich. What God has called you for is to enjoy and manifest the life you have in His own Son! Man was the crowning thing of all His works; God is obliged to put His foot on him in judgment, and what does He say? I will set him up again in the beauty and fashion of my own beloved Son! Not in that condition in which the judgment fell, not in the image of the earthly, but in the image of the heavenly. God has come in His own *exhaustless* purpose of grace, and triumphs over the ruin of this scene; and people *don’t believe it!* They just accept relief from the penalty, but they want to keep up and minister to the sinful nature, the thing that brought in the penalty. But the grace of God has put out the one, in order to bring in the other, to set me up in *His own Son*.

You say to me, “Do you shut me out of all the attractions of the world?” I reply, “yes—*clean out of every one of them!*” Worldly joys are thoroughly *eclipsed* by the life of Christ; and if nature and flesh wants to come up and claim a place, I say to it, “I have got a better thing than ever you were.” Hence every natural mercy is accepted, and used only as subject to this, which is superior to all.

May God give you to understand it. When He does you will see how it surpasses everything of which your own mind could form any idea.

S.

"THE VISION OF THE ALMIGHTY."

NUMBERS XXII-XXIV.

THE Book of Numbers gives the history of the testing and total failure of man, looked at as walking in the wilderness, and thus in responsibility; while it also unfolds the fulness of the grace of God, which takes up His people's case and brings them through in spite of themselves, so to speak, into the land where God had purposed they should be. Even Moses himself fails here, and is shut out. After two years in the wilderness the people were to go up and possess the land; they are filled with unbelief and fears, and will not go up, and they are turned back to wander for forty years in the wilderness; God in the most touching way turns back and becomes a wanderer with them for the rest of the forty years. This book is not like Joshua, fighting God's battles in heavenly places, (Canaan). It is the history of the wilderness where we learn our own hearts; as we read, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart," and "To do thee good at thy latter end." (Deut. viii. 2, 16). There we are tried and tested, and pulled to pieces; and very good for us it is so, for there we learn not only our own faithlessness, but the infallible faithfulness of God. He acts on the immutability of His own eternal counsels and grace; and it is well for us it is so. This is so exquisitely seen when Israel won't go up and possess the land (Num. xiii., xiv.), and then they go to destruction (Hormah), in seeking to go up and possess it without God. God turns, in ch. xv., to His own immutable counsels, and gives directions as to certain things to be observed "*When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you.*"

Only two of those who came out of Egypt as men ever went into the land—Caleb and Joshua. In the 14th chapter we get the complete picture. On the one hand we get two witnesses, Caleb and Joshua, to the faithfulness of God in supporting those who followed Him fully and wholly, (men of "another spirit;") and on the other, the fact that in spite of their failure and themselves, He would bring in the "little ones" to the land which they despised. The case of Caleb and Joshua shows us, as that of Paul in the epistle to the Philippians, the energy of faith which God meets and supports, and which runs right through to the end.

There are two things we should ever remember, and which are never confounded in Scripture, 1st, If we look at ourselves as in heavenly places in Christ—united to Him, there is no responsibility at all; and no "if" in any Scripture that looks upon us there: and 2nd, there is *always* an "if" when we are seen as walking down here in the wilderness. But at the same time we invariably find that God's faithfulness in holding up and lifting up, runs alongside the responsibility of man as walking here below. God's holding and keeping us, go alongside our responsibility; just as if my child in my arms was looking over a precipice; I tell him, If you fall over you'll be killed, but I'll hold you; so don't struggle to get out of my arms. He lies still and does not take himself out of my hands, and is kept.

There is nothing people are so afraid of in Scripture as an "if," yet you always find the other goes with it, and it is never used to enfeeble the stability of the place that sovereign grace has given us on high, "in Christ." As Paul says to the Corinthians when they were going on badly, and where an "if" was needed, and comes in; "Who shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be *blameless* in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. *God is faithful.*" He does not even say He will preserve you "safe," but "blameless."

In Numbers you find those deeply touching traits of His grace. God had in the beginning (ch. ii., iii.) directed the tribes as to the order of their march, to surround the tabernacle where He chose to dwell. He was there in their midst to be cared for and ministered to by them. But as soon as the Camp set out on its journey, (ch. x.) the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord left its ordered place in the camp, outside the order He had given, and in the most touching grace went three days' journey in advance of the tribes to seek out a resting place for them, not in the land, but in the wilderness. Thus becoming their servant in the place of need, before they came to the place where He will serve them in the joys of heaven. Blessed to think of possessing *them*, but far more so to think *He* ministers them to us. *Then* "He shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them." *Now* "When he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."

'Tis in this book too we find the provisions of the Rod of priestly grace—Aaron's rod that budded—to lead a failing

people through the wilderness, where the rod of authority can only smite them in asserting its power. It was the resource of grace when the people had totally failed, that God might carry out the purposes and counsels of His grace, and lead them through.

At the close of the journey we find another thing. Miriam dies. She represented the joy of victorious power which had triumphed in redemption at the first dawn of their eventful history. It will be remarked in Exodus xv., that while Moses' song embraced grace and glory, her's only celebrated the triumph of grace. The remembrance of this first joy now passes away, and Miriam dies. Next we find that Aaron dies. The service is now closing, and the journey nearly complete. Service assumes another character besides that of leading an unfaithful people with patience thro' the wilderness. Here it is turned against the foe. Enemies and difficulties are to be met and overcome, and wisdom is needed to know with whom to "fight," and from whom to "turn away."

But there is a closing scene which touches the heart more than all! It is that where God and Satan are face to face about His people. The enemy tries to curse them, and to keep them out of the land. The principles of the scene apply to the Church, altho' primarily the facts did to Israel. It is touching now in the last days to think of it.

Israel was in their tents, weak and weary of the way, on the plains of Moab; the Jordan flowing between them and the land of promise. They were encamped "on the plains of Moab, on this side Jordan, by Jericho." They were perfectly unconscious of their danger, while murmuring in their tents below, that on the high places of Baal, God and Satan's instrument were there. Unasked He had taken their case in hand. He forces Satan's instrument to pronounce the blessing of His people with his own lips; a blessing that could not be reversed, because of the faithfulness of Him who had spoken it. How it brings out the infallible faithfulness of God; the irreversible security of the people that God has given to Christ. It is the crown to all the grace and faithful love which we find in the other parts of the book. It has been observed that at the same moment when God was forcing Satan to pronounce the unchangeable blessing of His people on the heights of Pisgah, He was Himself speaking to the people by the lips of Moses, in the plains

beneath, and saying, "Thou art a stiffnecked people." (Deut. ix.) This brings out the fact that the judgment of God *for* us is always the opposite of that of the judgment of the Holy Ghost *in* us. If it is a question of the enemy accusing, God says, "I don't see a spot or a stain." If He is dealing with ourselves, He will pass over nothing. Blessed that it is so.

The blessing of the people is fourfold; giving a complete summary of their calling and justification; their order and beauty in His eyes; and their hope. It is useful for us to see them with the vision of the Almighty. The heart would be utterly disheartened if it were not so at times; for when we look at them as they are in themselves, how distressing: worldliness, and selfishness, and ugly traits of every kind are to be seen; and the heart would be tempted either to be satisfied with the evil and look for nothing beyond what we see, or to be totally discouraged in seeking to serve them as His. When we see with His "vision" it corrects this, and all is changed. Paul could break his heart when he looked at the Galatians, and "stand in doubt" of them; but the moment he lifts his heart up to Christ he says, "I have confidence in you through the Lord." He sees with *His* vision, and thinks of *His* faithfulness, and it changes everything.

The wonderful thought is that it was not when the victorious song of redemption was going up to the Lord, in the beginning of their course, that He pronounces their blessing and beauty in His eyes; but when all their failures had come out fully—when there was not one redeeming feature to be seen in them, as they were in themselves,—'tis *then* He chooses to unfold His thoughts of them as He saw them according to His purposes, and their comeliness in His sight. They are separate from all people. "Lo the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Why? Because God dwells among them! As Moses said, "Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." (Exodus xxxiii., 2 Cor. vi. 16-18.)

The people are justified—they have not to wait for this,—and not only so, but "it is God" who has done it. "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth." He does

not repent. He has spoken, and will make it good. Balaam says, "I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it!" He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither seen perverseness in Israel! Wonderful! The very people whose neck was like an iron sinew, when He deals with themselves, when the enemy comes up He refuses to see a spot or a stain! If God had brought them up from Egypt, He thinks of *His own work*, not theirs. And if He has wrought, He has wrought well! In man's eye they were weak and faint and weary. In God's they "shall rise up as a great lion." So far their separation, and justification, that none could reverse.

Now, when Balaam sought no more for enchantments, but turned his face towards the wilderness, where Israel still was—they were not in the land; he sees with "the vision of the Almighty." He beholds the order and beauty and freshness of the people, as gardens planted by the river of God; drinking from God's refreshing streams which flowed in their midst, they could invite the thirsty to drink those streams of *grace*. *The Church can say, I have drunk of the water; I know what it is; "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."* And God is the strength of their hearts, and their portion. "God brought him forth out of Egypt." This was the pledge that He who had begun a good work in them would perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. God's power was pledged for them, and the coming of Christ (ch. xxiv. 17, 19), would consummate the blessing, and make good all the purposes of His heart.

The prophecy has only been touched upon, but it is lovely in the extreme. God thus declaring His own thoughts and confounding the malice of the enemy. He sees aright, and according to the value of His people as cleansed and purchased with the blood of Christ! Such is grace. The enemy is confounded and cannot gainsay it.

The Lord give us to rise to His thoughts about His people. It is that which sustains the heart when the human eye can only judge by what it sees. We need "the vision of the Almighty" for this, and communion with the heart of Christ about the Church which He loves; for which He gave Himself, that He might sanctify, having purged it, with the washing of water by the word, and that He might present it to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

THYATIRA, SARDIS, PHILADELPHIA.

THYATIRA.—REV. ii. 18-29.

THESE are the three addresses of those to the seven churches in which the Lord's coming is mentioned. It is not referred to in the three first nor in the last, where we find His threat to spue the church out of His mouth in His judgment. In them we get the coming in three distinct ways.

In Thyatira we have the substitution of the kingdom and heavenly blessedness for ecclesiastical or church position. "He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to Him will I give *power over the nations*, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, . . . and I will give him the *morning star*." "Hold fast till I come."

In Sardis we have the professing church treated like the world. "If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Compare 1 Thess. v. 2, 3.

In Philadelphia we have encouragement to those who keep Christ's word. "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." "Behold I come quickly," &c.

In the three first churches judgment is not referred to, because He calls them to repent, and to return to first state. There are always two distinct grounds for God's judgment. First, the state we are in, not being that in which God set us. God cannot set up anything but what is perfect; but man is a sinner—he has departed from the state Adam was created in—he has lost his innocence. Another ground is, Are we ready to meet the Lord when He comes? Let us ask ourselves, Can we stand before the Son of man? It is by our past blessing and our future blessing that God judges us. So here in these messages. The three first speak of what the church was: and He calls for return. When she did not repent, the coming of the Lord is introduced—was the church ready for that? You find the same principle in Isaiah v. and vi. In chap. v. He recalls to what He had set up Israel at the first—a wholly right seed. In chap. vi. He introduces the coming of the Lord—were they fit for it?

