

THE
NORTHERN WITNESS.

EDITED BY
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VOL. XV.

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NORTHERN WITNESS.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAP. i. 16-23.

HAVE mentioned already, but may be allowed to repeat, that in the four divisions of the arrangement by the Spirit as to the descent of Christ down from eternal glory to the cross, the Holy Ghost has paused each time to interpolate a word about John the Baptist—thus marking off the divisions of the passage very distinctly.

There are only three verses in this third division about the Christ; several more about John the Baptist. The first one of these divisions we saw was looking at Him as with God, and as Himself God. The second as coming into the world, and then as already come. The third regards Him as here; and the question is anticipated, What has He brought us? What has He got to dispense? If any great man visited you in your house, it would put you, probably, to some expense; and the greater the personage you had to entertain, the greater, probably, would be the expense you would be put to. Or, in other words, the great men would not give to you, but you would have to give to them. The Son of the living God has been in this world, but He did not come, at least in the first place, to get, but to give. He gets us to be His own, but He first gives, and gives largely, and gives largely of the very, *very* best. Let us read the three verses.

“And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath told Him out.”

Now in looking at these three verses we shall see three matters specially pressed upon our attention. The first is, that we all get from what He has got; the second, as we shall see by-and-by, that grace and truth only exist through Him; and the third is, that He brings all God down to us; nothing is kept back.

Now as to the first, in verse 16, “And of His fulness have *all we* received.” Notice the word “we,” I pray you, or else we may think that unbelievers get it. “All we,” that is, probably, alluding to verse 12, “as many as received Him;” we who receive Him and none else.

“Of His fulness.” Fulness of what? I think that is an allusion to verse 14, which says, “Full of grace and truth.” Now these two words, “grace and truth,” crop up a good deal here, therefore we had better tarry on them a little while. The question arises, what is grace, what is truth, and what is the evident connection between them? Now I think that there is a passage which tells us very distinctly what grace is. It says in Ephesians ii. 7, “that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, *in His kindness toward us* through Christ Jesus.” Grace is His kindness toward us by Christ Jesus; that is what grace is. For, as the verses before show us, we were dead in trespasses and sins; and the verses next, that we are raised together with Christ; and then we read of “His grace in His kindness toward us by Christ Jesus.” Here, then, is what I take to be a definition of what grace is; God’s kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Then the question occurs again, what is truth? For I want, for myself and for you, to try and get into these verses; for I feel they are very precious, and it is a pity to slur over any word therein. What is truth? Truth is the revelation of God to the soul. All that has got away from God, all that is not of God, is a lie. He that once sees God,—has seen God in Christ, knows the truth. Truth, as truth, is the revelation of God to the soul. So this is eternal life, to know God. There is a connection between truth and eternal life; truth unveils God, life is through the knowledge of God. Many, many saw Jesus in the days of His flesh, but got neither life on the one hand nor truth on the other, because they saw nothing in Him.

Now I have said enough, I think, on these

words, "grace and truth," so we read on. "And of His fulness have all we received." There is an emphasis on the word "all;" all believers. As sure as we are believers, as sure as we have received Christ, we have got of this fulness of grace and truth ourselves from Christ our Lord. But then comes a clause which is obscure. What is meant by the words, "and grace for grace?" How are we to understand this? Two interpretations have been given. One is this, that grace follows grace; that as sure as God shows grace to-day He will do it to-morrow; as sure as we get favour from Christ to-day we shall get it, and more, to-morrow. That is not the interpretation I believe in. This, I believe, is the true one, though the more difficult. That the grace we receive from Christ is identical with all the grace that is in Him; it is the very same. For example, if we take a vessel to a fountain, and draw of the water, the water in the vessel is the same water as in the fountain. That is part of the meaning, though nothing like all. It is identical in many ways. Thus, grace in Christ is infinite; grace in you is infinite. I trust you will admit that. Do you think that, if it had not been for infinite grace in you, you could have been picked up from being dead in sins to be raised with Christ? Grace in Christ is abundant; Romans v. says we "receive abundance of grace." Grace in Christ is precious; grace in us is precious. Grace in Christ is lasting; grace in us is lasting. Grace in Christ is divine; grace in us is divine. I am trying, by these varied ways, to press upon your attention that grace in Christ and grace in us correspond. Only we get it from Him, so it is well for us ever to be living upon Him.

"Oh Christ, He is the fountain,
The deep, sweet well of love."

"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; or rather, "*became* by Jesus Christ;" for so it should read. I have mentioned before that throughout this chapter there is a contrast constantly being drawn by the Spirit between the word "was" used of Christ, and the word "became" used of everything else. Take verse 1 and 6, for instance; "the Word *was* God,"—"there *became* a man." One thing, as we have seen, is said of Christ that He became, "the Word was made (or became) flesh." But now about this grace and truth,

it should be "became" again. Or in other words, kindness and truth could never have got at us, could never have touched us, but for Christ. God might have loved us, and did, in his heart, from all eternity; but the love would have been kept there; out of His heart it could never have come, but for Christ, Christ who brought us it. Now remember what we are considering, for it seems so sweet. He is no mere nobleman, coming to expect to receive from us—that is the truth in Matthew; but here in John it is God, and the Son of the living God, giving. Coming to tell us, not only in words but in actions fully, of the kindness of God, of what God is. He is coming to make us acquainted with God, and to know God is the highest bliss of the creature. Moses could say, "do, do, do;" and Moses was the greatest prophet that ever lived; God spake with him face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend. But all that Moses could do was to inculcate law. But that Holy One came to tell us of the heart of God, of the kindness of God to sinners, and then of the kindness of God to His people; and as we drink it in it is indeed a delicious draught.

The next verse is still more striking, "No one hath seen God at any time." That is, God *as God*. Moses saw God, and the prophets, but they did not see God in unveiled glory and beauty; that was impossible. In the original there is no article, and the word would be better rendered "Deity." "No one hath seen Deity at any time." Moses or Adam might behold a form, but it was God veiled. Now, do you not feel that the next words introduce you to very high ground? "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath told Him out." As if only such a tremendous Being, such a wonderful Being could do it. These words, spoken of Christ, we must ponder. "The only begotten Son." There is the exact and full relationship in which Jesus stands to God—the Only Begotten. I have reminded you before, and therefore have no need to enlarge upon it now, that it is the prime essential that Christ be the Son of God, the outcome of God; and that is what all shades of infidels deny. Whether Mahometans, or all others—fools that they are,—they cut at the very root, as far as they can. If One has not come out of that God, God is unknown. We cannot understand the words, "begotten of the Father." There are many things in this passage,

more than I am going to suggest, beyond our ken at present. "Begotten of the Father," "the Only begotten;" He is called "the First begotten from the dead," that puts us in relationship with Him. But here it is, "the only begotten of the Father." Oh, what a wondrous Being! the very words make us feel we ought to worship. Look at the next words, "which is in the bosom of the Father." Which is in the bosom; the other expression speaks of the supreme height in which He ever was, but this speaks of the perfect intimacy with that Father which He ever had; the two together are very complete. I would remark again upon that word "is." If we look at chapter iii. 13, we read, "no one hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven"—that is, He must come down before He could go up; but it is the last clause I want you particularly to notice, "even the Son of Man which is in heaven." Yet at that very moment He was talking to Nicodemus; so that, that makes it rather difficult. At the very moment that he was sitting in that humble chamber, conversing with Nicodemus, He Himself asserted that He was in heaven. "The Son of Man," says he, "is in heaven." The word used, in the original, here for "is" is rather a special word, and exception has been taken to it, so that some have thought that it might be rendered "was." Now I will give you two other places in Scripture where the very same expression occurs, and where you can see for yourselves that it means "is." Romans ix. 5, "Who *is* over all, God blessed for ever." There it is the same word as in our passage, and it would not do to render it "was," as you can see. Next, in 2 Cor. xi. 31, "Which is blessed for evermore;" again the same word, and not "which *was*." Very well, then, whatever difficulties of interpretation there are, we must keep to the very *ipsissima verba* of Scripture; they are God's own words. At the time this was written, He *is* in the bosom of the Father; and when Christ was speaking to Nicodemus, said He, "the Son of Man which *is* in heaven." I remember hearing one speak, and he said that Christ *left* the bosom of the Father. I do not say he was wrong, but I would not like to say he was right. I feel that these are such very high altitudes of truth that all I would do is to keep close to the very words of Scripture, and not attempt anything more, for they are beyond me. This I

know, if I look at John xvi. 27, 28, I read—"For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth (or out) from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." Now do you observe a change in the word when talking about the world from what He uses when speaking of the Father? When He speaks of the Father, He says, "I came out from Him;" when He speaks of the world, He says, "I leave the world;" but not "I leave the Father." There was a time, we know, and that is glanced at in the next stage of this wondrous descent, when He became sin for us who knew no sin, and when God hid His face from Him. But, upon the cross, it was rather God who left Christ, than Christ leaving the Father; "My God, my God, why hast *Thou* forsaken *Me*?" But there, again, is something full of mystery. Then, enough for me to believe that He was in heaven when talking with Nicodemus; and that His native home, so to speak, is the bosom of the Father. I believe from John xvi., that He came out from God; and I believe, thirdly, that there was a time when He got down so low that He shrieked out, "My God, my God, why hast *Thou* forsaken *Me*?" But anything like an explanation of these very high altitudes of truth I cannot give. God alone can comprehend God. I believe, and I adore, just what is written, and add not a word.

"He hath told Him out." He has fully revealed God. There is not a thought of God, nor a purpose of God, nor an attribute of God, nor aught of God, that the embosomed One has not brought down to us. And the next verses show about the cross; and then we see Him, who had ever been in the bosom of the Father, made the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world. Oh, the mystery of grace, the mystery of divine love! Ah, friends, the salvation of your soul was a costly affair to God. To save you from everlasting ruin, and bring you to everlasting bliss, cost God more than you ever calculate.

Now I have allowed myself a few minutes to look at the contrast. For the Holy Ghost is pleased throughout these four stages to contrast John the Baptist with the Lord. "And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?" There seems

to have been a formal, official, influential deputation from the headquarters of religious society. There was nothing like that to the embosomed One, nothing; and whilst a poor feeble sinner had honour heaped upon him, the embosomed One got nothing. "And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ." As if they were willing to receive him as such, willing to receive any rather than the real. It was grace given to John to make such a noble confession. It is grace when a man humbles himself, and says, "Oh, God, I have been a fool;" and it was grace in John the Baptist to say, "I am not the Christ." And I think God impliedly commends him; do you not notice something peculiar about the expression, "He confessed and denied not, but confessed?" It looks like God praising him. So he had the choice of two—the world's praise, in thinking him to be the Christ; or God's praise, in denying and confessing. And do you think he was a fool in choosing the praise of God before the praise of mortal men? Oh, the loudest praise ever lavished upon any one by mortal men is as nothing to be compared with the smile of Jesus, and the praise of God. "And they asked him, What, then? art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us, What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am a voice." *Not the voice.* And the word "am" the Holy Ghost omits. He presses it so much about Christ, but leaves it out about John. "I—a voice." Now, remember, the Holy Ghost called Jesus the Word, and now He says of John the Baptist, "I—a voice." Thus do we get a distinction between the embosomed One and John the Baptist. We think with words; it is impossible to think without them. God had thoughts, we may be sure, and Christ was there. Christ is the outcome, the word spoken. So, too, is He called Wisdom, the word unuttered; the Word is the wisdom come out. Christ is the Word, and was there in the bosom before He came out from God, in the beginning. But a *voice* has no existence until it has come out; a word has. I think first with words, and then, when I have thought, I may tell it, in my own time, or no. Christ is the Word; before He came out of God He was in God, was with God, He was God. John was a voice; "I—a voice." I love John the Baptist, for in comparison with Christ he

put himself in the right place. Would to God that His servants did so now. People love to magnify men, to cling round what they can see; oh, to put the Lord in His place, and "worship thou Him."—*Notes of an address by W. Lincoln, communicated by J. S. H.*

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

CHAPTER VIII.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY J. R. C.

"**K**NOWLEDGE puffeth up, but love edifieth." Love is here placed in opposition to knowledge. The tendency of knowledge divorced from the fear of the Lord is to puff up, but what does love do? Love forgets self, and considers how it can bless another. God is love, and is therefore the universal blessing. He is the servant of all.—He openeth His hand and satisfieth the wants of every living creature. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth His rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. v. 45). "God is love," and even when you read of God's terrible judgments, do not let Satan insinuate into your heart that He is anything else than love. Love will not wink at iniquity; love will not tolerate sin; and our worst enemy is sin.

There is a danger in human love; it seeks rather to enjoy than to bless its object. That is the history of every spoiled child. The Lord Jesus loved His disciples, and when they needed it He rebuked them sharply, but never drove them from Him. You find Him rebuking them, and the next moment the rebuked one may come if he will and lay his head on His bosom.

True love is bound up with knowledge; and love cannot act for God without the knowledge of His will. Love will seek in God's presence to know how and in what way to deal with sin, and the sinning one, that so dealing with them according to knowledge, they may be gained for God. There is no necessity for love and knowledge being antagonistic to each other. "Love BUILDETH up." What is accomplished through mere knowledge, in the work and service of God, cannot stand, but must

fall to the ground to the sad disgrace of all who have had anything to do with it ; but what is built up through loving, wise dealing stands firm.

(Verse 2), "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

It is a remarkable thing that in acquiring fresh knowledge of God and His truth, the more we learn the less we seem to know. The great Sir Isaac Newton said that he seemed like a little child gathering pebbles on the sea shore, whilst the great ocean lay before him unexplored. Many show their ignorance by thinking that they know everything, but we know nothing as we ought. If we are learning in the presence of God, and by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, we shall feel that we are just babes at the best. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3). We may go on knowing God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, for years, for a life-time, nay more, for a thousand years, and still there will be more to know ; more of His wisdom, power, and love, and the treasures of His heart still to come out. That will be our occupation in eternity.

The more we know of God, the more do we love Him ; but it is not so with man. The more we know of man in his natural unregenerate state, the less we think of him. How many disappointments do we experience with people. We find by-and-by that they are not what we thought they were, nor even what they pretended to be. But the more we know God, the more we love, venerate, and worship Him.

(Verse 3), "If any man love God, the same is known of Him." In connection with that verse, read Galatians iv. 8, 9, "Howbeit, then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods, but now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God." What you know of God is true and eternal knowledge. God, as it were, has a special knowledge of the one who has trusted on His Son—"He knoweth them that trust in Him" (Nahum i. 7). God knoweth all our trials and troubles, and as we go about our business day by day He can sustain and strengthen us, and cause us to find our joy and blessing only in Himself. In Him alone is perfect rest, peace, and joy. God

knows us through and through. "He looketh upon men," and he knows every thought of our hearts ; every burden, every care, and can most assuredly meet our every need at all times. When did we begin to love God ? "We love Him because He first loved us." Whenever we saw that God gave His spotless Son to bear our sins, and our judgment, then love sprang up spontaneously in our hearts that we could not force before. What does He say of any one who loves Him ? God knows him. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye." Don't give him the cold shoulder because he knows less than you. Does He love God ? Then God knows him. "If any man love God, the same is known of Him." A man may have a great deal of knowledge, and yet he may not know God—"Ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth."

(Ver. 4-7,) "As concerning, therefore, the eating of these things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. . . . One God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him ; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him. Howbeit there is not in every one that knowledge, for some with conscience of the idol until this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol ; and their conscience being weak is defiled." Let us suppose that there is a young convert, who has been turned from worshipping idols, and he has been invited to a feast. He thinks that an idol *is something* ; and, consequently, if he were to eat of that which had been offered in sacrifice to an idol he would have a defiled conscience. At the same table there is another Christian who knows that an idol is "*nothing in the world.*" He eats, and gives God thanks. The other says within himself—"So and so eats it. It looks nice ; I will take some." And he, not having the knowledge the other has, eats with a bad conscience. Thus his communion with God is marred. "To him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." That one was emboldened to eat things offered unto idols, and thereby his conscience was defiled. God says—"Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." I am to look not only on my own things, but also on the things of others. I may be sitting at the same table along with one who, before he was converted, was a great

drunkard, and to him drink is a snare. If there is wine on the table, and I take it in his presence; emboldened by my taking it, he takes it too, and it is a snare to him, for he is brought under its power.

“Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification” (Rom. xv. 2). “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak” (Rom. xiv. 19, 21).

(Verse 11), “Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?” How can we reconcile that verse with the one in John x. 28? “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish?” This word “perish” has different significations in Scripture. For example, Luke xi. 51 — “From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple.” The word “perish” may be applied either to temporal or eternal death; or to many other of the troubles and afflictions that come upon men. The real teaching of the verse is that through want of consideration of your brother you bring him under the chastening of the Lord;—it may be, to “the destruction of the flesh,” see 1 Cor. v. 5. There is one who has sinned, and he is delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

(Verse 12), “When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.” The word wound here means “to smite.” What a terrible sin it is to wound the weak conscience of a child of God—one for whom the blessed Master suffered Himself to be nailed to the cross. If you or I cause another to stumble by our eating or drinking, or by our extravagance in dress, or in many other things, then let us remember that “every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.”

“No one liveth to himself.” Every action has an influence on others, emboldening to evil or strengthening to resist. For the results of our actions God holds us responsible. If my ways are such as to stumble a weak one, the sin of that one is chargeable to me.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

THE NEW-BORN SOUL.

“Being born again” (1 Peter i. 23).

MOST eventful in the history of any man is the moment when he knows for a certainty, that he is born of God. That the new birth is an absolute necessity, if Heaven is to be entered, is one of the plainest things taught in Scripture.

True, there are men to be found bold enough to deny this: but that any should, who profess belief in the Word of God, baffles all explanation. Memorable indeed is the utterance of the blessed Lord, “*Ye must be born again,*” and we rejoice as we remember that there are thousands to-day to whom it does not apply—*they have been!* Children of God, resting upon His word, which “cannot be broken,” indwelt by His Holy Spirit, they have been taught to cry—“*Abba, Father.*” As sinners, it was their part to believe “that Jesus is the Christ,” and this belief,—this unfeigned, living faith wrought the mighty change (1 John v. 1).

Delivered from eternal doom and unutterable anguish, in possession of peace and joy, they can now contemplate unspeakable glory.

It is their portion by heavenly birth, and nothing can possibly rob them of it. Already they have the earnest of their inheritance, and very soon they shall possess and enjoy its fulness.

But, is it not profitable to inquire, if every child of God will have an abundant entrance into the Everlasting Kingdom? We think not. Sometimes we have stood beside an harbour, and watched the entry of vessels; some come in with every sail set and a fair breeze;—others are towed in. So it is with Christians.

“Every tempest driven bark
With Jesus for its guide,
Shall soon be moored in harbour, calm
In glory to abide.”

But some, pursuing the ways of their God diligently, shall have an abundant entrance, while others—Lot-like—(because of imputed righteousness) shall be literally dragged out of a scene ripened for judgment, “*saved yet so as by fire*” (1 Cor. iii. 15).

How many there are converted, yet indifferent to "the ways which be in Christ."

"In Christ," by virtue of relationship, but apparently indifferent to their Redeemer's wishes, so far as obedience is concerned.

This is lamentable indeed, and betrays a spirit of coldness and deepest ingratitude.

Conversion is a great reality, but it is only letter "A" in God's alphabet.

Certainly it is crossing the threshold, but when saved, a man has the whole range of the will of God to explore and delight in.

God desires His children to grow—to develop into robust and useful Christians—to become positive blessings to all by whom they are surrounded, while they shine for His glory.

Hence we read of the cravings of the Divine nature.

Are we born of God? then we should "desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby" (1 Peter ii. 2).

The new life to be vigorous, must be nourished, and for the "babe in Christ" God has provided milk.

Does one newly born of God covet to grow? then, "if any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine." Let him make it his business to obey the elementary principles of Scripture, and to such an one the Father will reveal more and more of the hidden treasures of His will.

Has baptism been neglected, and fellowship of gathered Saints unsought? Then, how can there be aught but weakness? We know these are but beginnings in the school of God, but attention to such matters is the way to spiritual growth and power. We counsel young believers diligently to search their Bibles, to seek after the nourishment "the God of all grace" has provided for them there. Let them treasure in their hearts every morsel of God-breathed language, and never let it be lightly esteemed. It is their's to learn that they may obey.

Some little time since, the leader of a huge religious organization declared his intention to prepare a Bible for the use of his converts, in which he meant to omit "the genealogies, and things of no pressing moment!"

What next, we wonder? A mutilated Bible!

Never! No toleration of such impiety and presumption can be endured. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable." To omit certain

things from God's book may be a convenient course in order to ensure the success of one's own will, but the idea is arrogant in the extreme, and must be unflinchingly resisted by all who honour and revere the will of the Lord. The people returned from Babylon were but a remnant, yet they needed *the whole law*, and Jehovah bade them remember it. (Mal. iv. 4.) Oh, that the word of the Lord were more precious to our souls! The land is flooded with Bibles, but how little real earnestness of desire to become familiar with the holy precepts therein. Hence the puny christianity of our time.

The Apostle John wrote to "fathers," "young men," and "little children," and in this division of the family of God upon earth, we see Divine progress. Instead of this, however, baby incapacity is prevalent. Like some of the Hebrew Christians, many saints are dull of hearing (Heb. v. 11), and when "for the time they ought to be teachers—they have become such as have need of milk" (Heb. v. 12). The milk was their proper food at conversion, but considering the time since they knew the Lord, a very different state of things should exist. Satan has succeeded in keeping them weaklings, and as a natural result, very little aggressive work is done for God.

"Every one that useth milk is *unskilful* in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe" (Heb. v. 13). We shall see presently one of the great causes of this infantile condition; but let us examine for a moment the expression—"unskilful in the word of righteousness."

About three years ago, we remember being in a certain town holding meetings nightly in a tent.

One evening a lady professed conversion, and rejoiced in the definite knowledge of sins forgiven.

Upon reaching home she immediately told her brother (an avowed minister of a certain sect) that Christ had given her eternal life and that she could not perish. To her surprise, he remarked, "That's all nonsense, you may fall away and be lost after all. If you go back to that tent I'll give you a puzzler for the preacher, and you will soon see that all this certainty is unwarranted. Ask him to explain to you Heb. vi. 4 to 8, and tell him I told you to enquire."

The next night she came again, and while putting her query, told us the position her brother occupied. We helped her to see the meaning of the Scripture

referred to (which does not affect the actual possession of life at all) and then remarked, "You might say to your brother, that if he were not keeping himself in the condition of Heb. v. 12, 13, he would find no difficulty in Heb. vi. 4, &c."

The fault is not in Scripture, but in our own misconception of the mind of God.

Satan hinders the work of God very effectively if he can keep believers in this baby state. They are of necessity unskilful in the word of righteousness. (Compare 2 Tim. ii. 15).

In Eph. vi. 17, we read of the word of God, or more correctly, a "word," or "saying" of God, and this is called "The Sword of the Spirit." In the Lord's temptation we get a beautiful illustration of this principle.

However varied the suggestions of the evil one, being "skilful in the word of righteousness" He could use "the Sword of the Spirit" with effect and victory. It is ours to do the same, but so long as we merely take milk, and remain in a state of infantile incapacity we shall be unable so to act.

A word now as to the cause, or one of the causes of this weakness among Christians.

Read 1 Cor. iii. 1-5. It is the sectarianism which exists! And in this connection it is instructive to remember the order of this epistle.

Among other things a fornicator was in their midst unjudged. They were going to law one with another; eating food sacrificed to idols regardless of the consciences of weak saints, &c., &c.

But what is the first thing exposed? The germ of ungodly division which was terribly heinous in the Lord's sight. Therein was Satan's masterpiece of evil! And let it not be forgotten that we need not belong to the "systems," as they are called, to be sectarian.

We may, alas! boast in deliverance from these, and yet nurse the spirit of sectarianism in our very bosoms. What of the little party sections among Christian's professedly gathered to the Lord?

Our bodies may never associate with avowed sects, but our spirits may be permeated with this evil germ of division, in spite of our separation from denominations.

May God in His grace anoint our eyes with divine eye-salve, that we may see our own defects and be humbled in His sight.

Of what value is the form of right things if spiritual power be lacking?

The remnant got back to the right position, henceforth they abhorred idolatry, and resumed Divine ordinances, but in the days of Malachi formalism and unreality were rampant.

May we learn the lesson, and while a Godly position is not to be undervalued, let us see to it that our condition corresponds thereto.

It is interesting to contrast the 3rd of 1 Cor. with the 4th of Eph.

If gifts are wrongly received and a party spirit fostered, there must be weakness. This is the lesson of the first-named Scripture. In the latter, on the other hand, we find one of the objects of gifts is "That we henceforth be no longer children" or babes (same word as 1 Cor. iii.) True ministry strengthens believers, and after all, this is the only true test of ministry.

We fear some dear brethren are like so many crutches. If God took them to Heaven or removed them to some other place on earth, the saints they have been in the habit of helping would not be able to stand alone. Herein is a great error, and such a ministry, however much appreciated by hearers, is not in the power of God.

Poor Mephibosheth was lame on both feet, but pray don't blame him—it was the fault of his nurse! There are many dear saints who stumble at everything that comes along, and very often it is the guides who are to be blamed.

Timothy was exhorted to be "a saviour" to those who heard him, but few comparatively regard their ministry in that light to-day.

How shall the saints be preserved from being tossed hither and thither by the increasing blasts of evil doctrine?

Help them to grow, see that the roots of their Spiritual life take a firm grip far beneath the surface, and all will be well.

In conclusion, let us echo over again the Apostle's needful words—"Quit yourselves *like men, be strong.*"

F. A. B.

The spirit of obedience is the great secret of godliness. The spring of all evil from the beginning has been independence of will.

THE ASSEMBLY AND THE EVANGELIST.

RECOLLECTIONS OF AN ADDRESS.



WO important questions have come before us. Firstly, "with whom ought we to have fellowship in the Gospel labour?" Secondly, "how are we to get the needed men to addict themselves to the work?" To both questions the scriptural answer is clear and decisive.

For a reply to the first question let us look at 3 John 8 where a certain one is commended for being faithful "to the brethren even strangers." I have no doubt that "brethren *even* strangers" is the true rendering of the Greek text here. From the first days of the Church's history there have always been certain brethren who have been constrained by the love of Christ to become in a very special sense strangers on earth as they go from place to place preaching the Gospel. They are not hirelings; they labour not for money but for souls. Freely they have received, freely they give.

But the Lord "loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment" (Deut. x. 18). The channel through which He chooses to do this is the assembly and the individuals who compose it. The "brethren, even strangers" have no certain dwelling-place, therefore they are commended to the hospitality of the saints (Heb. xiii. 2). Their pilgrim life, while it gives them great liberty in the Gospel field, hinders them from working with their hands for their own support, therefore gifts given to them by God's people are accepted "as an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God." (Phil. iv. 18.)

One special work is put upon them by God and we do well to note it—"for the Name's sake they go forth taking nothing from the Gentiles" (3 John v. 7). This is a scripture that does not require to be explained so much as to be obeyed. Self-will may give largely for the support of the paid agents of a sect and then boast of its broad and liberal sympathies, but the word of God will not stretch itself to suit modern lawlessness veiled under the name of "Christian charity." There is no scripture for receiving money from the unconverted for the

support of the Gospel. Those who are doing the world's religious work in the world's religious way will always find plenty of supporters. Be it ours to see that our fellowship is exercised in accordance with the revealed will of God.

Turn now to Matt. ix. 37-38. Here is the answer to the second question. In the day's of the Master's life on earth there were crowds of Pharisees and Sadducees—crowds of scribes and lawyers—but (as another has said) "He looked at His little band and added the *labourers are few.*" It is the same to-day and, thank God the resource of the faithful in view of the scarcity is the same also.

What then is that resource? Not human wisdom, for we may educate a man ever so much but we cannot confer upon him the gift of God. Not human will, for we may elect a man unanimously, but we cannot give him the call of God. What then? "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest." The responsibility of the assembly is not to qualify and elect labourers, but to wait on the Lord in prayer and then to recognise those whom in answer to prayer the Lord has qualified and chosen.

In Acts xiii 1 we see that while the leaders of the church ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit chose the right men and pointed out their work. The church had neither the choice of the men nor the direction of where they were to go.

It is most important to remember that gifts and calling alike come from the great Head of the Church and not from the church herself. It is also important to remember that the evangelist is not the servant of the church. He can and does serve the church, even as the servant of another man may at his master's bidding render me service from time to time without thereby becoming my servant. Chosen by Christ at the first, the evangelist remains till the end the bond-servant of the One who has chosen him—and of no other.

On the other hand the leaders of the assembly by the command of the Holy Spirit set apart the men whom He had pointed out. Thus, while in ver. 4, it is said that they were "sent forth by the Holy Spirit!" in ver. 3 it is said that "they (the brethren) sent them away." Again, when they returned from their missionary journey among the Gentiles, Paul and Barnabas gathered the church together and rehearsed

all that God had done (Acts xiv. 26-28). Those who remained at home and those who went forth had a common interest in the work and they had a common joy in its success. The Lord gave a double blessing as He always does when there is true fellowship in subjection to His word.

This scene reminds us of another in the 1st chapter of the book of Judges. The children of Israel asked the Lord saying "who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first?" (ver. 1.) Human wisdom might have counted the relative strength of the tribes and chosen the strongest, but the children of Israel enquired of the Lord and the Lord did not disappoint them. "The Lord said Judah shall go up, behold I have delivered the land into his hand" (ver. 2).

What follows is equally interesting. Armed with the promise of victory, and the confidence of his brethren Judah chooses his fellow soldier for the day of battle. "Judah said unto Simeon his brother 'Come up with me'." The fellowship of labour is the narrowest yoke in which two can be bound and the one under which it is most difficult to walk evenly together. Therefore, let the labourer choose his yoke-fellow on his own responsibility before God.

In the 1st chap. of Judges as in the 13th chap. of Acts we see that great victory was the result of seeking the Lord after the due order. Nothing but defeat and disgrace could have resulted from any interference with that order. Brethren let us humble ourselves to walk with God and He will even yet do great things for us.

Happy the servant of God, who in addition to divine call and personal fitness, has the confidence of the assemblies of God by whom he is known. Happy the assembly that waits on the Lord continually, in order that He may thrust forth labourers, and in order that it may have fellowship in the labours and the joys of those who for the Lord's name sake and taking nothing from the Gentiles have gone forth.

We will not at this time enlarge upon the danger of the evangelist acting in independence and despising the counsel of the gathered saints. We do not judge that here and now this is our pressing danger.

What we would rather say is this. If the assemblies do not wait on the Lord to thrust forth labourers, and if they care nothing for those who have been already by Him thrust out, what wonder is it that He permits the scarcity to continue even though

the fields lie white unto the harvest? What wonder is it that even true servants are discouraged and return, like the Levites, to their fields? What wonder that there is never enough of grace and gift to supply the need of the assemblies, not to speak of aggressive work among the Gentiles? And finally, what wonder if even of your own selves men arise and draw away disciples after them, or remain and become lords over God's heritage? For those who have despised the true will ever, in blindness which the Lord in judgment permits, receive and submit to the false.

A. P. M.

Vevey, Switzerland, 21st Sept., 1884.

A LETTER.

P. O. BOX 18, ORILLIA, CANADA,
October, 1884.

DEAR BROTHER IN CHRIST,—As has been my custom, I send you a line or two about Gospel work carried on during the summer months "under canvas" in Canada and the United States.

DETROIT.—Thomas D. W. Muir, assisted by John Grimason, conducted Gospel meetings during the season in this important and rapidly-increasing capital of the State of Michigan. In the first place where tent was pitched the attendance was small. Another piece of ground in a better position was subsequently secured, and the audiences were larger, and the interest greater. Some professed conversion, and the Christians were refreshed and strengthened. There are many open doors for the Gospel in the State of Michigan. Brother Muir has been toiling on in it for several years, and is asking the Lord to send forth fresh labourers to "possess the land" for Him.

PHILADELPHIA.—Philadelphia, the capital of the State of Pennsylvania, with a population of 800,000 souls, is the second largest city in the United States. James Campbell and William Matthews preached for nearly three months in a tent. The meetings are now transferred to and continued in a hall for the winter. I have not been able to obtain any definite information as to the results of our brethren's labours.

GENEVA.—A tent was pitched early in June in Geneva, Illinois, and was worked by J. M. Carnie and R. Telfer. Owing to sickness and death in the

family of the former, the work was interrupted, and a scarcity of labourers necessitated leaving the place long before the tent season closed. The meetings were well attended from the beginning, and there was some blessing. The brethren expect to secure a hall for the winter.

BATAVIA.—A tent was kept up in this small Illinois town for eleven weeks. James Reid and A. M. Kellar were the preachers. Previously it had been erected in the town of St. Charles, where for a month or thereabouts the labourers tried in vain to awaken an interest in the things of God. The word obtained a good hearing from the commencement in Batavia. Children's services held daily were well attended. Through the little ones, some of whom professed conversion to God, the ears of not a few older people were doubtless obtained. Now that the tent season is gone, Gospel meetings have been transferred to a hall, and there seems little abatement of interest. A few are already gathered out to the worthy Name.

CHICAGO.—A tent was pitched in the south side of the city, and meetings were conducted by Mr. Ross; and Brother Ross having been taken ill, John M. Carnie succeeded him, and the work was continued until the cold weather set in. The meetings are now transferred to a hall.

CANADA.

DESORONTO.—Desoronto is a small town, 18 miles east of Belleville. During the winter months, large meetings had been held in a public hall, conducted by A. S. Rolph, assisted by a young brother. Quite a few made a profession of conversion, amongst whom were about a dozen Mohawk Indians. A little assembly of over 20 had been gathered out to the Lord, and as the summer season came round the Gospel was proclaimed in a tent for some time. Some professed conversion, and the work has been followed up by A. Rolph and his brother Raymond, who for a number of years was Secretary to the Y.M.C.A. at Ottawa.

BEAVERTON.—W. P. Douglas and W. J. M'Clure were the preachers. Previously, our brethren had held meetings in the town, and had seen some fruit. A few now seek to remember the Lord on the first day of the week in the breaking of bread, and in following on in His paths. After the tent had been

at Beaverton it was considered best to remove it to the village of Kirkfield. There was much determined and persistent opposition on the part of ecclesiastical dignitaries to the truth. Pamphlets, tracts, books, and lying reports about the labourers, were scattered far and near. Every device that could be employed to frighten the people from the tent was tried. Notwithstanding the false statements made that they neither believed in prayer, good works, repentance, or *ministers' salaries*, the people attended, and the brethren were encouraged by seeing the hand of the Lord stretched out to save. The meetings are now continued in a hall, and the good work goes on in that neighbourhood.

JARRATT'S CORNERS.—After trying another place for a short time, James N. Case and James Law removed a tent to Jarratt's Corners, a village eight miles west of Orillia. The meetings were well attended. On Lord's-days the tent was crowded. People came from long distances. Unsaved professors of religion were led to see that they were lost, and "deceived" souls who had been "converted," but *not by God*, were brought to renounce their profession, and take the place of hell-deserving sinners. One who had been a churchwarden in the Episcopal Church for 21 years professed to obtain peace with God. Satan raged most violently, and some of the "lewd fellows of the baser sort" did their best to disturb the meetings. They attacked the one who had been the churchwarden, and after stoning him until he was unconscious he was cruelly kicked. His life for some time was in danger, but he is now recovering. A cottage has been turned into a hall, and fitted up for a meeting-place.

TORONTO.—A tent was pitched in a good locality here about middle of June. John Davidson, James Case, and myself, with local brethren, were the preachers. The attendance on Lord's-day evenings was large, but on week evenings comparatively small. The Lord gave some blessing with the word. A few were baptized, and received into fellowship with Christians gathered to the name of the Lord in the Temperance Hall, Broch Street.

You will see that there have been more Gospel tents used during the past season than in former years. Last year there was only *one* in Canada; this season there were four.

MANY MORE LABOURERS ARE NEEDED.

The fields are truly white to harvest, and the "labourers" are very, very few. Difficulties innumerable beset the path of every true servant of the Lord. This is especially so in Canada, where sectarianism is so strong. The religious leaders have an intense horror, and a strong perception of anything approaching to what they call "Plymouthism." A servant of the Lord will not be long in the company of such people without being asked, "what church do you belong to?" If one is honest enough to avow that he has been separated from the sects of men, and is now in fellowship with Christians gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus, there is not much likelihood of him being "invited" to labour in connection with any of the sects, "societies," "associations," or "unions."

An evangelist some time since arrived in Canada, professedly in fellowship with an assembly in the west of England, and instead of seeking to act out the truth of God amidst difficulties and in face of opposition, he became an agent of the Evangelisation Society. He does not break bread with any of the assemblies, nor does he seek to "teach" the young converts "to observe all things whatsoever" the Lord has commanded. Several brethren who are in fellowship, *when in England*, with Christians gathered to the name of the Lord, when visiting Canada and the States have passed the little companies of believers, and instead of breaking bread with such have preached in some ecclesiastical edifice. Through such unscriptural and inconsistent conduct young believers have been stumbled, and some of them have been so grieved by such "looseness" as to go beyond Scripture, and join brethren in the Darby fellowship. Ask the Lord, dear brother, to send REAL LABOURERS (not merely "preachers"), men of faith and prayer, who are gifted of God to teach, exhort, comfort, and encourage saints; and earnest, hearty Gospellers who are prepared to endure hardness, and go into the "regions beyond" where there are no brethren to "invite" them, and who will teach those who may be brought to Christ through their instrumentality whatever God has taught them. There is no mid position in Canada. Persons professing to be Christians must either be in fellowship with the sects, or in fellowship with those whom the Lord has brought outside. Men of the *jelly fish* species are not needed; but

those who would "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," and go on amidst scorn, reproach, and misrepresentation, willing to preach to small audiences or great crowds, and determined to buy the truth and sell it not, are much required in this religious and ungodly Continent.

That the Lord would thrust forth such labourers is the earnest desire and prayer of many.


Yours by grace,

ALEXANDER MARSHALL.

P.S.—The annual Canadian Conference will (*D.V.*) be held in the city of Hamilton about the middle of January, 1885.

"THE FLESH OR FIRSTBORN."

DEATH AND BURIAL.

N the morrow after the Passover, the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians, for the Egyptians *buried all their firstborn* which the Lord had smitten amongst them" (Num. xxxiii. 3-4). Death is a solemn thing, and we do well to stand before it with humbled hearts. There should be no room left for giddy thoughts, as we gaze upon the cold, white face of the one whom death has claimed. The separation of soul and body is that which is so much dreaded by the natural man; this is what he calls *death*, and so it is, but it is not death in its *first and deepest sense*, it is merely the result or outcome of a condition into which the children of Adam are introduced by natural birth—a *fallen and dead condition*.

The question arises, What is death? "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely *die*" (Gen. ii. 17). A day came when the eye saw, the heart coveted, and the hand was reached forth in disobedience to God. And with what result? Precisely what God had said. Death entered the *moment* the forbidden fruit was tasted. Adam and Eve were *dead* when they hid themselves amongst the trees of the garden; they were *dead* when they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. Death manifested itself in their becoming afraid of God. The sacred record informs us that, "all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died" (Gen. v. 5). The natural physical life of

our first parents was not taken away on the day in which they sinned.

Death, then, in its first and deepest sense, is *alienation from God, the severance of intercourse or communion with Him*. The assertion of man's independence of his Maker was the hand which drew the fatal bolt, and the creature's passage *from life unto death* was announced to them in their eyes being opened. Innocence was exchanged for "the knowledge of good and evil;" life was gone, it was lost, and lost not to those only who were guilty in the first instance, but to the whole race, for "*in Adam all have died.*" This is the condition described in Ephesians ii. : "And you hath He quickened who were *dead in trespasses and sins.*" And again, in Colossians ii. 13 : "And you being *dead* in your sins . . . hath He quickened together with Him." This is the condition in which every child of Adam enters the world, *born dead*, there are no exceptions ; and none have life save those who are "born again" —"who are in Christ Jesus." But to the carnal mind there is nothing about this condition to cause alarm. Man, although *dead*, can make himself wonderfully happy, happy without God. He is most successful in the attainment of enjoyment when he most effectually shuts God out of his thoughts. Look into that ball-room ; hear those quickening strains of music ; see those active excited forms as they dance to the sound of the violin, and tell me, can these be *dead* ? This is what the world calls "*life*," and it is this they eagerly seek for ; but to view the whole scene by the light of Scripture, we see one word which describes their true condition, and that word is "*dead* !"

We need not stay here to remind the reader that the dead sinner is not always satisfied with the frames and feelings afforded by the ball-room and other such enjoyments. Spiritual death may, yea does, reign in the *most religious* atmosphere, and Satan cares but little whether the Christless, lifeless soul be shrouded in religious sentimentality, or decked for the most profane and unhallowed enjoyment, provided he remains "dead in sins." "Without God and without hope" are the solemn words written over those who are "alienated from the *life* of God through the ignorance that is in them" (Eph. iv. 18 ; ii. 12).

And let us bear in mind that moral and social corruption are the result of *spiritual death*. Every

effort of man to reform and improve his fellows —whether that effort be put forth by the unconverted moralist, or the uninstructed child of God—will, and must, in the end prove powerless to impart life. The Gospel message purports to create anew, and not to improve ; the Spirit taught Christian never aims at the *reformation* of his fellowman, but seeks his *regeneration*. True, the rapid decay of a corpse may be checked by the spices of the embalmer, but never yet has life been restored by these means, however scientifically applied. We are not amongst those who would willfully obstruct honest effort to rescue the drunkard from his debauchery, or the immoral from the slavery of their lusts ; but let it not be forgotten that, however complete may be the recovery of the fallen one, yet, without Christ, he is but an embalmed corpse—"dead in sins."

But there is a second aspect of death, and I would ask the careful attention of the young convert at this point. We have sought to show from Scripture what *spiritual death*, or death in its first and deepest sense, *is*.

Now we come to speak of *judicial death*, or death in its punitive character. It is with this second aspect of death that *burial* connects itself. We who are saved can sing—

"Once I was dead *in sin*, and hope within me died ;
But now I'm dead *to sin*, with Jesus crucified !"

The words *in* and *to* are important. Unsaved sinners are dead *in* sins, but saved ones are dead *to* sin. In Deut. xxi. 22, 23, we read : "And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him upon a *tree*, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise *bury* him that day (for he that is hanged is accursed of God), that thy land be not defiled which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This passage is full of instruction, and gives at once the subject both of *death and burial* (I mean death in its judicial sense). The position of the man who had committed a sin worthy of death, *prior* to his execution, illustrates the position of the unsaved and already condemned sinner. The law had been broken, his life was forfeited, he was therefore in a typical sense "dead in sins," but the law had not yet operated against him ; he was not yet "*dead to sin*," and therefore, not a subject for *burial*. Justice must be satisfied ; that man must first know what it is to be

“accursed of God,” by dying the death on the tree. Let us ponder this point: spiritual experience must necessarily be greatly influenced by a right apprehension of it.

To enforce it, I would ask the question, are you the person who has committed the sin worthy of death? You freely answer, “Yes, I am.” Have you then acknowledged the justice of the sentence passed upon you; and have you been hanged upon a tree? A moment’s reflection, and the believer is enabled to exclaim, “Christ hath redeemed me from the curse of the law, *being made a curse* for me; for it is written cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree” (Gal. iii. 13). But if He has been made a curse for you, then you must go on with the apostle to argue “I was crucified *with Christ*” (Gal. ii. 20). You are become “dead to sin,” and also “dead to the law by the body of Christ” (Rom. vi. 2; vii. 4). Here it is that we meet with burial, and as the ground has been cleared in some degree of the difficulties arising out of not seeing the difference between *spiritual* death and *judicial*, we can, with some freedom, proceed with that part of our subject. Life and death are opposite conditions, they cannot be made to commingle. Natural life calls loudly for a place to bury the naturally dead (see Genesis xxiii. 4); the corrupting corpse gives offence to living beings, hence the need for *burial*. Spiritual life cannot find a home amongst those who are spiritually dead, there is nothing in common between them. God is the *living* God, and He would have His redeemed and *living* people undefiled by the dead. Contact with death in any form brought uncleanness, and consequently separation from the camp of Israel, where Jehovah’s sanctuary was (Numbers v. 2). “Whosoever toucheth one that is slain with the sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be *unclean* seven days” (Numbers xix. 16). *Natural* death is doubtless the result of sin, but, as we desire to keep before us the two great cardinal views of death already presented, we will only think of the natural as illustrative of the others. *Judicial* death and burial are facts accomplished in the case of the believer before *natural* death lays its hands upon him. Indeed; it fills one with joy to notice that *natural* death has *no claim* upon the saint of God whatever; if such were the case, how could it be possible for living believers to be “caught up to meet the Lord

in the air,” *without having died naturally at all?* and this will be the case (see 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52; 1 Thess. iv. 15, 16, 17).

It is in no sense a *necessity* that the believer should fall asleep, if he does, it is simply because the will of God is so. It is not to satisfy an outstanding claim. Jesus met and satisfied *every claim*, so that there is a way into glory other than through the grave. Those who “have fallen asleep in Jesus” are not conquered by death, but wait for the archangel voice of Jesus to call them from the grave.

Judicial death and burial lie beyond natural death for the unsaved. While still in the body on earth they refused to hang upon the cross of Calvary, and to recognise *that* judgment as theirs; but when natural death has passed them on into eternity, no way of escape shall be found, nor can deliverance be possible. *Eternal life*—the gift of God through Jesus Christ the Lord—was not received *in time*, and now eternal separation from God is their inevitable portion; nor can they hope to arrive at that point when the expression “dead to sin” could apply to them. This blessed position is peculiar to those who by grace have claimed identification with “the body of Christ” on the cross, and who enter that claim *in time and on earth*. But “time” is “no more,” and Calvary’s wondrous work avails not.

Retributive judgment and punishment will be meted out in *equitable* proportion to the “deeds done,” “every man according to their works.” If God speaks out to Israel His abhorrence of death, if He demands the prompt and immediate burial of the judged and accursed criminal, surely this is but a shadow of that dread and awful scene—a scene which shall be enacted in the presence and with the consent of a people infinitely more holy than Israel after the flesh, when “death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them” (Rev. xx. 13), and when the lake of fire shall receive into its burning shroud *all* who were not found written in the book of life. Alas! for that great funeral day! O, sinner, will you be immersed in the “everlasting burnings?” Just as we would dread to lie down beside a corpse—as Israel of old dreaded contact with a bone or a grave—so the *living* God, the holy, the righteous God, *must* by virtue of His essential purity, abhor death, and deal with “the dead, small and great,” by burying them out of His sight for ever. He *must*

sweep from before His face every shred of sin and death.

That new heaven and earth must sparkle with *life*! No corpse, nor bone, nor grave will ever defile its holy habitants. The pure river of water of *life*, clear as crystal, shall proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb; the tree of *life* shall eternally yield her fruit there, and there shall he no more curse (Rev. xxii). What consummate bliss! But whilst eternal ages roll along, unfolding to us more and more of the glories of God and His Christ—whilst louder and sweeter our allelujah songs ascend—O, let us not forget it now, the “first-born” will still have a *conscious* existence dying the “second death,” sin branded upon them, with hearts as full of enmity to God as ever, and buried in a grave which shall never be emptied by resurrection, “the gulph shall be fixed,” and the smoke of their torment must ascend for ever and ever.”

But if God was exacting as to the burial of the dead, He was equally careful that the living should forget them, “Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you, I am the Lord” (Lev. xix. 28). In the brightness of His glory, no memories of the past will be allowed to moisten our eyes with tears, for “God shall wipe all tears away”—no “cuttings” nor “mark” will ever catch our Christ-filled vision to harrow our feelings, or cause us pain. *His will shall be ours.*

The righteous God doeth righteously, and His righteous people shall say “Amen.” Fellow-saved one, as we take our last and parting look at “Egypt’s first-born” (unregenerate man), as we turn and walk away from the buried and forgotten ones, as their wail of woe dies upon our ears, may the prayer rise from the depth of our hearts—“God help us to be faithful while yet we may be!”

It is the delight and joy of the truly spiritual soul to say “Amen” to all that God has done, and here we assert that the loudest and most practical “amen” that can be uttered by the child of God in approval of God’s righteous judgment, is that which is heard when he is “buried with Christ in baptism.”

W. J. E.

What we want is the full, blessed, and clear apprehension that we stand in grace.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

LUKE x. 25—37.



WHAT a picture does the parable of the good Samaritan present of the gracious way of the Son of God with poor sinners! His love in the gospel is perfect.

It is perfect, as the expression of *the divine love*; but in its varied multifiform beauty and perfection, we may treat and regard it as the pattern or model of love of one’s neighbour also. The good Samaritan loved the poor way-laid man *as himself*. He spent on him his sympathies and his property—the treasures of his heart and of his hand. He rendered him all kinds of service. As it were, he changed places or conditions with him. And all this was an unwearied unrepentant love; for he provided for the future, as well as for the present. He did as much for him, one may say, as he could have done for himself.

He enlisted others to bestow their care and their substance on him, but all this, not at their cost, but at his.

What was wanting, beloved? Nothing. The necessity, deep as it was, had it been his own could not have been more thoroughly met and answered.

The parable, however, suggests another thought.

There are two ways in which I, a poor sinner, may have to do with this good Samaritan. I may be a *debtor to Him, or an imitator of Him.*

The lawyer who came with his question to Christ never thought of assuming *the first* of these attitudes. His thoughts were entirely on the law, and what he himself could do. The Saviour, in answer to that, can suggest nothing less than perfection, or the imitation of Himself. Had he approached the Lord with a broken heart, he would have been otherwise answered—in some way that would have preached to him the *grace*, and not the *example* of the good Samaritan.

But let us, beloved, take our place with the poor way-laid traveller, before we ever think of taking our place with his generous Benefactor. We will be *debtors* to Jesus before we think of becoming *imitators* of Jesus.

And, sure I am, the more simply by faith we assume the first of these relationships to Him, the more really, and largely, and graciously shall we act

in the power of the second. It is only by the con-
strainings of the love of Christ to ourselves that we
can act in concert or sympathy with that love to
others.

The lawyer would have to find that he must
become the way-laid man before he could become,
in any true evangelic sense, the companion or
imitator of the good Samaritan who befriended him.

And, it is strange in the ear of the moralist to
say it, but so it is, the blessed God is more honoured
by my consenting to be a debtor to Him, than by all my

efforts to be an imitator of Him. And that imitation
at best will ever be found, and confessed to be, but
partial.

May we all know, more richly than we do, the
precious power and presence of the Spirit, to give
Jesus and Heaven more authority with our hearts!

What we need is intimacy of soul with God, rest-
ing in quietness in Him, though all be confusion and
tumult around.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

NOTE.—Those who endeavour to reply to Questions, desire to impress upon readers their responsibility to “prove all things,” and “hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. v. 21). They make no pretension to infallibility, but give their judgment as those who have received mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—Many Questions are received but not replied to; some not being for general edification, whilst others are laid aside from want of sufficient light to deal with them.—It is requested that all communications be accompanied by the Name and Address of the sender

QUESTION No. CLXXXVII.

*Is it wrong for the children of God, who come together
“on the first day of the week to break bread,” to sing
hymns, &c., before doing the thing they are gathered for,
viz., “breaking bread?”*

REPLY.

Although it is plainly written that the object for
which the disciples came together was “to break
bread,” nevertheless, it was not for this only that
they came together, but for all the fellowship in
thanksgiving, worship, prayer and ministry of the
Word of God, which appropriately accompanied this
most precious ordinance of the Lord.

To lay down any rule as to what ought or ought
not to precede or to follow the observance of the
supper would be to go beyond Scripture, and to
bring in what would eventually become bondage to
human assertion.

But there are principles which cannot fail to guide
those who have spiritual understanding. For ex-
ample, such previous exercises as thrust the breaking
of bread into the background, leaving so little time
that it must needs be hurried through, or perhaps
necessitating the leaving of some, before this service
is completed, cannot be for the glory of God or for
the edifying of the saints.

On the other hand, it often happens that a word of
suited ministry or prayer, or the singing of an appro-
priate hymn at the commencement, or early in the

meeting, is found most helpful in lifting wearied,
burdened, tried, and tempted hearts above surround-
ing circumstances, and fixing them on Christ, as the
centre and object of the assembly.

QUESTION No. CLXXXVIII.

*Matt xvi. 19 and xviii. 18: The “Bible Educator”
states that “binding” and “loosing” in these passages
are idiomatic of “allowing” and “forbidding,” for
which “thousands of examples might be brought forward.”
Can examples to such effect be found in Scripture, or in
Oriental modes of expression?*

REPLY.

We can find no warrant in Scripture usage to alter
in any way the rendering given in our “authorised
version,” and confirmed by the “new revision.”
“Bind” and “loose” seem, by comparison with all
other passages where the words occur, to give exactly
the sense. When, as in this case, words are used
not once or twice, but frequently, in Scripture, we
believe it to be unnecessary, and generally mislead-
ing, to search for other senses in the writings of
profane authors.

When, as in some cases, a word is only used once
in Scripture, then it is needful to ascertain the sense
in which such a word was ordinarily used at the time
it was written. But in the above instance there is
no occasion for any such research.

“ABBA, FATHER.”

MARK xiv. 36 ; ROM. viii. 15 ; GAL. iv. 6.



O be sons and heirs of God is the calling and the privilege of all those of Adam's race, whom God has taught to trust in the “precious blood of Christ.” For all such are begotten ones, and are born of God (see John i. 12, 13 ; James i. 18). This truth is shown also in the vision in Rev. xxi. 7. In that passage we have the final state of all the redeemed gathered at last into the perfected new creation. And of them all, verse 7 says : “He that overcometh shall inherit these things : and I will be his God and he shall be *My son*.” The blood of Jesus shed for all believers could obtain for them nothing higher or more blessed than this, and could not but obtain this, for was not Jesus Himself the Son of God, and are not all believers both IN Him and united to Him by simple faith ?

We sometimes hear the expression, “Sons of God by blest adoption” (see Hart's hymns), but it is not scriptural. All God's children are His by *birth*, and cannot therefore be adopted, for how could a father possibly adopt his own children. What is meant by our having “*the Spirit of adoption*” will be seen presently. All now remarked is this, the important effect our being begotten of God has on our spiritual affections. The true and peculiar *affection* of father to child hangs upon begetting and birth. God has so ordered it, that each relationship in life has its own affection belonging to it, and only as the relationship is real can the affection exist. Brother and brother, master and servant, sovereign and subject, &c., all carry with them the affection proper to them ; so does father and child—an adopted child may be very dear and increasingly dear to its “parent” all its days, but never from beginning to end can there be *that* love which subsists between real child and father ; neither on the parent's side nor the child's. And we may boldly say that God Himself could not love adopted sons, as He can and does His “dear begotten ones ;” nor could we in a truly filial way love Him.

We return now to the fact that ALL believers are sons and heirs of God at and from the moment they believed. Chosen in Christ, the eternally *begotten Son*, before the world began, they are all “predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son,” and

will in *one moment* be thus “changed” (1 Cor. xv.), just as in the *one moment* of believing, they received sonship life.

But alongside this, it needs next be said, that not until this present dispensation was it the privilege and duty of all believers to KNOW this, their sonship, and to enjoy it. Not till Jesus, our Lord, was Himself “*Son of God*” from the dead, and as such, had been bidden sit at the right hand of God, who *thus* begat Him, could the Spirit come, and reveal in all these living believers' hearts *their* sonship.

True, there were precious filial utterances in the ancient Scriptures (see Isa. lxiii. 7-16), but these were amongst the testifying “beforehand” (see 1 Peter i. 11) and were not wrought, that we know of, in those days, except in the hearts of a few.

No, this is the favoured age of *known and enjoyed* sonship, however true it be that it *belonged* to believers from the beginning. This is the age of the precious cry “Abba, Father,” whether of Jesus' own holy lips in “the days of His flesh,” or of all living believers, and no such sound was ever heard that we know of, on human breath, or by human ears before.

This brings us to the three passages—the only ones—in which the cry of “Abba, Father,” occurs in New Testament Scriptures.

In Mark xiv. 36—the first of the three—we have it as the utterance of Jesus Himself, in the awful loneliness of Gethsemane. As He was God's *lonely* “corn of wheat” (John xii. 24), so He alone had then the power to utter the cry “Abba, Father.” And even HE, not as God's only begotten Son from eternity, but as *that* Son of God who had been “fashioned as a man,” and was then and there the agonizing “Man of Sorrows,” about to obtain a new sonship through death and in resurrection.

Only thus, we say, could even *He* say “Abba, Father.” For what does “Abba, Father” mean ? It is in reality a double utterance of “Father.” For “Abba” means “Father” in the Hebrew language, as *(πατηρ) “Father” does in the Greek. It is a sonship utterance to God in *two languages* ; and pledged the holy utterer of it to bring *sinner*s as sons to God out of earth's Babel languages, and especially out of both Jew and Gentile. How per-

* Many have thought “Abba” to be only the imperfect infant utterance, and “Father” the same, more clearly ; but it really is the same, first in Jew language and second in Gentile.

fectly Jesus performed the work given Him to do! And how briefly, yet fully, He expressed it! All the truth of the union of Jew and Gentile in "one new man," was contained in embryo in that one cry, "Abba, Father!" Just as later on He fulfilled the last jot and tittle of Scripture by His one word on the cross, I thirst—viz., Psalm lxix. 21.

The next passage of "Abba, Father," is Romans viii. 15. Jesus had now died, was raised from the grave, and had ascended, consequently the Holy Ghost had come, and that too, as the Spirit of sonship, because, sent by Jesus, the First-born One of many brethren. No wonder, then, that as we read in Rom. viii. 15: "*We*" cry, "Abba, Father." Not now a *lonely* Voice uttering it in a dying agony; but *all* that are "beloved of God called saints" (see Rom. i. 7), *i.e.*, all the believers then at Rome, and all others of this dispensation, uniting to utter it as their earliest and birthright speech! What music must this needs be to the listening ear of His and our God and Father! Yet, alas! how lightly and unfeelingly we often say it, whether in hymns of praise, or in our handling of Holy Scripture!

But now comes another point. It is by the "Spirit of adoption" that we utter it. Though plainly made ours, even through the risen Son of God, yet such is the backwardness of our flesh to everything Divine, and especially to the filial nearness into which we are brought, that it requires the Spirit of the Son to inwardly inform us of our sonship, and to evoke from us the language suitable to it! In ordinary human similar relationship there is no such difficulty. The child of mortal parents learns the word "Father" easily enough; but behold God has *to work in us*, even to speak befittingly to Him, as well as to love Him.

And this is the exact force of the Greek word translated "adoption:" literally and exactly *υιοθεσια* means "*son-placing*;" and it is the Holy Ghost as the "Spirit of adoption" that enables us and causes us to *place* ourselves before our God AS His sons, both in our sonship worship and in our happy sonship service.

Blessed be God, then, for the Spirit in this character! As at the cross it was by the Spirit Jesus died for us (see Heb. ix. 14), so in our sense of resurrection sonship the same Spirit has His blessed part.

Gal. iv. 6 is the third and last passage of the

words "Abba, Father;" and here the difference between being God's begotten ones and our *knowing* it, and therefore uttering sonship language, is yet more plain. For Galatians is a controversial epistle against Judaizing error; and godly controversy conducted with the grace and the tears of God's Spirit, only serves to define God's truth yet more plainly. Therefore never let us cease from such kind of controversy.

The passage runs thus:—In Gal. iii. Old Testament saints, both as heirs and begotten ones of God, but as only "*babes*" (see "child" and "children" of Gal. iv. 1, 3 in Greek) in knowledge, are needing to be under tutors and governors; but after the sending forth of God's blessed Son, who at Gethsemane first said "Abba, Father!" believers are seen as "*sons*" (*υιοι*), and in the standing and intelligence of sonship. As John says (1 Epistle iii. 2), "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God;" and on this account God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying "Abba, Father!" This, then, is the Spirit of adoption (see Rom. viii. 15), given to believers of this dispensation not to make us sons—but "*because ye are sons.*"

By special Divine grace, then, we of this age are all of us utterers of the "Abba, Father," cry, and are thereby taught our filial nearness to God. But are we not also taught by it the tie that binds us as God's children *one to another*? For in neither passage do we find "Abba" standing alone or separated from "Father." Each time, therefore, that we utter our "Abba, Father," cry, we not only ourselves approach our God, but we take in also our fellow-saints. The Jewish believer takes in the Gentile as he says it, and so does the Gentile the Jew. Each one owns the other even in this breathing out of our soul, and this utterance of our lips. As Paul says (Gal. iii. 28), "There is neither Jew nor Greek, . . . for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Or, as he more formally teaches in Eph. ii. 14, "He (Jesus) is our peace (*i.e.*, peace between Jew and Gentile), who hath made both one;" and verse 18, "Through Him (Jesus) we *both* have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Evidently God, as our Father, never expects to hear the "Abba" without the "Father," nor the "Father" without the "Abba." He claims that all His begotten ones should own each other as they also own Him.

Indeed, what earthly parent is there that could possibly be happy at his children—all of them individually—speaking to *him* of his love, while each studiously avoided naming his father's other children? Nor can God take pleasure in a filial worship that recognises anything less than ALL fellow-saints.

The very law given in such love at Mount Sinai teaches the same; for if the first table of it required, "Thou shalt love *the Lord thy God* with all thy heart," the second (which was equal in authority) said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Thus by grace are we now made, even in our lip worship, to be law fulfillers!

This notice of the three "Abba, Father," passages of New Testament must not close without suggesting practical lessons plainly seen in the different contexts of the three.

1st. In the Mark xiv. 36 passage, the context is holy strife and agony against sin and temptation. Oh that *our* too easy utterance of "Abba, Father," (made easy for us by His dying love) were attended with similar watching unto prayer (Mark xiv. 37) and holy strife!

2nd. In Rom. viii. 15, Paul teaches us our "Abba, Father," nearness in order to strengthen us to bear outside afflictions of this life. "I reckon," says he, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with . . . the manifestation of the sons of God."


3rd. Does not Gal. iv. 6 remind us that we must indeed "*earnestly contend* for" our sonship and "Abba, Father," nearness, and make *no terms* with all the national Judaized Christianity around us which by chancel, altar, and rood-screen would put us into the *distance* as worshippers, and would give us man-made sermons instead of God our Father's voice to us as His children?

God give us needed grace for these lessons.

H. D

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAP. i. 29-36.

 HE next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." I put this along with verse 1. I think every one who has followed the exposition of these verses must perceive that it

is one Personage spoken of throughout the entire passage. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word *was* God. And the Word was made flesh. Behold the Lamb of God." Surely it is continuous, and the Person is one and the same. Thus we see that the Lord could look all the way down from the Father's bosom into the abyss of woe into which He sank. Yea and more, as chapter ii. shows us, He could look right on to the glory; to the marriage of the Lamb in the beginning of the chapter; to the purging of the temple which follows, and to the manifestation of glory. He could look all the way down to the bitter cross, and right away beyond it to the glory.

Now here God, by the mouth of the Baptist, introduces His Son in full to us poor sinners. Here is when He first gets at us, and we first get at Him. There is great emphasis on the words, "of God," "the Lamb of God." Thousands of lambs had been offered up upon the altar on account of man's sin, but their blood had been ineffectual to put it away. Repeated day after day, month after month, year after year, by high priest after high priest—eighty-nine high priests there are reckoned to have been before our Lord was appointed High Priest in resurrection, and they had all brought their lambs, two a-day, as well as the special offerings; but the recurrence of offerings day after day was of no avail. What was to be done? Do you remember that passage? "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" It is the language of a pierced heart. How shall I come before God? "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good"—referring, I believe, to the beginning of Genesis. "If thou doest well (or good), shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin (or the sin offering) lieth at the door." Then God took the matter up. When man could do nothing, though he might be in tears for ever and ever, yet would he be no nearer to God or to heaven. And the Holy One of God came down, and down. God took up the matter of man's salvation; it was God's thought, God's purpose, God's plan; it was at God's cost,

God's Son was upon the cross, it was all of God. "And all things are of God," says 2 Corinthians v. "Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me." The Lamb of God! We never should have thought of it. For we should never have known there was a Son in God if God had not told us; and then would it have been beyond our utmost thought that He would have come to be the sacrifice. O God, how wondrous is Thy love! "Who taketh away." Who lifteth up and carries away "the sin of the world." I understand the expression, "sin of the world," to be similar in meaning to the passage in Hebrews ix., which says, "Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of Himself." Hence God is not now demanding payment by sinners for their sins, but is pressing His grace and His mercy upon them. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." And in 1 John iii. 5 we read a slight variation from what we have here. "And ye know that He was manifested to take away *our sins*." Here it is "the *sin* of the world;" there, taking away "our *sins*." Thus is it gone. And now let us never forget that it is no longer the *sin* question, but it is the *Son* question, which decides a man's eternal destiny. Perfectly well does God know what we are, and He has made ample provision for that in His Lamb; but it is the Son question. Behold Him! Not merely look once, but look every day, every hour; look continually, and look now.

In verse 30 there follows another allusion to His greatness. We have had it before in verse 15, "He was before me." Priority of being. The other expression, "a man which is preferred before me," denoting the greatness of His person. "And I knew Him not; but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." Folk little thought, when John was baptizing so many, what was God's object in John's baptism. "That He should be made manifest to Israel." You see that His thought was Christ even then. Oh, to think along with God, to have our thoughts corrected by God's thoughts. When the crowds were pressing around John, His thought was of Christ. John's

baptism was not the same as Christian baptism is now. That was a baptism unto repentance. Those submitting themselves thereto pledged themselves to repent of their sins; and then, when they had been thus baptized, God brought out that beautiful Object upon which His heart was set, the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. First, He induces them to pledge themselves to repentance, then He says, Here is the Lamb to bear all the sin away. How beautifully the two fit together; the sinner and the Lamb thus brought together.

"And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him." There is something here which strikes one, as if God was calling attention to the fact of how He would thus Himself point to His Christ. It is not merely that John the Baptist pointed to Him, that was not enough for God; but He took the matter into His own hands by the Holy Ghost coming down in visible form and resting upon Christ. Thus God particularly said, "There He is;" all John has to do is to say, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove." This, I think, is an allusion to Leviticus viii. 12, where we find that when Aaron was consecrated, the oil was poured upon his head without the blood, to signify the very truth under consideration, that the true Aaron was come, and He needed no blood ere the Holy Ghost descended in fulness upon Him. If we look at verse 30 of that chapter, we see that it is blood and oil both, because there it is Christ and the Church together; for when we read of the sons of Aaron it is the Church that is typified; and when the Church is associated with Christ, we read both of the blood and the oil. In verse 12, when Christ is seen alone, then we read of the oil poured upon His head without the blood; for personally He was spotless, pure, holy. But then He got down, and He reached us, and got hold of us; and then it is blood and oil. "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove;" that is, not merely as a dove would descend, gyrating and circling; but Luke has it in much stronger language, "in a bodily shape." I suppose that the shape of a dove was chosen in reference to the Person upon whom He descended; like as when He descended upon the apostles there appeared cloven tongues as of fire, to show His assimilation with the person or persons upon whom He descended. So

now is the Spirit in us, even to the extent that it is one cry, "the Spirit and the Bride say come." "And it abode upon Him." Or "He," for it might be perfectly well rendered so. The Holy Ghost is "He," or a Person; "and He abode upon Him," stayed on Him. Thus has God given a perfect indication from the beginning as to Who was the Messiah.

"And I knew Him not." Twice over has John said, "I didn't know Him;" in verse 31, and in verse 33. There is a slight difficulty here, because John seems to have known Him; for do we not remember his words, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" That was before the descent of the Spirit, yet twice he assures us he knew Him not. The explanation given is that he had some idea as to Who He was, but not sufficient to indicate clearly, and with perfect confidence, that there was the very Son of God. "But He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." So first the Holy Ghost came upon Christ, and then when Christ had been offered up as the Lamb—the Lamb of God—then He begins to give the Holy Ghost similarly unto others, and the Holy Ghost comes down upon us. Oh, into what wondrous intimacy with God we are called! Oh, what high privileges are ours! Oh, how carefully should we walk that we may not grieve that Holy Ghost! How we should watch our thoughts, our words, our actions, our ways. And does the Holy Ghost rest first upon Christ, next upon me—*upon me*? But observe that it is after sinners have been pointed to the Lamb of God. The Holy Ghost cannot enter, or dwell in, an unclean temple. That is why in Leviticus viii. 30 we have it blood and oil. We are cleansed by the blood, and then the Spirit can enter and take full possession of us, to unite us to a glorified Christ up in heaven. That is what the Spirit has been given for. And then He shows us the glory of the Lord that we may be changed, and delight in seeing that the glory the Father has given Him is ours too through Him.

"The same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." I do not know for certain whether there is some emphasis put on the words "*baptizeth* with the Holy Ghost;" for in most cases in which we read in the Acts of the Apostles of the baptism of

the Holy Ghost, we read that they had various gifts given unto them. So do we read in Acts ii., or so when Paul laid his hands upon certain men, it says that the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied. God has not withdrawn the Holy Ghost, but it appears, so far as I know (with the exception of those who pretend vainly to have these gifts, I mean the so-called Catholic and Catholic-Apostolic Churches), that there is nothing of that now. What I would urge is that the *gift* remains, though the *gifts* we do not see. I do not mean that Christ is not giving gifts. There are the gifts of Ephesians iv., "He gave gifts unto men. And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers." I believe that though the Church has departed from her calling, on the one hand, God remains faithful to his promise, and the Holy Ghost will be with us all the way, and present us, Eliezer-like, to the Bridegroom of the Church; on the other hand, as to these gifts, I do not see them anywhere. Which is the better plan—to pretend that we have the gifts of tongues, of healing, of prophecy if we have not, or simply to take our places as sinners saved before the Lord, and cast ourselves at His feet, pretending to nothing that is not verily true? This is my opinion as to the gift and the gifts, written some years ago, but still as firmly held:—"And whilst Corinthians teaches us that the body has many members, and that all the members have not the same office, so Ephesians adds thereto, that to this body God gives gifts of MEN. The former proves that the Spirit must not be quenched in others, nor restrained from using whom He pleases; the latter, that His wont is to edify the others generally through particular individuals. The one affords scope to the babe, or to the unlettered, so to minister in the assembly as that great God, to whom alone the Church belongs sovereignly, would have him; the other marks a distinct provision made by the glorified Christ for His people's growth. The one proves the grave responsibility to the Lord of each, as to whether he speaks or is silent in His presence; the other affords evidence that rule in this body is perpetuated by the Lord, seeing that it is His will that those who feed the flock are, with others whom He stirs up, also to rule in it (Heb. xiii.; 1 Peter v.; Gen. i, 16). The

need, too, of this rule is obvious, inasmuch as where there is liberty to the Spirit, there must also be liberty to the flesh, which latter, for the health of the body, and for the glory of the Lord, should be judged. Hence the one class of gifts marks the liberty of all; the other, the subjection of all. The one impresses on us the thought that Christ is our only Lord and Head; the other demonstrates His faithfulness and love. The one shows us how we are cast on Him; the other that He will never fail us. The very words in the Greek are different. The Corinthian gifts are *χαρισματα*; the Ephesian gifts are *δοματα*. . . . Nor should it escape notice, that whilst the gifts of Ephesians are solemnly pledged to the end, those of Corinthians are not" (Lincoln's Leaflets, No. 11). May we, then, see that the Holy Ghost be ungrieved in us. I speak now of us individually specially, and the great thing we are to mind, in not grieving the Spirit, is to walk in love. That is the great thing in your ways with others. If you want not to grieve the Spirit, the great action, and the great flow of the Spirit out of you to others, is in love. "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." I have been led to these remarks by this expression, which is striking, I think. As a matter of history, the Lord did not baptize with the Holy Ghost until He had ascended; for, then, when He ascended God gave Him the Holy Ghost to give to others, and then He gave the Holy Ghost to us. "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." When Christ ascended, so delighted was God with the work of His Son that He gave to Him the Holy Ghost, not for Himself only, but to give to us, His children, His members, His saints, that the Spirit might flow into us, and out of us, and we be full of the Holy Ghost. I wish it were so very fully and constantly now. It is said of Stephen—a mortal man—"He being full of the Holy Ghost;" if, then, it could be true of him, why not of you and of me?

"And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." This is scarcely a full translation. In the original, the two verbs are in the perfect tense: "and I have seen, and I have borne record, that this is the Son of God." His words seem to me tantamount in effect to this:—"Now my work is done, I have borne testimony to Him as Son of God, and now your re-

sponsibility begins. Here He is. I have borne Him witness—there is the Son of God. I have seen, and I have borne witness to you that He is the Son of God."


Thus do we see the steps of this descent of this illustrious Person sketched by the Spirit from the very beginning, when He is with God, and is God, down to the Lamb of God taking away sin, giving the Holy Ghost, and thirdly—do you see the third? I only just touch upon it now. Then sinners begin to cluster around Him. "Again, the next day after John stood and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God" (verses 35, 36). Where is the sin? Look up there at that same Being seated at the right hand of God, and say, where is the sin? Observe the second time John points to the Lamb of God he adds not a word about the sin, as if, between the two pointings, Christ had put away the sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and now there is no sin upon Him (see Hebrews i. 3). I know, I cannot forget, that He is my Advocate with the Father for daily transgression, for I fail every day of my life. And that word, "they that mourn," in Matthew v., refers not to those who first come to Christ, but to those knowing the plague of their own hearts that see they have cause to mourn every day; the whole context shows that. As we every day know more of this Christ, the more do we see our need of Him. We learn on the one hand more and more of our own exceeding sinfulness, on the other more and more of that blessed Being without one sin upon Him. Now, we see in the second place that nothing is mentioned about sin. He had stooped, and that Mighty One had paid the price, had endured the wrath, had sunk under the waves of God's wrath, and the sin is gone. And now He is the Lamb of God, and every time I look at Christ I am encouraged. And then in these next verses we see sinners begin to cluster round Him. "And looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God." As He walked: I believe there is a deal of meaning in that. He had been baptized; the Holy Ghost had come down upon Him, He was ready to begin His work. He was waiting for God to give Him His work to do. Then God leads those two disciples to Him. Christ walking, as if waiting upon God as to beginning His work. Not a step without God's guidance; the very reverse of wilfulness. Is there

not wilfulness in your heart, and mine? It was the very reverse with Christ. Oh, beloved, God's ways are so perfect.—(Notes of an address by W. Lincoln, communicated by J. S. H.)

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

CHAPTER IX. 1-18.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY J. R. C.

 AM I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? My answer to them that examine me is this:—If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you; for the seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord" (verse 1-3). In the first verse he refers to having seen the Lord. He always refers his call to the apostleship to the ascended Lord. He was not one of those who companied with Him while He was on the earth, and, therefore, became in a special sense His witness, but one to whom the Lord revealed Himself from heaven. Then he points to them—the Corinthian saints—as the fruit of his labours; the result of service in the Gospel as the seal of his apostleship; or, in other words, his credentials. They were the confirmation themselves of what he affirms, and, therefore, the proof that he was sent of the Lord.

If we want to see the necessary signs of an apostle, we get them referred to in 2 Cor. xii. 12: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds." I would ask your attention for a little to these words, for I have known some who have been led away by those who profess to believe and maintain that there are apostles now as there were then in the Church. These words, "signs, wonders, and mighty deeds," occur in other two places in the New Testament. Acts ii. 22: "Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs." These are the same three words in the Greek as those referred to in 2 Cor. xii. 12, "signs, wonders, and mighty deeds." They were the credentials that God gave to His Son, as well as to His servants the apostles. The third place where these three words occur* is in 2 Thess. ii. 9: "Then shall that Wicked

be revealed, . . . whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders." "This Wicked" is the "lawless One," and the character of the wickedness is the casting off of God's authority. This is the spirit of the age, from the child to the oldest, that rises against law, order, and government. "Powers, signs, and lying wonders," these are also the three same words in the Greek as in the other two Scriptures already referred to. Just as by "miracles, wonders, and signs" Jesus' ministry was approved of God, and as God testified by "signs, wonders, and mighty deeds" to Paul's ministry, so Satan will give his power unto his man, "the lawless One," in order to deceive men, that they might receive the lie and reject the truth.

Paul was not without his credentials; and if any man profess to be an apostle, he must have his credentials too. We have not heard of any of the signs of an apostle being wrought by any of those that have sprung up within the last century. I reject utterly, from its foundation, what is called "the Catholic Apostolic Church," because the word of their so-called apostles is put upon a level with the word of the Lord. It may seem plausible, but it wont bear the test of Scripture; therefore we say it is a device of Satan, however much there may be in it that appears to be according to the truth.

It is blessed to know that wherever the apostles went God wrought by them in "signs, powers, and wonders;" and "God gave testimony to the word of His grace." And so will it be of every one who is sent of the Lord to preach the Gospel.