Properly speaking, we never get God's work in these churches, but the result, when man has had to say to what God had done. God cannot judge His own work; God's work is perfect always; He sows good seed, as to

which there is no question of judgment; but He judges it when He finds tares have been sown with the wheat. Here you find there has been decline in the state of the church at Ephesus—"Thou hast left thy first love." In Smyrna persecution comes in, and in Pergamos false teaching; then in Thyatira you find Jezebel corruption. The history of what is called the Primitive Church in the middle ages was just the seduction of God's servants. Jezebel is not merely a false, seducing prophetess, but a mother. There are children born to her. She had a time of repentance given to her, but she lost it—"I gave her space to repent, and she repented not;" therefore, there must be judgment executed upon her—special judgment.

There is never restoration from a fallen state in the public ways of God. You never get the first man restored, but the Second Man brought in, through whom individuals are brought into a far more blessed condition than they ever had under the first man: but they are not restored to that from which they have fallen. So it always is. You never get Israel restored under the old covenant, but God sets up a new thing both for Jew and Gentile, so that far better blessing is the result. If tares are sown among the wheat, the Lord says, "Let both grow together until the harvest." Have not tares been sown? Has not Satan sown false doctrine? There can be no restoration—"the mystery of iniquity doth already work." If I take the case of mystic Babylon, you find it will be destroyed, because God has in mind to give the kingdom to the beast—a power of still greater evil—*violence* instead of *corruption*. God judges the corruption by violence, and then puts down the beast; there is no restoration. The mystery of iniquity which began in the apostle's days goes on till the man of sin is revealed "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." (2 Thes. ii. 7, 8.) Judgment is reserved for Christ. Jezebel had time given her to repent, but she repented not, so He must execute judgment upon her—"I will kill her children with death, . . . and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

Christ has received it as His title to rule the nations with a rod of iron. This is the substitution of the kingdom and heavenly blessedness—the millennial state referred to in Ps. ii.—"and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the

vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father, and I will give him the morning star." The morning star is the heavenly Christ and blessing with Him. You get the kingdom, and besides that, you get Christ looked for as the one waited for by those that watch for the morning. "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning; I say more than they that watch for the morning." (Ps. cxxx. 6.) In Malachi you see what the Sun of Righteousness is—"Unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings, . . . and ye shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet." (Mal. iv. 2, 3.) He will be the Sun of Righteousness to the world when He appears, but then there will be judgment; but in Revelation I get the Morning Star. When the sun is up no one sees the morning star; it must be seen *before* the day comes in. When we have Christ as the Sun of Righteousness, the day will have come—the day that will burn as an oven—to the righteous that is a glorious expectation; but I want the Morning Star—the hope of Christ's coming before the day—to cheer my soul through the long and dreary night. When we read (Rev. xxii. 16), "I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." The moment that comes the church says "Come."—"The Spirit and the bride say come." Christ is known before He appears, and is possessed fully. This is the blessed expectancy of a soul that knows the Lord, and waits to see Him and to be with Him.

BARNABAS.

THE life of this saint of God affords useful lessons in the way of warning, as to our place of service to the Lord. There is room for all. We are joints and bands, each having his own place in the body: but "God hath set some in the Church." He has His own sovereign way of dealing. He chooses what instruments He pleases. We cannot patronise Him nor His workmen, but must be contented, nay, thankful, to be hewers of wood and drawers of water if He so pleases. Barnabas—son of consolation,—so named by the apostles during the first movements at Jerusalem, appears before us as a Levite, from Cyprus, selling his land and laying the price at the apostles' feet. Doubtless he was in the fervour of first

love, and in the happy sense that God could and would supply all his need "according to the riches of His glory by Christ Jesus"—a real contrast with Ananias and Sapphira, who, wanting a name for themselves—to be thought better of than they deserved—retained a part of the price of their land. But the Holy Ghost was equal to the emergency. If such things had been allowed, the Church would have been full of hypocrites; their death ensued as a warning to others.

The next mention we have of Barnabas is in Acts ix. 27, when by his influence he persuaded the distrusting Church at Jerusalem to receive Paul, and from this time he appears to have appreciated the rich gifts of Paul, and accordingly having come down from Jerusalem to Antioch, and seen the great work going on there among the Gentiles, he went to Tarsus to seek for Saul, desiring him to have part in it. From this time until their quarrel and separation—a period of about 15 years—they laboured conjointly. Just before going to Tarsus (Acts xi. 24), he is called "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." On their several journeys together his name in the earlier ones precedes Paul's, Acts xi. 30; xii. 25; xiii. 2. After the return of John Mark to Jerusalem, xiii. 13, Paul's name is nearly always first mentioned (xiv. 14 and xv. 12 and 25 being the exceptions), for his gifts of speech and marvellous energy were beginning to tell, and thus to indicate who was to be the leader among the Gentiles. In Acts xv. 37, we have the quarrel and separation. It is noticeable that as John (Mark) had returned, unable to bear the trial, to Jerusalem, where it would appear (Acts ix. 31), things were tolerably quiet, so Barnabas went *home* to Cyprus, and we hear, except incidentally, no more of him. No prayers of the Church accompanied him, and no companion, whilst Paul chose Silas, and was commended on his way by the Church. We easily gather by these two facts, viz., the silence of Scripture as to the further course of Barnabas, and his departure alone to Cyprus, on whose side the Lord was; but we must not rest on the quarrel or the causes of it; the quarrel was only a symptom to indicate the purposes of God concerning Paul. He was to take his place, and not Barnabas, as the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and ever after—very probably he knew it before (comp. Gal. i. 2)—he is seen as that brilliant light—a real exhibition in his own person of death and

resurrection, a pattern for us to follow, as indeed he followed Christ. But not only this (for every individual Christian is called to the same self-denying course), but a public officer or apostle chosen of God to his office; compare Rom. xv. 15, 16, 17; Eph. iii. 2; Col. i. 25. This he very well knew, but oh! how mildly and patiently he used his power. (2 Cor.)

But to return to Barnabas. He had to fall into his own place. He had not been separated from his mother's womb (Gal. i. 15) and endowed with particular qualifications suitable to Paul's office—grace is not gift in the full meaning of the word. Goodness characterized him, but in the case of his nephew, and in that of dissimulating in the matter of the Jewish believers at Antioch, we see that his goodness needed the balancing power of firmness and decision. The trials that the Church was heir to needed a firmer hand, and, speaking after the manner of men, a stouter heart. This quarrel then denoted who was to have the "care of all the churches"—thus we need not judge the character of Barnabas severely. It is likely that the cup had been a bitter one to him. Peradventure he had been in the way of patronizing Paul, and that with all his goodness he could not bear the thought of a second place.

But as to the future both of him and John Mark, there are some interesting notices. It admits of no doubt that the latter fell into the mind of God concerning the place of Paul, as well as that he was strengthened by the Lord for a place of distinguished service. Twice afterwards is he mentioned, first to the Colossians (iv. 10) as sister's son of Barnabas, and whom they were to receive as if hitherto there had been an hindrance; secondly, as being "profitable to Paul for the ministry," (2 Tim. iv. 11) the very thing which he had set out for originally, (Acts xiii. 5) but had failed in. (Acts xv. 38.) What an encouragement does his history afford to a weak soul, and what restoring grace is there in our head, Christ.

Also be it recorded to the honour both of Paul and Barnabas that we may reasonably hope their differences were not prolonged; for the quarrel took place in Asia before our great apostle had visited Europe at all; and yet in 1 Cor. ix. 6 a letter to a European Church, Barnabas is familiarly mentioned as if known to them. Moreover (although we must not rely too much on such a source,) tradition has generally affirmed that the brother (2 Cor. viii.

18) sent by Paul, "whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the Churches," was Barnabas. If so, how delicate was the mention of the sending. There is preserved a letter said to be by him, not admitted into the canon of Scripture, but we have no other commemorative mark of any office which he had, or any further mention of him.—W. W.

THE TWO EAGLES AND THE VINE.

EZEK. XVII.

JEHOIACHIN went to Babylon, thus yielding to the judgment of God, and in the end he was exalted. 2 Kings xxiv., xxv.

Zedekiah remained at home; and instead of accepting the punishment of his sin, by submission to the king of Babylon—the Lord's rod—he rebelled against him, and at last perished.

This is the two baskets of figs, good and bad, of Jer. xxiv.

The parable of the Two Eagles and the Vine, in Ezek. xvii., is to be read in connection with Zedekiah's history.

But the close of that chapter is very fine: it tells us that another witness shall deliver his testimony in Millennial days. That God takes up the lowly, and puts down the haughty and mighty. His constant, yea, necessary action in this fallen world.

Israel's real blessing *began* in the *lowly place*—when they stripped off their ornaments, and sought the Lord outside the camp. Ex. xxxiii.

So, Israel's blessing must *end* in the *lowly place*. After they had failed in the wilderness, their blessing lay in Babylon, as before it lay outside the camp. They must accept the punishment of their sin, and go there.

And it is thus with us individually. We are in the way or place of blessing, when convicted. We must be *broken, in order to be blest*.

Now, the Lord Himself took this same place—not by being broken in conscience, as we are to be, for He was spotless, without either corruption within or blemish without. But He was broken in *circumstances*. The heir of the throne was a carpenter—the Lord of the fulness of the earth had not where to lay His head. He was a root out of a dry ground—or, as Ezekiel here speaks, "a tender twig," a

"low tree," a "dry tree," but planted in the last days, in Millennial days, "upon a high mountain and eminent," becoming "a goodly cedar, under which" shall dwell "all fowl of every wing."

This is *Millennial* Jesus, who once had been the *Nazarene* Jesus.

But this was not Nebuchadnezzar's history. His branch spread in its day, as the branch of this Millennial Jesus will do. (see Dan. iv.) But Nebuchadnezzar had never been a "tender twig," a "low tree," a "dry tree." Accordingly, this great tree of Babylon, which had never been a "tender twig" in early days, in the last days exalts itself, and meets the judgment of the Lord. Its leaves are shaken off, its fruit is gathered, its branches are cut down. It is preserved, but preserved as "a stump in the earth," that thus being humbled and broken, God may bless and exalt it, in His own way, at the end.—J. G. B.

OCCASIONAL NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

Chap. ii.

THIS epistle is full of instruction as to the Christian's walk and character. It gives us properly Christian experience—the experience of a person who is conscious of redemption, and is living and walking in the power of the Spirit of God, and in nothing under the power of the flesh. We get instruction in it as to Christian life and directions for our walk.

Where faith is at work, no circumstances through which we may have to pass, can dim or cloud the relationship between the soul and God. What we have to learn is so to live with Christ, in Christ, by Christ, that the link with God in Him is never weakened. You cannot bring faith into circumstances in which this cannot be; for faith brings God in; and as long as faith is exercised, this relationship and confidence in Him never can be clouded—but self must be completely set aside practically that this may be so.

We have, in the second and third chapters, two parts of the practical energy of Divine life. In the third chapter, Christ—the glorified man—has gone up on high, and then I get the energy of divine life running after Him; the one thing that filled the apostle's eye was, that Christ as man

had gone up into the glory ; and looking on before him, he saw Christ, and pressed on towards that mark, looking for entire conformity to Him. He casts off every hindrance, counting all things but dross and dung, that he may have Christ for gain.