There was another ground on which he contended for his Divine mission, and that was *his character*. He points to his character and life to show that he was sent of God, and that God was with him. I think it was John Wesley who said that any one sent of God to preach the Gospel should be accredited by three things, viz., "*gift, grace, and fruit.*" If any man professes to be an evangelist, be sure that these three things are shown by him before you acknowledge him as such. First, "*gift!*" i.e., the qualification given to him of God whereby he is able to preach the Gospel; second, "*grace,*" or the character that corresponds with it; and, third, "*fruit*" through his testimony. Paul had gifts of the Holy Spirit as well as the signs and the wonders by which he gave evidence of his apostleship. He had the

* See also the same three words similarly used in Heb. ii. 4.

grace, and he pointed to his life as a witness to it; and there was also fruit, for he said, "Ye are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord."

Verse 4: "Have we not power to eat and drink?" I presume this means to eat and drink at the expense of the saints.

Verse 5: "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord?" Unquestionably this means those who were the issue of the marriage of Joseph and Mary. "And Cephas," Peter, the one referred to here, was married. The whole structure of the Church of Rome rests upon that fundamental doctrine of theirs, the celibacy of the priesthood. Yet Peter, the chiefest of the apostles, was married, and "led about" a wife.

Verse 6: "And I only, and Barnabas, have we not power to forbear working?" This is the first place that we have Barnabas mentioned after the unhappy split that took place between them. We find that Paul speaks of Barnabas with respect; there is no ill-feeling kept up between them. Paul had to withstand Peter to the face, but Peter calls him elsewhere "our beloved brother Paul" (2 Peter iii. 16). Paul and Barnabas wrought at various times with their own hands, and laboured in the Gospel as well.

Verse 7: "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk thereof?" These are three illustrations from nature, on the ground of which Paul contended that he had a right, as a labourer, to be supported by those for whom he laboured. How absurd for a soldier to go to war at his own charges! Who has planted a vineyard, and cared and watched over it, and has not eaten of its fruit? And who feedeth and careth for a flock, and doth not receive of the milk thereof? Such a thing was never heard of in natural things. The apostle, therefore, shows that it was a reasonable thing that he and his fellow-labourers should be supported by the contributions of those whom they served in spiritual things.

Verses 8, 9: And now he takes an illustration from the law, and shows that God's law bears out the same principle. "Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn." We learn from God's

merciful provision for oxen and other animals the care He would have His people bestow upon those that minister to them in spiritual things. Every one of those little commandments of the law of Moses gives us an insight into the wickedness of the heart of man. The covetous heart of man would put a muzzle on the ox to keep it from eating. This shows us the deep spring of iniquity that's in the heart of man. Nothing that we could do could atone for the corruption of our sinful nature; but, that God might judge that sin and set us free from it, our blessed Lord, God's Holy One, sunk into the deep mire under the judgment of God being made a curse for us. Every time that we look at Christ on the cross made sin for us, do we not learn the depth of depravity and deceitfulness of the unregenerate heart?

"Doth God take care of oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sake?" God has something more for us to learn from this than a mere precept about oxen. God would teach us spiritual things from it. An ox and an ass were not to be yoked together; and He would have us learn from that that the believer and unbeliever are not to be yoked together.

Verse 11: "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things?" "If we have denied ourselves, and left our homes to minister to you, in order that you might be saved, is it a great thing that you should contribute a little of your substance for our support?"

Verse 12: "If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless, we have not used this power, but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ."

He further urges his right and power to do so in the 13th verse: "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers of the altar." That is to say, the priests that ministered in the holy or sacred things of the temple had their portion of the offerings. Their's was a rich and an abundant share; no finer or richer fare could be than the priest's share in Israel. The breast and the shoulder was their portion; what could be better? God always took care that His servants were cared for. Both the Levites, whose service was to raise up, take down, and look after the Tabernacle, and the priests who ministered at the brazen altar and within the Holy place, were fed by

the Lord. The Levites' portion was a tenth part of all the income of Israel.

Verse 14: "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." Turn in connection with this to Luke x. 1: . . . "The Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place whither He Himself would come." I believe that there was great wisdom shown by the Lord in appointing that two go together in service—Paul and Barnabas went together. Paul never went alone, but had always some one with him. The Lord's servant was to be a blessing unto the house into which he entered. "In the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give" (verse 7). They were not to go from house to house, but they were to remain with those who received them, eating and drinking such things as they gave. If received of a godly one, though in humble circumstances, they were to be contented with what they could give. Some richer brother might be able to give more, but they were to abide where the Lord had led them. In the house where the "son of peace" dwelt they were to abide, eating and drinking such things as were set before them; it might be plain fare, but they were to take it with the Lord's blessing. What a beautiful pattern we have in the Apostle Paul as the servant of Christ! "But I have used none of these things; neither have I written those things that it should be so done unto me, for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void" (verse 15).

Paul establishes beyond question his right to be supported by the saints, and this he does on reasonable grounds. First, by the analogy of natural things; secondly, by reference to the law; and thirdly, by the provision Jehovah made for the Priests and Levites in Israel. It is a divine principle, that "they that preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." It is not a *hardship* to lay this responsibility upon His saints; it is rather and ought to be to the people of God an *unspeakable privilege* to serve the Lord in ministering to His servants' need. Paul says, "I have not used this power, and I do not write this to stir you up to support me, but rather that the grace of God may be seen in you in thus caring for His servants."

Paul wrought with his own hands, and he had two

reasons for doing so. First, necessity was laid upon him to preach the Gospel; and the Lord called him for that purpose. He says, "Woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel." "Then am I only to preach the Gospel in case a woe should come upon me? No, I want to show how willing I am, and that it is my delight to be in my Master's service. I do not desire to be supported by any one, but rather to labour with mine own hands that, I may give no occasion to any to say that I do it only as a matter of necessity."

Another reason you will find in 2 Cor. xi. 7, 12: "Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the Gospel freely? I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself," &c. There were other churches from which he would gladly accept gifts, and be rejoiced by their care of him; you will see that from Philippians iv. 10, 18: "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last your care of me hath flourished again: wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." They had not a ship sailing once a week where Paul was, therefore he might be a long time without getting help. "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. . . . I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." Observe that he applies to that which was sent to him by the Philippian Church, the very words which are applied to the offering of Christ in Ephesians v. 2: "An odour of a sweet smell." That little box of things that might be sent to him was a "sweet savour to God." We do not know how God appreciates any service rendered to any saint of His—servant or poor one. We may think that God is not taking any notice of it. If it is prompted by love to Him, He takes pleasure in it. Such service done in the Spirit comes up before Him as a fragrant odour.

"My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." He, as it were, says, "I cannot repay you for your kindness," but he casts them upon his God. "My God who

has supported me through 'thick and thin' will supply *all your need*; not according to my little ability, but according to His riches in glory." If our God disappoints us, it is because He sees that that is what we need; and if He allows us to suffer need, He knows that is what we require. Many a young man has been ruined by becoming heir to a fortune. Our God does not spoil His children by putting into their hands what will do them harm.

The Apostle Paul refused to take anything for his support from the saints at Corinth, but he gladly took what was sent from the Philippian Church. What was the reason? There was a great difference between the two. In the Church at Corinth there were some who thought that they had as good a right to be called apostles as Paul. Such were ministers of Satan, and they would take as much as the saints would give them. Paul, as it were, would say: "Let those who are false apostles take all; I don't want your money. I am serving the Lord, and He cares for me." Was it pride that led him to act in this way? No. It was that they (these false apostles) might have no excuse; that the difference between the true and the false servant of God, between the hireling and the lover of the sheep, might be thoroughly manifested; and that thus the Corinthian believers might be delivered from the bondage they were in to these false apostles. They were glorying in themselves, and not in Christ.

We see the spirit in which he served the saints in 2 Cor. xii. 15, 16: "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you: though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile." I must protest against the way in which this verse is used by some. They use it as a justification for going about the Lord's work in a crafty way, but that is not the meaning of the verse. He is evidently referring to what some of them had been saying about him. That though he did not take help himself he sent Titus, and he got it through him. Verses 17, 18: "Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?" Some of them had had the impudence to say that though he would not take anything himself, he sent Titus and

some one else, and what he would not take directly he got indirectly through others. Oh, the depth of the depravity and wickedness of the heart of man when not under the influence of the grace of God!

At Philippi, where he knew that the saints cared for him, he would take anything that they were pleased to send him. He said that he took from them more than their share, but he would not take anything from the Corinthians. There may be similar reasons now for the Lord's servants accepting help from some, whilst refusing it from others.

FAMILY LIFE.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY R. C. CHAPMAN.



ONE matter laid upon our hearts is *family life*.

Our hearts do cry that Enochs, Abrahams, Samuels, and Daniels may be raised up. God has great need of such for His own joy, according to that precious proverb, "My son, if thine heart be wise, My heart shall rejoice, even Mine. Yea, My reins shall rejoice when thy lips speak right things" (Prov. xxiii. 15, 16). There is another in that Book of Sonship, of Israel's Sonship and ours; that Book of Christ called the "Book of Proverbs." "My son, be wise, and make My heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth Me" (Prov. xxvii. 11). God's word speaks for itself; and His sun, moon, and stars speak to man, demanding on God their Maker's behalf that man shall listen to their testimony for God, much more do the Scriptures of truth. Beloved, let us remember this, that our obligation to the Church of God is the same as ever, according to John xvii.—loved in Christ; God's love, according to His eternal counsels, "Thou . . . hast loved them as Thou hast loved me" (John xvii. 23). That belongs to all saints, because, according to God's counsels, they are in the love of God; but the love of the fellowship ("ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you," John xv. 14), that fellowship the Church has been content to forfeit. Instead of contending for obedience without reserve, a league has been made with the Canaanites, and there has been no Bochim about it (Judges ii.). In family life it is not so.

Supposing a child of God be an husband, his wife and helpmeet gives him offspring. There are those here, more or less, holding family responsibilities. My dear brethren and sisters, wont you accept this affirmation, that there is more glory brought to God by a man—a child of His—ruling his family according to Christ than the wisest man ruling a kingdom. There is no kingdom under heaven so favoured as this, by the excellent woman that God has been pleased to give (going out of His course, because rule does not belong to the woman), and in making her to rule this country she has been a blessing to the land. And yet all that glory is as nothing in the sight of God in comparison with a servant—a child of His—ruling his family according to Christ. What is the reason? It is not the duty of any kingdom to rule according to Christ. Rule in the family should be according to Christ. It is required of the child of God as an husband that he should represent Christ. Is he a father? Then he should be the very image of his Father in heaven to his children. Is the wife a child of God? She has favour from God such as is not to be found in any of the relations that rulers bear to each other—to show forth the future Church in glory subject to Christ. Surely in Ephesians v. it is not the Church now, but the Church by-and-by in glory that is the pattern? Is it children? Then Christ is their pattern; Christ the pattern of subjection to the servants, and Christ the pattern of rule to the master. To the eye of God, and to the eye of faith, and to the understanding heart this earth of ours is more abundant in types and shadows of heavenly things, and therefore a better world to look at, than was the earth as yet not marred by the sin of the first man. To pass by types innumerable that could not be found in Paradise, let us go to the most excellent of all types, the husband and wife, the parent and child, the master and servant.

I would now look at a few passages familiar to us, which the Spirit of God will make fresh and new to us. Eph. v. 18, 23; vi. 1, 9; Col. iii. 18, 25; iv. 1, 2. Beloved, the greater part of the Scriptures is taken up with showing the saved how to be happy. I cannot but judge if you were to search out the Scriptures that refer to the enemies of God, to His judgments in time and eternity, and the Scriptures that show how the lost are to be saved, put these all together; then gather out the Scriptures that teach

us, who are saved, how to please and honour God, and how to be happy, you would find the latter to be the greater portion of the Word. It is all wrapt up in this—Christ dwelling in your heart by faith (Eph. iii. 17), and God's love poured into your heart abundantly by the Holy Ghost. That is the grand secret of happiness in the family, and there is no substitute for it.

In God's order, the special responsible person in connection with a family is the father—the head of that family; he is to be the spring of the family's happiness. If I stand in the capacity of head to a household, or as father to children, or as master to servant, for their sakes, next to pleasing God, I do feel it to be my obligation to be happy in the love of God; to have God's love shed abroad in my heart by the Spirit of God given to us. That is the course of His love, if I don't hinder it. God's love in me must press out, and if I don't hinder it, it must flow into my heart. I trust that we may have opened ears and tender hearts to receive and treasure up the many things God has been saying to us. Above all, let this be rooted in us, that it is God's delight to make us happy with His love, and it must be so if we don't hinder.

What suits the Church suits the family, and what makes a happy church makes a happy family. In the exhortation that we have been reading (Eph. v.), observe it begins with the relation of husband and wife; and for this reason the children can well understand God by observing the holy or unholy walk of father or mother. They keenly observe, and in the very order of God so it is, they must be affected by the walk and spirit of their parents. The father and mother may be upright and blameless persons to the world, yet if they little think of fashioning their minds, affections, speech, and behaviour according to Christ, they more or less make void what they so teach. But, on the other hand, if they do walk according to Christ, if the Word of Christ dwell in their hearts richly, the children will say in their hearts, "What a blessed thing it is to know the Lord! How happy father is; how loving mother is!" Such impressions will thus be deeply made on the young hearts in their early days. Happiness and obedience go together. If the Word of Christ dwell in me richly, it will lead me to view everything in relation to God. And let us remember this, that if the Bible be used

aright, it will be first of all the pleasantest book in the world to him that serves it well. The children will say, "What a lovely book the Bible is!" And they will not wish anything to please or interest them by comparison with the Scriptures handled by the lips of one full of the love of God. Beloved, let us remember this, it is one thing to read the Bible, choosing that which suits me, but quite another thing to search it in order to become acquainted with God in Christ, and that I may be fashioned like unto Christ. Let me, first of all, please God by my affections to Him, that thus He may find in my house a banqueting room. If I read the Bible for that end, the Spirit of God will always make it to me better than thousands of gold and silver; sweeter than honey, even the honeycomb.

Before I cease I would say a word as touching that in Eph. vi. with reference to children. "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise." There is no promise to any other. First of all let me say that it is to be understood according to Christ, and not according to Moses. The promise of the old covenant I would show forth thus: The gold was scarce and the copper plentiful; that is, heavenly things were but dimly revealed, but the promise was given of earthly things, and of the abundance of them. No sickness or disease, length of days, increase of offspring, flocks, herds, &c. Now, beloved, we are to "be content with such things as we have, for He has said, I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee" (Heb. xiii. 5). And, again, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8). The child of God has a far securer title to daily bread than the Queen of England. She, *as such*, has no title at all. God may or may not cast her down from her high estate. The world, simply as such, has no title from God to anything but the wages of sin. As a child of God He speaks to me through His Son. He says, "Consider the lilies of the field, . . . Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. . . . If God so clothe the grass which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you? . . . Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. . . . After these things do

the Gentiles seek. . . . Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matt. vi. 28-34). We have these things by promise, but then in our day the gold of heavenly things is plentiful: the gold of the things concerning the Father and the Son—the gold of the full revelation of the mind of God touching the past, present, and future. Beloved, the gold of heavenly things is now plentiful, but the copper of things temporal we shall not be without. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us *all things*?" (Rom. viii. 32.)

But, remember this, beloved, teach your children that they honour you; that is, not only that they obey you, but joyfully teach them that to do this is better than that every one of them had ten thousand pounds each. Teach them as soon as they can understand anything, and God will set His seal upon that. As to earthly things, God will take up your cause as to your children. But, besides that, there is another thing, they will see that you esteem God's Word, because it not only teaches you how to be saved, but how to be happy, and reveals the very heart of God, His ways and works. They will see that you love the Bible, and commend by speech and ways the Scriptures even before it please God to convert them—calling them from death to life. Don't urge them, overdrive or chill them, and thus you will win them. Your hearts being happy in the love of God, you will find this, that your training before conversion will mightily tell upon their character afterwards; because we must never forget this, that whatever the vessel is before conversion, the heart purged from an evil conscience, the affections sanctified by the truth of God, the will subdued by God, the vessel is the same. Saul of Tarsus was the same after he was converted as before. His capacity and capability for evil was the same as before conversion, but they were afterwards used for God, to make him what he was; that is to say, all his natural and mental powers and capabilities were now under the direction of God by His Spirit. It is said of Timothy, "from a child thou hast known the Scriptures;" and God turned this to good account.

"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. xxii. 6).

LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL.

LIFE still is beautiful! The pilgrim weary—
Beyond the saline spring, the tropic glow—
Still finds an Elim in the desert dreary,
Where palm-trees flourish, and sweet waters flow.

Life still is beautiful! The pilot sailing
O'er inky billows, tipped with flashing foam,
Forgets the dangers of the deep, in hailing
Athwart the gloom, the harbour lights of home.

Life still is beautiful! Though sorely broken
The frame that once was strong to do and dare;
'Tis joy to greet again health's feeblest token,
To see fair fields, and breathe the blessed air.

Life still is beautiful! Though shadows lengthen
From hills where day by day hope's sun has set;
God's presence comes at eventide to strengthen,
And Eden flowers with heaven's dew are wet.

O brief and beautiful! O rapid river
Still gliding onward to the solemn sea,
Thy golden tideway even now doth quiver
With sunlight from the better life to be!

A. P. M.

Aigle, Switzerland, 7th Jan., 1885.

"PHILIPPIANS."

CHAPTER iv. verse 2. The differences of two women were enough to interfere with the spirituality and growth of the Church at Philippi; hence the exhortation: "I beseech Euodias and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord".

We are apt to think that if the leaders in a Church are of one accord, all is well; but if one member, and that even the feeblest, be out of joint, the whole body must suffer.

It is not difficult to discern the workings of "strife and vain glory." How to repair the mischief and restore the erring ones not only to the Lord, but to each other, needs the "wisdom that cometh from above," and the pastor's heart.

The Apostle knew of this root of bitterness when he commenced his letter. To note when and how he speaks of it, is deserving the prayerful consideration of all who have a care for the Saints of God.

He first commends their zeal in the service of Christ; next shows them that before "honour is

humility"; then warns of what a snare the flesh is, seeking to make them of one mind, in following on to "know Him," reminding them of the happy moment when they shall be "like Him." Not till this point had been reached, does he address himself *directly* to those who in their failure had ever been before his mind. The language he uses is that of entreaty; beseeching will succeed, or at least accomplish more than the stern words of command.

To speak after the manner of men, had the verse before us been the opening of the Epistle, the breach between these two women would likely have been widened instead of being healed.

If we would be helpers in the work of fashioning each other's lives to the pleasing of God, it can only be as we retain the confidence, and in wisdom speak to the hearts of those wandering from the way. "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city" (Prov. xviii. 19); and he that would undertake this work of winning, would do well to remember it as a hard though a blessed work, for which he will require *zeal*, but not the untempered fleshly energy so productive of disastrous results. Along with zeal must be *knowledge*; and with knowledge, *wisdom*; but above all, he must possess the *charity* "which is not easily provoked",—"beareth all things", "endureth all things", "hopeth all things", and which "never faileth" (1 Cor. xiii. 5, 7, 8).

Verse 4—Again and yet again, the call to "Rejoice in the Lord", "finally", and "always", the be all, and the end all of the believers occupation on earth.

In a former paper attention was drawn to the repeated references to joy found in this epistle. It may be taken for granted, that wherever in Scripture we find a word or phrase oft repeated, to understand these words and phrases is the key to the section where they occur. Instance the expression "with slight variation), "The good hand of his God upon him," peculiar to the time of Ezra and his company leaving Babylon (Ezra, chapters vii. and viii.) The phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" found only in the Gospel by Matthew. These sweet words, "verily, verily," used only by the beloved disciple, (this is the disciple which *testifieth*, John xxi. 24). As also the word "better" which occurs oftener in the epistle to the Hebrews than in all the rest of the New Testament. Those who know what it is to "rejoice in the Lord", have begun to "learn the deep things of

God" in the epistle to the Philippians. *Verses 6 to 9*, should be read together, and may be summed up thus—*First*: Things to *pray* about (verse 6)—*Second*: Things to *think* about (verse 8)—*Third*: Things to *do* (verse 9).

The things to *pray* about are all things. What we are taught specially in this most blessed portion is not so much that our requests shall be answered; in fact, the pledge of an answer is not here given, but that having told my wants, God's own peace "which passeth all understanding" "shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." The praying one here is not like the importunate widow, who knew not if her petition would be heard or granted, but is one who knows and is assured his God has heard, and this knowledge is to him enough. The answer may be deferred—if it is, he frets not, believing "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth him" (Ps. cxxxviii. 8). God dwells in eternal calm—above the fume, and fret, and worry of life. Like the child in the storm, nestling to its mother's heart, the believing, praying one nestles to the heart of God, and all is calm.

Second: Things to *think* about. Can the Christian control his thoughts? This much he can surely do, keep strict account with them, and set himself to "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 5). The word of the mouth betokens the thought of the heart. When the speech is loose, unkind, defiled, and defiling, there is a nest of unclean birds within. The thought of the heart must be corrected and tested by the Word of Truth: if not, our vain and foolish imaginings will soon lead us far from God.

Without taking up in detail the ample subject matter of verse 8, we might profitably stay a moment on the first sentence, "Whatsoever things are true . . . think on these things". The word of His grace as it meets my every need is true, and we never tire thinking of His matchless love; but in our relationship to each other in the Lord, what about our thoughts? Two brethren meet; salutations are exchanged, and one says to the other: "Have you heard about our brother A——?" The one addressed is *happily* ignorant, but he is soon enlightened by having poured into his ear some rumour affecting the character of one, dearly beloved by God, and who ought to have been dear to both. No question of

evidence has been raised, and the two who had thus met, go their several ways, their thoughts meanwhile are busy resulting in the hardness of spirit growing against the one accused, manifesting itself in distance and coldness towards him. When next they meet him he is filled with astonishment and grief, not knowing why they should so treat him. This, alas, is no fancied sketch, but one of too frequent occurrence. How many brethren have been estranged on earth, because of neglecting the primary truth of giving no place to the "thought" until its truth is established. A rumour is not necessarily truth. No accusation ought to be received as truth before the accused one has been face to face with his accuser, and had opportunity to answer for himself concerning the things laid to his charge. (Acts xxv. 16.) What a rebuke is this Scripture, in the lips of a heathen Roman to the religious Jew, who would have condemned the Apostle Paul unheard. Individuals are suffering in our estimation. Have we sufficient grounds? Churches have been ruthlessly set down as impracticable, and wanting in love to the truth, yet, never allowed to justify or explain their supposed unfaithfulness. In short, the Bible is true, every word thereof is tried; therefore, think upon its testimony, morning, noon, and night; nothing outside the Bible is true, until sufficient evidence is adduced to prove it; and if the question is about a brother or a church, they must be heard before sentence go forth against them. Then, if need be, we must think, but even then our thoughts should not be our own, but the thoughts of our God as found in his Word, applicable to the *proved* wrong-doing.

Third: Things to *do*. What concentrated force is in that little word "do". There are those who are ever "learning", and "receiving", and "hearing", and seeing, but they never seem a bit the wiser or better. It is "by reason of use" the "senses are exercised" (Heb. v. 14). What is wanted is *doing* Christians, not those whose lives are a day-dream, ever purposing some great thing on a future day, whilst suffering the present moments, to bear their record up before the Lord, as having been unredeemed. Such Christians are hindrances in the Work of the Lord, and offend against Christ.

In Nehemiah's day, the nobles amongst the Tekoites "put not their necks to the work of the Lord" (Nehemiah iii. 5); quite likely they highly approved

of the work, very possibly they commended and applauded the workers, but their names stand recorded as those who stood idly by when every hand was needed. Alas that there are so many idlers to-day. The faithful worker is satisfied with the approval of the Master; the commendations and flatteries of patronizing idlers are always a snare. Little wonder that there are so few *strong* Christians. The angels "excel in strength", "*doing* his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word" (Ps. ciii. 20). God will not minister His peace to the slothful. "If any will not *work*, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. iii. 10). Whilst this is true in temporal things it is also true in the things of God. If we are crying "my leanness, my leanness", there is surely a reason why we have not been fed.

Verses 11: "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." Agur desired "neither poverty nor riches" (Prov. xxx. 8); he could not contentedly contemplate the prospect of trial, but Paul rose above such an experience, whether full or hungry, he was well content.

This was a matter of attainment. Once upon a time it might not have been so, but he could *now say*, "I have learned". He had *practised* himself in trusting God. We shall only be able to glorify God in the trials of our faith, as we have learned, slowly, it may be, but patiently to trust Him every day; then when the "evil day" comes, (every Christian has his own evil day), it will be to us a good day, because able to "do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth us."

Verses 10, 15, 16, 17, and 18: The Philippians had esteemed it a pleasure to care for the temporal needs of Paul as a servant of Christ, so much so, that he had boasted of them to the Corinthians, as those who, although in deep poverty themselves, had out of their poverty abounded in liberality. Through some cause their care had lessened. See the tender reproach (Philip. ii. 30), when their temporary forgetfulness had laid a burden on Epaphroditus, more than he was well able to bear. But now, their care for him had revived again, and with what tenderness and love he acknowledges their remembrance. He would have them know that his gratitude, of which they were assured, was but a small matter compared with its acceptance by God. "An odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."

Not the least of the happiness of that day, when we stand before Him, will be the acknowledgments our Lord will make of the "cups of cold water" received at our hands in the person of his loved ones while on earth.

Verses 19: All need to be supplied. God the giver, in Christ the inexhaustible store. Our wants may be, and often are contrary to our needs. "We know not what to pray for as we ought," only as we are taught of God by the Spirit, this surely will be a petition the Spirit would have us often breathe. "Lord teach us our need." When knowing our need, we will be asking according as His will is to grant; be saved the distracting experiences of asking amiss, and in happy fellowship with God about our need, prove the riches of that Glory which so fully satisfies.

P. H.

SPIRITUAL EYESIGHT.

"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."—PSALM cxix. 18.



READER, is this thy prayer when thou sittest down to peruse the Scriptures? Hast thou been taught by the Holy Spirit thy naturally blind and ignorant condition, and that thou canst not understand things spiritual except by His teaching? The above Scripture is the language of those hearts only that are taught of God. Many imagine that the sacred oracles are to be interpreted by the wisdom of our natural mind, but God has declared that "the *natural man* receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are *foolishness* unto him: neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually* discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14). It is also recorded that the Holy Spirit is given to guide us "into all truth" (John xvi. 13). Let us ponder these inspired testimonies. Have we not often proved the truth of them in our various experiences? Were not the sacred writings *foolishness* unto us for many a year, and of all other books the least in our estimation? And since our eyes were opened to a right view of our natural depravity, and power was given us to lay hold upon the Son of God as our salvation, have we not often been struck with the beauty, and felt the preciousness, of the Word of God, and its suitability to our poor and needy souls? Blessed would it be for us if we were at all times sensible of our real ignorance

and weakness, that we might habitually yield ourselves to the wisdom and teaching of the Spirit of truth when meditating on the Holy Scriptures. We are told that Jesus opened the understandings of His disciples, "that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke xxiv. 45), for, though they were His true-hearted followers, had been under His personal ministry, and had lived and walked with Him, still they needed the power of God to enable them to apprehend *divine* instruction. And we, too, should remember that whatever measure of knowledge we possess, or however much we may have attained in spiritual things, yet, without the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit, we cannot have a profitable understanding of the truth as it is in Jesus. Let us, then, continually lift up our hearts to Him, to anoint our eyes with eye-salve, that we may have ability to "behold wondrous things" out of His "law." And we shall find them "wondrous" indeed; first, because of the inexhaustible riches they unfold of the grace of

God, to such as we once were—"enemies;" and to such as we still are—failing, faithless, perverse, &c., unworthy of the least of His mercies. Secondly, in their peculiar adaptation to each and all of the Lord's dear people, whatever be their circumstances. Thirdly, because that in every page, in various ways—in types, shadows, parables, or figures, written by many instruments, and at different periods of time—the blessed Lord Jesus is presented to us, either in the perfect beauty and glory of His mysterious *person*, the incomparable excellencies of His *character*, or in His finished and all-prevailing *work*. Beloved children of God! let us seek to cultivate an increasing sense of our natural ignorance and blindness, that our unfeigned cry to the God of all grace, whenever we read the Holy Scriptures, may be, "OPEN THOU MINE EYES;" and thus drawing by faith out of His fulness, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," we shall assuredly "BEHOLD WONDROUS THINGS" out of His law.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

NOTE.—Those who endeavour to reply to Questions, desire to impress upon readers their responsibility to "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. v. 21). They make no pretension to infallibility, but give their judgment as those who have received mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—Many Questions are received but not replied to; some not being for general edification, whilst others are laid aside from want of sufficient light to deal with them.—It is requested that all communications be accompanied by the Name and Address of the sender

QUESTION No. CLXXXIX.

Please explain what is meant by the words, "FITTED to destruction" (Rom. ix. 22); "whereunto also they were APPOINTED" (1 Peter ii. 8); "who were before of old ORDAINED to this condemnation" (Jude 4.)

REPLY.

In the first of the three passages the word rendered "fitted" is the same that is elsewhere rendered "perfected," and implies a process by which these "vessels" became prepared for the doom that awaited them. It is like the "hardening" process by which Pharaoh became fitted for the last judgment stroke, and like the process by which nations fill up the cup of their iniquity until they become as it were fully ripe for destruction (see Gen. xv. 16; 1 Thess. ii. 16).

With regard to the second Scripture, we here quote the words of another, giving, we believe, the true meaning, to unbelievers, this stone was a stone of stumbling and of offence. They stumbled at the Word, being disobedient, to which also they were appointed. It does not say that they were

appointed to sin, nor to condemnation; but these unbelieving and disobedient sinners, the Jewish race, long rebellious, and continually exalting themselves against God, were destined to find in the Lord of grace Himself a rock of offence, and to stumble and fall upon that which was to faith the precious stone of salvation. It was to *this particular fall* that their unbelief was destined."

The third Scripture (Jude 4) is much obscured by the introduction of the word "ordained." The Greek word is nowhere else so rendered. It is the same as in Ephesians iii. 3, where it is rendered, "*I wrote afore*" (pro-grapho); and in Romans xv. 4, "written aforetime."

This greatly simplifies the passage, for it takes out of it the idea of preordination to condemnation, but teaches that the prophetic Scriptures distinctly foretold that such persons would arise—abusing *grace* by making it subservient to their lusts, and denying the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. The writer of the epistle then goes on to refer to many Old Testament prophecies, bearing upon these sins of the last apostate days.

“EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION.”

2 THESS. i. 9.



So solemn and awful is the teaching of the Word of God as to the doom of the ungodly, and especially of those who have rejected the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, it is hardly to be wondered at that many should seek to evade the full force of the Scriptures that bear upon it.

Opposition to the orthodox belief upon the subject generally originates in a desire to vindicate God's character as a God of love, with which the doctrine of the eternal punishment of the wicked is declared to be inconsistent.

But, at the outset, let it be clearly understood that nothing which God has revealed concerning Himself or His ways in His Word can really be inconsistent with His character, however much, in the short-sighted wisdom of man, it may appear to be.

The love of God has been once for all manifested in the gift of His Son. The cross of Jesus, with all its untold agonies, declares, in language sufficient to stop every mouth and silence every doubt, that “God is love.”

The Cross is, and will ever be, God's grand vindication of His own character as a God of love.

It is, therefore, in a spirit of child-like simplicity that a subject such as this must be approached. The object of inquiry is simply and only, “What hath God said?” If He has been pleased to reveal aught that appears to be inconsistent with His character, be it ours neither to cavil at it, nor question it, nor seek to evade it; but, like little children, reverently to believe and adore.

Two lines of escape alone present themselves to the reasoning mind from the full force of the words at the heading of this paper.

The first is, that the word rendered “everlasting” does not bear the signification which is usually attached to it, viz.: “eternal,” or never-ending.

But, if this be found to be untenable, then the ground of attack is changed, and the second argument is resorted to, viz.: that the punishment is *eternal* in its fullest sense, but that it is *not conscious punishment*; in other words, that it is annihilation.

Let us then carefully look at a few Scriptures

bearing upon these two points, and see if either of them will bear the honestly-applied test of the Word of God.

First, then, as to the word rendered “eternal,” or “everlasting.” Literally, it means “for the age,” rendered usually “for ever;” or, in another form yet stronger, “for the ages;” or, again, in a yet stronger form, for “ages of ages.”

It is not our intention to go critically into all the details of the original words nor would it be for the edification of the great majority of our readers. We would only point out a few plain incontrovertible facts: enough, in our judgment, to satisfy any simple mind; but not enough to meet the arguments, the criticisms, and the evasions of the initiated.

The ordinary Greek word rendered “eternal” is “*aionios*.” It is used, for example, as follows:—

In Matt. xxv. 46—Applied to life, and the same in John iii. 16, John x. 28, and all similar passages.

In Rom. xvi. 26—Applied to God, “the *everlasting* God.”

In Heb. ix. 14—Applied to the Holy Spirit.

In Heb. v. 9—“*Eternal* salvation.”

In Heb. ix. 12—“*Eternal* redemption.”

In Heb. ix. 15—“*Eternal* inheritance.”

In Heb. xiii. 20—“*Everlasting* covenant.”

Surely the above instances of the use of the word in Scripture are enough to establish its meaning to any unbiassed mind.

Now compare with the above the following, where the identical word is used:—

Matt. xxv. 46—“*Everlasting* punishment.”

Matt. xviii. 8, xxv. 41—“*Everlasting* fire.”

2 Thess. i. 9—“*Everlasting* destruction.”

Heb. vi. 2—“*Eternal* judgment.”

Jude 7.—“Suffering the vengeance of *Eternal* fire.”

The inevitable conclusion is that, if the word does not mean “eternal” in the latter passages, then it may not mean “eternal” in the former. Thus a shadow is cast on the “eternal life” of the believer, as well as on the “salvation,” the “redemption,” the “inheritance,” &c., &c.

Other two, and even more forcible, forms are used in the following passages:—

Rom. i. 25—“The Creator, . . . blessed for *ever*.”

Gal. i. 5—“To Whom be glory for *ever and ever*.”

1 Tim. i. 17—“The King *eternal* . . . glory for *ever and ever*.”

Heb. i. 8—“Thy throne, O God, is for *ever and ever*.”

Rev. i. 6—“Glory and dominion for *ever and ever*.”

Rev. iv. 9—“Who liveth for *ever and ever*.”

Rev. xv. 7—“God, who liveth for *ever and ever*.”

Rev. xxii. 5—“They shall reign for *ever and ever*.”

We confidently assert that language could not be stronger than what is used in the above passages.

Now compare with these the following, where the identical form of expression is used :—

Rev. xiv. 11—“The smoke of their torment ascendeth up
for ever and ever.”

Rev. xix. 3—“Hersmoke rose up for ever and ever.”

Rev. xx. 10—“Tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

Surely these three Scriptures are enough to shew that Satan’s punishment is, in its fullest sense, both conscious and eternal, and that the very same is the portion of those who have taken sides with Satan against Christ, even that very “everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

It is useless to argue that the words imply a limited, though an extended period. An “age,” with God, is at least a thousand years. “Ages” must be much longer. But the expression “ages of ages,” what can it mean but that which exceeds human conception—in short, ETERNITY.

We now come to consider the second line of escape proposed, viz. : that the punishment, though “eternal” in its fullest sense, is not a conscious endurance of suffering, but an eternal deprivation of good, or, in other words, annihilation, or non-existence. It is stated that, whilst Scripture teaches “*everlasting punishment*” and “*everlasting destruction*,” it does not teach “*everlasting torment*.”

But, although in our translation it does not appear, this is exactly what Scripture does teach. As though the Spirit of God had anticipated such evasions, the word rendered “punishment” in Matt. xxv. 46 is only used in one other place, viz. : 1 John iv. 18, “fear hath torment.” The use of it here is conclusive ; it cannot bear any rendering other than that given. The torment of fear is intensely real, and implies of necessity consciousness in its fullest sense. So applicable is this parallel that, according to Ps. lxxiii., the wicked in whose death there are “no bands” (ver. 4), after their death are seen by the Psalmist to be cast down into “destruction” (ver. 18), and “utterly consumed with terrors” (ver. 19). It would, therefore, be perfectly allowable to render Matt. xxv. 46 as in John iv. 18, “these shall go away into everlasting torment.”

To support the above theory, it is maintained that death is a cessation of conscious existence, that “the

soul” is simply “the life,” and that it terminates with the death of the body.

But this theory falls at once before the words of our Lord Jesus—Matt. x. 28, “fear not them which kill the body, but *are not able to kill the soul*.” This is unanswerable. The body dies and is buried, but the soul continues to exist, and is beyond the reach of weapons formed by man.

This is borne out by the Lord’s teaching again in Luke xvi. 19-31. It is asserted that this is merely a parable, drawn from Jewish traditions, and that it does not teach the conscious existence of the soul apart from the body. To us it appears little short of blasphemy, so to tamper with the words of Him who spoke as “never man spake.” Would the Lord have endorsed, by His teaching, a mere superstition ? And not merely a harmless or frivolous superstition, but one which according to the teaching of annihilationists, is most mischievous, because it imputes to God the character of awful cruelty instead of love !

No, we cannot accept such theories. On the very face of them they are attempted evasions of the truth.

That it is of the nature of a parable we do not deny, albeit, it is not said to be a parable. But granting that it is a parable, can it be admitted for a moment that it teaches anything short of the conscious existence of the man after death and before resurrection—whilst his brethren are yet alive—and also that having died in impenitence, his existence is one of conscious suffering ?

The idea of literal fire is ridiculed. We care not to contend for it, indeed, in view of James iii. 6, it appears as if the fire of hell was of a different nature, from literal fire. But when a figure is used by God to teach, it is one which is the best suited to convey to our minds the intended idea. Therefore, whatever “hell fire” may be, it is intolerable torment applied in judgment by God.

And here we would refer to that awfully solemn word of our Lord, thrice repeated (Mark ix. 44, 46, 48), “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Two ideas are here. The “worm” is the outcome of corruption. It points to the gnawing anguish of sin and conscious guilt, the misery that is generated out of the sinner’s own corruption. Character is unchanged, and conscience is unpurged—the word has gone forth “he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.”

But in addition to "the worm," there is "the fire." This is the judgment of God, the righteous punishment of sin inflicted by a Holy God.

If there be no such suffering, no such torment, nothing analogous to existence in flame, how then could the Lord be justified in using language which could only mislead the simple and child-like inquirer?

We maintain that the teaching of the Lord is specially designed to be clear to the simplest and most child-like mind, and no such reader of the Word would ever dream of the evasions that are now boldly contended for, only a very few of which we have noticed.

Compare with the scriptures already referred to, Acts i. 25—Judas went "to his own place." This cannot mean the grave, for saint and sinner alike go there. It is a simple and obvious confirmation of Luke xvi.

Also Jude 7—"suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." The fire that consumed the cities of the plain was not eternal. The conflagration died out, and the plain is now covered with the waters of the Dead Sea. Plainly and obviously it refers to the wicked inhabitants of these cities, who, like the man of Luke xvi., are suffering in their souls consciously and eternally the vengeance of God.

Then there is the "torment" of Rev. xiv. 10, 11, to be inflicted upon the ungodly of a yet future time, and which is the same as that which is to be the portion of Satan himself—see Rev. xx. 10.

It has been asked—*Is the doctrine of "the Immortality of the Soul" to be found in Scripture?*

The Greek word for immortality (*athanasia*) occurs only in the following passages:—1 Cor. xv. 53, 54, and 1 Tim. vi. 16.

Another word signifying *incorruptibility* (*aphtharsia*) occurs in the following places:—Rom. ii. 7; 1 Cor. xv. 42, 50, 53, 54; Eph. vi. 24; 2 Tim. i. 10; Titus ii. 7; and the adjective form of the same in Rom. i. 23; 1 Cor. ix. 25; xv. 52; 1 Tim. i. 17; 1 Peter i. 4, 23; and iii. 4.

In the face of these Scriptures we believe it is a mistake to apply the term *immortality* to the everlasting existence of the soul. The word is not so used in Scripture, and it is only giving a handle to the enemy if we contend for it.

Satan's device is to take advantage of the ordinary use of the term immortality, and to deny not only

its application to the soul, but also to deny that the soul does possess essentially an everlasting existence apart from the body and after death.

The fact is that in no way does the term "eternal life" or "immortality" or "incorruptibility," as used in Scripture, apply to the condition or existence of the lost. Everlasting existence in the torments of hell is not "everlasting life"—it is not "immortality." It is eternal death, but it is not a cessation of existence, it is not annihilation—it is an existence without a revealed termination in the conscious endurance of the wrath of God.

"He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36).

It is impossible to overestimate the mischief that is being done by this doctrine which we do not hesitate to name the Devil's Gospel.

Many a one now converted to God will bear testimony that if, before his conversion, he could have convinced himself that hell was a fiction, and that eternal punishment meant annihilation, he would have welcomed that belief with all his heart, and giving the reins to his lusts have gone in for the pleasures of sin to the extreme.

The rapidity with which the error is spreading in every sect, and the fewness and febleness of the voices bearing testimony against it, all tell how thoroughly it is adapted to the likings of the carnal mind.

In many cases it is the vain idea, that death is non-existence, which lures the disappointed wretch to seek escape from his blasted life in suicide. Non-existence, to him, has the charm of rest from the present hell of a shipwrecked life. And in America, where this doctrine has been more generally accepted than it is here, as yet, the increase in the number of suicides is the awful confirmation of what we now have written.

We warn the people of God against it, as a most awful and plausible device of Satan to undermine the Gospel, to disparage the atonement, and to ensnare souls.

We beseech young believers to shun it, and those who hold it, and books which teach it, as they would shun a plague.

May God use this feeble paper to stablish, strengthen, and settle any who may have been unsettled upon the question.

J. R. C.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAP. i. 35-49.

“**A** GAIN the next day after John stood, and two of His disciples.” John has two disciples standing by him at a given moment, and he says, “There is the Lamb of God.” And the two disciples heard him speak, and they follow Jesus. Oh, that that were the effect of all our preaching now. That whenever we pointed to the Lamb of God, the souls we pointed might cling at once to Jesus. “Then Jesus turned and saw them following.” As having been baptized He was now ready to begin His work, and was waiting upon His Father. A beautiful instance of what communion with God is. Not to do a thing, but that we first wait upon God about it. Now, if you look at the subsequent verses, one point, I think, should strike you very clearly; and that is, that of these disciples, who at once begin to cluster round Jesus when He is introduced in full as the Lamb of God—and mind, it means Christ as risen, because no sin is alluded to now, not as before, “the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world,” but when He is introduced to sinners as the risen Lamb of God, at once the sinners begin to cluster round Him; and there is this which directly claims our attention, namely, that in the case of the first it seems more like responsibility which is brought out; but in the case of one of the next there seems to be divine sovereignty as distinctly brought out. In the case of the first, and of the second, there is something like responsibility. “Look at the Lamb of God,” says John, and they go to Him at once. Then in the case of the third, in verse 43, there surely is divine sovereignty. “The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me.” “And findeth Philip.” But who is Philip? Why should the Spirit of God so explicitly mention that Jesus, in Galilee, finds Philip? Why, I suppose, there were thousands, tens of thousands, of souls in Galilee, but “He findeth Philip.” Whoever was Philip? I remind you of a remark I have before made, that in the lists of the Apostles, which the Spirit of God gives in Matthew, and in Mark, and in Luke and the Acts, they are always grouped into three fours. That is, the second four never get into the first four, and those of the

third four never get into the second four. But that is not all; the first of the first four is always kept first, and the first of the second four always keeps that place, and likewise the first of the third four, though the other names are transposed. There must be some reason for this, though what it may be I do not understand. Now, we know that these men were given to Christ by the Father, “Of those whom Thou hast given Me, I have lost none,” and certainly Philip was one of these. Beloved, may we as a little band of Christians, not only realize, but enjoy the truth that God has predestinated us to sonship before eternal times. *Predestinated* us; it does not look at our fall; election does, but not predestination. Predestination eyes the home, and the presence into which we are to be brought; and God, before eternal times, predestinated us to be brought into that presence. Need I tell you what presence I mean? And Jesus first, and afterward the Holy Spirit, is the great carrier-out of the Divine purpose. Now Jesus finds Philip, and He found you. In the cases of the other disciples, they seem as it were to find Christ, but here Christ finds Philip. Thus we have here, both the great truths of Scripture on a very controverted point, to wit, human responsibility to chime in with Divine sovereignty; and they do not jar, they coalesce. Ah, He found me! Oh, let us enjoy it. Whatever God reveals is for our joy; not to be afraid of it, and to speak of it under our breath. God predestinated us, and, at the same time, I think, as John i. 2, became a fact; He predestinated us before all times, that we should be co-heirs with His Son (2 Tim. i. 9, Titus i. 2), see Revised Version. Let us enjoy it. Not only are we elected, we are predestinated.

Let us observe a second fact: that whether sinners are brought to Christ through realizing their responsibility, or rather their need; or whether through Christ finding them, they each quickly bring another. Now notice here, that each of these disciples, when once he has got hold of Christ, he is so full of living water that he immediately brings another. How long have you been a Christian? Five years, perhaps you say. And you have not brought *one*? And you mean to tell me that rivers of living water flow out of you? Surely they rather dribble. Then Jesus turns to these first two, and sees them following, and says to them—“What seek ye?” He does not say “*Whom* seek ye?” He allows rather their con-

sciences to find that out. They do not like to say, "Lord, it is yourself we want," and so they put it in a round about way, "Where dwellest Thou?" And Jesus says to them, "Come and see"; and they went and stayed with Him a few hours. The Lord Jesus was evidently a very accessible person. He does not say, "Oh, I live at such a place," but "Come and see." I do not tarry long upon these first two; one of them was no doubt John himself. He was certainly a very retiring character; why, I cannot tell, unless the object of the Spirit is to keep Christ in the foreground. But immediately, the Lord gives Peter his new-birth name; Cephas, a stone, a chip of the rock. It is remarkable that in John He begins with giving him his name, so that he must have been born again, and have begun to cling to the Rock, for we only became "living stones," as Peter himself says, by clinging to the Rock. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, . . . ye also, as living stones, are built up."

"The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto Him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael." They seem, do these souls who were groping for something better, to have known one another. They seem a sort of inner circle, or band, and when one has found something better he passes it on to the other. However, Philip's testimony is very poor; Nathanael's, when he finds Christ, is an infinite degree richer. Philip's is even, in some degree, incorrect; I suppose because he knew not better. "We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph." At once I contrast this with Nathanael's testimony in verse 49, "Thou art the Son of God." What a difference, in their knowledge of Christ, there is between these two real disciples. And can it be possible that two real disciples of Christ differ so much in their apprehension of the person of Christ now? That some do not grasp it, the greatness of the Person of Jesus? Anyhow, this is clear, that two who were each certainly disciples of Jesus had a very different degree indeed, of knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; be it, therefore, your ambition and mine to know a great deal about Christ, so that if any should ask you about Him you might be so full as to have to labour to express all you know. To think of Philip, even when he had been with Christ a

minute saying, "Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph;" and when Nathanael had been with Christ a little while he could say, "Thou art the Son of God." Not but what Philip was a true believer in the Lord Jesus—no Unitarian is born of God. Philip was simply groping towards better things, and had to be told, and he believed. And Nathanael was told; and there the Lord again shows His sovereignty. Why did He take such pains to instruct Nathanael, and not with Philip, who evidently was elected and predestinated? I cannot say; God's ways are sovereign. When I read, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," I say, it is easy to read these words; but it is not the same thing to "grow in grace," as to read about growing. Nathanael grew wonderfully, and I think I can tell you how he came to grow so. All these had evidently been disciples of John the Baptist, but they felt that he was not the person for whom they were seeking, and they wanted something better. Unconverted souls can rest in the Reverend Mr. this, and the Reverend Mr. that, but souls who have life need something more. And besides this, Nathanael seems to have been in deep contrition about sin, and I think that is the secret as to how quickly he advanced in the school of God. Have you ever, once in your life, put your head down in the dust before God? Really, *really!* Now, I think, Nathanael had, but I doubt whether Philip had. I think Nathanael had been deeply abased about his sins; and the more we know of our sinfulness, our wretchedness, our absolute unworthiness, the fuller will that Christ, the Son of the living God, with His glory, appear to our eyes. The words of verse 45 should read thus, "We have found Jesus, the son of Joseph, of Nazareth." As if he did not think it such a low place to be the son of Joseph, as to come out of Nazareth; as if he hardly liked to utter that. But Nathanael's confession was like Peter's in Matt. xvi., "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art The King of Israel." Heavenly and earthly glories meet in Thee.

"And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" That was before he had come; that is the way to learn, to come; if we have not learned much of Christ, it is because we have not come much. Nathanael altered his tone very much when he had come. The reason some can give so much better a testimony about Christ than

others, is because they come closer and oftener to Him. "Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming unto him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Now I think I can prove to you, so as to convince you, that the Lord alludes here to Ps. xxxii.; for we shall find in it two points of reference, I believe, to that Psalm. Let us read Ps. xxxii. a little. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Now these are the very words of the passage. And this is more remarkable, when the Lord adds, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." What was he doing under that fig tree? Well, if I look down the Psalm, I can, I think, make a good guess. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long." Outward composure, inward restlessness "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Now think of Nathanael under the fig tree, how he would muse thus: "The Lord is coming, and I do feel I am a very great sinner. All the people keep on testifying of it; but I cannot be so joyful as they, when I think of my sin, my sin. There is a fig tree, I will sit under its shade and tell the Lord about my sin." And did the Lord forgive him? "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." And then the Lord tells him, "When thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee." "I saw it all, I saw the broken heart, the tears streaming down your cheeks, that you could not rejoice with My people, and that all you could do was to smite upon your breast." But this is not the only allusion to the Psalm, there is another one. I have sometimes remarked that the first Book of Psalms (from i. to xli.), is full of allusions to the eye of God.* Even in this (xxxii.) we have such an one—"I will guide thee with Mine eye;" but this is only a specimen. But now look at our chapter. "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Does it not clearly identify the speaker of John, with Jehovah of the first Book of Psalms?

* N.B.—Each of the four books of Psalms ends with Amen and Amen.

It is enough to prove to me that Jesus is Jehovah, by the many clear allusions to the Psalm. "I saw Thee." Now, I suppose in a company like this there are souls in very various conditions. We cannot be always upon the mount, or we are not, at anyrate, upon the mount, above the mists and clouds below. We are a pilgrim people, weighed down with the harassments of evil. But Jesus is regarding you and can lift you up, and give you a helping hand; and the moment you get down He will revive your spirit so. Was it not so with Nathanael? Evidently the Lord spoke to Nathanael's conscience; and I should almost quote that as a third proof that Christ was alluding to Psalm xxxii., for who can speak to the conscience like God?

So there we see his spiritual history. First, he must have been a careless, ungodly young man; next, he is struck and impressed with the joy of those who were saying, "Christ is coming," and wishes he were like them; then he gets depressed, and sits down, as Christ testified, under the fig tree, some place quiet and retiring; and there, where no eye can see and no ear can hear, he goes through Psalm xxxii. up to a certain point; and then he is brought to Jesus and goes through the rest. "I saw you; I heard you." Oh, beautiful testimony for our souls! For the Lord is coming again. His first advent was foretold to the very day by Daniel the prophet. The actual moment of His second advent is, for wise purposes, hid; but it is impressed as deeply upon the minds of His disciples now, as then, that the Lord's advent is very nigh. And some are rejoicing, and not only rejoicing, but bringing in others; and some are confessing their sins. I think, so far as I can see, that this which Nathanael (or Bartholomew, for it is the same individual) experienced up to this point, is the very highest experience. Peter got up as high when he said in Matt. xvi., "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and I do not suppose any one could get beyond that noble confession. Peter got up to that; Nathanael jumped to it at once. And why? Because he had been deepest down in the depths of soul humiliation; and if you want to know the Lord well, you must get to the very end of self. As long as you are dangling between the two you will not know either self very well, or the Lord very well. But when you have got right to the very end of self, and know yourself really, and abhor yourself

in dust and ashes, then is the time to see the glory of the Lord. Do you remember how God dealt with Job? Look and see. In chap. xl. 3-5 we read, "Then Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further." But did you ever notice that he had to proceed a deal further? He had said, "I am vile;" but that was not enough for God. Look at chap. xlii. 5, 6, and see if it is not so. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." "I abhor myself:" that is more than, "I am vile." To hate self and to repent in dust and ashes is deep self abasement; and he had evidently got to the very bottom then. And then God answers in kindness and in love. You must get below, "I am vile," a deal lower; and then Christ will be all in all to you.—(*Notes of an address by W. Lincoln, communicated by J. S. H.*)

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

CHAPTER IX.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY J. R. C.

THE Apostle's assertion in this chapter of his right to be maintained by the contributions of the saints has been taken to support the doctrine of a separate class among Christians set apart for ministerial functions distinguished from the believers generally—"clergy," as contrasted with "laity."

But observe that in this chapter he is referring specially to those who preach the gospel,—*i.e.*, to evangelists and their work and support, not to pastors, overseers, teachers, who are localized in certain towns and permanently associated with the assemblies in those places. When he refers to such, it is in different terms. Turn to Acts xx. 28, 29, and you will see the spirit which the Apostle inculcated in such—"Take heed, therefore, unto *yourselves* and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after My departing shall grievous wolves enter in

among you, not sparing the flock." Like the false shepherds referred to in Ezekiel xxxiv. 2, 3, "Woe to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? Ye eat the fat and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed, but ye feed not the flock." That's the difference between the true and the false shepherds. The one fed, nourished, and cared for the flock; but the others fed themselves, but did not feed the flock. It is a grand thing when the servants of Christ prove by their lives that they are not serving self but the Lord.

To return to Acts xx. In this Scripture Paul is not speaking to evangelists, but to those who had oversight in the Church at Ephesus. He was not addressing those who might have to go many hundreds of miles to preach the Gospel, but to pastors in local churches, who were labouring in the midst of the saints—feeding, nourishing, and caring for them. The evangelist's work is the breaking up of the fallow ground, and very often, from the nature of his calling, it is impossible for him to support himself. If a man is called to preach the Gospel, let us seek to know that such is his gift, and also seek to see his grace, and witness the fruit of his labours; then, if these are manifest, we can with confidence remember such in prayer and also minister to their temporal necessities.

It is a pity if there are any assemblies of the Lord's people where there are no regular contributions made for the Lord's servants, whether labouring at home or abroad. But let us be sure, in our efforts to help such, that they are indeed His servants, and that they prove their call to the work by their gift, grace, and fruit. Then it is blessed fellowship to pray for them and contribute to their support.

Now, in addressing these overseers of Ephesus, see how different is his teaching. Instead of telling them that, as a separate or clerical class, they have a right to claim the support of the saints, he asserts the very opposite principle: "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you (overseers or bishops) all things, how that *so labouring* YE ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus how He said, it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Turn with me now to the Third Epistle of John, verses 3, 4: "I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." Some of the brethren had entered the house of the well-beloved Gaius, and saw his love and faithfulness; and when they got back to where they were accustomed to meet, they bore witness before the Church of the grace they had seen in Gaius. We should seek to discern this grace in our brethren in other assemblies, and when we see it, we should testify of the same to our brethren, and praise the God who bestows the grace.

Verses 5-8: "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the Church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort (margin, worthy of God), thou shalt do well: because that for His name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth." To help such after a godly sort is to help in a way worthy of God—that is, liberally, freely, heartily, and lovingly.

I might speak as to our responsibility. Let us ask ourselves, each of us, who are gathered unto the name of the Lord, how much are we doing in this way in helping on the Lord's work? If we were Jews, and our income had been one pound per week, we should have required to give two shillings each week. That was the law's demand—"one-tenth." Will grace not constrain us to give more than that? I am judging no one, because I know that there are many of the Lord's people very poor. I would not speak of it merely as a responsibility, but rather of helping the Lord's servants and His poor ones as a *precious privilege*.

If you have anything to give to any of the Lord's servants or His poor ones, take heed of sending it through intermediate channels. Rather take the trouble to find the address, and take it direct to them, that they may know and feel that it is heart-to-heart work. Or, if the communication be by letter, send it direct to the one for whom it is intended. I would not disparage the ministry of brethren who are at much personal labour to keep up constant communication with the Lord's servants

labouring in other lands, and to whom many gifts are entrusted, often with discretion, to send where they deem the need to be greatest. Such a service faithfully performed is a good work. But there is ever a tendency to rely upon such channels of communication, *because it saves trouble*. But I am persuaded there is more blessing to all concerned when the collective gift of an assembly is sent direct with a loving letter and remembrance in prayer to a lonely labourer abroad.

Often this is followed by the joy of hearing direct from the one communicated with, and in many cases telling how the gift just came at the right moment, when every other channel seemed shut up; and thus both givers and receivers rejoice together before God, the Author of every grace.

Societies are a means of taking the life and love and the fellowship joy out of such service.

How many, instead of making a garment for some poor one and taking it to them themselves, like Dorcas, form themselves into a "Dorcas Society," and they gather together to work and gossip, and things are made and sent, and a report made out at the end of the year; but not one, perhaps, of the workers and givers has had any personal heart-to-heart contact with the receivers, nor have the receivers had any thought beyond what "the society" did for them! We want heart-to-heart service. Let us beware of the machinery that takes the life and heart out of the service. Don't you see the blessing that flows from taking the gift to the person, where this can be done? There is mutual joy and thanksgiving to God, the great source of all blessing, coming to us through His well-beloved Son. He served us by shedding His life's blood; shall we not serve Him well, and in such a way as will bring glory to His name: aye, and give joy to His own heart? Shall we not serve Him by considering how we can help on His work, and help and encourage His hidden ones, who are labouring for Him in lonely parts of the world? The Lord stir up our hearts in this honoured, blessed service.

GOD not only shows us the emptiness of everything here, in order to prove His all-sufficiency, by leading us to the fulness that is in Christ Jesus; but He is also showing us how prone we are to misuse the very blessings which He has given to us, by resting in them, instead of living by faith in God.

THE FLESH OR FIRSTBORN.

BURIAL—BAPTISM.

WE invite our converted readers to accompany us back to the spot where, through grace, we gained the position described in Scripture as "*dead to sin.*" That spot we know is Calvary; and, as we gaze upon the lifeless body of the Son of God, we solemnly declare that death to be ours by right, and with the thief exclaim, "We indeed are *justly condemned*, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke xxiii. 41). No confession short of this can bring salvation to the guilty. This admission, more or less intelligently made on the sinner's part, liberates, so to speak, the justice-bound hand of God, and complete and eternal identity with Christ in death and resurrection becomes the portion of the self-condemned sinner. The blessings brought by that identity may be but little known to the recipient of the Gospel, but, blessed be God, ignorance of them cannot alter the word of truth which says, He "hath blessed us with all *spiritual blessings* in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. i. 3).

The little child whose undeveloped mind can only grasp the Gospel in its simplest form has nevertheless "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled"—an inheritance as full and secure as that possessed and enjoyed by the most fully grown in the family of God. The acorn may be held by the tiniest fingers, and yet, within that little seed there lies the mighty oak.

So with the Gospel. Christ is the portion of the strongest, and Christ is the portion of the weakest. Grace says "there is no difference;" and it is well to understand that the *instant* a sinner receives Christ his possessions are so complete, that in *one sense*, nothing can be added to them. This may seem strange to some, and we would here seek to be very guarded least any should be misled.

There is a "recompence of reward" held out for the encouragement of faithfulness, or, if not with that object, yet it remains true that "rewards" *will be* dispensed according to the measure of our devotedness to the Lord. At the judgment-seat of Christ (1 Cor. iii. 13, 14, 15) *these* may be *won or lost*, but the position we are brought into by identity with

Christ in death and resurrection is the same for all, whether weak or strong, whether intelligent or dull. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; *all are yours*, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." What a precious declaration! And is it not more precious still when we remember that these words were written to *carnal saints*, who were unable to bear the strong meat of the Word, and because of their enfeebled spiritual condition had to be fed with milk? (1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.) It is evident that believers have a possession and position which remain untouched, even though they be carnal and dull—a possession and position which *grace* has given, and which *grace* maintains. There are some, and we fear not a few, amongst God's children who seem to take advantage of this grace, and with shameful selfishness loudly proclaim that their "highest and only aim is to get to heaven." They are unmindful of the word which says, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. vi. 20, R.V.)

But having seen the equality of God's grace, and the blessings which are made absolutely ours in Christ, do we not exclaim with the Apostle John, "We love Him because He first loved us?" and go on to inquire with Saul of Tarsus, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6.) All believers in Christ have died with Him, have been *buried* with Him, are raised up together with Him, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. ii. 6). This is true of every one who is saved, whether it be understood and enjoyed, or not; but the *comprehension and enjoyment* of these precious truths are made to depend very much upon the *obedience* of the believer to the word and will of God. God delights in *practical subjection* to His will.

"If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isa. i. 19). This is a principle with God, "*but the rebellious dwell in a dry land*" (Ps. lxxviii. 6). Now in the family of God there are many (to His name be the praise) dwelling in the first of these conditions, "rejoicing in the Lord," and, as "obedient children," seeking to fashion themselves according to His will; but, alas! alas! are these not comparatively very few?

Although all have the same place and inheritance in the risen Christ. Although all "are accepted in

the Beloved One," yet, in the matter of "growth in grace," and enjoyment of heavenly things, there are differences, numerous almost as there are believers on earth. It behoves us then to be careful how we treat the word of God, seeing that our capacity to enjoy Him must necessarily be enlarged or contracted according to the measure of our subjection to Him or disobedience. Christians little know what *present and eternal* loss they sustain in resisting the truth and will of the Lord: loss negative and loss positive. A man may be possessed of enormous wealth; he may have "more than heart could wish" and yet for lack of health be utterly unable to *enjoy* it. Now, as in nature, so it is in grace; whilst all in the family of God are made to possess like blessings in Christ, yet the health of the soul, the spiritual condition, may be such as to unfit the possessor for the enjoyment of those blessings, and true it is that many Christians, very many *are in this condition*. Dulness of hearing (Heb. v. 11, 12), dimness of vision (2 Pet. i. 9), crookedness of walk (Heb. xii. 12, 13), and worldliness of heart (2 Tim. iv. 10) are all traceable to one cause, *viz., dishonour done to God and His word*. Violation of nature's laws is that which brings about physical prostration; and nonconformity to the mind of God, whether ignorantly or wilfully, whether actively or passively, must produce in spiritual things the same result. "God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Many have gone to premature graves through ignorance of cause and effect, for nature did not excuse or make allowance for their simplicity; their *want of knowledge caused them to perish*.

Nor can it be allowed that God's children do not suffer because that certain commands of their Lord have not been known to them, nor "laid upon their hearts." They *do* suffer, they *must* suffer even though they be ignorant as to the cause. Their loss is *real and permanent*. We urge this strongly. The importance of the subject demands it. That which imparts health to the soul and power to enter upon the enjoyment of Christ, or produces the opposite result, must not then be treated lightly. It is not here implied that disobedience to the Lord's commands is followed in every case by *equal results*, the measure of light given and the strength of the resistance offered, must necessarily form the basis of *retributive* consequence, at least in some degree, for

"he that knew his master's will and did it not" is held to be worthy of more stripes than he who knew it not.

There are thousands of believers in Christ for whom the utmost sympathy must be expressed, who are guilty of disobedience, only in a passive sense; those who are responsible to teach and feed them have not done so, and though they are without excuse, inasmuch as they have God's Word and the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth; yet, as a matter of fact, the greater portion are utterly unconcerned and unexercised about certain commandments and doctrines. But though the *guilt* of disobedience may not wholly lie at their door, yet their spiritual experiences testify loudly that they suffer the *consequences* of it. This is solemn but true. It is an undisputed principle in physiology that the *consequences* of indiscretion or sin may be suffered by posterity. We know of one upon whose face the evidences of intemperance may be seen; his organs are diseased; his symptoms are those of a drunkard; his medical adviser declares his ailment to result from alcohol. But, hear the story, *that man has never tasted intoxicating drink*. The *guilt* of drunkenness lies at *his father's* door, but the *consequences of it the son must endure*. Now in some degree this has a parallel in spiritual things.

The intoxications and pollutions of papal Rome have caused to be handed down from generation to generation an enfeebled Christianity, as well as that which perpetuates it: doctrines and commandments of men are put in the place of truth—"brick for stone and slime for mortar"—whilst the will of God is accounted "non-essential." The Reformation rescued one grand fundamental truth from the bondage wherein it had been held; but that truth—"justification by faith"—pertains rather to the salvation of the soul, than to the growth and vigour of the "new-born babe." For the defence and confirmation of this precious salvation doctrine the Reformers spent, or if need be lost their lives; yet few, very few of them, ever saw much beyond it. But we must not be tempted to pursue this theme further; enough has been said to show, that disobedience to the commands of Christ, in greater or less degree unfits the soul for the enjoyment of those heavenly blessings which are ours by virtue of the blood. Let the reader focus the foregoing remarks upon the

subject before us, and its importance will at once be manifest. *Baptism* is the first command to be obeyed by the *saved soul*. There is no such thing as "infant sprinkling" taught in God's Word, nor yet "adult baptism." Believers, and believers only, are commanded to be baptized, and much darkness and distress of soul is experienced by Christians from a want of apprehension of the *doctrine* taught in baptism. But how, we ask, can one expect to grasp and enjoy the truth taught in this ordinance if the *command* itself be not obeyed?

W. J. E.

CHANGELESS LOVE.

THE swallow, wearied on the wing,
 Seeks first a nest.
 Saviour! my fainting soul I fling
 Upon Thy breast.
 Thy strayed sheep fain to Thee would come;
 Oh! seek and find;
 And in Thy bosom bear me home;
 And, that I never more may roam,
 With love me bind.

I need Thy love. Oh! press me fast
 To Thine own heart.
 Cover me from the world's rude blast,
 And Satan's dart.
 Life's storms, O Lord, me fierce assail,
 With sullen shock;
 But, though my spirit faint and fail,
 Welcome, safe shelter from the gale,
 Thou riven rock.

O, changeless love! that loveth me,
 Though I forget.
 Infinite love! that saveth me,
 Though snares beset.
 Love that cut Satan's tangled chain,
 And set me free.
 Love that drew love from sin's domain;
 Broke Satan's power, bade mercy reign;
 I'll trust in Thee.

And, since I must go forth to meet
 The night's chill blast,
 Thy love's full mantle, soft and sweet,
 Around me cast.
 Let not the darkness hide from me
 Thy shining face,
 Until the Morning Star I see;
 Until from earth aloft I flee,
 To Thine embrace.

A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

1 PETER iii. 21, 22.

THE *affections* and the *conscience* are both addressed in the precious mystery of the Gospel. Provision is there made to engage the heart for God, and to quiet the conscience toward God. This is its glory. This gives a sinner an interest in the *justice* as well as in the *love* of God. In one sense, it is all love—for love or grace is at the source; but it is grace providing for the demands of justice, and thus giving ease to the conscience, or to the judicial sense of the soul exercised about right and wrong, or good and evil. The gospel provides "the answer of a good conscience toward God,"—and this is done "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."* But there is blessed doctrine contained in that.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus was the public witness from God, that He had accepted the previous death or sacrifice: and consequently, when understood and pleaded by faith, it relieves the conscience, or gives it a good answer to *God*. And that, too, on the surest ground; because it is *God's own witness of His entire satisfaction touching all that might affect the conscience.*†

The resurrection, therefore, addresses the *conscience*, rather than the *affections*. It is the conscience which triumphs in it. It is for the conscience it provides a feast and a rest, for it tells the satisfaction which the God of judgment, "by whom actions are weighed," has found, in the preceding death or sacrifice; and that is the point, the one point for the conscience.

God has again seen the blood, and passed by. I may have poor thoughts of the blood. "All my best thoughts are but poor." I may desire the Holy Ghost to unfold its preciousness more and more, but that need not hinder the rest of the conscience; for the conscience is concerned in God's view and estimation of it, and not in mine: and the resurrection of the Lord proclaims *that*, as loudly, as distinctly, as conclusively, as the passage of the angel over the

* This is not a good conscience, as being the verdict on our own practical ways, but as expressing our state personally or positively before God; as in *Hob. ix. 14, x. 22.*

† I may not have a good conscience *toward myself*, if I may so speak: I may not forgive myself—nor do I in one sense. But that does not affect my good conscience toward *God*, or the assurance that He has forgiven and accepted me.

sprinkled lintel proclaimed the value of the blood which had so sprinkled it.

Thus the resurrection speaks of the death; and therefore to the conscience.

There are two ordinances under the law which sweetly prefigured the resurrection, and its virtue for the conscience.

In cleansing the leper, the living bird was let loose in the open field (Lev. xiv.) In the day of atonement, the living goat was sent away into a land of forgetfulness (Lev. xvi.) The happy bird took wing and departed far away from the scene of death, as into heavenly regions with heavenly freedom; it was let loose into the open air. The delivered goat, "the *scape-goat*," was sent from the place where judgment had been executed on its fellow, into a land not inhabited, where there was none to accuse, none to remember or talk of sin and judgment, a land of separation.

For, just in this way, the conscience is borne, in the faith and understanding of the resurrection, into the light and freedom of heaven itself. Beautiful shadows these Levitical ordinances may be, and beautiful shadows they are; nevertheless, they are but shadows, faint and distant resemblances of the great originals, which we get in this Scripture, which tell us, that He who has borne away our sins carries the freed conscience with Him, so to speak, up to heaven. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto Him."

The conscience of a sinner believing in Jesus may now delight itself as in heaven, in the highest heavens, above "angels, and authorities, and powers," as a bird let loose in the open field.

Such is the atmosphere prepared by grace for a sinner's conscience. It is the *conscience* that is carried to heaven by the resurrection of Jesus. The believer is thus made "perfect as pertaining to the conscience." The conscience triumphs, it celebrates the resurrection as all its own. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us." Such is the language of a soul

freed in conscience toward God (Rom. viii. 33-39). Such is the triumph of a sinner borne above "angels, and authorities, and powers" with Jesus, as a bird let loose into the air, or a goat dismissed into its natural wilderness. And liberty, perfect liberty, is the natural place for our souls to breathe in. The resurrection of Christ, and His being seated far above all heavens, having purged our sins, makes it so.

THE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place."—2 PET. i. 19.

THE study of the prophetic Scriptures *essential*? is a question often proposed in the present day. If by such an interrogation is meant, "Can I not be saved without it"? We reply, "by *grace* are ye saved through *faith*; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. ii. 8, 9). Many other scriptures also prove the blessed doctrine, that by Christ "all that believe are *justified from all things*" (Acts xiii. 39). The thought of any thing being *essential* to salvation, besides faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, proves His finished work to be undervalued in the soul, and, as a consequence, shakes the foundation of the believer's peace.

But if it be asked, "Is being spiritually instructed in prophetic Scripture *essential* to my walking so as to please God?" We reply, 1st. It will be found, on tracing our Lord's recorded ministry, that prophecy formed a considerable portion of His teaching, and that He also said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words" (John xiv. 23). 2ndly. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, has been given to guide us "into ALL TRUTH," to show us "THINGS TO COME" (John xvi. 13), and to "bring all things" to our REMEMBRANCE, whatsoever Jesus has said (John xiv. 26). 3rdly. The testimony of the prophets was not only "the sufferings of Christ," but also "THE GLORY THAT SHOULD FOLLOW" (1 Pet. i. 11). 4thly. ALL SCRIPTURE is profitable (2 Tim. iii. 16), and the passage before us declares that prophecy is like unto a "light that shineth in a dark place, . . . whereunto *we do well that we take heed.*"

It is the "sure Word of prophecy" that the Holy Ghost, by Peter, so commends to us here. It is not a prophetic scheme that has had its origin in the human imagination, nor a system that the plodding philosopher may have moulded by a mixture of truth and fiction; neither is it a consolidation of the *opinions* of learned nor even of godly men. The word "sure" could not legitimately be attached to such ambiguous sources. But to plain and obvious statements of the Word of God relating to the future, we can, with unquestionable accuracy, associate the divine title, "sure word of prophecy."

It is *sure*, because it is the record of Him who said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Matt. xxiv. 35); and when we obtain our information from this unfailing authority, we have the testimony of our consciences that it is the "sure word of prophecy." We may experience that our Divine Guide teaches us only "here a little and there a little"—"line upon line"—nevertheless, the unalterable word of the Lord being the ground of our faith and instruction, to us it will be "*sure*;" and according to the proportion of faith we mix with it shall we be enabled to hold it fast with a firm and unshaken confidence. After all, the most diligent in the study of prophecy, when taught at the feet of the Great Prophet, will have to acknowledge that they hold but a few links of the chain of God's unbroken and eternal purposes. "We know in part, and we prophesy in part," and "see through a glass darkly" will be our confession till "that which is perfect is come." But what we have received is "*sure*." Should such have to experience, like the prophet Jeremiah, that all around are unanimously crying "Peace! peace!" while the divinely written page of prophecy proclaims only sorrow and judgment, they, like him, will be unmoved by the finger of scorn, or the persecutors iron grasp, because they hold the "*sure* word of prophecy." Or, as in Ahab's day, when the united testimony of four hundred false prophets under royal patronage was believed, while the solitary man of God, who proclaimed the truth, was the subject of mockery and contempt; like him, they will be steadfast, because they utter the "*sure* word of prophecy."

The great object of the enemy is to blind souls; and he often seeks to effect this by making the world appear in a better condition than it really is. Satan

likes to help men to make a false Eden of that which God has cursed; to speak of light and beauty, where the prophetic pen has legibly written, "a dark place;" and many other stratagems he suggests, to induce us to build a nest, where Jesus had "not where to lay His head." And where is our refuge under such circumstances, especially when appearances sometimes admit the *reasonableness* of such conclusions, but in the inspired page?—the "sure word of prophecy," the "light that shineth in a dark place." *There* we see the rightly-exalted Prince of Life, "expecting, till His enemies be made His footstool." *There* we behold the Heavenly Bridegroom, preparing a place for His beloved Bride, whom He is quickly coming to receive unto Himself, to be the sharer with Him of His glory. *There* we learn that the "King of kings," the "only Potentate," is soon coming forth, with His vesture dipped in blood, to take "vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel." *There* we discover, also, that David's Son and David's Lord is ere long to sit on His Father's throne, and to reign over the house of Jacob for ever. *There* faith views the "dark place," tenanted by scoffers and seducers, who wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; the love of many waxing cold, because of abounding iniquity; and faith hears the world's self-complacent utterance of "peace and safety,"—the awful signal that "sudden destruction" cometh. The "sure word of prophecy" makes manifest these things, and much more, concerning which *we do well that we take heed.*

TRAINING CHILDREN IN THE NURTURE AND ADMONITION OF THE LORD.



NE feature of the *last perilous times* is that children will be disobedient to their parents. And is it not a sad fact that all around us this evil is manifest, and continually developing? The attractions to every form of vanity and pleasure are becoming more and more fascinating. *Sin* is made easier for young and old. Therefore our responsibilities, *as parents*, increase, to guard our children with a sedulous care; to be guided ourselves by God's principles of truth, and to teach them the same, so that this may *ballast* their souls when the surges of evil passions

arise within them ; that "*the fear of God*" may be in their hearts and before their eyes continually. All important is it for their happiness, *and ours too*, that we should "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. vi. 4). The Scripture cannot be broken which declares, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." If children are trained up *for Christ* at the family hearth, we may early expect to see them brought into the Church by the regeneration of the Spirit. Timothy's mother had, *from a child*, instructed him in the Scriptures, and in the first dawn of manhood she had the joy of seeing him *converted to God*.

In John iv. 47, the centurion brought his son's case of sickness *to Jesus in faith*. So in Matt. xix. 13, mothers brought their infants to Jesus for a blessing, and got it; teaching us the pleasing duty and privilege we have "*in everything* by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving," to make our requests known unto God. The truth in Ezek. xvi. 44 is very manifest: "As is the mother so is the daughter." Old Testament Scripture affords us abundant example of how men have been led astray by home teaching and example. See 1 Kings xxii. 52, "Ahaziah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father and mother." Then, how often is a sad history of failure prefaced with these significant words, "His mother's name was . . . ?" In contrast to this, Samuel's mother *nurtured him for God*. Parents, remember that God in reality says to you, "Take this child and *nurse it for Me*." Let your homes be *nurseries for the Church*, and not infant schools for the world. Your children's education begins with the first dawn of intelligence. They learn by imitation: copying what they see, and repeating what they hear. So that their characters generally become a counterpart of their parents' lives, and a reflection of home influences. What children are given they receive, what they are told they believe, what they observe they copy; and those *first ideas* and habits give a basis to their whole life and tone to the moral character. Therefore, "*example is better than precept*," but both are needed. Oh! remember "the sowing is the reaping;" and if you desire to see them Christians and dutiful children, tie God's laws about their necks, and bind them upon their hearts. Train them up in the way they should go. But if you teach them that fine clothes

are more desirable than "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," don't be surprised if you see a large crop of *pride*. If you teach them that riches and social status are the first thing to be desired, don't be surprised to find them grow up like Demas, who "loved this present world." Many a David, and many an Eli, have wept over the misconduct of wicked sons; and their tears were all the more bitter from the reflection that they themselves were to blame. How ready we are to pity those who are deformed, or grow up cripples, through some carelessness of their nurses in childhood; yet there are thousands around us who are *moral cripples* through their parents' neglect, or *careless spiritual nursing*.

Think, dear friends, how solemn and how sad it would be if any of *your* loved ones should thus grow up, and be able to lay this blame at your door! Better that you should make God's Word so familiar and so attractive to them that it may verily be a cradle for their childhood, a lamp to guide the feet of their youth, a staff to their manhood, and a pillow for their dying beds. Better let them see in your lives a reflection of the graces of Christ Jesus our Lord, than see a denial of it by your worldliness or your apathy. A brother in Christ once said, "I ran away from home when a boy, and roamed all over the world, feeding upon the husks of sin. I revelled in stage-acting, infidelity, and all the gaiety of public life for twenty odd years. But in all my wanderings there followed me the memory of my mother's holy life and Bible teaching. She had *lived the truth* before me, and thus it became impressed on my heart, and answered the sceptic's arguments. 'Many days' that seed was sown, but it was *found* at last, when God answered my mother's prayers, and saved my soul." This is what parents want to realize more; that the welfare of their children's souls is of more value than anything concerning the poor body. That in all things God's grace will be sufficient for us, if we seek His help and guidance. Ever teach them the principles of Divine truth. Ever present to them CHRIST as God manifest in the flesh, to redeem them from sin and the curse of the law, for nothing less than CHRIST will suffice for them, or for us, in this evil age. Never teach them that if they love God and are good they shall go to heaven; but rather seek to implant in their minds the Scripture

truth, that *God loved them* when they were sinners, and Christ died and lives to save them. And with this let them learn obedience, and all moral duties that devolve upon them, so that a solid foundation of Christian principle may establish their character in youth; and parents will then have the joy of seeing them walking in God's ways of pleasantness, instead of bringing them down in sorrow to the grave.

E. H. B.

WITH regard to our cares and trials, Christ does not take us out of them. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world." While He leaves us in the world, He leaves us liable to all that is incident to man; but in the new nature teaches us to lean on God. The thought with us often is, that (because we are Christians) we are to get away from trials; or else if in them, we are not to feel them. This is not God's thought concerning us.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

NOTE.—Those who endeavour to reply to Questions, desire to impress upon readers their responsibility to "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. v. 21). They make no pretension to infallibility, but give their judgment as those who have received mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—Many Questions are received but not replied to; some not being for general edification, whilst others are laid aside from want of sufficient light to deal with them.—It is requested that all communications be accompanied by the Name and Address of the sender.

QUESTION No. CXC.

Why was the Tabernacle pitched at Shiloh? Was Shiloh a place of God's choice?

REPLY.

The answer to this is found in Jeremiah vii. 12: "But go ye now unto My place, which was in Shiloh, where I set My Name at the first." Although from the day of Abraham's offering up of Isaac on a mountain in the land of Moriah, it can now be seen that Jehovah had Jerusalem in view as the place of His choice, yet this purpose does not appear to have been communicated until David said, evidently by inspiration (1 Chron. xxii. 1), "This is the house of Jehovah God: this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel."

QUESTION No. CXCI.

In John i. 18, Scripture declares, "No man hath seen God at any time." Was God not seen in Gen. iii. 7-10, or Exod. xxxiii. 20, &c., &c.?

REPLY.

The words quoted from John i. 18 remain absolutely true notwithstanding that many Old Testament Scriptures refer to occasions in which He was pleased to show Himself to His servants.

God in His essential Deity and glory no man has seen or can see. But "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father," He not only "hath declared Him" or "told Him out" fully in His incarnation, life, death, and resurrection, but He it was who, in the form of man or angel, appeared to Abraham (Gen. xviii.), to Moses (Exod. xxxiii., xxxiv.),

to Manoah (Judges xiii. 18, margin compare Is. ix. 6), to Isaiah (Is. vi. 1, compare John xii. 41), and doubtless on other occasions also.

QUESTION No. CXCII.

Is it right, or is it wrong, to seek fellowship with a meeting of believers in another town when there are saints gathered to the Name of the Lord in the town we live in, who, though few in number, have to be passed by in going to the other meeting?

REPLY.

Without a knowledge of all circumstances it would be unwise to pronounce upon any definite case. But general principles may guide.

As a rule, we believe the principle of Exod. xii. 4 does apply. It is not for us to choose our fellowship; it is in most cases settled for us by the necessities of locality.

On the other hand, meetings are sometimes "started" for the convenience of a few, without the fellowship and prayers of those with whom long association should have linked them in a very special way. It cannot be wondered at, if in such a case, godly ones prefer the longer walk to casting in their lot with what they believe to be not of God, but the fruit of self-will.

But in such matters it is folly to sit in judgment upon those who seem to us to err. We may exhort, or instruct, or warn, or beseech, but to take high-handed action and force our judgment on the conscience of another is entirely contrary to the spirit of Christ.

PRAISE.

"Praise is comely for the upright" (Psa. xxxiii. 1).

"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me" (Psa. l. 23).

"By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually" (Heb. xiii. 15).

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. v. 19).



It is truly wonderful that God should not only delight Himself in saving us but also take pleasure in the praises of His reconciled children, telling us that in praising Him we are glorifying Him.

Nor would it have been so wonderful if this privilege had been deferred till we are with the Lord in glory. We shall praise Him then indeed and worthily, and redemption's song will ever be the sweetest melody in the heavenly anthems; but the marvel is that we are, even now, whilst on earth encompassed with sin and failure, permitted and encouraged, both individually and collectively, to sing the praise of God.

Coming from hearts attuned by the indwelling Spirit of God, and presented by Him who is our Great High Priest, the songs that ascend from redeemed lips are to God as incense sweet—as a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing.

But not only is such service glorifying to God; it is also full of blessing and edification to the saints. The joy and gratitude begotten in the soul by the Holy Spirit is increased and intensified by finding vent in praise, like the pent up fire when at last it breaks forth in flames. And this reacts on others, communicating to them its warmth and blessing; cheering and encouraging to press on in the journey—the race—the warfare.

Moreover, the songs of the Church, when according to truth, are a vehicle of mutual exhortation of great value. Who has not felt the power of a hymn, fitly chosen, to comfort in sorrow or to seal home the instruction that may previously have been given? Not to speak of the many occasions on which a suitable hymn has been the key-note of a meeting, giving tone and character to the whole!

And if praise occupies so important a place in the Church, how very important it must be that the selection of hymns be varied and scriptural.

In compiling "The Believer's Hymn-book" it has been our desire and effort to keep this in view, whilst

limiting it to a size and price that bring it within the power of even the poorest saint to possess one.

Carefully considered alterations have been introduced into not a few of the hymns, but only where we believe conformity to the truth rendered it absolutely necessary.

Believing that it is not glorifying to our Worthy Lord and Master to address Him as "Jesus" it has been our care to alter this in every instance of its too frequent occurrence, in such a way as to do as little violence as possible to the composition.

Along with this compilation there has been prepared an edition, with music adapted to every hymn in the "old notation," and another in the "sol-fa notation." Very frequently hymns are sung to tunes that are quite out of keeping with the character of the words. In this way worship is hindered and marred, and deprived of much of its enjoyment.

Whilst alive to the danger of giving undue attention to the music, a danger that in these days of self-pleasing is most serious, we believe that the attaching of appropriate tunes to the hymns will prove to be a real and permanent service to the Church, which in due time will be appreciated even by those who at first may stand in doubt of it. With permissions that have been kindly granted we have been enabled to include a number of hymns and tunes that we judge to be the best of those which have been published within the last few years.

No doubt there will be defects, and criticism may find much to lay hold of, but we offer it to the Lord's people as our endeavour to meet a felt need, and we pray and ask all who sympathize with us in this effort, to unite with us in prayer, that God may be pleased to use it for the glory of His name, and for the edification of His saints.

ABEL took the place of the sinner, and in faith put the blood of the victim that had been slain between him and God. He thus owned that he could in no other way be an acceptable worshipper; for, "without shedding of blood there is no remission." Having owned he could come in no other way, he takes his place with Christ, and becomes a sufferer from the "world that lieth in wickedness." This is what the Christian has to expect at the hands of a world departed from God; he must "suffer with Him" who died to ransom him.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

NOTES OF ADDRESSES BY J. R. C.

1 COR. ix. 19, &c.



THE subject of this chapter is Gospel Ministry and its recompense. It does not refer to our acceptance in Christ or to justification, which is through faith in His blood, but to service and its rewards. This gives the key to the whole chapter, and makes expressions plain in it which, if misunderstood, are liable to be used in support of erroneous doctrines.

Ver. 19.—“For though I be free from all men yet have I made myself servant (or bond-servant) unto all that I might gain the more.”

Paul was a Roman citizen, and therefore a free man. He became the bond-slave of the Lord Jesus, and not only so, but voluntarily, in order that he might win many for Christ, he made himself servant to all, sparing himself no labour, no suffering, no self-denial, if by any means he might win sinners to his Master, and so secure a glorious recompense in the day of rewards.

Jesus was the anti-type of the Hebrew servant whose ear having been bored and nailed to the door-post, became a servant for ever. Jesus “made himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death.” Thus he took on Himself voluntarily—though he were the Son—the place of bond-servant to God. But not only so, He became our servant also. This he showed in figure by washing His disciples’ feet, but oh! how much deeper the reality of His service to us, when on Calvary, by the shedding of His blood, He made provision for the cleansing of our sins!

He did not perform this service for us because a yoke was laid upon Him—for He is fore-shadowed in the offering of the red heifer, “upon which never came yoke” (Num. xix)—but love drew Him on, even to the end.

And the service of the Apostle Paul was after this pattern. Love was the constraining motive, love to God, love to the Lord Jesus, love to saints, love to fellow-men perishing in their sins.

If our service is not of this character, voluntary heart service, labour of love, yet having “respect unto

the recompense of the reward”—then it is valueless to the Lord.

Paul had two classes of people to deal with, the Jew and the Gentile. He was himself a Jew and loved his nation. Doubtless, it was according to his own heart as well as by the Lord’s command that in all cities whither he carried the Gospel, he first sought out the Jewish synagogue and delivered his message to the Jews—“To the Jew first and also to the Gentile.”

Ver. 20.—“Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;”—that is to say, although he knew well his liberty in Christ Jesus (in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek), so that when he was with Gentiles he could forego the ceremonial restraints of the Jewish economy with a good conscience—yet he would avoid anything when with the Jews, that would needlessly offend their zealous respect for the Mosaic law—seeking ever to give none offence either to Jew or Gentile (1 Cor. x. 32), and this he did in order that he might gain them.

Ver. 21.—“To them that are without law,” *i.e.*, the Gentiles—to whom the law was never given—albeit they show the work of the law written in their hearts, having not the law they are a law unto themselves, their conscience also bearing witness (Rom. ii. 14, 15).

Ver. 21.—“As without law;” and here he must needs put in a saving clause, lest any should think that under any circumstances he acted *lawlessly*. Lawlessness is the spirit of the age. It is the casting off of all restraint! It is the refusal to submit to God’s authority first, and then to man’s.

But in all the breadth of the apostle’s liberty there was no such spirit, he was “not without law to God, being under law to Christ,” however he might seek to accommodate himself to Jewish prejudice or Gentile ignorance, he never allowed himself for a moment to take any course of action, in which he could not count upon the approval of his Lord.

In every effort to lead sinners to Christ, let us seek only to make use of such means and methods as are sanctioned by the word of God. In setting forth the Gospel let it be done simply and with unmistakeable clearness, and let us beware of departure from the grand simplicity of the apostolic practice.

Then the “preaching of the cross” was the only power

to attract. Many modern accompaniments of the Gospel intended to attract, only bring it into ridicule. Let us beware of such means.

A notable instance of this principle of becoming all things to all men in order to win some, was William C. Burns, missionary to China. He was the first missionary who assumed Chinese dress and manner of living, in order to gain access for the Gospel, where otherwise the people could not be reached. Hundreds of miles he journeyed through China alone, and everywhere he became known as "the man with the Book."

But whilst dressing and living as a Chinaman, he never forgot that he was "under law to Christ."

A very similar principle has to guide in dealing with children. In order to gain them, it is needful to come down to their level, and so speak, and so illustrate the truth, that it may be plain to their understanding.

Ver. 22.—"I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." Notice, he does not say, "if by any means some might be saved"—that is not his thought. He knew well that God would save apart from him, The Lord stood by Paul when evidently, he was well nigh fleeing from Corinth, and said, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace . . . for I have much people in this city" (Acts xviii. 9, 10). The Lord knew His chosen ones, even when they were dead in sins and bowing down to idols. His eye was upon them, and he would see to their salvation by some means, whether Paul was to be so honoured or some other of His servants. Remember how the Lord called Philip away from a mighty "revival" in Samaria, in order that he might be the instrument of saving the Ethiopian eunuch. The Lord took care that this elect one should not be left without the light of life. "All that the Father giveth Me SHALL come to Me" was the consolation of the Lord Jesus.

The question is not "shall souls be saved?"—God will see to that in spite of us. The question is, shall WE be honoured of God to be the instruments of their salvation? It was knowing this that Paul said, "if by any means I might save some"—*i.e.*, "if by any means I might attain to this honour and to the future reward of turning many to righteousness." If we are willing to deny ourselves in order that we may serve the Lord in the Gospel, and be the means of saving sinners, the time is coming when for such service our

Lord will amply reward us. If we fail to serve Him thus, He will set others to do His work. He can do without us.

What a privilege to be used in imparting the Word of life to the dead, who, if saved through our instrumentality, shall be to us as a crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ.

Alas, for those who have never been the means of saving a single soul! Let such not stand idle any longer. There are many around us who would be glad to hear God's way of salvation. Seek to be directed to such in daily life, or at the close of Gospel meetings, wisely and lovingly, pour words of grace and truth into their hearts, and look to the Lord to bless His own message.

Ver. 23.—"This I do for the Gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you." He does not speak here as if he were the only Gospel preacher. He says, "I want to be a partaker with you."

He thus addresses them as runners in the same race and partakers of the same prize, and exhorts them so to run that they may obtain. Observe, he speaks of a "race" and a "prize." Such terms do not apply to the question of our eternal salvation. In speaking of it, the same apostle writes, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5); and again, "So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God, that showeth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16).

This brings us down to the point of doing nothing for salvation. It is not of works, but of grace, and therefore it is by faith. There is no mingling of the two principles; it must either be on the ground of works, or on the ground of absolute grace.

Ver. 24—"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain."

He refers here to the Grecian games, which were annually witnessed by great numbers, who came from all parts of the country to see them. This is made use of by the Spirit of God to illustrate spiritual things.

Ver. 25—"And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." The reference here is to the well-known fact that, in order to obtain the victor's wreath, a long course of training and self-discipline of the most rigid

description had to be undergone. Yet all this was cheerfully borne by these Grecian athletes, in view of the passing honour of the applause of the multitude and a fading, laurel wreath. But more intensely real to Paul was the judgment-seat of Christ. It was ever before his mind, as he pressed toward the mark for the prize. That crown of righteousness, on which his heart was set, was kept by him more steadily in view than ever was laurel wreath by a Grecian young man.

At the judgment-seat of Christ, the question to be settled is not eternal life nor eternal death. It is not our *persons*, but our *works*, that are to be tried.

There is a day coming when you and I, if we have not had "respect unto the recompense of the reward," will find ourselves eternal losers. The judgment there, given upon our service here, will determine our place in the coming Kingdom of our Lord.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAPTER i. 50; ii. 2.

"**J**ESUS answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called and His disciples to the marriage."

Here, as everywhere else in Scripture, we find that our Lord Jesus Christ is pleased with simple, strong faith in Himself. Nathanael had said, "Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel;" and so there is the reply of the Lord which we have just read. It is wonderful how faith pleases Him; obviously, because it specially glorifies Him. "Now, I do believe, from my very soul—I know I do—I have no more doubt of it than of anything visibly manifest. I am surer of this than of anything, that Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel. With all my heart, Lord Jesus, I believe Thee to be all this." Then am I pleasing Him. What a comfort this is. Then am I gladden-

ing His heart, and that is what I want to do. And in this world which hates Him so bitterly, I for one, and ye all, dear brethren in Christ, likewise, believe that Jesus is the uncreated Son of God, and that He is also the King of Israel. Thus, in this cold bleak world where He was cast out, we are His witnesses. So He says, "Ye shall see greater things than these." "Thou perceivedst that My eye rested on thee under the fig tree, that My eye beheld thee when thou wast taking the lowly place, and that My eye could follow thee thus, has convinced thee that I am the Son of God; thou shalt see greater things than these." That is His way to lead us on, step by step, from great things to greater. And surely, I may add, He can never end! "Thou shalt see greater things than these." I could enumerate a number of things in which He proceeds from great to greater; that His way is always to keep the best till the last. As, for instance, Eve in Paradise, Jerusalem in Canaan, and the golden city in the Revelation; now, as far as we have gone, the great mystery of Christ and the Church in Ephesians. Again, the last miracle He wrought was the raising of Lazarus. Or take the life of Christ, as to His love. Then, too, there are His discourses in John xiii. to xvi. So we find that He was more drawn out, though the world was so vile; at the cross He tells out the love of God in one way, and then in His place in the midst He tells it out in another. I have been asked which is the greater, the first advent or the second? My answer is that on the cross He ever looked to the glory; "Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross;" and in the glory we all of us shall be looking back to the cross. As to the two advents, the first was a preparation for the second. Again, the dispensations, first law, second grace, third glory. Then in your own soul He goes on to display Himself brighter and brighter. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." That He, the Infinite, like as one treats a growing child, may lead us on and on till we are overwhelmed. The fact is, He loves to surprise us; and we never can sound to the bottom, or soar to the top of His illimitable love. And we should expect, as we grow in years and in grace, to grow in the knowledge of Him and of His ways. We can never anticipate Him; He will always be before us,

and beyond us. So in this miracle which we have in the opening verses of the next chapter, there is an illustration of it; also, in this 51st verse which He cites an illustration. But what an illustration! in what a way He goes on, to be sure. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." The thought is of heaven and earth united, with Jesus as the centre of worship in both worlds. It is not only that He will be worshipped in heaven; it is not merely that He will be worshipped on earth. Many of the saints think that the earth is beneath His notice; and I fear there are some saints, (though it is a question whether they should be called saints,) who would be willing to stay here and worship Him. "Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending." Mark that "ascending" is put before "descending," showing that the earth will be last occupied with His glory. He will take possession of heaven ere He takes possession of the earth. So the angels of God are seen coming up to Him as the centre, ere they are seen as coming down to earth to Him. But all united to Himself, the One blessed object before all.

I do not think I need tarry now, at any length, upon the words, "heaven open." Yet is there much in that slight expression to foster a consideration. Undoubtedly the reference is to Jacob's dream, when the ladder was seen let down from heaven to earth; for no man has ever yet been found who could construct a ladder from earth to heaven. No, the ladder must be from God; and I need not tell you who that ladder is. That divine, crucified, glorified, coming One—God's ladder. We never read of heaven opened in the Old Testament at all, unless it be in that vision of Jacob's ladder, or in Ezekiel i. 1, another vision; but this is not to be a vision, but a reality. When Jesus was baptized the heavens were opened to Him; and the words "unto Him" the evangelist marks strongly, as if to show that He were welcome to heaven at once; and the moment He commenced His service in that beautiful act of humiliation the heavens were opened to Him. And then, when the Lord died, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top,—and how high up that is we do not know, for we have never been, not even, I think, in spirit, so high as that; of course we are

carried as high in Christ, but I mean in experience;—from the top to the bottom. Aye, we who were sinners so far off, had got so very far from God, are now welcome right up to the very presence of God Himself. And there is no place where I am more welcome than in the bosom of my heavenly Father. Oh, beloved, the danger is that we should utter these things without really apprehending them, and living in the power of them. God means us to enjoy them, and they should be our strength in the wilderness whilst down here.

Stephen, who was the first martyr after Christ, saw heaven open. He was quite outside the camp; and no wonder, therefore, that God gave him to enjoy the consciousness that the heavens were ready to receive him inside the veil. Peter saw a great sheet let down from the opened heavens, which was a picture of Gentile sinners who properly belong to heaven, for their names were in the book of life, but they were for a season in this world, and no very enticing picture is drawn of us whilst here. "Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things." Then the sheet is drawn up to heaven again. There is my history; for my history, strictly speaking, began when God, in sovereign grace, wrote my name in the Lamb's book of life; when God, in electing love, gave me to His Son; and Christ, in infinite grace, condescended to accept me. But I got far away from Him; it does not matter which of those terms describe me, one or the other will. Then I see the issue of the Lord's dealings with me, drawn up to heaven again. John, in the Revelation, sees the heavens opened twice, in chapter xv. and chapter xix.; when the Lord is about to interfere on the earth, and when He does. He sees the heavens opened as a suffering servant. May we take our place with John, as suffering servants now, and thus see heaven open! May we have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus. We are welcome there any day, any minute of our lives, for that is our home. The higher we get, the more at home shall we feel; because we shall see the value of the blood, the more we live in the Divine presence.

In verse 51, instead of "*hereafter*, ye shall see heaven open," it more correctly reads, "from now." It makes it more difficult to interpret, but we must be quite sure every word of God is perfect. It may

be the Lord Jesus speaks to Nathanael in anticipation as the risen One, because you remember John has spoken of Him twice, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;" then, without the sin, baptising with the Holy Spirit. Both characters describe Him now. Anyhow, He had begun His work; and, as is usual with God, when He describes what He will do He generally begins with the end. It could not be our way unless we were forgetful of what little things we are. But it suits the majesty of God and Christ to look right on to the end. Oh, it will be a beautiful sight, when there shall not be a whisper or a mutter against the Lord in heaven! There is, even in heaven now, because the devil and his angels are there, and there is plenty of it upon the earth we know. But when it shall be all put away, there shall not be a whisper of rebellion, but one burst of adoration from heaven and from earth, to the glorified Lamb of God. There is a moment coming when heaven and earth shall be no longer separated and disunited, but when heaven and earth shall unite in blessing and praising that wondrous One. Himself the centre of all in heaven, and all on earth. As the hymn we sometimes sing about the millennial morn says:—

"Oh, what a company will sing
On that millennial morn!"

There will be a great many more who will sing at the close of that day than at its morn. Only the heavenly company will sing in the morning, but the earthly company will sing, too, in its course. When the judgments have been poured forth, and when a people have been delivered by mighty power from all the tyranny of evil, then there will be the two swellings of harmony. The redeemed in heaven, with the Church leading the worship as only the Church can; and the redeemed on earth, with Israel leading the worship as only Israel can; and one great volume of praise to Christ, and through Christ to God, to that central object, worthy the Lamb slain. The great central object of God is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. From eternity back it was God's grand thought, and in eternity to come it will still be the source of all blessing that shall flow out to us and all creation. Do you see the thought? "The angels of God ascending," the moment is not of the beginning of the millennium, but when it has run its course a good deal, when the

earth has been put right as well as heaven, "ascending and descending towards the Son of Man." Oh, what an object! Like as the sun fills the sky on a July day, so will the Son of Man fill heaven and earth with His glory then. Now, I think I have attempted to convey the thought, in these last two verses, clearly to your minds. And yet God will allow one unhappy exception to this general universal burst of adoration. Oh, it will be a horrible thing, that hell—hell shall still be full of those that hate Him. But, beyond this glance, I pass it over, as it is not mentioned here.

I have read a verse or two of chapter ii., in order that you may see that it is properly all one chapter. These chapters are man's divisions, and oftener than not hinder our catching the mind of the Spirit. It has been my belief for many years that John i. and ii. are one chapter, with the exception of the last three verses of chapter ii. They bring before us the Lord in the two eternities. In eternity past, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." There is He, in eternity past; and the Church, I think, seen in it, according to Proverbs viii., and Revelation iii., and Colossians, passages which were quoted when we were considering verses 1 and 2, associated in the mind of God and of Christ. Then, in eternity future, there are seen the families of heaven and of earth all grouped around that blessed One. That is the exact translation of that passage in Ephesians iii., "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named;" it should be, "Of whom *every* family in heaven, &c." The heavenly families, the Old Testament saints, and the Church, the earthly families, Israel, and Judah, and the nations; all in their respective places, and Himself the centre, the Lord.—*Notes of an address by W. Lincoln, communicated by J. S. H.*

PETER WEEPING.



STRONG in purpose, frail in power,
Where now the pledge so lately given?
Coward—to creatures of an hour
Bold to the challenged bolts of heaven!

But Jesus turns;—mysterious drops
Before that kindly glance flow fast;
So melts the snow from mountain tops,
When the dark wintry hour is past.

S. M. W.

THE SONSHIP OF BELIEVERS AND OTHER RELATIVE TRUTHS.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God; therefore, the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."
(1 John iii. 1-3, R. V.)



OD has not only saved us from hell—from the wrath to come, but much more; He has made us His children, and brought us nigh to Himself.

We learned God's love to us at the first in the wounds of Christ crucified. It was at the cross of Jesus that our thirsty souls got the first fresh draught of the living water; it was there, hungry and famished in soul, we ate of the flesh and drank of the blood of the Son of Man, and thereby life, eternal life, was communicated to our souls by the Holy Spirit. That was, indeed, a happy day to us, when by faith we saw all our sins washed for ever away by the precious blood of Jesus! That was the beginning of days in our spiritual experience; and the blessing that we received in all its freshness and power then, we have had renewed to us by the Holy Spirit, as we have again and again repaired to the cross of Christ, and gazed by faith on the bleeding Lamb of God, who was there wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, by whose stripes we have been healed. Such is God's love to us, and such the manner of it, that *we*, who deserved to be for ever banished from His presence, are called the sons of God, and "made nigh by the blood of Christ."

"Oh what love, what boundless love!
The Father hath bestowed
On sinners lost, that we should be
Now called the sons of God."

HOW WE BECAME SONS OF GOD.

This we learn from the Word of God. We shall now turn to a few well-known Scriptures, which show how a poor guilty sinner—a child of the devil—is made a son of God:—"He (Christ) came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (right or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them

that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 11, 12). "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26). "Born again, not of corruptible seed (i.e., natural birth), but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. . . . And this is the Word which, by the Gospel, is preached unto you" (1 Peter i. 23, 25). "Of His own will begat He us *with the Word of truth*" (James i. 18). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy *He saved us*, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus iii. 5). We see from these Scriptures how a son of fallen Adam, one "born in sin and shapen in iniquity," becomes a son of God. Such are born (not adopted) into the family of God. God alone, by His Spirit and Word, makes us His children. It all rests on, and proceeds from, the mighty redemption work finished by His Son on the cross. The work of regeneration is the necessary outcome of the work of redemption to those who believe. The Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Ye *must* be born again," but He also said that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 14, 15). The Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation;" and all that believe the Gospel are by the Spirit made children of God—made new creatures in Christ Jesus—made partakers of the Divine nature; they receive a power by which they can love and serve God. It is most important that young Christians be thoroughly grounded and established in these elementary truths. All real living for God proceeds from knowing in the power of the Spirit, that we are sons of God. If we are clear as to our sonship as believers in Christ, we shall be saved from very grievous errors into which many of God's children have fallen, through false teaching on this subject.

SONSHIP AND THE SPIRIT.

"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father" (Gal. iv. 6). The Spirit of God is the only power for communion, worship, and service. As we have seen already from the Scriptures, we are begotten into the family of God by the mighty Spirit

and Word of God. "We are the circumcision, which worship God in (by) the Spirit" (Phil. iii. 3). "We have . . . access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 18). When we heard and believed the Word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation, then we were sealed by the Holy Spirit until the redemption of the purchased possession (Eph. i. 13). "In one Spirit were we all baptised into one body," (which is the Church) (1 Cor. xii. 13). He is the Comforter which, the Lord said, would abide with and in His people for ever (John xiv. 16, 17). He it is who through the truth comforts, edifies, teaches, and sanctifies the children of God. He takes of the things which are Christ's and shows them to us (John xvi. 14). The things concerning the Person, work, and glory of Christ. He has been given to guide into all truth (John xvi. 13). It is the same blessed Spirit who testifies to our spirits that we are the children of God (Rom. viii. 16). If we would bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, then we must live and walk in the Spirit; and we see from Gal. v. 22, 23, what the fruit of the Spirit is—"Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." The opposite—the works of the flesh, the outcome of our corrupt nature, we have in verses 19, 20, and 21. We are to pray and sing in the Spirit (1 Cor. xiv. 15. Also Eph. vi. 18), "Praying always with all supplication in the Spirit." "Praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20). We are not to quench or grieve the Spirit (1 Thess. v. 19; Eph. iv. 30), but we are to mortify, through the Spirit, the deeds of the body (Rom. viii. 13). As it was by the mighty Spirit that the Son of God was raised from the dead, even so "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii. 11). We see from these Scriptures how dependent we are on the Spirit of God for real Godly living, testimony, and service. If we desire to be used of God, then we must be *emptied* of self and *filled* with the Spirit. May we ever remember that ours are redeemed bodies, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, therefore we are to glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20); and in so doing we shall be vessels, meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work (2 Tim. ii. 21).

SONS OF GOD—HEIRS.

"AND IF CHILDREN THEN HEIRS, heirs of God,

and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17). We are not only made sons of God, but we are also begotten again to "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter i. 3-5). We read in Heb. i. 1, 2, that God hath appointed His Son *Heir of all things*. And "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). He was brought unto the dust of death (Ps. xxii. 15) "that He might raise up the poor out of the dust, and lift up the beggar from the dunghill, to set him among princes, and make him to inherit the throne of glory" (1 Sam. ii. 8). The Captain of our salvation is now bringing many sons to glory. "And it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but *we know* that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." There is a time coming when the sons of God shall be manifested, that is, when Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall we be manifested with Him in glory (Col. iii. 4). As sons of God, we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. viii. 29). He is the First-born among many brethren, "for both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of One (Father), for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. ii. 11). And He sent this message by Mary Magdalene to His disciples, "Go to My brethren and say unto them I ascend to *My Father and your Father*" (John xx. 17). "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. xv. 49). Meanwhile we are in this body of sin and death, and we are to seek help of God to be like Christ, and this, in measure, we can attain to, as "we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). If we would be like Christ, then we must continually behold Him as He is revealed to us in the Word as the perfect Son and Servant of the Father. Following in His footsteps, and taking His yoke upon us, we shall thereby learn of Him, the meek and lowly One (Matt. xi. 29).

W. K.

(To be continued in our next.)

IN MEMORIAM.

*The following Lines were composed on the Death of
Miss W., Barrow-in-Furness.*

THE minstrel's voice is hushed,
The harp is now unstrung;
Her last sweet note of praise
On earth has now been sung.

The silver cord is loosed,
The ransomed spirit fled;
And she, in youth's bright bloom,
Is numbered with the dead.

Oh, paradox complete!
Through death she entered life;
Through pain's dread portal—rest,
To peace through mortal strife.

With Christ for ever now,
His voice her spirit thrills;
The Bridegroom's fairest form
Her raptured vision fills!

No aching brow is there,
No weary sigh of pain;
Thrice blessed they who sleep—
In Christ to die is gain.

Yet dimly, through our tears,
We trace her upward flight;
Down here, in Baca's vale,
We walk by faith, not sight.

We think, like some of old,
Oh, Lord, had'st Thou been here!
Our sister had not died,
She, to our hearts so dear.

But He would have her know
The fuller, deeper joy
Of resurrection bliss,
In life without alloy.

In love He went away,
In love He tarries still;
In love He'll come again,
His saints with joy to fill.

He'll speak the word of power,
Then, springing from the dust,
Like dew on tender herbs,
His voice death's bands shall burst.

The minstrel then shall wake,
Her harp again to string,
In sweeter strains to praise
The glorious coming King.

THE PATH OF SERVICE.

THE careful man of business will at intervals take stock of his concerns, examine his position, and see what are the prospects of his business affairs. And it is wholesome for us, as Christians, sometimes to pause, as it were, upon our road, to review our position, and to remind ourselves of what our real standing is in this world. These are days when men and things move very rapidly: when the desired goal, whatever it may be, is sought to be reached, not by sober, steady progress, making sure of every step, but by an impetuous rush. Let us, who are children of God, beware lest we too be caught by this spirit of the children of the world, and imitate them in this, even in spiritual things, till, hurrying on beyond our depth, we experimentally lose our firm foothold on the sure foundation, the solid Rock, and by-and-by find ourselves floundering in a sea of doubt.

And what is our standing? We are in a world to which we once belonged, but from which we have been redeemed—by no effort of our own, but because God, in His sovereign grace, had mercy upon us. He has taken away our sin, by giving up His own beloved Son to die in our stead, as the Lamb of God, purging us from all our filthiness and guilt by His precious blood, and giving us new life in Him. He has redeemed us, and given us new hopes and aspirations conformable to the nature begotten in us. But He has left us in a world where everything is adverse to that nature. I say it advisedly, and let us weigh it well, for it is oftentimes forgotten by the children of God, that everything in this world, its principles, its practices, its pursuits, its pleasures, whatever it be, are all adverse to the spiritual nature of those who are born of God. However innocent it may seem, or even good in itself, yet, as being of the world, it is not helpful but hurtful to us. Some may object that I am saying too much, that I am too narrow in my views, and that surely some good may be acquired in our intercourse with the men of this world, at least with the refined, the talented, the intellectual among them. Such I would remind of the words of the Spirit by the Apostle John:—"All (*all*, mark it well) that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride (vain glory) of life, is *not* of the Father, but of

the world." Or, as the Apostle James has written : "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." This surely is putting the matter in a very strong light. Or, again, we may call to mind the words of our Lord Himself: "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." And what do men more highly esteem than talent and intellect? Yet, in the natural man, however fully it may be developed, in the sight of God it is an abomination. For, unsanctified by the Spirit of God, it will only tend to exalt man in his own estimation, and set him more in antagonism to God. And, lastly, I would quote that very solemn passage which so distinctly separates the two classes: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Observe, it is the *whole* world; not only the immoral, the irreligious, the depraved; it includes equally the refined and intellectual, the religious and the moral. The *whole* lieth in the wicked one, the adversary of God. So that when I have to do with the men of this world, I have to do with those who are in the power of Satan, who are energized by his spirit. Do not let us forget that in our walk through life—that I cannot have to do with the things of this world without their having more or less a baneful influence upon me. And do we not find by experience that even in the daily business of life, our association with the men of this world has a deadening influence upon our souls, except, as we are continually kept in living communion with the Fountain of Life, with Him, from whom we first got life, and by whom alone it can be sustained? And if ever our *hearts* get occupied with things of the world, then we are in a position of serious danger. The one we cannot avoid, nor did God intend that we should; our Lord did not pray that we might be taken out of the world, but that we might be "kept from the evil." In the transactions of daily life, we must mingle more or less with the world. The other we must ever be upon our guard against, and be suspicious of any influence which in any form bears a likeness to this world. And in this connection, let us remember that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Let us therefore not trust our hearts, but ever judge our motives in the light of God's Word.

Before passing from this, I would like to refer to one other important passage. Important, when we remember who it was who spoke these words, and demanding our serious attention because of the grave responsibility under which they place us. They are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, in Matt. v. 13 and 14: "Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world." They put an exceedingly solemn aspect upon things and men around us, and show us the great responsibility devolving upon us, who are called into fellowship with the Son of God. First, what do they imply as to the world in which we are placed? That it is characterised in every respect by corruption and darkness. That, however outwardly beautiful, however amiable, however philanthropic, however refined and civilised men may be, there will, and must be, *in all* the tendency to retrograde and manifest that which is inherent—corruption. And again, however educated, scientific, enlightened they may become, or desire to become (as to God's things), they are only struggling after that which is unattainable (without the Spirit of God), and will find themselves to be in grosser darkness. It only needs the anointed eye to see it in all around. Why do the political and social reformers of the day fail to realise the ends they seek to attain in the schemes of reformation, which in themselves may seem plausible and desirable? Simply because they do not see the corruption which is characteristic of the natural man. "Let us educate the masses," say they, "and crime will decrease;" such is the theory. The practical issue is that while education has become more diffused, crime has increased, and science has put into the hands of wicked men the means of making crime more dangerous. "Oh," said one in a railway carriage, as we passed a large prison, "if temperance were universal, we should not need such places," forgetting that the corruption would remain, that if it did not manifest itself in one way, it would in another. Let us keep clear of the whole thing—of the world, with all its schemes of philanthropy and reform, and show men, by testimony of life and lip, that what they need is *to be born again*. Let us beware of fellowship with the world in its scientific pursuits, remembering that men are in utter darkness, and need enlightenment; not by their advancement in sciences, but in a knowledge of Christ, the true Light. So let us see to it that it is a living Christ we are bearing about with

us, and not human science. Ah, dear fellow saints, our Lord referred to a serious thing when He said, "Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world." Are we showing it in every-day life? In our business, our homes, our intercourse with our unsaved relatives and friends? Do they feel uneasy in our presence, as the salt in us detects the corruption, and exposes the flesh in them? Or, can they go on in their worldly pursuits as comfortably whether we are absent or not, and find that we can join with them? It is a common proverb among men that "nothing is so diverse as darkness from light." Is there the like diversity in our ways from those of the world? or do we conform to their ways, and make the difference as little as we think we can in safety? These are solemn questions for us to answer, especially when we remember that this is the will of our Lord and Master concerning us, to whom we must give account as to how far we have fulfilled it.

But if such be our position in this world, confronted by all that is adverse and difficult, for what purpose has God left us here? That we may serve Him as His witnesses. And an inestimable honour and privilege it is, though we, alas, so seldom regard it as such. We are too apt either, on the one hand, to be impatient of the roughness and difficulty of the road, sighing to be away from it; or, on the other, allowing ourselves, practically if not in theory, to imagine that we are left here to enjoy a little of what this world can afford, ere we are taken to our heavenly home. But what is our power for service, and what is the course our service is to take? Are we left in doubt as to this, and to follow our own devices? By no means. Our Master has not only left us written instructions, His own inspired Word, sufficient that the "man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works," so that we can regard nothing as true service for which we have not the direct authority of that Word. Not negatively, so that we may argue, as some seem to do, that any course is justifiable so long as it is not expressly forbidden, and seems to possess the claim of expediency; but that in no course are we justified except we take direct authority from that Word for it, else the words do not mean what they say, and that Word is not sufficient, and needs that we add thereto that which *we* deem to be proper and necessary. But the Lord has given us more even than this. He has left us "an example,

that we should follow His steps." He has come and lived before us, and glorified God under circumstances as adverse as those to which we ourselves are subjected. "He Himself hath suffered being tempted," and when we say this, surely we may add that His soul, in its perfect holiness, must have endured that under temptation of which we can form but little idea. And now His word to us is, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." And what was His path? A path of self-emptying, of humiliation. "He emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of servant—and became obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross" (Phil. ii). He knew that only by the renouncement of these old selves, which in the essence of their fallen nature were utterly opposed to God, could we glorify and serve Him. Therefore did He take such a path, that He might leave us such an example. But He had nothing to lay aside that was adverse to God. He had dwelt from all eternity in the bosom of the Father, and was at all times His delight. He could only lay aside His glory. And He, whose prerogative it was to command, became the obedient, the submissive One. And why? That He might give an example to us, who have nothing to lay aside but our own corrupt selves, in which there is nothing good, and that He might teach us, too, to become obedient and submissive, that we might get into the path of real blessing. Oh, marvellous indeed is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! He saw and knew that our greatest enemy is self, and He laid aside His glory, and suffered humiliation, that He might teach us to renounce ourselves. And should it not humble us to the very dust, that we should ever think of asserting ourselves, when we are in the presence of such wondrous condescension on the part of the Lord of Glory—the perfect, holy, spotless Son of God? Oh, shame upon us that we are so little moved by it!

But again, His word to us is: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." Are we going after Him? Has He so won our hearts by His love, His redeeming love, that we are intent upon treading the path He trod? Then this is the way He indicates. And the first step, and one of clear necessity, is that we deny ourselves. And not only, I take it, in the matter of fleshly desires and worldly pursuits—these surely; but more, in the matter of our positive

service for Him. In this we must learn, too, to deny ourselves. The path He would indicate may not be the path we should choose; it may not make our names so honourable in the eyes of men, and that, alas, is too often a motive in our service. It may not be so pleasant, so gratifying to our taste. Perhaps He has given me a business to attend to, and a wife and family to provide for; let me beware how I neglect it, because it pleases me better to be holding Gospel meetings, or making other efforts. Or it may be He has given me aged and infirm parents, that I should attend to their wants; let me take heed how I neglect them for activity in other work. Perhaps I am a Sunday school teacher, and find it often wearisome and thankless labour week after week, and think it more pleasant to stand up before a large audience to preach the Gospel. Shall I lightly leave those young souls the Lord has, as it were, put into my hands that I may sow in their hearts the Word of Life, to be discouraged and scattered, in order that I may please myself? These are ways in which we do not so often think of denying ourselves, and persuade ourselves that if we are only doing some service for the Lord, it does not matter what it is. What did our Lord say? "The Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left His house, and gave authority to His servants, *and to each man his work.*" Then let us see to it that we get our work direct from the Lord, and when we know what it is, do it with all our might; not in seeking to please ourselves, but to please Him, to whom we must give account as to how our work was done. And then to take up our cross. That cross by which I have died to all that I was, by which I can say, "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." That cross by which "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." This line of demarcation cuts me off, or should, from all around me here, and makes fellowship with the world, in His service, an impossible thing. It (the cross) was the end of His course, and cast its shadow over the whole. Is it the same with mine? But if the end in one sense, it was not in another. "Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." And He points us to the glory, too, to cheer and sustain us. He has entered there as our fore-runner, the pledge and guarantee of our being welcome

there by faith in spirit now, and by-and-by that we shall be there in body, to see Him as He is, and to be for ever like Him. He is there as our High Priest. Jesus, the lowly man, who humbled Himself, and endured temptation, not only to leave us an example, but that He might know how to sympathise and succour us as we seek to follow Him in His path. That He might be the Leader of our salvation, made perfect through suffering.

J. S. H.

THE FLESH OR FIRSTBORN.

BAPTISM.

IT has been asserted in previous papers, that baptism is an ordinance which concerns believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and none else. It has also been affirmed that intelligent and godly obedience, as rendered to this command, is the practical consent of the saved sinner to a thing already done by God Himself.

These assertions call for proof, and we request the reader to forsake, for the present at least, all human argument as contained in the many books and tracts, which have each in their turn claimed to be authoritative on the subject. No voice but that of Scripture can claim our attention here. But before entering upon this important enquiry, questions of grave moment suggest themselves, and questions which, let us hope, our converted friends may be able to answer honestly in the affirmative. What about your will; is it broken? Should this search for truth result in the defeat of your preconceived ideas, have you a willing heart to obey the Blessed Lord, whose blood has bought you? No question need be raised as to your intellectual ability, for Jesus hath said, "if *any man will do His will*, he shall know of the doctrine" (John vii. 17), and having this assurance, the simplest soul may enter with safety upon this enquiry.

Intellectuality in the things of God affords no security from evil doctrine, but a broken and contrite heart does. "The Lord preserveth the simple" (Ps. cxvi. 6), is the happy experience of all who are poor in spirit, and who lean not upon their own understanding (Pro. iii. 5). When believers *fall short* of obeying the truth, or when they *go beyond* what Scripture warrants, speaking broadly, it is the *heart* and *not the intellect* which is at fault.

In this matter of baptism it seems inconceivable that any believer in Christ should have a difficulty. Scripture leaves no room for doubt, and difficulties have their source, not in any want of clearness in Scriptural testimony, but in time-honoured practices being received by credulous Christians with the respect and subjection which are alone due to the Word of God. It is well to be reminded that error, though tolerated and propagated for fifteen centuries, remains exactly the same as when it started, and length of days can give no doctrine the authority of truth.

Let the honest enquiring soul come aside, and forget entirely his theological education; let him leave behind him prayer-books, catechisms, creeds, books, and tracts; allowing the mind to become a blank as to the past history of what is called the Church; and in the quiet seclusion of his room, with no eye upon him but God's, let him open his Testament with the earnest prayer, "Lord, teach me Thy truth!" If the subject be approached in any other spirit, it is doubtful whether blessing will result from the enquiry.

Is it not strange indeed to hear so many professed Christians declare, that "the subject has never troubled them," that "it has never been laid upon their hearts," and that "they don't make much of a mere form." Others, again, with greater boldness, assert that "*they were baptised* when infants, and never mean to be again," or that "they have been baptised with the Spirit and that this is sufficient for them." Now, all such thoughts and arguments indicate an unhealthy state of soul—a condition much to be deplored, for self-will and self-sufficiency are in exercise instead of "the will of God" and "the power of Christ."

To assume that we have the mind of Christ before making diligent search is unwise, and we counsel every child of God not to be satisfied with folding the arms, as it were, and stilling the conscience by thoughts such as are here referred to. If prejudice and wilfulness abound in the heart, then go to God with them and ask Him to cause the scenes of Calvary so to pass before the mind and heart that self may no longer be allowed to rule, and that the eye may be opened to see the truth.

First, Baptism concerns believers only. In Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth,

go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (age)." Scrutinise this passage and what is the first thing to appear? Is it not that the risen Lord Jesus had all authority given Him from the Father? The word power means *authority* rather than *might*, and with that power He sent forth His disciples. If any asked the question "By what authority doest thou these things?" the obedient servant was able to refer to authority, than which, none could be higher. Here is the *prime source* of authority, and all that emanates from other sources is human, and unworthy of our subjection; and further, all teaching and practice which disturb the order as given in this passage, deny the sufficiency of His authority, who thus pronounced His will.

And now, let us notice what that order is, "teach" (make disciples or Christians, margin) "baptising them." Surely this is clear enough; the first duty of Christ-sent servants was to teach men the Gospel, and by its reception, souls were saved. Their second duty was to baptise those saved ones in the name of the Triune God, proceeding to teach them all things whatsoever Christ had commanded. This order is irrevocable, it cannot be disannulled without casting dishonour upon the Lord. There are those who say that "This was doubtless the practice of the early disciples, but that times have changed, and that this order of things would not do for modern days." We reply by drawing attention to the words, "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age." The order of service given by the Lord Jesus prior to His ascension, was intended for the practice of His servants throughout the entire Christian dispensation, and until the end of this age the Lord Himself is with the true servant in every act of obedience. Will those who speak of "Times having changed" go so far as to say that we have reached and passed "the end of the (Christian) age?" Surely not! Till then, let none with impious finger disarrange Divine order, or with pride of heart, dispute the Lord's authority.

In the Scripture already considered the responsibility thrown upon the evangelist, was *to teach and baptise*, but in Mark xvi. 16, the recipient of the

Gospel is brought face to face with his *own* responsibility, viz., *to be baptised*. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." Believing comes first and baptism follows. Had we no Scripture to inform us as to the way of salvation other than the one here quoted, we might reasonably connect baptism with salvation; nay more, we might insist that it is as essential as believing. But Scripture is uniform in its testimony, and we need only refer to *one* out of the many portions of truth which establish beyond the possibility of doubt, that "eternal life" is received by, or through faith, without *any additional act of obedience whatever*. "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come unto condemnation, but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24.) Nothing could be clearer than this. If salvation depended upon the outward act of baptism as well as the inward act of faith, surely the Son of God, who is "the Faithful and True Witness," would have said so. *But He did not*. This is very blessed, for from the hour in which it was said—"this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," many, like the thief on the cross, have believed and were saved, when it was *too late* to be baptised. Baptism, then, cannot connect itself with eternal life or salvation, and what our attention is invited to in Mark xvi. 16, is simply the relative order between faith and baptism; *faith coming first*, and baptism as a confession of that faith, *following*. Not a few are being deceived by false teaching on this subject: hundreds have, within the last few years, been allured by "false teachers" to step into the baptistry with the vain hope of finding salvation *there*. The proud heart of man gladly receives any doctrine or teaching which makes salvation the *reward* of an act performed, rather than a *gift received*. This doctrine is acceptable to many, but notwithstanding the audacity imparted to the adherents and disciples of this theory—audacity to declare themselves truly saved, and to trace their salvation to *the occasion of their baptism*—notwithstanding all this—we are unable to discern any change for good, in the lives of those who have thus professed; and beyond a certain outward religiousness which is neither pleasing to God, nor good for man, this *soul-destroying delusion* leaves its dupes where it found them—"in their sins."

No doubt some of God's dear children have been

caught by the specious arguments of the exponents of this "system," but what effect has it had upon their ways? It has not induced strict attention to truthfulness, for in many cases the newly made "disciple" learns to give evasive answers as to the time of his conversion, while often the conscience is outraged by the statements which must be made to give support to this position. The delicate way in which doubt is cast upon their former profession gradually develops *into positive denial* that they were ever truly "born again" before having been baptised.

This we need hardly say is not a result of the Holy Spirit's teaching. If life and fruit-bearing be found in connection with this doctrine, it is not that *either* have been produced by it; but, rather that its reception has *failed to "choke"* the "Word of God," *already embedded* in the soul.

The two passages which we have been considering give the *authority* for *Christian baptism*, and the reader will search in vain, in the four Gospels, for another verse which deals with the subject. "John's baptism," was *Jewish* in its character and is frequently spoken of, but, as it differs entirely from Christian baptism, both in its intention and scope, we need not *now* occupy our minds with it.

We will therefore confine ourselves to a hasty glance at the *conduct* of those who first preached the word of life, after the Lord Jesus had ascended and shed forth the Holy Spirit, and in doing this we shall be compelled to admire the *subjection* of the early converts. In the Acts of the Apostles we read, that "they that gladly received the word *were baptised*" (ii. 41), that when the Samaritans believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, *they were baptised, both men and women* (viii. 12), that the Ethiopian eunuch went down with Philip unto a certain water and *was baptised* (viii. 38.), that Saul of Tarsus, as soon as he had received sight, arose and *was baptised* (ix. 18.) We also read in the same book of the baptism of Cornelius and those with him (x. 47, 48), of Lydia and her household (xvi. 15), of the Philippian jailor and his household (xvi. 33), of the Corinthians who heard and believed the Gospel (xviii. 8), and of certain disciples (xix. 5.)

The Spirit of God has thus fully recorded the obedience and subjection to Christ which were rendered alike by evangelists and converts. It did


not occur to any of these newly saved ones to resist the ordinance of baptism; nor do we read of any having said "it was a mere form, and not essential." The plea "O, I have been baptised with the Holy Spirit, and that is all I need," would have fared ill, for Peter made the fact that God *had imparted* the Spirit to the Gentiles, the strongest reason for not withholding water baptism. "Can any man *forbid water* that these should not be baptised *which have* received the Holy Spirit as well as we, and he commanded them to be baptised," &c. (x. 47, 48.) The "certain disciples" in Ephesus did not say, "*we have been baptised once and wont be again.*" No, they willingly obeyed (xix. 1-5.) "Ah!" but says one, "that was 'John's baptism unto which they had been baptised' at the first, and of course it was right that they should be baptised again, but you know it is quite different with me, for *I was baptised* in the Name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, when I was an infant." Well, my friend, it is not difficult to agree with you on this point. Your baptism (?) was indeed different from John's, but the difference lies in this, that John's baptism was a *Divine* ordinance, and served a heavenly purpose, whereas, what you term baptism *never was Divine*, neither in its origin nor purpose; this we assert strongly. If men have invented a substitute for the real thing, no child of God should be satisfied with the *counterfeit*. Infant sprinkling counts for nothing with God.

"But stay," says another, "were there not whole households baptised, and were there not infants in some of these?" Let us look and see, the Word itself will help us. "*Lydia's household*" conveys the impression that she was an unmarried person. God has set the *man* as head over the woman, and if she had possessed a husband the Spirit of God would not have spoken of "*Lydia's household*;" her husband would have received that honour. We must therefore reject the idea of a baby having been found there. "*The jailor of Philippi*," of him it is said that he rejoiced believing in God *with all his house*. No infant in arms is capable of exercising faith, or rejoicing because it has believed, so no comment is needed here. *The household of Stephanas* addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints (1 Cor. xvi. 15), and will any man, claiming to be of sound mind, affirm that a baby could minister to the saints?

Surely not. There is equally little difficulty with the house of Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue at Corinth, for, of them it is affirmed that *they believed*. Those who advocate "infant baptism" or infant sprinkling, must do so on grounds other than Scriptural, and we refuse to stand with them upon their quagmire of error; or, with them, teach for doctrine the commandments of men. W. J. E.

DAVID'S SINS.

1 CHRONICLES.

 IN the progress of 1 Chronicles, we observe that David commits four errors. But this we observe also, that each of them comes from a distinct source, and receives distinct discipline from the hand of the Lord. There is profit for the soul in marking this and musing upon it.

1. (See chap. xiii.) David commits a great mistake here. It is on the occasion of bearing the Ark from Kirjath-jearim to the tent which he had prepared for it on Mount Zion. He put the Ark upon a new cart, instead of committing it to the shoulders of the Levites.

Whence came this error? How was it that this mistake was incurred? David acted hastily, in the mere desire (right as it was) of his own heart, *without consulting the Word of God*, under the sanction of which even the right desires of the heart ought to proceed and be gratified. David did not either consult or remember God's Word in the Book of Numbers, as he ought to have done, on this solemn occasion.

The Lord allows the error to bring mischief and trouble upon him. The mistake he commits works in the end its own cure; and without any severe rebuke from the Lord, David is brought to an understanding of his error; and, though suffering for a little moment, all ends in blessing and joy.

2. (See chap. xvii.) David's mind is under an error here. He talks to Nathan of building an house of cedar for the Ark of God. This, again, was a right desire; a beautiful witness that David's heart was fervent towards the Lord. But still the purpose of that heart could not be allowed.

Whence then, I ask again, came this error? Not like the former case, from a forgetfulness of God's

Word, because the word did not treat on such a matter. It came simply from *want of full spirituality of mind*, or of sympathy with the mind of God. This was the source of the error, and the Lord deals with it in the gentlest way possible. He does not let this error, like the first, work any sorrow for him. He sends him at once a message by His prophet, and David's thought is corrected. This is like the gracious admonition of the *Spirit* of God, without any dealings of His *hand*, in the discipline of His saints.

3. (See chap. xx.; also 2 Sam. xi. xii.) We have here the record of a terrible breach. Nothing can well exceed either the sin, or the mischief that followed it.

Whence arose the trespass? Not like the first, from a forgetfulness of the Word of God; not like the second, from a want of full spirituality of mind; it came from *the lusts which war in the members*, from the corrupt springs which rise in our nature. This is the history of this sin. The history of the sorrow and chastening that followed it is of the same charac-

ter. God pronounces His entire abhorrence of all this, by telling David, that henceforth the sword should never depart from his house. Beyond, far beyond, what we before saw of the Divine judgments, is all this visitation upon this character of evil—an awful expression of the mind of God on iniquity which broke loose from such a corrupt spring.

4. (See chap. xxi.) This is the last offence—the king's numbering of the people. We are told its source—it came from *the temptation of Satan*.

It reminds us of Adam. It is a reflection of the scene in the Garden of Eden. It was the old Serpent working in man again the desire to be as God. David was seduced in pride, to act as though he were the owner and lord of Israel, and not merely their king or shepherd. He would have the people numbered as Jehovah (whose right it was, and whose inheritance they were) had once numbered them (Numb. i. 4). He would be as God.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

NOTE.—Those who endeavour to reply to Questions, desire to impress upon readers their responsibility to “prove all things,” and “hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. v. 21). They make no pretension to infallibility, but give their judgment as those who have received mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—Many Questions are received but not replied to; some not being for general edification, whilst others are laid aside from want of sufficient light to deal with them.—It is requested that all communications be accompanied by the Name and Address of the sender.

QUESTION No. CXCIII.

Is the word “broken” in 1 Cor. xi. 24 correct, or should it read, “This is My body which is given for you?”

REPLY.

There is hardly room to question the authority for omitting the word “broken” or “given”. The oldest and most reliable MSS—have simply, “this is My body which is for you;” the word “broken” or “given” having been apparently supplied. But, evidently, it is needful to the sense to supply some word, and taken in connection with the significant act of breaking the bread, we do not see why exception should be taken to the supplying of the word “broken.”

It has, however, been objected to on the ground of its not being in harmony with John xix. 36, “a bone of Him shall not be broken.” But there is a wide difference between His *body* being broken and a *bone* being broken. The veil of His holy flesh was indeed rent or torn, and in this sense was surely “broken”; but in the mystery of Divine providence every individual member of His body was preserved intact, not

a single bone having been broken by the cruelty of His murderers.

Nevertheless, we do not contend for either word, believing that the sense is the same whichever is used, or, if, indeed, the word be entirely omitted.

QUESTION No. CXCIV.

If a child of God sin, and makes confession (1 John i. 9), does it follow that, as in 2 Sam. xii. 10, punishment for it will be inflicted?

REPLY.

There are numerous instances in Scripture where sin, though undoubtedly forgiven, is visited with a righteous retribution in this life. The sin of Moses and Aaron, though forgiven, excluded them from Canaan. Jacob's deception of his father came back upon himself in the deceptions practised upon him by Laban, and notably the sin of David and others might be added.

Probably, for lack of spiritual observation, we fail to connect our troubles and sorrows with the sins to

which God in His government has attached them, and for this reason there can be little doubt that this visitation of sin is more general in God's ways than we have any idea of. Nor is it confined to the person who committed the sin. The results, in sorrow and suffering, are often reaped by children, and by children's children, and may be widespread and lasting. Indeed, no more forcible illustration of the principle can be found than the sin of Adam, which, though forgiven, has been visited upon the whole Adam race, as well as upon Adam himself.

Blessed be God for the resurrection, and the glorious hope in the fulfilment of which every trace of our former ruin will be for ever wiped away.

But, whilst the principle of reaping what is sown, and of retributive consequences following, even upon *forgiven* sin, is thus clear in Scripture, there are other modifying principles which ought also to be taken into account. There is such a thing as the postponement of the evil to a future day; and who has not seen instances wherein the very consequences resulting from sin were turned into blessings, and mercifully reduced as it were to a minimum? Let us never forget that the Lord is "very pitiful and of tender mercy;" and whilst making confession unto Him of sin committed, let not a slavish fear of retributive consequences which God may mercifully modify or even avert, prevent the joy of realized forgiveness through faith in the blood of Christ, or hinder the outflow of unfeigned thanksgiving for pardoning and cleansing grace.

QUESTION No. CXCIV.

Is it right for a Christian to read novels or poetical works, such as those of Shakespeare or Burns?

REPLY.

There may be instances where, for educational purposes, and in order to fitting oneself to obtain a livelihood by teaching, it may be necessary to acquire a knowledge generally of English literature, including such books as the question names.

But, with this exception, when we believe it may be done in the fear of God, and without damage to the soul,* we would, without hesitation, entirely

* In such a case, the reader, in all likelihood, would turn from such subjects with a feeling of relief to obtain refreshment and comfort in the Word of God.

condemn the practice of indulging in such reading, as soul-withering, and utterly unfit for a child of God.

There may be many fine thoughts and high sentiments to be gathered from the pages of such works, but *none* that are not more or less directly borrowed from Scripture, the only source of all that is true and good.

And in order to arrive at any good that such books may contain, what a mass of rubbish has to be waded through! In many cases soul-defiling rubbish in which sin is made light of or excused, or even held up for admiration.

We can easily apprehend the incompatibility of taste between the leeks and onions and garlick of Egypt, and the sweetness of the heavenly bread. Who, that had recently indulged in the former, would relish the latter? Even so, who could arise from the light and frivolous and falsely-colored novel or poem, with a sharpened appetite for the Word of God? The two are incompatible. The one is of the earth, earthy; the other is from above, and heavenly. The one can only feed the carnal mind, the other is meat for the inner man. "No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for, saith he, the old is better."

As to novels, there is in them all an unwholesome excitement that tends strongly to unfit those who indulge in them for cheerfully grappling with the prosaic matter-of-fact business of daily life. Feelings and affections are wrought upon in an unnatural way through the utterly false and delusive colouring lent to characters and circumstances. Tears are shed over the sorrows of an imaginary person, as in Ezekiel viii. 14; the women are seen weeping for Adonis—whilst upon the actual sorrows that abound on every hand, scarcely a sigh is heaved, or a tear shed, or a helping hand stretched out to aid.

We exhort young believers to take heed that in the selection of matter for reading they eschew everything that would tend to mar their relish for the Word of God. Read only those things in the reading of which you can count upon the approval of your Lord.

Seek first to please Him, and in daily duty worship and service; your time will be so fully taken up that the reading of novels and poems of the sort mentioned will be entirely excluded.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

I COR. ix. 26, 27.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY J. R. C.

THEREFORE, so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest, that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

By many, this verse has been taken to mean that even the Apostle himself had a secret fear lest, after all, he might be lost. I do not believe there was such a thought in his mind, or that the word "castaway" was intended to teach any such thing.

It must be borne in mind that in all the chapter, of which this is the conclusion, he makes no reference to the question of Salvation. It is a chapter on service and reward, illustrated by running in a race, or wrestling in the Grecian games with the winning or losing of the prize.

The Greek word rendered "castaway" means literally "disapproved;" or, as the new revision fairly renders it, "rejected."

"They that run in a race run all, but one (only) receiveth the prize"—that is to say, one is *approved*, the others are "disapproved;" or, as regards the winning of the prize, they are "rejected." The same illustration is used in 2 Tim. ii. 5—"If a man also strive for the masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully." In connection with every game, or race, or wrestling match, there were certain rules laid down, conformity to which was essential in order to obtain the prize. One might come in first in the race; but if he gained the advantage by taking a short cut, not according to the rules, he would not be crowned. Another less apparently successful, but who had adhered to the rules, would be crowned instead. And so, in the service of the Lord, apparent success does not necessarily gain the prize. There may be many who are at present regarded as earnest and successful labourers, whose service, when it comes to be tested at the judgment seat of Christ, may be found wanting, inasmuch as it was not regulated by the Word of God.

Success, in the eyes of many, seems to justify

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almost anything in the shape of means. The argument is, "the crowds must be attracted to hear the Gospel, otherwise sinners cannot be saved." It seems plausible; and so, to begin with, truths of the highest importance, are by common consent set aside. They must not be taught, or even referred to, for "success" demands that all denominations shall join together in the work. Next, the preaching must be of such a nature as not to run counter to any of the modern popular movements. The co-operation of annihilationists, perfectionists, blue-ribbon army men, &c., must be secured. Music must be introduced for the sole purpose of "attracting." The trained choir, composed too often of unsaved as well as saved, provided only that they have a good voice: the organ, or for that part, the drum, or the fiddle, according to the class to be attracted; and many other devices are introduced to ensure "success." Meanwhile, the plain, simple, old-fashioned preaching of Christ crucified is at a discount. The meetings are not attractive. The apparent results are comparatively insignificant; and true-hearted labourers are well-nigh fainting or yielding to a compromise with "successful" evangelization.

But let the judgment seat of Christ come into view, and all this is seen in another light. The approved one *here* is he who has greatest success. The approved one *there* will be the one to whom the Lord can say, "Thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name!" Faithfulness will be the test rather than success. Nor can it be ever known here how far reaching is the issue of faithful, though all but hidden, service. Who knows but the origin of many an extensive awakening might be traced to a Kitchen meeting or a Bible-class, conducted in faith and love, unknown to popularity, but marked for recompense in the day of Christ?

The Apostle, in prosecuting his arduous ministry, says, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection." I do not believe we are at all aware of the extent to which *the body*, if not kept in subjection to the Lord, may stand in the way of true ministry. To ensure success, as a runner or a wrestler, temperance in all things was needed. Some regard temperance as synonymous with "total abstinence," but this fails to give the Scriptural idea. The body, in every one of its many lawful desires, is ever ready to assert itself. It needs to be

kept in check, or as the word used by the Apostle really means, "buffeted" (see new revision), in order that it may not hinder in spiritual service. Eating too much may prove a hindrance, as well as drinking to excess, and be less suspected. Sleeping too long may turn the service of many a child of God into the garden of the slothful. Indeed, anything, if not kept in due restraint, may effectually hinder and deprive of the victor's crown.

As to the word "castaway," we miss its full meaning if we limit it to rejection, merely as to the future recompence. Take, for instance, the case of Lot. We should not have dared to pronounce him a saved man had not Scripture called him "righteous Lot," and "that just man." Yet, as regards all service and testimony for God, he was "disapproved," "rejected," or "a castaway." Take also the case of Samson. At one time a power for God, the deliverer of Israel, and the terror of the Philistines; yet, see him at last, "rejected," a poor "castaway," with his strength gone, his eyes put out, and set to grind in the Philistine's prison-house.

Or look again at Solomon. His wisdom wondered at, and sought after to the ends of the earth—that wisdom with which God had filled his heart (1 Kings x. 24). Yet, when he is old, his heart is turned away, and his testimony blasted through loving many strange women.

And there are those serving the Lord to-day, who, if they do not watch, and hang in conscious weakness upon God, will find Satan too strong for them. Little by little will he tempt us to indulge in lawful things, until the *body*, in some form or other, gains the mastery, and testimony here is gone, and reward at the judgment seat of Christ lost.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." We speak of no mere theoretical possibility but of that which is happening before our eyes so frequently, as to be alarming in the last degree. "Happy is the man that feareth alway,"

BELIEVERS' MEETINGS.

DEAR BROTHER,—With reference to meetings under the above heading, I do not think that it is generally understood that there are (to use a common mode of expression) meetings and meetings. I sup-

pose we should all agree that, under the above heading may be ranged meetings for worship and ministry, for teaching and exhortation, and meetings also for believers who take the oversight of assemblies for the transaction of the business of God's house, which has its needs in this respect as much as any well-ordered household in the community. There are many saints who have come out from human systems and arrangements, to the liberty of free and untrammelled worship, who were at first under the impression that all subjection to every one and everything ceased the moment that worship in spirit and in truth began (I speak of my own case as an instance of this) and that any previous arrangement connected *with any meeting whatsoever* was an outrage on the so-called "liberty of the Spirit." Now, in the meeting which is pre-eminently a meeting for worship (I mean that for remembering the Lord's death), it would be a denial of the whole principle which we hold dear as worshippers, to lay any restriction on the freedom of worship, for we need no minister to worship God. The feeblest saint may lead the assembly in worship, in the reading of a few verses of Scripture, in the giving out of a hymn, or in praise or thanksgiving; or a meeting may worship in silence, but even here the ministry is subject to the judgment of those who sit by, and we have often had to tell a brother that his word has not been to edification, and in this we submit one to another in the fear of God. I speak again from experience, as having myself been the subject of such gracious admonition; but if we seek to guard against this by rules or regulations, or by limitations beforehand as to who is or is not to minister, we should be giving up the liberty of the position to which we have been called as worshippers in spirit and in truth. To say, however, that because we meet only to the Lord, and recognise Him as the only Sovereign Director of the gifts of the Spirit, we must therefore accept all that we hear as of the Spirit must, alas, often be to lay serious things to the Spirit's charge. And we know from experience that a brother prefacing his address by saying "I have a word from the Lord," is often the preliminary to a sadly contrary experience. Meetings for worship (so far as we are able to insure it) are composed of *Christians only*, and those who compose them are supposed to know, and ought to know, that we seek to maintain order and discipline in our meetings, and

that we receive one another not to communistic principles, but to subjection and to order, and if this is not so, we receive only to self-will and confusion. Now, there are other meetings besides these for worship. Those for teaching, for instance; where a teacher who has proved his gift may be called on to exercise that gift in expounding some Scripture truths which he has well considered. I need hardly stop to say that to throw such a meeting open to any one who might happen to be present, would probably mar the whole purpose for which those assembled came together. Again, there are meetings called "believers' meetings" or "conferences," and of these also it may be said there are "meetings and meetings." There are first such as are held at Leominster, where not only all who come to them are well known to be Christians, but are all engaged in the Lord's service, and are invited *individually* as those who are more or less instructed in the principles of ministry and worship and the responsibility of subjection one to another. To leave these "open" is, I believe, according to God, and most blessed we have found it to do so. But there are other meetings which are called "believers' meetings," and rightly so, for it is to bring Christians together that these have been instituted, to which people are not individually invited, and to which many come who are not saved at all, which are in a great measure composed of Christians of different denominations, who have not the remotest idea of the principles of ministry and worship, or the responsibilities attaching thereto, but who come from all parts of the country to receive help and instruction from those who are qualified to give it. Many of these are shut out from all such privileges in the homes from which they come, and look forward with longing to each half-yearly believers' meeting. They therefore expect help from those who are matured in knowledge, and whose lives have been spent in ministering to the saints. The question then arises as to whether those who convene these meetings, and are otherwise responsible for them, have any responsibility as to the ordering of them, such as inviting those brethren to minister whom they think most competent. Not to lead the saints in worship, which would be to give up our choicest privilege as priests to God, but to occupy an hour, or any time, in any particular meeting, as may be most convenient to other ministering brethren

present, and most helpful to those who have come to be instructed and edified. In my humble judgment, this is not only admissible, but they are responsible to do so. I do not suppose that any one will contend that these meetings are the result of the Spirit's moving people to come together to a particular place, on a particular day. They are *convened*, and no small responsibility rests on those who do convene them, that the purpose for which they are called may be fulfilled, and that to the glory of God. I fear that some dear brethren feel that they are slighted because all the meetings are not thrown open, and that there should be any selection made as to those who are to speak, and that the Spirit is grieved because any one, and every one, young or old, learned or unlearned, may not "have his say," and instruct the saints as he feels led. And I may mention that I declined to go to the believers' meetings for three or four years after they were first established, because I thought that *every* meeting should be open to *every* body, and did not see that there are "meetings and meetings." As to the question whether subjects for ministry should be announced or settled beforehand, it is just a question as to whether this is more profitable or not. There is no reason that I know of in God's word, why it should not be announced that some brethren who are capable of doing so, will give addresses at the believers' meetings, on certain subjects, at any hour, on any day of the meetings, no more than that any brother who may be instructed in the subject should be announced to give, in any town or place, an address on the Lord's coming, or on the order of His house. This might, I think, be left to the brethren who are invited to minister to arrange amongst themselves, putting them under no bondage in the matter, provided only that all things be done decently and in order, and for the edification of the saints.

F. C. BLAND.

[NOTE.—The above letter is worthy of serious consideration. No doubt it may be said, there is another side to it. Not infrequently the most edifying word at such a meeting has been given by a servant of God who had come almost unknown, or known only to very few. But ought not such to come to "believers' meetings" where they are not known, commended not only as fit persons for fellowship, but also as those qualified to minister the Word of God and approved in the locality where they have laboured?

Again, "believers' meetings" are now very numerous in districts rarely if ever visited by those pre-eminently gifted to teach. At such meetings, where several might edify a little, and none much beyond the other in gift, there would be serious objections to pre-arrangement as to who should minister the Word. As a rule, where there is grace, and none thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think, the ones who do have opportunity to take part are just those who would be asked to do so. But to this there are not wanting many lamentable exceptions. We commend this letter to the consideration of our brethren, and shall be glad to receive further help from any who have light from God on the subject.—Ed.]

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAPTER ii.

“**A**ND the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, ‘They have no wine.’ Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.” A nice motto that for all servants of God, “whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.” “And there were set there six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins a-piece.” The word rendered “firkin” denotes a measure equivalent to about $7\frac{1}{2}$ gallons; and as they contained two or three, I should take it to be a “bath,” about twenty gallons. “Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with water, and they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.” That word “now” denotes the moment of the miracle. “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.”

Please not to forget that the last verse of John i. is the real introduction, or, as we might say, condensation of all John ii., excepting the last two or three verses. “Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man”; and the whole of chapter ii., with the exception of the last verses, which properly belong to the next chapter, is an expansion of these words.

“And the third day there was a marriage.” Now, I do not want to imply for a moment that this marriage is a type of the heavenly thing, and I want to be distinctly understood there; I do not think it would fit at all. But I tell you what I do think about it. There must be some object of the Spirit in alluding to the marriage here, and the more so because there is mention of the third day. Those who have spiritual eyesight will see some significance in that expression, the resurrection day. But this, I do think, earthly things are fleeting, transitory, and comparatively unreal; eternal things,

on the other hand, are real and substantial. Now, here is a picture of the real thing. What I mean is this. It is commonly supposed that God designs the whole of earthly relationships existing here to illustrate as far as possible divine truths; but that the earthly things are, of course, the real; and the heavenly, the shadowy. In my opinion the reverse is the fact; and whether it be the relationship between father and child, or whether it be the relationship between husband and wife, the heavenly is the real; and God instituted these earthly relationships on purpose that, being very little babes, we might understand His way. How should we have understood as to His being our Father but by realizing the relationship on earth? Therefore, He instituted the relationship on purpose that we might understand what it is to be begotten of God. And so, with husband and wife, the union is dissolved generally in the course of fifty years, and often in much less time; but, oh, that marriage union will be for ever and ever! Now, in this chapter which follows, you will find the shadow of the heavenly, and then the shadow of the earthly, each in its place. Can that be without design? “There was a marriage in Cana”—Cana means possession,—then will He get possession of His Church,—“on the third day.” I think I need scarcely allude to the marriage, it is so evidently figurative. In Genesis we have repeated allusions to it, and you are, doubtless, conversant with them. Eve fixes the period of the Church’s existence upon earth, for she was taken out of the side of Adam whilst he slept, showing how she derived her existence; and also when, properly speaking, she began to exist, viz., when Christ had been crucified. Then Eve was brought by the Lord God to Adam; and Christ will bring, as we are told in Ephesians (which alludes to Genesis), His bride to Himself. “That He Himself, might present to Himself, the Church glorious.” It shows that He is both the Lord God, the Creator, and the true Adam to whom the Church is to be brought. Rebekah gives us another hint; married to him whom she has never seen, to him who stays in the father’s house whilst she is betrothed to him. It is a beautiful picture of the divine reality; we to journey on to Him, and then presently, you know that beautiful verse, “Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide,” thinking, no doubt, of the bride who was coming,—“and he lifted

up his eyes and saw, and behold, the camels were coming." Rest assured the Lord Jesus is more anxious for the advent than you. Then the two wives of Jacob began to figure the two brides more distinctly; Rachel, representing the Church, loved first and most, but married last; whilst Leah, representing Israel, is married first, but not loved so much as Rachel. Then comes the final picture of the true bride seated with the Ruler upon His throne; Joseph and Asenath. I just touch upon these things, you may put them together at your leisure, and meditate upon them, and then you will receive a flood of light. "And the third day there was a marriage." For it is the heavenly family God is looking after now; the earth, except in a providential manner, is uncared for, and except as God guards His elect. The Lord Jesus has been cast out, therefore God calls us from earth; and it is the marriage God has in view now. I need not tell you what follows; the judgment seat, the marriage, and then the reign.

But at this marriage He turns water into wine. It appears to have been a humble wedding, on account of the lack of a sufficient supply for the invited guests, and it also seems to have been near to the village well, by the six water-pots lying there. It is much more likely that we should find Jesus in a humble dwelling upon earth, than in a palace. But the point I must press is, that this was the "beginning of miracles." It was not an act of mighty power, but it was an act of gentle beneficence; like the sun, peeping above the horizon, and beginning to gladden the mountain tops on which it shines. This was a beginning. And remember that this miracle of turning water into wine, is only found in the Gospel of John, which treats of the Godhead of Christ, and here it is put in the very fore-front. This was His beginning: and what creature could tell what would have been His end, had He had His own way then, as He will have before He has done. What would have been His second, and His third, and His fourth? had they not taken those blessed hands and nailed them to the cross; those feet that walked from village to village in order to bless, and nailed them to that tree. But if it had not been so, where should we have been? It was good as it was. Still this was the beginning, and we may judge of what He could have done by what He did.

Look at it as an act of power. He who could turn

water into wine, could have changed the stars, and made them infinitely more beautiful than they are. Astronomers tell us that there is a constellation, called by the unlearned the seven sisters, and by the scientific the Pleiades, and that if we count them they seem to consist of about eight to twelve stars, according as our eyes are strong or weak; but if we put a telescope to them, we shall find that instead of their being ten, twenty, or a hundred stars, there are thousands; stars innumerable, gathered all in that little spot, centred round one star, and the name of that star is Aleyon. It reminds me of that 51st verse, when all the stars of heaven and inhabitants of the earth will be centred around one crucified, glorified Object—the Son of Man. This was the beginning: What, then, could He not have gone on to? He, who said, "Lazarus, come forth," and Lazarus had only to obey, could have brought millions out of the grave, and brought the resurrection on then and there; and could have set the universe in flames. But God's purpose had to be accomplished, and the Son of Man lifted up and crucified.