In the second chapter you get another thing, and that which forms our character down here by the way. Here it is not Christ as man gone up to God in glory, but God come down here in grace and lowliness to man. Both together give us the display of the divine life in us. The energy of the third chapter would make a man hard towards others, but the grace and mind of Christ in the second gives divine qualities. It teaches us the way to get rid of self. If the eye is fixed on Christ, there are no difficulties. The only difficulty is first to get the eye fixed on Him—the heart *fixed*, and the single eye finds no difficulties whatever, because it counts on God. If we want to run the race thus, let Christ be everything, and all is quite easy. When Christ is before us, as the only object which governs the heart, it is quite easy to follow Him—in our path through the world we should thus have the mind of Christ. When there is not the judgment of self, there is the working of self, and the working of self hides out God : like the mists from the earth which hide the sun when they arise. But when self is judged, and the eye fixed alone on Christ, the effect is complete conformity and likeness to Him : in the presence of God self dies down. Let us remember, that all we have now got is the power of good in the midst of evil—not the reign of good. The instant that power is weakened or slackened in our ways we slip into the evil which is around.

In God's dealings with man there is never a restoration for failure of the things set up. Something better is brought in. The Paradise of Eden came first, and man lost it. After the fall there was no restoring man to what he had lost, but Christ was promised, and man introduced by redemption to the Paradise of God. This is the secret of all God's dealings—what is ruined and lost by the first man is made good far more blessedly in the Second. Then came the law, but the golden calf was made even before Moses came down from the Mount : by and bye He will write the Law upon Israel's hearts. Again, when the priesthood was established, failure came in immediately : Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord, and died ; and the consequence of this was,

that Aaron never went into the holy place in his garments of glory and beauty. He was consecrated in them, but that was all—so that exercise of priesthood in its verity was gone. So the church has failed. It should have taken care of Christ's glory on high, but it is mixed up with all that is against it below. The evil is never remedied now by reinstating the thing which failed as it was. See the parable of the tares and the wheat. The Lord sows wheat in the field, and the enemy sows tares. The crop is spoiled, and none is restored; the tares and wheat are allowed "to grow together until the harvest." But if everything is ruined by the first man, everything is brought in far more blessedly in the second man, who sets all up in perfect glory; so, instead of a failing priesthood, I get Christ the perfect High Priest. So, with the law, He will write it on Israel's heart at another day. So, also, when the Church with all its wondrous privileges has failed so totally—attaching the name of Christ to the most abominable evils: by and bye Christ will come to be "glorified in his saints." (2 Thess. 1.) This failure of the first man in every trial is indeed an humbling and sorrowful thing. God sets up the thing aright: He plants a wholly right seed: then, what He has set up, turns into the degenerate plant of a strange vine to Him. (Jer. ii. 21.) As regards man, the end of all this is judgment: but in Christ we have the fulness of blessing. Still, no failure can break the link of faith of the individual with the power of God—the very place where God's grace shines out brightest is when things seem darkest. So it was with Christ in that lonely moment when all the disciples forsook Him and fled. Christ in it all glorified God! There are no circumstances in which faith may not reckon upon God. Nothing can separate us from His love. If faith is exercised, it brightens the darkest circumstances. We have the power of good in the midst of evil to surmount it. The days may be darker or brighter, but if you get an Elijah alone, (for though there were 7000 who had not bowed their knee to Baal, he thought he stood alone); the faith that *kept* him in the midst of evil, will *take him up* to heaven without death! The secret of all is, "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

(To be continued, D.V.)

"WHOM THE LORD LOVETH HE CHASTENETH."

Heb. xii.

My God ! how good are all Thy ways !
How well Thou knowest how to bring
Each feeble—tried one, near to Thee ;
Yes ! Thou *dost* draw with cords of love !

My God ! how good from first to last,
The lesson Thou dost gently teach ;
It *must* be learnt, however hard ;
But learnt with *Thee* ! My God, how good !

What patience with Thy wayward child !
No harshness, but a Father's love,
'Tis *this* recalls my wand'ring heart !
'Tis *this* that bows and breaks my will !

How slow to learn,—to learn myself,
To say "I'm nothing, *Christ* is all."
To take no place, but at *His* feet—
There sit and wait, and waiting, learn.

To sit and gaze, Oh ! what a place !
And softly whisper, "I am *His*,"
"*His* to the end, and *He* is mine."
This meets *all* need ! My Father God !

Now for a season laid aside,
Teach me Thy "wherefore" in it all ;
That I in quiet rest may lie,
Till Thou seest good to strengthen me.

With *such* a Father, *such* a God,
Well may I bear what Thou dost give.
Good to lie still, and hear Thy voice,
None other, than the voice of *love*.

Then speak, my Father, tell Thy child
More of Thyself, more of Thy will ;
That self in me may hidden be,
And Christ shine out in brighter light.

"Christ formed" in me, 'tis *this* I ask,—
Christ first, Christ last. My Father grant
Me to be nought—He *only* seen,—
My soul thus *bless'd*, I kiss the rod !

THE INSENSIBILITY OF SIN.

How little estimate most people have of what sin is in God's sight. You will hear persons talk of being sinners in a general way, little thinking what a tremendous thing sin is before Him—how difficult it was to put it away! So difficult that none but God could put it away—and that only by the death of His Son! You will hear it said that an evil conception is not sin, unless it is carried into action. Mere natural conscience is shocked by an evil act; but men do not ask themselves why Christ had to die? Why God gave a law to forbid the evil that was there in their hearts? Thus they do not believe that they are sinful and away from God. When man did go away from God—when God drove him out from the garden—He took care that man should carry a conscience with him. A terrible companion it is too, if it is violated; but still in reality a great mercy, because God works in it to bring him to a sense of his state. This is a mercy.

Paul was a blameless man in a natural conscience till that light shone down into his soul; then the enmity of his heart to God was exposed. Yet the light that exposed his heart shone from the face of Him who had borne the judgment of God which was upon that heart.

You hear people say, too, that they expect to go to heaven; they take it for granted they will go; but they don't care about heaven at all. It is easy to say you expect to go, when in reality you don't care about Christ. If I tell you a man has got an estate in Russia, you say; well! But if I were to say, *you* have one, see how anxious you will be to make your title and possession of it sure. Is there anything that marks the insensibility of souls more than the carelessness they evince about their state before God; or anything that shows how far they are from God, than the utter indifference they manifest to the things of heaven and Christ? Adam gave up all that God was to him for the sake of eating a fruit: and this is what sinners are doing every day. They are giving up God for the things of the world continually. A ribbon—an amusement has more power over them than all God's beseeching love—than all the grace of Christ! Like the young man, with the great possessions, they go "away sorrowful" when they hear of the reality of their state; but still they "go away." This brings out the

utter ruin of your heart—that there is not one atom for God there!

The Holy Ghost is pleading with sinners, “Be ye reconciled to God,” and sinners don’t care. But when God is revealed to my soul, I discover that there is sin there, which must in itself shut me out from God for ever! But when I discover that that is the very thing for which Jesus gave Himself—for which He bore the wrath and died; thus accomplishing for me, and revealing to my heart the unsought love of God! God has come in in mercy and dealt with the very sins and state which troubled me, in His own Son in righteousness, in order that He might be free to express His love—to deal with me in grace! He has dealt in holiness against my sin, and that before the day of judgment comes! so that I can say I have peace with God!

How dreadful then, in the face of all this, to find a sinner going on with sin; with that for which Christ had been delivered—that which caused the death of the Son of God! Think of being the cause of Christ’s death! and yet if I was, which is true, He died to put my sins away! Wonderful for a sinner to be able to say, “I believe that this blessed One *did* drink the cup of wrath and died; and that so surely as He drank it, He is at God’s right hand, my Saviour!” This is what brings the heart back to confidence in God—the very thing that Adam lost. What He wants you, sinners, to believe is His love. Did He spare a poor apple from a tree for you? *He spared not His Son!* That Son gave Himself that you might be with Himself for ever? This perfect grace takes the guile out of the heart: there is no need for any concealment of your state—no need for guile. You can rest in Divine and perfect favour, and know God better than yourself; and the way you will know yourself best will be to look at God. Can you not then say, I believe unfeignedly that He gave His Son for me; and I am at peace with God, and rejoicing in the hope of His glory. Then I can boast in God—joy in Him through our Lord Jesus. This gives full Christian character!

Oh, what a God we have to do with! One who commends His own love to us as sinners—His unsought love—makes us feel we need that love, and that He desires we should enjoy it, and be at peace with God. One who sheds His love abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us. It is peaceful joy to the heart to think of what He is to us—poor,

lost, self-ruined sinners. Rising in the triumph of grace above our wretchedness. 'Tis thus the Holy Ghost ever reasons—downward from what God is in His goodness, to us who are in ourselves nothing but evil. Blessed for those who find in truth that the cross of Christ has answered every claim of God upon them, as it has also answered to all His glory! Solemn the state of those who are satisfied to sit in darkness, and the unbelief and insensibility of sin.

OCCASIONAL NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

Chap. ii.

WE are called to have certain feelings and characteristics as living and walking in the Spirit, but we can only get them as they come from God. We are to walk in love as Christ walked; to be "of one accord, of one mind." So, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." There may be purpose of heart, but not the mind of Christ in carrying it out; we want the power that has done with everything here below, in living for and to Christ: but we must have done with self to have the mind that was in Him. He was in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of *no reputation*, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. In Him we see the very opposite of Adam in every particular. He was in the form of a man, and sought to be God. He kept not his first estate, as the creature should have done. The angels too fell by this: they kept not the place God had given them. He was God, and He alone could do this without sinning, and so He emptied Himself and took the form of a servant. Do we always take the form of a servant? Do we humble ourselves that we may serve? That is what love always does. Love delights to serve—self to be served. We have in Him here the first great example of "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted;" as in Adam, of "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." It was the total surrender of self in Him. Where was *self* to be found in that lowly man? His delight was to do the Father's will. We have to judge ourselves and condemn ourselves—to try to be like Him—to walk in the path in which

He walked. A Christian who is thus walking with Christ, in the power of the Spirit, sees Christ in his brother, but sees the workings of the flesh in himself, and judges it. He can esteem others better than himself when he thinks of Christ. Self is forgotten and God is there, enabling us to forget it. The power of good in the midst of evil was in Christ coming down from the glory of God to the cross. In Him there was perfect love and perfect obedience. There is nothing so humble as obedience, as it is having no will at all. This is the character of the new man in us—always dependent, always obedient. The new man lives by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God: that is, the Scriptures. There is no truth elsewhere; many things true, but no truth in the world but the Word of God. Christ is the living Word. People may say, "there is no harm in this or that," but if you have no word of God for it, it is harm. Christian obedience is not my being stopped when I have a wrong will; but it is the new man who has no will at all, and who takes the will of God and lives obediently to His word. Christ never had a will. He was the only one who could say, "I do always those things that please Him."

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The contrast was between Paul's working when present with them and their own working in his absence. Work out your own salvation. You have not lost God if you have lost Paul. No deprivation of apostolic power can hinder obedience to the Word of God. It saves me from all the machinations of the enemy. Paul was gone, but they could count upon God. "It is God which worketh in you." There is nothing to hinder the path of faith. If you think faith could be hindered by circumstances, it is saying something could *hinder God*.

Are we thus carrying Christ's character through the world? Satan is always trying to get us out of this path, but is that the path you hold to? Is that the path you have before your mind? Is your whole desire that people should see *Christ* in you? Is that your only thought? Is the one thing that shines out in us *CHRIST*?