Look at it in another light. In the new creation, there are some things that God is going to set quite aside. Thus the old nature in us is so utterly bad, that He is going to set that quite aside. But some things there are that are not so utterly bad, and with them God is going to do something, like what some men say they can do, viz.:—convert charcoal into diamonds; and He is going to take the charcoal and change it into diamonds. As, for instance, our mortal bodies. Think of when that moment arrives, when the mortal bodies of all His saints, whether here as subject to death, or in the grave corrupting, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, He will change them as charcoal into diamonds, and make us like Himself.

This was His beginning. It seems to me that there is great emphasis on this expression of the Spirit of God. He was going to bring out the Lord, and show what was in Him; but they stopped Him by their unbelief and sin. Men will have poor creatures now, who cannot do them an atom of good, and they will hail them and rally round them; but Jesus, who could have blessed any number of worlds, and could have beautified creation at a word (and this was His beginning), Him they nailed to the cross. This is His beginning, and when will He get to the end?

I think you and I might reverently say, never. Till man is overwhelmed, Satan exhausted, and He going on still. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory;"—what there was in Him! He let out a beam or two of the infinite rays of glory, ready, when God's time came, to stream forth in all directions, to gladden us forever with His smile and His presence. And God grant the same result may be found in us; "His disciples believed on Him." There is the heavenly company complete: do you see that? The angels of God descending, coming down from the height where Christ and all His saints are, to learn and to exercise His will who is Master of all.

Another point or two before we pass from this: some other objects in His thus turning water into wine. To the married pair, rewarding them for their hospitality; He will never let any lose by kindness to Him and to His. To His disciples, that He was not another John the Baptist, who came neither eating nor drinking. To Himself, as revealing His glory; invited as a guest, He becomes the host, and gives as a king. Imagine a man with a million a year, invited to the house of one with a few shillings a week; you could not conceive of him acting as a guest very long, he must soon become the host. To us, He who changes water into wine ever goes on; first He gives us the forgiveness of sins, next eternal life, the Holy Spirit, the blessed hope, Himself, and so on; unfolding Himself, till we do not know what we shall get. But union with Him is necessary ere we can partake of His delights. All we have previously tasted is like water; but He lets our resources fail on purpose that we may be cast upon Himself. And joy is His element. The thought of wine here is joy. As He said at another time, "I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." He will share His joy with us, all joying together, for joy is the very atmosphere of heaven, and joy is an element of the kingdom. "That ye may eat and drink at My table, in My kingdom." The kingdom is the time for His putting all things right, and as He puts all things right, we shall have more and more cause for joy. He loves to give, though we are apt to mistrust Him. He turns our very evils into sources of joy, our blessings into the wine of heaven

We are prone to suspect His ways, but He is too good to do other than bless.—*Notes of an address by W. Lincoln, communicated by J. S. H.*

THE SONSHIP OF BELIEVERS, AND OTHER RELATIVE TRUTHS.

(Continued from page 54).

SONSHIP—LIFE AND TESTIMONY.



LET us now see what God says regarding our life and testimony in the world as His sons.

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine (or, shine ye) as lights in the world, holding forth (or fast) the Word of Life" (Phil. ii. 14, 16). As sons of God, we are to be blameless and harmless; and His well-beloved Son left us an example, that we should follow in His steps, "Who did no sin; neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter ii. 21, 22). "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). While He was in the world He was the Light of the world; but now that He has gone to heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us, we are to shine *down here* for Him, and thereby glorify our Father who is in heaven. Our Lord said to His disciples, in Matt. v. 14, 16, "Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven;" also, verses 44 and 45, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be (manifestly) the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth His rain on the just and unjust." That is how we, as sons of God, may glorify our heavenly Father. May we, therefore, be followers of God as dear children, and shine for Him in the midst of this dark world. We can shine for God only in the measure in which we walk in the light. If we are walking in the light of God's presence day-by-day, we shall reflect that

light; it will radiate from us, and poor sinners groping their way in the dark shall be led through us to Christ. While the Lord Jesus was in this world, wherever He went there was a halo of moral glory surrounding Him. Throughout His whole life He glorified His Father, who testified that He was His well-beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased; and He, as the Son of the Father, could say, "I do always those things that please Him." We are to hold fast the Word of truth, earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, and maintain and uphold it at all costs. Our ways in daily life and our testimony in the Gospel are to be in perfect harmony. We are to be upright, straightforward, gracious, gentle, humble, and unflinching in our adherence to God's truth. This is the will of God concerning us as His children.

May we, therefore, seek the help of God, that we may shine indeed for Him in the midst of this poor dark world, which is being blinded by Satan, and led captive by him on to destruction.

SONSHIP—CHASTISEMENT.

Fatherly discipline is another of the blessings which flow from our relationship to God as our Father. "It needs be," He has to deal with us in this way, it is a proof as well as an expression of His love, "for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. xii. 6). Although we are "partakers of the Divine nature," we have also a corrupt and sinful nature, and a desperately wicked heart; but, through the constant help of His Spirit, we are enabled to resist and overcome indwelling sin, and walk with the Lord, and delight ourselves in His ways. But, if we yield to sin, and do not judge ourselves then our gracious loving Father has to judge us; He has to use the rod of chastisement, and punish our proud sinful flesh, where sin dwells. The chastisement may have to be repeated many times before we have learned the lesson, and received the instruction that we needed. If we have not profited by the dealings of our heavenly Father, He has again and again to chastise us until we have learned to obey Him, and walk in subjection to His will. Our Father desires our fellowship, but there can be no communion with the Father and child so long as sin is indulged in. And the means that God uses to bring us back to Himself and to lead us

to walk in subjection to Him is chastisement. We see this from Psalm cxix. verse 67, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word." That is the end of all discipline. It is corrective and restorative in its results. Obedience to God is the blessed result of God's dealings with His people, as disobedience to Him leads to the infliction of punishment that we might learn thereby to obey Him.

While the wrath of God shall most surely overtake the ungodly and impenitent sinner, the believer in Christ has been justified by His blood and saved from wrath, through Him who bore it. We have been for ever delivered from the wrath to come (1 Thess. i. 10). But God deals with us as sons, and when needful, uses the rod of chastisement for our profit and blessing.

"My Son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him" (Heb. xii. 5). We are liable either to despise, *i. e.*, look upon the affliction as a light matter, and unworthy of our consideration; or we may faint under it, or become discouraged and cast down in soul, not discerning in the chastisement the hand of a loving gracious Father. What is needed on our part is godly exercise of soul regarding the dealings of the Lord. The end that the Lord has in view in afflicting us is to bless our souls, and bring us nearer to Himself; and thereby reveal more of His love and grace to our hearts. Our Father chastens us for our profit that we might be partakers of His holiness (Heb. xii. 10).

Let us take heed to the exhortation in 1 Peter i. 13, 16, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as *obedient children*, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but, as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." God delights in His children when they obey Him; and it gives joy to His heart when they are delighting in Him and walking in His ways. "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy Him for ever." It was for this purpose that He saved us and made us His children.

We have the same line of truth in John xv. 1, 2: "I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth

not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." The Husbandman is our heavenly Father, and the branches represent each member of His family. If we are God's husbandry, then in this connection there is the planting, the watering, the pruning, the purging, and the cutting off. The planting answers to our being set by regeneration in the family of God; the watering is the daily and constant supply of Divine grace which the Lord ministers to our souls by His Word and Spirit, which leads to growth and fruitfulness; the pruning and purging answers to the discipline of our Father, in order that we may bear more fruit to God; and the cutting off takes place when the purging and the pruning fail to produce the desired result.

In 1 Cor. xi. we have chastisement and discipline brought out in connection with the Lord's redeemed ones gathered together as His assembly. The church at Corinth was in a sad carnal state when the Apostle wrote his first epistle to them. Instead of gathering together in the fellowship and fear of the Lord to "keep the feast" as He had commanded them, they met to eat their own supper. The rich feasted on their abundance, and the poor hungered, and God's holy Name was thereby dishonoured. They did not examine or judge themselves in this matter, therefore, God had to judge them. Many were weak and sickly, and many slept; that is, many were taken away by death. The weak and sickly, who were not exercised about it, and who did not judge and humble themselves under the mighty hand of the Lord on account of their sins, He had to cut off as unfruitful ones, because they were not accomplishing the end that He had in view.

We would just remark here, in connection with God's dealings with His people in judgment in this life on account of their sins, that it does not at all touch their eternal security in Christ. The moment that a sinner believes the Gospel concerning the Son of God, he is assured by His Word that "he shall not come into condemnation" (or judgment). Why? Because Christ bore his judgment on the cross. Therefore, in virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, and the faithful Word of God believed in, he is saved from eternal judgment. But as we have already shown, as long as sin is allowed to lie upon the conscience unjudged, there will be no communion

with the Father. But "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. xi. 31, 32).

May we be exercised after a godly sort concerning God's dealings with us; and may we also seek grace to profit by them. It is written that "all things work together for good to them that love God." May we seek to extract blessing out of every affliction that God, in wisdom and love, may see meet to bring us into. Let us also seek His grace, that we may be enabled to praise Him for every trial that we are called in His providence to pass through; for, depend upon it, He means us to receive blessing through it. What we need is patience to wait until the gracious purpose that the Lord has in view is attained. O for the opened ear to hear His word, and the ready and obedient heart to do His will! And as we go on in happy fellowship with our gracious Father, He shall reveal His precious thoughts to us, and fill us with joy and peace as by faith we receive of His love, which He pours into our hearts. May it, then, be our deep and constant desire to walk worthy of God who has called us unto His kingdom and glory.

W. K.

THE FLESH OR FIRSTBORN.

BAPTISM—BURIAL—(Continued.)

THAT Baptism is an ordinance which concerns *believers in Christ* the Scriptures referred to have clearly established; however young in the faith, however weak or ignorant the convert may be, none of these things need debar him from obeying his Lord. *Intelligent* obedience is desirable, but we humbly suggest that the primary thought in the mind and heart of the saved sinner should be to render implicit obedience to the command of Christ. It is not necessary that one should understand clearly the *teaching* contained in this precious symbol (however desirable this may be) in order to obey; it is enough that it be known as a command; and the willing and obedient soul having "done His will" shall most assuredly "*know of the doctrine.*" What did those early believers know of the deep and blessed meaning embodied in that simple act at the time of their immersion? We venture for them the answer, that

they knew *but little* of its teaching beyond its humbling effect on their pride; nor was it made with them a point of *light* or *understanding*, but rather of *heart* and *will*. "I cannot see it" is the cry from many who profess to be saved; and whatever they may mean by this, it is held by them to be a sufficient reason for neglecting to obey.

There are, doubtless, many honest-hearted saints who *conscientiously* tender this excuse, but it is to be feared that the greater portion of those who speak thus have no desire "*to see*," and would not *obey* if they did. There are two great or principle hindrances to a right apprehension and a willing reception of baptism. The first lies in the fact that "the natural man"—"the carnal mind"—dislikes it; and the second is consequent upon the first; and is that the more pleasing and less mortifying substitute—infant sprinkling—(which tradition has furnished) holds a place in the minds of many. The total rejection of the latter, together with what it pretends to teach, is the earnest of much light and blessing to the willing-hearted—though it may be—bewildered saint.

But now we must proceed, without further delay, to that interesting part of our subject which bears a relation to the heading—"The Flesh or Firstborn;" this has been our objective point throughout, and, but for the error which abounds on every hand, we might have gone to it at once.

Baptism is a Burial; and the question arises, who, or what is buried therein? Rom. vi. 2, 3, 4, 5—"Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are *dead to sin* live any longer therein. Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death; therefore we are *buried* with Him by baptism into death . . . for if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection." Here the question is answered, there must of necessity be *death to sin*, ere one becomes a subject for *burial* in baptism. We have already seen that identification with Christ, on the cross, in the tomb, and in resurrection. Life and glory is the portion of every saved soul, whether he comprehends it or not. But God is desirous that His children should comprehend it, and to this end a simple ordinance is given. In baptism we have "*the likeness of His death*"; mark, not the real death, but the likeness of it. As the believer steps down

into the water, the profession he makes is a truly wonderful one. He says, by that action "my old man has been crucified with Christ (Rom. vi. 6). I was so guilty and vile that God could not, in justice, treat me in any other way. I have accepted, thankfully, the position of a cursed one whom justice hanged upon the tree (Gal. iii. 13).. And now I am here, to permit my body to be buried in this water: this is but a figure or likeness of the death and burial in Christ, of my "Firstborn" nature—my old man—which was incurably evil."

This is a humbling confession; and no wonder that "proud man" has so many objections to offer to it. Many have said "there is something about baptism I don't like." We know of no Scripture that anticipates our "liking it."

To stand by the grave of a friend and watch till the earth covers the coffin, is not a pleasant thing; but how much more solemn it is to present one's own body for burial; in profession of having died a death more ignominious by far than any natural death possibly could be. And this is what is done by the true Christian who offers himself for baptism. "Liking it," then, has nothing to do with it, but remember the very pride which dislikes it emanates from the evil nature which has been nailed to the cross; and are we not more than conquerors when grace enables us to bury our likes and dislikes in that typical grave of Jesus? Our evil nature, our flesh, can never enter heaven; its end is the cross, the grave. Can we then refuse to give our heartfelt consent to that most righteous judgment which fell upon us at Calvary? *Surely not*. "A form" is precious when it is God's form; and do not say that your spiritual condition will be unaffected by obedience in this matter. We have seldom, if ever, known unbaptised Christians to be really clear about resurrection life and standing. And whilst their souls are none the less saved because of this there can be no question that they suffer in experience whether they are conscious of it or not.

We are not of those who treat this matter lightly; nor would we suppress the expression of belief that obedience to the Lord in the baptismal ordinance is the key in the hand of the Spirit of God, which unlocks to the believer a casket of resurrection treasure—treasure which is seldom, if ever, discovered to the disobedient saint.

Now, what applies to individuals must necessarily apply with increased force to assemblies. Is it not a matter of observation that gatherings of believers "to the Name of the Lord," where many are unbaptised, are in an unhealthy backward condition? And how could they be otherwise? The *self-will*, whether as expressed in *positive refusal* to obey in this matter, or sheltered behind plausible excuses, must, and will, oppose other truths of God, and exert its influence in the assembly. And if this be true of a young believer, how much more so of one who takes a leading part in a meeting? His position is anomalous. How can he stand beside the baptistry and say "Amen" to the action which he himself never submitted to? Alas! this case is not a supposed one, for it has many examples. What advice then can be lovingly tendered to these "fathers in Christ?" We know of none more befitting than that they should immediately apply to themselves what they allow to be right for the younger, and "*arise forthwith and be baptised.*"

This is humbling; and we hear one say, "my being baptised *now* would reflect upon all my past life." But, how, we ask, is the Lord and His glory considered, in such an objection? It is his *own honour* the objector has in view, rather than God's glory! This is a day of much brokenness and disorder in Christendom as well as in the "churches of God." It is therefore not to be wondered at, that souls coming up out of spiritual captivity should learn God's ways somewhat irregularly. Early saints knew baptism as holding the *first* place in their confession of Christ; but how many in these last days find themselves at the Lord's Table having overlooked this ordinance altogether? Beloved, there is no need for this, if godly applicants for fellowship are rightly instructed as to divine order. (No question is here raised concerning invalids.)

We would now draw attention to a condition of things which must be looked upon as the natural offspring of disobedience in respect of this. *Ecclesiastical purity* is no less important than *individual holiness*.

There is a generation of beloved and respected Christians whose *personal characters* bear much of the likeness of Christ; but when their work for God passes under review, what is its most striking feature? Is it not, that whilst God may have used them much in Gospel labour they are leaving behind them a race of feeble, carnal Christians? Feeble because their *wills* were not operated upon by the word of God in the

early days of their Christian life. *Baptism was not presented to those converts in its due order.*

Oh! for the fearlessness that overturns human expediency that we may keep the "old paths," and lead others into them too! Much popularity will be lost, and much opposition engendered by strict adherence to "the ways which be in Christ;" but the *present* "revelation in the knowledge of His will," together with the abundance of reward at the judgment seat of Christ, will amply repay the true servant who sought his Lord's glory. A place on the popular Gospel platform, an honourable recognition by world-bordering Christians, and eulogies by editors of newspapers, are not amongst the favours accorded to the servant of Christ, who, with holy, humble, and firm step, leads the converts to a convenient spot where they may be "buried with Christ in baptism." The world may laugh and hurl their showers of ridicule upon those who thus confess Christ; and carnal Christians, whose fleshly natures rule them, may turn away in disgust; yet, surely we know that our God is pleased with what nature hates — with what in profession puts natural man in the lowest place, but exalts the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have traced the Flesh, the Firstborn, through its high-handed rebellion against God. We have watched until righteous judgment dealt its final stroke, and now with resurrection thoughts and happy hearts we sing—

"Into Thy death baptised, we own with Thee we died,
With Thee our life are risen, and in Thee glorified.
From sin, the world, and Satan we're ransom'd by Thy blood,
And now would walk as strangers, alive with Thee to God."

W. J. E.

A LETTER.

STROM, WHITENESS,
SHETLAND, February, 1885.

DEAR BROTHER IN CHRIST,—Knowing that some of the readers of the *Northern Witness* are interested in the Lord's work in these parts, I send you a few notes of the last half-yearly Conference which was held in the town of Lerwick, on the 12th and 13th of last month. Notwithstanding the weather being very stormy, a good many were in from the country; having travelled on foot some thirty, some fifteen, and others nine miles to be present. The first meeting

was held in the Masons' Hall, and after we had spent one hour in prayer, the meeting was an open one for the ministry of the Word. Our attention was directed to the 11th of Matt., verses 28, 29 and 30. Where did we find our rest at the first? Was it not in His presence at the Cross? Rest for our consciences through His *precious blood*. Rest for our hearts in occupation with His person. Where He toiled and suffered, we rest. Where His path ended, our path as strangers and pilgrims began. Now exalted, seated at God's right hand He rests, and reaps the fruit of His toil. God rests in Him with infinite delight. God's rest in creation was broken; but His rest in redemption cannot be. Do we want to triumph over our enemies? then we must have God's presence manifested with us; not only God for us, and God in us, but also, God with us. (Exod. xxxiii. 14.) God said to Moses: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give you rest." Israel, on account of sin and failure forfeited God's presence; so that when they went up against *Ai* they were defeated. Why is there such weakness and failure in our assemblies? Is it not because of sin unjudged that we have not the manifested presence of God with us as we should possess it? Oh! for more of His presence, then we shall have more of His power. Do we want real joy, an abiding joy? then we must abide in His presence. "In His presence is fulness of joy, and at His right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm xvi. 11). Abraham had the presence of God with him in Hebron. Not so Lot, when he dwelt in Sodom. *Oh, to be dwellers in Hebron!* (FELLOWSHIP.)

Mr. A. Jobson (from Sunderland) next turned our attention to the 15th chapter of Genesis, and among other profitable things, said:—"Here we have Abraham in a right condition before God. Why is there not with us as with Abraham, an increase of seed, an increase in our numbers? We cannot expect to be blessings to others if we are in a wrong condition. Most of us here are in the place of all places;—gathered out—to the alone worthy Name of our Lord Jesus Christ; but oh! let us see, that in a right position, we maintain in fellowship with God a right condition." Mr. E. Stack brought our first meeting to a close by a few practical remarks on love (John xiv. 21). The manifested presence of God is based on the condition of our

love and obedience. One thing that hinders blessing is the absence of manifested love one to another. "My little children, let us not love in word, or in tongue, but in deed, and in truth" (1 John iii. 18). Lip love is an empty thing, it is very shallow and very cheap. "The Lord make you to increase, and abound in love toward one another; and toward all, even as we do toward you" (1 Thes. iii. 12.) In the evening, we met again at five; this time in the new Town Hall. After tea was served, we had nearly three hours of profitable ministry; the truth brought forward being calculated to lead to heart-searching, and humbling before God. On the following evening, we met again in the Masons' Hall. From six to seven there was a meeting, chiefly for those taking oversight from the various assemblies; this was found to be a very important meeting, which we trust will not be without practical results. At seven, the hall filled, and after prayer, our attention was directed to the 12th Psalm. In these dark and evil days, no one at all exercised before God and seeking His glory can be otherwise than humbled on account of the failure with which we are surrounded. At these meetings we have had truth brought before us bearing upon our position and our condition. Some exalt the one at the expense of the other; let us seek by the grace of God to contend for both. A little child who was once asked whether it was father or mother that it loved best, replied in simplicity: "I love both best!" To those who would ask in those days—Whether it is better to be in a right position or in a right condition? our reply would be similar to the child's, "both are best." Deeply conscious of failure, what are we to do? to whom are we to turn? "Help, Lord!"—from Jehovah our help must come; though we have failed, He abideth faithful; we have changed, but He remains the same; oh! to hear His voice saying: "In Me is thine help found." What we need is the trained ear to hear above the din and discord of the many Babel tongues, the Master's voice. (Verse 4.) What lawlessness abounds, and oh! how sad, to find the same spirit creeping in amongst those out to His Name, so that, instead of godly submission one to another when trial or difficulties come, how often there is the biting and devouring of one another, and the spirit manifested, expressed in the words of this Psalm (verse 4). "Who is Lord over us?" (Verse 5.) "Are we

oppressed? are we poor and needy? Jehovah will set us in safety from him that would ensnare us" (margin). Many are the snares that Satan, in these last days has set for our pilgrim feet; may our prayer be (Psalm cxli. 9). "Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity." (Verse 7.) "Thou shalt keep them, Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever;" how precious! reminding one of 1st Peter i. 5. "Kept by the power of God through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time;" and also of Jude, verse 1; "Preserved in Jesus Christ." (Verse 1.) "The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted." But our day is coming, as we love to sing: "The crowning day is coming by-and-by." Yes; in a very little while we shall be exalted and the wicked humbled. Meantime, let us have grace to be the humble ones, and thus manifest the life of Him who humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; knowing that soon, very soon, we shall be exalted with Him. Mr. E. Stack gave a very searching address, chiefly on the "Brazen Altar and the Laver;" showing how in these days of lawlessness, we need to bring the Word of God to bear upon our ways. The Brazen Altar, typical of the cross where the precious blood was shed that cleansed our sins, and brought us nigh to God. The Laver, typical of the Word; which, as we yield obedience to it, cleanses our ways.

Of the last address I am sorry notes were not taken; I believe God was speaking to the hearts and consciences of His own. Mr. A. Jobson closed by reading Psalm lxxxv. 6. "Wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" I trust this prayer rose from the hearts of not a few who were present. Mr. E. Stack, and Mr. A. Jobson, after a short but happy visit to papa, went west to Selivoe, and had meetings for a week for Christians and the unsaved. Mr. A. Jobson also paid a visit to West Burrafirth, a lonely spot among the hills, about 26 miles or so from Lerwick. His visit cheered and encouraged the few weak ones out to the Name of the Lord there. It is a very rare thing for them to be visited by any of the Lord's servants. At Whiteness on the 26th of last month, we had a tea meeting, hall nearly filled; and some interest. While there is very much to

be thankful for, one great lack in the meetings in the country is men with shepherd hearts, and true to the Lord as guides to the flock. Will the Lord's people who read this pray that such men may be raised up, and fitted by Him for this very important work? D. McL.

NOTES IN CONNECTION WITH A WEEK OF PRAYER.



MONDAY NIGHT.—Our individual humiliation, confession, blessing, and prayer for increase of faith, hope, and love. Scriptures read and exhortations from Matt. xviii. 15-35. If brethren trespass one against the other, how to act. The Church meeting for discipline no insignificant thing, for what they bind on earth is bound or registered in heaven; likewise on the brother's repentance and restoration, loosed from his sins, we gladly receive back, and that which is so loosed on earth is loosed in heaven. *The prayer meeting*; God's acknowledgment of two agreeing together to petition the throne of grace; God's promise it shall be done.

To Peter's question, Shall I forgive my brother seven times? the Lord replies: "Till seventy times seven"—490 times. If a brother offends us *once* now it is sufficient; we are apt to treat him coolly for years to come. See the contrast of the king's dealings to that of the servant. The king forgives a debt of ten thousand talents—£2,120,000. The same servant sees a man who owes him a hundred pence, £3 2s. 6d., and he seizes him by the throat, saying, "Pay me that thou owest." So it often is with us. A brother has grieved us by saying hard things about us; we would instantly seize him and wring a confession from him, forgetting the great amount God has forgiven us.

Psa. xxxviii. 13. The Psalmist when he heard the slanders laid against him in verse 12 could say in verse 13: "But I as a deaf man heard not; I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth." Solomon said, "There is a time to hear and a time to speak." Would that we could learn when to keep silent. His hope was in the Lord, and he knew that He heard all. "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." He learned the lesson in Psa. xxxix. 1, and said, "I will take heed to my ways,

that I sin not with my tongue. He kept silence, and held his peace even from good." This was painful to him. As he was musing the fire burned and his heart was hot within him, and at last he burst forth—"Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am."

TUESDAY.—For all saints ; the Body of Christ, for all men, kings, &c., considering the lawless spirit of the age, and for the speedy coming of Christ.

Matt. xvi. 18 : The Church. On Peter's confession, Christ calls it "My Church," on the foundation of which (the Rock) all for whom He bled and died are built.

John xvii : Christ prays that they may be one in the Name, one in the truth, and one in the glory, that the world may know that Thou has sent Me, and hast loved them, &c.

Heb. xiii. 9 : Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established with GRACE, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. Link Acts ii. 41.

Jude's Epistle was read, warning us of lawlessness, hypocrisy, and insubordination, creeping from the outside world into the Church. Whilst all this is going on, we are to be building up ourselves on our most holy faith ; praying in the Holy Spirit ; keeping ourselves in the LOVE of God ; on some having pity ; working to pull them out of the fire ; hating the garments spotted by the flesh ; looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.

1 Cor. xiii. was read, noticing though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, even to removing mountains, and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity—though I do all these things—I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Dan. ix. also read, showing how the prophet confessed the sins of the people as his own, and took them all to the Lord.

WEDNESDAY.—Our homes and home life, as fathers, husbands, and wives : the great need of setting and being an *example to our children*, and for the conversion of relations and friends.

Gen. xviii. 19 was cited as God approving of Abraham, for He knew that he would *command his children and his household* after him, and they *shall keep the way of the Lord*, to do justice and judgment. His obedience, his happiness, resulting from that, and the great power he had with God in pleading for the righteous within the city.

1 Tim. iv. 16, and v. 22 were dwelt upon as essential before others would learn from us. Eph. v. 22 : The wife's duty to the husband was considered, as well as the husband's love to the wife. The wife was taken from his side, not from the dust beneath his feet, thus we ought to love them as our own bodies, and not as something inferior.

THURSDAY.—For the servants of God and the work of God, both at home and abroad.

Eph. iv. 4 : The one body and one Spirit, hence diversities of gifts ; verse 8, the apostles and prophets the foundation, then the need of the evangelist next, hewing out from the quarries of nature the rough stones, to be built upon the foundation for a habitation of God by the Spirit : then the pastor gathering them together, looking after, and caring for the building as it goes up, the teacher dividing the word, and instructing the converts as to how they should behave themselves in the house of God.

FRIDAY.—Sunday school work, a teacher's meeting, &c. ; considering how best to promote the welfare of this important work.

SATURDAY.—A general prayer-meeting, a large number of requests read, handed in upon paper, for all classes.

2 Tim. ii. 3, with Eph. vi. 11-18, read and commented upon, specially noticing the exhortation, *endure hardness*. In these times of hard and bitter sayings, how grand to see the soldier of the cross going on steadily, perseveringly, with full purpose of heart, nothing daunted, in spite of every obstacle Satan may put in his way, determined at all cost to glorify Jesus, ever looking to Him, the Captain of our salvation. Therefore put on the whole armour of God, which is, according to Rom. xiii. 14, the Lord Jesus Christ. But there is first the putting off of the old man with his deeds, like Joshua, the High Priest, his filthy garments must be taken away ere he can be crowned, and a fair mitre set on his head. The soldier now, with the whole armour on, a picture of *strength*, so the man of the world would say, but

God's ways entirely different from man's, and hence verse 18. The soldier realises his entire *weakness*, and is found *praying always*—blessed weakness, blessed infirmities. May we, like the dear servant of God, learn to rejoice in them.

MANY who have proved the Lord's care need an increase of faith to enable them fully to confide in Him for all needful supply, if they see a dark day gathering. There is a difference between a young

Christian looking forward, and saying, "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me," and "Paul, the aged," testifying, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." There is much that we know as abstract truth that we cannot say we know experimentally; we have not "*learned*" it. Paul had "*learned*" to set self aside, and knew more of Christ's unfailing faithfulness. In every conflict God is teaching His people that their resource is not in self, but in Him.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

NOTE.—Those who endeavour to reply to Questions, desire to impress upon readers their responsibility to "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. v. 21). They make no pretension to infallibility, but give their judgment as those who have received mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—Many Questions are received but not replied to; some not being for general edification, whilst others are laid aside from want of sufficient light to deal with them.—It is requested that all communications be accompanied by the Name and Address of the sender.

QUESTION No. CXCVI.

Is there any Scriptural authority for what are commonly known as "oversight meetings"?

REPLY.

The term "oversight meeting" is certainly not found in Scripture, but reference to the following Scriptures will show that, apart from the *term*, something of the *kind* must have been very generally practised:—

Acts vi. 2: When "the twelve" called the multitude of the disciples together, it is evident that "the twelve" must have taken counsel together about the step previously.

Acts viii. 14: Here, again, the apostles acted together in such a way as involves a previous consultation.

Acts ix. 27: Paul was here brought by Barnabas to the apostles, and to them Barnabas declared the facts of Paul's conversion, of which he only was cognizant. It is evident from this passage that there were opportunities of seeing the apostles apart from the whole body of the believers.

Acts xv. 6: Here the apostles and elders came together, not the whole church. It was fitting that such matters should first be discussed and agreement arrived at among *the guides* before bringing them before the whole assembly.

Acts xi. 30: The contributions of the saints at Antioch were here sent to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Acts xx. 17: The elders of the Ephesian Church

are here sent for by Paul. They came to him and received instructions specially suited for themselves.

Acts xxi. 18: "Paul went in unto James, and all the elders were present." We are not told for what purpose they were together, but evidently this was one of the frequent occasions when elder brethren were to be found together apart from the whole church.

1 Tim. iv. 14 also shows the united action of the elders.

No one of the foregoing Scriptures might of itself suffice to warrant the meeting together of elder brethren, but taken altogether, their import is plain enough.

If there be "elder brethren," if there be those who are the "guides," the "shepherds" or "pastors"—the "overseers" of the Churches—what more natural or needful than that those who so serve the Lord should have special occasions of coming together, when the state of the flock can be freely considered, when steps that may be thought desirable for the good of the whole can be discussed, when differences of judgment can be adjusted, when special cases requiring discipline can be freely named, in the confidence that they will not thereby become subjects of "tittle-tattle?"

Such special fellowship of those who have the rule is essential to the wellbeing of any assembly where there are several who seek to do oversight or shepherd work.

Nothing can be more injurious to an assembly

than to have brought before it by one leading brother some proposal that is opposed by another, or which takes others who have equal responsibility as "guides" by surprise.

Such action betrays a lack of mutual confidence and consideration one of another.

It is like disagreement between father and mother in a family in the presence of their children. Alas for rule and order in the household if there be not "the oversight meetings" of the husband and wife, where all things concerning the welfare of the children can be considered apart from them, so that in their presence nothing but perfect fellowship and oneness of mind is manifested.

But right and necessary and Scriptural as the oversight meeting may be, it is like every other good thing—liable to abuse.

If attended by those who do not in character answer to the overseer of 1 Tim. iii.—by novices, or some who have not a good report without, or others who know not how to rule their own household, or even their own tempers—little wonder if it degenerate into a meeting for speaking hard things one to another, instead of a meeting of loving, burdened hearts to speak to God and to one another about the subjects of their care.

Again, such meetings may arrogate to themselves powers which do not belong to them, and instead of being guides to the assembly, leading the feeblest along with them, they may act for the assembly, and, independently of it, so weakening that sense of responsibility which ought to rest upon all.

Be it remembered that attendance at "oversight meetings" will never constitute a man an overseer. The Holy Spirit must first have qualified him, otherwise his attempts to do the work will be a failure, and his presence among those with truly shepherd hearts, an intrusion.

On the other hand, some may, from a sense of diffidence, or from doubt as to the Scripturalness of such meetings, be absent from the "oversight meeting," who nevertheless have the blessing of the saints at heart, and are continually in an unobtrusive way seeking to care for others.

But in all such matters it is not well to draw lines where God has not laid them down.

Whilst the forward and carnal need to be repressed, and, if necessary, told plainly that "oversight" is not

their work, it is equally important that every glimmering spark of Godly care for others be encouraged, even in those who may not have been acknowledged as of the number of the overseers.

QUESTION No. CXCVII.

Referring to article on "Praise," in March No. of "Northern Witness," may I ask why it is not glorifying to our Lord and Master to address Him as "Jesus?"

REPLY.

We reply to this in the words of another, printed in the *British Herald* so long ago as 1867:—

THE NAMES BY WHICH WE ADDRESS OUR LORD JESUS
CHRIST NOT A MATTER OF INDIFFERENCE.

"DEAR BROTHER,—For some time I have been wishing to communicate to you thoughts I have had upon a subject which, I am sure, no one that is spiritual will consider altogether unimportant. I allude to a habit we seem to have fallen into of addressing the Lord Jesus, and speaking of Him, by the name of 'Jesus.' And let me say at once that in what follows I do not claim to speak with authority, though my own mind is very decided, but rather to suggest for others the train of thought which has led me to the decision I have formed. I once thought that the frequent use of the name of Jesus betokened spirituality of mind, and an apprehension of the place of nearness into which we have been brought. But a deeper study of Scripture has greatly modified such a notion. I have learned that there are special truths which cluster round the several names of Jesus, Christ, and Lord; and that the use of these names, whether alone or in combinations, depends upon the truths which the Holy Spirit would suggest or make prominent. No one who believes the epistles to be the Word of God can suppose the frequent changes in the use of these names is accidental, or to be accounted for on the ground of euphony. Take, for instance, the Epistle to the Ephesians: Paul, an apostle of *Jesus Christ*, to the saints in *Christ Jesus*; the salutation is from the *Lord Jesus Christ*; and the blessings are all in *Christ*. There must surely be teaching in this, and how interesting the study of it must be! Perhaps I may enter on this again; at present I only notice it in passing, and will pause merely to suggest the clue to it. The name "Jesus" speaks to us of the man who lived on earth; was

crucified and raised again; who is now passed into the heavens as man; whom, moreover, God has made both Lord and Christ (Acts ii. 36). 'Christ' brings in His official position and relationships in resurrection; and 'Lord' reminds us of the power, the throne, the glory. An apostle was a witness of the resurrection of Jesus (Acts i. 22); or, in other words, one sent by Jesus to testify that He was Christ; and, therefore, Paul is called an apostle of Jesus Christ. It is in Him we are accepted, but it is in Him as risen from the dead. And so the word is, 'to the saints in Christ Jesus.' The same names are used, for it is the same person of whom the Spirit speaks; but they are transposed, because a different thought is prominent. 'Blessed in Jesus,' 'Chosen in Jesus,' 'Accepted in Jesus,' and such like expressions, are very common with us, but quite unknown in Scripture. It is always 'in Christ,' and for the reason I have stated. The salutation is from Him as seated in the glory, and therefore from the Lord Jesus Christ.

"And now, to return to the subject with which I started. When we kneel down and pray to the Lord Jesus, how ought we to address Him? Would it not be blessed to discover the Lord's mind in this matter? I should indeed deplore getting into bondage about it, for we are called to liberty; but let us not forget that liberty of the Spirit is liberty to do as the Spirit leads. If, then, I pray to the Lord, is it not the joy and strength of my heart to know that He is in the place of power, crowned with glory and honour; and will I not delight to acknowledge Him as such, and address Him as *Lord*? Or if I bow my knees to my God and Father, will I not gladly own that my prayer is in the name of One whom He has exalted—'in the name of the *Lord Jesus*?' But to look at this in another aspect, let me ask, Does it not become us to call Him *Lord*? I would not forget the intimacy of the relationships into which we have been brought, or the tenderness of the ties by which love has bound us to Himself. But yet we must remember who *He* is, and what *we* are. He calls us His brethren. His Father is our Father; His God is our God;—but He will not take His place along with us and say, 'Our Father, our God.' How delicately He seeks to teach us this in His message to the disciples after the resurrection (John xx. 17). He is not ashamed to call us brethren; but I think the grace that gives us

such a place would itself teach us to call Him "Lord." And thus it was the disciples always addressed Him and spoke of Him, as appears in a very remarkable manner in the chapter to which I have just alluded, John xx. 2, 13, 18, 20, 25, 28. See also John xi. 3; xiii. 25, 36; xiv. 8; xxi. 15, 16, 17; Luke ix. 54 ('The demons address Him as 'Jesus)'). No doubt in the *narrative* of the Gospels He is generally called Jesus, but there it is *God Himself* who speaks. I am not aware of any passage in which the disciples are said to have called Him Jesus; and indeed in one place He commends them for calling Him Master and Lord (John xiii. 13). We are not to expect commands to guide us in a case like this, but it does seem to me that that one word of the Lord's ought to be a sufficient expression of His mind to any heart that is true to Him, 'Ye call me Master and Lord, and *ye say well*.' If any would bring in here (for I would not) the relation of bride as justifying a greater familiarity now, I would remind them that it is specially recorded of Sarah, she 'obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord.'

"I might enlarge upon this, but the foregoing is sufficient to convey my thought. And while I again disclaim any wish to press this upon others, I must add that I by no means deem it of little moment, I do not believe that it is the Lord's mind that we should address Him as, 'O Jesus,' 'Blessed Jesus,' 'Dear Jesus.' It jars upon one's spirit. I am sure that when on earth His own never addressed Him so; and I am no less sure that when we shall stand in the eternal glory to which we have been called, made like unto Him, faultless and blameless as Himself, we shall bow before Him and call Him "Lord." Nay, shall we not fall down before Him, and cast our crowns before His throne. But, above all, in this the time of His rejection here, ought we not to insist on His title of *Lord*? Let us learn to speak of Him as the *Lord*. Let us address Him as *Lord*. Prayer to the Father is in His name as *Lord*. If we meet according to the promise of Matthew xviii. 20, we meet, not in the name of Jesus, but 'In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. v. 4). Thus let us constantly remind ourselves and one another, and testify to the world that Jesus Christ is *Lord*. Every tongue shall confess it one day to the glory of God the Father. May not *our* confession of it redound to His glory even now?

"A. R. D."

"THE DAY APPROACHING," AND REDEMPTION DRAWING NIGH.

WHEN Scripture speaks of the coming of the Lord, as that for which we are to be continually waiting—knowing neither the day nor the hour when it will take place—we are in danger of imagining that it does not become us to watch the signs of the times. Such, however, was not the design of the Holy Spirit, and is alien to the thought of the apostle, when he writes in Heb. x. 24, 25 :—"Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works ; exhorting *one another* . . . and so much the more, as *ye see the day approaching.*"

Prophetic Scripture teems with warnings having reference to the character of the latter days, which they who are wise and guided by its teaching will understand ; so that, as the Day approaches, and troubles, and sorrows, and perplexities increase, they will learn with joy the significance of our Lord's words : "When ye see these things *begin* to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." The connection in which these words stand in Luke xxi. deserves our special notice. There is no reference made here, as in Matt. xxiv., to "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet," which especially belongs to the history of Israel in the latter day, under the reign of Antichrist ; but, in accordance with the general scope and character of the Gospel, the Spirit of God refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, not in the light of its yet prophetic future, but in the light of that Divine vengeance which overtook Jerusalem in its destruction by the Romans. To this our Lord refers in chapter xix., when, as He came near to the city, and wept over it, He foretold its desolation, and said that one stone was not to be left upon another, because they recognised not the time of their visitation ; adding, in the passage before us : "There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people, and they shall fall by the sword, and shall be led away captive into all the nations ; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the nations, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." He foretells wars and commotions, perplexities and fears, earthquakes and pestilences, fearful sights and signs from

heaven, persecutions and betrayals. And all these things as they *have come* and *will yet come*, are designed to be to the seeing eye and to the believing heart the proofs of a coming deliverance. To this end, He uses the parable of the fig tree, from which, when it shoots forth, we are able to *see of our ourselves* that summer is nigh ; so, likewise says our Lord : "When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." It will be said these things have always been ; and, therefore, there can be no especial indication of the nearness of the Day. That they should be so all through the dispensation, is precisely what our Lord's prophetic words would lead us to expect ; but while it is so, He designs that His people should ever be alive to what is transpiring around them, regarding events not as mere accidents in human history, but as divinely appointed data, which are to be regarded as harbingers of the day of the advent of the Son of Man.

This presents a feature of prophecy too little regarded, wherein it has before it an immediate and near future, as well as an ultimate and often far-off future ; the latter finding its demonstration in the former. The near and the remote are so often blended in one, that it needs acquaintance with God's ways of teaching as to the future, to understand what is meant, and to discern those distinguishing points in a prophecy which belong to the proximate, and those which belong to the ultimate. As illustrating this, we would refer to the Immanuel section of Isaiah (*i. e.*, ch. vii. to xii.) where it will be seen that "the child" (ch. vii. 14-16), refers to something immediate, and yet points on to the ultimate purposes of God in Christ.

Thus, the Hebrews saw "the Day approaching," and thus, through the ages gone have the children of faith, amidst the political, civil, and religious discords and confusions of the passing moment, read afresh to themselves in what was happening, the pledge of the coming of the Lord.

Calling to mind these things, one awake to the realities of what prophecy unfolds, cannot fail to realise, in the portentous events characterising our days and looming in the distance, that the indications of the near approach of the King of Kings are neither few nor small. The name by which the great Antichrist of the future is known in Scripture,

“the lawless one,” is in itself most significant, when we remember the lawlessness of the days in which we live; wherein the mystery of it is seen coming to its head, out of which we know will issue, in God’s appointed time, the Man of sin—the son of perdition—Satan’s agent to bring in the final apostasy.

The full and explicit unfoldings of Scripture in regard to the Antichrist and the apostasy of the future are of essential importance to us in these days, in which, surrounded as we are by the manifold workings of lawlessness in mystery, we learn from the more full unfoldings given us of the future, how to regard things when not yet fully manifested. Satan is now, under mystic names of falsehood, seeking to ensnare the feet of the unwary; and Paul, in speaking of these perilous times (in allusion to this mystery of Satan), when men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure; and, exemplifying most of the worst features of heathendom as portrayed in Rom. i., yet winds up the whole fearful catalogue with “having a form of godliness.” It is this form of godliness without the power, this name of Christian without the life of Christ, which constitutes the dark mystery of our times. Men are deceived by names, mistaking them for realities.

In the same line, we find the apostle John some thirty years afterwards writing: “Children, it is the last time, and as ye have heard that the Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” The many Antichrists of the present and of the past, are but the result of the working of this mystery of which we have been speaking, and pave the way for the coming of THE Antichrist of the future.

It is in this way that we are to regard events past and present, as foreshadowings of the future, just as in Deborah’s triumphant song—the victory by the river Kishon—when “the stars in their courses fought against Sisera,” is used to point out a yet mightier triumph, when the last verse of her song will be fulfilled: “So shall Thine enemies perish, O Lord, and they that love Him shall shine as the sun, when he goeth forth in his might!” It is this linking of the present with the more remote future, and the blending of the historic past with the prophetic hereafter, which gives its peculiar intensity and interest to the records of events gone by; and

gives to the circumstances, sorrows, perplexities of the present, a pledge and a promise of brighter things to come.

It is in this way that the Saints in past ages, however apparently far removed from the period of the kingdom and the glory of the Son of Man, have taken their comforts and consolations from the prophetic word, regarding, and rightly so, the circumstances of perplexity, war, and trouble—political, social, or religious, that immediately surrounded themselves—as premonitions of the future, and harbingers of coming glory.

It was thus that in the early ages, when the Church was suffering under the persecuting power of heathendom, she read in the records of the famines and the pestilences, the wars and commotions, the rising of nation against nation that overwhelmed and destroyed the Roman world, indications, if not fulfilments, of what shall finally bring the kingdoms of earth into subjection to the Kingdom of Heaven; and, in the same way, under the persecuting power of Christendom in the dark ages, the persecuted and suffering people of God viewed the power of the Papacy as that of an Antichristianism that would find its ultimate destruction at the advent of Christ. It is not for us to-day, to say absolutely that this, that, or the other event indicates the coming of Christ as immediate. We are nevertheless justified in regarding them as prognostications more or less near of the coming of the Lord. We may not know how, we may not know when; but faith regards all these things as indications that “the kingdom of God is nigh.”

We would refer to the opening of the seals in the book of Revelation, and, without attempting to give a definite interpretation of their meanings, yet there are certain principles unfolded in them—as in the rest of that deeply important prophetic book—which we can hardly misapply. We are told that the Lamb on the Throne takes the book sealed with seven seals, which we may truly designate the book of the inheritance of the kingdom of God; and the opening of the seals indicates not only the Lamb’s claim to the inheritance, but also makes plain to us the means by which He is going to make it good. In opening the first four seals, the four living creatures, as if longing for the advent, say to the Coming One: “Come,” and each rider comes forth with peculiar characteristics of

his own. The horse is the emblem of war, and we regard the riders as representing the power of God as brought to bear upon the world. The bow, the sword, the balances, and death, represent to us those divine judgments indicated by war, famine, pestilence, &c., in all of which God is but indicating the way by which, in the providential history of nations, He is slowly, yet surely bringing in "the day of the Lord." The fifth seal, whatever its ultimate interpretation may be, presents the people of God suffering, trodden down and slain, awaiting the day of God's avengings; the sixth seal corresponding with Luke xxi. 25, 26, points to supernatural interpositions of God on earth and in heaven, which foretell the coming of the great day of the wrath of God and of the Lamb; while the silence of the seventh seal carries us on to the yet further unfoldings of the book of Revelation.

The inference we would draw from what has been said about the seals is, that God would have us to connect together whatever events have transpired, or may yet transpire in the future as indications and prognostications of God's ultimate future, to all or any of which faith can say with the living creatures: "Come!"

The professing Church will, as we are forewarned, sink into Laodicean lukewarmness and death, which will end in those defiled by it, being spued out of His mouth; when, because lawlessness will abound, the love of many shall wax cold. As we look at these things hopeless of amendment, and with the prophetic words ringing in our ears that things will go on from bad to worse, it becomes us by the very hopelessness of things looked at—whether in the light of past facts or prophecy—that we should direct the eyes and hearts of the saints of God to that blessed hope, "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works."—(R. V.)

The Lord quicken our hearts to long for, and our eyes to see the signs of the dawn of the day of God, and the appearing of the Morning Star so that none fall under the judgment of him who says: "My Lord delayeth His coming," nor join in the language of the scoffers: "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," for many are, we fear, in these days ensnared in the mists and fogs of sceptical

uncertainty, when the prophetic word is sure, and gives no uncertain sound to those who have ears to hear.
H. G.

NOTE.—We believe it to be most important to distinguish between the Coming of the Lord for His Saints, and the approach of the Day of His manifested glory and power.

The former may take place at any time—but whilst we wait and watch for Him, there are not wanting (as this article points out) many signs of the lapse of the long Night-watches and the consequent approach of the Day.—Ed.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

I COR. x. 1-5.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY J. R. C.



HE conclusion of chap. ix., referring to the diligence necessary to secure victory in the Christian conflict, naturally leads to further warnings and instructions of the same character. These are based upon the experiences of the Children of Israel in the wilderness, and take us back to much that is recorded in the books of Exodus and Numbers.

Some of their peculiar and precious privileges are enumerated, but only to show that, in spite of these, they so failed as to incur the displeasure of the Lord. Instead of responding by faith and obedience to the grace that saved them, they were disobedient and unbelieving. With few exceptions, the divine judgment fell on them—"their carcasses fell in the wilderness"—they were manifestly "disapproved," and judged unworthy to enter the land of promise, the recompense or reward which God then set before them as His people, but which all failed to win except Caleb and Joshua.

The Children of Israel are here said to have been baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea—as it is written, "He divided the sea and caused them to pass through; and He made the waters to stand as an heap" (Ps. lxxviii. 13). With the waters rising up on either side, and the cloud, which symbolized the presence of Jehovah covering them, they were immersed for the time being in a watery grave, from which they came forth, typically, a resurrection people, cut off by this baptism from Egypt and its thralldom, from the dominion of

Pharaoh, and delivered into the hand of Moses as their leader, lawgiver, and mediator.

And the teaching of Christian baptism is of the same character. Buried with Christ by baptism into death, we are also risen with Him; and as risen ones, cut off from former bondage to sin, the world, and Satan, we are baptized unto Christ. He becomes Lord and Saviour, Legislator and Mediator, Leader and Captain to His redeemed people. Thus, Moses, the servant of God, was but a type of Christ, the Son.

Then they "did all eat the same spiritual meat." The heavenly bread was their portion, and they all partook of it just as they all passed through the sea. We well know that this bread which came down from heaven, morning by morning, was a type of Him who is the "Bread of God." Those only have life who have eaten of this Bread. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (John vi. 53).

Again, "They did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ."

In the same Gospel where He calls Himself "the Bread of Life," He also says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink" (John vii. 37).

The supply in the wilderness for Israel's thirst was as supernatural as the supply for their hunger. The smiting of a flinty rock might naturally bring forth fire, but only supernatural power could bring forth water, and that abundantly and continuously.

The Rock—as well as the manna and Moses, was a type of Christ—the One from whom the water of life has come to us through His being smitten on Calvary for our sins.

"But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness."

Thus did God punish them for their unbelief and disobedience. It by no means follows that all who died in the wilderness were finally lost. Of their number were Aaron, Miriam, and Moses, all of whom we know were the Lord's (Micah vi. 4). But the chastening of the Lord in many cases is more than mere sickness, as in 1 Cor. xi.—"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep, for if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged, but when we are judged we

are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

Thus the dealings of Jehovah with His Old Testament people, as referred to in chap. x., are shown in chap. xi. to correspond in great measure with His dealings in the Church—judgment coming upon those with whom He is "not well pleased."

"Now these things were our examples (or figures), to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they lusted."

There is no passage in the Word of God which more explicitly teaches the typical character of the history of Israel than this one. It shows us unquestionably that all that is written concerning the journeyings of the Children of Israel through the wilderness is typical of the trials, failures, and discipline that God's people experience in this world. We are pilgrims and strangers, just as they were in the wilderness; and we are passing on from where we were in the world, under the power of Satan, to our heavenly inheritance, to which our Lord is leading us.

It is remarkable that many of the Lord's ordinances were previously neglected by the Children of Israel in the wilderness. For instance, the rite of circumcision was not carried out; nor was it observed by them until they entered the land of Canaan.

We see God's judgment executed on the flesh in the person of Jesus, our Lord, on the Cross. Not merely was sin judged, but "the body of sin," which was only fit to be executed and buried out of sight.

"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24). This takes us back to the Cross of Christ, and the hour of His Crucifixion, when He was made sin for us—made a curse for us—put to death for us. We have owned the righteousness of the judgment passed upon us there, in the person of Christ, and thereby have justified God.

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1 Peter iv. 1, 2).

Herein consists the difference between a spiritual and a carnal believer. The spiritual is the one who owns and submits himself to the judgment of God,

and who judges himself day by day; the carnal is he who lives to self, and gratifies his own desire; not having judged himself, God has to judge him that he may thereby be humbled and blessed.

God's dealings in judgment with Israel in the wilderness are written for warning to us not to lust after evil things. To lust means simply to desire. The word is used in the Scriptures both in a good and bad sense. There is nothing essentially evil in the word. It simply means that they desired evil things, and that we are not to desire evil things as they did.

Let us turn to the book of Numbers that we may see what this refers to.

Chap. xi. 4—"And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the Children of Israel also wept again; and said, who shall give us flesh to eat?" &c. God had given them bread from heaven, and it was perfectly sufficient to have satisfied all their need. We read in Psa. cv. 40, "The people asked, and He brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven;" but it does not say that they were satisfied with the flesh. We may be satiated but not satisfied. If Satan gets us on the track of trying to satisfy ourselves by mere natural gratification, we shall be disappointed. There is no satisfaction to be got in anything apart from Christ. Nothing can satisfy the new man but the Bread of Heaven.

God gave Israel a food so nourishing, that, through feeding on it there should not have been a weak one among them. The food He provided was sufficient to have sustained them all the way from Egypt to Canaan.

We know that they went on well for a time; but a mixed multitude went up out of Egypt along with them: a people who had not been sheltered by the blood of the passover lamb. They were like many now who have not been "born again," but, having made a profession, they go a certain length on the way with God's redeemed people, but in heart they have never left Egypt. Such are ever a snare to the people of God, and it is remarkable that the murmuring began with this mixed multitude and spread like the infection of a plague to Israel.

Is it not a fact that when some are first converted Jesus is very precious and quite sufficient for them? His Word is sweet to their souls. They get on very well for a time, but by and by they be-

come associated with the world, and their first relish for Christ and His Word is gone and something else takes its place. Other things have charmed and attracted them; things that once they shrank from, they now enjoy and consider harmless. All these things are the symptoms of a backsliding heart. Instead of going on with God they have left their first love, and the Lord marks it.

THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF JESUS AS LORD IN BAPTISM.

I AM thankful for W. J. E.'s paper in the April *Northern Witness* on "Baptism."

Some may deny that baptism is a command, but none can deny that it is a privilege; and a privilege has as much force to a true heart as a command.

Some one has said, that "when people speak of essentials and non-essentials they generally mean by the former what concerns their own salvation, and by the latter those things which only concern the glory of God;" and I fear this is often the case.

Now, as touching commands, there are two kinds in Scripture, viz., those which are commanded because they are right, and those which are right, just because they are commanded.

It is commanded that I should not kill or steal, because it is right that I should not do such things; but there are other commands of God, which, though apparently there may be no moral reason for their being enjoined, are right simply because God has commanded them. The *value of every word of God is that God has spoken it.*

On the other hand, to press baptism on a believer as a mere act of obedience, without teaching what it signifies, would be to put Christians again under ordinances, and to degrade a most precious and significant symbol to something not much better than a grown-up christening.

But, now, what does believer's baptism signify? Well, I suppose that every one will answer, "it signifies our death and resurrection with Christ." True, but is this all?

Is it not also an act on the believer's part by which he acknowledges the claims of Christ over him as Lord, because he has died and risen with Him?

Let us briefly trace the various baptisms of Scripture, and see what they signify. 1 Peter iii. tells us that the flood was the first type of it. 1 Cor. x. tells us that Israel was baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. John's baptism comes next, and then Christian baptism, as now practised.

The leading thought in all these is the cutting off of those who passed through them from everything they believed then, and giving them a fresh start in new circumstances.

Noah believed the old world was cut off; and he emerges from the ark to make a fresh start in a restored earth.

Israel believed Egypt was cut off, or rather they were cut off from it as the place of bondage and judgment, and with the Red Sea between them and it, they make their first start through the wilderness for their inheritance.

John's baptism brought Israel to the acknowledgment that they had forfeited everything, and a fresh start is offered them in connection with Messiah, who is amongst them.

Lastly, when we have died and are risen with Christ, all our past history is ended. To us the old creation is cut off, and we make a fresh start in our heavenly calling towards our promised rest.

But another element in baptism is that it is always *unto* something.

Israel's baptism was *unto* Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

John's baptism was *unto* Him that was to come after him, viz., the Messiah. Our's is *unto* Jesus Christ as *Lord*.

Israel, a *typically* dead and risen people, were baptized *unto* Moses as their leader through the wilderness, and God's controversy with them was that they rebelled against Him and *His servant Moses*. We, as a really dead and risen people, are baptized *unto* Jesus Christ as *Lord*. (See Acts ii. 36-38; viii. 16; x. 48; and xix. 5.)

If this element is left out in baptism, its chief significance is lost.

I hold baptism, then, to be the *intelligent, willing, and reasonable* acknowledgment of the claim of Jesus Christ over us as our *Lord*, because we have yielded ourselves, His servants, to obey Him, having been freed from all other masters by our death and resurrection with Him.

If baptism were a simple command without any such significance in it, we should obey it just because God had commanded it, but how much more should we hasten to do it when it has in it such deep and precious meaning.

When the Lord Jesus came to John to be baptized of him, John forbade Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee." The Lord admits this, but there is no question raised by the obedient One as to its being a non-essential, though surely He might have done so, but He just says, "suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

I confess I have great fear of pressing young Christians to be baptized the moment they believe, on the ground merely of its being a command, without seeking to get their hearts and consciences exercised about its deep and solemn import and meaning; and I believe it may be done "unworthily" (1 Cor. xi.) unless there accompanies the act an honest desire to acknowledge in our lives and ways Jesus Christ as *Lord*.
F. C. B.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAPTER ii. 12, &c.



HAVE said that in this chapter we have the shadow of heavenly things, and the shadow of the earthly. We have already looked at the heavenly, now let us look a little at the scene on earth. But I would read first verse 23, because it is so little apprehended. "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did." There were many professors in His name when they saw His miracles. "But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men." The word is the same in the original, Jesus did not believe in them. "*But* there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus." There is the word "*but*" in the original. *There was one different*. "Many believed in His name when they saw His miracles, *but*—;" as if He knew an exception well. Nicodemus, a conqueror of the people, by separating himself to Christ from them. Put in the word "*but*;" and you see that chapter iii. is connected with the three verses before.

“After this He went down to Capernaum,” the place or field of repentance. And Israel will repent as a nation when they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn because of Him. “After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother, and His brethren, and His disciples; and they continued there not many days. And the Jews’ Passover was at hand.” We learn from the last chapters of Ezekiel that the Passover will be celebrated again, and read there all about the sacrifices of the Jews. Here we read, “The Jews’ Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.” And that reminds me of another passage. We read in Matthew xxvi. 1, 2, “And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said unto the disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover.” So the Passover had come at last, within two days; the real Passover—the *real*. They had been keeping the type for 1400 years; but God, who never fails, had brought the real Passover at last within two days; and Jesus knew it perfectly. He had the Passover in His mind, for He knew who was to be the Paschal Lamb; when God would not only pass over the Israelites’ houses, but pass over *our* sins. And now it was within a week, five, three, two days; and the Lord’s next words are, “and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified,” showing that the crucified Son of Man was connected in God’s mind with the Passover. Just as, for 1800 years, the “breaking of bread” has pointed backwards, so the Passover forwards; and in between the two (the Passover for 1400 years, and the “breaking of bread” for 1800 years) stands the Cross.

Then our chapter goes on, “When He had made a scourge of small cords. He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not My Father’s house a house of merchandise.” If you turn to the last chapter of Malachi you will see what He is fulfilling in type here, and what He will in antitype by and by: “For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness (the very idea

in this John i. and ii.) arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked.” Then in the previous chapter we read, “And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” I believe we have there the antitype in prophecy of what we read here. Oh, what a company will sing in the course of that Millennial Day; when one grand hymn of praise rises from a ransomed earth, and from a people thronging the heavenly places, each in the place predestined for them, and all owing to the Son of Man. And if you ask what is the ground of all, what is the foundation of all, the root of all, the height of all, read the next verses: “Then answered the Jews and said unto Him, What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” You see it was all founded upon death and resurrection. If you destroy this temple, first in three literal days I will raise this literal body, then in three prophetic days I will raise My mystic body; and thus shall all be glorified together.—(*Notes of an address by W. Lincoln, communicated by J. S. H.*)

GALATIANS.

NOTES ON GALATIANS AND EPHESIANS, BY S. B.

THE Churches of Galatia, to which this epistle was addressed, consisted of converted Jews and Gentiles—the latter predominating. Judaizing teachers had visited these assemblies and had taught the Gentile converts that they ought to submit to circumcision and the observance of the Mosaic ritual in order to be saved. Hence this epistle was written as an antidote to the Judaizing tendencies of these false teachers, and naturally divides itself into three parts. Part I consists of chapters i., ii.; part 2, chapters iii., iv.; part 3, chapters v., vi. The two former are mainly controversial, the latter practical and admonitory.

Chapters i., ii.: Paul asserts and proves his calling and authority as an apostle by direct revelation from Christ Himself, and not from or by man.

Chapters iii., iv. : We have the great basis laid of justification by faith *alone* and not by works of the law. Hence the marked contrast drawn between law and faith, bondage and sonship, Mount Sinai and Mount Zion, demonstrating the utter impossibility of amalgamating the two systems, law and grace, works and faith—a curse resting on those who remained under the former, and blessing on those who submitted to the latter.

Chapters v., vi. : After exhorting them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, the apostle contrasts the "Flesh" and the "Spirit"—bad works characterizing the former, good fruits the latter; closing with practical exhortations of universal importance, desiring himself to glory in the Cross of Christ alone, by which he was crucified to the world and the world to him. Hence we have a double aspect of crucifixion or death—first applied to the *flesh*, second to the *world*. "Ye see how large a letter:" ver. 11 refers to the *size* of the letters and not to the length of the epistle.

EPHESIANS.



PHESUS was the most celebrated city and capital in Asia Minor, and was especially noted for its most magnificent temple of Diana. Its inhabitants were luxurious and voluptuous, and, as a whole, were exceedingly opulent and idolatrous. Paul's first visit to this city is recorded in chap. xviii. of the Acts, and on his second visit (see ver. 21) he remained labouring with remarkable success for about the space of three years amongst both Jew and Gentile, but amidst much persecution, Acts xx. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 32. This epistle was written while Paul was a prisoner at Rome, and about the same time as those to the Colossians and Philemon (chap. iii. 1; Col. iv. 18; Philemon 9), and may be divided into two distinct parts, chapters i.-iii., iv.-vi. The former is chiefly doctrinal, giving us our standing in Christ; the latter almost wholly practical, containing exhortations as to our walk down here. Hence, in these two parts, we have the heavenly and earthly side of the Christian's position and condition, standing, and state. Over 100 times the word "*in*" is mentioned, and 8 times the word "*body*." There are 7 things to

the Church and 7 aspects of walk, chap. iv. 4, 5, 6; v. 25, 29; ii. 1, 10; iv. 1, 17; v. 1, 8, 15. There are two prayers, the former is addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ and refers to our standing, the latter is addressed to the Father of Christ and applies to our state, chap. i. 16; iii. 14. There are two references to the sealing of the Spirit, chap. i. 13; iv. 30, and the church or body so spoken of is "one new man," "temple," "habitation," "perfect man," "family," and "bride," chap. ii. 15, 21, 22; iii. 15; iv. 13; v. 29, 30. Chapter i. unfolds the divine counsels of God and the blessing of the Church in Christ. Hence we have God as the blesser, the character of the blessing, spiritual, and the sphere of the blessing "heavenly places," in the person of Christ, the one raised from the dead, who has become the Head of the body the Church.

Chap. ii. : In the previous chapter we have Christ raised from the dead. Here believers are "quicken together," "raised up together," and made to "sit together" in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Hence the believer is viewed as united to a risen Christ, Jew and Gentile brought out of their respective places to form one "new man" in Christ, becoming thus the dwelling place of God on the earth, a holy "temple," "an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Chapter iii. develops the "mystery"—the mystic man—consisting of Christ the Head, and those who are made members of His body, of His flesh, of His bones. This mystery of Christ and the Church was specially made known to the apostle Paul, and is the sphere in which God's glory will be seen in the eternal ages. Ver. 1, we have the "grace of God;" ver. 10, the "wisdom of God;" ver. 19, the "fulness of God."

Chapter iv. : We have seven unities of the Christian faith and the different gifts for the building and edifying of the members of the one body. These gifts are from the ascended Head. Hence no man can make another a pastor, teacher, or an evangelist; they are God-given and divinely appointed. In the former part of this chapter we have ecclesiastical godliness, in the latter individual.

Chapter v. declares the unchanging love of Christ to the Church for which He gave Himself, under the analogy of husband and wife, soon to present her to Himself a glorious Church, without spot, without wrinkle, without blemish, when He will be manifestly

the Saviour of the body and her oneness acknowledged by the world (John xvii. 21).

Chapter vi. begins with practical exhortations addressed to various persons in different relationships of life, then closes with a full description of the nature and use of the Christian's armour. Thus it will be seen in the first part of this epistle, the believer is *seated* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and at the close *standing* as a soldier engaged in conflict, but clothed in spiritual armour, consisting of five defensive parts and one offensive. S. B.

JESUS ONLY.

FOR me the past was clouded,
 For me the present dim,
 And all my future shrouded
 Until I gazed on Him;
 On Him—the fair unveiling
 Of all my life and light,
 Sweet light!—in Him unfailling
 To make my future bright.

To make my past unclouded,
 My present no more dim,
 And all my future blessed,
 Centred alone in Him!
 Yes! Jesus—"Jesus only"—
 To fill my raptured sight,
 No longer dark and lonely
 Through this world's fevered night.

Lord Jesus! on the mountain
 Beside Thee, I would stand,
 Drink from no other fountain,
 Feed from no other hand,
 Gaze on no other glory,
 Lean on no other breast,
 Thus, thus would I adore thee,
 My Everlasting Rest!

My Lord! Thy beauty seemeth
 So fair, so passing fair,
 I stand like one who dreameth,
 With Thee transfigured there!
 Keep me, all else forgetting,
 Still standing at Thy side,
 Upon Thy holy mountain,
 Whatever may betide.

Hollywoodrath.

L. T.

A man cannot truly hate sin till he is cleansed from it: the believer hates it because God hates it, not because he is ruined by it. What a spring to the cultivation of holiness this truth should be—*God condemned sin in Christ's death.*

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF GIDEON.

PREVIOUS to the captivity described in Judges vi., the children of Israel had been in bondage on three occasions. The following is a brief summary of these:—

- 1st. In servitude to "Chushan-rishathaim," king of Mesopotamia, for eight years. Delivered by "Othniel" (Lion of God), forty years rest succeeding.
- 2nd. In bondage to "Eglon," king of Moab, for eighteen years. Delivered by "Ehud" (joining together), and "Shamgar" (Warrior); then eighty years of tranquility.
- 3rd. Sold into the hand of "Jabin," king of Canaan, for twenty years. Delivered by "Deborah" (Bee), and "Barak" (Thunder or Lightning), forty years of undisturbed quiet ensuing.

One feature in each of these is noteworthy, viz., that the bondage of the people only lasted while they were impenitent and prayerless. The moment they cried to Jehovah their voice was heard, and deliverers, *irresistably mighty*, were raised up to subdue their Captors and procure their liberation.

Oh, beloved, we are the objects of the changeless love of God! and so careful is He of our spiritual welfare, that He cannot allow sin upon us unjudged. Is there in any of our hearts a feeling of estrangement from Him? then let us be assured it is wholly on our part, and all He waits for, is an acknowledgment of our sin and backsliding that He may freely and richly bless us, causing us to experience anew His forgiving and healing grace. This was Israel's portion again and again, and yet, alas! how frequently they forgot the loving kindness of their God, became sinfully indifferent to His forbearance and grace, calling forth His hot displeasure on account of their rebellious ways.

The fourth captivity was that in which they were held by Midian seven years, at the end of which they were reduced to the sorest straits, having "neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass." With their substance gone, driven to the mountains and caves of the earth for refuge, they turned to Him who had never failed them, and who, notwithstanding their guilty and impious behaviour, was as ready as ever to bless them. His eye beheld their misery, His ear listened to their bitter cry, and in the tenderness of His gracious heart,

He began immediately to act for their welfare. But here a new feature presents itself:—This time ere a deliverer appears, a prophet comes upon the scene, his ministry being preparatory to their release. Jehovah purposed to deepen in their hearts a sense of their sin in departing from Him, and, therefore, the prophet recounts in their hearing the great deliverances of the past, pointing out that their pitiable and sorrowful state must be attributed to their own folly and disobedience. Our gracious God takes no pleasure in bringing His people into trial and difficulty, although in His infinite grace and wisdom He chastens us with His Fatherly hand that we may become partakers of His holiness.

Israel being thus in some measure prepared for deliverance, the Angel of the Lord came and sat under an oak in Ophrah, belonging to Joash (whom Jehovah hastens). This man had a son named Gideon (Cutter down, or Brave soldier), and at the time he was engaged threshing a little wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites. While thus employed, he heard a voice, one of exceeding sweetness and dignity, saying—

“The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.”

To him, placed as he was, and fully aware of the desolate and impoverished state of Israel, the saying was strange and unintelligible. However, in his reply he shows he had profited by the prophet's instruction, for he recognized that Israel could not have been in the plight they were *had not God delivered them* into the hand of their enemies. Thereupon came the command, “Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites, have not I sent thee?” And now come out the chief features in Gideon, viz., a deep realization of his own insignificance, and an entire absence of pride and high-mindedness. Does he plead his own nothingness, obscurity, and poverty? then in these lie the secret of his fitness for the work he had been called to. In some respects Gideon resembles Moses, in whom the following principles are exemplified:—

- 1st. The forwardness of the flesh (eager, impetuous haste to deliver the people before God's time came, associated with a manner altogether foreign to the thoughts of the Lord).
- 2nd. The reluctance of the flesh (an unwarranted delay occasioned by fear when God's time had come).

In the latter respect Gideon is somewhat like Moses, but after two miracles had been performed for the strengthening of his faith, he seems to be bolder and more determined. We need to guard against the two things noted above, the former of them is a snare into which many fall to their own hurt, and the sorrow of fellow saints; the latter is more rare, but it is a subtle thing, producing in brethren a state of apathy, whilst others are losers, who should be helped by their loving and cheerful service. As we have pointed out, miracles were performed to encourage Gideon, but it is important to observe that any special privilege involves a corresponding responsibility. That same night God required of him an act of obedience which was well calculated to *prove his faith and steadfastness*. Gideon's own father had lapsed into idolatry, and Baal's altars beside his dwelling proclaimed the sad fact. God therefore ordered Gideon to destroy these, and to erect unto His Name an altar, sacrificing upon it. Thus we see a *destructive* and *constructive* ministry joined together. We must ever seek to destroy (with weapons that are not carnal) that which is contrary to God and then construct after the heavenly pattern, in the light of divine revelation. It is interesting, too, to notice that the bullock to be offered in sacrifice by Gideon was seven years old, exactly the same age as the length of the captivity. Herein is a type (or illustration) of a truth alike wonderful and precious. Christ was foreordained as “the Lamb of God” before the foundation of the world.

“Soon as the reign of sin began,
The light of mercy dawned on man,
When God announced the blessed news,
‘The woman's seed thy head shall bruise.’”

Again, ere Gideon is sent into a more trying and public sphere, he must show his loyalty and obedience to Jehovah in the circle of his own family, he must be a “cutter-down” for God there. We may regret that his faith was not strong enough to enable him to demolish his father's altars in the broad daylight, and some may be ready to exclaim, “What timidity, afraid to obey God openly!” Let such reflect, however, that it is always better for a man to keep within the bounds of his faith than to go beyond it, the latter is mere bravado! Better far for Gideon to do it at night than not do it at all; besides, the day after, when the men of the city beheld the demolished altars, it was soon ascertained that Gideon was the cause, and

they clamoured for his life. Here indeed was a trying moment, but just when everything looked blackest light appeared. God honoured the act of Gideon by converting his father from his idols, and causing him to speak to the glory of His great Name. Thus were the men of the city astounded and silenced, while Gideon's triumph was secured.

In this the young believer may be encouraged to obey God implicitly and fully in the sphere where He has placed him, and although the reward of his faith may be longer in its manifestation than in this instance, still he *shall reap* if he faint not.

(*To be continued in our next.*)

EXCUSE AND CONFESSION.

THE crookedness of the heart early discovered itself in seeking to make excuses for sin, and from that time to the present one chief evidence of the unregenerate state of the soul is this readiness to palliate evil, by endeavouring either to excuse it, or, if possible, to lift the blame off one's-self, and to cast it upon others. Adam sought to shelter himself by reproaching both the woman and even God—"The woman whom *Thou* gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." Eve is ready in a moment to cast all the blame on the serpent—"The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." And thus has the course of evil run on, so that there is perhaps no grace more difficult of attainment, no honesty more rare, than that truthfulness of confession which results from at once seeing sin as before God, and seeks for no cloak, and has no excuse ready as a palliation for it.

Excuses are not necessarily devoid of a measure of truth; but rather their subtlety consists in the very degree of truth with which they are mingled, or on which they are founded. It was no direct falsehood that Adam or Eve uttered, when they thus replied to God respecting their sin. But we shall be able to trace in all excuses either a mixture of untruthfulness, or a concealment of part of that which has really occurred. Wherever this is the case, the soul is not exercised before God about the sin; but either mistrusts the grace of God to pardon, or is desirous of standing well in its own estimation, or in that of others.

Let us trace one or two remarkable instances from the word of God.

When Moses reproaches Aaron (Ex. xxxii.) respecting his sin in bringing such a fearful evil upon Israel, by making the calf at Horeb, what is Aaron's excuse? "Thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." Much of this was perfectly true; but was it for Aaron to cast the blame solely on the people? Would he have yielded to their request, if he had remembered the presence of Him who was with them; and that Jehovah had really brought them up out of the land of Egypt, and not Moses? Was not the ground of his sin this forgetfulness of God; and, therefore, instead of instructing the people as to the presence and power of the Lord, he assisted them in their fearful idolatry, at the same time that he combined it with the Name of Jehovah? Then mark the direct falsehood and folly of his excuse—"There came out this calf!" Had he no hand in making it a molten calf? Had the fire such miraculous power to fashion it? Had he not himself used the graving tool in order that his work might have more credit in the eyes of Israel? Alas! for the crookedness of the heart, when it seeks to vindicate itself before God or man! But if Aaron thus desired to yield himself, he had in the sequel to learn, in another and far more sorrowful way, not to spare his own flesh; for the sons of Levi girded on their swords, and knew neither the nearest or dearest kindred in the slaughter that followed. (See Deut. xxxiii. 9.)

Let us next turn to 1 Sam. xv. Saul had been commanded utterly to destroy Amalek; but instead of doing so, he spared Agag their king, and the best of the sheep and oxen, &c.; in fact, all that was good he retained, but every thing that was vile and refuse he destroyed. And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said unto him, "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord." Here Saul boldly declares that he has obeyed God's command, whereas he had just done enough to set his own conscience at rest, and had at the same time fully gratified his own selfish desires. "And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" When

thus detected in his act of disobedience by Samuel, he has his excuse ready—"They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." With what wonderful facility does this evil man alter his speech? Before he is convicted of evil, he says, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord;" he takes all the credit of the obedience to himself. When detected in his sin, he casts the blame of the disobedience entirely on the people, "They have brought them;" at the same time adding another falsehood, namely, that the sole object in sparing the cattle had been for the sake of sacrifice; and he adroitly concludes his sentence by now claiming part of the credit of having utterly destroyed the remainder—"the rest we have utterly destroyed." But this is not all. When at length obliged to own he has sinned, in verse 24, then he has another excuse, "because I feared the people and obeyed their voice." When did Saul ever act from fear of the people? When did he ever fail to do according to his own will? And what is confession of sin worth before God, when it is mingled with such hollow excuses, and when it is extorted by necessity rather than being the humble acknowledgement of error in His sight?

Let us probe our own souls and take warning from these instances; not attempting self-vindication in any case where there has been direct sin or failure, and even where we ourselves are unconscious of error and are falsely accused, leaving it to God to justify us in due time.

It is refreshing to turn from these sorrowful disclosures of the waywardness and folly of our hearts, to one bright instance of honest confession, which is recorded for our example on all occasions of failure. In the chapter alluded to above, Samuel said to Saul, "The Lord hath given the kingdom to a neighbour of thine, *that is better than thou*;" and in nothing did David more display his superiority over Saul than in his immediate and unreserved confession of sin, when convicted of it by Nathan the prophet. "I have sinned against the Lord," is the short but deeply touching sentence. He estimates at once his sin in the right place, "before the Lord;" this closes his mouth as to any excuse or palliation. Had he walked before the Lord, he would not have sinned against the Lord; at the same time he is able thus freely to confess, because

he is conscious of the Lord's abounding grace. And what a Psalm pours forth from his heart on this occasion, the 51st! In that he again utters the same truth, namely, that he has sinned before the Lord, and also that his sin was *against the Lord*. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." Let us keep the two great truths in mind which are contained in this short verse; namely, that sin, *all sin*, is *before the Lord*, and is *against the Lord*; so that the real depth of evil consists, not in the way in which it affects others here, but in its being an offence perpetrated in the sight of God, and a direct act of disobedience and rebellion against His majesty and holiness. Then, again, David traces sin to its real source, so that the soul is left without excuse. It is not the power of temptation, or the pressure of external circumstances, that originates sin; but, "behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." It is the birth-plague with which we enter this world; and temptation only presents some opportunity for its manifestation.

This is an instructive subject for our soul's meditation, especially as it necessarily leads us to that precious blood which alone cleanseth from all sin.