It is a beautiful thing to see the unselfishness that marked the path of Christ. When He was born in the manger, the angels and the heavenly host praised God, saying, "Glory to

God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good pleasure in men." (Luke ii.) But to the eye of man His path was only going down lower and lower till it ended in the cross. A babe, lying in a manger, no place for Him to be found, no room in the inn. He could not take a place in and of the world. What place could He have taken? He had a path of *His own*. He walked *alone*. He could not take a place of honour here: it would be owning the world *as it is*, to seek such from it. Christ had a path, and that path is taking no place on this earth, but being the expression of divine love in the midst of its evil. That is the path in which we have to walk. Mary had a heart associated with Christ's place, which no one else had. She had no home without Him.

Would you like, as a fact, a place in this world; or to be like Christ as He was on that downward path? Would you like to be looked at with honour by the world, or to have Christ's place? If we were near to Christ the soul would get the habit of Christ's thoughts. Look at His graciousness. His thoughtfulness for others. We see Him at one time with no leisure so much as to eat, again seated on the well wearied with His journey. Oh, may we be like Christ! Thoughtfulness for others characterized Him. It is very blessed to see Him. Graciousness in Himself which thinks of others, not of Himself at all. It is wonderful! This comes out in measure in Epaphroditus; He was so occupied with others that he was full of heaviness because the Philippian saints had heard he had been sick. He does not think of himself but of them. "They will sorrow" was his thought.

My brethren, let us abide in the path of faith, apparently the most difficult one, yet the place where Christ is found, and where grace—the only precious thing in this world—flourishes, and binds the heart to God by a thousand links of affection and gratitude, as to one who has known us, and who has stooped to meet our need and the desires of our hearts. Faith gives energy; faith gives patience; and it is often thus that the most precious affections are developed; affections which, if the energy of faith makes us servants on earth, render heaven itself happy—because He who is the object of faith is there, and fills it in the presence of the Father.

IS "CONSCIENCE" OR "THE LORD" THE STANDARD.

MANY Christians think they have nearness to the Lord and spiritual happiness who very little, if at all, understand the one or the other. It is quite possible for a soul to rest satisfied with a certain degree of happiness (let us call it), and to know a certain quietude, and be in a degree devoted and devotional, who is not near the Lord. I believe the *conscience* is its referee, and *not the Lord*. Now, we know that it is quite possible to go on in great darkness with a good conscience. I now speak of Christians; their good works, and more frequently their good reputation, stand them in good stead, and they go on without much distress, save now and again when they feel they have fallen below their own standard.

I dare say Peter did not feel any disturbance in his conscience when he went a-fishing, nor Paul when he went into the Temple at the instigation of James; but I need hardly say that if either had been walking very near the Lord he had not done so. The conscience is no criterion unless I am daily enlightening it by the Word of God; the wonders and power of God never touch you like the still, small voice. Your feet are washed by Christ's words to your soul, and the soul that trembleth at His word is the one that is really near Him: walking in the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. You will always find that there is more reverence and fear of the Lord from the soul that is walking near Him than the one who feels less evil within, and therefore concludes, and with some grounds, assumes that he is happy and in a place of nearness to the Lord, which in truth he is not. The reverence and value for the Word of God would be the external test to me, and I believe one by which I should be seldom mistaken in any one. One Christian knows in a moment how much the other reveres the Word of God, not merely as a marvellous revelation, but in relation individually to himself; not a word quoted of it but sends a "ring" (if I am before the Lord) to my soul of its quality and metal.

But there is another test of the soul's standing which is its internal test, if I may so say. If you tell me what your soul is occupied with, I could tell your standing, and of course in the same way you could tell your own. I believe

a soul is often very well satisfied with itself for a good long prayer. Again, for visiting some needy one; and again, because one has acquitted oneself to the approbation of others. Still more insidious, and, because so specious, is the state of souls when they are occupied with their own failures. How often does the soul think very well of itself because it has raked up all its evil—only the kind it feels most. True—most true—it must see its evil when entering into the light; but it is not enjoying the Lord until the clouds of failure have been removed by His word declaring His grace to the confessing soul. I believe the godly devotional souls one regrets so to see in a false position are like the worshippers in Israel, who were greatly, and deeply it may be, occupied with the offering of the victim, but had not their souls carried on to the full end of the offering.

I have noticed what would prove a soul was *not* near the Lord. I would add now that the one great expressive mark that a soul is near the Lord is, that such a one is surely receiving light and instruction from Him. Such a one could never be *in statu quo*; or even only improved, or good, as men say. You may find souls very good and proper, but they are really losing ground in light and truth, and probably, if you knew them well, you would find that they are in some shape or form thinking more of themselves than of the Lord.

FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN.

REDEMPTION.

It is very blessed, beloved friends, to understand and enjoy the place we have in the thoughts of God. This I now desire to trace through Scripture for a little.

In that Scripture where the apostle is using the history of Israel—the things which happened to them—as types and warnings, he says, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” (1 Cor. x. 11). This is an important word—“the ends of the world,”—it means that where we are, as Christians, is consequent upon the *close* of *all* the ways and dealings of God with man, as to testing and trying him. It is important that our souls should get hold of this; that man, as man, has been fully

tried, and that God has set up another man, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that He cannot own both. All the efforts made to set up man now, is but to deny the truth that God has set up another; that the first man has been tried from innocence to the Cross, and found wanting; and now grace has set up another, that we might have life, and grace, and blessing in Him in God's presence—a better Paradise than that that was lost. God sends out now the testimony of His grace, and the Lord Jesus has said, "Now is the judgment of this world"—not yet executed, but sure. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; tried and tested in every way—without law—under law—warned by the prophets—as last, God sending His own Son, brings the trial to a close. Whether grace or law, the result was the same—"We have piped unto you and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you and ye have not lamented." Man's state is that of total ruin. He may be *decently* alienated, but the *fact* is, he is away from God. God has not set up the second man while He could recognise the first, and this it is that the heart of man is unwilling to own: He wishes to set up the religious heart of man. What we have then to learn is the character of the deliverance that we have; not only *pardon* of our sins through the Lord Jesus Christ, but full *deliverance* from the state in which we were as of Adam, though we wait for the adoption, the redemption of the body. We are *now* brought into full, true and blessed liberty, in association with Christ, to God in righteousness.

In the Old Testament Scriptures we find figures of the ways and dealings of God, seen especially in the history of the children of Israel. You may remember that Jordan is often looked at as death, and Canaan as a figure of heavenly places; and very justly so. But then there is something very peculiar in this, that what characterizes Canaan when the Israelites got into it was conflict. When Joshua had crossed Jordan, the first person he meets is a man with a drawn sword in his hand. Canaan then is evidently not heaven and rest. It must be something other than going to heaven to be at rest. Now, at the end of Ephesians, in which Epistle the Church is seen as set in the heavenly places, we have to take the whole armour of God, "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood," as they did under Joshua. It answers as a figure to our wrestling with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies.

But if we are thus having our conflict in the heavenlies, we must first be there, Christ Himself is there, and I wish to bring out how we are associated with Him there—who is waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. I would then trace a little, the history of Israel, to show how we are delivered from this present evil world, for the reproach of Egypt was rolled away from them only when they got into Canaan; not in the wilderness: and they kept the passover, which no uncircumcised person could keep. If we turn to the history we shall find the way in which a soul makes its progress to this place of blessing.

The children of Israel were in Egypt, and slaves there—just a picture of the slavery of the people of God in this world of sin under Satan. God comes down to deliver them, and the first thing is, that God would pass through the land in judgment. By His direction, blood was sprinkled upon the lintel and two door-posts of the houses of the children of Israel. When this was done the Lord said He would pass over the house. God had the character of a Judge, and the blood met His eye as such, and the blood kept him *out* of the house. They were as guilty as the Egyptians, but if they had obeyed the voice of the Lord, when He came to that house, He passed over it. They were secure through the blood. So it is now with him who believes; God passes over him, and he cannot come into judgment—the blood of Christ shelters him—God would deny the efficacy of that blood if He did not pass such an one over; or if He imputed guilt to one trusting it. What secured them was that *God* saw it, not *they*. How many a soul is in distress, saying: “I see I am clear if I have accepted it,” but that is for God to see. I am not *clear* if I have accepted it, (with a simple heart that may be so,) I do not doubt the effect of it, but what gives peace is knowing that *God* has accepted it. Very true it is that every earnest soul desires to find that blood every day more precious to it, and that gives right affections but not peace. What gives peace is that the offended person is satisfied. When the blood is brought under God’s eye, and I find that what He *gave* in love, He has *accepted* in righteousness—Ah! then, I say it is all settled!

But mark this still, it was the offended and righteous God who gave it; as a Judge His hand is stayed. Most blessed this; but now, it is not only my sins have been borne, but God has been glorified, and it is that which gives its full

value to the blood. Suppose that all were sinners, and that all were cut off; that, I say, is righteousness; but there is no love. Or suppose all sinners, and all forgiven. That, I say, may be love, but not righteousness. Now I get both love and righteousness brought out in the cross, and both according to the majesty of God "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." The Son of Man has glorified God specially in that place where He was made sin, as well as elsewhere; "wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name," so that in virtue of the cross, man is now exalted to the right hand of God in the person of Christ. Stephen witnesses, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." He does not merely say, "I see the glory of God," but "the Son of Man standing on the right hand of the glory of God;" and that was what the Jews could not bear. A wonderful thing this is, He has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Man is set at the right hand of God. Now that is the new basis of everything: man gets his place in the glory of God, and it is that that makes the new basis of the whole hope and condition of the believer, because he is in Christ there; and of the judgment of the world, because they rejected Him. When the Spirit of Truth is come He shall convince the world—not believers—of sin—the world, all in the lump. Why? "Because they believe not on me." If man rejects the Son, the Father will take Him up, and glorify Him. (John xvii. 5.) "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was;" the glory of His person, now taken *as man*. He has glorified God—all God's moral attributes glorified, as He has revealed Himself—and for us. What a wonderful place is ours in connection with all this. The cross is the foundation of it all; and when I have peace, I still come to the cross and get all blessed affections flowing out. We come to the cross as sinners, but through the veil we now contemplate all the glories of it. There is no growth in my accepting it. God's accepting it gives me peace; for I find that God gave it in love, and in righteousness has accepted it.

Then they come to the Red Sea: they are going right, but they are stopped! So souls often find, when saved from judgment by the cross of Christ; then in the path, death,

and judgment, and Satan stare them in the face, and they cannot go any farther. Many a one can say, "I am a poor sinner and the cross just suits me;" but can you say "I am a poor sinner and the judgment-seat just suits me"? No, you cannot say that. Now it is well for us, beloved friends, just to look at this. At the Red Sea, God was not acting as a Judge, but as a Saviour. "Stand still and see the *salvation* of the Lord." God here is a deliverer, and the very Red Sea is their protection; they pass through it, and it is a wall on their right hand and on their left. Now they have got out of Egypt—they are redeemed out of the condition they were in, and brought into another. This we have in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ—I have passed out of the place where I was as a sinner—the world—and am "brought to God," (Exodus xv.; 1 Peter iii. 18). I do not talk of "heavenly places" yet, but "to God." I am "reconciled to God"—"you hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death." The effect of the Red Sea was not simply what blood had done to screen them from judgment, but what redemption did to deliver them from the condition they were in, and to bring them into another. Christ went down into death, and has risen right out of it all. Now we have a part in that. If I say, "Well, but I am guilty." "Yes, you were, but you are justified." "But I am defiled." "Yes, but you are cleansed." "But I have offended." "True, but you are forgiven." God has met every shape in which a soul may be distressed before Him, and He has revealed the new place of man—redeemed out of Egypt and brought into the wilderness. "I have seen the affliction of my people"; "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." (Ex. iii.) "He gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world." (Gal. i. 4.)