True confession will therefore be unmingled with excuses; will not seek to cast the blame on another; will proceed from a soul which has estimated sin as an offence against God, and that weighs it in the presence of God; at the same time this must always be accompanied with a deep sense of the value of Him, "who now once in the end of the world hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

May we cultivate this habit of humble and sincere confession before the Lord—a habit of truthfulness in His presence; conscious, indeed, that we are shapen in iniquity, but with full, unreserved confidence in the love and eternal mercy of our God and Father, and in that precious blood that cleanseth, and in the living intercession of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

CORRESPONDENCE.

We have received the following in connection with the paper on "Believers' Meetings" in our last issue.—ED.

I am glad that a correspondent in last "Witness" has called attention to the present mode of conducting Believers' Meetings, commonly known as "Conferences." For a considerable

time past it has been clear to me, and to not a few others, that there is something decidedly awanting about these meetings. No doubt we have had some good conferences; for God can come in in spite of everything. Yet that is no reason why we should be careless about carrying on His work "after the due order." Endeavouring to cultivate the spirit of being thankful for anything, no one cares to have even the appearance of a fault-finder. Nevertheless, for the Lord's glory and the good of His people, we are surely entitled to look into this matter and see if He has not provided some better thing for us than our periodic Conferences as *presently conducted*. We are all agreed that the principle of the open meeting is the principle laid down in God's Word for the Breaking-of-Bread Meeting; and I daresay all will agree with your correspondent in last "Witness," that the same principle may be safely extended to such meetings as the Leominster gatherings of the Lord's servants. But the question that comes in here is this: Is it right—is it scriptural—to take the principle of the open meeting, and put it in force in a promiscuous gathering of believers, such as the periodic conferences that are held in various parts of the country? It appears to me that we are *not* warranted in applying to such meetings the open principle of the worship meeting on the first day of the week. In support of this, I adduce the following reasons: In the worship meeting all who may take part have been intelligently received into the meeting, are presumably persons fit for fellowship, and have been more or less instructed in the principles of subjection to Christ and to one another in the fear of the Lord. In the open conference, however, *any one* may get up and minister. He may be in fellowship, or he may not. Indeed he may be some brother under discipline, or one not "sound in the faith." Yet it is an open meeting; and who has power to hinder such persons occupying the time? There may be present those who are utter strangers to the principles of subjection to the Lord and to one another; yea, as your correspondent pointed out, there may be unbelievers mixed up with those assembled. In such circumstances—or even in view of such possibilities—I do not see how it can be right to throw such a meeting open for ministry of the Word. We admit that, notwithstanding all, there may be a good conference; but, if the principle is wrong, the seeming success of the meeting cannot make the principle right. But, even judging of the open conference by its fruits, how often there is sad evidence that something is awanting. Believers will travel twenty or perhaps forty miles to one of these meetings. They naturally expect to hear something that will stir them up; and I think we shall all agree that, if there is anything to be had, they should get it. Yet what do we find? Too often that some brother, with no special adaptation for the work, "fills up the time" for an hour. He has scarcely sat down till another—no better fitted for the occasion—gets up and occupies the platform as long as he pleases. By this time (if we must be plain) the life is out of the meeting. Yet there is no help for it; for these brethren fancy they have as good a right to minister as any other person, seeing it is an *open meeting*. In other words, many believers travel miles to hear a message from God delivered in the power

of the Holy Spirit; but they arrive at the appointed place only to find that the meeting is virtually placed at the mercy of anyone who may choose to stand up and speak! It is difficult to see how this is doing "things decently and in order." This plainly shows the great responsibility involved in calling believers together for the ministry of the Word. But were there no gifted brethren present? it may be asked. Yes; very likely there were—brethren fitted of God to minister to edification. Yet that very qualification had taught them to wait on God; but while they were *waiting*, the flesh in others was *acting*. And this, I believe, gives us a hint as to why, at the open conferences, God-sent men are often conspicuous by their absence. It is hardly to be wondered at if they decline to take a long journey to minister to the saints, seeing it is altogether uncertain whether they will have the opportunity to do so, unless they thrust themselves forward with undue haste.

Now anyone can see that there is something seriously defective in all this. What we believe to be wrong is, as we have already stated, *viz.*, applying the principle of the worship meeting to promiscuous meetings of believers. It is true, as you say in your foot-note, that, "where there is grace, and none thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think, those who do have opportunity to take part, are just those who would be asked to do so." But in how few cases do we find such a happy state of things even in a local assembly. How much more difficult to find it in the meetings of which we are now speaking.

Having thus endeavoured to show that these meetings are open to grave objection, the question naturally arises—Is there a scriptural way of conducting them? We think there is. In New Testament times, God's servants went wherever the Lord sent them. They looked to Him for guidance, and ministered the Word under responsibility to the Lord Himself. This is a principle upon which all are agreed. For instance, one or two brethren, gifted of God as teachers, send word to a neighbouring church that they purpose to address a believers' meeting there. The saints are delighted. Everything is in readiness. The meeting is held. God's people are blessed; and nobody sees anything wrong in these two brethren taking such an "independent" step. It is acknowledged to be the right thing; and the only regret is that more of God's servants do not follow the example. The *principle* of such a meeting as that is admitted on all hands to be right. Now, just extend that principle a little, and you solve the whole mystery of the Believers' meetings under our consideration. If it is right for these two teachers to call God's people together in one place, how can it be wrong for them to call God's people together from *five* or *twenty* places, or, if you will have it, to a meeting of believers from all parts of the county where the two brethren in question would deliver the message which they believed God had given them? So far as I can see, the two brethren would be as clearly warranted to do such a thing as to call a local assembly together to hear the Word. I certainly believe that those fitted of God for that work should do the work. I much question the propriety of God's gifted servants waiting till they are invited. They are responsible to make

use of what God has given to them. If there is a curse to him who withholdeth corn (Prov. xi. 26) shall he be innocent who withholdeth the corn of heaven? To God's gifted ones the word is this: "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. x. 8); and for gifted teachers to wait for an invitation from the saints before they can act, would be as unscriptural as for a God-given shepherd to wait till the sheep say, "Come and take care of us."

It may be objected that, if large meetings of believers were convened and addressed by two or three brethren "on their own responsibility," the result would be that men not fitted of God would step forward to do the work. Very well. Let them make full proof of their ministry if they will. Such an objection can be brought against almost everything in the sphere of service. But it would soon be made manifest who are really *doing the work*. Moreover, everything would soon come to its proper level, as it seems to be "a law of the kingdom" that "gift is subject to gift." In the eyes of some it might appear rather presumptuous for two or three of God's servants to send out an intimation, saying, "We purpose to address God's people from all parts on Saturday first at such-a-place." But why should it be thought presuming? Let us take care lest by our own traditions we are putting trammels on God's servants, and thereby despising our own mercies. In the matter of *worship* let us contend for equality, seeing we are all priests unto God. But in regard to *ministry*, let us remember that God hath set only *some* in the Church as teachers, *some* evangelists, and so on. It is for us to acknowledge these "some," to thank God for them, and to pray for more.

The plan suggested by your correspondent, that the Lord's people in some particular place should *invite* gifted brethren to address these believers' meetings, is certainly worthy of consideration, and seems much superior to the present system. To select your speakers at any rate secures that the time will be occupied only by those intimated to speak; and, if these are really gifted brethren, the believers assembled may somewhat confidently reckon upon getting something to edification. At the same time, this system of selecting speakers has its drawbacks. There is a divine wisdom needed in throwing two servants of the Lord together; and we must remember that it was the Lord who sent them out by two's, and said, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." When God's people send for speakers, care is seldom taken to see that those selected are of one mind in the Lord. The result is, that on the platform, one ministering brother may bring forward some controverted doctrine, and another brother occupies the rest of the time in pulling the first speaker's address to pieces. Again, if the saints are in a low condition of soul, they will very likely send for teachers who will "prophecy smooth things." If in connection with this we remember what is written concerning the time when, having itching ears, they will heap to themselves teachers, it will, I think, be admitted that the system of inviting speakers is not the "more excellent way." It is clear to many that in the present day God's servants are getting more and more under the control of the Church. The Church asks them to speak, and patronizingly shows them up to the platform; and,

as a matter of course, the ministry must be such as will please the Church. Ahab's four hundred prophets were at his beck and call; but Micaiah, whom God had sent, was the very man whom Ahab did not want to hear. If Israel had been left to choose their prophets, Jeremiah was the last man they would have selected; and if he had waited for an invitation, he would have utterly failed to do the work to which God had called him.

If God's people in this day are to get their portion of meat in due season, there must be a return to the simplicity of early times. There must be a looking to God—a praying to the Lord of the harvest that He may thrust forth labourers into His vineyard. Let God's ministering servants awake to their true responsibilities, and let us who are His people wait on Him, that He may touch the lips of more than one Isaiah with a live coal from off the altar; and then to the question, "Who will go?" shall be heard the answer, "Here am I, send me."

The letter under this heading in May issue of the "*Northern Witness*" suggests the enquiry, *whence* this growing desire amongst us for pre-arrangement and man-rule in connection with gatherings of children of God for mutual edification and fellowship?

In the inspired record of the Church in early days, we do not find any reference to such a thing, neither in later years when saints began again to see and own the Lord only as Head of His body, still holding the ministration thereof in His own power (1 Cor. xii. 5; Rev. ii. 1, and iii. 1), was need for the like felt. On the contrary, they rejoiced in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and experienced in large measure the blessed results. Their hearts were comforted and edified, and numbers were added to their fellowship. We know that the order of the dispensation remains still unchanged, and we have knowledge of the truth; but power with it is lacking. What is the cause? What is our resource?

Our brother writes of "meetings and meetings," and instances some, viz., the meeting to remember the Lord's death, where full liberty for the Holy Spirit to act free from man-made rules and limitations, should be recognized, and others, such as those called "Believers' meetings," where he considers it necessary for the maintenance of order and edification to have recourse to pre-arrangement as to speakers, subjects, &c., and adds, "It is just a question as to whether this is more profitable or not."

Should it not rather be said, "It is just a question as to which is most in accordance with the Word of the Lord?"

Hence the question, have we sufficient ground for the distinction (on which so much is made to depend) between that meeting where the breaking of bread is the primary object, and the meeting for mutual edification where the breaking of bread is not? A reference to 1 Cor. xi. 23, xiv. 37, will, I think, show otherwise. There the breaking of bread, worship, and various ministries are linked together. No doubt there were in that assembly unintelligent and carnal Christians, and the presence of unbelievers was also contemplated. Nevertheless, full liberty for the Spirit to

act at the time is there insisted upon, and even in this our own day, at ordinary meetings for the breaking of bread, notwithstanding the presence of Christians who are not in fellowship, or of unsaved persons (as is often the case), the same divine principle is acted upon. And, as a rule, order prevails, the hearts of saints are warmed and fed, and occasionally the unsaved are given to feel the power from the presence of the Lord. Why should it not be so at the larger meetings of believers? For in neither case should "open meetings" be understood to mean, open for "every one, young or old, learned or unlearned, to have his say, and instruct the saints as he feels led." For instance, that liberty does not extend to women, not because of an arbitrary man-made restriction, but because she is disqualified so to act by the Word of the Lord. Neither should it extend to a man, however gifted, if unsound in the faith, or to one whose life is not in accordance with the truth of God, and for the same reason, once from under subjection to the Lord any of those might be considered admissible, whilst the Spirit was being quenched in others. Yet we speak of open meetings as applicable alike to all meetings where Christians assemble to wait upon the Lord for mutual profit, meaning thereby, open for the Holy Spirit to act as the Lord may at the time be pleased to direct through any qualified servant present, in the ministry of such truth as He may deem suitable for the occasion. And why should this not apply to what are called "Believers' meetings?" Is not the Lord all sufficient under every circumstance? Has He not ever at heart the welfare of His people, every one of them? Does He not know best how to meet the varied needs of His people? And who but He can control the flesh, and constrain and restrain His own servants?

To suppose that because open meetings have sometimes been found unprofitable, or that liberty has been occasionally abused, we are therefore obliged to adopt some new method, would simply mean that because of our own failure we must needs let go divine principle and fall back upon human expediency. Happily, cases as above are exceptional, whilst,

on the other hand, how many can testify to the faithfulness of our gracious God whenever He has been fully trusted.

Further, we profess to have found something far superior to the best of human systems and a man-ordained ministry. Should we not desire that fellow Christians of different denominations who attend these meetings should also be led on? But if instead of availing ourselves of such an opportunity, to help by example as well as by precept, and to encourage one another to look off from man unto the Lord, we take upon ourselves to order every thing, shall we not by our inconsistency rather confirm others in unscriptural practices?

Have we any right to elect teachers more than other Christians have to appoint elders? What is the difference in principle between limiting the sphere of the Spirit's action to one man, and limiting it to two or more of whom we ourselves make choice? In the one case, as in the other, does not man arrogate to himself authority which belongs to the Lord alone? And will not the same apply to the one or more who would undertake to fix beforehand subjects for all? Of course, any brother waiting upon his ministry may be led of the Lord to consider beforehand a subject upon which *he himself* might speak; but to assume to do so for other servants of the Lord appears unwarrantable.

In conclusion, have we not need to "watch and pray" against the beginnings of unbelief and departure from the truth? May not the very sense of weakness at the present time call for self-judgment (see Prophet Haggai), in order to a fresh laying hold upon God to make good to us the precious pledges of His Word. If His glory in the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ is ever made the primary thought in our meetings, shall not all be well with us? But if instead, with the eye off Him, we get occupied with ourselves as though our blessing was everything, shall we not miss the mark, and forfeit blessing? Just as in the case when in pursuit of success (according to man's estimation of it), the salvation of the creature is more thought about than the glory of God the Creator. May our prayer be, Lord, help Thou our unbelief, and hold and guide us in Thy truth.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

NOTE.—Those who endeavour to reply to Questions, desire to impress upon readers their responsibility to "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. v. 21). They make no pretension to infallibility, but give their judgment as those who have received mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—Many Questions are received but not replied to; some not being for general edification, whilst others are laid aside from want of sufficient light to deal with them.—It is requested that all communications be accompanied by the Name and Address of the sender.

QUESTION No. CXCVIII.

Is it right that a believer should be engaged in war, or encourage it in any way?

REPLY.

Not a few of the brightest Christians have been converted whilst in the army. When this is the case many considerations arise. Some have not the means to buy themselves out, others may not have the faith. Some are induced to remain because of the need they see for Christian testimony among the soldiers; others, from not "rightly dividing the Word of Truth," ignorantly believe that serving their Queen

and country in the army now is as much in accordance with the will of God as to have served in the army of Israel under Joshua or David.

In Old Testament times Israel nationally were the acknowledged people of Jehovah. Their enemies were Jehovah's enemies, and their wars were the wars of the Lord. But no nation on earth now occupies this position. The people of God are a spiritual seed, and they wrestle not with flesh and blood, nor are the weapons of their warfare carnal weapons. It is with spiritual foes they have to contend, and by means of spiritual weapons and forces.

The spectacle has been seen in latter times of two professedly Christian nations at war, each claiming from God victory for their armies. This shows the absurdity of attempting to defend, on the ground of Old Testament practice, the position of a Christian in the army.

When asked by the disciples if they might call down fire from heaven to destroy those who had manifested their enmity to Him, the reply of the Lord was, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save" (Luke xix. 55, 56). And surely the same reply might be given now to any who would contend for the army as a legitimate sphere for a Christian.

How is it possible that the servants of Him who is Prince of Peace, and whose business it is to "preach peace by Jesus Christ," can consistently with their calling make it their business to perfect themselves in the art of destroying human life?

If all that a believer does is to be in the Name of the Lord Jesus, if all is to be to the glory of God, how can he in that blessed Name, and to the glory of that God who has redeemed him, take aim at the heart of a poor, ignorant, unsaved man, and hurry him into an undone eternity?

Or if, as has often happened in modern wars, there be Christians in the ranks of both contending armies, how dreadful to think of one Christian deliberately causing the death of another, a member of the same body in Christ, simply because as to the flesh he was of a different nationality.

Whilst sympathising with the difficulties of those who have been converted in the army, as stated at first, we must state emphatically our conviction of the sin and shame of a Christian deliberately choosing the army as his profession, or volunteering to qualify himself for warfare.

The consideration by which some have been induced to join the volunteer movement is that military drill is beneficial to the health, and tends to develop the physique of a young man.

Alas for the condition of soul that could be so lightly led into so unscriptural a position!

Are there not abundance of methods of obtaining healthful exercise without the horrid stimulus of acquiring proficiency in the art of killing?

Moreover, however remote the prospect of a volunteer being called to engage in actual warfare, the fact of joining in the movement implies a readiness to accept all the consequences of such a step.

In the moral aspect of it there is no difference between becoming a volunteer and joining the regular army.

But the truths that settle all questions such as these are the believer's separation from the world by the Cross of Christ, and his union in life with the Risen One at God's right hand.

Let these great fundamental truths be at all apprehended, and neither army nor volunteer force will be joined, whilst he who is already a soldier will cease not to pray that his way may be opened up to an honourable discharge.

QUESTION NO. CXCIX.

In John xiii. 7 the Lord Jesus says to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

May we not conclude from this that in the matter of the Lord's washing the disciples' feet Peter submitted to an ordinance at the command of Christ which he did not at the time understand?

Would this not support W. J. E.'s remarks in May "Northern Witness," page 72, as to Young Converts and Baptism?

REPLY.

As W. J. E. remarks, "intelligent obedience is desirable;" but there is a point about which intelligence is not only desirable, but essential, if the obedience is to be "the obedience of faith," viz., that the thing to be done is *that which the Lord has commanded*. If clear as to this, then obedience to Him will have His approval, although, like Peter in John xiii. 7, the significance of the ordinance may be little understood.

We would not, however, undervalue the importance of understanding the significance of a typical ordinance. For example, how barren must be the acts of eating the bread and drinking the cup at the Lord's Supper if the deep meaning of it be not discerned. And even as to Baptism, it is hardly conceivable that with the full light of the Scriptures as we have them, any who see it to be the Lord's will to be baptized could fail to have some understanding of the truth contained in it.

TRYING TIMES.

FOR the last twelve months a cloud has been hanging over the commercial world, and its depressing effects have not only been felt by those who are "of the world," but the children of God have had to suffer in common with others, as Elijah and the widow, and others of God's people had to do during the three and a half years of drought on account of the sins of Ahab, King of Israel (1 Kings xvii.); and as also did the early disciples during the great dearth which in accordance with the prophecy of Agabus, came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar" (Acts xi. 28).

But as God provided for Elijah by means of the unclean ravens, and the poor widow's "handful of meal and a little oil," and also supplied the need of those early disciples through their brethren—who, notwithstanding that they were themselves in a great trial of affliction (2 Cor. viii. 2), yet the grace of God did so abound in them, that in their joy and deep poverty they were enabled to help their poorer brethren—even so now may those poor ones whom God has chosen, "rich in faith," take courage and sing:—

"In some way or other the Lord will provide,
It may not be my way, it may not be thy way,
And yet in His own way the Lord will provide."

A word of warning and exhortation to dear fellow-saints may, in view of surrounding circumstances, be a "word in season." There are valuable lessons to be learned under such trials, which, if we fail to learn, and allow the season to pass unimproved, will entail irretrievable and eternal loss to our souls. Not the least of these lessons is the lesson of "faith in God." Faith is "precious," and "the trial of your faith," we are also told, is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth" (1 Peter i. 6). God's object in the trial of faith is to purify it, and remove therefrom every base admixture of unbelief and dross of earthly affections, that we may learn not to lean on an "arm of flesh," but prove the all-sufficiency of the "mighty hand" and "outstretched arm" of Jehovah.

In the history of Abram, the great exemplar of faith, we find an example of unbelief which may serve as a warning to us. "And there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there." We have only to read the narrative to learn

how he brought dishonour on the Lord, and was driven out of the country ashamed by the Gentile king, whom he trusted instead of his God (Gen. xii. 9-20).

There was also another famine in the land in the days of Isaac. "And the Lord appeared unto him and said, 'Go not down into Egypt, dwell in the land, . . . and I will be with thee'" (Gen. xxvi. 2, 3).

Egypt is a type of the world. It is always "down" to Egypt, and doubtless there is much to induce as well as to impel the children of God to "go down" to the world and accept its "easy payments," its "cash advances," and its "bills of sale," so readily offered, and, alas! often so eagerly accepted by faithless, unwary Christians, who frequently find to their sorrow, that debt and danger are never far apart. Oh! beloved child of God, let the warning and promise given to Isaac sink into thine heart—"Go not down into Egypt. . . . I will be with thee." (See also Isa. xxx. 2; xxxi. 3.) "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed," and in "the days of famine thou shalt be satisfied" (Ps. xxxvii. 3, 19). "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord." Therefore, for thy Lord's sake, for thy soul's sake, "Trust thou only in God."

God, who sitteth above the water-floods, working "all things after the counsel of His own will," has stored in these dark clouds of adversity, refreshing showers of spiritual blessings for His people. He turneth them "round about by His counsel, that they may do whatsoever He commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth" (Job xxxvii. 12). How fickle and changeable the clouds appear to be! now gathered, now dispersed or tossed hither and thither by every fitful breeze; and how expressive of the apparent chance and change of human history and experience, which is ruled by the force of circumstances, and marked by "disappointments," "fortune," or "ill luck," as it "happens." How comforting to the child of God is the sweet assurance that our Father rules over all. For every "stormy wind" that blows is but "fulfilling his word" (Psalm cxlviii. 8). Christian, is there a thick cloud over thy head? Then, "He causeth it to come, whether for *correction*, or for His *land*, or for *mercy*" (Job xxxvii. 13).

Some of us need lessons of *frugality*; we have been improvident and thriftless—hence the "rod of correction" is needed. Perhaps we have scorned to save a

portion of our earnings when we had the opportunity, presuming it to be inconsistent with the heavenly character of our calling, and assuming a faith which we did not in reality possess, whilst we were spending more upon ourselves than was consistent with our position and circumstances. Might not godly forethought have been taken, without falling into the snare of "the love of money," against which we cannot be too watchful. Then in the days of famine we should have been able to thank God for the days of "great plenty" which preceded. The foresight of the ant which "provideth her meat in the summer," furnishes us with a useful example in this matter, and we are exhorted to "consider her ways and be wise" (Prov. vi. 6).

Others need lessons on *spiritual fertility*; hence these thick clouds are for the sake of "His land." The genial south winds and sunshine of prosperity, have not promoted the growth of those precious "fruits of righteousness," so he has turned our summer into winter, and "by the breath of God frost is given." "He casteth forth His ice like morsels." He has awakened His withering "north wind" to blow upon His garden (S. Song iv. 16). Our Beloved is seeking His "pleasant fruits" of Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, &c. Oh, may we so drink in showers of blessing from these dark clouds, that we may bring forth these fruits which are not only "pleasant," but "meet" for the great "Husbandman" by whom we are "dressed" (Heb. vi. 7).

Again, others need lessons of *mercy*. To find ourselves in circumstances where succour and sympathy are as balm to our sorrowful spirits, ought to teach us to be pitiful and loving to the brethren, to have compassion on others in their trials (1 Peter iii. 8). Likewise those who are "rich in this world" are solemnly charged "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (1 Tim. vi. 18); whose privilege it is "to be contented with mean things" (Romans xii. 16, margin), that they may learn to show mercy with cheerfulness, and glory in that they are made low (James i. 9, 10). For, social distinctions, although God has made them, and we are bound to recognise them, should never mar the fellowship of the heavenly brotherhood. But contrariwise: "for if a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food" (James ii. 15), an opportunity is afforded for

the exercise of "brotherly kindness," for an exhibition of "love in deed and in truth," and a triumph of mercy against judgment.

We are told that our Lord said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts xx. 35). Here is a twofold blessing, might we not say threefold? The receiver is "blessed," the giver is "more blessed," and moreover, this God-like act causeth blessing and thanksgiving unto God (2 Cor. ix. 12).

But God would not only teach us mercy and other needful lessons, but He would have us to see *His* mercy, tracing it "*from* everlasting," through all the sin and suffering, the darkness and death of this world's history, and on "*to* everlasting." We have, like Moses, to learn to see and hear God where we might not expect to find Him, at the "back-side of the desert" in the burning bush" of His people's fiery trials, before we see His glory in the sanctuary (Ex. iii). It was a "great sight" to see the bush *burning*, but not *burnt*, and so it is to see God's suffering saints now, "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed but not in despair" (2 Cor. iv. 8). It is a sight we shall never see in Heaven, and one we may well "turn aside to see," and as we gaze at the exhibition of the sustaining, preserving power of God in His people, we may put off our shoes from off our feet, and realise that there is at least one great and sacred sight to behold, even here, at the "back-side of the desert," and before we reach the land where glory dwelleth.

We often forget that "the Lord said that He would dwell in the thick darkness" (1 Kings viii. 12) as well as in the light, and so we fail to recognise Him in what we call our "adversities." There are "treasures of darkness," even "hidden riches of secret places," and he often calls us into these dark places to enrich our souls. He has said, "I form the light and create darkness" (Isa. xlv. 7). They both have their benefits, "Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge" (Ps. xix. 2). As in nature we can see further in the darkness of night than in the light of day, for the night reveals greater wonders of the Creator's power than in the day, even so, in grace, we shall find that we have obtained our brightest visions of God, and made our greatest discoveries of the wonders of His love in seasons of darkest sorrow.

But the present universal depression of commerce,

is but one feature amongst the many, which, when taken together with the international political complications, the interests of which all gather around that Eastern centre which is to be the scene of the last great conflict and judgment of nations, and ultimately the seat of the heavenly rule, and the centre of worship to the rest of the world, the social corruptions, the rationalistic tendency, and prevalence of earthquakes; these things taken in conjunction with each other, are surely premonitions of the predicted judgments (Luke xxi.), and to us the welcome signs of the approaching day.

“Behold the Lord maketh the earth empty and maketh it waste . . . the earth mourneth and the world languisheth . . . the earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof” (Isaiah xxiv. 4, 5). “But our citizenship is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. iii. 20). We are “children of the day” and we watch for the “Bright and Morning Star,” when we shall be “caught up” “from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Till then, whether our path be rough or smooth, light or dark, only let us repose in that heart that has planned that path, and trust the hand that guides us, and then we shall be able to take up the language of Habakkuk’s song, “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, . . . yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab. iii. 17).

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” That name is “Jehovah Jireh;” then let our daily testimony to that Name be “Ebenezer,” and we shall bless God throughout eternity for the present trying times.

T. R.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

1 COR. x. 6.

(Continued from page 85).

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY J. R. C.



WHEN the soul has lapsed into a state of backsliding, and the Word of God is being choked by “the lust of other things,” it is astonishing what power Satan has to suggest to the mind thoughts that are

evil and false. It was Satan who filled the heart of Ananias with the lie that was visited with death (Acts v. 3). It was Satan who suggested to David the thought of numbering Israel (1 Chron. xxi. 1); and still, as he beguiled Eve, he has power to corrupt the minds of the children of God (See 2 Cor. xi. 3; 1 Cor. vii. 5).

In no other way is it possible to account for the terms in which Israel lamented as they thought of Egypt. “We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt *freely*; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all beside this manna, before our eyes” (Num. xi. 5, 6).

How Satan seems to have brought to their memory the things they enjoyed in Egypt! painting its paltry pleasures in glowing colours; and, at the same time, blotting out from their recollection the sore bondage, the bricks without straw, the lash of the task-master, the groans and sighs and tears that had gone up to Jehovah and brought Him down to succour them. All this through Satan’s subtlety they forget, whilst the few dainties they fed upon are remembered and lamented. In heart they returned to Egypt, although by Jehovah’s mercy, to have actually returned there was to them an impossibility.

Alas! how often is the same principle still found at work in the children of God. Things which long ago they had separated from and testified against, they are found going back to in heart. Heart departure from God and His ways, always precedes the outward manifestation of it. That work of the Lord which once they found delight in, gradually loses its interest to them, they grow careless about it, and by-and-by they give it up entirely. They no doubt blame persons and circumstances, and complain of the lack of love and sympathy—in all which there may be a measure of truth; but the real secret is *departure in heart from the Lord*. The fellowship of the people of God becomes to them a burden rather than a refreshment, they see as little of them as possible; they come to the assembly late and leave it early! What is the cause? Their heart is lusting after evil things, they are not *satisfied* with the Bread of heaven; they have forsaken the Fountain of living waters. Such departure in heart is not always apparent to fellow saints, but if allowed to go on unjudged and unconfessed, sooner or later it will be

manifested to all, either in grievous open sin or in that chill indifference to spiritual things which is, if possible, more hateful to God and hurtful to others. It is one of our precious privileges as children of our heavenly Father to "endure chastening." But the worst chastening is to be let alone, and to be allowed to have our heart's desire. It was said of Ephraim, "he is joined to his idols, let him alone." That is to say, let him alone, till he finds in his bitter experience that the way of transgressors is hard, and till his own backslidings correct him.

They said, "our soul is dried away, there is nothing at all beside *this manna*." Thus, they despised the heavenly bread. Reminding us of the term of reproach so often applied to the Lord Jesus, "as for *this man*," &c.

Turn now to Num. xxi. 5. "The people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread."

In chap. xi. they said, "there is nothing at all *beside* this manna;" they were not satisfied with it—they wanted something in addition to it—but here they have reached a further stage of departure from Jehovah, they reject it altogether; they say there is "no bread," they call it "light bread," and they loathe it!

And are there not those still who once rejoiced at the Word of the Lord, and found as they fed on Christ therein that their hearts were made glad? But gradually they lost their relish for it, they failed to find satisfaction in it. Like the manna, ground in a mortar and made into cakes, they would receive it if made up into a well-connected and well-delivered address, but to gather it fresh from God they have long ago ceased. Nor did their backsliding stop there; they say, in their hearts, if not by their lips, "there is no bread;" and their withered souls actually loathe the food that once was sweet to their taste.

But Jehovah must visit in judgment this double sin of despising the heavenly bread, and in heart going back to Egypt. "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. cvi. 15). "While their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen of Israel" (Ps. lxxviii. 30, 31).

"And the Lord sent fiery serpents among them, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died" (Num. xxi. 6).

Although the judgment of God may not come upon His people in the same immediate and manifest way now, yet it is the same God we have to do with, and He has the same interest in us which He had in them. Depend upon it, in one way or another, His chastening still comes upon His children, and if we are really exercised about His dealings with us, blessing will result.

How varied are His ways! One, it may be, loses a good situation and cannot find employment; another is unable to work through sickness or accident; another is deprived by death of a beloved child, or wife, or husband. These things happen alike to the saved and the unsaved; and our danger is that we regard them as the ordinary lot of humanity. But it is the special privilege of God's children to learn lessons and receive blessings through these, His dealings. The Lord marks the backsliding in heart ere any other eye has detected it—"thou hast left thy first love"—and He deals with us about it. But how often does it happen that a child of God goes on for years under the chastening of the Lord, and never once honestly goes to Him about it to know the real cause, and to learn the needed lesson.

God would have His people to "hear the rod, and Him who appointed it," as well as to hear His Word (Micah vi. 9). Let us not *despise* the chastening of the Lord when it is *light*, neither *faint* under it when it is *heavy*. In either case we lose the blessing. If the light chastening be despised, the heavier is sure to follow. But even then, "faint not," for the greater the trial, the greater the grace He is prepared to bestow. He never yet turned a deaf ear to any who sought His grace. He has never said to the seed of Jacob, "seek ye Me in vain" (Is. xlv. 19).

We thus see how Old Testament and New combine to reveal God, in His ways and dealings with His people. We cannot rightly understand the New Testament—especially such a chapter as this (1 Cor. x.), and many others like it—without reading the Old; neither can the Old be rightly understood except as it is read in the light of the New.

It is profitable to read the Scriptures consecutively right through. If we only read certain favourite portions, or search about a certain line of things, we

lose much blessing. God would have us search His Word as for hidden treasure. It is in so searching and comparing scripture with scripture, that we get at the mind of God.

The Word here used "lust," or "desire," connects itself with the *heart*. Hence we are exhorted, "keep thine heart with all diligence." Why? Because sin begins in the heart. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," &c. "Out of it are the issues of life." If the heart be not watched in its motives and desires, the outward life will never be to God's glory. To avoid outward acts of sin is good, but it is only a small part of living for God. With outward actions fairly correct, there may be a proud unsubdued spirit within, and nothing will test this sooner than our intercourse with fellow believers. The law said "thou shalt not covet." This was the commandment that went directly to the desires of the heart. Hence, Paul said, "I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known lust except the law had said 'thou shalt not covet'" (Rom. vii. 7).

Dr. Chalmers once used a beautiful expression: "the expulsive power of a new affection." When once the love of God really enters the heart, everything inconsistent therewith is expelled. Nothing but the new affection can expel the old. It is as the affections are set on things above, that they will die to things on the earth.

May we see to it that our souls are "nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine," and may we be "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, that we being rooted and grounded in love, may grow up into Him" (Eph. iii. 16. 17).

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAPTER iii.

CAN well imagine that there are some present who will be thinking, "What, only John iii. ! why, that is very old news." You might as well say the same of Revelation i., or of Revelation xxi. Are you tired of Revelation xxi. ? You will never tire of it to all eternity. The fact is, we have so fastened hold of John iii., 14 and 16, that all the rest we have more or less skipped. But John iii., 14 and 16, precious

verses as they are, are not all the chapter, there is a little bit left beside for those that are willing to receive *all* that God says to them. If I understand this chapter, it is about the Father and His work for the world, and it is about the Son, the Bridegroom of the Church ; and is that nothing ? The twelfth verse gives you the epitome of the chapter, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things ?"

I think it will help us in bringing out the teaching of the chapter, if we seek to perceive, what I think I see in it, that is, a series of contrasts. I think that in the first twenty-one verses we shall find that there are eight contrasts. You will please to bear in mind that the last three verses of chapter ii. properly belong to chapter iii. The word "but" has been left out at the beginning of chapter iii.

The first contrast is between the two classes of believers—those that believed because they saw the miracle, and those who believe so that they do not perish, but have eternal life. The two thoughts are evidently put into conjunction by the Holy Ghost, showing that we must take care, when we hear about the faith of any, not to forget to see that it is that faith in Christ which is operative. Inert, inoperative faith is only like that of the devils, who believe and tremble. "*But* there was a man . . . Nicodemus." In this chapter the Lord begins with a man at the top of the tree, socially, in the next He begins with a woman at the bottom. And He tells more of the earthly things to the man at the top of the tree, than of the heavenly things to the woman at the bottom. Evidently Nicodemus had an exercised conscience, he was feeling that his faith would cost him something. It is further evident, I think, that he was not saved here, or even in chapter vii. ; not until in chapter xix. we find him bending over the dead body of Jesus. Like as there were some in Israel probably, who did not look at the brazen serpent so soon as others ; and like as there are some now who do not believe so soon as others. I do not doubt but that the name, Nicodemus, is suggestive, "one who conquers the people," one who dares to come out to Christ. I have said that he had an exercised conscience, but evidently he needed that it should be still more exercised, for he was coming with thoughts of his own wisdom. We find here frequent allusions to Proverbs xxx., for instance in verse 8 and verse

13, and others, four or five in all ; has it ever occurred to you why the Lord so alluded to that chapter ? Why He so pressed Proverbs xxx. upon the attention of Nicodemus ? Evidently, because Nicodemus came full still of his own knowledge. And do you observe how Proverbs xxx. begins ? By showing that the one to learn is the man who knows that he is a fool. The Spirit must humble ere it can exalt.

The second contrast is between the heavenly and the earthly things. "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things ?" What are these ? Undoubtedly the earthly refer to the kingdom of God. He begins with the kingdom of God, and God's kingdom is over evil, and evil cannot exist in His own immediate presence, no higher than the lower heaven. So the Lord speaks of earthly things lower down than God. Observe too, verse 5. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." How then are there so many hypocrites, who are said to be in the kingdom ? Because here the Lord looks only at God's work in the kingdom, there at the devil's work in putting evil into it. Again, what is meant by being "born of water ?" Whenever we find mention of soul's being born of God, it is by His word ; as, for instance, in 1 Peter i. 23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." Putting these two together, we find that water represents the Word, the Word acting as water upon man. There is no reference here to Christian baptism, which had not even been instituted.

But what are the heavenly things ? Observe how these are introduced here, in what a glorious way He speaks. Says He, "They are perfectly well known to Me." If any prophet or apostle could tell us of heavenly things it would only be by revelation from God first, but Christ did not get the knowledge of heavenly things in that way, because heaven was His proper place, He had been in heaven and knew all about it. You or I might be able to tell something about the interior of Buckingham Palace, because we have read about it ; but the Prince of Wales knows well all about it, for he has dwelt there. Two men have been taken to heaven, but Jesus ascends there as though it were his proper place. I do admire the way in which He introduces this. He had looked around heaven and knew well what was worthy of it ; nay,

He had been in the bosom of the Father, and knew well what God was.

But what are the "heavenly things," in contrast to the "earthly things ?" Is this the contrast, that in the earthly it is that a man is born, but in the heavenly that he has eternal life ? I cannot consider that to be the distinction ; because eternal life is only an advance upon the new birth. And I would say, in passing, that even about eternal life we find a great deal more uttered in John than anywhere else ; as if the Lord, in bringing out heavenly things, would speak more of these things of God. In Matthew, the word "life" occurs seven times, in Mark four times, in Luke six times, in John *thirty-six* times. The word "love," in Matthew twelve times, in Mark four times, in Luke fifteen times, in John *fifty-six* times. The word "believe," in Matthew eleven, in Mark fifteen, in Luke eight, and in John *ninety-nine* times ; and all are gathered together in that verse 16. Still what are the heavenly things ? I think the 14th and 16th verses give us the answer. In other words, the Lord refers to these deep counsels of grace entered into between the Father and the Son ere the world began. That God wanted to glorify Christ, and Christ wanted to glorify God ; that God wanted sons brought unto Him, and Christ to bring those sons. The heavenly things which God arranged with Christ in eternity past.

For the third contrast observe the words "in heaven," and "lifted up." "The Son of Man which is in heaven," or, as in chapter i., "Which is in the bosom of the Father." Think, when the Lord uttered these words ? When He was talking to Nicodemus. Yet He says, "The Son of Man must be lifted up," must be on the cross ; still He is *in heaven*. How is this to be explained ? It is not yours or mine to explain, but to bow our heads and worship. Oh, what a great Christ is God's Christ given for us ! He had been up in heaven, He *was* in heaven, He was the source of heaven, He knew heaven as well as you know any place upon earth, and a deal better. He had looked round upon heaven, and He had seen what was fitting for the presence of God, not merely in the earthlies but in the heavenlies. And as He had surveyed heaven, and comprehended heaven, He said, "So **MUST** the Son of Man be lifted up."

The fourth contrast is between the *serpent* lifted up and the Son lifted up. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of

Man be lifted up." That was all the law could do; it could inflict vengeance on the sinner, it could punish for sin. But what does the gospel do? It goes far beyond that and tells out God's heart, and thoughts, and love. But there is more in it than that. In Numbers xxi., where we have the account, we read in our translation, "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole." But the same words are everywhere else rendered, "set it for an ensign;" and the same word "pole" occurs about twenty times in Isaiah, and is called "an ensign," and everywhere refers to Christ Himself, to the personal appearance of One crucified, risen, and coming down. When the enemy shall come in like a flood the Spirit lifts up the ensign (a crucified Christ), and says, "Look there!" Of course if you make too much of the figure you do no good; you know what became of that serpent of brass. I would just ask you to notice also these different "musts;" "Ye *must* be born again," "He *must* be lifted up."

Contrast five, is between righteousness and love. Why *must* the Son of Man be lifted up? Because God's love could not flow unhindered, except when sin had been atoned for and blood had been shed. The Son of Man must die before we could live. Observe the order, as it is always in Scripture, first righteousness, then love. God is light, before God is love. And on the word "love," just one remark, because we may often have our spirits refreshed by it as we consider this gospel. The gospel of John speaks of four loves. First, the love of Christ to God, and of God to Christ; secondly, God and Christ's love for all His people in the aggregate; thirdly, the love of God and Christ to individual believers. Jesus loved Mary, that is, the drinking-in believer; and Martha, that is, the working, living-out believer; and Lazarus, the testifying believer, sitting at the table in resurrection. Ah, but, some present may say, these three are very beautiful, but they cannot get into them; they should like to be amongst the Marys and the Marthas, and amongst those loved by Christ in the aggregate; they would like to know what this is. Then comes in, at the very beginning of the gospel, the way to all the other three, in verse 16 of this chapter, "God so loved the world,"—the *world*; ah, that takes you in. I believe that "the world" there just means the world, and that God loved the poor wretched world that had got away from Him, and that God in infinite grace

came out after the world in the Person of His Son. Never forget that it was in the Person of His Son. What are chapters i. and ii. about? More about the Son than the Father. The Son coming all the way down from the bosom of the Father to make Him known. And here we read in this sixteenth verse about the Son that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son;" and not only gave the Son, but it was on purpose that He might get sons, "bringing many sons to glory." "That whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." As if the alternative of not having eternal life, is perishing. And you know what perishing is according to God. In the mind of God perishing is being away from God for ever and ever.—*Notes of an address by W. Lincoln, communicated by J. S. H.*

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF GIDEON.

(Continued from page 89).

HAVING obeyed Jehovah in the home circle, and having had the joy of seeing his father relinquish idolatry, Gideon's heart must have beat with lively gratitude to the Lord.

With his personal enemies frustrated, his faith rewarded, and his confidence in God intensified, he is now fitted for a different and more extensive sphere of service.

Nor has he long to wait, for he had scarcely passed through the one experience, when he is confronted by a fresh difficulty. The Midianites, the Amalakites, and the Children of the East, were seen to be concentrating their forces and preparing for battle.

With resources abundant, and a numberless armed host, they presented a singular contrast to the feeble and oppressed Israelites.

Regarding the situation from a human stand-point merely, an observer would have assigned to the latter a defeat, as effectual as it would be disastrous, but happily for them, God was on their side, and was even then preparing a deliverance for them which should be alike miraculous and sudden.

Indeed it is beautiful to notice the first words in verses 33 and 34 of Judges vi.

"**THEN** (after Gideon had been proved) all the Amalekites, &c., &c., were gathered together."

"But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon." What if the enemies of Israel do assume a threatening attitude? Why, there is an indescrivable force in that little word "But"! God Almighty is behind it! and why need Israel fear?

It is important to observe the character of the energy of God as displayed through Gideon on this occasion.

"The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon."

Ah! here is the secret of his irresistible power.

In fresh circumstances, and with more formidable difficulties to encounter, the special aid of the Holy Spirit was given to him equal to his need.

Now he has only to blow the trumpet, and his brethren gather to his standard;—only to send a message to the various tribes, and they come out to meet him.

How is this? Is it not strange that an obscure person like Gideon should possess such a commanding, attractive influence?

But the solution lay in this, he had received a God-given power, and it was manifestly perceptible.

Brethren, is not this where we are lacking? Do we not hinder the operations of the Spirit of God through us? Indwelt by Him, we possess Him, but do we not impede the free manifestations of His power?

How often we hear the phrase "I was led by the Spirit," when to the spiritual there was not the slightest indication of it!

How is it that our words of praise, prayer, and ministry so frequently lack the perceptible unction of the Holy Spirit, and fail to edify the children of God?

Is it not because instead of being "filled with the Spirit" we are simply "clouds without water?"

We can only give, as we get from God continually, and if our words are really accompanied by the Spirit's power, it will be wholly superfluous to state the fact. The effects will be perceptible and permanent.

We pass over the miracles in connection with the fleece, by which Gideon was again assured that the presence and power of Jehovah would be with him, and pass on to Judges vii.

The great thought of this chapter is the jealousy of the Lord, for the glory of His great name.

His purposes may be purposes of richest blessing to

His people, but His highest thought is ever for His own glory.

Gideon's men all told numbered thirty-two thousand. But what was their strength in comparison to the innumerable hosts of their foes? Nothing! Left to themselves they must succumb and perish, but with Jehovah on their side victory lies before them.

And yet He does not act, something hinders, and appearing to Gideon He said, "The people are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, mine own hand hath saved me."

Self-satisfaction, and self-glorification hinder God from using us in His service.

Too often, alas! when He has condescended to use us in a little degree we have been "puffed up," and in recounting our exploits our rehearsals have been sadly marred by the frequent use of the personal pronoun, "I."

Take for instance, the case of a conversion. How often the individual who has been used to the deliverance of the soul is heard to say, "I" was the means of his (or her) conversion." He has put a lighted match to material existing, and arrogates to himself (perhaps unintentionally) the whole credit of the conversion. Who shall say that the departed mother's prayers and entreaties, the faithful admonitions of the Sunday-school teacher, or some other of the various agencies at work for the salvation of men did not sow the seed which was afterwards reaped?

And is it comely for the reaper to forget these things? Why are we not content to praise God for the conversion, and leave the question as to the persons and means to the Judgment Seat of Christ? Thus should we be preserved from the spirit of pride and self-satisfaction which ensnares us on all hands.

A much esteemed, and venerable Christian (R. C. C.) said, "Wherever, and whenever you experience dissatisfaction and disappointment in the service of the Lord, the root of these is self-seeking," and surely we do well to lay this observation to heart.

May we seek purity of motive, and ever-increasing devotion of heart to our absent and rejected Lord, and then we shall be "vessels meet for the Master's use."

The people were "too many" for God to use.

Not that in any case they could have defeated the

enemy in their own strength, but He who knows the heart, knew, that if He gave them the victory, while the army numbered thirty-two thousand, His glory would be lost sight of in the boastful, self-reliant spirit of the people.

We may be "too many" but we cannot be "too few" for God to use; if in our weakness we rely on His strength and seek the exaltation of His name.

And now God was about to test the people; to blow upon the chaff and separate it from the wheat.

Firstly, however, the timid were instructed to return to their homes, and twenty-two thousand took upon themselves the brand of cowardice and fled. Only ten thousand now remained, and unless Gideon had learnt to depend on "the God of Jacob" what utter dismay must have filled his heart as he beheld their departure! But "ten thousand" were still "too many" and a test is proposed to Gideon which would effectually separate the true and the humble, from the false and the proud. The test was a simple one, but as the common proverb puts it, "A straw shows which way the stream flows."

The people, unconscious of the test God had given to Gideon, were taken to the water, and were probably in sad need of drink. The method by which they satisfied their thirst sufficed to show the spirit they were of.

Those who "knelt down to drink" showed a listless indifference to the great object before them, while those who took the water as a dog laps it indicated a zeal and anxiety which regarded not creature-comfort, nor personal ease. Nine thousand seven hundred who had probably stayed because of their reputation and for "the sake of appearances," were now compelled to depart, and three hundred only were left.

(To be concluded in our next.)

FORMALISM AND IRREVERENCE.



WE can find no record that Israel ever went back to idolatry after their return from the captivity. That gross sin had been abandoned; and this, to the superficial observer at least, would give hope that God's ancient people were now a spiritual people, cleansed from their idols, and walking in the fear of the Lord.

This, however, was far from being the case. In our Lord's time there did not seem to be an "idol" in the whole land of Judah—that is an idol of wood or stone. Nevertheless, Israel at that very time were farther away from God than in the days when they cried, "O, Baal, hear us." In those bygone days there was at least hope of recovery. The "commonwealth of Israel," notwithstanding its idolatry, was not altogether dead to the call of God. At the voice of an Elijah, it could arouse itself out of its deep idolatrous sleep. Yet, when Christ came, a greater than Elijah was there, and they were utterly deaf to His voice. Elijah attested his authority by signs and wonders; and idolatrous Israel acknowledged the finger of God. Yet, when Elijah's Lord and Master appeared in the plains of Judah, doing mightier works than any prophet of the old dispensation, Israel refused to acknowledge that God had any part in these works at all. They had purged themselves from their old sin of heathen idolatry; yet here we find them in a state of blindness, such as, in Old Testament times, they had never known. How do we account for this, and what is there here for our learning, upon whom the ends of the world are come? We believe the explanation will be found in Matt. xii. 43-45, where our Lord says: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." The evil spirit of idolatry had gone out of God's ancient people. But, when it had gone, it left an empty house; and what avails it though some gross sin be cast out, if God is not brought in? Israel failed to call in Jehovah to cheer the desolate hearth; and thus we see the sad spectacle of seven other spirits, more wicked than ever, taking possession of the remnant of Israel; and truly their last state was worse than the first. Idolatry at least betokened the existence of a spirit of reverence that reached out for some one or something on which to lavish its adoration, and was ready to respond to the prophet's voice and turn again to their covenant God. But, as the time drew near

when the sceptre was to depart from Judah, this spirit of reverence seems to have departed, and nothing now remained save a cold, self-satisfied formalism, which so blinded the nation that they knew not when He came, even God's Eternal Son. Now in the present day one cannot fail to observe a lamentable decrease in this spirit of reverence. Gross sins may have been discarded, it is true; but in their place has there not arisen an easy and flippant manner of speech concerning the holy things of God? How often is God's word and God's work spoken of laughingly, and even *jestingly*, by those who profess to have left for ever behind them the gross sins of the world's idolatry! On looking back over the past twenty years, whatever may have been the gain, there has certainly been no increase of the spirit of reverence in the things of God. We believe it has been the reverse. We may be told that the light and easy style of things presently prevailing in many quarters, is more in keeping with the spirit of the times. But, beloved, it is not the spirit of the times, but the Holy Spirit, that is our Teacher in these things, and He has said that God is to be served with reverence and Godly fear. It seems to be characteristic of these last days that there is a great lack of veneration for holy things. God's Word and God's Name are used with a levity that is appalling, and an unholy familiarity has taken the place of the reverent and Godly handling of Divine things that so widely prevailed in our younger days. It seems to have been forgotten that God is in heaven and we are on the earth, and that He is the lofty One who inhabiteth Eternity. Knowing these things, it becomes us to be watchful. We may be told that we are holding down our heads like bulrushes, while we should be shouting "glory, hallelujah!" Be it so. While we have that deep inward joy with which a stranger may not meddle, we can afford to be misunderstood. It is simply a question of "how shall we please God?" and if He has His true place in our hearts, our words, our whole manner of life will tell that we revere His Name.

ALL THINGS POSSIBLE WITH GOD.



WHILST the full soul loatheth an *honey-comb*, to the hungry soul every *bitter thing* is sweet. These truths, are perhaps, more proved in regard to simple scriptural statements than in any other way. The

humble, meek, and growing Christian picks up the crumbs, and delights to handle and turn over the simple passages and promises of God's word, pleading them in prayer, meditating on them in secret, and endeavouring to fortify himself by them in practice.

Not so the more lofty or self-satisfied Christian: (and alas! may we not all more or less plead guilty of this sin?) he passes by the simpler passages; he would fain dive deep, or soar high, and be restless if obliged to tarry at an elementary truth. But thanks be to God, as we grow in experience, so we grow in setting a high value upon the simplest and most elementary portions of God's holy word. And may we not consider it a subject of praise and thankfulness, that God's *pure word* is daily becoming more and more the household bread of our souls? Much as we value the love and gifts of others, truly do we find that they serve us *really* only as they are used by God, and as we use them to Him. Happy advance, when our souls find all our good in Him, though this be learned through the breaking of earthly cisterns.

Jesus, to whom I fly,

Does all my wishes fill:

What though the creature streams are dry,

I have a fountain still.

When walking in the narrow path, and realising the daily difficulties of the Christian life, the grand truth that God is a God of impossibilities, will afford a deep solace and consolation to the tempted and harassed soul. Whilst he contemplates this glorious character of God, he will be led, in calmness and composure, to lay all the difficulties at the footstool of Divine grace; he will be led to look less at difficulties and more at God: he will be less often disappointed, and oftener made glad: he will be led to consider matters, as this or that will be for God's glory; easy though it be or difficult, he will plead with One who, he knows, is fully able to maintain His own glory and honour, though, as to sight and reason, there may be many obstacles. The history of the children of Israel (Ps. cv., cvi., lxxviii., &c.), fully verifies this character of God. Have we any difficulties, personal, family or others of a graver nature? Yea, have we not many? Let it be our business, then, to prove our God, and to know Him as the God of wonders. Jeremiah pleads thus, "Ah, Lord God! behold Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power, and stretched out Thine arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee" (Jer. xxxii. 17).

Our blessed Lord said, "With God all things are possible" (Matt. xix. 26). And this He Himself pleads in His hour of sorrow, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee" (Mark xiv. 36).

The amount of our faith in this business is of great importance; but these remarks are rather for those of weak faith, pointing out to such what a God we have to do with. It is often said in such and such a trial, "Oh! it is past hope!" This shows the unbelief of the heart, and many a child of trial succumbs under it with the impression that there is no remedy.

Moses says, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the god's? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Ex. xv. 11.) Isaiah testifies that "His name shall be called *Wonderful*," (Is. ix. 6), and says, that "the Lord of Hosts is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working" (Is. xxviii. 29).

Even Job says that he does "great things, past finding out; yea, and wonders without number" (Job ix. 10): and Daniel declares of Him that "He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth" (Daniel vi. 27).

The Scriptures, however, abound in similar testimony, and the more we read them, the more shall we learn, amid other things, of the character of God.

Let the timid, and tempted, and cast down, in this cloudy and dark day, be encouraged to trust in God, and to remember that "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke xviii. 27).

Faith is a mighty principle; it grasps great things because it is dealing with God. Oh, how near to God our souls are brought when we thus deal with Him, no matter how great the difficulties! It seems as though we had got up into one of the high mountains, from whence the men and things below look very small, and comparatively insignificant. "O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for His mercy endureth for ever. To Him who ALONE doeth GREAT WONDERS: for His mercy endureth for ever" (Ps. cxxxvi. 3, 4).

SUMMER WORK AMONG THE VILLAGES.



ACCORDING to our usual custom, we take the opportunity of sending through the pages of the *Northern Witness* a short reminder to our fellow-labourers in the Gospel, and to the Lord's people generally, regarding summer work among the villages

Seven years have come and gone since the first little band of five went forth in this happy service, and we are thankful to say, the work has been continued with unabated energy, and by an increasing number of workers year after year.

The workers have been sent from all parts, and the wants of the work have been supplied by God through many channels. Its results are also with Him.

Part of the county of Cumberland was the field of operations last summer. There were twenty workers, besides many valuable local helpers. Over a period of about four weeks, we were enabled to travel on foot over 300 miles, visiting the hamlets, villages, and the many farm-houses and peasant's cottages, preaching in the open air, and indoors, and dealing personally with souls as we had opportunity. In many of these hamlets far up among the hills, the Gospel is seldom if ever preached, and a Gospel-book is hardly ever seen. Among these we were heartily welcomed, the people in many cases begging us to stay, and offering accommodation. The long distances were rather trying for the first few days, and feet unaccustomed to so much walking threatened to give way. But our wants in this also, were wonderfully supplied. Of his own free will, a farmer sent the use of his horse with a supply of corn, another brother sent a set of harness, a third found a wagonette, a fourth gave a whip. This turn-out to convey us to our destination, was a welcome sight, as it made its appearance in some far-off village as the shades of night were falling. It would be unwise to write of results; they are best known to God. We had the joy of baptizing some, and several who were brought to Christ last summer are now gathering to the Name of the Lord. To *His* Name be all the praise.

One half or more of the county of Cumberland remains unvisited, and it has been exercising the hearts of some of the workers to take it up for work this summer, beginning probably about the middle of July. Should it be considered advisable to work, in addition to this, some part of Scotland, either simultaneously or later on, all well. It will greatly depend on the number of workers, and the time they can remain. There will be plenty of work for "willing-hearted" and "wise-hearted" brethren, whose hearts the Lord stirs up to share the labour, and whose lives

and testimony at home are in accordance with it. There is a small Bible-carriage to work, a tent to preach in, books to distribute, and many forms of wayside work. Special gift may not be required; but *grace* and *godliness* are indispensable in all who seek to serve the living God. May the Lord stir up and thrust forth many prepared and furnished workmen.

Young men; are *you* willing to give yourselves to the Lord for His use in this humble sphere of service?

Seek His face, and deal with Him about it. Working days are gliding by, opportunities for service becoming fewer, eternity nearing, glory dawning for the saint, eternal woe awaiting the sinner. Brethren hoping to go, will please communicate with us as *early* as possible, to enable us to make such preparation and arrangements as are needful.

Ever yours in the love of Christ,

JOHN RITCHIE.

Braeside, Kilmarnock, 13th June, 1885.

"BELIEVERS' MEETINGS."

Three different principles are proposed by different correspondents upon which to conduct "Believers' Meetings."

1st. There is the principle of what we call, for the sake of convenience, "*the open meeting.*"

2nd. The principle of the *teachers themselves taking the responsibility*, and one or more of such arranging to hold meetings for the ministry of the Word in a given locality, inviting the Believers to assemble for instruction from all the district.

3rd. The principle of "*pre-arrangement.*" That is where those who call the meeting arrange the place and time, who shall address the meetings, the order in which they shall take part, and also, it may be, the subject.

To the second of these principles we do not know that any objection can well be urged. All are agreed as to the individual responsibility of the teacher to God. When *even one* so gifted, known to the saints and having their confidence, has proposed to go and hold one or more meetings, as a rule, there is a hearty and encouraging response. How much more if two or three acted together in this way.

It would be well for the assemblies, especially those in country and out-of-the-way places, if such visits and arrangements were more frequent; but to apply this principle to large periodical conferences already in existence seems to us impracticable.

The principle of "*pre-arrangement*" has its serious objections. In a large gathering of Believers, there may at any time be present those who, unknown to the callers of the meeting, have been much exercised before God as to needed truth. Such might really be sent with a message from God,

and yet have no opportunity, because of pre-arrangement, to deliver it. Again, the highest edification is often attained by the one with the word of exhortation, stirred by the truth taught, following the teacher immediately, and thereby in few words clenching the nail which the teacher had driven home. But pre-arrangement excludes this.

Again, not uncommonly the truths most needed by the saints are those that are least palatable. To have happy, agreeable meetings is sometimes more urgently sought after than to have such ministry as will go to the root of present need and failure. The callers of meetings, unless very well assured of their own powers of discernment, will find difficulty here. It is one thing to fix upon those to minister who are *best liked*, and another thing to select those who shall minister in the present power of the Holy Spirit.

How often has it been found that the most gifted and educated, and best liked has spoken, but his words have not been in power, and have fallen flat upon the hearers.

But the greatest danger to be feared from "pre-arrangement," is the tendency we all have to *run in grooves*, confining ourselves to certain lines of truth, and excluding subjects on which there may be differences of judgment as well as servants of God, who may not be in all points of the same mind as the callers of the meeting.

The "*open principle*" is really little understood, and mainly for this reason, is sorely abused and brought into discredit.

The very name is liable to serious misconception. When a meeting is spoken of as being "open" this by no means implies that each one may *do as he likes*, or that *any one may speak*.

The true signification is, that it is open for the teacher to teach, for the exhorter to exhort, for the one who can do so most to the edification of all, to pray or lead in praise by giving out a hymn, and all this "in the spirit" and in subjection to the one Lord. As universally adopted in the assemblies of God on the Lord's day, it is confessedly God's principle; if so, the highest. Finding no warrant for the pre-arrangement system in scripture, that form of meeting has been surrendered by those believers who have sought in simplicity to return to God and the Word of His grace, and the principle has taken its place which owns a present God Who alone knows, and is able and willing to supply through each member, that which is needed by the whole.

The order and edification that has been generally experienced in such meetings, has abundantly and, indeed, remarkably testified to the blessedness of trusting to God alone in this, as in other things.

But there are objections to be urged and considered. And first we would remark, that it is God's way in all His arrangements to test the condition of His people. Man's devices are such that they will go on like a machine, irrespective of the spiritual condition of those gathered. Pre-arrangement is most advantageous to this end. God's principles on the other hand are such, that carnality, ignorance, wilfulness, become manifested, and if not discerned and remedied become intolerable. God's principles in short, cannot be maintained without God Himself.

"But," it is objected, "do not those sometimes take part who ought not, and who really do not edify?" Yes, it is so; but He who appointed *liberty* that His Spirit might be free to use whatever instrument He pleases, also appointed *rule* in order that true liberty might be maintained. In the ordering of nations, rule and liberty go together. If there is no rule to restrain evil, there is no liberty for good. So, in the order of God. Rule is intended to restrain the flesh, in order that there may be conserved that liberty in which the Spirit may act unhindered. This truth has been almost lost sight of, and hence liberty, unaided by rule, has become license.

In an assembly where unedifying (or carnal) ministry has prevailed, what remedy is provided? In answer, let God first be sought as to the cause. Perhaps instruction has never been given as to the true principle of Divine liberty. Perhaps those who are fitted to rule have never realised their responsibility to God, to stop the mouths of fleshly talkers. Perhaps those who so offend have been often spoken *of*, behind backs, and perhaps spoken *to*, by individuals with more zeal than discretion, but were never graciously waited on by a *united oversight* and told that their supposed ministry was unedifying and could not be allowed. In order to this, true loving fellowship and confidence among those taking oversight is essential. As rule is hopeless in a family if the father and mother are not of one mind, so is it in the church if the oversight is divided. Hence, God is to be sought unto for oneness of mind and heart.

But another cause of unedifying ministry is not unfrequently the slowness of those who are gifted. The flesh can be *listless* and *backward* in the gifted to the loss of all, as well as *forward* in those unfitted. The remedy for this is *diligence* on the part of those who have the ability. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee," is a needed exhortation. Thus, and in other ways, the evil felt and complained of is to be remedied. Not by surrendering the Divine principle and substituting "*pre-arrangement*," but by bringing into operation the remedial forces that God Himself has provided, and which He will bless when He is appealed to by faith.

"But," it may be still objected, "while all this holds good regarding the assembly on the first day of the week around the Lord's table, how can these principles be applied to large promiscuous gatherings of believers, such as are held in many places in England and Ireland on Bank-holidays, and at Easter and Whitsuntide, and on 'Fast-days' in Scotland?" To this our reply is, first, the principle *has been acted upon*, and where it has been really understood, and God really trusted, the result has been to His glory and to the edification of the saints. Weakness and failure have been felt, but is it not better that faithlessness and carnality should thus be brought home to all, than that the true condition of things be covered over by the surrender of God's principle?

To the objection "are not unbelievers present?" We say, if so, they no more form a part of the assembly than they do on Lord's days, when many such may be present though not in fellowship, nor have we ever heard of an instance of attempted ministry by an unbeliever.

It is further objected, that many Christians are present who have never learned God's principle of ministry.

To this we would say, first, the sooner they are taught it the better. Yet, alas! on many hands this is just one of the subjects that some would have excluded from such gatherings. It may have been spoken of in a carnal and offensive way. Shame on us if it is so! But taught in the words of Scripture, and in the power of the Spirit, what could be more to edification? Secondly, if those who have not learned God's principle of ministry are sought for *to teach* in such assemblies, we are not surprised at unprofitableness resulting, and that those who have learned to wait on God for both the message and the opportunity, should feel embarrassed and hindered; but where such have been voluntarily present, we have very rarely known of their taking part; and on some occasions when they did, it was under godly constraint, and felt to be no intrusion. Not unfrequently such having been present, have gone away deeply impressed with the exhibition of Divine order and liberty which they had witnessed.

The most painful scenes we ever beheld at such meetings, have been caused by disagreements between leading brethren and leading teachers; and the least edifying and most tiresome addresses have sometimes been from those very persons who, on the pre-arrangement principle, would almost without doubt have been asked to take part.

What does this show? Not that the *principle* is wrong, but that *souls* are wrong, and that in God alone is our help and resource.

A word as to the application of rule to such assemblies. This subject we have never heard discussed. But why should not a number of elder brethren known to have oversight in different assemblies, not act together on such occasions?

They could sit, as befits such, in a prominent place and together; so that, without any disturbance they could easily take counsel about anything occurring that seemed to be injurious.

The voice of one, acting with the consent of the whole would commend itself to the whole congregation, and could hardly be resisted by the most forward.

Such action would be after the scriptural order, and if God be trusted in, we believe He would own it.

But all attempts to secure by private means the actual effect of pre-arrangement, whilst retaining the semblance of "liberty," is away from the path of faith, and cannot be owned of God.

We do not pretend to say that a "pre-arranged" meeting may not under any circumstances be held, or that such meetings may not be highly edifying, but whilst leaving others at liberty to act according to the measure of their light, we could not but regard the surrender of the "open" principle for that of "pre-arrangement" as a retrograde step, if applied to such gatherings of believers as we have specially alluded to.

We propose in our next, if God permit us, to offer a few suggestions for the consideration of those who are wont to take part in such assemblies.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

NOTE.—Those who endeavour to reply to Questions, desire to impress upon readers their responsibility to “prove all things,” and “hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. v. 21). They make no pretension to infallibility, but give their judgment as those who have received mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—Many Questions are received but not replied to; some not being for general edification, whilst others are laid aside from want of sufficient light to deal with them.—It is requested that all communications be accompanied by the Name and Address of the sender.

QUESTION NO. CC.

In an article in the “Northern Witness,” for April, it says that the devil and his angels are in heaven, and as we have never seen anything like it before would you kindly prove it to us from the word of God?

REPLY.

From Revelation xii. 7-13, we learn that a time is yet to come when Satan and his angels will be cast out of heaven into the earth. Then will be a terrible time of persecution for all ‘who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.’ Satan’s enmity will be intensified by the thought that “his time is short,” that is to say, he knows that in a short period thereafter his liberty to range heaven and earth, with mischievous intent, will be ended by his being cast down into the bottomless pit and imprisoned there (Revelation xx. 1-3).

The statement in Revelation xii. 8, “neither was their place found any more in heaven” is enough to prove that his place is there for the present.

But this is fully confirmed by reference to Ephesians vi. 12. Our enemies are not earthly nations keeping us from the enjoyment of an earthly inheritance. “Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians vi. 12, *Revised Version*).

This expression “heavenly places” is used in chap. i. 3 to denote the sphere of our blessing in Christ, and in chapter ii. 6, it refers to the height of glory to which we are raised in Christ Jesus, and in chapter i. 20, it is used to describe the place of honour which Christ Himself now occupies. Yet these very heavenly places are at present occupied by the enemies against whom, by the might of the Lord and by His Spirit we are called to contend.

The access of Satan and his hosts to heavenly places is further confirmed by Job i. 6, 7, ii. 1, Kings xxii. 19-23, Zechariah iii. 1.

Then as to his liberty to move and act in the sphere of this earth there is no doubt, 1 Peter v. 8, is conclusive as to this—also, Luke xxii. 31, John xiii. 27, Acts v. 3, 1 Corinthians v. 5. 1 Thessalonians ii. 18, and many other passages.

The ordinary idea that Satan is in hell, has not a

shadow of support from Scripture that we can find. That he will be *bruised under our feet shortly* (Romans xvi. 20) is certain. That he will be cast down out of Heaven into the Earth shortly is also certain, and that after that he will be cast into the abyss, and there confined during earth’s millennium is clearly revealed. Then for a little season he is to be loosed again. The liberty he now possesses will for a time be restored to him to be used as it is now, only for evil and against God and His saints; then, finally he will be cast into the lake of fire, which we are told by the Lord Himself, was prepared for the Devil and his angels.

All this is perfectly plain in Rev. xx. It needs no comment. A careful reading of the chapter will suffice for any unbiassed mind.

QUESTION NO. CCI.

We give the following in reply to the oft-repeated question as to the meaning of 1 Cor. xi. 5.

REPLY.

The best reply I can give to your question is to submit to you, a brief examination of the three passages in the New Testament where the subject is particularly treated. These passages are 1 Cor. xi. 3-16; 1 Cor. xiv. 34-38; and 1 Tim. ii. 8-14. Let us look at them in order.

I.—The first of these scriptures (1 Cor. xi. 3-16), presents the greatest difficulty, as in it the apostle seems to permit the public ministry of women, provided only that they minister with a covering on their heads. But this, which at first sight seems the simplest construction to put upon his words, is inadmissible; because it makes chap. xiv. contradict chap. xi. How then do we get out of the dilemma in which we are placed, by finding that the context will not allow to this part of the epistle the signification that, without context, it might have appeared to convey?

I answer, by observing Paul’s manner when he writes to the assembly at Corinth, concerning other abuses of which its members were guilty. Instead of attacking these abuses abruptly at the beginning of his epistle, he endeavours to convince them that these things are unbecoming in practice; and then, after having apparently dropped the subject, he returns to it in order to declare with the authority of an apostle that these things are wrong in principle.

For example, in chap. viii. he touches upon things offered to idols. There were some who reasoned that, because an idol is nothing, they might therefore recline at table in the idol's temple, and partake of the meats that had been offered in sacrifice. Paul, regarding the matter from their point of view for the moment, reminds them that their practice was very dangerous, inasmuch as it was apt to stumble weaker brethren who were not such good reasoners. Still, from chap. viii. alone, one might conclude that there was no harm in eating the portions from the heathen sacrifice, so long as in so doing one took care not to wound the consciences of the weak.

But the question is not left there. In chap. x. the apostle returns to the charge, quoting Deut. xxxii. 17, to prove that although an idol is nothing in the world, yet that idol-worship is nothing less than demon-worship, and declaring formally that they could not be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

Apply this to the xi. and xiv. chapters of 1st Cor., and the apparent difficulty vanishes. The first scripture having insisted that if the woman lay aside her veil and take the place of the man, she ought also to be shorn and assume the man's appearance; the second says expressly, "Let your women keep silence in the churches." I must pass to the next division of our subject, and content myself with this general description of the first, the more so as I may quote chap. xi. occasionally in course of what follows.

II.—Here (1 Cor. xiv. 34-38), the advocates of women's public ministry are forced to employ a variety of arguments—some of them subtle, many of them very silly—to turn aside one of the plainest passages in the Word of God. Let us look at the verses in detail.

(Verse 34), "Let your women keep silence in the churches." "In the churches," because the church was the only place where an Eastern woman would have dared to speak. The idea of an Oriental female facing a mixed audience of men and women, Jews and heathens (even if they could have been got to listen to her), is too absurd to be entertained for a moment. In the assembly, on the contrary, where all were brethren, she might have been emboldened by the new order of things to rise and hold forth. This is just what she is forbidden to do.

"For it is not permitted unto them to speak." That is, "*to speak publicly*," the same Greek verb being used many times in the chapter (for instance, verses 29 and 39), and always meaning the same thing. It has been said by some that this verse only forbids the women to talk to one another during the meeting. Such a statement only shows to what straits one may be driven when seeking to evade the teaching of God's Word. Is it conceivable that the custom of the churches of God (chap. xi. 16), and the commandment of the Lord (chap. xiv. 37), required to be cited in order to prove that women should not gossip in church?

(Verse 35), "If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home." Anyone who has attended a Bible-reading where the sisters are permitted to ask questions, may have noticed how dogmatically a sister can state her opinions under the form of a question. Hence, the Spirit of God leaves no room for her to assert herself and her views, while only seeming to desire information. What follows is very important.

(Verse 36), "What! came the Word of God out from you?" That is, "does the Word of God owe its authority to the woman—the church?" "Or came it unto you only?" That is to say, "is it the MAN Christ Jesus that speaks from heaven, and has the woman—the church—nothing to do but listen and obey?" Behold how great a matter is involved in this question of woman-preaching! Because the woman represents the church, even as the man represents Christ. If, therefore, Christ speaks with authority as Son over the house of God, it is fitting that the man, with uncovered head, should speak authoritatively on His behalf. And if the church has no power to send forth decrees or doctrines from herself, it is most fitting that the woman, with head covered, should learn in silence and subjection.

Compare with this chap. xi. 9, 10. "For this cause ought the woman to have authority on her head because of the angels." Even now the angels ought to see in the church "the manifold wisdom of God." They witness our proceedings in assembly, and because of them, each sister should keep faithfully her God-given place as representative of the church—a place than which none is more honourable, except that of representative of the Lord Christ.

(Verse 37), "If any man think himself to be a

prophet, or spiritual," &c. Beware of being beguiled by vain talk about the *spiritual* people who hold this, or practise that. The Lord's people are only *spiritual* in so far as they are *scriptural*. The commandments of the Lord as here set forth, become a test of the spirituality of those who hear them.

(Verse 38), "If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." It is assumed that some will continue to prefer the leadings of their own supposed "spirituality" to God's written Word, but with such it is useless to argue. "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (chap. xi. 16). The servant of God is not called upon to weary and wither his own soul in discussion with obstinate opposers.

Thus, the epistle to the Corinthians does not contradict itself, and its testimony is quite conclusive against the platform-ministry of woman. Further evidence supplied by the Word of God, can only confirm that testimony.

III.—Let us turn now to 1st Tim. ii. 8-15. Here (verses 8-10), the *man* and the *woman* are viewed in contrast, and the sphere of each indicated. To the former is assigned the leading of the assembly's worship and supplication; to the latter, sober behaviour, becoming apparel, and the adornment of "good works." Ch. v. 10, mentions a few of what are accounted "good works" in a woman. It is a specimen catalogue, and the sample "good works" it gives us, are all of a quiet and unobtrusive character.

(Verse 11), "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection." This and the following verse are almost a repetition of 1 Cor. xiv. 34. It is not often that God comes so near repeating Himself, and He only does it when there exists an important reason.

(Verse 12), "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp," &c. Reading this in connection with the "I will that men (males) pray everywhere," of verse 8, the concluding words of verse 12, "to be in silence" are seen in their full force. The last resort of some, who contend that the woman may pray aloud in the gathering, even if she may not teach, is destroyed by this text and context. If a woman prays audibly in a meeting, or gives out a hymn, she leads the gathered saints, and thus usurps authority over the man. Therefore, she must "BE IN SILENCE."

(Verse 13), "For Adam was first formed, then

Eve." God here appeals to creation, and the natural order He has established. Compare 1 Cor. xi. 8-9. God has never abrogated nature: and those who begin by teaching that He has, have not unfrequently ended by falling into sin against which even nature itself protests.

(Verse 14), "And Adam was not deceived." This verse leaves us in no manner of doubt that Adam ate the forbidden fruit, not because he believed the lie of the Serpent, but in despair and from love to his wife. Words could not be plainer.

"But the woman being deceived was in the transgression," or rather, "hath become in transgression." Note that the general expression "the woman" is substituted for the proper name "Eve," that we would have expected to find in the second clause of the verse. This change must have been intentional; and, indeed, the character of the woman in her liability to be beguiled remains the same in all the ages. Man may be violent or corrupt, but he is not so readily deceived as the woman. The latter arrives rapidly at a conclusion without reasoning her way to it, and attaches herself to a cause with absolute sympathy and devotion; but, withal, easily mistakes evil for good. This liability to be ensnared, joined with her influence over the man, must, sooner or later bring disaster where she is suffered to teach or rule. And is not this just what has followed wherever the experiment has been tried?

Verse 14 is the conclusion, and may be paraphrased thus:—"Notwithstanding" her readiness to be taken by the wiles of the devil, "she shall be saved," if she continue faithfully, lovingly, and holily, in the sphere for which God has fitted her. The godly wife and mother is promised salvation from the consequences of the weak points in her natural character, even though the adversary desire to take advantage of them. There is no such promise of salvation for the woman who thrusts herself into public life. She may preach with fervency, she may pray with "eloquence," she may teach many things that are true, and many things that are beautiful; but the instincts of nature (1 Cor. xiv. 13), the history of the creation and of the fall (1 Tim. iv. 13, 14), the Mosaic law (1 Cor. xiv. 34), the custom of the assemblies of God (1 Cor. xi. 16), and the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. xiv. 37), protest against her conduct as utterly wrong.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

I COR. x. 7.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY J. R. C.

NEITHER be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

In connection with this, turn to Exodus xxxii. 1-6.

"And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for, as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him." Mark this, the thought originated with the people. Moses was out of sight, being on the mount with God receiving the commandments of Jehovah for Israel; they missed him, and they could not wait on God. His absence was a test for them, and it brought out the state of their hearts.

They gather around Aaron, and instead of owning God as the One who had brought them up out of Egypt, they say, "this Moses, *the man* that brought us up out of Egypt."

In Exodus xx. 2, 3, we read: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; thou shalt have no other gods before Me." They had forgotten Jehovah who had brought them out of Egypt; Who divided the Red Sea, and caused them to go over on dry land; Who went with them and brought them thither. They are thinking of *a man*, and Jehovah is not acknowledged as the One who had heard their groanings when under the bondage of Pharaoh, and who dealt in judgment with their enemies, and set them free from their grasp.

Beloved, let us take heed lest we get into bondage to man. It is quite natural for us to lean upon some one. God calls us to know Him as the One who has brought us up out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay. It is the Lord alone who has saved us, and Who leads us on our way; and He desires that our eye be upon Him, and not upon His servants, however gifted or godly they may be.

Turn to Deut. xii. 18: "Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thine hand to."

H

We have seen from Exodus xxxii., that when Moses was up in the mount with God, at the instigation of the people, Aaron set up a golden calf, and all Israel sacrificed thereunto and worshipped it;—they engaged in an idolatrous feast, though it was professedly a feast to Jehovah.