GLEANINGS.

THE moment I know God, I know Him better than I know myself; for I am double-minded. You never find God double-minded. He is what He says He is.

FAITH learns Christ, and walks by what it learns.

THE ASHES OF THE HEIFER.

(Numbers xix.)

THE ashes of the Heifer in Numbers xix. were but or only a remembrance. The thing itself, "ashes," would intimate that. It was the remains of the victim, and not the victim itself. It is not *atonement*, but *cleansing*. It is the washing of the *feet*, and not the washing of the *body*. It is the personal action of the Lord in heaven, upon the remembrance or virtue of His own accomplished redemption at Calvary.

But in that same chapter (Numbers xix.) we see the sensitiveness of divine holiness. The slightest touch of any thing dead, conveyed pollution. Yea, the priest who prepared the victim, the Israelite who buried the ashes, the Israelite who sprinkled the unclean were all alike unclean, and had to wash themselves, for they had dealt with that which dealt with sin, and *that* was enough to make washing needful. They were outside the sanctuary till they were cleansed.

But, beloved, how will all this magnify the Lord Jesus, when we think of His life in connection with this. He was ever dealing with sin and the results of it. He was raising the dead, He was cleansing the leper, He was touched by the polluted, He was allowing the approach and the contact of all kinds of defiled ones. And yet, unstained in the midst of all—just because He took in relation to all, not merely the place of a Priest or an Israelite, but the place of the cleansing Victim.

The Heifer is the only thing (the ashes for sprinkling) that is undefilable in Numbers xix. And Jesus is the only One that was here alike undefilable. Instead of pollution getting into Him through the touch, virtue went out of Him to dismiss the power of death and blot out the stain.

The Heifer was without blemish and never had yoke. She was *pure*, and she was *free*. Beautiful premonitions of Jesus! He was *free* as well as *spotless*, which none are but "Jehovah's Fellow."

Indeed, Christ's relationship to sin, is God's. In Gen. iii, man became like God, in knowing good and evil—but man knew it, because he had brought himself under the power of evil; God knows it as being essentially and infinitely above it. Man touching it, sympathises with it; God touching it, withers it. And so, Jesus.

Jesus was ever dealing with sin in the days of His flesh, but was as unspotted at the end as He was at the beginning—for He dealt with it either as the Victim who put it away, or as the God of holiness, that is in Himself supremely above it; in whose presence it cannot abide and who touching it, dismisses it, and withers it.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "THE HEAVENLY CALLING" IN THE HEBREWS, AND "SEATED IN HEAVENLY PLACES" IN THE EPHESIANS.

THE relation in which Christ is presented to His people as "the Apostle and High Priest of their profession" in Hebrews; and Christ as Lord and "Head of his body, the church," of which we are the members, in the Ephesians, might of itself explain what the difference is, and determine it. There are, however, other considerations of interest to which the Scriptures guide us.

We are looked at in the Hebrews as a collective number of persons, on their way into the rest that remaineth, and therefore pilgrims and strangers, in virtue of our heavenly calling. Another and a very important point is, that "the time of need" measures the provision made for our supply by "the throne of grace," to which we are exhorted to come boldly, in order "to obtain mercy and find grace to help" us. Moreover, we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who is able to succour them that are tempted, for that "He himself hath suffered, being tempted." It is evident, from such provisions as these, and others of a similar character, that the people are not contemplated as in Canaan, or in the rest, but on their way to it: "we who believe are entering into rest;" and again, "let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest." Further, "the heirs of *promise*" are encouraged to lay hold on *the hope* "set before them, within the veil, whither the *forerunner* is for us entered, even Jesus," &c.

In brief, we see in all these instances that Christ is separated off from His people—a High Priest passed into the heavens, and He alone "*set down*" on the right hand of the Majesty on High—though there on behalf of His people, but a people as yet on the earth, with a heavenly calling, and on their way to the rest. So as to "the forerunner"—He

is within the veil, but alone—though He has entered there for us; and “to them that look for him shall he appear” a “second time,” &c. What can be plainer than that the character and provisions made by God, in the Hebrews, to suit Himself in the Holiest, and a people whom He has called into His rest, recognise distance, and infirmities, and a time of need. In short, the necessities of a people *on their way* are met by the resources of the heavens above their heads, and ministered by the great High Priest of their profession.

In the Ephesians, we are viewed as members of Christ's body; of His flesh and of His bones—which He nourishes and cherishes. Besides this, the power which wrought in Christ to place Him where He is, at the right hand of God, is likewise to usward who believe—God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us hath quickened us *together with Christ*, and hath raised us up *together*, and made us *sit together*, in heavenly places in *Christ Jesus*. This epistle is just the opposite of the Hebrews; for there, as we saw, the Lord was *alone*, and set down as a Priest—or entered in alone as a forerunner (and very precious these relations of Christ are to us); but here, in the Ephesians, He is not *alone*, for we are in Him, as the members of His Body, *seated in Him* in the heavenlies, because He is the Head of the Church—not in *an office*, which priesthood is, but as Head of His Body—not as a forerunner, but we are quickened together, and raised up together, and *seated*.

Moreover, our infirmities are not the question, but a direct and different ministration from the Lord, in love to the members, “till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

There is *no* corporate body in the Hebrews, but a collective number of people, with a pilgrimage and the rest of God in view—whereas in the Ephesians there is nothing of this kind, but a “unity”—“a habitation of God through the Spirit”—and “a body” upon the earth—not units, tens, hundreds, and thousands (numerically considered) like the children of Israel, who were “six hundred thousand, and a thousand seven hundred and thirty,” when numbered on the plains of Moab, before their entrance into Canaan—on their way into rest—but “one new man.”

The saints of God, in this dispensation, stand in the

relation to God of a people on earth, "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," &c., of which Peter's epistles give the description. Till we enter into this inheritance by our own resurrection, or translation, we are addressed as "pilgrims and strangers," and exhorted "to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear," calling upon the Father, &c.

But the saints of God have another relation to Christ, as "the beginning, the first-born from the dead," and "Head of the body, the church"—and in which relation we are *not on our way*, but *seated* in the heavenly places in Christ; for as members of Christ, and of His Body, we should be denying our relation to both, if we do not allow that we are seated, as our Head, and in our Head. A Christian can therefore say in his *Church* relation that he is quickened, raised up, and seated in the heavenlies in Christ—because he is a member of His body—whereas, if viewed in another relation (as in the Hebrews) he is one of the holy brethren, and a partaker of the heavenly calling—moreover called to consider Christ, not as Head of the Body, but in *an office*, as the Apostle and High Priest of His profession—who appears in the presence of God *for us*, and lives *to make intercession* for us. Does the Lord do *this* for the Church, the Body, of which *He* is the Head? On the contrary, one of the prayers in the Ephesians is, that the members "may know *the love* of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." How different *this love* to the intercession of the great High Priest—though that is the fruit of grace too.

A Christian is therefore one of the holy brethren, with a heavenly calling, on his way into the rest that remaineth, with a promise of entering in, but in the meanwhile obtaining mercy, and finding from the throne of grace in the heavens, the help that is suited for the time of need, or the pilgrimage journey. A Christian is also "joined to the Lord," and "one Spirit;" and as such "baptized (with all his fellow-members) by one Spirit into one body;" and "made to drink into one Spirit"—and this body is *Christ*. To introduce "a calling," or a "pilgrimage," or "intercession," where all is vital, and existing in the unity of a Body, would be to disturb these relations with Christ, and put all into distance again, and reduce the Body to mere

units, tens, hundreds, and thousands. A Christian, as a *Churchman*, is already raised up, and *seated* in heavenly places.

I trust these remarks will make plain the difference between the "heavenly calling" of the Hebrews, and "seated in heavenly places" in the Ephesians. I trust also that we shall be able to hold our duplex character of "holy brethren," on our way to the rest, and labouring to enter in—yet quietly take our places, as knowing no distance, nor difference in this respect, between Christ as Head of the Body, and ourselves as of His flesh, and of His bones, seated with Him in the heavenlies! It is thus we are contemplated and addressed in these two epistles, and *faith* accepts it in communion with the Father and the Son, through the Holy Ghost.

SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

"R. A. H." asks the following questions from Col. i.—1. "The firstborn of every creature;" ver. 15?—2. "All fulness;" ver. 19?—3. What are the "sufferings" of ver. 24?—4. "The dispensation" of ver. 25? and, "The mystery which hath been hid," &c., ver. 26?

A.—1. The apostle is unfolding the personal glory of the Son of God in these verses (15-19); when the Creator deigned to take a place in that which He created, He must necessarily be "first-born," or "chief" of it all, in the sense of the dignity of His person. It is a relative name; not one denoting the date at which He did become a man, thus taking a place in it. Just as it is said of Solomon, who was not David's first-born, "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth," in the place of priority given him. He adds, in verse 16: "For *by* him were all things created . . . and *for* him;" explaining and enlarging upon verse 15. He must be the chief of it all, even if He appeared last in order of time, as taking a place in it. Adam could not be this, and his children were only those of a fallen man. When God Himself takes a place in that which He created, He could not have a secondary place; but is "first-born," or "chief," because He had created it. Wondrous and yet simple testimony to the deity of Jesus!

2. We should read verse 19 thus: "For in him all the fulness was pleased to dwell." This was the counsel of the

Godhead. In chap. ii. 9, we find the fact: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness (completeness) of the Godhead bodily." The fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Christ. Christ is God; and Christ is man; yet it is Christ who is both. When He, the Son of God, walked here upon earth, it was not a partial manifestation of God, as if He were but a man. If He, the Son of God, wrought miracles, it was by the Spirit of God: "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God." (Matt. xii. 28.) Yet, "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (Jno. xiv. 10); the Father wrought in the Son. It was not one person of the divine fulness of the Godhead acting alone, or to the exclusion of the rest. But all having, not merely similar counsels, but one counsel, end and aim; "all the fulness was pleased to dwell in him."

3. Paul in a special manner suffered those sufferings of which he speaks here. To Christ alone, for Paul, as for all saints, belonged those atoning sufferings which He bore once, and for ever; which God never forgets. Still He suffered in many ways here below, in which His love led Him, and He does not exclude us from a share in them with Him—"the fellowship of his sufferings," and if we are faithful we may know them in measure. Paul knew them in a peculiar way. It was not here so much "the afflictions of the gospel;" as, "sufferings for you"—Gentiles—and "for his body's sake, which is the church," of which he speaks. The truths concerning his testimony which led him to prison, and a life of unparalleled devotedness and suffering, which perhaps few, if any, have ever borne.

4. "The dispensation of God" given to Paul completed the word of God. Creation; Providence; Law; Government; the Kingdom; Incarnation; Atonement, every subject had been unfolded in the word of God, but one. When it was revealed through Paul the full circle of revelation was completed: this was the mystery of Christ and the church. 1st, That Christ should—as man—be set in the heavenlies, having all dominion, by redemption, (personally He had it as God,) as Head *over* all things in heaven and earth, *to* the church, His body, united to Him by the Holy Ghost come down from Heaven. 2nd, That He was "in you"—Gentiles—the "Hope of Glory." This was a new thing. When Christ came He was the "minister of the circumcision (the Jew) for the truth of God, to confirm the

promises made unto the fathers;" (Rom. xv. 8.) Abraham was the vessel of the promises of God; they were repeated to the fathers, Isaac and Jacob; Israel took the promises on the ground of law and man's responsibility, and forfeited them totally; then Christ came, in whom were all the promises of God, yea and amen. He came to establish the promises, as Heir of them all, to the people to whose fathers they had been made, *i.e.* the Jews. He was rejected, and instead of becoming the "Crown of glory . . . unto the residue of his people" (Isa. xxviii. 5), the Heir of glory goes on high, and the poor Gentile believer, who had no promises, comes in on the footing of pure mercy, not promise; as we read, "that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy" (Rom. xv. 9): he gets a place in Christ on high, united to Him who is the Heir of all the glory; and not only are we in Him, but He is in us—not the "crown of glory;" but "the hope of glory." "Christ in you the hope of glory."