In 1 Cor. x. 7 no reference is made to the idol that they worshipped, but to the fact that the people "did eat and drink, and rose up to play." It was a feast followed with dancing to music; just such as we know goes on around us in the world to-day.

Now from Deut. xii. 18 we see that God would have us, in all our enjoyments, to keep Him before us, to be in fellowship with Him. The question is not, "Is there any harm in this or that?" but, rather, "Can I do this thing, whatever it may be, in fellowship with God? Can I glorify God in what I may be engaged in?" If we think it necessary to get out of the presence of God in order to get enjoyment, then be sure of this, we are in a bad state of soul. Beloved, have we got *God with us* in all our enjoyments? If we cannot take Him with us in all that we are engaged in day-by-day, then be sure of this, what we do cannot have His approval.

It was not merely that the people worshipped the calf, but, in the absence of Moses, and forgetting Jehovah, they sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. They feasted and enjoyed themselves, but *God was not in their thoughts*. That is one important view of idolatry.

I now ask your attention to some scriptures showing the New Testament view of idolatry, and how it may be rampant where no image is bowed down to. Turn to Ephesians v. 5: "No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." In connection with this, look at Exodus xxiii. 13: "Be circumspect, and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth." They were to be such an holy people that they were not even to mention the name of a false god. This agrees exactly with Eph. v. 3, where we read: "But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;" again, in Col. iii. 5, we have these words: "Covetousness, which is idolatry." And in 1 Cor. v. 11 we read: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an

idolater; . . . with such an one, no not to eat." Mark that the covetous person is there put alongside the idolater; and we have already seen from other scriptures that *covetousness is idolatry*. It is important that we see this. In these days in which we live, and in this country, you may say that there is no such idolatry practised as the worshipping of idols made by men's hands. In what sense, then, can covetousness be said to be idolatry? Turn to Luke xvi., where we have the spirit of covetousness referred to by our Lord. He says, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (verse 13). Mammon was just another name for riches—it is the modern idol, and it is opposed to God. Mammon and mammon worship, mark how it is here put. Not that we should not serve the two; it is far stronger. *It is impossible to serve the two*. Mark the 14th verse: "And the Pharisees, also, who were covetous (literally 'lovers of silver'), heard all these things, and they derided Him." When they heard these words from the lips of our Lord they laughed at Him. Nothing will more bitterly oppose the truth than "the love of money." This world is deriding the Gospel and standing up for philosophy and science; and it all has its root in a covetous heart.

"And He said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your heart; for that which is highly esteemed among men is an *abomination* in the sight of God" (15th verse). An "abomination" is the Old Testament name for an idol. Money-love is, in the sight of God, "an abomination;" it is the idol of the last days.

The 19th verse comes in in close connection with these verses that we have read. "There was a certain rich man."—I saw a book lately that tried to make out that this was only an illustration, and that it teaches nothing regarding the eternal doom of the wicked. One of the arguments used was, that we are not told the man was guilty of any special sin;—but if you read all the chapter, you will see the close connection between the rich man here spoken of and the Pharisees who were before said to be "covetous." Was He not speaking this parable to the conscience of those men who derided Him for dealing plainly with them about their sin? As if He had said "Here is a specimen of one of you." This man was rich, and clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; and there was a certain beggar . . .

which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. He is a man who has no heart for anything but himself! living only for himself; in the sight of God he is an idolater. That man goes down from his luxury and riches to the poverty of an endless hell.

Turn now to 1 Timothy vi. 5-11: ". . . Perverse, disputing of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness." I once heard such a remark as this, that "the funds were the pulse of the Church," and if the funds were ample, then the Church was in a good condition. That savours very strongly of what we have here. But we read further, "that godliness with contentment is great gain." The Spirit of God there lays down the law of contentment, that is, that whatsoever position God has been pleased to put any of His children into, *therein* they are to be content.

Much has been said on the subject of debt, but we would add this, that whenever a Christian goes beyond what he has the means of paying—contracts a debt that he has no prospect of being able to pay—that moment he is committing a covetous act. This is one way in which the spirit of covetousness is often shown. Beloved, let us watch lest we yield to this sin; let us beware lest we are entrapped by Satan, little by little, into a position in which we shall be *discontented*. We are all exposed to this temptation, that is, the desire to have some other position or possessions than God has given us. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." Let us seek to be contented with what God has given us, and keep within that limit, be it little or much.

If this was done by God's people, there would be a great many more happy Christians than there are. It is inattention to these things that makes many homes miserable, and that leads many away from the Lord.

"They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, . . . for the love of money is a root of all evil." This rendering is more correct; not "*the* root," but "*a* root," from which all kinds of evil spring.

"Which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness,

faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."

If a man is wanting to lay hold upon this life, then he must push after money. The exhortation here is to "lay hold on eternal life." The laying hold on the one implies a letting go of the other.

Verse 17: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God." There is a difference between "those who *are* rich" and "those who *will be* rich:" both may be covetous. The poor are exhorted to be content and the rich to be willing to distribute. The rich man need not be set upon his riches nor the poor distressed about his poverty when he has the living God to rely upon.

Turn to Hosea xiv. 8: "Ephraim shall say what have I to do any more with idols? I have heard Him and observed Him." It is the one who has heard the voice of the Lord Jesus: and not only heard His voice but *observed Him*, that turns away from idols. The God of glory appeared unto Abraham when he was serving other gods. One sight of "the God of glory" called him away from his idols. It is when He shines into our hearts, and we see and know Him—His unsearchable riches and His glory—that other things cease to occupy our hearts.

God would teach us the uncertainty of riches—that there is nothing secure under the sun. The world knows not God, nor does it exercise faith in Him; but places confidence in human organisations for the security and increase of their wealth. The child of God ought to keep himself clear of being partaker or shareholder in these societies. God would have His people separate unto Himself, and not unequally yoked with the ungodly.

There is nothing that can be securely trusted in but the living God; that is better than the most secure bank on earth. It is blessed to depend alone on God for all things; to acknowledge all things as coming from Him who "giveth us all things richly to enjoy." God delights to see His people happy, *not in His gifts apart from Himself*, but in Himself as the great Giver. If He is prospering you in business, then thank Him for it, and ask grace to use that which He has given to you for His glory and the good of others. But, if He does not prosper you in business, then learn the lesson He would have you learn; seek unto Him to know why He has permitted adversity to come upon you.

God would have us lay up in store for a coming day. Everything that we do for Him now in faith and according to His will shall meet us by-and-by. Rowland Hill very quaintly said, referring to that word, "he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord," "If you like the security down with the dust." If the people of God understood and believed this divine principle, that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," and that "he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully," they would be more ready to distribute to the necessity of saints; whether the poor in our midst, or the Lord's servants labouring for Him in the gospel. If the Lord's children only saw this, that to give, as the Lord has prospered them, to the Lord's servants or poor saints is actually laying up treasure in heaven, what a different aspect it would put upon all our givings.

I want you to look in connection with this to the 18th of Revelation and to connect it with the 5th chapter of James. The 18th of Revelation gives us the downfall of Babylon the Great. "The kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her shall bewail her and lament for her when they shall see the smoke of her burning. . . . And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more." Then follows an enumeration of their merchandise, beginning with "gold" and ending with "the souls of men" (verse 9-13). Gold is that which is most "highly esteemed among men," and the souls of men that which is least cared for. If a man of the world gets gold it matters little to him how souls perish. What a picture of the last days of "Babylon the Great!"

Turn with me now to James v. 1-7: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you," &c. If they had been laid up in store with God they would not have been rusted. This world is heaping up treasures; amassing wealth and riches, but for what? For the last days; the days when God's judgment shall consume them. Their gold and silver will be like fire, eating up the very flesh of those who trusted in their riches, but would not trust in the living God.

Hebrews xiii. 5: "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have." Mark that word, "let your conversation be without covetousness." Why? Because the living God hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Take the case of Jacob, to whom this was said. He prospered in spite of the subterfuges of Laban. God turned them all into blessings. What a difference between a man who has gained money only through his cleverness and business shrewdness and the one whom the living God has prospered.

There was a rich man in heaven as well as in hell. "Abraham was very rich." But the difference between him and the rich man spoken of in the 16th of Luke was this, the one trusted in the living God and owned all as coming from Him; but the other trusted in his riches, and not in the Giver of them.

Money in itself is not evil; it may be used for God, and be as a sweet-savour offering; but it is the love of it and trust in it that is idolatry.

Turn with me to 1 John v. 19, 20: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness (or in the wicked one). And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

What is an idol, or what may become an idol? Anything may be an idol which keeps me from allegiance to my Lord. A child or a wife may be an idol when they come between my soul and God, and draw me away from Him. Little children who know Him, keep yourselves from idols.

Turn now to Matthew xxiv. 5: "Many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many." Read also the 24th verse: "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that *if it were possible they would deceive the very elect.*" How is it that a false Christ cannot deceive the elect? Because the elect *know the true Christ.* There is no safety against idolatry and all that is false, except the knowledge of "*Him that is true.*" And, beloved, "we are in Him that is true." Do not have anything to do with that which is false—such as the love of money, position, applause of men, or anything that

would call you away from "Him that is true." Whatever we do for Him that is according to His will shall remain. Service done for Him, or money or time spent in His service, shall neither be forgotten nor go unrewarded. But anything done for self-pleasing, to please and gain the approbation of others, shall be an eternal loss to us. May our hearts be increasingly drawn out to the Lord Himself, and be saved from the idolatry of the nineteenth century.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAPTER iii.

(Continued from page 103.)



THE sixth contrast of the eight that we find in the first part of this chapter is between life and judgment. It is brought out in verse 18—"He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God." You will see that several times in this Gospel our translators have put the word "condemned" when it should be "judged"; they have sought to intensify the expression when really they have weakened it. So here, it brings in condemnation in this way; that if any one is judged in the last day it is tantamount to condemnation. If God enters into judgment with you, as to your person, it is certain that you must be condemned. So really it is a stronger way of putting it. Every one here, I assume, knows the precious difference between the judgment seat of Christ, where the *works* of believers will be brought up; and the Great White Throne, without one spot of blood upon it for sinners, to plead, before which the unsaved, in all the sinfulness of their persons, will be manifested. Then, John v. 24, carries on the teaching of this verse—"Shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death into *life.*"

The seventh contrast gives us another little precious and important hint, a distinction between the two "nots" in verse 18—"He that believeth on Him is *not* condemned" (or judged); and "he that believeth *not* is condemned already, because he hath *not* believed, &c. They are quite different words in the first, and in the latter clause in the original. One word is equivalent to a denial, the other to a refusal. "He that

believeth on Him is not judged"—God's denial. The blessed Lord gives His own solemn assurance and denial, we shall *not* be judged. "But he that believeth not"—the sinners refusal. And this is of importance, because it shows that this is not the judgment of those who have never heard the Gospel, but the distinct judgment of those who have heard it, and having heard it have deliberately refused it. Not, it may be, with the lip, but by the life. "I shall not be obedient. I love my sins, or my own will, and my own ways too much." It does not speak of those who can repeat a creed—remember the first contrast. But if you believe in the Lord Jesus it makes you a different man. I would like to read verse 36 here, because there is the same thought—"He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life; but he that is *disobedient* to the Son shall not see life." Teaching us, as it were, that real faith assumes that when the Lord comes before His people and says—"I am," the heart bows to accept His grace. "But he that is disobedient to the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Now, the eighth contrast is as solemn a one as any. "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved." What is the opposite of doing evil? Oh, say you, "doing good." Granted; but, did you ever observe that that is not the word used here? But "he that doeth *truth* cometh to the light." You see it is not "he that doeth *good*." Now, this is a very singular variation, and evidently there is great purpose in it. May I try to make plain to you the difference? Man's standard is doing good; but God's standard is doing truth. One judges of man by man, the other judges a man and his works by God, and "God is light." Truth is the manifestation of God, the thoughts, the heart, and will of God. Now, apply this to your everyday experience, and see how many there are who will justify the cause of their friends, of whom they have a good opinion, and say of this and that one, "well, he is doing good." And it is such a solemn thing that the Lord distinctly discards it, and selects another expression, and for this there must be an object. Now, think again of how many there are who appear to be doing good, and of all the many humanitarian schemes for blessing the world, apart from separation from it and blessing it from God's stand-point; these mixed up with it and struggling

against it, while others are separated from it and blessing it from God. Now, looking at the two, observe what a solemn hint there is about the judgment-seat of Christ. We have seen in the previous contrast that the wicked may anticipate the judgment of the Great White Throne; "he that believeth not is condemned already," the Lord assigning the reason why he is judged; this is the ground of judgment: that "light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." Thus every unbeliever may anticipate his judgment; and now every believer may, and does, anticipate the judgment-seat of Christ. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." It does not quite need that we should wait till the judgment-seat to know if our life, walk, testimony, and separation please God or no, for we may have the testimony in our soul now. A believer walking in the Lord is ready to go up to the judgment-seat at once. In one sense all are ready, but in another we may be so walking as that it may fail to seem pleasant to us. Oh, beloved! be it your ambition and mine to be ready any moment to go right up to the Lord Jesus, and to look Him full in the face without a misgiving. The test is whether we are only doing good or doing the truth. If we are doing the truth we shall judge our doctrine, our creed, our every day life, even the place where we worship, everything by His word;—we shall examine and ponder the Word. It was said of the Lord Jesus that He should be of "quick understanding," or "quick scent," in the fear of the Lord. "Search me, O God!" Is there aught in my conversation, in my reading, in my life, that is wrong? Bring in the Word to search the heart, and anticipate the judgment-seat of Christ. Do good, and you will get the thanks of the world; but to get the reward of God you must be living according to God.

CHAPTER iv.

Now, having considered this earlier portion of chapter iii., with its eight contrasts, I pass on at once to chapter iv.; because I think that the story of Nicodemus in chapter iii. is intimately connected with the story of the woman in chapter iv.; and the end of chapter iii. is a supplement of the story of Nicodemus, while the healing of the ruler's son is a supplement of the story of the woman of Samaria.

Therefore I leave the two supplements for some future time. In both chapter iii. and chapter iv. Christ's rest is intruded upon by sinners, and in both He receives them heartily. One from the very top, the other from the very bottom of society; the contrast between the two is designed, and the Lord's dealings with the two we do well to study. He has to show Nicodemus how little he knows; with the woman of Samaria (believed to be a type of the Church of God), He begins by asking a little favour, and ends by revealing His glory to her soul as the Christ of God. She is a type of the Church inasmuch as that He was on His road from Judea, where he had been rejected, and upon the confines of Gentile land. And I consider that a key verse to this chapter. "He left Judea and departed again into Galilee." It is a great point to see that Jesus was cast out from Jerusalem, that rejected Him, I think, too, that there is force in that word—"He must needs go through Samaria"; it shows electing love and sovereign grace. In Luke xv., in the parable of the prodigal, we see the sinner going to Jesus; in this chapter Christ journeys to the sinner, and here the sinner and the Saviour meet; and, rest assured, the meeting was not without design on His part. It is striking too that it was the well of Sychar, where the sons of Jacob had murdered so many in centuries gone by, to which He journeyed in order to save one soul. Looking down the section we observe that the Lord Jesus addressed her seven times, and she replies six. The first two or three remarks that pass between them seem to remind one very much of the Gospel as preached at this present day, when sinners put off Christ with all sorts of excuses. He begins with asking for a little kindness (for that is the way to win confidence, to put one's self under an obligation), though it does not appear that He got His request granted.

She replies with a taunt—"How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria, for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans?" Thus, at the outset, we see that she was hard enough, yet it is wonderful to see how He could go on to tell of God's ways of grace to sinners.

The second time, He speaks, to her of the gift of God. "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." That is a very beautiful motto for each one

of ourselves—"Thou wouldest have asked, and He would have given." But thus, everywhere else, life is spoken of as the gift of God. I do not think that the fact of having eternal life takes up so much of our praises as it should. Whilst we bless God for putting away our sins, and putting us in His presence; do not let us forget to bless God also for "the gift of God, eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is remarkable that this is the only place in scripture where eternal life is connected with prayer; everywhere else it is represented as given to faith. Is there any reason for this? I think it is implied, that it is to faith here. She would not have prayed to Him if she did not believe in Him; thus was faith required in His person then. Now we are required to believe that He who was upon the Cross was God's Son, and that He who was upon the Cross is now upon the Throne. Then, they were required to believe that He who stood before them in lowly guise was the Son of God. In each case faith had to pierce the veil which shrouded the glory of the Lord Jesus. Yet there is something very sweet in those words—"Thou wouldest have asked . . . He would have given." It implied the readiness of God; no stinginess, no hesitation.

To this second remark she replies—"Whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob which gave us the well?" Now she opposes, and it is always more likely that the Gospel is finding its way into anyone's heart when they chafe and oppose it.

The third time he speaks, and now, not only is it of—"Thou wouldest have asked and He would have given," but He speaks of the well of living water in every one of God's saints, thus coming to the subject of worship. For this is worship, when there is so much life in a man, that the life wells over and he rejoices. The Christian is only in a worshipping frame when the water is so deep that it overflows.

Before, she withstood Him, but now she tries to evade Him. "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." She does not want to understand. So mark, in the fourth place, His action; He touches her conscience; He was putting His finger on her sin. She could not trifle now in the presence of Omniscience, and when He was thus putting His finger upon the inner wheels of her heart, and reminding her of her last sin—laying bare her conscience. She begins to confess now, that is remarkable, as He bares her whole life, touches her conscience, and opens out all before her.

How aghast she must have felt, as those few words brought before her, and exposed her whole life. The different ways of tying the marriage knot, the different ways of dissolving that knot, all would rise before her now, and she perceives she has to do with One different from any else. See how she winces under it. Ah, Jesus! Lord we have to do with Thee. What a mercy if we are thus exposed before Thee in all our vileness, for it is Thy way of putting it away, that we may stand before Thee in joy and peace. "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts." Says she, in reply, "Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet;" in a round-about way saying, "What you have said is true, and I am a sinner; what shall I do?" And when she thus takes her proper place, now He can pour words of grace and mercy into her heart. So He speaks in His sixth address to her of worship, but first He draws her to Himself. "Woman, believe Me." *Me*; as it were, the manifestation of Himself to her soul. He had exposed her life, now He says—"Believe *Me*." Thus He draws her to Himself. She a poor sinner, He putting his finger on her sin, and then revealing Himself. "I that speak unto thee am He," the Messiah. The great grand glory of redemption is, that it places us before God in perfect peace and joy.—(*Notes of an address by W. Lincoln, communicated by J. S. H.*)

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF GIDEON.

(*Concluded.*)

Read JUDGES vii. and viii.



OUR God is almighty, and what the human heart conceives to be an utter impossibility He can speedily effect. In no instance is this more apparent than in the triumph of Gideon's three hundred over the hosts of the Midianites.

But He is also tender and graciously considerate toward His servants. He knows our frailty, and condescends to make provision for it.

This is beautifully brought out in His dealings with Gideon, when He instructed him to go to the enemies' camp. "But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host."

Companionship (if of God) in service and in danger begets confidence and hope, enabling us to labour with greater cheerfulness and with brighter aspirations.

This principle is a divine one, and is confirmed by numerous scriptures.

Prior to this Gideon had received several extraordinary proofs of Jehovah's purpose to aid him in the destruction of Israel's enemies, but on this occasion the confirmation of these promises was to be given from the foes themselves.

In the darkness of night, accompanied by his servant, he stole down to their camp, and overheard the narration and explanation of a dream, which would alike produce humility in himself and increased and implicit confidence in God.

He was compared to a "barley cake" falling into the midst of the Midianites, producing an utter panic, and ending with a glorious victory.

Certainly it was not a very flattering illustration to be likened to a common "barley cake," but this was the final test of his willingness to be anything or as nothing in the hand of Jehovah. Truly he had learned well the lesson; for, despite this emblem of his personal nothingness, he worshipped God, and, with exultation unexampled in his previous career, he returned to his three hundred of Israel, saying:—"Arise! for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian."

Oh, dear brethren, for grace to be thus schooled by God! All power is here; all victory! Gideon's God is our God, and, if our hearts are right in His sight, who shall measure our power or describe our triumphs?

Our race heavenward is impeded by obstacles of our own making, and our warfare in the service of the King is marred by our fleshly pride and self-importance.

Of recrimination one towards the other there may be abundance, but it avails nothing; what we each need is personal humility and self-abasement.

And now the final movement toward victory is taken. Of carnal weapons these soldiers used none at this point, for in one hand they carried a trumpet, and in the other a pitcher unbroken, in which a light had been placed.

They went towards the enemies of God and of themselves in the darkness of night, and at the given moment they blew the trumpets and brake the pitchers, and out of the broken pitchers the radiance of their lights illuminated the scene.

But mark their "war cry"—"The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon."

Is it not beautiful, and so descriptive of the ways of God?

Jehovah will take care that the man who has gone down into the depths of self-abasement shall be dignified and honoured. It is ever thus, and from it we may learn to do the will of God, and *leave our reputation* in His care.

But what was the effect of this upon their enemies? Why, panic-stricken, *they ran, and cried, and fled!* So that the beginning of this mighty triumph rested entirely with Gideon and his small army.

When the enemy was seen to be flying in all directions, others of Israel joined in the pursuit, and Gideon sent special messages through all Mount Ephraim, inviting the aid and co-operation of other of his Jewish brethren. This is interesting, shewing as it does that he cared not for the monopoly of the position and victory, but would gladly share it with them.

The same spirit of self-abnegation is evinced by Barnabas in Acts xi. He was "a good man and full of the Holy Spirit," and had been a channel of much spiritual blessing at Antioch. But we find him seeking out Saul of Tarsus, and constraining him to aid him in his great and noble work.

We fear this spirit of love and brotherly confidence is sadly wanting in our time. Some dear brethren, as really called by God as Gideon or Barnabas to a special work, appear to imagine that they have a "monopoly" in a given locality or labour, and never invite others to their sphere of service, while, if some appear in the neighbourhood who are also servants of God, they are regarded with an jealous suspicion, and treated with cold and distant formality. Of the results of this we have not space to speak, save to remark that it is invariably fraught with barrenness and weakness.

Gideon's choice of helpers, however, was not all that could be desired; not that they were unsuccessful, but because their success inflated them with pride, and caused them to endeavour to stir up a quarrel on that basis.

They killed two princes of the Midianites, Oreb (Wolf) and Zeeb (Raven), their names signifying a beast of prey and an unclean bird. This was a great conquest and, instead of the spirit of thankfulness to God, that of self-importance predominated.

No signal triumph in the service of God entitles

one to arrogate to himself a dignity and an authority in regard to others, for underlying such conduct is a proud and stubborn heart.

These men of Ephraim were angry because they had not been consulted from the beginning—brought into prominence at the outset of the conflict, and the sacred narrative says:—"They did chide with him (Gideon) sharply."

And what made the matter worse was, that through mortified pride, they were trying to force a quarrel with Gideon while the enemies were still flying and undestroyed.

Ah, brethren, does this not convey a solemn and heart-searching lesson? We need to "contend for the faith;" but, wherever *wrath* exists, it indicates something wrong. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." We fear that much of what is called "contention for the truth" is in reality an insidious struggle for one's own way. It need not be, it ought not to be; but, unless we are watchful and prayerful, it will degenerate into that.

Souls are perishing on every hand, saints are crying out for food and guidance, and many so-called leaders in our meetings are found squabbling, month after month, about "who shall be the greatest." This is putting it plainly, snatching from it the apparently pious garb of "earnestness for the right thing," but such is our solemn conviction of the *petty* annoyances that are made the occasions of thus inflicting on the saints, sorrow and loss, that we must speak out.

Truth must not be sacrificed, not a jot or tittle of it; but let us beware lest we mistake our crotchets for truth, and shelter a spirit of self-importance under an appearance of jealousy for principle. But how wise were the tactics of Gideon!

He gladly compares himself unfavourably with his brethren,—takes the low place,—is content to be nobody, and turns away their anger by a "soft answer."

Would to God we could learn in the depths of our souls to act in similar circumstances as he acted!

Reading lately, we came across the following, which depicts well what we are seeking to convey:—

Two very small children, a boy and girl, were playing together in the nursery, when something or other occurred which annoyed the boy, and, bending his little fist, with threatening brow, he said to his sister:—"Me hit you!"

She smilingly replied, bent on having no quarrel :—“Well, me kiss you!”

The effect was wonderful; the little fellow's hand relaxed, his frown passed away, and presently he was hugging his sister.

Only a nursery scene! but one the moral of which the children of God would do well to learn.

Having abated the anger of the men of Ephraim, Gideon, with his little band,—“Faint, yet pursuing,”—were confronted by a new difficulty. The men of Succoth (Gentiles) were requested to give Gideon's men some bread, instead of which they heaped insult upon Gideon, and spoke rudely to him. Oh, the patience and grace the man needed! Shall he avenge himself on these now, or do the special work God has assigned him? He takes the latter course, and, having accomplished that, he was free to punish the men of Succoth and others for their cruelty and wrong-doing.

He was not to be turned aside from the pursuit of his mission, either by brethren within or the ungodly without. They may irritate and aggravate as they please, it is his to obey God, as became the man who had learned to worship at being compared to a “barley cake.”

After all the enemies were overcome and peace restored, his brethren came and requested him to be their king.

Here was a new form of temptation. Prior to this it was his dignity and position that were assailed, but now it is the very opposite, and yet this noble man resists it, and teaches them to own fealty to none but Jehovah.

So far the scenes in Gideon's life are sublime, and we have often wished it had ended here.

But God, the faithful and true, omits nothing, and we find, after all his triumphs, Gideon fails. He made an ephod and put it in his city, and Israel went a whoring after it. It was only a small thing, but it was the beginning of an evil day. The evil did not come during Gideon's lifetime, *for his personal influence* checked the growth of it; but he was (so to speak) scarcely cold in death, before the little spark he had kindled became a mighty flame. The people lapsed into gross idolatry. The ephod had to give place to “Baal-berith,” and *they remembered not* the Lord their God, who had delivered them. Oh, how careful “chief men among the brethren” should be, in what they introduce and allow! Their personal influence

may temporarily hinder the development into evil of this or that, but to them belongs the grave responsibility of putting in “the thin end of the wedge.”

Gideon's bright and useful life was clouded by a great evil, self-invented, and this, when he was no more, became a snare and ever-increasing evil to others. Surely we do well to tremble as we sing:—

“O Lamb of God, still keep me
Near to Thy wounded side;
'Tis only there in safety
And peace I can abide.
What foes and snares surround me,
What lusts and fears within;
The grace that sought and found me
Alone can keep me clean.”

A FEW FRIENDLY HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF GOSPEL LITERATURE.



AMONG the many agencies at work in our day for the spread of God's Gospel among men, there are few that have been so abundantly blessed and owned by God in the conversion of souls as the circulation of Gospel books and tracts.

Many cases are on record where the reading of a Gospel tract received by the way-side was as an arrow from God to awaken the sleeping conscience, and to bring home to the careless sinner, for the first time, the great realities of eternity, sin, and salvation. Households otherwise impregnable have been reached with the Gospel, and souls converted to God through a tract handed at the door by some earnest tract distributor. Time and space would fail to tell the half that is known of the blessing of God on Gospel books and tracts, besides what the day will declare that never can be known till then.

Tracts are silent messengers from God direct to the souls of men; they enter the palace and the cottage, and declare their message alike to all. They speak to men's consciences in the busy crowd and in the silent chamber, and their message has been blessed to the conversion of souls in the public-house, at the race-course, and on the dying-pillow. They stand the sneer of the scorner and the criticism of the worldly-wise without a pang; and although rudely torn in pieces, they utter no reproach.

The distribution of God's Gospel thus is a branch of work in which all the true-hearted saints of God may bear a part. It requires no special gift; it involves no great expense. The principal requisites are a heart filled with Divine compassion for souls, a little wisdom in the selection and distribution of the tracts, and sufficient courage and courtesy to give them away. There is an immense field for service here, and service, too, of an order that is least likely to puff up the servant or lead him beyond the measure of his faith in God.

Thankful for all that has been and is being done by individual saints and servants of the Lord in this, we think that the importance has not been so generally felt amongst the people of God at large as it ought, or its immense advantages embraced as a fruitful auxiliary to the work of the Gospel usually carried on by the assemblies of the Lord's people in their united capacity.

With the earnest desire of being helpers one of another, and seeking to stimulate each other unto increased activity in this work of faith, we would humbly seek to offer a few homely hints which, we fondly hope, may be for the encouragement and help of our younger brethren and sisters in the Lord.

It is of the first importance that the books and tracts we distribute be SOUND IN DOCTRINE. They should give a clear and certain ring on the Gospel of God, otherwise they are worse than useless.

Tracts containing the Satanic doctrines of the non-eternity of punishment, the denial of man's fall and Christ's atonement, are now offered for sale, dished up in an evangelical form to mislead the purchasers. Others, telling the sinner to pray for salvation, are rife; and many, although not actually erroneous, are simply religious fiction, or highly-coloured incidents without pith or point. Let us give what we can honestly expect God to bless. It is unwise to give away any tract until we have read it ourselves, then we know what we are giving.

Next we should study ADAPTATION. They should be adapted to the receiver. Some need arousing, some need unmasking, and some are anxious. We should not give a book containing a story for a child to an aged lady, or *vice versa*. What would do well for a race-course might not be suitable for a Bible-class, and what we would give at the door of a public-house might not be adapted for house-to-house

visitation in a respectable and religious locality. Happily now there are so many to select from that by a little care we may have a word for all.

The books should be kept NEAT and CLEAN. A pocket case is a good idea, containing a selection folded and ready for use. No wonder if people refuse tracts which have been crushed in the pocket until they present a tattered and dirty appearance, sometimes smelling of tobacco.

They should be given politely. A gentleman, telling the story of his conversion, says it was through reading a tract. He always refused tracts, until a little boy one day met him on the road, and said, "Please, sir, will you take a tract?" The "please, sir," overcame him, and he took it.

We should watch our opportunity. Never thrust a book into a person's hand when it is full, or ask one to stop in the midst of some pressing duty to receive one. It is unwise, when distributing tracts in the railway train, to push them on the top of a newspaper or during conversation; let us watch our opportunity, and, when it comes, embrace it.

There are no end of spheres where Gospel literature may be circulated. God has blessed the distribution of short, pointed hand-bills given at races, markets, games, and all such public gatherings. Many can be found at such places whom it might be difficult to find elsewhere, and where brethren have courage to face the lion in his den, and to spread the Gospel in such spheres it is well, taking good care not to go into so close proximity to the crowd as to become identified with it.

House-to-house visitation is another excellent method. In many towns and villages the whole ground is covered thus, and at stated times the workers go over their districts singly or by twos, leaving a book or magazine in every house suited to its occupants, and the opportunity is thus afforded of speaking a personal word for Christ, and giving polite invitations to the preaching. In many places this has been done so successfully that once empty benches in the halls are now filled by this means; and cottage meetings conducted weekly in many homes where God's name was never heard, save in blasphemy.

There are peasants' cottages and lonely farm-houses where a Gospel book is seldom seen, and always welcome. When we go to the country, or on a holiday, let us remember such and seek to reach them.

And do not forget the children, they are ever on the out-look for something to read, and read they will. Let us put into their hands the best of reading—the Gospel of the blessed God—in a readable and attractive form that will interest them.

Follow every tract with prayer. God will look after His own seed: here, or yonder in heaven, we shall see the fruit and be able to trace the many links among which tract-distributing will have its own place.

“One soweth and another reapeth.” God bless the tract-distributor, and stir up His saints to increased effort and earnestness in this important branch of Gospel work. J. R.

HEBREWS.

THIS Epistle was addressed to Hebrews who had separated from Judaism and had taken Christian ground and Christian profession; some evidently, only nominally, and not in reality *possessors*. Hence, the solemn warnings in chapters iii. 1-19; vi. 4-8; x. 26-31, against apostatizing, from which there could be no recovering.* There is restoration from back-sliding, but not from apostacy.

This Epistle is divided into two parts. Part I. chiefly consists of doctrinal teaching, and comprises chapters i.-x. to verse 18. Part II. is chiefly practical, and includes chapter x. from verse 19 to the end of the Epistle.

Chapter i. opens with the voice of the Son of God contrasted with the voices of the prophets, [Who, “when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Four times the words “sat down” are mentioned in this Epistle (i. 3; viii. 1; x. 12; xii. 2). In verses 2, 3 we see the “Son” as Lord, Creator, Upholder and Redeemer. and then in chapter ii. we see His superiority to angels as Son of Man. After having passed through the suffering of death, he is exalted and crowned with glory and honour as the First-begotten from the dead—the “Son” by resurrection. In Luke i. 31, 32 we have Christ as the “Son” by incarnation; but in these two chapters He is constituted the “Son” by resurrection, and in virtue of His death and resurrection believers in Him are “sons,” too, and their final destiny is the coming glory. Compare with “many sons” in ii. 10,

* We invite correspondence regarding the scope of Ep. to the Hebrews generally, and these passages particularly, in order that out of the many existing opinions we may be helped to the truth.—Ep.

Rom. viii. 14-21. Hence He is not ashamed to call them “brethren.” “Go to My brethren,” was not said till after Christ had risen from the dead—never before (John 20. 17; Matt. xxvii. 52, 53). Hence we have, in chapter ii., Christ as man, made a little lower than the angels, His humiliation, His propitiation, His destruction of Satan’s power over death, His exaltation, His succouring priesthood, and the future ultimate visible subjection of all things under His feet. (See Psalm viii. 6-9.)

Chapter iii. Here we see Christ Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest; as the former He came from God to speak *to man*,—as the latter, He has gone to God to speak *for man*. Then we have the contrast of Moses the *servant* and Christ the *Son* over His own house, closing with solemn exhortation and warnings applicable to professors and professing Christendom in the present day.

Chapter iv. Here we have presented the rest of God in contrast with the rest of Canaan. Hence, believers are looked at in this Epistle, not as in the Epistle to the Ephesians, *seated* in heavenly places, but as pilgrims and strangers passing onward to the rest that remaineth, which is yet future. There is a threefold rest applicable to believers:—first, when he believes in Jesus; second, continual rest to his soul while passing through this wilderness (Matt. xi. 28, 29); third, an entirely *future* rest, the rest of God. Then we have the wonderful provision God has given: namely, the “Word of God” and the Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ: the former laying bare the corruption and depravity of the human heart; the latter, the One who is able to succour, and sympathize, and to Whom we can come for help in every time of need. Hence we have the Word of God to guide, and the sympathy of Christ to support us in our wilderness journey; boldly coming to the throne of grace, boldly saying “the Lord is my helper,” and boldness at the day of judgment (chap. xiii. 6; 1 John v. 17).

Chapter v. Here we have the Priesthood of the Lord Jesus compared with, and differing from, that of Aaron. Christ’s Priesthood is for ever—Aaron’s only human and passing away. Hence the Priesthood of the Son of God is after the order of Melchisedec—an everlasting one. Christ learned obedience as a Son, and became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that *obey* Him. Thus obedience in *all things*

should characterize the sons of God. Verses 12 to 14 refer to the spiritual condition of those to whom this Epistle was addressed. Babes here, as in 1 Cor. iii. 1, refers to undeveloped, stunted Christians, and is not the proper normal Christian state. Carnality characterised such at Corinth, Judaism here.

Chapter vi., verses 1 and 2, refer to the Jewish elements which applied to a state of infancy—a period preceding the first Advent of the Messiah. Verses 4-6 to the whole circle of Christian privileges in virtue of the accomplished work and glorification of the Son of God. Hence, these people referred to in verses 4-8 never go beyond a nominal Christian profession, and mere profession never gives *life*. Those who are real possessors of Christ, and have life in Him, are mentioned in verse 9. Connect with verses 4-6 and 9, 10, Matt. xiii. 19-23.

Chapter vii. Here the apostle returns to the comparison between the Priesthood of Melchisedec and that of Christ, showing the superior dignity and surpassing glory of the Priesthood of Christ, in contrast to the transitory and imperfect order of the Aaronic priesthood. Hence, the Priesthood of Christ is after the order of Melchisedec, everlasting and reaching beyond the present dispensation of the Church to the time of millennial glory, when He will be manifestly Priest and King, righteousness and peace characterizing His reign on the earth (Psalm cx.).

Chapter viii. We have reference here to the two covenants,—the first was written on tables of stone, the second will be written on the fleshy tables of the heart. The first old, and passing away, which was conditional; the second new, the future covenant of blessing yet to be fulfilled, when Israel as a nation shall be blessed in the coming millennial glory. Hence a *better* covenant established on *better* promises.

Chapter ix. In this chapter we have contrasted the numerous and oft-repeated sacrifices under the old Levitical economy with the *one* offering and perfect sacrifice of Christ, who is the Mediator of the new covenant ratified by His own blood. In verses 24-28 we have the *three appearances* of Christ. First, the past as the sacrifice; second, the present as the High Priest; third, the future as the Saviour.

Chapter x. gives us the full efficacy of the *one* sacrifice of Christ and its application to the believer who is perfected for ever having liberty to enter into the presence of God, by a new and living way. "New,"

because opened by the death and blood-shedding of Christ; *living*, because all those who enter already possess *life* in Him. Hence the invitation to "draw near," and the exhortation to *hold fast* the confession of our hope, and "*consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.*"

Chapter xi. Here we have the energy and activity of faith, the divine principles on which God's saints have ever acted, producing moral power for witnessing, testifying, walking, serving, suffering, and overcoming. Hence we have in this chapter faith's victories, and the omission of the name of Lot, Abraham's companion, has a moral significance.

Chapter xii. Here we have God as a Father dealing with His people in government. Hence, chastisement is a proof of Lordship (verse 6), a Father's right to chasten for our profit (verse 10), that fruit might be the result (verse 11). Then we have law and grace—Mount Sinai and Zion contrasted. Then there are eight things given, in Divine and prophetic order, in verses 22-24; and each may be distinguished by the word "and." First, "Mount Zion;" second, the "city;" third, "angels;" fourth, the "Church;" fifth, "God;" sixth, "spirits of just men;" seventh, "Jesus the Mediator;" eighth, and the "blood." Hence, we have in these verses God's dispensational dealings with his ancient people, when He will re-establish His relationship with them on the earth, in virtue of the blood of the Mediator, which speaks better things than the blood of Abel. Hence, we have in all, God, Christ, heaven, angels, the Church, the remnant of the Jews, and the redeemed earth.

Chapter xiii. In the beginning of the previous chapter, the Apostle exhorts the Hebrew believer to look off from men to Jesus (whose faith never flagged or failed) for strength to run the heavenly race. Here to "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" (verse 8) in contrast to the guides who had departed to be with the Lord (verse 7), whose faith was worthy of imitation, then showing Christ is the "Altar," and the only true place for witnessing and testimony is "outside the camp" unto a rejected, despised, suffering Christ, bearing His reproach. In verses 15, 16 we have two aspects of sacrifice. First, that of praise God-ward; second, doing good man-ward. Then the apostle closes this Epistle with Christ as the Great Shepherd in resurrection, and salutation to all the saints. S. B.

OUR RESOURCE.



N Acts xx. Paul warns the Ephesian elders of coming evils from without and from within. Truly a dark picture; but, thank God, he did not stop there; he told them of their never failing resource in every time of perplexity—"God and the word of His grace" (v. 32). Rejoice, O child of God! look not in, that is despair; or around, that is confusion; but look up, that is peace. Looking around we see what havoc the angelic ministry of Satan is working; yet look up, for "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. xvi. 20). However great or varied the troubles may be, whether in the church, family, or business, the child of God need not despair, for "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John iv. 4); and, if "God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31.) But what does it mean to be commended to God? what is the force of it? Is it not just to come into God's immediate presence and rest in His strength, even if He does not deliver us out of the trouble at once? Oh, the rest to feel His strong arms of love round about us; then can we sing,

"With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm."

Let us gather fresh courage by looking at some who will prove this in very dark days. In Matthew xxiv. our Lord tells of a time coming which shall be more terrible than any that have gone before. The Church gone, the salt has lost its savour and the light become dimness, the evil thickens, despair may well take hold of the few faithful ones—the time of the great tribulation is upon them. Look around; nothing but heaped up sorrow—wars and famines, pestilences and earthquakes, false prophets and cruel treachery all at work; and, last of all, he who appeared to befriend the people of God, is unmasked, and proves to be the very Man of Sin, who, in fearful blasphemy, shall dare to place the abomination, the idolatrous image, in the very temple of God. What can the poor feeble saint do in such a time? What is left for him? *God!* and that is enough; and so the Blessed Master says, "*Pray ye*" (Matt. xxiv. 20). And will there be any who will find this enough? Yes. In darkest days God always has His testimony, a remnant reserved for Himself; and in Micah vii. we get their experience. It is the same dark scene. How graphically the first six verses

describe its awful sorrows; but in the midst, the faithful ones *look up* and rest. "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait . . . my God will hear me" (verse vii). What a triumph of faith! Truly, as our Lord said, these are the darkest days of the earth's sad history, and yet the brightest and most God-honouring faith gleams through them. And mark, there is no apparent immediate answer; but faith says, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause." The infidel around may and will say at that time, "Where is the Lord thy God;" but faith will rest in quiet confidence and await His salvation, looking for nothing less than His personal appearing to deliver; and so, when the Deliverer appears in Zion, faith will say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him" (Isa. xxv. 9).

This is the earth side of the picture; what about heaven's? Does not God hear? Does not He regard the cries of His people? Turn to Rev. viii. The seventh seal has been opened, and the trumpets are about to sound; the exact moment as to time, when our Lord said "Pray;" the commencement of the second half of Daniel's 70th week, and what do we see? A golden altar, and the incense ascending up before God, which is *the prayers of saints*, and with what result? Why, that censer which held the incense is now filled with fire from off the altar and cast into the earth, and there are voices and thunders and lightnings and an earthquake; and when we compare Rev. iv. 5; xi. 19; xvi. 18, we learn that these awful utterances of nature do but tell of speedy judgment, the pledge that Jehovah will deliver His down-trodden people by terrible judgments on their enemies, and this in direct response to those very cries that appeared to receive no answer, and which brought forth the infidel question, "Where is the Lord your God?" And so we learn, whatever the appearances may be, that in all ages, "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears open unto their cry" (Psa. xxxiv. 15).

May we be amongst those who are wise and observe these things, so shall we understand the loving-kindness of the Lord (Psa. cvii. 43).
W. H. S.

"I shall be satisfied when I shall awake with Thy likeness." Nothing less can satisfy a child of God.

“WHO TEACHETH LIKE HIM?”

EXHORTATION is sometimes even more necessary than Teaching. The two gifts are distinct (Rom. xii. 7, 8). The teacher engages himself in exploring and unfolding new spheres of truth, or, if you will, aspects and principles of truth that saints are not generally familiar with. Thus, as a wise scribe, he is able to bring forth out of his treasure “things new” as well as “old.” On the other hand, the exhorter urges on saints their responsibility to act out what they already know. The burden of his ministry is expressed in his words, “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth” (2 Peter i. 12). The Apostle Peter seems to figure as an exhorter in both of his epistles. The spirit of this age is that of Athenians, who spent their time in nothing else but either to hear or to tell some new thing, and this spirit is often prevalent in our meetings. Of course, it is quite right for us to learn all we can, for we are to grow in knowledge as well as in grace; but this thirsting after something new has its dangers, and is prone to become a snare. Therefore it behoves us to take heed *how* we learn as well as *what* we learn. It is possible to have the mind stored with truth and yet to be sadly deficient in that grace, without which, truth can never be effectual. We may learn too much truth, because we may learn out of communion with God. “It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God.” When God teaches, the truth reaches the conscience, adorns the life, and enables one to say with the Psalmist, “I have not departed from Thy judgments, for *Thou* hast taught me.” But when we are merely taught of man, the truth only serves to illuminate the intellect, to foster spiritual pride, and to make us “wise in our own conceits.” Hence the words, “Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up. If ANY MAN thinketh that he knoweth anything he knoweth not yet as he ought to know” (R.V., 1 Cor. viii. 1, 2). I would not for one moment speak disparagingly of books, tracts, meetings, &c., but I do feel that much which I have learned by these means I need to learn over again in the realised presence of God: “Who teacheth like Him?” It has been well said, “What we need is not new truth, but old

truth with new power.” Therefore, when we hear a brother exhorting saints concerning that which we are familiar with, and which, perhaps, we have learnt years since, let us not be *restless* or *indifferent*, but rather let us honestly ask ourselves, “Have I learnt this truth in the sanctuary?” (Psa. lxxiii. 2; lxxiii. 17; lxxvii. 13.) “Can I speak of it as a matter of my own experience?” (Phil. iv. 11, 12.) “Has it conformed me more to the image of Him ‘who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens?’”—*From an address on “Ministry,” by S. J. B. C., Ballarat, Australia.*

“BELIEVERS’ MEETINGS.”

Suggestions for the consideration of those who are accustomed to take part.

“That God in all things may be glorified” and “let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Peter iv. 11 and 1 Cor. xiv. 26), are the two principles that should ever be our guide. If this two-fold object is kept steadily in view it will greatly help.

If, as is not unfrequently the case, as many as five hundred or a thousand believers come together, and two hours of the precious time of each one is spent at the meeting—how great the responsibility that rests upon those who occupy the time, to be certain that they are ministering not only truth, but needed truth, and that in plainness, definiteness, and brevity.

Readiness to minister shortly and to strike a fitting keynote at the commencement of a meeting is an invaluable gift. But to do this involves real, solemn dealing with God from Whom alone such preparedness can come. Often the meeting is begun by a hymn, then a pause, then a long prayer, then more hymn-singing—then a pause, then a long address, so long that there is hardly time for another to follow with any degree of liberty. We would be sorry to limit the time to be occupied by one who has manifestly a message from God, and by whom God is speaking to hearts and consciences—but our observation has impressed us with the belief that the longest addresses are rarely the most edifying.

It would be well for ministering brethren to remember that the great majority of their hearers are able only to grasp and retain a very little of what they hear. A little, spoken pointedly and with calm deliberate reference to an open Bible—will do more solid work than a long, wordy, diffuse address.

The early part of a meeting having been taken up with long pauses and one or two long addresses, it almost invariably happens that towards the close there is quite an unseemly haste to take part, those only succeeding who have the knack of slipping themselves forward quickly, or who give out a hymn, and then begin to speak before the rest have quite regained their seats.

The effect is to quite exclude those who study to act calmly and deliberately as in the presence of God.

Two passages duly pondered would cure this, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think;" "in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Rom. xii. 3; Phil. ii. 3).

Surely if this were the exercise of each soul, there would at least be a pause, and the heart uplifted to God to know whether or not another might be the more fitted and prepared instrument to minister the needed word. Surely each one of us may have learned that God can do without us, and to rejoice if the children are fed, albeit *we* may not be allowed to break to them the living Bread.

Long pauses are not desirable, but is it not the case that very often the prayer, or the word ministered, after a long and almost painful silence, has been in unction and power, whilst very generally the word that has been thrust in without a moment's pause, or prefaced by the declaration (in no case necessary), that it is "a message from God," falls flat and powerless?

Is there a reason for this? We believe there is. There is in some a spirit of self distrust and diffidence that hinders action until there is in the soul the fullest conviction that it is the mind of the Lord that *truly* should take part. Such was the experience of Moses, Gideon, Jeremiah, and others—they were slow to go forward, and hard to convince that they in their insufficiency were the ones whom God had selected for the great work He had to do. It is a feeling akin to this that often hinders, and instead of the silence that is of God being allowed to have its effect on the conscience of such servants of God until they are pressed from within to act—some restless ready brother thinks it "a pity the time should be wasted," and gets up to fill the gap by ministry that is felt to be not in the power of God.

Alas, how little he thinks of the practical wasting of half-an-hour in ministry of the "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal" order, when five minutes golden silence, that to a restless spirit seems an hour, might have cleared the way for the very message of God.

Truly this stop-gap ministry, the offspring of mere carnal restlessness, whether it be a prayer, a hymn, or an address—is an infliction we would protest against.

One serious lack in most meetings for ministry of the word, is a worshipping spirit. Ministry gets on the swing, and one address after another is delivered without the healthful variation of praise or prayer. True ministry will invariably lead to God. Sometimes it will lead to God in confession of sin, which "the word quick and powerful" has detected; sometimes in prayer for grace to act what has been taught; sometimes in praise as the wondrous purposes of God's grace have been opened up to the heart. Oh! the pain and disappointment to one in fellowship with God, to hear an address that humbles to the very dust, cutting to the heart and arousing the conscience, followed by the discord of a lively hymn, instead of silent prayer, or prayer leading in the Spirit to humiliation, self abasement, and confession. We do not speak too strongly when we say that on some such occasions

we have felt the giving out of a hymn, well-meant though it may have been by the one who did it, to be as evidently of Satan, as was the well-meant word of Peter to the Lord, which met the sharp rebuke, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." We have felt it to be the effort of the Adversary to neutralize as far as he could the effect of the word ministered.

We trust these suggestions may lead the servants of God to seek of Him discernment as to what is fitting, so that we may each one be helpers of the faith and joy of the many.

One or two minor points ought to receive consideration. It is essential to edification that all should hear. Therefore, it is a duty devolving upon all who speak, to do so, as far as it is in their power, as distinctly and loudly as may be required by the size of the room.

The zealous mothers, who so often sit upon the front seat with infants that are so "good" that they keep up a constant prattle, ought to be kindly invited to sit near a door, where they could easily remove with the children until they were quieted or put to sleep. In this way the mothers might get a good share of the benefit of the meetings, and yet with very little disturbance to speakers or listeners. Little do mothers know the agony they inflict upon a nervous speaker by placing a baby immediately before him. Be it ever so "good," its little amusing sounds—which are music at home—are sorely distracting to some, while ministering the Word.

And shall we venture to refer to the zealous, well-meaning people, who bring children with severe coughs to such meetings? We have even, on several occasions, seen children brought to conference meetings with *whooping-cough*, to the injury of the suffering child, the danger of others who might take it, and the serious disturbance of the meeting. One text would end this practice—"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification" (Rom. xv. 2). In worldly assemblies, where large numbers come to hear either speaking or singing, coughing is restrained to the utmost. To be "courteous" is as much a Christian duty as to be "pitiful" (1 Peter iii. 8). Christian courtesy demands silence while another is speaking.

J. R. C.

THE supply of water and manna did not take Israel out of trouble. They drank, and were refreshed; they gathered up a little strength, and then came Amalek to fight against them. They only had these blessings as a preparation for conflict. So those who feed on Christ as the manna, and have the "well of water springing up unto everlasting life" in their souls, have the wilderness and conflict still before them. The Lord will not allow His people to lay up anything that will make them independent of Him: it would only tend to their discomfort. It is sin not to have full confidence that the Lord will aid in our "time of need," and not to be *sure* of water, even in a desert, is to "tempt God."

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

NOTE.—Those who endeavour to reply to Questions, desire to impress upon readers their responsibility to “prove all things,” and “hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. v. 21). They make no pretension to infallibility, but give their judgment as those who have received mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—Many Questions are received but not replied to; some not being for general edification, whilst others are laid aside from want of sufficient light to deal with them.—It is requested that all communications be accompanied by the Name and Address of the sender.

QUESTION No. CCII.

Prove from Scripture that those who sleep in Jesus are in a state of consciousness.

REPLY.

Luke xxiii. 43.—The thief's request was, to be remembered at a future time, not yet arrived, viz., when the Lord comes into His kingdom. The dark, unknown period of death, and a separate existence in Hades, lay before the thief as inevitable; and the utmost blessing he could conceive was, to be remembered in the future day of Christ's glory.

How unutterably sweet to him must have been the answer of his dying Lord, “Verily, I say unto thee, TO-DAY shalt thou be WITH ME in Paradise.” Of course this included the answer to his request, but also infinitely more. It was a joy to be fulfilled to him *that very day*. But what would be the joy or the meaning of such an answer if the spirit of the dying malefactor was to be in a state of unconsciousness? Nay! why say “in Paradise,” if the poor man was not to be conscious? Why say “with Me,” if he was not to know in whose companionship he would be?

Phil. i. 23, 24.—Here two conditions are contrasted—“to depart and to be with Christ,” and “to abide in the flesh.” The former is said to be “very far better” (R.V.); but how could this be if death be a departure into a state of unconsciousness?

If to die be to enter a condition of unconsciousness, who would ever say in his right mind that this is “gain?” At most it is nothing at all.

2 Cor. v. 6-8.—Here also two conditions are contrasted—“at home in the body,” and “absent from the body;” and also “absent from the Lord,” and “at home with the Lord” (R.V.).

What can be the meaning of “at home with the Lord,” and how can such be preferable to our present *absence from the Lord* if it signifies a state of unconsciousness? In our present “absence from the Lord” we know Him, see Him by faith, rejoice in Him, hear His word, and enjoy the enlightenment of His spirit. Is all this to be surrendered for a state of unconsciousness? and are we still to say that we are “*willing rather*”—i.e., that we prefer—to be absent from the body? Nay, the idea is monstrous. If the words

mean anything, they teach that death introduces the believer into the presence of the Lord, and into the vision of the Lord in a way more blessed by far than even what we now know.

We do not care to say more, the thought can only be supported by wresting scripture (2 Peter iii. 16), and to follow up the twistings and evasions of the word of God by which such errors are supported would be endless.

QUESTION No. CCIII.

Which are the Scriptures and where the teaching that would lead us to expect the Lord's return at any moment?

REPLY.

We would reply to this by asking another question. What Scripture is there in the New Testament that would lead a believer to look for death as a natural and necessary event? That certain individuals would die, and the manner thereof, was specially revealed; and also, in a general way, it is taught that others would suffer martyrdom; but these exceptions prove the rule, which is, that saints are taught that the return of Christ is their proper hope and expectation, and for him they are to look and wait. John xiv. 3, xxi. 18-23; Acts i. 11; 1 Cor. i. 7, xi. 26, xv. 51; 2 Cor. v. 1 (note the “if”); Phil. iii. 20; 1 Thess. i. 10, iv. 15; 1 Tim. vi. 14; Titus ii. 13; Heb. ix. 28; James v. 7; 1 Pet. i. 13; 2 Pet. iii. 12; Rev. xxii. 20.

QUESTION No. CCIV.

Is it right for a Christian to marry his deceased wife's sister when it is contrary to the law of the country in which he dwells?

REPLY.

Apart altogether from the controversy as to whether or not the thing is contrary to the Word of God, there is quite sufficient ground for a believer not entertaining such an idea. It is illegal, and that is enough. See Rom. xiii. The issue of such a marriage is illegitimate, and the bare idea should deter any right-minded person from such a course.

It cannot therefore be done in the fear of the Lord or have His blessing, and to ask His blessing upon what is contrary to His Word, is a mockery. “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. v. 22); “Let not your good be evil spoken of” (Rom. xiv. 16).

REMNANT TESTIMONY.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.



WANT to refer you to a few Scriptures, to show God's dealings with His people in all ages; in the past, and in the present, and with a glance at the future; to show that there is a harmony in His dealings thus with men. No matter how great their departure from Him, how glaring the evil into which they may have sunk, and how great the judgments with which He may have had to visit them, at all times has He reserved some for Himself. And my great object is that we may look at the characteristics of such, not that our hearts may be elated, to say in an exalted sense "*We are the people of the Lord*"; but, that we may search our own hearts as to how far we are like those of whom God speaks with approval.

Look first at Genesis vi. 7, 9, "And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth Me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Now these are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." There is a difference here in these of whom we may speak as a remnant, with those to come after. Noah may be viewed, undoubtedly, at least in three characters. He was a man of faith, and as such is brought before us as an example in Hebrews xi.; secondly, he was a type of the Lord Jesus, and as such was the Saviour of his house; and thirdly, he was with his family a type of the Jewish remnant, hereafter to be carried through the tribulation. You know that the apostle Peter speaks of him as the eighth person, and the eighth generally represents the renewed resurrection Israel. Noah, then, with his family, is the first instance we have in Scripture of God preserving a few. Noah, like Enoch, as a just man, walked with God; and the difference between this remnant and all others is this: the men then upon the earth were divided into only two classes, the world ungodly which perished in the flood, and the eight saved in the ark. In the other instances which I am going to quote there are at least three—the Gentiles, who know not God; the Jews, who were the people of God, and a few from them reserved for God.

Turn now to 1 Kings xix. 13, 14: "And it was so, when Elijah heard it (the still small voice), that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very zealous for the Lord God of Hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword: and I, *even I only, am left*; and they seek my life to take it away." Then, in verse 18, we have the answer of Jehovah. "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." Let us read also the Spirit's comment upon that, in Romans xi. 2, 4. "Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord they have killed Thy prophets, and digged down Thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life." But what is the answer of God unto him? "I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." That last verse shows us that the remnant in the days of Elijah was especially a type of a remnant in the present day; a remnant of Israel, the Jewish portion of the Church of God. But note particularly two points: God's reserving, and because of His reserving the refusal to bow the knee to Baal. I want very carefully to balance the two; and to avoid, on the one hand, giving man the glory due to God, and the other, fatalistic error,—if God reserved they would not bow the knee. How many instances we have of this kind in the Word. Take, for instance, Acts xxvii. You remember that God had told Paul that He had given Him all the people in the ship; but Paul did not act as a fatalist, on the contrary, he says, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." We must balance God's sovereignty with its effect upon men. Another instance in the life of the same apostle. Said he: "I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." The fatalist says, "oh, if they are elect it is no matter what we do, they are safely secured." Paul, on the contrary, says: "I endure all things, that they also may obtain salvation." So, in the days of Elijah, God reserved a

people, and because of the reserving of God, they prove that the power of God is with them; and when others are carried away with the mass, they refuse to bow the knee to the false god.

I would next ask you to look at Ezra vi. 15-22. Now here, as a remnant, we have only two tribes out of twelve in the land. The ten are scattered in different parts of the earth, and, so far as their walk is concerned, far from God. But the two are the remnant in that age, and one beautiful and striking characteristic we read in verse 17: "And they offered at the dedication of this house of God, . . . for a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel." They offered a sin-offering, not for themselves only, or for the ten tribes only, but they offered for *all Israel*. Though they were but few out of the many, though they were but two out of the twelve, yet would they manifest in this respect, the unity of all Israel. Doubtless it would have been displeasing to God if they had offered simply for their brethren who were away; that would have been very much like saying, "We are holier than they," and certainly not according to the heart and mind of God. Nor, would it have been right to forget their brethren far away? that would have been a spirit of narrow exclusivism, but they offered for all. So with us; however few are gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we should bear upon our hearts before the Lord *all* who are His; we should keep in memory before God *His one church*; all are brethren in Christ, no matter where they may be. The one loaf upon the table speaks of the one Christ, and, as partakers of that one bread, we should remember before God *all* who are partakers of that one Christ, of whom that one bread speaks, and not only those who are thus breaking bread there or elsewhere.

Now, another point here. Everything is now regulated anew according to the Word of God. They searched the book of Moses, and therefore, they set the priests in their divisions. It was not according to the imagination or will of man. Theirs was not such language as this: "We cannot be as the children of Israel used to be, because we are only two, and there ought to be twelve; therefore, we must adapt ourselves to circumstances." The point with them was that, whether few or many, whether they be only part or the whole, surely they had only the Word of

God to lead them; therefore, the great matter of priesthood arrangement must be according to what is in the law of Moses; in everything the Word of God was searched and acted upon. And so now. Is it a question of worship? We are not to say that we are living in wonderfully different times, and that it is impossible to obey God. It is never impossible to obey God, and it is a libel on His character to say so; it is exalting Satan over the Lord Himself. No matter what the evil may be, we can obey; and never let us resort to human devices. If we want to know how to worship, or how to serve, and for everything else "*It is written.*" And if there be only two, and all the rest of the people of God are away, then for those two "*It is written.*" This, surely, is a very striking characteristic of this remnant. And there is this beautiful point in connection with them also: they sought, not only the word of God but the Lord God Himself, the very presence of Jehovah. Nothing here would satisfy them or meet their deep, deep loss. Not enough for them was it to have the priests, and the ordinances obeyed as commanded by Moses, but they must have the Lord Himself among them. It is very like that oft-quoted verse in the Hebrews xiii. "Let us go forth therefore unto *Him* without the camp, bearing His reproach." Let us not rest satisfied even with this, that we have the written Word of God for what we do, but have the very presence of the Lord whilst we obey that word. Is it merely obedience to the letter, in the flesh; or according to the power of the Spirit? And so is the striking fact brought out again and again, when any number of God's people are brought back to Him there is joy. As we read in the days of Hezekiah, at the keeping of the feast of the Passover, and of unleavened bread, it is said there was such joy in Jerusalem as had not been since the days of Solomon. Still later on, in the days of Josiah, there was still greater joy, going back even to the days of Samuel the prophet. Later on still, in the days of Nehemiah, they kept the feast of booths, and there was such joy among them as there had not been since the time of Joshua. Each time did they go further back in their experience, as to what God had done among them. Does it not encourage us? for no matter how far distant may be the happy apostolic days, if only two or three trust in Him, we may be full of joy in the Holy Ghost.

NOTES ON ECCLESIASTES.



CHAPTER I., verse 1.—“The words of the preacher” (Heb. Koheleth—translated Ecclesiastes)—“the son of David”—Solomon.

Verse 2.—“Vanity of vanities,” &c. A Hebrew expression for “utter vanity.” This is the subject of the discourse—the utter insufficiency of all earthly things to make man happy.

Verse 3.—“What profit *hath* a man of all his labour which he taketh *under the sun*?” This question he proceeds to answer by showing first, the frequency of the changes in the natural world, and then that man’s most laborious and painstaking efforts in pursuit of earthly happiness bring him no nearer to the attainment of his object.

Verse 4.—The generations of men come and go on the earth, which serves as their abode; and abideth itself unchanged.

Verses 5, 6, 7.—The sun riseth and setteth, the winds perform their periodical and continuous round, the rivers run back to the sea, from which they originally (by evaporation) came.

Verse 8.—The ceaseless sound of labour goes on. Man is unable to speak about it all, the matter is so great, and the changes so many and frequent, that the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing,” *i.e.*, one’s eye is never *satisfied*, nor is the ear.

Verse 9, 10.—These things which we see and hear, and which each generation sees and hears afresh for itself, have been and will be, yet do they all fail to satisfy; and no matter what wonderful discoveries may take place *under the sun*, there is nothing new or fresh in them *as a means of satisfying* the soul of man.

Verses 10, 11.—Men have sought from the beginning to find out every form of pleasure and enjoyment, thinking thereby to be satisfied; but after all, there is nothing of which it can be said “See, *this* is new!” for it hath been (in principle at least) tried long ago in the days before us. And men forget what has been tried. Neither does the present generation enquire after former things. Each generation seeks its own glory, and men care not to recall to remembrance former things as worthy of note, lest they should lose their own present chances of praise and profit.

Verses 12, 13.—“I, the Preacher, was king, . . . and I gave my heart (*i.e.*, gave himself thoroughly up to the task) to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done *under heaven*.” “This sore travail (*i.e.*, this restless desire to know and thoroughly understand the springs of human desires and pleasures), hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith.”

Verse 14.—His general summary is, that after seeing all *under the sun*, he finds there is nothing to really satisfy; all is vanity and vexation of spirit, in that nothing tangible remains.

Verse 15.—“That which is crooked” (see vii. 13). God so orders all things that we cannot bend straight that which He has purposely made “crooked.” Nor can we, by any means supply that which He has wisely left wanting. Far better bend to circumstances, than try and bend circumstances to suit a depraved mind and will.

Verse 16.—Solomon considers the position he is in, as having “great estate,” and with it, wisdom exceeding any previous ruler in Jerusalem (see ii. 9; 1 Kings iii. 12, 13). By this (*i.e.*, use of this wisdom,) he had got “great *experience* of wisdom and knowledge.”

Verse 17.—He set himself to the task of thoroughly weighing and discerning the difference between “wisdom” and “madness;” or, free license and “folly,” the result being, that it ends in “vexation of spirit;” for all that tends merely to self-gratification soon palls, and loses its attraction.

Verse 18.—For in becoming wise and full of knowledge, as to the various things done “under the sun,” there is “much grief” and “sorrow,” seeing that it bringeth revelation of the continual corruption of man’s heart, and also of the utter emptiness of all earthly things.

CHAPTER II.

Verses 1, 2.—With advantage, then, of wisdom and experience, Solomon willingly gives himself freely to try various modes of pleasure, so called, “mirth” and “laughter,” *i.e.*, all things which tend thereto, and which men seek after. He finds no cause for real delight, and sums up the issue as vanity, as madness, as useless.

Verse 3.—Free indulgence in strong wine—yet keeping himself well aware of what he was doing—

and then free license in "folly" (or base sensual pleasures), to see if *in them* lay anything good for the sons of men (*i.e.*, satisfying), during their lifetime. Solomon is permitted (never enjoined) thus to act with free, full power, and to do whatsoever entered into his heart to do. So that while he is morally guilty in choosing such a course, yet he serves as a testing example and proof to the sons of men, of the utter emptiness of everything down here.

Verses 4, 5.—"I made me great works." Solomon enumerates the various enterprises he took up (see 1 Kings, 7, 9, 10 chapters), enterprises such as a king only, with power and resources such as he possessed could follow. In short, he did, or commanded to be done, every conceivable thing that bore promise of yielding some return of pleasure or satisfaction (verses 6, 7, 8 show the details).

Verses 9, 10.—Thus he increased to fame exceeding any before him, yet remaining watching (in his wisdom) the end or effect of all; carrying out every desire and rejoicing in his absolute power so to do. This afforded certain pleasures while it lasted, for his heart was in measure looking for a reward of his labour.

Verse 11.—Yet when all was done, and the passing pleasure of doing the things over, he considers all, and then exclaims, after all, "Vanity and vexation." "No profit under the sun," of all my labours.

Verse 12.—He turns to contemplate the issues of wisdom, madness, and folly (see chapter i. 17), for no one could add fresh opportunities for knowledge of these things after his, the king's experience. A man could but repeat his experiments and it would only bring him the same sad results.

Verses 13-16.—"Wisdom" (even here) "excelleth folly," for a wise man knows what he is about, by foreseeing things, but the foolish man acts in ignorance of results, yet, both die. If both die, "why was I ever wise?" said Solomon; "of what use to me is this wisdom eventually?" It is vanity; for soon (when both are dead) their wisdom and folly are alike forgotten. How! Is it possible,—dieth the wise man as the fool? Is there no difference hereafter? Are both but as passing clouds?

Verses 17-19.—Existence becomes a burden, because the thought that the fruit of all one's labours may pass to a fool, and be squandered, is so galling as to rob life of the pleasure of all its actions. Vanity!

Verses 20-23.—Despair of really attaining any good results from all his labours causes him to cry out in complaint. He had done all he could in wisdom, with sagacity and equity, yet, must he leave all to some one else who had done nothing towards it. There seemed positively nothing to satisfy him after all his labour and vexation, *i.e.*, anxiety of heart, his sorrows and disappointments whilst labouring—yes, even absence of sleep through carefulness about all his labours—all seemed vanity.

Verses 24-26.—Yet in spite of all this unsatisfactory result, let a man eat and drink, and get all the good he can out of his labours, nursing his comforts, not his sorrows. So would God have it, and who knows it so well as the king after his rich and varied experiences? For God giveth to the man who is good before Him, joy amidst all the sorrows of his labours; but to a wicked man, nothing but joyless travail, and the fruit of his labours given to others, who perhaps, he hateth, even to those who are righteous. What vanity and vexation of spirit to him.

CHAPTER III.

Verses 1-8.—These verses are not precepts to men to act, but refer to God's purposes and designs as predetermined. They are proverbial statements of current and recurring events which alternate in men's lifetime. *Let men do as they will, they cannot alter the course of matters, which, while man exists in his present condition, will alternate in this fashion.*

Verse 9.—Man may say, then, "what profit hath he that worketh,"—doing his very best,—"wherein he laboureth?" Nay, but man must labour, for he is so constituted.

Verse 10.—Solomon then adds, "I see all this travail is from God. He purposely sets the children of men to work ceaselessly, having his own designs in it all, utilizing their ceaseless energies for all-wise reasons."

Verse 11.—Perfect; right, or beautiful *in His time*, so as to fit into His master-work. He Hath made all things to occur, and hath set the world (*i.e.*, the constitution of things designed) in their midst, *i.e.*, amongst, and in all these things. So that no man can find out (or wholly perceive and understand), the work that God is making to come out from them all.

Verses 12, 13.—It is no use, therefore, for men to fret because they cannot understand all, far better to rejoice in hope, and to take care only to do good, or

obey God's directions all one's life, and so enjoy all they can of their labour.

Verses 14, 15.—God's plans are unalterable, eternal, and perfect. Hence men should fully trust Him and reverence Him—God so acteth to this end. For God seeketh out (see Sept.) the thing that has been, to repeat it now, and so on perpetually, to shew to man the end of all his labour, that he may learn wisdom thereby.

Verses 16-18.—He notes injustice instead of equity, and argues that God will intervene, *even here*, and judge both the righteous and the wicked truly; but then, disappointed in not seeing this, he argues that God purposely lets all this state of things occur to shew to man he is no better than the beast.

Verses 19, 20.—Sceptically, he adds, they both die. A man is no better, in this, than the beast, they both return to dust.

Verses 21, 22.—Who knoweth, or can tell, for a certainty (showing he knew before of such a hope), whether a man's spirit goeth upward and a beast's downward to the earth? (See 1 Cor. xv.)

Verse 23.—He concludes that a man must get all the joy he can now in his labours, such is all he can do, for who can shew him the ultimate end and profit of all he does? Who indeed but God, who reveals to *His children* in Christ Jesus, "You labour not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. xv. 58.)

CHAPTER IV.

Verses 1-3.—He again considers the oppressions beforenamed (chapter iii. 16). The oppressed weeping, the oppressors using their power, but both wretched—comfortless. He counts the dead happier, for they have gone through all they have to do down here, and the soul unborn better off still.

Verse 4.—Even the doers of good works—*i.e.*, beneficial, right works—are envied of their fellows, and the poor oppressed—both have to suffer "vexation."

Verse 5.—Yet is it better to suffer oppression or envy than to be a fool and do nothing.

Verse 6.—Best of all to have a mere handful with quietness.

Verses 7, 8.—He takes the case of a man with no child nor relative, labouring, heaping up riches, dissatisfied, yet never considering the uselessness of such labour; surely such conduct is vain, sore travail for nothing.

Verses 9-12.—Two working together better than one; they help each other—one lifts up the other if fallen. Alone, such an one would be helpless; thus, each has good reward or return. Two warm, two resist a common enemy, and a threefold alliance is better still—not quickly broken.

Verses 13, 14.—In a kingdom; better is a humble and wise servant raised to the throne, than an old and foolish king, who will not take advice and acts as a tyrant; for the one succeeds to the throne from the prison, perhaps, or the lowest place, and is exalted; while the other, though born in his kingdom (*i.e.*, born a king) becomes poor, and is degraded.

Verses 15, 16.—Solomon notes, "I saw the people taking the part of the second king"—(*i.e.*, the successor to the old king),—there were many to take his part then; but those succeeding them had not the same love for him, and his popularity soon waned, and he, doubtless, is thrust aside. Surely *this* is vanity and vexation of spirit? Exalted and elated to-day, degraded and low to-morrow.

CHAPTER V.

Verses 1-3.—"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints," therefore, remember in whose presence thou art, and give heed unto His words, rather than be hasty to offer sacrifices formally. Let His majesty cause reverential utterance, and let thy words be few and from the heart, for as dreams are the consequence of a multitude of business, so fools are known by a multitude of words.

Verses 4-7.—Be honest with all thy vows, don't make vain excuses for not fulfilling them, neither say before the angel (perhaps the messenger or priest), it was a mistake. God knows the heart and may blast thine enterprises for deceit. For both in dreams, and in profuse talk, are many vanities. Ever act before, and reverence God.

Verses 8, 9.—Marvel not at the oppression of the poor, and the perversion of justice, for over the judge is the king, and over the king is God. Moreover, after all, if the poor be ground down and oppressed over much, who shall cultivate the soil? If the soil be not tilled, whereby shall the king obtain his revenues? for he himself is served through the field, and therefore has interest in the prosperity of the poor, *i.e.*, the peasant.

Verses 10-12.—Heaping up riches cannot ever

satisfy; new expenses come. The poor labourer is far happier, he sleeps soundly, content with his lot, while the very abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep, he is so restless and suspicious.

Verses 13-17.—Heaped up riches, unused for present good, are a sore evil. If they are lost or stolen, the family is beggared. As the man came into the world so he leaves it, naked of all earthly possessions. It is a sore trouble to him to find he has laboured for nothing, and has had a poor joyless life after all.

Verses 18-20.—The best way then is to enjoy all one can in a lawful way, avoiding these causes of sorrow, by hoarding money or by vexation and disappointments. This is a gift from God, for a man so acting does not keep brooding miserably all his days, nor does he nurse fears for to-morrow, but enjoys thankfully the present from the hand of God, and God grants him this in response to his hearts desires. (1 Tim. vi. 17). A. O. M.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAPTER iv.

NOW let us see, in the second place, how that to rejoice before God we must have divine life. Here are spoken of certain persons, worshippers, having eternal life; having the well of water in them, and worshipping before God. Those who have not cannot. Then observe further why God gave this eternal life; and here you will see the connection between John iii. and iv. You will find that we have mention of seven features of the Holy Ghost's work. In the first, He begets souls, in the second, they are worshipping God with the well of living water in them. Putting the two together you will see why God has given eternal life; for God shews that He has an object in it, namely, that He may get worshippers. These words, "The Father seeketh worshippers," shew He wants it, that His heart craves it. Worship and companionship are the only two things He seeks. If He is making us His sons, it is on purpose that we may enjoy His love; if it is true that God so loved the world, here is the reason,—“I give you My nature that you may worship Me.” Angel worship could not content God, therefore He created another order of beings; and He let angels get far off, that He might

bring them nigh, and shower upon them His blessing that they may worship Him.

Before God can be worshipped He must be known. “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship.” Therefore He gives eternal life, for “this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” (John xvii. 3.) Are we awake to this, that He is now teaching us to worship? Those angels are somewhat like those who play but have no soul for music. But God is getting His Church together, and making them *feel*; lavishing His grace upon them in an unmeasured way. Oh what skilful players, what deep harmonies there will be in that day!

There is one great chapter in the Old Testament where you will find the principles of worship laid down in most beautiful type; I refer to Deut. xxvi. We find there that they were to bring their baskets of first-fruits, put them down before God, and then were to say, “A Syrian ready to perish was my father,” and so on, verses 5 to 10. Now these are the principles of worship. First, they were to worship in the land. “And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance” (verse 1). Now *we are not* to worship *here*, but in the presence of God, as resurrection men, risen with Christ; sons risen and before God, there to confess before Him that He has brought us in Spirit to the land that He spake to Jesus about before the world began. Then they had to confess that they were ready to perish, “A Syrian ready to perish was my father.” So likewise we, as we read in Ephesians, “That at that time ye were without Christ, . . . and atheists in the world.” Then a third element of worship was their basket full of fruit. Where did they get it from? Not from the wilderness; they were the fruits of Canaan. Had they not been there their baskets would have been empty. Only the things of heaven are to be introduced into our worship. Only the joy of being in the resurrection land, with Jesus our Lord to teach us to worship. Fourthly, they had to make an offering to God. We, who are saved, should remember that whilst thanksgiving is all very proper, thanks *living* is proper too. “By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But to do good, and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is

well pleased" (Heb. xiii. 15, 16). The one is going up to God, the other is going out to others. Worship partly consists of taking God's love and drinking it in, next in its flowing out in words and deeds towards His people. What is the value of a well, if no water is to be got from it? It is a striking fact that whenever we read of God's dwelling we always read of water flowing out from it. God grant that from us, who are His temple, there may be ever flowing vivifying water to bless others around us. Like as a beautiful river, flowing from the cleft rock, makes the thirsty wilderness to rejoice; God grant that from us His people in the wilderness, water may be flowing on every hand to bless.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." (Heb. x. 19.) Boldness to go right under the eye of God. How? By the blood of Jesus. "By a newly slain and living way." (Literal reading.) There is resurrection life. By death and resurrection going into the new life, and standing before God in Christ in heaven, and so worshipping. Two things are requisite in worship, boldness through the blood to be in His presence, and actual realization of death and resurrection in the soul in order to take our place as sons before God. Observe that worship, in the highest sense, is not a thing we can experience alone. You can keep your sorrows to yourself, but not your joys. If you are full of joy you are sure to want to give out to others. God "seeketh such to worship Him." He is gathering saints together, and mind it is as a *Father*, and saying, "Now I want you to worship." I must add here that I think that one cause which will be an incentive to our worship, and make it happy and joyful, is that we should not go to an extreme on this point. Some will not hear a word about teaching, and insist that it should be all worship, and the natural effect is leanness in their souls. It is only as we get from God, and His Word comes to us with power, that our worship flows back to God.

Then follows Christ's seventh word. The woman said to Him, "I know that Messias cometh which is called Christ; when He is come He will tell us all things." A round about way of saying, "You talk as if you were the Christ, are you?" Christ always replies to people's thoughts, not to their words. Thus was He leading her on. She felt that He who stood before her was the Christ, the Saviour of the

world. Nor would He let her have a doubt of it. Oh what a change these seven words had wrought! And now He can openly avow Himself, which He very rarely did. "I that speak unto thee am He." I once heard Lord Congleton when speaking on this chapter make a beautiful remark. "If she forgot her water-pot, He forgot His thirst." But both forgot; they were taken up each with the other, the Saviour taken up with the sinner, and the sinner with the Saviour, and He talks to her about worship, the highest act in which a man can be engaged, when not only is God near to the soul, but the soul draws nigh to God by the blood of Jesus.

Then, next, observe that this woman, here, may I say, saved by Christ from herself and from her sin, drawn by Christ to Himself and to God to worship Him, her next act is to go and tell others. "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" What a lesson for us, that when we have thus learned ourselves, and learned of Him, and when we have thus drawn nigh to God, that we should seek to bring others to that Blessed One.

That verse 36 is one that has often comforted my heart. "He that reapeth receiveth wages." In one sense not wages, in another sense it is. He will reward every one according to his work, and will reward every one who seeks to bring others to Himself.

The observation has been made that the Samaritans seemed readily to have believed in Christ, for you remember Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ to them, and they received Him. And so here, "many more believed because of His own words; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." What a noble testimony to give of Him!—*Notes of an address by W. Lincoln, communicated by J. S. H.*

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

I COR. x. 8.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY J. R. C.

NEITHER let us commit fornication as some of them committed, and fell in one day three-and-twenty thousand."

In connection with this verse, let us turn to the book of Numbers, 25th chapter.

This is a remarkable episode in the wilderness history of Israel. The two chapters which precede this, give us a detailed account of the way in which the adversary sought to bring the judgment of God upon His beloved people. Balaam, who is there brought before us, was a most remarkable man. He was evidently known as a prophet, and was used by the Spirit of God to utter remarkable prophecies; and yet he knew not the Lord. He seemed as one going down to hell with his eyes open. A terrible example of one who was exalted in privileges, and yet unregenerate. Like Judas, his heart was set upon money—"the wages of unrighteousness."

It does not appear here what Balaam did in order to seduce Israel; but we find from Numbers xxxi. 16 that he was Satan's instrument in causing the children of Israel to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor.

There is a deep lesson for us to learn here. Balaam stood on the top of a hill along with Balak, and there offered sacrifices, endeavouring, as it were, to turn the heart of Jehovah against His own people. Satan is a wily enemy; he is the accuser as well as the adversary. He might point to their sins, iniquities, and failures; nor does he need to resort to false accusations.

Again and again he said, "curse me this people;" and again and again Jehovah turned the curse into a blessing. Balaam said, "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?" "Behold, I have received commandment to bless; and He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob; neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel."

Utterly foiled in his attempts to bring a curse upon Israel, he tries another way. "Make friends of the people; invite them to your feasts; get them acquainted with your daughters; attract them and draw them into fellowship with you; draw them aside into your entertainments, and by-and-by you will get them to bow down before your gods; and then the chastisement of the Lord will come down upon them." Satan cannot change the heart of God toward His people. He cannot get God to curse His people—no, *never, never*. By open opposition Satan often fails to turn the people of God aside; but when he changes from the roaring lion into an angel of light he often succeeds in ensnaring into alliances with the world those who ought to be separate unto Him.

Thus he gets them dragged into all sorts of doubtful relationships with the ungodly. Being thus led away from the Lord, they become entangled in the meshes of the world; and God has therefore to judge and chasten them, as we find here.

I do not believe that God's people can go in for the world's enjoyments and not be defiled by them. Our safest course is to walk in entire separation from it. You may say: "Can we not, at the invitation of our friends, go to their worldly gatherings?" If you have faith for it, then go as Jesus went. Wherever He was invited He went, but it was as the light in the darkness. He never put a cover upon the light; it shone out in the midst of the darkness. I have no doubt Christ, as the Light, was very unwelcome to those who loved darkness rather than light. If you have faith to witness for God at the world's gatherings, then go. If it be at the bidding of Christ, He can give grace to be true to Him. But, beware, lest instead of the voice of your Lord, it be only the wily tempter luring you to compromise, defilement, and destruction. Israel are soon ensnared by the friendship of Midian and Moab. The world's embrace is far more dangerous than its frowns. Friendship with Moab's daughters, and fellowship at their feasts, soon resulted in worshipping their god, and defiling themselves with their sins.

Turn with me to James iv. 4: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Refer also to 1 John ii. 15: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

These are God's warnings as to the love of the world, its friendship, vanity, and pleasures. If we are determined to go in for the world, then know this, in doing so we forfeit fellowship with God.

Mere outward separation will not do; that is but the separateness of the Pharisee; we must be separate from it in the spirit of our minds.

We read in Romans xii. 2 these words: "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed." How? "By the renewing of your minds." So you see, it is the inward man that is to be renewed in the first instance, and not the outward.

Beloved, if we would experience daily renewing, then we must feed daily on the Word of God; we

must let it search us; we must be dwelling in, and breathing the holy atmosphere of the presence of God continually. The world will have no attraction for such. We shall then be taught of God as to its character and ultimate doom.

God has separated us for ever from this evil age by the Cross of Christ, "Who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Gal. i. 4).

There is a kind of sanctimonious pharasaic separation practised by some that would lead them to separate from their ungodly parents. This is not a separation which is of God. The Christian is not called to a separation after the pattern of the monk or nun.

God often saves a child in the midst of an ungodly household that He might have a witness there for Himself; that, shining for Him in the midst of the darkness, through their godly, consistent life and testimony, their parents or their brothers and sisters might be saved.

The godly testimony of a child of God, in the midst of an unconverted family, is a mighty power for God. In their hearts they will respect them, and in the time of trouble they will seek the help of the Christian in preference to any other; and then will be His opportunity to shew forth specially the love and faithfulness that is of God.

I have known Christians so stiff and sanctimonious that they became as enemies to their own kindred. I have also known others who neglected their own mothers, and in some cases did not support them, on the ground of separation. That is not a separation that is of God. Beloved, let us be separate in heart to the Lord, and seek in every relationship to do the will of God after the example of His Son Jesus.

Turn to Numbers xxv. 1, 2: "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods." We see here the children of Israel forming ungodly alliances with the daughters of Moab.

Ungodly friendships necessarily lead to a setting aside the fear of the Lord. Before it there must always have been a casting off, in heart, of the authority of the Lord. The Lord would not have His

people in any yoke with the ungodly, whether it be the marriage, the business, or the religious yoke.

3rd verse: Not only did the people go to their idolatrous feast, and bow to their gods, but they joined themselves to Baal-peor; then "the anger of the Lord was kindled against them." They cast off Jehovah, who had in His mercy and power brought them out of Egypt.

Beloved, are we drifting into the vortex of modern idolatry? In yielding to it the understanding becomes blinded, the yoke becomes harder and harder; one sin follows hard upon another, until God is completely out of sight; and the man goes on as if there was no God, with the heart hardened and the conscience seared.

Let us be thankful that we have a faithful God, whose chastening rod can arouse from even such a condition.

4th verse: "The Lord said unto Moses, take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel."

Observe that the Lord holds the heads of the people responsible for the whole. That is a truth which we have in the Old as well as the New Testament.

Turn to Heb. xiii. 17: "Obey them who have the rule over you, and submit yourselves to them, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you." There are those which answer to the heads of the people—the guides or the overseers. They take up this work, knowing that the Lord has called them to it; and they watch over their souls, knowing that they have to give account to the Lord when He comes as to how they have served Him in this capacity. The Lord has put such in this place of responsibility, because of their gifts, experience, and knowledge of the Lord and His word; and being thus in the place of responsibility they have to give account.

How much of the responsibility lay on the heads of the people we are not told. They were no doubt aware of the sin that was going on. Like old Eli, whose sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not (1 Sam. ii. 14), whom the Lord had to judge with his household. Grace never trifles with sin. Truth comes in to deal with sin, but grace is never

separated from truth, They both go together. Like the two sides of an arch, not in opposition to each other, but supporting one another.

See how faithfully Christ dealt with sin, whether in His disciples or the Pharisees.

6th-9th verses: Whilst the whole congregation are gathered together at the door of the tabernacle weeping, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation. Perhaps very few took notice of this; but there was one man who saw it and determined there and then to make an example of them, and in the power of God he carries out the judgment of God upon them both.

Brethren, if you want to help the world on to their ruin, you have only to go in with their ways; but if you want to be a blessing to them, stand out for the truth, and fearlessly uphold it for God. These Corinthians had been converted to God—turned to God from idols. No doubt many of them had been guilty of the sin that they are here warned against.

Let us remember that God calls His people to be a holy people, and He will judge them if they sin against Him. Any fellowship with the filthiness and ungodliness of the world, on the part of God's people, will bring down upon them His judgment. God abhors sin, but especially so in His own people.

Whilst God does not carry out His judgment upon His people now as He did upon Israel in the wilderness, yet He is the same jealous God, having the same abhorrence of sin in His people now as then.

We are called to be a holy people—holy in the spirit of our minds, and holy in our ways. Just as Israel were not even to mention the name of any false god, even so fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness are not to be once named amongst us, as becometh saints (Eph. v. 3).

Let us walk through this defiled world as those who have been redeemed to God—as those who have been separated from the world by the Cross of Christ—separated spirit, soul, and body by the blood of Christ, to glorify Him in all our ways.

In every difficulty and perplexity see what the Word of God says; consult it in everything; let it be a light to your feet and a lamp to your path.

A WORD TO "BABES IN CHRIST."

IF you turn to the second chap. of the first Epistle of John you will find the expression "little children" occurring five times. But while we have the same word in English, it is not the same in the original. In verses 1, 12, and 28 it is an expression of tenderness and affectionate interest, such as we find the Lord using in addressing His disciples: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you" (John xiii. 33); or Paul to the Galatians, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth" (Gal. iv. 19). It is also noteworthy that in the three verses just referred to it is our God as a Father addressing all his children, of whatever age or experience, by the tender and endearing term of *little children*. "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not" (verse 1). "I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven you" (verse 12). "And now little children, abide in Him" (verse 28). These all apply with equal force to every member of the blood-bought family.

But when we come to verse 13 we find the family divided into three classes, "fathers, young men, and little children." Now, this word as well as the same word in verse 18 is a word that refers to one's age, such as we have in Matt. xix. 13 and 14, where the people brought little children to Jesus "That He should put His hands on them and pray," and is an expression which distinguishes young Christians, or those newly converted, from Christians of riper years and experience. You will also observe that the three divisions of the family are each addressed twice; but the *fathers*, although twice addressed, have no word of exhortation or warning given to them. This seems to imply that they had got their hearts entirely fixed on Christ. But to the *young men* there is a word of warning and counsel. They had overcome one enemy, and they are put on their guard against another. This I may take up again in a future paper, but meantime we pass on to verse 18, where we have the little children, or babes in Christ, warned against a special danger and counselled how to avoid it.

Now, dear young Christians, observe that what is written from verses 18 to 27 inclusive, is addressed to you, and is the voice of our loving Father putting you on your guard against an enemy that will meet you

at the very start of your path as a disciple of Jesus. And He begins by telling you that "*it is the last time.*" That is, we have entered on the dispensation or period of time in which man's iniquity will be fully developed, and will culminate in the appearance of the Anti-Christ or the "Man of Sin." This Man of Sin, or lawless one, is mentioned in 2 Thess., chapters i. and ii., where we are told that, before he is revealed, there will "come a falling away first;" and while the same character of iniquity is working now it is in "mystery;" and the Anti-Christ cannot be revealed until God shall have finished His present purpose concerning the Church. So John tells us that although the coming of "The Anti-Christ" is still future, "yet are there many Anti-Christ's" abroad in the world even now; and it is against their seductions that our God warns His *little ones*. Paul gives a similar warning to the Elders at Ephesus; see Acts xx. 29, 30, where he says that some would enter in from *without* and some would rise up from *within*, their object being to "draw away disciples after them." That is, instead of gathering *with* and *unto* Christ, who is ever God's gathering centre, they would make themselves centres for the Saints of God. They were thus Anti-Christ in miniature, seeking to lead away *from* Christ *unto* themselves. The force of this can never be fully understood until we clearly apprehend that THE CHURCH IS ONE and under the rule of one Head. Christ is "THE *Head of THE body, THE Church*" (Col. i. 18). And as there was one manner of law for all the Congregation of Israel, and also for the stranger that sojourned among them (Lev. xxiv. 22; Numbers xv. 16), so there is one manner of law for "The Church." As all Israel followed one Cloud and one Divine Leader, so there is now only one Leader and one path for the flock of God. And it is to prevent the young convert from being seduced from this one Centre and one path that John by the spirit writes this passage.

Now I trust you have followed me thus far, and have seen that the family of our God is one, the body of Christ is one, and that for His Church there is only one rule and government. All who are saved, who are born again, and going to glory, have started from one starting point and that is the Cross. All are journeying to the same terminus, and that the glory. But it is evidently the will of God that all His children should keep together and walk in one path from the

Cross to the glory. God has made one grand division between "the world" and those whom He has given to Christ "out of the world," and it is the prayer of the Lord to the Father that these should "all be one" (John xvii). It is evident from the rebuke the spirit of God gives to the divisions in the Church at Corinth (1 Cor. i. 10, 13), that it is the will of God that this manifested oneness should continue to the end of the age. While Paul refused to allow his name to be made a gathering centre for the saints, he told the Elders at Ephesus that there would arise men who would form parties or sects around themselves; and, as John wrote his epistles about thirty years after Paul's address at Miletus, he tells us that "even now are there many Anti-Christ's." The expression in verse 19 "they were not all of us," would imply that some of them were, and would agree with the prediction "of your own selves will men arise." As we look abroad in the present day, what do we find? Not only Anti-Christian men, but Anti-Christian systems; and whenever, or wherever sinners are converted, these are ever on the watch to catch up the young converts and *re-christen* them by some name not found in the Scriptures, in order to distinguish them from the rest of their brethren in Christ. This, however, is really designed to take away the reproach of the name of Christ, for there is a fundamental distinction between belonging to Christ and belonging to nobody but to "The Christ." Before I can "suffer as a Christian" I must be nothing but a Christian. If I am wearing any of the world's religious names, to that extent it is impossible for me to be suffering reproach for the name of Christ; because I have covered up that blessed Name with another name that has no reproach at all attached to it. And the warning given by God to His little children, or babes in Christ, is to guard you from being seduced by Anti-Christian men or systems, from the "footsteps of the flock" as given in Scripture.

This brings us to the next part of the truth of this Scripture, namely, the counsel given, or God's direction to young Christians how they are to avoid being caught in the trap the Devil has set for their feet at the very commencement of their journey heavenward. Now in this counsel we have two things prominently before us. In verses 20 and 27 we have the "unction," or the anointing, which means the indwelling Spirit, whom the Lord promised to send to His disciples and

who was to teach them all things. This divine Teacher, John says, the babes in Christ have already got, and He abides in them to teach them all things, so that they are not dependent on any man. This Teacher may teach them through a man, but not necessarily so. He dwells in every child of God, and every child of His ought to know this, and to have full confidence in, and be in complete subjection to His teaching. The youngest saint, if thus living, will be able, by a sort of spiritual intuition to detect the seductions of the spirit of Anti-Christ. But we have not only all got the one and the same unerring teacher; we have also all got the same book; and this is what is taught in verse 24. There, it is not the anointing, but "that which *we have heard*," and this evidently means the Word. Now, while it is true that the Teacher abides in us and will never leave us, it is our responsibility to attend to our lesson book; and just in proportion to our diligence in studying *the one Book* under the guidance and instruction of *the one Teacher*, will we make real progress. It is for want of this that the one family is all broken up into factions; and it is only by a return to the one Book and the one Teacher that they, or any part of them, ever can be brought together again. The Holy Spirit in the believer ever leads the heart to Christ; and the same Spirit in the Word always points to Christ. When you were converted you had only one object before your mind and heart, and that was Christ. So our Father would have us go on all the way, "Looking unto Jesus," consulting His Word in every difficulty, and endeavouring by grace so to walk that we shall enjoy the full sunshine of the Spirit that dwelleth in us, guiding us unto all truth according to the Word of the Lord (John xvi. 13, 14).

G. A.

REVELATION.

REVELATION signifies, the unveiling of that which has been hidden, or rolling back of the veil. The characteristic of this book is *judgment*. It is divided into three general divisions:—"the things which thou hast seen (past), and the things which are (present), and the things which shall be" (future), chap. i. 19.

In Chapter i., we have the introduction and an epitome of the whole book. In verse 6, the Church is heard singing her redemption song.

"*Loveth*," is in the present tense; "*washed*," in the past. In verse 7, the Jew is seen penitentially weeping. Verses 12-18, is the vision of Christ as the "Son of Man" in the midst of the Assemblies judging. "Garments down to the foot" represent priestly judgment; "golden girdle," divine righteousness; "His head and His hairs white as wool," Ancient of days; "Eyes as of a flame of fire," divine scrutiny and intelligence; "His feet like unto fine brass," earthly judgment; "His voice as the sound of many waters," His majesty; "His countenance as the sun," supreme light; "Alpha and Omega," Christ as "Jehovah," the risen Man. Hence, we have Him exhibiting His divine titles and attributes, executing judgment as the "Son of Man." While we have the historical account of the moral conditions of the *then existing* churches in Asia, they represent the successive stages of the professing Church until the coming of the Lord.

Chapter ii.—Ephesus, while being zealous for truth, purity, activity, and patience, declined in *love*. Hence, the Lord Jesus judges the *present* condition of assemblies, and regards not what we were, but what we *are*; declension characterizes this church.

Smyrna.—Persecution and suffering characterizes this church; hence, Christ is spoken of as "the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." He promises "a crown of life" to those that are faithful unto death, a promise admirably suited to cheer and comfort those who were appointed unto suffering and death.

Pergamos.—The doctrine of Balaam is amalgamation of the Church with the world; Nicolaitanes; evil doctrine and deeds,—some think clerisy. Hence, we have worldliness and evil doctrine combined characterising this church. In the "hidden manna" and "white stone" we have Christ, the Bread of life, and Christ, the believer's justification.

Thyatira.—Jezebelism, *i.e.*, Popery, and worldly religious power characterized this church. To the overcomer is promised "power over the nations," to "rule them with a rod of iron," and the "Morning Star."

Chapter iii.—Sardis;—religious formalism without the power, a name to live while *dead*, characterized this church.

Philadelphia.—Three things characterized this church. First, they had a little strength; second,

they kept His Word ; third, they did not deny His name. Hence, the keeping of His Word, and the non-denial of His name go together ; *Christ* and the *Scriptures*. The promise to the overcomer here is, that he will be made a pillar in the temple of God ;— a pillar is emblematical of strength.

Laodicea.—Pretentious religiousness, self-conceit, and self-delusion characterised this church, illustrative of Christendom and the last state of the professing church, which will not only be judged, but spued out of His mouth.

Chapter iv. to the end of the book, is entirely future and unfulfilled prophecy. Hence, it takes in the period, or third division of this book, *after* the translation of the church which we have symbolised by the enthroned elders seen in heaven (verse 4), “white raiment” and “crowns” representing their priestly and kingly dignity. “Rainbow” in verse 3, represents God’s covenant with creation ; the “living creatures,” the attributes of God ; the heads of creation ; the “lion,” symbolical of strength ; “calf,” endurance ; “man,” intelligence ; “eagle,” swiftness of judgment. Hence, we have God’s throne of judgment set up in heaven, the living creatures proclaiming His glory, and the saints worshipping Him that liveth for ever and ever.

Chapter v.—The slain Lamb is the centre of God’s counsels, and is invested with the sovereignty of earth, who alone is worthy, and has the title to open the Book. “Horns” and “eyes” represent perfect power and intelligence. In verse 9, we see the redeemed in heaven previously translated ; verse 10, a remnant still on the earth.

Chapter vi.—Here we have the opening of the seals. The “white horse,” is symbolical of triumphant power and unchecked victory ; “red horse,” of desolating judgments of war ; “black horse,” of mourning and woe ; “pale horse,” of death. In answer to the prayers of the martyred remnant men become alarmed, and conclude that the day of the Lord and the “wrath of the Lamb” has come ; but not so, they are deceived.

Chapter vii. is parenthetical, and records what takes place between the opening of the sixth and seventh seal. The 144,000 are God’s people sealed upon the earth for millennial blessing ; verse 14 are the spared Gentiles, who have gone through the tribulation. “White robes” symbolical of acceptance and right-

eousness. Hence the subject of this chapter is Israel, and the Gentile blessed as such.

Chapter viii.—Here we have the four trumpet judgments. In verse 3 the angel is Christ acting as Priest, adding incense to the prayers which are answered by judgment. The first four trumpet judgments are limited to trees, grass, the sea, rivers and fountains, sun, moon, and stars.

Chapter ix.—The star here is some apostate dignity ; “locusts,” emblematical of rapine and devastation. The fifth and sixth trumpet judgments specially fall upon man ; first, on apostate Jews who have not the seal of God in their foreheads ; second, on the apostate Roman empire, Those who escape the plagues become more hardened and impenitent. Verse 20 assumes religious, verse 21 moral evil.

Chapters x. and xi. down to verse 18 of the eleventh are parenthetical. There we have Christ under the figure of an angel, asserting His right and power over the whole earth and sea. Verse 6 should read, “there should be no more delay.”

In verse 1 of chapter xi., we have the temple, the altar, and worshippers, and in verse 3, prophetic testimony of the two witnesses. Hence the worshippers and witnesses are both Jewish in their character and testimony.

Chapters xii. and xiv.—These chapters rightly go together, and record the great tribulation and the suffering and persecution of those who pass through it. The woman represents Israel, the man child, Christ, and the Church caught up ; the woman persecuted, who flees into the wilderness, protected and preserved by God, the Jewish remnant.

Chapter xiii., portrays the tribulation itself, and Satan’s instruments of evil. The second beast, no doubt, is the Anti-Christ. In chapter xii., 10, we have the Anti-Christ, and in chapter xiii., 11, the Anti-Prophet.

Chapter xiv.—Here we have the 144,000 set apart, and belonging entirely to the renewed earth, they are those who have suffered like Christ, and are characterized by separation from idolatry, purity of life, and faithful allegiance to the Lamb. There are seven distinct things mentioned in this chapter. First, the remnant associated with the Lamb on Mount Zion ; second, the “everlasting gospel,” differing entirely from the “gospel” of this dispensation ; third, Babylon fallen ; fourth, the unmitigated doom of

those who worship the beast and his image; fifth, the blessedness of those who die in the Lord; sixth, the harvest of the earth; seventh, the great wine-press of the wrath of God.

Chapters xv. and xvi.—Here we have the saints who have passed through the great tribulation, and had gotten the victory over the beast and his image, at rest, singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb; then we have the seven vials of the wrath of God poured out; unmingled, unmitigated judgments, characterizing these vials.

Chapters xvii. and xviii., give us a description of what Babylon is, and how she has corrupted all nations. Babylon is Rome, hence we have the end of apostate Christendom.

Chapter xix.—Thus Babylon being judged, we get heaven ringing with “Alleluia’s” and the marriage of the Lamb taking place, then the chapter closes with the beast and the false prophet cast into the lake of fire.

Chapter xx.—We have here Satan cast into the bottomless pit; then the millennium, *i.e.*, the reign of Christ and His saints over the world. Satan, who deceives the nations, is let loose for a little while, finally cast into the lake of fire; then there is the judgment of the wicked dead at the Great White Throne; the lake of fire being their final and eternal doom.

Chapter xxi. 1, 8, gives us a glimpse of the eternal state, when God shall be all in all in the new heaven, and the new earth. Then from verse 9 to the end of the book, the spirit returns to give us an insight and an additional description of the heavenly Jerusalem in millennial glory; closing with warnings, encouragement and exhortation, giving us a threefold announcement of the Lord’s speedy return, and John’s response, “Even so come, Lord Jesus.”

In the beginning of this book (chapter i., 3), there is a blessing promised to him who *reads* and *listens*, and at the close (chapter xxii., 7), a blessing for him who *keeps* the sayings of the prophecy of this book. This is peculiarly significant.

This last book of the Bible rightly closes the canon of the Sacred Scriptures.

S. B.

If we are in communion with the Lord, we will readily detect what is not of Him.

SIN CONFESSED AND VICTORY SECURED.

NUMBERS xiv. 40-45, and 1 Sam., Chaps. iv., vi., and vii.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY MR. ALEX. STEWART.



ISRAEL presumed to go up against their enemies when Moses said, “Go not up, for the Lord is not among you.” They went up, but the Ark of the Lord, the symbol of the Divine presence, went not up with them, but remained in the camp. No wonder that their enemies proved too strong for them, and that they were utterly routed and discomfited.

Turn to another passage in 1 Sam. iv. 1—11: Israel thought, no doubt, that they were in a better case than at Hormah, that now, having with them the Ark of the Lord, they would overcome their enemies. But, although they had the Ark, the Lord Himself was not with them; therefore we read that they were smitten by their enemies, and the Ark of the Lord was taken.

Chap. vi. 19: It had certainly not dawned upon them that none but holy hands could handle the Ark, and they had evidently forgotten the judgment that fell upon Hophni and Phinehas.

Chap. vii. 2: Israel were very anxious for blessing—there could be no doubt of their desire that the blessing of the Lord might come upon them.

Now, always where the Word of the Lord comes, light comes with it. And the first thing that light does is to manifest that which is contrary to the mind of the Lord and, therefore, hindering blessing. Whilst sincerely desiring blessing they knew that it could come only from the Lord.

Verse 3: They had strange gods, and if they served the Lord it could only be with a divided heart.

Verse 6: They said, “We have sinned against the Lord,” and the pouring out of the water was simply a confession of their condition. As we read elsewhere (2 Sam. xiv. 14), “For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.” There are two kinds of weakness. There is infirmity, such as the Lord in His wisdom and love, permitted to come upon Paul, concerning which he said, “Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. xii. 7-10). But there is a weakness that is sinful, and we have not to travel far from this passage to find an instance of

it. There was Eli, "whose sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (1 Sam. iii. 13). This was sinful weakness, and he, as their father, should have commanded his household after him; but he did not and upon him and his sons the judgment of God came. Whatever the weakness may be, the first step to real blessing is confession of it to the Lord. This pouring out like water illustrates our state before God. Apart from the strength that He gives, it is our state, not because of our infirmity but our sin.

Verse 6: They were afraid of the Philistines. Of course, they had seen the vanity of their former vain-glorious shout. "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord," and who looks to Him alone for victory over his foes. But, if it is a question between flesh and flesh, we shall get the worst of it. Have we not found it so? Is it not true? They had discovered what they were, what their own strength was, and the value of it.

Verse 8: "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that He will save us out of the hands of the Philistines." They lifted up their eyes, not to the hills, but the God who made the hills, from Whom their strength came.

In chap. 4, we read, that when they were smitten before the Philistines, they said, "Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us it may save us out of the hand of our enemies" (1 Sam. iv. 2, 3). They were delivered from that by this time. They said, "it is the presence of God that we need—the living God alone will save us."

Verse 9: "And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him." This is the only place in the Scripture where we have a sucking lamb mentioned,

which is an emblem of Him who was crucified through weakness, but who now liveth by the power of God. If that people took the place of weakness, and said that they were as water spilt on the ground, that could not be gathered up, Samuel took the sucking lamb and offered it as a whole burnt-offering; and the next verse brings out God's power in response to that weakness.

Verse 10: "And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel." You see that the offering of that sucking lamb brought the whole power of God to the help of Israel, and it brought it to them because they were in a condition to receive blessing and get the victory; that is the point of it. I was thinking, the other morning, while gathered to remember our Lord, of the Lamb in the midst of the Throne, all power given unto Him; and, again, of Him being as a lamb led to the slaughter. We have here the two extremes of weakness and power. I thought of this passage, how the weak sucking lamb offered up in sacrifice brought the power of Jehovah against the enemies of Israel. I thought also of those two servants of Christ in the prison of Phillipi, their feet fast in the stocks, and their backs smarting and bleeding from the punishment inflicted. What do they do? bewail their sad plight? No, no. They are in fellowship with the Lord, therefore they pray and sing praises unto God. When the prayer went up, God answered by an earthquake, bringing home conviction to the guilty conscience of that jailor, and then saving his soul. What we all need is not only that we have correct forms of truth, but we must also have the presence of God Himself if we are to overcome our enemies and be blest.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

NOTE.—Those who endeavour to reply to Questions, desire to impress upon readers their responsibility to "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. v. 21). They make no pretension to infallibility, but give their judgment as those who have received mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—Many Questions are received but not replied to; some not being for general edification, whilst others are laid aside from want of sufficient light to deal with them.—It is requested that all communications be accompanied by the Name and Address of the sender.

QUESTION No. CCV.

Why was it sin for David to have Israel numbered?
2 Sam. xxiv.

REPLY.

The sin was evident unto the carnally minded Joab and to David himself whenever it had been accom-

plished, so that his heart smote him. From 2 Sam. xxiv. 3, it seems evident that the motive was *pride*—a sin that God abominates, though rather admired than hated among men.

When God appointed the numbering of Israel, he caused each one to pass before Him in connection

with *atonement* (see Ex. xxx. 12-15). To be numbered apart from atonement was to incur the judgment of Jehovah. Every man was to give "a ransom for his soul," that when numbered there might be "no plague among them."

But David acted without the command of Jehovah, and without concern for the honour of His name. Thus pride ever sets aside the claims of God, and God is compelled to shew by judgment that He is a jealous God, and that He will be glorified in His people.

QUESTION CCVI.

Is it right, or is it wrong, for believers to take their children to the Lord's Table, or a believer who is not in fellowship, although neither partake of the bread and wine?

REPLY.

In the case of children, we believe it is better that up to a fitting age, when they can be trusted to sit quietly by themselves, they should be beside their parents or guardians, whilst present at the Lord's table.

Strangers or others not partaking, ought, according to every principle of order, to occupy seats specially provided for such.

We believe there is a sad lack of courtesy in this respect in many assemblies. Strangers and young persons coming in to hear and see ought to be kindly welcomed, and shown that although not in the circle of fellowship, they are in the presence of loving hearts.

When such are allowed to come and go without notice, without a kindly word or a loving smile, and, perhaps, shown to seats that are exposed to a draught or without backs, or otherwise inferior to the rest, it is equivalent to telling them *they are not wanted there!*

QUESTION CCVII.

When a brother or sister in an assembly has committed any of the sins mentioned in 1 Cor. v., should the Church—

1. *Following the example in that chapter, "put away" such person immediately, having no alternative?*
2. *Endeavour, and, if so, in what way and how long to get the backslider restored, and, if successful, let them remain in fellowship? or*
3. *If restoration be not effected, but only as the last resort, put such person out of fellowship?*

REPLY.

Although in such sorrowful cases *restoration* is one important object not at any time to be lost sight of, yet this is not the only end to be served by the divinely appointed discipline.

In the example given in Scripture there was *first* the "punishment" with a view to blessing, inflicted of the many. But there was also wrought in the Corinthian assembly "godly sorrow," "repentance" of their callousness and indifference to God's glory in tolerating the sin in their midst; "carefulness" or a tender regard for the claims of the Lord; "clearing of yourselves," &c., &c., so that an apostle could add, "In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

It is like the scraping process that was to be applied to every stone in the house after a leprous stone had been found and taken away. Lev. xiv. 41.

Doubtless, also, although it is not in this connection referred to, there is not wanting the element of clearing the assembly from the reproach of complicity with the evil in the eyes of the world.

When a spirit of self-judgment and godly contrition exists there can be little doubt that, if the sin is known to others than the sinning one's own soul and God, there would be such concern for God's glory and the consciences of others as would compel a voluntary withdrawal from fellowship.

Continuance in the fellowship is of itself almost proof positive that real restoration has not taken place, and demonstrates the necessity for putting away from the midst of gathered saints.

When withdrawal is voluntary, and the result of a broken heart, or of "godly sorrow," then the Church's responsibility is—1st, To profit by the permission of such manifestation of evil, and to be humbled before God about it. 2nd, To acknowledge the grace of God in having so touched the heart and conscience of the sinning one that they voluntarily "cut themselves off" (see Gal. v. 12; R. V.). 3rd, To seek their restoration so soon as the entire assembly is satisfied that God has wrought restoration to fellowship with Himself.

Thus will their being received back again be a blessing to all, a comfort to the restored one, and to the glory of God.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

I COR. x. 9.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY J. R. C.

“**N**EITHER let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.”

Exodus xvii. 1-7, and Num. xxi. 4-9, are two passages which bear upon the subject of tempting the Lord. Also Psalm xcvi. 8-11.

We read in Num. xxi. 4, “The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.” Jehovah was leading them Himself—but it was by a long, difficult, round-about way. This was His judgment upon them because of their sin and unbelief.

But instead of bowing to the chastisement, it was true of them then as in the days of Isaiah, “the people turned not unto Him that smote them, neither did they seek the Lord of hosts” (see Is. ix. 13). It was in this rebellious unbroken condition of soul that they spake against God and against Moses, and in their sullen anger complained that they had been brought out of Egypt to die in the wilderness; that they had neither bread nor water, and as for the manna, once so sweet to their taste, now they loathed it!

What a provocation was such a spirit as this to Him who was daily supplying their need, and leading them Himself by day and by night by a right way! Well might He have withdrawn the bread they loathed and the Presence they ignored, and have left them to die in the wilderness as they had said; only He is “the God of all patience,” and in His long-suffering mercy He would chasten again and again, in order to bless them and not cast them off.

In Ex. xvii. 7, “They tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us or not?” And in Ps. lxxviii. 19, “They spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?”

This reminds us also of the incident in the siege of Samaria (2 Kings vii.), when in answer to the glad message of the prophet Elisha, the unbelieving lord on whose arm the king was leaning, replied, “Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?” And the prophet’s answer, “Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof.” The next day it was fulfilled according

to the Word of the Lord, but he whose unbelief gave God the lie was trodden to death in the gate.

In all these various instances it is the same principle. Nothing so tempts God as questioning His truth and love and power to give effect to all He has promised and undertaken—His faithfulness to keep and sustain His people in all their trials, and to bring them through them blest and sanctified.

The roughness of the way, the chastisement, the discipline, is all but proof of love. “Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.”

It is ours to know and believe the love that He hath to us, and instead of sinking under the trial of circumstances, to keep our eye steadily fixed on Him “that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

Turn now to another passage bearing on the same subject, viz., Matt. iv. 5-7. Satan having taken the Lord to a pinnacle of the temple, thus addresses Him, “If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down; for it is written He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee,” &c. “Jesus said unto Him, It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

The Lord Jesus, as the Son and servant of God, came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. In the path of obedience He could confidently count upon His Father’s care. From the manger to the cross, in all that path of unwearied service and suffering, not one step was taken, not one word spoken, but in obedience to the will of His Father. And the path of perfect obedience was also the path of perfect trust. Not a reproach or a sorrow, not a privation or a pang that He endured even unto death, ever raised in His holy soul a doubt as to His Father’s care.

But what was the meaning of Satan’s suggestion? Was it not that in this way He might test whether or not God would be true to His Word?

But perfect faith needed not so to test the faithfulness of God. Israel at Massah had tempted God by saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?” But no such questioning found a place in the heart of Jesus, therefore the prompt response to Satan’s device, “It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

If a child of God ventures where God has not sent him, he cannot count upon His preserving care. To go on consciously in a path of self-will and then to

expect a Father's care, is not faith, but presumption,—it is tempting God.

The forty years of Israel's wilderness experience was one long "provocation," a continual tempting of God.

The sin of Israel was visited with severe and solemn judgment. "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died."

This is a beautiful instance of how God takes occasion to shew out His grace in the midst of man's rebellion.

He takes this occasion to bring out one of the most beautiful types to be found in Scripture, of the putting away of sin by the Lord Jesus upon the cross.

As a subject by which to illustrate and set forth the gospel of God's grace, the story of "the brazen serpent" can never be exhausted.

The Lord Jesus preached the gospel from it to Nicodemus, and how many since then have used it with blessing to sinners and to saints!

The brazen serpent tells us that God was ever looking forward to the cross of Jesus.

Though He judged them for their sin, yet the moment they turned to Him in confession and acknowledged their guilt, God met them in mercy.

The people came to Moses and asked him to pray that the serpents might be taken away. The Lord did not in this way answer their prayer; merely to have taken away the serpents would have been to leave the wounded to die. The Lord was better to them than what they asked or thought—He provided the means of healing and life for every bitten one. "And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

Christ crucified is God's remedy for the serpent-bitten sinner. The sinner who by faith looks to Jesus, is certainly saved. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth."

But there is a lesson here for the saved as well as for the unsaved. The guilty sinner, dead in sins, looks to Jesus on the cross by faith, and receives pardon and life. Even so, the child of God who now by faith looks up to Christ upon the throne,—to Him who liveth and was dead, receives power to resist and overcome the temptations of Satan, the lusts of the

flesh, the allurements of the world. Apart from faith in Him, the child of God is helpless against the wiles of the adversary, even as the sinner is helpless to save himself.

To the woman who touched the hem of Christ's garment, there flowed from Him healing virtue, whilst the crowd that pressed and thronged around Him received no blessing. It was not the *touch*, but the *faith* that drew forth the grace which was in Him to meet her need.

And as the believer feels day-by-day the motions of sin, the workings of an evil nature within, it is his blessed privilege to obtain by faith, out of the fulness of grace that is in Christ for us, constant supply to meet his constant need.

To venture forth into a defiling world, beset by a subtle foe, without having sought and claimed by faith the grace that alone can keep from falling, is to be surely overcome. Be it ours in conscious weakness ever to cling to the Lord Jesus.

REMNANT TESTIMONY.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.

(Continued from page 129.)

NOW, turn to Mal. iii. 13-15—"Your words have been stout against Me, saith the Lord: yet ye say, what have we spoken so much against Thee? Ye have said, it is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." How solemn is it to remember that these are the very people, or the representatives of these people, that we read of in Ezra vi. Yet here there is another sad departure from God; and oh, what language is this coming from the lips of those who had been keeping God's ordinance, that God should charge them with saying that it was vain to serve Him! Just as many do complain now-a-days. "What is the use of keeping so close to the Word of God: does it not seem profitable to mingle with it some of the words and ways of men? Where do we see the results with those so narrow in their views?" Are there

not tens of thousands carried away by such language now? But, happily, that is not the language of all. God reserves to Himself a few, and the next words come with striking beauty.—“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.” When others were carried away by thousands, they who feared Jehovah, with reverent godly fear, “spake often one to another, and the Lord heard it.” Ah! ’twas music in His ear; and all the more so because the many were away. Suppose an earthly parent, having, say a dozen children, had said that it was his wish that at least once in the year they should come together to sit around his table. For a little while the twelve obey, but by-and-by some get weary, and nine or ten get occupied with other things, and find it a bondage to obey; but the two or three keep loyal, and they are where their father would have them. Does he not get greater gladness out of these two or three? Not because the others are away, I do not mean that, but because, whilst those others were cold, they are true and constant in their affection. So is there special joy in the heart of our God over the few, because they are faithful in a faithless age. So when they spake often one to another He, as it were, stooped to hear. He hearkened like a man bending to catch a feeble sound—and that was not sufficient. He recorded what He heard, and a book of remembrance was specially written for the few “who feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My special treasure.”

Now, turn to Luke ii. 25—“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.” And then, in verse 37, we read of Anna, “a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she, coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” Here, at the very time our Lord came to the earth, when those who were His people were divided into Pharisees,

Sadducees, Herodians, and others, there were a few not carried away with the rest. There was a Simeon, and an Anna, and a little group who were evidently looking for Him; in sympathy with God as to His purposes, expecting the redemption of Israel. Even then, as in these other ages, God had reserved some; and, when the Lord appeared, their hearts were attracted to Himself. The Pharisees cared nothing for Him; the Sadducees and Herodians thought nothing of Him—that is speaking of them generally as a class—but here and there there was one and another whose heart was beating true to the Lord Himself, and in fellowship with God about His purpose of redemption in Jerusalem.

Once more look at Rev. iii. 1-5. I am not now going to enter at length into this epistle to the church in Sardis. Those who view these epistles in a historical light, generally say that this one particularly refers to the time of the Reformation. But I quote it now to show its correspondence with the other passages read, and to find in it a lesson for you and for me, and for the people of God in the present day. Any interpretation, having no voice for our hearts, and consciences, is certainly not the correct one. God speaks to us too. And I read of these that they had a name to live, yet were dead. Surely this is even stronger than what we read in the Epistle to Timothy as to those who had “the form of godliness, but denying the power.” Certainly there are many who have the *form* of godliness, yet who take not the name to live. But these in Sardis had that—the name to live, yet were they dead. And it says in the next verse—“I have found no work of thine perfect before God.” Not merely jumbling them altogether, but analysing them one by one. But there were a few, some who could stand against the stream, who dared to be singular. “Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments.” Very like the characteristics of those we were reading about in the days of Elijah, negative rather than positive; nothing is said of what they did, but of what they did not; when others were defiled, they refused to be. Their’s was a path of separation from evil, and the Lord promises them a reward corresponding to their walk. They dared to walk here, although in such a minority, taking care of their garments upon earth: they shall have white garments in heaven, “they shall walk with Me in white.” The white surely

speaks of righteousness, of a blameless, spotless, sinless walk hereafter with the Lord. Is it not most precious to look forward to the time when we shall be able to walk in perfect fellowship with the Lord Jesus in white, with no sin in us? Now, we boast of no sin on us, we glory in Him who has put away our sin by His blood; but we cannot now boast of a sinless, spotless walk, that is held out to us in the future, and is one of the most gladdening thoughts that God has set before us.

I only now remind you of that scripture in Rev. xii., which shows us that even after the Church has been taken up, there will be yet another remnant who will "keep the commandments of God."

Now, my object has been, not to prove that we are a godly remnant, far from that; but what I want that we should do is, to see how far we are living like these, who were living as the godly remnant in those days past. Are we separated from evil? Can we stand as a few among many, if need be? Are we seeking from the Scripture to know the mind of the Lord about our worship, our service, about everything? Are we seeking the Lord Himself, and not satisfied with anything short of His presence in our midst? Are we in fellowship with God as to His purposes, and what He is going to do? These are some of the ways in which we should test our hearts if we are seeking to be godly in the midst of an ungodly generation. And depend upon it, if we do, we shall not be elated, but humbled to the very dust.

J. S. H.

NOTES ON ECCLESIASTES.

(Continued from page 121).



CHAPTER VI., verses 1-6.—A common evil under the sun, a man possessed of everything heart could wish for, deprived of it suddenly, and seeing a stranger possess it; surely this is vanity and a painful trial? For if a man beget many children and live to old age, and yet is unable to enjoy the good of his possessions, and even have the fear of a dishonourable burial and a despised memory, surely an untimely birth is better than he? For it (*i.e.*, the untimely birth) cometh and goeth in darkness, in utter obscurity, never seeing the light of this world, never

knowing anything; this, then, hath more rest than the other, for it knows nothing of life's troubles. But the man who lives even a thousand years and hath never really enjoyed the good of his life, is a miserable being; for he lives in misery, and then dies.

Verses 7-9.—After all, a man's labour is to sustain his body; and yet this—the gratification of the appetite—does not satisfy him. "For what (in this) hath the wise more than the fool" or the poor man who walks wisely before men? Why, surely, the sight of the eyes—or pleasure in making the best of the present—is better than the weary wandering of the desire, for *that* is vanity and vexation of spirit. (Ch. ii. 24).

Verses 10-12.—There is nothing new that man can arrange, all is known before. Man only repeats what man before has done, and God knows what man will do. He knows *man*. Neither may men contend with God (Job xxxiii. 13, xl. 2).

It is little use man striving against—arguing with words against his lot. It only increases vanity. For who knoweth what is really good for man during his brief, vain life here? Who can tell a man what the result of his labours shall be? (Ch. ii. 18-23). Who indeed? Man cannot, but God can. Man knows not, God knows.

CHAPTER VII.

Verses 1-6.—"A good name (*i.e.*, a good character) is better than the most precious ointment." The savour of the character abides, that of the ointment passeth away. So, the day of death, when all troubles are over and true rest begins, is better than the day of birth, when life's troubles are before one. The house of mourning, which is the end or common lot of man, is better than (or more instructive) than the house of feasting, and men lay it to heart, generally speaking, profit by its lessons; for sorrow truly sanctifies and solemnises, and the wise find it so, but fools seek mirth and laughter and shun sorrow. Yet it is far better to listen to the rebuke of the wise—or to that which rebukes one's folly and makes one wise—for as short lived as burning thorns is the laughter and mirth of a fool; whereas, the lessons of the wise are of permanent blessing. The way of a fool is vanity.

Verses 7-10.—The *practices* of oppression turns a,

wise man into a tyrant, and if he receive gifts, as bribes, he becomes unjust. Wait quietly for the issue of matters, for he who waits patiently for the end of a matter is safer and stronger than the hasty proud man who jumps at once to conclusions. Be not thus hasty, it rivals foolishness. Say not querulously: "Why are things so much worse now?" Wait for the end, and mark the issue of all seeming discordance.

Verses 11, 12.—An inheritance without wisdom to rule it is a bane, not a blessing to the living; for wisdom and means are both powers, but the excellency of wisdom over means is, that it giveth life, *i.e.*, ability to rightly manage, to those who have it.

Verses 13, 14.—Consider well what God works, for He hath ordered all things (the crooked and the straight) and no one can alter God's dispensations. Be joyful in prosperity, and ponder in times of adversity, for God arrangeth both, to the end that man may rest quiet in His dealings, and not be fretting to find out vain reasons for all that happens.

Verses 15-18.—During my poor vain life (saith Solomon) I have seen the righteous die in early life, and the life of wicked men prolonged. Such, might well perplex me. High *pretensions* to righteousness and wisdom, as well as excessive wickedness and folly, lead to swift destruction. It is good for man to ponder both these things. He who truly fears God will avoid and come safely forth out of both.

Verses 19, 20.—Wisdom is to the wise far better than mere brute force, for, seeing that even the best of men continually err, who is there that needeth not more wisdom.

Verses 21, 22.—Let us be hard on ourselves, not on others, remembering our own faults against others. He who finds most fault with himself, finds least fault with others.

Verses 23-29.—These things I have learned by experience, but oh! how little I really know. I have tried my very best to know, and search, and seek out with all thoroughness and persistency, and one thing I have learned by painful experience—more bitter than death—the sinful woman ensnaring men. Only he who fears God can escape her. I have carefully (saith Solomon) weighed the whole matter. I have found here and there a man upright, but not one in a thousand among women. (See 1 Kings xi. 1-4). God made man at the beginning upright—free from moral depravity—but gradually man by his own "inven-

tions" has become utterly depraved. (Read Romans i. 21-32).

CHAPTER VIII.

Verse 1.—Who is *truly* wise, and who knows thoroughly the explanation of a thing? True wisdom makes a man's face to shine, and softens its natural hardness.

Verses 2, 7.—Obey the king's commandments, for he is thy king and ruler by God's authority. Turn not abruptly away from him, nor obstinately persist in a wrong course, for his power is absolute, and he does what he chooses. Where there is a word (or command), from the king, there is power to see it carried out, and who may question his actions. He is wise who keepeth the king's commandment, and a wise man discerns both time and season to act. For there is a proper time and season for everything (fixed of God, Chapter iii. 1, R.V.)—and so the restlessness of man is great, for he cannot tell the issues of his plans, nor can he foretell what may be. He frets himself to arrange things and fathom things to his own liking, instead of keeping God's commandments and submitting to His will.

Verse 8.—*As* no man can retain his spirit (*i.e.*, his life), and as no man hath power over death, and as there is no discharge or making terms when war has broken out, *even so* is wickedness utterly unable to deliver those who practice it; for though they may seem to prosper for the time, their prosperity is of short duration.

Verses 9, 10.—The tyrant may tyrannise to his own hurt, for I (saith Solomon), have seen such an one buried—who once had sat on the throne (*i.e.*, of justice)—and he was soon forgotten in the city and his name hated, though while he was in power he expected his name would be handed down as famous. Such is the self-deception and delusion of wickedness. Truly this is vanity.

Verses 11-13.—Because swift judgment from God follows not speedily on iniquity, therefore men are bent on evil, but though this happen a hundred times, and the days of a sinner be prolonged, yet, it is really only well with those who truly fear God. It will go ill with the wicked eventually—neither shall he prolong his days, which shall pass as a shadow.

Verses 14, 15.—Yet after all, there are cases that perplex; the righteous suddenly die and the wicked apparently prosper. It seems vanity. But let a man

make the best of what God gives him now, and leave the unravelling of these problems to the time when all shall be made clear. Each man's duty is to get all the good he can from the present, "The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matt. vii. 34.) When I (Solomon writes), pondered this, and sought to understand the business that is done on the earth (for it is ceaseless and never ending)—when I pondered the method of God's dealings—I saw that man could not with all his searching, and all his wisdom, find out.

CHAPTER IX.

Verses 1-6.—For all this Solomon lays to heart, and seeks to unravel the meaning of, but cannot, so he lays down his opinion, that the righteous and the wise, the wicked and the foolish, and all their works are in the hand of God, and that no man can discern by the events which take place *God's* love or hatred. This is a question of explaining the present life only, by the events which come to all kinds of men alike and not with reference to the future. (Read Psalm lxxiii). Apparently all fare much the same, and *apparently* there is no gain in being righteous, no loss in being wicked. This is an evil, and it causes men to be evil and fills them with madness and rebellion till they die. Yet, the living can hope for better things both here and in the future, for "a living dog (even) is better than a dead lion," For the living know that death lies before them, but the dead know nothing, they can gain no more here, their memory, their ways, whether loving or hateful, soon fade, and they cease to have a portion down here.

Verses 7-10.—So now, whilst thou livest, enjoy gratefully all God gives thee, for He now accepts thy works, which cease when thou diest. Let thy heart enjoy the blessings of thy portion, and the tender human love that is given thee, for thou hast but short time for it. And whatever is given thee to do, do it thoroughly and heartily, for in the grave, whither thou goest, there are no further opportunities for actions.

Verses 11, 12.—He returns to his subject, and notes that things do not turn out as men would expect them, often indeed, in most contrary fashion, time and chance happen to all. It all appears casual, yet, God absolutely controls and fixes all, though men see it not. (Chap. iii. 1-11). Man knows not when troubles or

death are at hand, for as suddenly as fishes are netted, or birds snared, so are men overtaken by calamities and death. Yet is there no chance in the matter.

Verses 13-18.—He illustrates the statement of verse 11, that the wise are not rewarded according to their deserts, but forgotten after the benefit of their wisdom has been obtained. May this not remind us of another, whose wisdom saves, but is too oft forgot. Solomon adds, sadly, truly wisdom is better than strength, yet when the occasion is passed for its use, wisdom is slighted, and the poor wise man is neglected. The words of wise men *hearkened* unto quietly are better than the cry of blustersers, who rule among fools only. Wisdom is more powerful than weapons of war, but one transgressor against the dictates of wisdom does infinite harm. (See Rehoboam's case, 1 Kings, xii. chapter).

CHAPTER X.

Verse 1.—As dead flies in sweet ointment, cause an ill savour, even though they be but small things, so a *little folly* in one who has a reputation for wisdom and honour, outweighs (R.V.) his influence, and spoils his testimony.

Verse 2, 3.—A wise man's heart (*i.e.*, understanding) is at his right hand, (*i.e.*, ready for use), but a fool's is at his left, *i.e.*, he is unable when called on to do anything aright; yea also, even in the most ordinary actions of life, his wisdom faileth him, and he shows to all that he is nothing but a fool.

Verse 4.—If the ruler be wroth against thee, quit not his presence haughtily and hastily (Chap. viii. 3), for yielding and humbling, pacify and soften down great offences, and moderate the spirits of those in authority.

Verses 5, 6, 7.—Solomon notes the mistakes rulers make in arbitrarily promoting and elevating the unworthy, and in deposing the rich and noble. In verses 8, 9, he observes that such conduct recoils on the ruler himself, enforcing his advice by illustrations.

Verse 10.—As a sharp axe saves strength and time, so wisdom (*i.e.*, attention to the ways of God), saves much profitless labour, and consequently weariness of spirit, and this is true in all the affairs of life, both spiritual and temporal.

Verse 11.—Surely a serpent will bite, if it be not lulled by the enchanter; and a babbler will do harm if his mouth is not stopped.

Verses 12-14.—The words of the wise are gracious,

—they are thoughtful and few—and “tend to life;” whereas, a fool runs on hastily in his speech, and there is no knowing what will be the result. Who can tell, also, what is to be, and foretell the future, but a fool thinks he knows everything, and speaks as if he did?

Verse 15.—The labour of a fool in his talk wearies him (and others) out, for he knows not the way to the city, *i.e.*, he does not know how to obtain his object.

Verse 16-17.—A land is ill governed, and in poor condition when its king is but a child in wisdom and experience, and its princes are voluptuous and sensual; but a land is blessed when its king has noble qualities, and its princes are bent on promoting its prosperity.

Verse 18.—Slothfulness, either public or private, causeth decay and idleness to overtake daily duties, and soon causes everything to go wrong.

Verses 19, 20.—A feast is intended for joy, and wine to make glad. So the earning of money, by diligence, procures all things.

Bear patiently with, and do not think of cursing the king or great people, even in thought, for thou knowest not how it may come out, and get to their knowledge, and so cause thee terrible punishment.

A. O. M.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAPTERS iii. and iv.

THE themes of these two chapters are so precious that we are tempted to let our minds dwell so wholly on the narratives of the Lord's dealing with Nicodemus, and with the woman of Samaria, as to partially neglect the narratives at the close of these chapters.

You can see the connection of the beginning of chapter iii. with the beginning of chapter iv. The Lord begins with a sinner at the tip top of society, a well instructed and very religious man, and He tells him he must begin again. In chapter iv. He deals with a woman at the very bottom of society, and by His seven words draws out all her heart and tells her much of His. Then at the end of chapter iii., we have something about the bride, and at the end of chapter iv., of the Lord's way with the remnant in Israel. The four are woven together thus:—first, there is one with whom the Lord deals, giving new and resurrection life, the earnest of many to follow. Then there is the bride, rather earthly than heavenly. Then

in John iv. we have a hint of the heavenly bride, for the Church is mostly taken from the Gentiles, and those who are the dregs of the world. But His grace is rejected by the nation, and a remnant is seen on whom He has mercy.

First, we will study a little the closing words of John iii. A discussion arises between a Jew and John's disciples concerning baptism; for the word of God says a good deal about baptism. And they come to John, and refer the matter to him. “Why,” say they, “do so many go to be baptised of Jesus and His disciples?” Says John, “Don't be jealous on my account; for whom does the bride most care? If she has the bridegroom, hears his voice, sees his face, she has little more that she cares for. I see the beginning of the bride clustering round the Bridegroom,” “this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” He compares himself to the friend of the Bridegroom, and that leads me partly to believe that this refers to the earthly bride. Paul alone speaks of the heavenly bride, that is one reason; but another is, that another acts as the friend of the bridegroom, when it refers to the heavenly bride. Think what is the part of the friend of the bridegroom. Often between the betrothal and the marriage there is an interval, and the part of the friend, when the bridegroom is not present, is to convey loving messages from the bridegroom to the bride, to assure her of His unchanging constancy, and so to descant upon the bridegroom as to draw out the affections of the bride to him. I need not tell you Who is thus acting as the friend of the heavenly Bridegroom. For that I just refer you to John xvi, 13-15.

Now you see that as John here speaks of himself as the friend of the Bridegroom, it is more probable that it is the earthly bride that is eyed here. Souls were clustering round Jesus, and John thought that the marriage was about to take place; he was not aware of all the counsels of God. John then was to tell of Christ so as, if he could, to win Israel to Him. He came preaching the Baptism of repentance, and then pointing to the Lamb of God, as if that would draw all hearts. But Israel was not drawn: the net was broken until the death and resurrection of Jesus. But Israel is yet to be gathered, as the Church is being now. Then see what was the joy of this friend of the Bridegroom, and what his work. His work was to point to Another, and not to talk of himself. The Holy Ghost points to Jesus, and Jesus points us to

the Father. The Father again says, "This is My beloved Son;" and Jesus says, "I will give, and fill you with, the Holy Ghost." Then see what is his joy. Says he, "This my joy therefore is fulfilled." When he hears the Bridegroom's voice he is glad to stand aside. "He must increase but I must decrease." It is the mark of a true servant not to exalt himself. Then further notice, that he speaks of the Bridegroom's supremacy: He is different from himself. I beg you to take note of that, because it is an important point in controversy with Unitarians. They say that of course Jesus was sent from God, but so are many others—John the Baptist was. Here we get the answer. For observe the fact, that of all born of woman none was greater than John the Baptist; yet we see how infinitely short of the dignity of Jesus John was in his. For it is to shew how immeasurable the distance was that John says, "He that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth; He that cometh from heaven is above all." That divine servant came down; He could not mount one step until He had first descended.

Let us note again what a testimony the Lord Jesus brings. Reference is twice made to the fact that the testimonies of Christ, though so blessed, are not received. "And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth, and no man receiveth His testimony." Just what the Lord had said in verse 12. "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell ye of heavenly things." Then look at that previous verse again, which is so striking. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." Jesus who came from heaven could unfold the counsels of heaven. You cannot but remark how different everything is as seen by us from what it was as seen by the seers of old. Take Hezekiah's prayer as an instance. How terrified at death he was; how different from him who said, "To die is gain." Jesus makes everything plain, because He is God, and God would put all honour upon Him. He had been in heaven, He had looked round upon heaven, He knew what was worthy of heaven and of the presence of God, and He has revealed it. Such deep, high, grand, glorious things to you who have the ear to hear. But observe that it is added what is our part, in verse 33. "He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that

God is true." So when Jesus tells us of earthly things, the kingdom of God, or of heavenly things, eternal life through His death, it is to refresh our hearts. A few receive the testimony, and God says, we set to our seal that He is true. To think of God allowing us to give testimony to Him that He is a truthful God. If we do not receive His testimony into our hearts we are calling God a liar.

Then we hear further of Christ having all things given unto Him. "For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure." Mark, that the words "unto Him" should be omitted; it is a statement. Now that the Son has come there is no measure. The Spirit in Him is infinite; the Spirit is in us in measure, because our faith is so little, so contracted. If we did fully believe, rivers of living water should flow out from us. It seems to me to be like the rising sun; Jesus coming, and His glory bursting upon creation. So, while John was only thinking of the earthly bride, Israel, there was a deeper meaning behind.

Then lastly, there is mention of the word "Son." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." As if this rising Sun were flooding hearts with His glory. We never read of the church except we hear of His Son; and the preface to chapter iv. is this believing on the Son. Observe, things are narrowed to a point. Christ has come, and God has done dealing with man as to what he is, or what he has done. It is not the sin question, but the Son question. With everyone it is His attitude towards that Being. "And he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life." It is a common phrase in the higher classes of society—say, when a young lady has been confirmed, and has been to her first ball—that she begins to see life. What a different testimony this! To be enjoying His love, knowing Him, standing in His presence, that is life; do you not feel this to be true? The right translation of this verse is, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that is *disobedient* to the Son shall not see life." It is the obedience of faith. "But the wrath of God abideth on him." I have often thought that in this last clause, there is a peremptory denial of two of the worst of the false doctrines abroad in the present day; that is, the doctrines of annihilation and of universal restoration. Take the latter first. "Shall not see life,"

never,—never. Or the other: “the wrath of God abideth on him;” but how so, if he be annihilated?

But now let us turn to the closing verses of chapter iv. In its dispensational teaching we find here, that though Christ's grace be rejected by Israel as a whole, there is a remnant which shall be saved; like as when, before His death and resurrection, the net brake. But now let us look at this in its more practical aspect. It says in verses 43-46 that Jesus, testifying that a prophet hath no honour in His own country, departing thence, “came again unto Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.” Observe, at the outset, how the miracle is introduced; as if to say, that He had brought out His glory, flooded every heart with that glory, and creation with blessing; He had been rejected, but a remnant would receive Him. Observe, that Christ did four things for this nobleman's son; first, He healed his child, and, at a distance. Secondly, He told him that the child was healed, for He never keeps His people in doubt. Thirdly, He gives him a commandment to test His faith; for He loves to test our faith. Faith pleases Him, and God crowns our faith because faith crowns Christ. And if our faith will not stand testing, it is worth nothing; the more it is tried the more it grows. Fourthly, He gave him faith to accept His Word. But, say you, “how do you prove this?” I ask your particular attention to this point, because it is most practical to us in everyday life. Suppose that this man had had any doubts as to his child being healed, would he not have hurried home to see? He was only twenty miles from home, and the time at which the child was healed was one o'clock in the day, so that he could, had he chosen, have reached home by sunset. But he did nothing of the kind; it appears he did not set out until next day, because it was the next day that he met his servants. And it is clear that the healing of the child was miraculous, because it was done instantaneously, and he knew the exact time; by the word of Him who came forth from God, the fever was gone. Thus, we see that by faith, he did rest upon the Word of the Lord. And God would have us rest upon His Word about everything. Further, nothing strengthens faith like obedience. Had he hurried back to Capernaum, he would have been a timid, hesitating believer longer; but when he got

home himself believed, and his whole house, and his faith was strengthened.—*Notes of addresses by W. Lincoln, communicated by J. S. H.*

A WORD TO “YOUNG MEN” IN CHRIST.

(Continued from page 138.)

IN my former paper to “Babes in Christ,” I observed that, in the first Epistle of John, it is God as a Father writing to His children as such; and notice that seven times over in that epistle He calls them by the endearing name of “little children.” But, as I have already observed in chapter ii. verse 13, He classifies them into “fathers,” “young men,” and “little children,”—literally babes, or newly converted ones. To each of these He speaks twice. But, as observed already, He gives no word of warning to the fathers, while to the young men and babes He gives counsel and instruction to suit their varied need. What is said to those who have lately been born into the family, I have already looked at. I would now endeavour to write a few thoughts to those who have grown up to spiritual manhood.

First, I would observe that the term “young men” does not refer to *sex* at all, but, to a certain stage in growth as a christian; so that women who have passed the period of christian infancy, are as much addressed as men of the same experience. It is of great importance to remember this, else the half of my readers will be missed. What God says here to young men applies to both male and female alike, of whom it can be said that “ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” This evidently implies that they had attended to the warning and counsel given to the babes (verses 18-27); and by doing so had overcome the wicked one in his attempt to seduce them from the divine path. This they had done by attending to the counsel given in verse 24. By thus taking heed to what they had heard, the word of God was abiding in them; and they had overcome the wicked one, when he had assailed them through the many anti-Christ's that were abroad. But now, having got fairly delivered from this snare, the Father warns such against another snare; and that is the love of the world.

Before looking at what is said to young men, let us see that we understand to whom it applies in the times in which we live. I have no doubt it applies in measure to all those who have arrived at a certain stage of experience in the divine life ; and whose behaviour is regulated by the word of God, as far as it has been apprehended by them. Yet, it also evidently applies to those who have been delivered from sectarian associations, and gathered to God's divine centre, Christ himself ; to those who have refused to wear any sectarian name, or to have anything to do with any of man's religious inventions ; but who are gathered out unto "The Name," and are keeping the ordinances as they were delivered unto the saints ; and are thus established in the truth regarding their church position. It is to such, indeed, the warning in verses 15, 16, 17, specially applies. What a large number this includes ! How many there are, who during the last fifteen or more years, have grown up from little children to be young men in Christ ; who years ago were sorely tried in going against the current of sectarianism ; and who once felt keenly the reproach of being gathered with a few of God's children, who met to "shew the Lord's death" in remembrance of Himself. All that may now to a large extent have passed away, the devil may long ago have ceased to tempt them with his anti-christian seductions. But he has not done with them yet. He has got another bait for his hook, and that is "*the world and the things that are in it.*" It is this snare which we are here warned against.

Now, my dear readers, do not let the truth of God miss your conscience. You are now in a right *position* ; what about your *condition* ? You have overcome the wicked one, what about the world ? You manfully stood your ground against the devil, when he tried to get you into, or keep you in, a sect ; how are you standing your ground against him, when he plies you with the "world, and the things that are in it ?" You have grown up from a little child to be a young man ; do you think you are in a fair way to become a father in Christ, when those who are now fathers shall have finished their testimony, and entered into their rest ? Many during these past years have grown from babes, to be young men. But where are the young men who are going on to be fathers ? And if there is not a wakening up soon, what is to become of the testimony of the

Lord, should the Church be left a short time longer down here ? What is the cause of the withering blight that is everywhere settling down on the gathered saints ? I answer, several causes combine to stunt the growth of the saints. But the chief cause is the love of the world, and the things that are in it. And the worst of it is, those who have come to the front are in many cases deeply involved in it. This is just as it was in remnant times before. In Ezra's day "the princes and rulers were chief in the trespass" (chap. ix. 2.) And in Malachi's day it was those whose lips "should keep knowledge" that had "departed out of the way." (Chapter ii. 7, 8.)

So, now, many of those who ought to be an example to the rest are allowing themselves to be overpowered by the terrible current of worldly ambition, and are seduced into a race with men and women of the world, after worldly position and wealth. How many there are who, some years ago, were shining lights, but have now become total wrecks as to their testimony ? They could not be content in the position where the Lord had put them ; they must needs be their own masters, and become great men. So they embarked in business—dashed on, struggled on for a while—then became bankrupts, and not only ruined their own testimony, but well-nigh destroyed the testimony of all those with whom they were in fellowship. The *power of Godliness* in assemblies has thus in many cases become so small that there is no energy to deal with such cases ; while in some instances, men whose conduct is despised and condemned by respectable men of the world, are to be found in the front amongst the gathered saints. But even where bankruptcy has been escaped, how many are slaves to the world who might have been happy, useful Christians, had they allowed their Father to choose for them instead of choosing for themselves, as Lot did ? There are also those who have made no mistake in choosing their path. They were led into business by the Lord, but instead of acting as stewards for Him they have set up as proprietors on their own account. The temporal blessings the Lord bestowed upon them have got into their souls, and instead of returning thanks to Him for the "benefits received," they are like Hezekiah, of whom it is said, "his heart was lifted up" (2 Chron. xxxii. 25). They begin to do as he did, fraternize with the great men of the world. One

word here in passing. There are dear men to be found, and that not a few, who deeply feel these things, and sigh for liberty of soul; but everything is against them. Competition in every line of business is dreadful. They are compelled to breathe the pestilential atmosphere of a greedy, covetous world all day long; and, when they return to the bosom of their own homes, the influence there is also against them; their partners in life instead of being a help to them (which they ought to be), are sometimes a great hindrance. And, even where the love of the world has not got into their hearts, the cares of this life prove too much for many dear saints; simply, because they carry these themselves, instead of casting all their care on Him who careth for them (1 Peter v. 7).

But, to turn from describing this terrible disease that is working such havoc among the children of God, what about the cure? Is there no remedy for this fearful scourge that is eating up spiritual life in both individuals and churches? O yes there is a wonderful cure, a perfect remedy; not invented by any quack practitioner, but prescribed by the Great Physician Himself. That remedy is, "*the love of the FATHER.*" Mark, it does not say *the love of God*, but *the love of the Father*. When speaking of the love of God, Scripture says, "We love Him *because He first loved us*" (1 John iv. 19). But, when the Lord was teaching His disciples the love of the Father, He says, "The Father Himself loveth you, *because ye have loved Me*" (John xvi. 27). It is most important to mark this distinction. Many who "have known and believed the love which God hath to us," have never known the love of the Father. God loved us as lost ones; but, now that we are His children, God loves us with a FATHER'S love; and cares for us with a FATHER'S care;—His care for us being measured by His love. When the blessed Lord is unfolding to our hearts the Father's love, He says, "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved Me" (John xvii. 23). And when he is unfolding to us the Father's care, He tells us of His care for the "ravens," the "lilies," and the "sparrows." Then He says, "Fear not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke xii. 7). He also tells us that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. Were these sayings of the Son of God believed and appreciated in the same way as we believe on the Son for everlasting life, what a revolution it would work in the souls of many dear saints!

This dealing with our God as a Father concerning the things of this life, would give such a sweetness to the soul, that the world would have no power over our hearts, and would lead us to cultivate an intercourse with our God which would so satisfy the heart, that the fascinations of passing things would fail to captivate us. Surely His infinite wisdom knows best what is good for us. His love cannot withhold anything that is for our good; and His resources can never fail. "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the Lord of hosts." (Hag. ii. 8.) And how blessed it is to be getting what we need from His hand, knowing that, whatever channel it comes through, it is from Him all the same, whether we earn it with our hands, or our head. "It is He that giveth *thee* power to get wealth" (Deut. viii. 18.) And we only hold it for a little while as a trust from Him. It is indeed blessed thus to know Him as a Father for this life, as well as a Saviour for eternity, It is one thing to have the *word of God* abiding in us, and it is another thing to have the *love of the Father* in us. Many have the one, who know little of the other. And it is mainly the lack of this special love in us, that gives the world such a power over us. "For, all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Time is passing, souls are perishing, the Church is languishing. Let us, beloved, wake up, and gird on our armour. It is but a little while, and we shall hear the Victor's shout calling us home. The tinsel which many are anxious about now, will then be left for ever behind, and nothing will be of any value, but what we have really *done for*, and *given to* the Lord.

G. A.

ESTHER.

BY S. B.

THE history in this book comes in between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra. It is here we have recorded the origin and institution of the festival of Purim, a feast still observed by the Jews in commemoration of their complete deliverance from their enemy, wicked Haman.

This book beautifully illustrates the care of God over the godly remnant subject to the Gentile power, who refuse to bow to the enemies of the God of Israel.

Though God's name is not mentioned in this book, His finger is seen; and His secret governmental power is displayed in justifying the righteous and condemning the wicked.

Haman the Agagite, is illustrative of the flesh judged; Mordecai, of the spirit honoured. But there must be first suffering and reproach, then honour and glory. Vashti (beauty) may represent the professing Church, or Christendom disregarding and disobeying the command of her professed Lord; Esther (star), a figure of the Jewish bride; Haman, of the enemy of restored Israel, and his final doom; Mordecai, of the Lord Jesus as the Head of His chosen and exalted people in the millennial kingdom.

LAMENTATIONS.

It is evident that Jeremiah was the writer of this book which bears his name. Nowhere is there a greater variety of beautiful and pathetic language than here, all expressive of the deepest distress and sorrow. His heart seems broken as he so pathetically pours out his grief for the miseries of famine, the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, and other calamities which have befallen Zion. Yet anticipating the hope of restoration when Israel, confessing their sins, shall receive full pardon and promised deliverance.

Z E C H A R I A H.

Zechariah, whose name signifies remembered of the Lord, was a post-captivity prophet of priestly descent, and was contemporary and co-operated with Haggai in encouraging the remnant to rebuild the temple.

This book is divided into two parts. Part 1 comprises chapters i.-vi., and contains a series of visions which were communicated to the prophet in one night. Part 2 comprises chapters vii.-xiv.

Chapter i., verses 1-6, are the introduction; verses 7-17 the vision of horses; 18, 19, of horns; 20, of the carpenters; the former representing Jehovah's care for Jerusalem, the latter indicating the ultimate and final destruction of Israel's ruthless oppressors—*i. e.*, the Gentile powers.

Chapter ii.—We have here the measuring line, and the restoration of Jerusalem. When God has put down

all Gentile authority, then will He take possession of the land, and Jerusalem be restored.

Chapter iii., verses 6, 7, represents Israel's place of responsibility conditionally. Joshua, in this chapter, represents the sinner; Israel and the Lord Jesus Christ as high priest.

Chapter iv. is the vision of the golden candlestick, representing Israel as a light on the earth, maintained by royalty and priesthood; the bowls on the top of the golden lamp-stand representing the Lord Jesus; the lamp Israel and the Christ of God; the two anointed ones typical of royalty and priesthood; oil, of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter v.—The vision of the flying roll shows the judgment of the wicked in Israel in the last day.

Chapter vi.—In the four horses we see the government of God, in the four Gentile empires;—the *Branch* representing Christ.

From chapter vii. to the end of the book we have Messiah in Israel; His present rejection His future power and exaltation; and Jerusalem the centre of worship and holiness to the Lord. Verse 7 of chapter xiii. undoubtedly refers to Christ. Some question whether verses 5 and 6 do.

C H R I S T ' S Y O K E .

MATT. xi. 28-30.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY MR. J. A. BOSWELL.



DESIRE to say a few helpful words to young Christians, and to connect these verses with a subject that has lately come before me with greater power than at any previous time. You will observe that there are two rests spoken of in these verses—the first, is the rest which the weary sinner receives when he comes to the Lord Jesus for salvation; the second, is the rest obtained through obedience, and is conditional. The latter is connected with taking the yoke of Christ upon us, and is illustrated by the following incident:—

Some time since I was staying in a country, where oxen (instead of horses, as in this country) are used for agricultural purposes. What struck me was the way in which the oxen had learned to walk together. They were harnessed together by their heads, and there was a middle bar with a cross bar fixed to it,

and this was tightly fastened about the horns of the two animals, so that when one moved the other had to move as well. From seeing the oxen yoked thus, I learned that it was painful for them to walk, except they stepped together; and it was only while they went in step that they could do their work pleasantly and well. I believe this is what these verses bring before our minds in connection with the yoke that the Lord would have His people take upon them.

Do not let us think that if we are only doing something for God that is all He desires from us; that, doubtless, is the popular idea, but it is very far from being scriptural. If we are not doing it in *God's way*, we cannot really know what happiness is; nor are we pleasing Him.

In connection with the subject of service, I have often heard it said—"Well, but it is surely of God, if He puts His seal upon it; if there is blessing, that must be sufficient to show it is of God." But, as you look around, you cannot say that all the service professedly done in the Name of the Lord meets with His approval,—even though there may be conversions. I do not wish to say anything that would discourage any in their gospel work, but, after many years' work for God, I would suggest the following:—In many cases, I would like to see those who professed conversion, say, three years after. That is a fair testing time, and there is a good deal to be learnt the first three years of the Christian life. In the young convert's experience there is, first, the joy of sins forgiven, and then a testing time comes. Often after the first feeling of joy subsides in measure, and Satan seems to be let loose upon them, and temptations, as it were, crowd in upon them; then it is that the child of God feels his own weakness, and learns where his strength lies.

I do not deny that much blessing may follow the preaching of the Gospel, but is that a proof that God is pleased with the methods of the workers? Let us ask ourselves whether we, as His sons and servants, are seeking to please Him.

Martha was as much a child of God as Mary, but, what does the Lord say as touching the latter? "She hath chosen that good part." Martha was doing a right thing in itself, but she was placing *service* before *communion*; whereas, the Lord wanted fellowship with Himself to be the first thing, and service would naturally spring from it. Never let us fall into

this mistake; service can never take the place of communion, but should rather be the outcome of it. I can *hire* a servant, but I cannot *hire* a wife. God has saved us *not merely* to serve Him, but that we might be continually in His presence, drinking in His love as revealed in the Scriptures. We have been called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and this embraces not only this little while, but *eternity* also, and *nothing less* would satisfy God.

If you are not enjoying this fellowship, but going on in service without it, God who loves you, and desires that you have communion with Himself, will probably place you in circumstances where you cannot go on in the activity of mere work, and for this purpose—that you may have leisure to think and consider your ways, and learn to listen to His voice, and wait on His council. Persistence in service, without the realised presence of God, is a great mistake, and often ends in some grievous fall. Blessing given in connection with any service is no criterion of the Lord's approval;—there is one incident in Scripture that settles that point—I refer to Moses. God said, "Speak to the rock, and the water shall flow out for Israel." If you refer to Numbers xx., where the smiting of the rock, and that which led to it, is recorded, you will find in verse i. that Miriam died, and then follows the murmuring of the children of Israel. There were three persons connected with the deliverance of the people from Egypt, as we see from Micah vi. 4—"For I brought thee up out of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." We see also, from Exodus xv. 20, 21, that Miriam led the women of Israel in praise to Jehovah. Her name signifies "praise." She dies, and next there is no water. Whenever praise ceases in our hearts, blessing ceases too. "The Lord said to Moses, take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, and *speak* ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth water. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he (Moses) said unto them—Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice, and the water came out abundantly. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron.—Because ye believed Me not to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this

congregation into the land which I have given them." They got a blessing, but Moses, through his disobedience, lost Canaan, and never led Israel into the "higher blessing of the land." We hear much about "the higher blessing," and "the higher life," but we repeat, Moses, owing to his disobedience, was unable to lead the people into the higher blessing of Canaan; and although blessing came to the people through him, yet, in the very act, he disobeyed God, and received judgment in consequence.