What is meant by the "Hidden manna;" and the "White stone," of Rev. ii. 17?

The church had departed from her first love in the state contemplated in the message to Ephesus, (c. ii.). God had used the persecution, with which Satan had tried to drive her out of the world, as that which brightened her up for the Lord. This is Smyrna. Satan had not succeeded thus as a "roaring lion," and he now tries seduction, as a "serpent," and had drawn her into the world. This is what we find in the message to Pergamos. "I know . . . where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." Still there were faithful ones. Antipas, a faithful martyr, might be slain amongst them for His name. (Striking meaning, the name Antipas, *i.e.* "against all," when all were slipping away into the world.) Now we find the promise to the overcomer in such a state of things—the "Hidden manna," and the "White stone." The manna was, in figure, Christ humbled here: there was no place on earth that He could take: doing so would but own the world in its state of departure from God. He was the lowliest on earth. Those who were standing firm in this lowly path, where the church should have trodden in His footsteps, would be fed thus with Him, as the humbled, rejected One, which the church was now ceasing to be. It was the "Hidden manna" too. This is an allusion to the golden pot of manna which was treasured up in the ark for a remem-

brance. (Exod. xvi.) The humiliation of that Blessed One God never forgets. It was no mere passing savour of Him, as merely a means to an end, in accomplishing His great work. But that which abides in God's memory and heart for ever! Blessed to be fed on such food—"God's treasured store."

The "White stone" was, according to an ancient custom, a mark of approval—as a black stone was of disapproval—it is the approval of Christ to those who were satisfied with this lowly path. In the stone a new name written, known only to him who received it. There are common joys of God's saints now: there will be common joys in heaven. But there are secret joys now between the heart and Christ, known to him who is recipient of them alone. There will be such in heaven.

"J.K.M." If "all Scripture" is "profitable," &c., (2 Tim. iii. 16), what edification is the Christian to receive from the narrative of Saul and the witch of Endor? (1 Sam. xxviii.)

A. We learn for ourselves a deeply solemn lesson from this chapter, beside the ways of God with His people Israel, instructive as they are. We find the closing days of one who had once maintained an outward form of piety, and had exhibited much apparent devotedness and zeal in the service of the Lord, but who never had faith. In Saul's case we see how far flesh can go in an outwardly devoted pathway, yet, when the testing time comes, it proved that there never was any real link with God. His outward zeal had destroyed the witchcraft in Israel, when he was maintaining a religious character; but his conscience never was awakened—he had not faith. In his extremity in the face of the enemy he trembles, and enquires of the Lord, who did not reply to him by dreams, Urim, or prophets: and he has the solemn conviction forced upon him that the day of outward apparent serving of the Lord was gone. Like the sow that was washed, he has recourse to what he had once destroyed, and which even by natural conscience he knew was evil—to enchantments. Here God meets him, and exhibits a power that causes even the witch to quail—terrified by a power superior to the enchantments which she practised. He finds now, when too late, that he had given himself up to Satan's power, and made the Lord his enemy, who tells him his end. Like Judas—who had habitually yielded to temptation, he finds

now that the enemy cannot shield him from the judgment of God, whose grace he had traded upon so long.

Poor Saul! Poor Judas! how many a fair vessel, when the day of reckoning comes, will be found like you!

Q. If Enoch and Elijah were taken up to heaven, what is the meaning of Jno. iii. 13?

A. They were caught up to heaven. No man had "ascended" up to heaven till Christ. *He did so in the calmness of His own divine and indwelling power.*

THE SEA BIRD.

I've watch'd the sea bird calmly glide,
Unruffled o'er the ocean tide;
Unscared she heard the waters roar,
In foaming breakers on the shore.
Fearless of ill, herself she gave
To rise upon the lifting wave,
Or sink, to be a-while unseen—
The undulating swells between—
Till, as the evening shadows grew,
Noiseless, unheard, aloft she flew;
While, soaring to her rock-built nest,
A sunbeam lighted on her breast,
A moment glitter'd in mine eye,
Then quickly vanish'd through the sky.

While by the pebbly beach I stood,
That sea-bird, on the waving flood,
Pictured, to my enraptured eye,
A soul at peace with God!—Now high,
Now low, upon the gulf of life,
Raised or depress'd, in peace or strife;
Calmly she kisses the changeeful wave,
She dreads no storm—*she fears no grave:*
To her the world's tumultuous roar,
Dies like the echo on the shore.
"Father," she cries, "Thy pleasure all fulfil,
I gladly yield me to thy sovereign will;
Let earthly joys, let comforts ebb or rise,
Tranquil on Thee, my God, my soul relies."

There, as advance the shades of night,
Long-plumed, she takes her heavenward flight;
But, as she mounts, I see her fling
A beam of glory from her wing—
A moment—to my aching sight,
Then lost in boundless fields of light.

—*Extracted.*

GOD'S TWO-FOLD TESTIMONY.

1 JOHN v. 9, 11, 12.

THERE are few Scriptures which contain more peaceful testimony for anxious, troubled souls, than the above; they present the very truth that is calculated to meet the difficulties which are treasured up in the poor burdened heart, and they tell of a liberty and a peace which nothing but possession of, and occupation with the Son of God can give.

Nothing can be more distinct than this fact, that God has placed the evidence of a sinner's acceptance outside himself. Nothing we can either *say*, *do*, or *feel*, is any ground upon which we can rest our souls: what an unspeakable comfort that it is so. For, think for a moment; this day, all might be favourable and bright about me; happy frames, sweet experience and the like; but to-morrow all is as dark as yesterday was bright; coldness and deadness within me, and all that I prized so much has vanished in a night. What a state of destitution and wretchedness am I plunged into all in a moment! It seems to me that such a state resembles very nearly that of the man who formed his judgment of the sun, by looking at it in a pool of water, ever and anon was the surface of the stream swept by angry winds, and to him did the sun appear as often to move as to stand still; but when he learned no longer to use as his medium, a muddy tempest-tossed water, then did he discover that *that* sun was ever the same,—*steadfast* and *fixed*. So is it ever, Dear Reader, in the question of salvation, evidence of it rests not in me or with me, but *outside of me*. I mean by this, it is not what I think, or feel, or do, it is what God *has done* and says: firmer ground or safer foundation God could not give us than *His own Word*—nothing can change that, neither time, circumstances, nor events. With this I meet the fury and rage of Satan, with this I silence every rising fear and murmur of my heart.

Let us then look at these testimonies a little. *First* then the Holy Ghost says, "God has given to us eternal life:"—what a sentence that! it begins with the Giver and closes with the gift; "God HATH given"—here then you have God's own witness, record, testimony; but more than that, is not what He gives worthy of the name of the Giver? "eternal life"! Dear Reader, do you know what eternal life is? have you got it? Eternal life, is nothing less than *the very life* of the One who took our place in grace, bore the wrath,

and rose again from the dead—His death has ended your history, your life before God, the Lord Jesus Christ is the “*last Adam*,” as well as the “*second man*” the Lord from Heaven, (1 Cor. xv.) you remember His own blessed testimony in John iii, “the Son of man *must* be lifted up.” There was a necessity on the side of God, as well as on the side of man. Man—God’s creature—had set up a will of his own in opposition to God and in consequence had forfeited the condition in which God had placed Him. The judgment was, “in the day that thou eatest thereof *thou shalt surely die*,” and God drove him out of His presence—“so he drove out the man.” The love of God undertakes to remove in righteousness this distance, and alienation from God—and God *gives* His only, and well beloved Son, who Himself came into the world where all was against God—manifested the secrets of that heart in which He shared, “the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father”—and finally as “the Lamb of God,” bears the wrath of God—gives up His own spotless and blessed life, for the life that was forfeited and under judgment—He dies—is buried; the love of God has in His cross taken out of the way in righteousness all that hindered its outflow; but He rises again on the third day; “the glory of the Father” raises Him from among the dead; and He is now the author of *eternal life* to all that believe. It is not man set up in his old life, and his debts all cleared away; nor man set up in innocence as Adam before he fell; but the believer united by the Holy Ghost to Christ risen from the dead and in glory, the recipient of all that finds expression in the words “God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in his Son.” To recapitulate a little then, on this first head we have God’s testimony, or record of *Himself, His Son, His gift*. As to Himself, He is the giver—the blessed giver—“God hath given.” As to His Son, all that God gives is *in Him*; and as to His gift, it is *eternal life*.

Now the second testimony or record of God is contained in ver. 12; “He that hath the Son hath life”—and we might place alongside of them those blessed words of the Lord Jesus Himself in John v. 24, “verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life”—So here the record is that faith in Christ, receives God’s gift; the word is “hath,” a

present thing. Faith never raises a question about me, for faith knowing that God hath set me aside altogether in the death of His Son; it does not want to revive that which is dead, that of which to be rid is an unspeakable relief. Faith hears Christ's word, believes the Father who sent His Son, possesses Christ, and has everlasting life. This is God's testimony. Do you not see how the eye of the soul is turned out in faith on Christ, *not in on oneself?* and do you not see that it is the person of the Christ, the blessed Son of God, that is the object, not His work merely, *but Himself?* Is this to make little of His work? far be it; it is the one who makes most of His person knows how to value His work. God says then "this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son, He that hath the Son hath life"—Have you the Son?—W. T. T.

THOUGHTS ON SACRIFICES.

THE OFFERINGS OF CAIN AND ABEL.

THERE are two points of view from which we may study the lives of men, according as we place ourselves with the spectators, or with the actors. With the former we may scrutinize the conduct, and mark the consequences which flow from it; with the latter we become cognisant of the motives, and trace upwards to their source the otherwise hidden springs of action. The history of Cain and Abel afford us an illustration of this.

In reading the account handed down by Moses we are placed in the position of spectators; in reading the brief notice of the history in the epistle to the Hebrews we understand the position of Abel, and learn the guiding principles of the two brothers. No antediluvian record, if any such existed, survived the flood; to revelation, therefore, we are wholly indebted for what we do possess. Fifteen centuries elapsed between the date of the writing of Genesis and that of the epistle to the Hebrews, during which the outward history (*i. e.* what a spectator might have recorded) of their sacrifices, was all that God had been pleased to disclose. But, when in the fulfilment of His counsels, ordained before the foundation of the world, the message of His grace went forth to all men; and the seed of Jacob had to renounce the earthly promises made to their fathers, if they would

receive God's salvation; the secret history of that day's offerings was revealed. God unfolds truth in season. Till then its application would not have been understood, for it concerns not Israel merely, but all men, as it speaks in language clear and loud of a sinner's acceptance before his God. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." (Heb. xi. 4.)

What a value God has put on this history! "By it he being dead yet speaketh." A voice then comes to us from the other side of the flood to which man would do well to give ear: and as we listen to it we can be at no loss how to understand its purport, or how to translate its language; for God the Holy Ghost has given us His divine comment on that history. So, whilst we read in Genesis of the awful wickedness to which a child of Adam can stoop, we learn in Hebrews the principle on which one born in sin can be held righteous before God. Of the sacrifices of Adam and Eve we have no record. They were created in innocence, and fell through positive transgression. Their example, then, as to sacrifices, men might plead, did not meet their case. Adam and Eve were directly answerable for their fallen condition, but we enter the world sinners from our birth. Hence the sacrifices of Cain and Abel just meet our case. For like us they were children of Adam, born in sin, inheriting by birth an evil nature. Their position is ours as children of the same father; the ground of their acceptance is the ground of ours likewise, as they possessed by natural generation, in common with us, a nature at enmity with God. Hence, on the first occasion that could arise, this question of a sinner's acceptance before God, so intimately connected with the everlasting welfare of man was clearly raised, and the controversy definitely and plainly set at rest, as "the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." (Gen. iv. 4-5.) A look from the Lord settled the question between them, and has taught us that the question was then settled for us.

"By faith Abel offered," &c.—Then with Abel it was obedience to a revelation from God, but how communicated it has not pleased Him to record—nor does it concern us. It is the fact of a revelation having been vouchsafed, and not the manner of its communication, we require, to throw light

on Abel's actions. With him, then, what he should offer was no question of choice; he learned what God required, and brought it. Thus, at the outside of the garden of Eden, in the wilderness of Sinai, and at Mount Calvary, we behold how in all ages God has declared what that sacrifice is which He can accept. Before the flood, as well as after it, souls to be accepted had to learn this. Yet with all the light of revelation, the accumulated knowledge of ages, and the boasted enlightenment of this nineteenth century, are not many souls even in this country in as thick darkness about the teaching of Cain's and Abel's offerings, as if that history had never been written, or God's word they had never heard of? Few there are, probably, who have never heard of Cain and Abel; but how many are there among that large class who, acquainted with the statements of Moses, have understood the meaning of that voice, which though he is dead, yet speaketh? Are we strangers in our day to language such as this—"That men may be saved in different ways, if only they are earnest and upright?" The narrowness of past generations must be overcome; the bigotry of those who refuse to divorce salvation from the atonement can no longer be endured! Are such voices from the altar of Abel? or are they echoes from the offerings of Cain?

Turning to the Mosaic account we learn that on one point both the brothers were agreed; they owned that it was right for a creature to bring an offering to his God. Cain seemed as ready as Abel to yield up to the Lord something of what he possessed. There did not appear any backwardness on his part in bringing an offering to the Lord. The ground had yielded increase to reward his toil, and he was willing to present part of it to Him by whose power and goodness the earth was fruitful at all. The occasion on which they thus approached God is not mentioned. Sufficient for us is it to remark that Cain, by his offering, though he acted wrongly, condemns many a one in this day who receives favours from God, enjoys them, learns the value of them, and looks for a renewal of them each morning, without once stopping to think of the Giver, or enquiring in what way He can be approached and worshipped.

"Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of the flock, and of the fat thereof." The amount of Cain's offering has not been revealed, nor the number of Abel's sheep, but

both, doubtless, drew nigh with no niggard hand : and now these two sons of Adam, born in sin, stand with their respective offerings before the Lord. Cain, doubtless, brought of the choicest of his harvest, the fattest of the fruits of the ground—beautiful sight, we may believe, for the outward eye to admire; whilst Abel, doubtless, stood with the finest of the firstlings of his flock, with their fat. Observe, there is no mention of the blood. This is in perfect keeping with the character of their service that day. Throughout the book of Genesis, it may be remarked, there is no mention of blood in connection with sacrifice to God. It is not till the redemption of the people of Israel was to be consummated, and the law to be given, “added because of transgressions,” that its efficacy is brought out, or the blood mentioned at all. “Without shedding of blood is no remission” is a truth never to be forgotten; but on that day it was not, it would appear, a question of sins to be forgiven, for we read not before this of a single thing that they had done wrong. The question raised was about the acceptance of a sinner, not about the remission of sins. This is an important distinction, and gives great weight to this history of Abel. It was the nature, and not the acts of that nature, that Abel’s sacrifice brings into prominence. The blood makes atonement for sins, but a nature can only cease to exist by death. Death therefore must come in ere a nature can be put away. So we have here the death of the firstlings, and the offering with them of their fat, without the mention of the blood. The death of the animals foreshadowed the death of the substitute; their fat, as we learn from the Levitical ritual, the perfect obedience to the will of God of the Substitute, in the inmost recesses of His nature. For, observe, it is not fat lambs that we read of, but the firstlings, with their fat. Doubtless the firstlings were the best of their kind, the fattest of the flock, but that explanation will not satisfy the term “and the fat thereof.” “All the fat is the Lord’s,” we read in Leviticus iii. 16, and with the inwards, formed “the food of the offering made by fire for a sweet savour.” How expressive must the mention of the fat with Abel’s offerings have been to the children of Israel, hearing that history for the first time probably, just when they had learnt at Sinai the value of the fat in God’s eyes. The mention then of the fat has a voice, and the offering of Abel a meaning which we can interpret. Cain acted in self-will in the offering he brought, Abel approached

as a sinner, put the death of the substitute between him and God, and offered with the animals their fat, thus prefiguring the perfect answer within of the true victim to the will of God; as it is written of Him, "My reins also instruct me in the night seasons." (Ps. xvi. 7.) Abel then drew near acknowledging his need of the death of a substitute. Cain approached as a righteous man who had already a standing before God. He ignored his condition by the fall, so was rejected; Abel owned it, offered accordingly, and was accepted. The fruits of the ground were witnesses against Cain of the fall, for the ground was cursed for Adam's sake; the dead victims likewise testified of it, for death entered the world by sin; but they spoke also of the divinely appointed way of putting away sin by the sacrifice of God's own Son. Hence "the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Neither of them drew nigh without offerings which spoke of the fall (whatever they offered must have done that); but Cain thought to set himself right with God without the death of a substitute, whilst Abel acknowledged the need of another's death ere he could stand in acceptance before God. Abel thus confessed that as far as man was concerned his condition was irremediable, for he was a sinner; Cain manifested a disposition by his fruits to make good his standing, and miserably failed, as all must who act in the spirit in which he acted, and refuse to accept the atonement made by the Lord Jesus. Abel took the place of a sinner—a lost sinner; Cain of a soul able to maintain its ground before a holy God. Was this thought confined to the days before the flood? Is it not largely entertained still?

But, it may be asked, why were the fruits of the ground an offering God could not accept from Cain; when He afterwards commanded the children of Israel to offer of their first fruits unto Him? The answer is plain. Their cases were very different. Israel, as a nation, were already redeemed, and had a standing before Him; with Cain it was the question of an unredeemed sinner's acceptance. Cain should have learned that the only ground of his standing before God was through the death of another. With Israel this had been already settled by the blood of the paschal lamb, and manifested by their passage through the Red Sea. Do we not discern the difference of these conditions in the language addressed in the New Testament to sinners and to saints?

To sinners the message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." To saints the word comes, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Acts, xvi. 31. Rom. xii. 1.) As redeemed by blood, God looks for that from His people, which it would be presumptuous for the unsaved soul to offer.

Now the identification between the offering and the offerer comes out,—“The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.” Could He have accepted Abel without his offering? Impossible. Could He have accepted the offering without the offerer? Impossible. For by faith Abel offered. He manifested the obedience of faith, and so received the sure consequence—acceptance before his God. “He obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.” He had no need to ask his father or his mother (if they were present) whether he had been accepted, the Lord would have him learn it direct from Himself, so he could leave the place of sacrifice with his mind at rest about it. Abel knew all about it, Cain did likewise. To both was it made plain, that the one was owned as righteous that day, who had taken the place of a lost sinner, needing the death of a substitute; and Cain’s conduct comes out to us in all its enormity and presumption, when we learn what Abel’s firstlings foreshadowed.

But, how graciously did the Lord deal with Cain, when He manifested displeasure at his rejection. Was the Lord unrighteous in His dealings with the two brothers? “If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?” Or, as the margin reads, “have the excellency.” But to do well was to own, like Abel, what one born in sin needed. How little do men understand this? Yet, what higher or truer ground could Abel take, than simply to confess what he was? It was in this Cain had failed. Yet the Lord would not for that finally cast him off, so He added, “If thou doest not well, sin,” or as is more commonly understood, a sin offering “lieth at the door:” and, if offered, his sin would be forgiven, and his position as first-born would still remain to him—“unto thee shall be his desire (*i.e.* Abel’s) and thou shalt rule over him.” Here we have the first mention of an offering. God told him what to do, but he refused to obey, and instead of the sacrifice, as pointed out, he took his brother’s life. Was he desirous to secure the

rights of the first-born, and so slew his brother, as others afterward could say, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours"? It may have been so, but Scripture is silent about it. One thing, however, is clear, the way of acceptance, even after he had sinned, was pointed out to him, so he was left without excuse, when he turned from the place of sacrifice, without having brought the sin offering. The Lord would not allow him to be ignorant of what he should do, any more than Abel of the results of what he had done. Multitudes have fallen into Cain's mistake, but what the Lord told Cain He tells them. For Cain and for them a sacrifice must be offered up. But in Cain's case it was the offering up of one from the flock; in the sinner's case now, it is trusting wholly to the sacrifice of God's Lamb on the cross. How clearly then is the whole question of a sinner's acceptance shadowed forth in this brief history. How has this history spoken to the heart of the readers of these lines? If hitherto it has been read simply as the record of a by-gone age, with which we are not concerned, now may its voice penetrate to the depths of the heart, and it be found speaking directly to each soul. We read here what Cain and Abel respectively offered; but we read in it also what men are doing in these days, and how each one should act, if desirous to be found on the same side as "righteous Abel."

From that day the paths of the two brothers outwardly diverged. Abel's body was shortly afterwards laid in the grave, and Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and builded a city, and called it after his son, Enoch. His posterity became famous as inventors of instruments of music, and workers in brass and iron. The flood came and obliterated all trace of his city, if it existed till then, and all trace, too, of Abel's grave; and the strains of music Cain's family had first evoked, were hushed for ever into silence as the waters overflowed the earth. But there is a voice which Cain's malice could not silence, nor the overflowing waters drown; and, whilst all of Cain's race, with their arts and works, perished in the deluge, this voice still speaks to sinners, telling what they need, as Abel found, who by faith offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, and by it, though dead, yet speaketh!—C. E. S.

“THE WORLD”

At the creation there was no such thing as “the world”—as the Lord spoke of it in the Gospel of John, and as John speaks of it in his writings. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” is what we read. But “the world” is a vast system in which every man is bent upon doing the best he can for himself, and God is really unknown: a system which Satan uses to ruin man, and to destroy the power of God.

The presence of the Son of God in it brought out the fact that all that was of the world was not of the Father, whom He revealed. He overcame the world; and Satan, who led it against Him, for the first time received definitely the title “the prince of this world.” The judgment of the world was on the rejection of the Son of God—not yet executed, 'tis true, but sure. The presence of the Holy Ghost now convinces the world of sin in one common lump. It is the evidence that the world did not believe on the Son of God, but cast Him out, and He has no more to say to it, and never will till He judges it.

The man, therefore, who believes that “Jesus is the Son of God” overcomes the world—(1 John, v.)—not merely that He is the Son of David, or the Christ. The world is that in which the flesh finds its place when the soul is not with God. We find it more than seventy times mentioned in the writings of John. It is that system which comes to light between the first coming of Christ and His appearing, and is only then used in this moral sense.

THYATIRA, SARDIS, PHILADELPHIA.

SARDIS.—Rev. iii. 1-6.

IN Sardis you get another character—it is a very striking thing when you come to this. The character given to Christ when walking among the candlesticks, in chapter i., is all ecclesiastical. You see Him both in His divine and human character,—“One like unto the Son of man . . . his head and his hairs white like wool, and his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass.” All this is a person judging—fire is ever the sign of judgment; “And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword;”—judgment again. We find none of these ecclesiastical characters here except the

seven stars. He never gives up His authority at any time, and never will: still the ecclesiastical characteristics are passed over. In Sardis we get His divine character in connection with the coming of the Lord,—“These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars:”—none of those spoken of at first, but the seven stars. This fulness of the power of the Spirit is His; no lack of authority. “The seven spirits of God,” His intrinsic moral character, all that the Spirit is, in wisdom and power. “I know thy works that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead.” There is no Jezebel corruption here in Sardis; there is death. “Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God.” That is the way He is dealing with Sardis. This is a solemn truth.

What a strange thing when the Lord speaks of their being dead, and yet expects perfect works! But God never expects anything else, and never will. He will never go back from His proper claim; He will never expect more than has been given; but He will expect conduct fully up to what has been received. “Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent; if therefore thou shalt not watch I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” What is this? It is mere profession—not corrupt systems; it is that which has a name to live and is dead. He will treat it like the world. Why? Because *it is* the world. People complain of our calling it so, but it is called so; and it is treated as the world; as you see in 1 Thess. v. 2. It is the very distinction the apostle makes where you get true Christians contrasted with professors. “For *yourselves* know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night, for when *they* shall say peace and safety then sudden destruction cometh upon them; but *ye*, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake *you* as a thief.” Nothing could be more solemn than His testimony, “I will come on thee as a thief;” but it will overtake Sardis; and if you, my reader, have a name to live and are dead, it will overtake you. If you do not “watch”—if you are not acting up to this—I will treat you like the world. That is the exceedingly solemn testimony as to those who have a name to live but are dead—where there is profession, but the works are not perfect according to what has been re-

ceived. If you are not acting up to that, if you say "My lord delayeth his coming," I will treat you like the world, and will appoint you a portion with unbelievers. (Luke xii. 46.) I get this solemn testimony here as to those who have a name to live and are dead to God.

SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFESSION OF SINS.

"R. P."—(1.) How is it said in 1 John i. 9, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" after it is said in Ephesians i. 7, and Colossians i. 14, "In whom we have redemption through His blood; the forgiveness of our sins"? (2.) As a believer in Jesus Christ, whose blood has cleansed me from all sin, am I not already forgiven—washed every whit clean—so as to need no repetition of forgiveness, or application of it? (3.) To which does this ninth verse apply—to the cleansing efficacy of the blood at the first; or the washing of our feet afterwards by the water of the Word? especially as the next verse says, "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not?"

(1. 2.) I must preface my remarks on these questions by stating, first, that *a sin is never forgiven till it is committed*; let us be clear as to this: when I, as a poor sinner, believe the gospel, God forgives my sins on the ground of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done; He is just and consistent with Himself in doing so, as a righteous God. He justifies me, and I am pardoned for all the sins I have committed: God remembers them no more for ever. But more; I find, after all, that I am still a sinner, and that if God in grace has removed the fruit off a bad tree, the tree is still there, and may produce a new crop. Then I learn another truth, not only that Christ died for me and bore my sins, but that I have died with Him, and thus for faith, as for God, the old tree is gone, that *nature* which produced the sins, for which there is no forgiveness; and as dead with Christ, I am justified from sin, and the Christ, who has died and risen, is now the true "I"—a new graft on an old tree, which has been cut down; "Christ liveth in me." The old tree is there, and if I am not watchful it may—alas, it does appear; for "in many things we offend all." Now I cannot say that I am forgiven for what I never have committed; for forgiveness has reference

to actions which have been committed, not to the nature which produced the evil thing. Forgiveness assumes that the sins are in existence to which the forgiveness applies. Neither can I say that I *must* sin in the future—I *may* do so if not watchful; and if I do so, it is the allowance of the action of the old nature, which, as long as unconfessed and unforgiven, hinders fellowship and joy. As for *imputation*, that cannot be, because Christ has borne the wrath for me, and is in God's presence on high. I cannot enjoy the presence of God—and God will not allow me to do so—so long as the sin is unconfessed and unjudged. The righteousness has not changed in which I stand before God, as Christ is there, but the sin is on my conscience. God has said in His Word, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," &c. I lay hold upon that principle by faith, and lay my heart bare before Him; a deep and painful work; much more so than asking forgiveness, for which I have no divine warrant after redemption was accomplished, and which is really "taking it easy." It is easy enough to ask to be forgiven, but a painful work for the heart to take the motive from which the evil action came, and the thoughts which conceived it—"when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin." James i.)—to God, and to tell them out in the presence of a grace that does not impute it to me, and which breaks my heart down more than all else could. My heart thinks of the agony it cost Christ to put away that sin before God's eye—feels, too, what it is to have a sin on my conscience, and learns the restoring grace of God, who is faithful and just to forgive me my sin; and more—"to cleanse" me—to remove the remembrance of it from my conscience in full restoring grace.

No doubt we have, as quoted, "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins;" but it is to sins that *have been committed*, to which this and like passages refer: Redemption, Quickening, &c., go much farther than this. The former is the total deliverance of the person out of the condition he was in as a sinner, and introduction into another state before God. Quickening is the impartation of a new life—the life of Christ risen, who had borne the sins away, and in whom I have the redemption. I *ought* not to sin after having been introduced into such a state, yet, alas, I do. Hence, when John speaks in the verse you quote (1 Jno. i. 9), he adds, "My little children, *these things* (i.e., the preceding

verses) write I unto you that ye sin not." To have said what he did might have been taken advantage of by flesh, and used as license to sin, thus he guards it, and adds the truth, "If any sin, we have an advocate with the Father," One who has gone after us, and dealt with our hearts and consciences with His word and Spirit, making us feel the bitterness of sin, and thus has bowed our hearts before God in confession—a thing we would never do unless He exercised this advocacy.

We do not need to be justified again—to be redeemed again—to be quickened again; all that is accomplished once and for ever. But we do need the sense of forgiveness when we have allowed the sinful nature in us to act in the slightest form. This is the value of the Priesthood of Christ during our whole course here; Advocacy is an action which flows from Priesthood. The presence of a sinful nature in us never makes the conscience bad. It is only when it *acts* that the conscience becomes defiled. The sin can never come to God's presence, because Christ is there. Nor is there imputation *for condemnation* to me. But the conscience is defiled and the bitterness of sin felt. I cannot go to God and tell Him that I have a *sinful nature*, and could not help it, because, if I had used His grace which *is* sufficient for me, I had not failed. But I go and confess my "sins"—not "sinful nature"—and He is faithful and just to forgive me, and to cleanse me, because Christ died; and the righteousness is unchanged, because He is risen and in heaven.

(3.) 1 John i. 9 is very abstract: *i.e.*, it is a divine principle which the apostle states, without *applying* it to the *state* of the individual, as believer or sinner. John's Epistle is full of general abstract statements. He takes things as he finds them, without allowing for the *state* of individuals. Faith uses the divine principle, and gets the good of it. It would pre-suppose that I *must* sin in the future, to *provide* such a resource for believers *as such*, specially. Yet when a believer does fail his faith seizes the principle, and uses it for his restoration. If a soul comes to God, confessing his sins, believing that God is faithful and just to forgive him, he gets the good of it, but I could not call him a mere sinner now, as grace has wrought in his heart.

The first two verses of chap. ii. belong to the subject at the end of chap. i. The apostle has those who have eternal life in Christ specially before his mind in the epistle. He writes

these things which relate to communion with the Father and the Son, that their joy might be full. Verse 7 is not an evangelistic statement of the Gospel, although frequently used in that way. It gives three features of Christian position. 1, Walking in the light, we are in the presence of God without a vail, and we walk there before His eye. 2, We have fellowship one with another in doing so: flesh is not at work in us: jealousies are gone: there is mutuality of joy, and all absence of seeking our own. 3, Although we have sin in us, and if we said we had none, the light in which we walk would contradict us: we know that the blood of Jesus Christ has given us a title to be there with God, and God to have us there. The light prevents us saying we have no sin. The blood gives us the consciousness that we can be there with God. It is not repeated cleansing of the blood, as such is done once and is never repeated, but it is the title.

You will say, Were not all my sins future when Christ bore them? True. But bearing wrath, and shedding His blood on account of them before God's eye, in view of all His people's sins, is not forgiveness. My forgiveness is on the ground of what He has done, and the application of the good of His work to me appropriated through faith. I object strongly to Calvinistic statements used at times in preaching, viz., "all the believer's sins, past, present and future, are forgiven;" or the like. No doubt the work was completed full by the Lord Jesus Christ, by which they are put away, and the sense of forgiveness applied to my soul, but the sins must be in existence first, in order that it may be so.

"MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE."

"Gershom," you ask how is it that the saints whom Peter addresses as, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," (1 Peter i. 2), are told in 2 Peter i. 10, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure?"

It seems strange to say to a person who possesses a thing to "lay hold" of it, and "make sure" of it, as you find in many places—yet it's always the way in Scripture. Timothy had eternal life, and yet he is told to "Lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called." (1 Timothy vi.) There are many instances of the kind. Scripture always looks upon the Christian, in the two-fold condition,

"as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." It is the riddle of the Christian state. If he looks at Christ on high, and the changeless purpose of God who has called him, he knows that "He who (had) begun a good work in (him) will perform it," and that born of God to-day, he never can be *not* born of God. If Christ bore his sins and put them away, there never can come a moment when He did *not* bear them. He is united to Christ on high, and knows it by the Holy Ghost dwelling in him. To all this condition nothing can be added, and it never changes. But when he looks at himself below, he is a poor worm, in weakness, and feebleness on earth, and has got nothing yet, unless the Holy Ghost dwelling in him, the earnest of all he possesses in Christ. Then he must get to heaven, and "so run," that he "may attain," "Lay hold" on what he has got, "make his calling and election sure to *himself*, in a walk in which God ministers to his soul the joy and secure sense of his position. It cannot be made sure to *God*, because *He* has called him, and chosen him. A walk, as detailed in the preceding verses (5-9), fills the heart with the sense of security, and joy in which he dwells. It is the atmosphere of the place where God dwells in unhindered blessedness; and his "entrance" is "abundant" into that scene, when his time has come to enter it. Thus he makes it sure to his own heart.

FRAGMENTS.

God's love is always perfect ; always the same. We do not always enjoy it. He never makes us doubt His love ; but makes us feel the loss of it, consciously, at times. It may not be for positive evil ; but for a slothful state of soul in not acting in the light. Still, though I have to go through exercises, I am as sure of His love as ever. I am sure of the sun when it rains, but still I say, "What terrible weather we have ! not a gleam of sunshine !" He loves us too well **not** to put us into these exercises. Do I suppose He will go on and give me the enjoyment of His love if I am careless and neglect it ?

AN "Invisible Church" is an invention of men to enable the church to shake hands with the world. What would people say if we spoke so in natural things ! an invisible light is nonsense.