How many of God's people are bringing blessing to others, who are satisfied, like Israel, with getting a good drink, without considering if God is thereby glorified. Such, however, being disobedient themselves, in the act of bringing blessing to others, cannot bring God's people into the fulness of blessing in obedience to Christ.

Remember, brethren, it is not the amount of truth

that we have learnt that helps us, for we have been hearing truth since we were converted, and in many cases it has not been acquired through our own toil and research. Many of us have got it "second-hand," so to speak, and therefore it has been of very little use to us. And, further, what we have heard of the will of God concerning us has not been done—the truth has not been an active living power in our souls.

It is a delightful sight to see a young Christian drinking in the sincere milk of the Word; but it is a sad sight to see one who ought to be a teacher still needing milk.

Remember, blessing may be given, but disobedience in the end will hinder, not only the one who is disobedient, but those who are blest through them. May the Lord lead us more deeply and really into the mind of Christ.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

NOTE.—Those who endeavour to reply to Questions, desire to impress upon readers their responsibility to "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. v. 21). They make no pretension to infallibility, but give their judgment as those who have received mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—Many Questions are received but not replied to; some not being for general edification, whilst others are laid aside from want of sufficient light to deal with them.—It is requested that all communications be accompanied by the Name and Address of the sender.

QUESTION CCVIII.

Ought a Christian to vote for a Member of Parliament?

REPLY.

"The powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1). Therefore, reasons the Apostle, he that "resisteth the Power, resisteth the ordinance of God."

The character of the government is not here the question, neither is the righteousness or injustice of the laws. The only government at that time existing was the Roman; and of the authority of the Roman Governor our Lord spake when He said, "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above." This is in perfect accordance with the lesson God taught Nebuchadnezzar by depriving him of his reason—"that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will" (Dan. iv. 32). The means by which God works in bestowing this authority—in casting down one kingdom and establishing another—may be the vilest of human passions. To trace the history of a kingdom or dynasty to its origin may discover only that which is devilish. Pride, lust of power, thirst for blood, may have been

the motives that chiefly operated in establishing its authority; nevertheless, apart from its moral character, the fact that it has the power is to be referred ultimately to God, and to Him absolutely and alone.

In this respect the dominion of "the Beast" of Rev. xvii. differs nothing from any of the previous Gentile powers. Of the Ten Kings of the last days it is written, "God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree and give their Kingdom unto the Beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."

Here, then, is the Divine establishment of the last great Gentile and anti-Christian government. It is the consummation of Satanic authority in the world, and yet its power is of God in exactly the same sense as the Roman power which Christ owned, and by which He was put to death.

The only people whom God ever recognised nationally was Israel. To them He entrusted His revealed will concerning government on earth. To administer Divinely given laws, statutes, and judgments, was the office of Israel's king. God never withdrew the legislation given in trust to Israel by Moses, and never superseded it in any way. When the dominion was

transferred, because of Israel's sin, to the Gentiles, God gave to the Gentile kings no new revelation as to government. He only withdrew, as it were, to a greater distance from the administration of government in the earth, retaining, nevertheless, the supreme and ultimate control.

The calling of the Church is heavenly. Its origin, sustenance, administration, and destiny, are all heavenly. Christ alone is Ruler within this Divine sphere. He is Lord; and in subjection to Him as such, the Holy Spirit distributes His gifts amongst the members of the body of Christ, and through them operates in maintaining divine order and rule.

Within what professes to be the Church, the will of man has indeed risen up in rebellion against the Lordship of Christ—the gifts of the Spirit of God have been rejected, and confusion of the most inextricable character has been the result. But, nevertheless, it remains true, whether men will own it or not, that, as truly as God revealed His will concerning national government and order to Israel by Moses, so so truly has He made known His will concerning church government and order by Paul—chiefly, though partially, also by the Lord Jesus Himself and others of His Apostles.

Thus, God's two revelations as to government are before us in the Scriptures in their entirety. All other legislation of kings and parliaments is but a groping about in darkness and unbelief after that which can only be found from God and His Word.

In accordance with this, it is very noticeable that whilst in the New Testament God has spoken concerning the duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants—and also very specially as to the duties of Christians as SUBJECTS under the world's governments, there is not one word to a Christian in the capacity of a ruler or a magistrate in the world.

Surely God's omissions are not accidental, but full of instruction. Had God contemplated His heavenly people accepting rule in the world's apostate kingdoms, is it to be for a moment supposed that He would thus have avoided giving to such as well as to others the needed wisdom and counsel?

Subjection to authority is all that is inculcated—this is strongly insisted upon in many passages—but to resist the authority is forbidden, and any attempt to constitute authority or to wield it, is left without a

word of guiding counsel, so that he who acts in such matters must act in his own wisdom and strength.

The Christian is a "stranger" in the world because of his heavenly birth, and a "pilgrim" because of his heavenly destiny. Like a foreigner in one of our cities, he is passing through, and must be subject to its laws, or else incur its penalties; but his stranger-ship forbids that he should be either a legislator or a ruler there.

Recent legislation has so extended the franchise, that the right to vote for a Member of Parliament will be conferred for the first time upon many, Christians as well as others. It is a political privilege, and, as such, is highly regarded by the world; but, though a right and privilege, there is no obligation to make use of it; and to refrain from voting, is no departure from the Christian's rule of subjection to the powers that be.

For a Christian to take sides in the world's party politics, is to leave the heavenly path and surrender his calling of strangership on earth.

Sometimes a cry is raised by a party that awakes the sympathy of the Christian. For example, in view of the terrible inroads of infidelity undisguised and ghastly, the cry of "the Bible in the Schools" laid hold upon many an unenlightened conscience, and drew many a Christian into partizanship with the religious world.

But by the lending of your vote to the party who raised *this* cry, you also give your influence to the party who turn a government out of office for imposing a small additional tax on whisky!

We merely adduce this as an instance of the helpless position of a Christian who takes any part in politics. None of the world's political parties are guided by the Word of God. They have no appeal but to reason, common sense, expediency, &c., &c. Each political party in its turn, is drifted into lines of policy from which one who is taught of God must recoil with abhorrence. How, then, can a Christian, without a word of Scripture to guide him, attach himself to, or use his influence on behalf of any party, seeing that each and all practically, and of necessity, ignore both God and His Words?

Apart from the political as well as the religious parties of His day was the path of the Lord Jesus. When He comes again, it will not be to suffer as a stranger, but to reign as King. For His kingdom

we wait, when we shall indeed exercise rule and authority not as the servants of a worldly power that is symbolized by monstrous and ravenous beasts; but as the servants of Him who is the rightful Heir, and Whose the kingdoms of this world shall then have become.

Perfection in government would result in perfection of liberty to the subject. Anarchy is bondage. The Christian in this land, because of his familiarity with peace and liberty, is too apt to undervalue these great blessings, and to fail in acknowledging God as the Governor Supreme, who so disposes rulers for the blessing of His people.

Hence the almost universal omission in the assemblies of the children of God, to pray for those in authority. A spurious spirituality regards it as inconsistent with the character of the worship of a heavenly people.

But believers ought never to forget that though a heavenly people, they have also earthly relationships, concerning each of which God has spoken, and true spirituality will seek always to act in such relationships according to the Word of the Lord.

Rom. xiii., 1 Tim. ii., 1 Peter ii. 13, &c., demand the special attention of Christians, in order that in their relation to the world's government, they may know and do the will of God. Obedience to the will of God alone is true spirituality and true sanctification.

QUESTION CCIX.

How should the collection every Lord's-day be appropriated?

REPLY.

In every assembly necessary expenses are incurred, for example—rent, coal, gas, cleaning, bread and wine, &c., &c. For the discharge of this liability *all* should hold themselves in measure responsible, seeing all are partakers of the benefit. It is merely a question of common honesty to lay aside out of the contributions of the believers the weekly proportion of these necessary charges. Until this *debt* is provided for the assembly has nothing to give, either to the poor saints or to the furtherance of Gospel testimony.

Some may, in the providence of God, be able to bear a much larger share of such responsibility than others; and whilst they ought cheerfully to do so, yet few things are more hurtful than the habit of

leaving to them the burden of paying the assembly's debts. Each one, according to his ability, should share the burden. Then it is light for all; and if, in the wisdom of God, one or more of those who bore the larger share are removed by death, or by change of residence, the work can still go on, though the loss may be felt.

Then next in importance comes the need of poor saints. To care for such is the duty and responsibility of every assembly; but it is far more, it is a precious privilege; and to be without poor ones to minister to would be to be deprived of one of the holiest joys and most fruitful ministries. If the brethren who have charge of the money matters intimate lovingly to the assembly that the contributions are barely enough for expenses, and that they feel straitened as to the need of the poor, experience has proved that, by the grace of God in His children, there is invariably a response, the sufficiency or otherwise of which may afford occasion for suited exhortation.

Then comes the need of the Lord's servants, who have gone forth to preach the Gospel either "at home" or "abroad."

Alas for the assembly that takes no practical interest in such work! Enlargement of heart ought ever to be sought and fostered by hearing and reading of what the Lord is doing through His servants whom He has qualified and called to the work, and by prayer for such by name. Of course in such matters no rule can be laid down, for God has given none. But we would mention that in some assemblies it has been found to be most profitable to set apart an evening in the month for hearing reports of and prayer for the Lord's work. It has also been found to be a great blessing to keep up regular communication with the Lord's servants both "at home" and "abroad"—sending to approved labourers the collections for these purposes monthly—and all the better, if possible, to write to them directly, and to hear from them individually. Much blessing is lost by not taking the trouble to communicate *directly*.

Let all be done to Him who accepts in His infinite compassion the "two mites" of the poor widow as well as the hundred pounds of the rich. Let not the thought that collections are necessarily *small* be used by Satan to prevent each assembly, as well as each individual, aiming at the Lord's commendation "She hath done what she could."

THE GENERAL ELECTION.

THE people of the British Isles have entered upon a new era. Two millions of inhabitants who hitherto have had no voice in the government of the country are about to register their first votes. Democracy has gained the day; the *people* are now going to rule, and hope, though a false one, fills the hearts of the poor. Statesmen and partisans have been and are outbidding each other for the confidence of the people, and in a few days it will be decided who shall rule. Reform and progress are the order of the day; the onward march will in future be bold and fearless; but, alas! for the days that are to follow.

If we felt called upon to tender advice to those who are about to vote, we would indeed feel perplexed; but as that duty devolves upon men of *this world*, we leave it to them, and turn ourselves to the help of those children of God who seek a right course throughout this crisis.

Those who fear the Lord can take hold of the promise of Psalm xxxi. 20, "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

Many Christians do not understand the nature of their calling and testimony, and because of this they "*cultivate politics religiously.*" They believe that to withhold their influence from a matter of such importance would be to sin against God and fail in Christian duty. Some communities bearing the name of Christ have degenerated into political clubs, their chief concern being to set to right the wrongs of the country.

Now there are many apparently good arguments in favour of believers taking an active part in politics, but human reasoning is always dangerous and misleading. Has the Lord spoken on the subject? If so, let us seek to hear His words, and be subject to them; nor let any think that this is a matter of minor consequence, involving no principle of importance.

It is now the undisputed right of every one whose conditions are embraced by the new Franchise Act to share in the election of rulers for their land; but the child of God, whose birth and citizenship are heavenly, ought to regard himself as outside this sphere of worldly privilege. This may sound

strange to some, but a patient consideration of Scripture will lead the humble, subject heart to no other conclusion.

So long as a man remains unconverted he is a citizen of earth—he belongs to the world, and may consistently take part in all that concerns his well-being here. But a Christian is one whose position is entirely different. His relationship to earth and its affairs has undergone a radical change—that which he could once lay claim to as his privilege is no longer his by Divine right. But what has made this change? We answer, *death* has made it. The apostle could say, "I am *CRUCIFIED* with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ, liveth in me; and the life which I *now* live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. ii. 20). Again, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, *whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*" (Gal. vi. 14).

The Christian, then, is a man who has died to the world by the Cross—he no longer belongs to earth; he is risen with Christ, and is to "set his affection on things *above*, not on things *on the earth*; for he is *dead*, and his life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 1, 2, 3).

No argument is needed to convince us that dead men, whose bodies lie in yonder graveyard, are outside the sphere of action on the election day; they have ceased to take any part in all that is done "under the sun;" their day for this is over. On the same ground, exactly, do we claim exemption from all responsibility and participation in the choice of rulers for this country. We are *crucified—dead and buried* (Rom. vi.), hence the Lord Jesus could say to His disciples ere He left them, "If ye were of the world the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you *OUT* of the world, therefore the world hateth you. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you" (John xv. 18, 19). And, again, in His prayer on their behalf, "They are not of the world, *even as I am not of the world*" (John xvii. 16). As citizens of the earth we have "passed away." At the Cross we lost our earthly citizenship, but we gained an heavenly.

"There we lost our stand in a death-doom'd land,
As children of wrath by the fall;
There we gained a place as heirs of grace,
At the feast in the heavenly hall."

Only citizens have a right to vote, but the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ has made us pilgrims and strangers on earth (I Peter ii. 11), and we are exhorted to pass the time of our *sojourning* here in fear (1 Peter i. 17). "*Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence, also, we look for the Saviour*" (Phil. iii. 20, *R.V.*). We are "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. ii. 19). "*Raised up together, and made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places*" (Eph. ii. 6). A foreigner cannot lay claim to exercise the English franchise; he is outside that privilege—he belongs to another country. We belong to heaven, and are left on earth as witnesses for Him.

But who is such a good citizen of any country as a Christian? Who so qualified to give a right judgment as to the choice of rulers? Who, for that matter, so fitted to *rule* as a Christian? Would he not maintain righteous principles and laws? Would he not grant privileges to Christians and freedom for the Gospel which the worldling would not?

Let us not be led away by such specious questions and arguments; the root of the matter lies in the Scriptures already quoted. If it were any part of a Christian's duty, either to choose rulers or to rule himself, then would there have been found ample instructions in the New Testament for his guidance; but no such instruction is found there. Scripture contemplates the believer as being dead to the world—its pleasures and politics; it regards him as risen with Christ, and furnishes the man of God thoroughly for every good work (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). We are furnished with words of instruction as to our conduct in the capacities of parents and children, husbands and wives, masters, servants, and *subjects* (see Eph. v. and vi., and Col. iii. and iv.); but no directions whatever are given for the guidance of Christians in the exercise of magisterial authority, political responsibility, or anything appertaining to world-government. He who launches out upon the political sea must do so in darkness, and without the chart of Divine instruction. I speak now only as to *Christian* testimony.

Surely the absence of directions as to these positions will cause us to think before we join with the world at the polling booth. But, has a believer no responsibility with regard to these things? We say emphatically, yes; he has much to do with them. God has imposed upon him a duty which no unsaved one

could perform. "I exhort . . . that, *first of all*, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men—for kings, and for all that are in authority—that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour" (1 Tim. ii. 1-3).

Here is the only door of influence which our God lays open to us in times such as the present. Through our intercession more influence is brought to bear than possibly could be by our votes.

In betaking ourselves to prayer that God would guide as to the returning of a government which would carry out His purposes, we do not contravene His sacred command, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. vi. 14), whilst in joining with them in actual canvassing, or otherwise, we are *disobeying* His word.

"But an I," asks one, "to stand up, and, with folded arms, see an enemy of the Gospel returned to Parliament, when, by my vote and influence, the election might be turned against him?" We answer, If the fate of the empire hinged upon the giving of your vote, *your responsibility comes to an end with your obedience* to the word of God. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1). Whether "Conservative" or "Liberal," power is conferred by God. Our place is to be subject to the *present rulers*, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. "For this cause pay tribute also; . . . render, therefore, to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour" (verses 5-7). "Put them (believers) in mind to be subject to principalities and powers; to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work" (Titus iii. 1). "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man (no Ecclesiastical) for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him; . . . fear God; honour the king" (1 Peter ii. 13, 14, 17). Subjection and submission are here enjoined upon us, but, we repeat, no direction is found to guide us as electors or rulers.

Now a word as to the dispensational side of this question. Israel was an earthly people, called to be "the head, and not the tail," of all the nations of the earth (Deut. xxviii. 13). Whilst they walked with God they enjoyed that blessing, but when "they

chose new gods, then was war in the gates." Scattering and destruction came upon them, and power was given to the Gentiles. Daniel exercised much authority as a statesman under Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. He was a Jew, and with perfect consistency could do so. God put him in that position; but through that same Daniel a revelation has been given which sets out clearly the present position of affairs. An image, divided into four sections, was seen by him in a dream. The image represents the four great Gentile powers to whom God gave authority, each in their turn—Babylonish, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman; the latter has not yet passed away; we live in the days of its most broken condition. A stone cut out without hands smote the image upon his feet. "Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became as the chaff of the summer threshing floor" (Daniel ii. 37, 45). This stone is the earth-rejected King of kings—Jesus. Since His rejection He has been associating a people with Himself, who are also earth-rejected;—Christians. Now the question arises, Are we identified with Christ, or with the image (Gentile nations)? Clearly we cannot consistently be with both, for the Stone is about to fall upon this world-power and crush it to powder (Matt. xxi. 42-44).

The Church holds a unique position, unlike to Israel; her testimony, calling, and hope are heavenly, and never was she expected to act as ruler on earth; her work is to *shine* in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, holding forth the word of life (Phil. ii. 15, 16).

The rejected Lord Jesus Christ shall shortly be manifested "who is the Blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. vi. 15), "when all rule and authority shall be put under His feet." "If we suffer we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. ii. 12).

To touch the world's politics is to "get a wound and dishonour." On the one hand oppression is exercised by the aristocracy, on the other lawlessness and blasphemy by the democracy.

Let us be content with prayer and subjection, not forgetting to pray for and honour that most excellent of all earth's rulers, the Queen of these realms. "Long may she reign," is our prayer, in so far as it interferes not with "our blessed hope"—the coming of the rejected King, our Lord and Saviour. W. J. E.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAPTER V.

IN the Gospel of John the sinner, in his extreme wretchedness, is brought face to face in a peculiar way with the Son of God in His divine fulness. In John iii. we have the religious sinner, in iv. the sinner irreligious and the sinner sick; in chapter v. we have the sinner weak and Christ giving strength, in vi. as wanting food and Christ giving the Bread of Life, in vii. as needing drink and Christ giving the Water of Life, in chapters viii., ix., and x we have the sinner needing light and Christ giving light, in xi. the sinner dead and Christ the Resurrection and Life.

Now, in looking at this chapter, we will first survey its general teaching before we gather up its lessons. It opens with the Son of God setting Himself above Judaism and the Sabbath day, and setting all on one side in the fulness of His majesty. "A feast of the Jews" it is called, not a "feast of the Lord" as in the Old Testament. If we cling to the shadow when the substance is present, the shadow of itself is valueless. It is remarkable that whenever we read of the Lord in connection with the Sabbath, it is as acting contrary to Moses' words about it; and is it not remarkable, also, that so many Christians do not see that the Sabbath, like the feast of the Jews, is "Nehushtan," when the perfect rest of God in Christ has come. He asks a man if he is willing to be made whole in His way and not by an angel coming down; thus setting aside Judaism altogether, like, as in Hebrews, we have the setting aside of all the Old Testament sacrifices. The man's reply shows the unbelief of his heart, and how little he expects from God. Then, when the cure is effected, and the Jews assail Him for it, the Lord retires, as is His wont, into His own ineffable glory, associates Himself and His Father together, and says that we shall see Him now at work, especially in giving life to dead sinners. At the time when Jesus spoke He was at work getting down to sinners that they might come unto life, now He is at work communicating that life. It shows us that things are contrary to the mind of God, for when they are in accordance with His mind He can rest. The Jews are more than ever offended at that, "because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also, that God was His Father; making Himself equal with

God." He said that "God was His *own* Father." And the Holy Ghost does not avoid giving us what construction we are to put upon the words. Similar language we have in Philippians ii., "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."

Christ then goes on to say how that His Father and He are working together in giving this life. Three works are spoken of here. First, they marvel at the work upon the man. Secondly, the Lord says in verse 20, "The Father loveth the Son, and will show Him greater works than these that ye may marvel." Thirdly, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice." Observe, that when Christ acts with the Father in giving life, He is spoken of as the Son of God (verse 25); but when acting in the way of judgment, it is the Son of Man (verse 27). As Son of God He gives us life, and as Son of Man He will judge creation. The chapter ends with the Lord citing four witnesses to Himself. The first, John, "a burning and a shining lamp" (Jesus is the *Light*). Secondly, His own works. Thirdly, the Father Himself, anticipating an objection of the Jews in verses 37 and 38. Then remarkably, of the four witnesses He cites, He keeps the Word of God till the last, as if that were the climax. I never read these next verses without shuddering at the religious world. "I receive not honour from men;" while I remember how saints love honour one of another, and I see it savours of Antichrist. "But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." The cause of men giving honour one to another, is that they are dead to God; and in Christians, who are living, it is because they have the flesh in them. "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name him ye will receive." Observe, how the Lord Jesus brings the ends of the two dispensations together; the end of the last, Christ rejected; the end of this, Antichrist received. In the Lord's account, but a short moment between; while the Holy Ghost, who hinders the apostasy, is here. And a great bar to our living before God is living before men.

These, then, are the thoughts that I press upon you. The leading thought in the entire chapter is, that that One must be honoured. He has come forth to serve God, and God will see that He is honoured

as He deserves to be; either willingly, or unwillingly by every one. First, willingly. Here Christ is seen specially to be the One by whom we get life. "I work," the Lord says, and we see that He is working in giving life, in full unison with the Father's mind. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." This shows us that the sovereignty of God is exercised conjointly between the Father and the Son. "For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth: and He will show Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel." And the works evidently refer to works of grace; to the work of arranging with the Father who shall be saved. This is very solemn; for the next words read, "For, as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will." That work of quickening is the work of the Father and of the Son. You will find that this conversation of the Lord's divides itself into two parts; first, of this carrying out of Divine sovereignty, in selecting whom God will; and secondly, of judgment, as if one or the other were certainly to be expected by every soul, as they are. But the Son can do nothing of Himself. The Father and the Son in all acts of grace, proceed with one thought, one purpose, one result, and not two. All that is done in the way of grace, is done between the Father and the Son conjointly. We have eternal life, and our having it is in full accord with God's heart, counsel, desire, and Christ's also; it is the will of God, and that on which Christ's own heart is set. It is a beautiful picture we get in these verses of the co-operation, of the actual communion between the Father and the Son as to who shall be saved. There is something like it brought out in the next chapters, in vii. 28, 29. "I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not. But I know Him: for I am from Him, and He hath sent Me." And fuller still, vi. 37-39. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Blessed thought, delightful thought! that when a soul is converted and brought to Christ there is actual communion at once going on between the Father and the Son about

him. God knows, and Christ knows whose names are written in the Book of Life. God knows whose sins were laid upon Christ; and Christ knows whose sins were borne by Him upon the tree. And these verses show that the intercommunion between Father and Son is not a thing accidental, but a thing of such moment, of such importance that 'tis ever going on. The Lord speaks out more plainly when He says, "And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them," and so on, through the rest of John xvii.; but here it is plain enough to those who have ears to hear, this tacit understanding and communion between the Father and the Son when any one is saved. We are not saved accidentally, or even only on our faith in one sense; we are saved because God gave us to Christ, and Christ accepted the gift, and saved us; because the Father and the Son loved us. Thus, they work together; as (to use human language for Divine realities), they planned together, so they work together; Father and Son acting in co-operation, on purpose to bring sinners to Christ.

Then we see that this eternal life is a present possession. "For, as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so, the Son quickeneth whom He will. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life." We are told in some Scriptures to "lay hold on eternal life;" having it, to live it out in every day life. Still, this is a fact we should ever hold fast to, as a blessed truth that God has taught us. Next, this life is a life altogether beyond judgment. We only get life in resurrection, in Christ risen; like as Noah was sheltered in the ark, and carried out of the old world into the new, and in that new world no floods of water could come. By the ark the judgment was borne. We are in Christ, and Christ has died and is risen again, and it is the risen life of the risen Son that God has communicated to us. "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." We get life from His life, forgiveness through His death. All controversy between God and the soul is settled by the Cross and blood-shedding of Christ, and the life communicated is life out of death; and the very possession of life presumes that we are beyond judgment altogether.—*Notes of addresses by W. Lincoln, communicated by J. S. H.*

NOTES ON ECCLESIASTES.

(Continued from page 151).



HAP. XI. verse 1.—"Cast thy bread, &c." "Sow ye beside all waters" (Isaiah xxxii. 20); for, "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7-9). See also Proverbs iii. 9-10. The allusion seems to be to the sowing of seed when the land is flooded; apparently it is lost, but after the waters have subsided the green blade is seen.

Verse 2.—This, with verse 1, seems to teach the value of generously dealing out whilst one may (in every direction), for we cannot tell but that reverses may come to us, and the injunction, "make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations," seems the parallel truth taught (in Luke xvi.) by the Lord Jesus.

Verses 3, 4.—Full clouds empty themselves on the earth for good; and, as a tree falling abideth where it falls, so, wherever the clouds empty themselves, there the rain acteth for good. Thus, in giving there will surely be blessing wherever the bounty is scattered; yet it must be done as before God, not waiting for times and seasons according to human expectations, else there will be disappointment. Even as a farmer, who keeps waiting till he thinks all is favourable before he sows or reaps, instead of acting in due season (instantly), is disappointed.

Verses 5, 6.—Thou knowest not the secrets of God in nature, how canst thou fully comprehend His works in all things? So, go on generously, day by day, taking advantage of every *present* opportunity, for thou knowest not which act of thine shall be prosperous—this or that—or whether both shall be alike good.

Verses 7, 8.—Truly, it is a pleasant thing to live prosperously, in the light and sunshine of favourable circumstances; yet, even if a man live many years and rejoice in them all (and I do not say he is not to), let him remember days of sorrow and trial trouble and death will come, and let him be prepared for this by knowing God, lest all prove utter vanity.

Verses 9, 10.—Take thy full joy, O young man, in thy life, and in all thou desirest; yet, remember, thou art accountable to God in all these things, and all must pass before Him in judgment. Therefore, take good care to remove *things which cause sorrow* from

thine heart, and put away evil habits from Thy flesh, for the ways of childhood and youth—unrestrained and apart from the fear of God—are, verily vanity.

CHAPTER XII.

Verse 1.—The entreaty to remember or give due heed to the Creator when young is here solemnly urged, on the ground that “evil days” soon come—*i.e.*, days when man is unable to give heed or attend to God’s voice; when the worn-out senses take no pleasure in anything vital.

Verse 2.—Figures showing forth a man’s sensibility to joy, and as though it was said, “Give heed to thy God while all things are bright and clear to thee; before the sky of thy life is clouded over, and storm succeeds storm.”

Verses 3-6.—Give heed, before the day when “the keepers of the house” (*i.e.*, the arms and hands) shall tremble through old age, and “the strong men”—thy legs—shall bow themselves through weakness, and thy teeth fail to chew thy food, and thine eyes be dim and darkened; before thy lips are closed and thy voice is weak and low, and broken sleep causes thee to rise early at the voice of the bird, and the once musical notes of thy voice are brought low, and before little things cause fear and forebodings; before “the almond tree shall flourish” (*i.e.*, the hair turn silver grey as the leaf of the almond tree), before the smallest thing is a burden, and desire quite fail; before, I say, these things take place, Oh! remember thy Creator! because man goeth to his long home (*i.e.* the grave—the home he occupies for the longest—“it is appointed unto him to die”); and the hired mourners go about the streets bewailing. O! turn to God and give heed to Him, or ever “the silver cord” be loosed (*i.e.*, the thread of thy life), or “the golden bowl” be broken;—likening the living body in its matchless workmanship and worth, to a golden bowl;—or the pitcher (the earthly house) be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern (*i.e.*, the wheel winding up the water), the allusion being to the wonderful mechanism of the human frame, which ceases to work at death.

Verse 7.—“Then (when death ensues) shall the dust return to the earth as it was (Gen iii. 19), and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.”

Back to the earth shall the materials of the body go, and back to God, man’s spirit, to give in its account.

Verse 8.—“Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity.” Such is his conclusion after stating all that man can do, or obtain, or be under the sun.

Verses 9-14.—And further, Solomon seems to have written this book after his failure, and after full experience of all he has stated; because the Preacher was wise, because, after his painful experiences he saw what was truly wisdom, and what would benefit others, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he pondered carefully and sought out, and set in order many proverbs (1 Kings iv. 32). Yea, the Preacher sought to find out acceptable words which should speak to the hearts of men, and that which was written in righteousness, even words of truth (for the words of the wise are as goads stirring the sluggish hearts of men; and as nails well driven in, are the words of masters of assemblies), given from one Master Shepherd. And, further, by these writings (such as these) my son, be admonished, be taught; for there are many books written, the study of which would be only a weariness to the flesh, whereas the study of God’s words will ever prove a refreshment to the spirit.

Now, “Let us hearken to the conclusion of the whole matter; ‘Fear God, and keep His commandments.’ This is the whole duty of man;” this is the sum of all happiness, this is the true object of a man’s life; “for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil.” Nothing shall escape His righteous judgment, and even the secrets of men (Rom. iii. 16), shall be made known and judged. So let man learn now, of God, that he may not have reason to be ashamed before Him then.

Twenty-nine times in this book is the expression “under the sun” used. This affords a clue to the meaning of the teaching. Solomon tries for himself, notes, observes, and draws lessons from all things “under the sun” with this conclusion, that “all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” Nothing satisfies; nothing here is meant to satisfy the soul of man. The record is left us, that man may know there is “no new thing” he can possibly try in the way of gratification to himself under the sun; and seeing all has been well and thoroughly and impartially looked into and tried by one who had extraordinary opportunities so to do, and unsurpassable powers, what possible use can there be in any man attempting it after such a trial?

Thus, God overruleth this experience to warn men not to seek rest or pleasure in creature comforts or pursuits, but in turning to Himself, the Source and Giver of all good.

In the Lord Jesus Christ alone is this revealed. He is made "of God" (unto those who believe in Him), "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." He comes, the Giver of eternal life (and the Source of all good) unto men; that unto Him, man drawn, may be created anew, and made capable of enjoying and of being satisfied with the things of God. Seeing then, "the darkness is past, and the True Light now shineth," man has now no excuse to abide in darkness. "The times of ignorance God closed His eyes unto, but now He commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and to believe the Gospel; seeing He hath 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. 30, 31). A. O. M.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

CHAP. x. 10, 11.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY J. R. C.

NEITHER murmur ye as some of them murmured and were destroyed of the destroyer" (see Num. xiv. 2-29).

From this last scripture we learn that it was this sin specially that brought upon the whole of Israel from 20 years old and upward, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, the sentence "your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness."

Murmuring is the direct outcome of unbelief. It is a denial of all God's goodness. It is taking sides with the serpent in his lying insinuation against God, that He is not as good as He says, that instead of loving us and blessing us, He hates us and would deprive us of blessing.

Yet, strange to say, how often are the children of God found sinning thus, and instead of judging it as sin of the most heinous character, it is excused and even defended—as Jonah, when the gourd withered, stoutly asserted, "I do well to be angry."

God's grand object in creation, as well as in the

more wondrous mysteries of redemption, is to manifest Himself. In creation His power and wisdom are displayed and we read that as the result of this, at the first, "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job xxxviii. 7), and ever since, the reverent contemplation of creation's wonders calls forth praise to the Creator (see Ps. viii. 9, Rev. iv. 11).

But in Christ and in His redemption work the glories of God's character shine out as they never did or could in any other way. Pre-eminently in redemption is God manifesting Himself so as to elicit praise and worship deeper, sweeter, and more acceptable than ever was offered before.

And from us, who are the unworthy objects of such wondrous grace, what is His due? Is it not that we should "in everything give thanks?" Is it not basest ingratitude that we, who know Him, not only as Creator but as Redeemer—who have been "so loved" and blessed in Christ, should ever allow a murmuring, rebel thought to arise?

Yet such is the deceitfulness of our hearts that such thoughts will and do arise, and also find expression in naughty murmuring looks and words, unless, by faith, we are living in the present enjoyment of the love of God.

There is no other cure. Faith will praise. Unbelief will murmur. The wilderness to Israel was a time of proving or testing. Such is our time on earth. Circumstances are arranged for us by the providence of God to this end. Faith can look at all circumstances in the light of the Cross of Jesus and can say, "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Again, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Thus murmuring is cast out as faith brings God in. Thus and thus alone can we "give thanks always for all things"—it is only "IN BELIEVING" that we can be filled with joy and peace.

It is practical infidelity that writhes under a disappointment, grumbles at the weather, maligns the climate, rages at the children, they are "so naughty," and incessantly murmurs at the badness of trade, the folly of governments, the blindness of saints, &c., &c.

Unbelief is the most virulent form of spiritual dyspepsia—it makes everything look dark and evil, because it blots God and His sunshine out of the soul's

firmament. Oh! that we might learn as God's children how He is dishonoured, His spirit grieved, His people's souls withered, and Satan rejoiced by a murmuring spirit.

In the arctic regions the captain of a vessel knows in the darkest night that an iceberg is near by the sudden fall in the temperature. Within a wide circle around the moving icy mass everything feels its chill, —its deadly influence. Such is a Christian who is abiding in practical unbelief and losing sight of God. Others who approach Him feel the chill, and well is it for them if it drives them to nestle the closer under the Almighty wings.

“Now these things happened unto them for ensamples (figures, or types); and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world (the age) are come” (verse 11).

This verse is conclusive as to the spiritual import of all that is written in the Old Testament. It is the book of experience. We do not find much of the experience of God's people recorded in the New Testament. We have there a record of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus; also, the doctrines of God's grace; His truth unfolded for us, and His will concerning us, in all the different relationships of our life on earth. We have also the prophetic word telling us very plainly of coming glory and judgment. But we do not find a large portion of the New Testament taken up with the experience of God's people.

These Old Testament records of the experience of God's people were specially written for our admonition, profit, and instruction. No doubt we are in a different dispensation, and a different order of things, but it does not, therefore, follow that we are any the less able to gather instruction from these Old Testament Scriptures.

I have heard it said that, because the Old Testament saints had not the Spirit as we have, therefore they are not patterns for us.

The Holy Spirit indeed dwells in the believer now in such fulness as was not known in the previous dispensation. We have, therefore, much greater knowledge of the mind of God than the Old Testament saints had. “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”

(1 Cor. ii. 9, 10). He has been given “to teach us all things” (John xiv. 2, 6), to “guide us into all truth” (John xvi. 13). Great are the privileges, and, therefore, great are the responsibilities of the saints of this dispensation; nevertheless, whatever of holiness, righteousness, or graciousness we discover in the ways of God's people in the past dispensation, it was by God's grace it was wrought. They had the same God to rely upon, and it was by His grace they were sustained and upheld as now. The flesh was the same in its nature and manifestations; I daresay, it is even worse now. The Devil was as wicked then as he is now, but, having longer experience, the ways by which he deceives men are even more subtle now than then. It is the same sinful world. I may say that since it put to death the Son of God, and God having sent His Holy Spirit, its sinfulness is more aggravated. It was by the Spirit that saints were quickened and upheld in the path of faith and obedience then as now, hence the same divine principles are to be found throughout, and the experience of those of whom we have been reading answers as face to face in a glass. We see our hearts to be as deceitful as theirs. Therefore, we are warned and put on our guard lest we yield to sinful temptation as they did.

If we take up what are called the historic books of the Old Testament (God forbid that we should regard them as mere histories), which were inspired by the Spirit of God, we see in them God's biographies, indited by the Spirit of truth. The subjects are not flattered, and all the bad traits in their character left out as in man's biographies. Having been written for our admonition, they are faithful delineations of human character applicable to all ages; and it is of the utmost importance that we give heed to them.

I commend to God's people the careful and prayerful reading of the Old Testament scriptures. There you will find recorded the sins, failures, and temptations of God's people; also, the ways in which God dealt with them, all of which have a living voice for us. It will, therefore, be for the profit and blessing of our souls to search and study these scriptures with a prayerful subject spirit, seeking to take home to our hearts all the lessons that they teach, and ever remember that we have the same patient, faithful, gracious God that they had.

THE LAST DAYS.



It has been thought by some that this world is getting better in its moral character ; and that when it arrives at a certain stage, universal salvation will be the result.

But we have only to turn to the word of God to find that this is not so. In 2 Tim. iii. 13, it is written, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

Instead, therefore, of getting better, the world is to get worse ; and we have only to look around us to see the awful confirmation of all this. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed," and it is only those who are in the secret of the Lord that know what is yet coming to pass on this sin-stained, guilty world.

Great progress may have been made in the advance of science and art, but how terribly has wickedness increased with all this increasing knowledge ; and, instead of a desire to know more about God, it may truly be said of this generation, that they "desire not the knowledge of His way" (see Job. xxi. 14).

"In the last days, perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

. . . Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth, men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Tim. iii. 1-8.)

We are here distinctly given to understand what is to be the prominent feature of the "last days," viz., *departure from God*. How often does the form of godliness show itself, but without the power.

No doubt the world is becoming more refined and religious ; but it is only human refinement and worldly religion. It is a religion without Christ. Every "*form of godliness without the power*" that exists to-day can exist without Christ.

Christendom wants a Christ, but it is not the Christ who died on Calvary's accursed tree. It is a Christ who will wink at sin and shut his eyes at iniquity ; who will allow his followers to have as much pro-

fession and as many religious formalities as will be consistent with the spirit of the age, and not interfere with any of their pernicious ways (compare 2 Cor. xi. 4, and 2 Peter ii. 2).

When one is found to stand up and testify for God, and to enjoin separation from this "present evil world," he is quickly set aside, by worldly professors, and sometimes even by Christians, as "*too legal*," "*righteous overmuch*," &c.

Reference to Exodus vii. 11, shows how Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses. They withstood him by imitating (through the agency of the Devil) his actions. But when it was a case of creating life out of the dust, their imitations were only a miserable failure (Chap. viii. 18), and they were compelled to acknowledge to Pharaoh that it was "the finger of God" (verse 19).

If ever there was an age of imitations, it is the present.

Children of the Devil (John viii. 44), are to be found amalgamated with the children of God, pretending to worship and serve Him. Darkness and light, which can by no means have fellowship, have been placed side by side together.

The sons of Belial, and the sons of God, have been joined hand in hand, while God asks the question : "Can two walk together except they be agreed ?" (Amos iii. 3).

So, these sons of darkness are said to *resist* the truth. They do not come out and *deny* it openly, but by imitating, *resist* it.

But there is a time coming when this will be tolerated no longer. "The refuge of lies" (Isaiah xxviii. 17), shall be swept away. The cloak of religion shall be torn asunder, and the resisters of the truth will be stripped of all their hypocrisy, and appear in their own nakedness.

This apostate world shall yet see "the Lord Jesus revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess. i. 7-9).

Instead of becoming more righteous, the world is getting ripe for that judgment that slumbereth not.

Instead of godliness being in the ascendant, iniquity is abounding on every hand. The spirit of Antichrist

has already begun to make itself felt, as saith the Scripture: "Even now are there many Antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time." "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God, and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world" (1 John ii. 18; iv. 3). Truly we are in what the Scripture calls "the last days." Damnable heresies are being brought in even among the saved by false teachers, who "bring upon themselves swift destruction" (see 2 Peter ii.). Again it is written: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies and hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with a hot iron (*i.e.*, past feeling), forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving, of them which believe and know the truth" (1 Tim. iv. 1-3).

We have only to turn to corrupt Christendom to see the abundant fulfilment of this Scripture.

The doctrines of devils are being ushered in from all quarters by the devil's agents, whose consciences are past feeling. The latter part of the above Scripture, "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats," &c., points unmistakably to the Romish Church, and the celibacy of its priesthood.

In these ungodly, apostate days, "scoffers, walking after their own lusts," are not wanting who boldly ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (see 2 Peter iii. 4).

To the eye of the unenlightened observer, all seems to be drifting, where—he cannot tell; but the Christian enlightened by the Holy Spirit, is not surprised to find iniquity under the garb of religion.

To such the word is: "But beloved remember ye the words which were spoken before, of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who would walk after their own ungodly lusts" (Jude 17, 18).

It has been remarked, that the darkest part of the night is just before the dawn of day. This may well be applied to Christendom, for, instead of its being a light in this dark world, it is getting darker every day; let us, therefore, who are of the light take heed to the exhortation of the apostle Peter: "We have, also, a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do

well that ye take heed, as unto a 'light' that shineth in a 'dark place,' until the day dawn and the 'Daystar' arise" (2 Peter i. 19).

THOUGHTS ON THE DEATH OF LAZARUS.

JOHN XI.

THE sickness and death of Lazarus procured for the loved family at Bethany a visit from the Lord—a circumstance in itself full of blessing and of promise; and in that visit we see several things which may well engage our heart and attention.

He sympathizes with the sorrow, and then removes the cause of it. He "wept" first, and afterwards said, "Lazarus, come forth."

The purpose which He carried with Him of removing the occasion of the misery, left His heart still the seat of present compassion with it. It was so in the case of sending out the Apostles. He was about to give them pastors according to His own heart; but looking on them as sheep that had no shepherd, He had compassion on the multitudes. It was so again in His feeding the people. He was about to give them bread enough and to spare, but on seeing them, He had compassion (Matthew xvi. 32).

No prospect of the *future*, be it as bright and certain as it may, can rightly close the heart to the claims of the *present*. The follower of Christ will "weep," as he enters the house of mourning, or the chamber of death, though he knows that the power of resurrection, in season, will close the scene in all its own magnificence and joy.

With this sympathy and this power over the cause of sorrow, we see, moreover, *the instructions of wisdom, and the lessons of God conveyed through this sorrow.*

Martha speaks of her grief to the Lord. And much ignorance is expressed through the natural, and in some sense pardonable, exercises of her wounded heart. But Jesus teaches her the way of God more perfectly. He lets the light of some wondrous truths break in upon her soul,—truths deeper and more precious than what the hours of her undisturbed ease and happiness had been able to discover. The light of the day of prosperity had not shewn her what Jesus now brought with Him in this night of weeping. She is made to see some bright shinings of the glory of

God through the tears of that sorrow, through that gloom of death which had entered her dwelling. "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

The place was, indeed, a sanctuary; and Jesus Himself treads softly. He wept. He owned the claim of such a moment. But it was a spot for Him to cultivate also. It was a garden of the Lord's; and He enriches it with fresh fruit and growth of knowledge.

Again, let me say of this affecting scene, *that it is made productive to others also*. Many believe, when they witness how the grace and power of the Lord had dealt with this sorrow. "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him."

I ask, is not all this as much the history of this our day, as it was of the day of Martha and Mary? Who need live long or travel far to know that the sorrows of the saints still draw the willing visits of Christ? And that, during such visits, He sympathizes and teaches? Who, I ask, need live long or travel far in order to know this? Gracious it is in the Spirit, and precious to us, to have the record of such things in the Book "written for our learning." But is it less gracious in Him, or less precious to us, that these things are not merely the things of *history*, but the common things of *experience and observation*?

And further: this sorrow is the occasion of *fresh acts of supplication and of worship*. "Father, I thank Thee, that Thou hast heard Me," said the Lord. And is this at all more strange, or less a matter of experience than the others? What say our own souls?

"Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer,
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there."

This is not *history*, but *experience*. It is not the light of other days which, as we *hear*, was wont to cheer the night of weeping, or the house of mourning, but the light which, as we *know*, is still wont to hold its court and display its power, in the dark valley, and in the shadow of death.

I am bold also to add another thought—a thought, too, lately made very precious to my own heart—that *the blessed Lord, in unjealous love, allows both our sorrows and our mercies to be just links between Himself and our poor hearts*.

The widow of Sarepta was afresh bound to the Prophet, when she received her son from the dead. Her joy in one she so loved being restored to her acted as another link of tenderest and yet strongest texture between her heart and the man of God, the witness of Christ. And the Spirit allowed it, I am sure (1 Kings xvii. 24). So, in much later days, the Lord allowed His servants to be thankful and take courage, on seeing brethren again after a long separation, though during that separation he had enjoyed His presence and encouragements in a sweet and large measure (Acts xxviii). And so here: receiving their brother from the dead, the dear family at Bethany are more than ever in devotedness the Lord's. In the power and joy of resurrection they sit with Him (ch. xii. 2). *They delight in Him afresh through the mercy which their common, natural, human feelings had received. They rejoice in Him who is "the Resurrection and the life."*

PSALM LXXIII.

IN this precious Psalm the man of God looks on the world around through the windows of his sanctuary, *i.e.*, through the eyes of Christ. And this, beloved, is our only safe way of contemplating all around, and ourselves as amidst it all. "The spiritual man discerneth all things."

But looking out of the window is not our only, or our chief employ in our blessed sanctuary. There are holy treasures within which should engage and fill our hearts and minds. The Father, His counsels, and His love—Jesus, His grace, and His glory—the family of God, with all the peace, joy, and love of the fellowship of saints. What heart can trace, what tongue can tell the blessedness of the objects found within! Praise, intercession, prayer; the Word, too, and that Holy Anointing pervading all, even the Spirit of God Himself, who interpreteth all to our souls in love!

Oh! let us then live amidst these holy things, supping, dwelling with Jesus. And when He leads us to look outward on the scenes around, we shall do so in fellowship with Him. Then shall we anew bless Him for that word—"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Anew praise Him for having redeemed us to God by *His own blood*, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father!

In all these things we should seek to be led by *His* word; seeking to read it *all* in communion with Him whose word it is. Not making a Bible of our own out of a *part* of the Word, but reading it all as "written" and at the feet of Jesus, taught by His Spirit. *Then* shall we look upward, forward, backward, around, inward, just as His own word, opened to us by the Spirit of truth and grace, leads our souls.

"YIELD YOURSELVES UNTO GOD."

JESUS, my Lord, in deep humility
I now desire to yield myself to Thee;
Spirit and soul and body to be Thine,
Indwelt and quickened by Thy life Divine.

Though "other lords" have o'er me long held sway,
Yet henceforth Thee alone I would obey:—
No longer only following in word,
Throughout my being I would own Thee Lord.

My heart I bring—Lord, take it for Thine own!
And raise within me now Thy royal throne;
Each longing, each affection of my soul,
Bring under Thine unlimited control.

My mind and intellect I yield to thee:
Lord Jesus bring into captivity
Each wandering thought, imagination, dream:—
Even o'er these Thy will shall reign supreme.

My lips and tongue must also ever be
Subjected, Jesus, Master, unto Thee:—
Must speak for Thee when Thou dost give the word,
At other times be silent to the Lord.

These hands must labour always for my King,
Doing for Him each great or little thing.
If recompense for labour now seem small,
Thine "Inasmuch" will one day pay for all.

My wandering feet no more must run astray
In paths self-chosen: keep them in Thy way
As Thou hast promised:—guide, uphold, restrain,
And let them ne'er to folly turn again.

Jesus, my Lord, I choose Thee for my King!
In grace accept the sacrifice I bring,
Bind to the altar fast with cords of love,
That ne'er again I far from Thee may rove.

Yea, Lord, take ALL! for I *am* all Thine own,
For me the winepress Thou didst tread alone;
"Bought with a price"—even Thy precious blood,
I'm Thine for evermore, my Lord and God!

A. H.

CHRIST THE ESSENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

NOW I wish for myself, and desire to fix it on the consciences of others, that the one thing needful is the *knowledge* of CHRIST (John xvii. 2). Many seem to think that when they believe in Jesus, and are *resting* in His atoning death, they know all; but joy and peace are to be *multiplied* through a *growing* acquaintance with CHRIST (1 Pet. i. 2). Every leaf of the Bible testifies of CHRIST: it is like a rose that is just opening under the genial warmth of the sun; each separate leaf emits the fragrance of the rose: the rose is not perfect without each leaf, and each leaf has fragrance only as being a part of the whole rose; so with the Bible, it is the testimony of JESUS in every leaf. HE is the very essence of the written word; it has no value, no savour, apart from HIM; and when our hearts are really alive to discover CHRIST, to *learn* CHRIST, then, through the Spirit's teaching, each chapter will be fragrant with the perfume of His Name.

A LETTER,

TOUCHING VARIOUS ASPECTS OF ASSEMBLY TRUTH.

DEAR ———,—Now from Scripture I would try to answer some of your suggestions. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the *old* paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. vi. 16).

What does the Scripture teach us about the Holy Spirit? John xiv. 16, 17, shows us that God's children alone are so indwelt by the Holy Spirit, for the Lord adds, "Whom the world cannot receive." "What? know ye not" (says the apostle), "that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God" (1 Cor. vi. 19).

But we are not only indwelt *individually* by the Holy Ghost, but in 1 Cor. xii. 13 we find that "by one Spirit are we *all* baptized into one body. . . ." In verse 12, God takes up the simile of a human body, and tells us that "as the body is *one*, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so also is Christ." This is "*the body*" indwelt by the Spirit, "*the Church*," as recognized by God, in His Word. "The Church, which is His body" (Eph. i. 23), which includes every member of Christ. "There is *one* body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (Eph. iv. 4). He, the Lord Jesus, and we, His

members, having but one life, and one Spirit, God gives but one name to the whole body, the name of the living Head, "the Christ" (1 Cor. xii. 12). This living union between Christ and His Church is the divine side of things.

"Chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world" ("the mystery of Christ"), "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit . . . the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been *hid in God*, who created all things, by Jesus Christ; to the intent that *now* unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the *eternal purpose* which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. iii. 4-11). And that hereafter, "In the *ages to come*, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us through Jesus Christ," and then, "The world will believe," "the world will know" (John xvii. 21-23).

This is all *God's* "workmanship," and no human hand can either make or mar in it. "He quickened us together with Christ," "He raised us up together with Christ" (Eph. ii. 5, 6). "God hath set the members in the body as it hath pleased Him" (1 Cor. xii. 18).

But there is also another aspect of things to be considered, *i.e.*, the Church in her responsibility to God on earth.

When God desired Moses to build a tabernacle, which was to be "a pattern of heavenly things," "See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shown thee in the mount" (Heb. viii. 5). And it was so carried out at first (Ex. xxxix. 43). But failure soon began in the worship and service (Lev. x., Acts vii. 40-42); and before long the ark was separated from the tabernacle not to be restored to its place till the building of the temple (1 Sam. iv.). And in like manner, "the Church which is His body," "the heavenly thing," had its counterpart on earth, with *full* directions given, how it was to be carried out. So we find in the beginning of the Acts, "All that *believed* were together." A very *inclusive* and *exclusive* expression. In Acts v., it is added, "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them . . . and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." While the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians give us the heavenly aspect, so to speak, of the Church, the epistles to the Corinthians give us the aspect of the Church in responsibility on earth. And here Israel's history of failure is soon repeated.

The first three chapters of 1 Corinthians warn us against the two-fold evil, on the one hand, of sectarianism, and taking any name but that of "Christ;" ("Is Christ divided?") and, on the other hand, against building into the temple the wood, hay, and stubble of a mere profession which will not bear the test. In chapter v. he shows them how variously they are to act towards

those "*within*" and those "*without*" (verses 12, 13).

He goes on to teach them *very minutely* all that concerns church matters—socially, the Lord's table, ministry, and Church government, ending his exhortation with the solemn words of warning, "If any man think himself to be a prophet or *spiritual*, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you *are the commandments* of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant" (1 Cor. xiv. 37, 38).

The second epistle shows us that already the Church and the world were beginning to link hands, and the apostle, by the Spirit, raises his warning voice, that as "the temple of the living God," indwelt by Him, they must "*come out* from among them, and be separate" (2 Cor. vi. 14-18).

And has not the Church failed utterly, both in sectarianism and as to her separation from the world, and consequently in her testimony to it? Have not these warnings been entirely disregarded? Prove it. In what so-called "Church" would it be possible now to carry out any of these principles of 1 Corinthians? Take, for instance, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." People now-a-days are born (?) in such and such parishes, Protestants or Roman Catholics, and go to their respective "places of worship." Each one "belongs" to such and such a "church." Why not? He may spend his days in carelessness and godlessness his evenings in theatres, &c., or it may be worse. Or perhaps another is outwardly all one would desire, but unconverted also. But they are both "confirmed members" of the "Church of England," or of "Ireland," or had become through some form "members" of some other sect; and have therefore as good a right to come to "church" or to the Lord's table as any Christian present. Yet God's word says, "*Come out* from among them, and *be ye separate*." "What communion has light with darkness?" "What part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever?" Of the Lord's Supper He says, "Are they not the communion of the body . . . of the blood of Christ?"

The Church in its present condition upon earth is a ruin. "All that believe" are not "together." The "living stones" are built in with the "dead" clay of this world, into various buildings; like the stones of the ruined temple in Jerusalem, built into the temple of Omar and surrounding hovels. The question arises, "What then?" Are we to come out from amongst them and try, so to speak, to reconstruct the Church? Surely not. How could any gathering on earth now be called "The Church?"* Such a name now would, from the circumstances of the case, exclude all the other children of God, who (however wrongly so) are in the surrounding sects.

* Whilst desiring to guard against every form of unwarrantable assumption, we fail to see that a Scripturally-gathered company of saints should be owned as anything less than a church or assembly of God.—Ed.

If you look at the second epistle to Timothy, written for these "last days," you will see that God contemplates such a time. A "perilous," "grievous" (R.V.), or "difficult" time, and there shows the "*man of God*," what *he* is to do?

In 1 Tim. iii. 15, the apostle had written to the young man, Timothy, how he was "to behave himself in *the house of God*," which is "*the church of the living God*;" but in the second epistle, the "latter day" epistle, in a day of faith being overthrown, and ungodliness increasing, he tells him, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the *Lord* knoweth them that *are His*, and let everyone that nameth the name of the *Lord* (R.V.) *depart from iniquity*. But in a *great house*" (he no longer uses the language of the first epistle, "*the house of God*," &c.) "there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a *man* therefore purge *himself from these* . . ." (It is no longer an exhortation to the "church," as such, to maintain her position as "the temple of the living God" in separation unto Him). *Now* the exhortation is *individual*. "If a *man* therefore purge himself from these" (vessels of dishonour in the great house), "*he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work*." That these "vessels of dishonour" are in "*the house*" implies that they are not in the position of the heathen world *outside*, but maintaining a lifeless, God-dishonouring formalism inside.

The "vessels unto honour" are then exhorted to personal holiness and *fellowship* in holiness, "*with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart*" (22). The next chapter (2 Tim. iii.), then dropping all metaphor, tells us in a few strong words the characteristics of those who, in "the latter days," will wear as a cloak this *form* of godliness, but denying the power thereof, who in these last difficult days fill the "places of worship;" and Christians say complacently, "We can't help it;" but *God* says, "*From such turn away*."

It is a day for *individual* faithfulness to the Lord; alone, if need be (Jer. xv. 17, 19, 20), and if we find those who with us are seeking to carry out *church principles, as given to us in the epistles*, returning to the "*old paths*," if we be only two or three "gathered unto the Name" of the Lord Jesus, He is "*in the midst*." And here "in the midst," "*Jesus Christ is Lord*." This leaves no room for individual lawlessness, but rather brings us into the position of responsibility and subjection.

Freed from the trammels of human traditions and organizations, we have much need to observe the apostle's exhortations, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. . . . Brethren, ye have

been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. v. 1, 13).

Thus gathered together unto Him, each assembly, and each member of such assemblies personally is responsible to the Lord, to do all things "after the due order," in subjection to *Him*, following the directions, and those only laid down in His Word.

If human additions were necessary, why did the apostle tell Timothy that "*all Scripture is . . . profitable for doctrine*," &c., "that the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly furnished* unto *all good works*?" (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17).

When Moses gave Israel their law, ceremonial as well as moral, he tells them, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you" (Deut. iv. 2). But by the time that the Lord came to earth, the Pharisees had added many (no doubt very beautiful) "traditions of the elders" to His Word, and the Lord's comment on it all is, "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit, in *vain* do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For, laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the commandments of men. . . . And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition. . . . making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition" (Mark vii. 6-9, 13).

And do not these words of our Lord apply to us, as to how we carry out the two simple ordinances He has left us? (Compare Lev. x.). Are we more at liberty to do what we like because we are not under law, but under grace? Obedience does not merely mean doing what He says, but doing it *as* He says it, even did He not descend to give us the divine meaning of these ordinances, which He does, very fully. Could God praise many of His people now for "keeping the ordinances as I delivered them unto you?" (1 Cor. xi. 2).

The "Church of Ireland" (in common with some other sects), sprinkles an infant to admit it into the "Church!" (I do not speak of the High Church view of baptismal regeneration, though it seems to me to be more consistent with the rest of the "Church's" teaching.) Scripture teaches, "He that *believeth*, and is baptized, shall be saved" (Mark xvi.). "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized" (Acts ii.), and so on through the book of Acts. You know that the word itself (even apart from the instances given in the Bible) means "immersion," and could not mean sprinkling. They were immersed, or baptized, *not* to admit them into anything, but as followers of Christ; they thus confessed Christ, and as those who believed that spiritually they had

“died with Christ,” been “buried with Him,” and “raised in Him,” to “walk in newness of life” with Him, waiting for the resurrection in His likeness. Thus they reckoned themselves “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God” (Rom. vi.).

The baptism of believers teaches much besides, but this is enough to draw a distinction. Does it then make no difference how you do it? When? or what it means? And what about the Lord’s supper? Compare the Lord’s own simple words in the Gospels, as He left us this memorial of His death for us, and the fellowship which it expresses (1 Cor. x.) with Himself and His members. Compare it with a “consecrated” bread and wine, a “priest” to “administer it,” a “sacrament” wrapped up in “mystery” (!) as the “prayer-book” makes it to be. Read the exhortations on the Sunday before “communion” and on “communion Sunday.” Are not, for instance, these sentences “superstition?” “That Christ was given not only to die for us, but also to be our spiritual food and sustenance *in that holy sacrament.*” “For *then* we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood. *Then* we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us.” *Then?* “Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.” These subjects touch on matters which deeply concern each of us in our relationship to God, and the responsi-

bility He has put upon us by giving us His Word, makes them worthy of our fullest consideration, and, in fact, *requires* it of us.—Yours truly,
J. M.

WOULDST thou know that the matters contained in the word of Christ are real things? Then never read them for mere knowledge sake. Look for some beams of Christ’s glory in every verse. Account nothing knowledge, but as it is seasoned with some revelation of the glorious presence of Christ by His quickening Spirit. Use no conference about spiritual truths for conference sake, but still mind the promoting of edification. Use not duties for custom and mere service sake, but for nearer communion with God.”

PRECEPT.—The precepts which God has given us are generally grounded upon some revelation of God’s character;—thus, “Be ye holy, for I am holy;” “Let us love one another, for love is of God;” “Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful;” “Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you,” &c.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

NOTE.—Those who endeavour to reply to Questions, desire to impress upon readers their responsibility to “prove all things,” and “hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. v. 21). They make no pretension to infallibility, but give their judgment as those who have received mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—Many Questions are received but not replied to; some not being for general edification, whilst others are laid aside from want of sufficient light to deal with them.—It is requested that all communications be accompanied by the Name and Address of the sender.

QUESTION NO. CCV.

Is it right for an assembly gathered to the Name of the Lord to give to the need of saints who are not in fellowship in an assembly thus gathered?

REPLY.

Our instructions are—“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. vi. 10).

We do not deny that those who in the providence of God are gathered in one assembly have mutual claims and responsibilities that take precedence of others.

The need of saints with whom we are more immediately associated ought undoubtedly first to be considered.

But to shut up our bowels of compassion against those who are members of the same body, and dear to Christ as the apple of His eye, because they have not yet learned the blessedness of being gathered where Christ is owned as Lord, with sole right to order His own household, would be a sad denial of the truth we seek to own, that “there is one body and one Spirit,” notwithstanding all the sectarianism that abounds on every hand.

In Gal. ii, verse 10, we see how the distance between the Jewish and Gentile Churches was bridged over by loving remembrance of the poor. Thus with much of prejudice and ignorance that tended to separate, love sought the more to reach those who might have been alienated, and so to draw the cords of fellowship and mutual sympathy closer, to the glory of God.

QUESTION CCIX.

If a brother has been told by those in oversight that his ministry is not acceptable nor to profit, is it right for him to go "and break bread" in another assembly at a distance, and would it be right of them to receive him?

REPLY.

It is quite possible that brethren assuming to be "in oversight" might be mistaken as to the profitableness of certain ministry. But experience goes to show that the wilful brother who loves to hear his own voice; who claims to have a "gift" and "a message;" and to have it "laid on his heart," &c., &c.; and who will speak regardless as to whether his so-called "ministry" is profitable and acceptable or not, is no uncommon character.

We have to thank God that Satan does not succeed in filling more hearts with this species of conceit.

But where an assembly is tried in this way, we would suggest that many courses are open that are seldom adopted.

1st. Let it be remembered that God has permitted it to test the faith and patience of His children. Therefore, let the whole assembly judge themselves, and perhaps on self-examination it will be found that unprofitable ministry came to the front because those who should have been ministering profitably were not exercised as to their responsibility, but neglecting the gift that was in them.

2nd. Let prayer be offered that God would so cause his presence to be realized that the flesh would be silenced, and full liberty be afforded for the Spirit of God to use whom He will.

It is most blessed when God is thus appealed to, and in His faithfulness answers, to find how in this more excellent way, the irritation and sorrow of *impatient action* is avoided, and the chastened assembly encouraged to hope in God.

But if it be found after the exercise of patience and long-suffering that it is for the well-being of the assembly that the "unprofitable ministry" be put a stop to, then in the spirit of meekness, and with prayer, let the brother be informed that it is the mind of a united oversight that he should abstain from speaking. Few have the hardihood to resist such dealing.

But let not such action as this be regarded as even an approach to excluding one from fellowship. The

carnal and troublesome must be owned as in the fellowship, as well as the spiritual and amiable, else would there be no occasion for the exercise of the precious graces of patience and long-suffering.

Hence, should he go to another assembly, they have no sufficient ground for refusing to receive such an one, and if they in their weakness call upon God for wisdom to act faithfully, they might be honoured of God in reaching the brother's conscience when the first had failed.

His finding that the more distant assembly was of the same mind and judgment as the nearer, might be the very thing in the Lord's hand to break him down.

QUESTION CCX.

Please explain Lev. xiii. 13.—Why one spot will cause the person to be pronounced "unclean," and if covered all over he is "clean"?

REPLY.

The single spot was the beginning of the out-breaking of the evil within. At that stage, it is natural to suppose, there would always be the refusal to own to its being actually leprosy, or else there would be the attempt to cover it, or the hope that by some means or other it might be got rid of.

But in the one who was covered all over from head to foot, all these considerations have passed away. He has been confessed a leper long before, and presumably taken his place as such according to verses 45 and 46.

He, therefore, fitly represents one who has no word of excuse or extenuation to plead; no rag of fancied righteousness left to trust in, but like David in Ps. li, owns himself to be altogether unclean; or like the publican in Luke xviii., who had no defence for himself on the ground of prayers, or tithes, or anything else; but in contrast to the Pharisee, pleads only that he is "a sinner."

It is an interesting analogy in nature, observable in, for example, small-pox, that when the disease has wrought its way to the surface and is all out, at that very most loathsome point the healing process has begun, and the patient feels relieved from the most disturbing symptoms.

May this not indicate that in the spiritual sphere there is a close connection between the unreserved confession of sin and the supply of restoring and overcoming grace.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

CHAP. x. 12, 13.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY J. R. C.



LET us consider these words for a little :—
“Upon whom the ends of the age are come.”

In the New Testament we are spoken to as drawing very near the end of this age. The common idea that many people entertain as to the end of the world is entirely opposed to Scripture.

Many have predicted that the world would come to an end on a certain year, but all such predictions have been shown to be false. Yet people continue to talk of “the end of the world” being near. This idea has no place whatever in Scripture; but we do read of “*the end of the age,*” or “of the ages.” The word here translated “world” is different from that which represents the earth and the people on it,* and signifies “the age,” or “ages.” In Matt. xiii. 39 we read, “The harvest is the end of the world”; that means the consummation of this present age, at the end of which comes the harvest, which will be the beginning of another age—an age in which the Lord Jesus will reign, triumphant over all the power of the enemy.

We find this same expression, “the end of the age,” in Heb. ix. 26. “For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world (“cosmos”—the material world), but now once in the end of the world (“aion”—the age) hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” Since sin entered into this world, God, in His long-suffering mercy, has been dealing with man in order to bring out his character, the nature of sin, the character of God and the ends of His grace. God has great purposes to serve, and deep things to work out. This world is the platform on which these mighty and gracious purposes are being wrought out, which will be the subject of inquiry and praise from age to age

* “Cosmos” signifies the world as at present constituted. See its use in John i. 10, where it is used three times. It also signifies the persons of whom the world is composed. See John iii. 16, 17, where it occurs four times. The other word “aion” has reference to a certain period, and is most accurately rendered by the word “age.” For example, see Matt. xii. 32, Gal. i. 4, Heb. ix. 26.

of the ten thousand times ten thousand of God’s holy intelligent beings that surround His throne.

Nearly six thousand years have run their course since sin entered this world. God is still lengthening out this “acceptable year” of His grace; He is long-suffering, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” God is still dealing in sovereign grace with this guilty world. It was toward the end of this age of grace that these words we are considering were written. We are still nearer the end of it now; yet, still our long-suffering God is holding back the sword of judgment. Our God is “slow to wrath” judgment is “His strange work.”

Notice the exactness of Scripture in that verse of Isaiah lxi. 3: “The acceptable *year* of the Lord and the *day* of vengeance of our God.” The period in which God deals in grace is called a “*year,*” but when He deals in judgment it is called “the *day* of vengeance.”

When God put that terrible choice before David, which we have recorded in 2 Sam. xxiv.: Would he have seven years of famine, or flee three months before his enemies, or three *days* of pestilence, he said, “Let me now fall into the hands of the Lord; for His mercies are great.” He left God to choose. And beautifully is the heart of God revealed in the choice He made. God chose the *shortest*—that which would be over in three days. When God arises to judgment He will make “short work” of it (Rom. ix. 28).

In the book of Revelation, the seals, trumpets, and vials of wrath—all that is represented in these different departments of judgment in that book of judgment—will take place within a period of three and a-half, or at most, seven years. Thus God makes short work when He comes to judgment; but when it is grace He lengthens out the period of His long-suffering.

We are now at the very end of this day of salvation—this age of His grace. May we therefore take heed to that word, “The time is short” (1 Cor. vii. 29), and “redeem the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. v. 16).

12th Verse.—“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

This is a warning against self-sufficiency. We might turn to many instances in the Scriptures where God shows us the folly of self-confidence.

God brought Israel to the foot of Mount Sinai, and there they made a promise. They said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exo. xix. 8). It was in entire ignorance of their own heart. Before Moses came down from the Mount they broke the very first commandment of the decalogue, which says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before ME" (Ex. xx. 3). Self-confidence is fatal. Look at it in the case of Peter, who said to his Lord, "If I should die with Thee I will not deny Thee in anywise" (Mark xiv. 31). Peter did not know his own heart, nor the power of Satan and the world; he was in ignorance of it all, and it was for God's glory that he should learn this. In order to this he must pass through a bitter experience. As the Lord told him, he denied Him thrice. He said, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 31, 32). Thus God over-rules all the malice of Satan for His own glory and the blessing of His people.

Peter, who professed to be the strongest, was the very weakest. Turn in connection with that to Matt. xxvi. 40: "Jesus cometh to the disciples and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! *could ye not watch with Me one hour?*" James and John were there; but observe, He now addresses Himself to Peter—"Could ye not watch *one hour with Me?*" He was the one that boasted that though all men would deny Him he would not. Therefore the Lord marks him specially for warning.

He said unto them, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." The Lord Jesus could speak in this way, for He knew that by the grace of God there was a willingness in the inner man to follow Him. He knows that this desire is in every one who is begotten of God, and that in the very depth of our hearts there is *love to Him*; and yet He knows how powerless we are to stand in the face of temptation.

You will see how that bears upon the verse that follows:—"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man, but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (verse 13).

The apostle speaks of temptation, and immediately he calls them to look up to God. Thus he puts plainly before the Corinthian believers that in every hour of trial there needs to be the eye upon God. That's exactly what our Lord said to Peter—"Watch and pray." We are to watch, for the enemy is at hand, and we are also to have the eye upon God. We need the double caution. We are to be watching against the wiles of sin and Satan and the fascinations and enticements of the world. Therefore it will not do to fall asleep, for we are in an enemy's land. "Let us not sleep as to others, but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. v. 6). Watching will not avail without prayer; that is, having our eye upon God, and counting upon Him. Nothing but the power of God can enable us to stand against temptation.

Throughout the Scriptures we read that temptation is the portion of man.

There is a difference between the temptation referred to here and that in James i. 13: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man." Evil has no attraction for God. So the Lord Jesus could say, "The Prince of this world cometh, but hath nothing in ME." Suppose you take a magnet and put before it a piece of glass, there is nothing in the glass that responds to the attraction of the magnet. Such were all the attractions of the world and sin and Satan to Jesus: they found *no response*. How different with us. Bring the magnet to a piece of steel, and at once there is a response; the attraction takes effect. God never puts evil before any man: that is Satan's doing.

"Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed" (verse 14). I have heard it said by those who profess to be on a higher platform than others that "temptation is not sin." But that depends upon where the temptation comes from. God tempted Abraham when He told him to offer up his son on Mount Moriah. It was God testing Abraham's faith. The Lord's teaching is that "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. v. 28). Be very careful how you say that temptation is not sin. It is not sin to be tested by God in the path of obedience like Abraham. But it may be that sin is presented to us, and we are not even conscious that our hearts are responding to it. "FLEE fornication"

tion" (1 Cor. vi. 18). "FLEE from idolatry" (1 Cor. x. 14). What does that mean? There is within each one that which responds to sin; we may not be conscious of it, but still it is there all the same. God says, "flee from it." Scripture is very practical. God knows what a power there is in our corrupt nature which entices to sin. There is always the conception of sin in the heart first before the outward act is committed. Do not let us lower God's standard of holiness. He says in His Word that "the thought of foolishness is sin" (Prov. xxiv. 9).

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

CHAPTER V.

(Continued from page 165.)

WHEN we have these two hours—the hour when the Son of God is quickening, and the hour when the Son of Man will judge; and they are put in juxtaposition and in contrast. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, 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 is all this time, when the Son of God is making us hear His voice so that we live. Then another hour is spoken of in verse 28: "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice." Everywhere in Scripture judgment is attributed to the Son of Man. "He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." So in verse 27: "And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." Thus you see it is the Son of God connected with everything of grace and salvation: it is the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. If we have got life, it is because the Son of God died. Then as Son of Man He will judge. In other words, when it is an act of grace and of Divine love, the Father and the Son co-operate; and the climax of that love is seen in verse 24. Now, in carrying out this love of God and of Christ, I say the Father and the Son act conjointly. If a sinner is saved, he is not saved despite of the Son or despite of the Father; he is not saved without the Son or without the Father. It is very comforting to me when I kneel in prayer to know that I am the object of God's choice and of Christ's love. But in judgment

God acts differently. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. . . . And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." That word "Son of Man" is used in different senses in Scripture. It is used of Him as the One who had not where to lay His head, and of Him in the most exalted glory. Upon that same Being who was despised and rejected God will heap every conceivable and inconceivable glory. Notice that it is in the very nature in which He was rejected that He will judge, and for this reason it is stated that judgment is alone committed to Christ. In the giving of life He acts conjointly with the Father, but in judgment, alone, and in the nature in which He has been despised and in which God will bring Him glory. In that nature He will utter the destiny of every living being. How God does stand up for the honour of His Son! Occasionally we read of the Father judging, as in 1 Peter i. 17; but it refers to His looking at us now as His children and marking how far we please Him—not of the judgment-seat of Christ; there it is Christ, and not the Father.

I have said that there are two hours; so also are there two resurrections—the resurrection of life, and the resurrection of judgment. Observe the alternative, life or judgment. If we have got life, no judgment. What an important alternative. I might mention that the word for "done" in verse 29 is not the same about the good as about the evil. "They that have *done* good—they that have *practised* evil," as if it were their habit. Then there is the crisis of the two. Life, now, brings the resurrection of life, by-and-by; practising evil, the resurrection of judgment. The one raised to be judged, the others are raised to be glorified. The very time differs by a thousand years. But the main point is that the two resurrections differ fundamentally. When I am raised it is by the power of the Son of God, and by the Spirit, who dwells within me as a seal, on purpose to be declared a Son of God by power through resurrection from dead ones. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." The Spirit has put forth His power in our souls; He will in our bodies also. The Spirit works from inside to out. There is nothing of this with respect to the lost; they are

raised simply by an act of omnipotence. But oh! what solemn realities are called up in one's mind by these tremendous verities. How that the world may go on year after year, and century after century, but God has a Man in whom all power and omniscience reside, and by that Man He will decide the eternal destiny of every one. On the one hand there is the resurrection of life, and those who will stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; on the other, the resurrection of judgment years after, and those who will stand before the great white throne. To me it is a comparatively small matter whether a thousand years or a thousand days intervene; that is not so material. The important point is that those who are the Lord's are brought out to the resurrection of life; those not the Lord's to the resurrection of judgment. And mark again that expression here, "They that have done good" and "they that have done evil." The Lord is pleased to speak of some as those that have done good, and of others that they have done evil. He recognises *doing*, and it is not well to ignore the words. Oh! what an awful meeting of all sinners, little or big, notorious or unknown, when all are placed before that great white throne. Or, on the other hand, what a blessed meeting it will be when all the saints of God, all those countless myriads, shall be gathered round the throne in glory. We shall be all there. The Lord knows all His servants—those who have laboured much for Him, and those who have laboured little. He knows them all and will have all with Him, and then

"What a company will sing
On that millennial morn."

And our Master, our Lord, our Judge is One that knows all that we have done for Him, all the cups of cold water given in His name—and He will not miss one. Ah! what a grand time when He has us all up there, not one absent, each with our reward, each with our meed of praise, each conscious that the Lord knows perfectly all about us. And the resurrection of judgment,—it is a resurrection of damnation, for to stand before that great white throne is equivalent to that. Ah! who can tell its terrors.

Then follows the four witnesses to Christ in these two actions, to which reference has already been made. But let our minds just revert for a few minutes to that verse 24, which we may consider to be the very centre of the passage, and may be

regarded as the climax or culmination of thought as to what has been suggested: "Verily, verily" (He speaks as the Amen, the Faithful Witness), "I say unto you." And God says, That is My beloved Son, hear Him. "He that heareth My words." That is the way to get the life. He that believes that God in love sent Me, sent Me in love to hang upon the cross for him, "hath everlasting life." Thank God for that "hath;" and if it is eternal life, we never can lose it. It seems to me just the epitome, the gathering together of what the Lord had been suggesting in verses 20 and 21; and thus we get, so to speak, a revelation of one of the secrets of God. The Father and the Son converse together as to who shall be saved, and the result of that converse is, "He that heareth and believeth hath eternal life." "And shall not come into judgment"—a solemn pledge that we are beyond judgment altogether. And see the doctrine, why you cannot; you cannot, any more than Christ can be upon that cross any more. It is a striking expression. In a sense, as the next verses show, we shall come into judgment; but *this* is the judgment of the great white throne, where the wicked shall be. What an assurance from the lips of Him who never deceived. And then He even explains why we cannot. "But is passed out of death into life." Just as Noah passed out of the old world into the new—out of a world doomed to judgment into another where judgment never can pass. How could Noah, as he came down from Mount Ararat into that purged world, be judged? There was nothing left to be judged. The waters of judgment descended upon the ark, but only tended to lift it up, and he came down from that ark a judged and a justified man in type. Thus it is, "hearing," "believing," "having." And now let me ask a few questions of myself and you from this verse 24. Is Jesus the Truth? Yes, He is. Has Jesus, the Truth, spoken? "I say unto you." If He has spoken, will you hear? "He that heareth My word." Do you believe? "And believeth on Him that sent Me." Then have you everlasting life? "Hath everlasting life." And can you come into judgment? How?—*Notes of addresses by W. Lincoln, communicated by J. S. H.*

"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him."

THE LAST DAYS OF ELI.

1 SAMUEL I.—IV.

ISRAEL had long provoked the Most High. Time after time had they fallen under the power of the enemy, and again and again had the God of Jacob delivered them. But they rebelled still; and a universal turning away from God specially marks the last days of Eli, though one and another are in the secret of the Lord, and appear as solitary witnesses of the truth amidst the thousands of Israel.

Religious ceremonies, however, were still observed, sacrifices were often offered, and the Aaronic order and office of priesthood also still had a place. But the days of the long-suffering of Jehovah were nearer to a close than many imagined: for no *forms* of religion, even though of divine institution, are acceptable to God, further than they are connected with subjection of heart to Him. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. xiv. 23). Where the *form* of godliness is upheld, and the *power* thereof denied, God must turn away from it, as He also commands us (2 Tim. iii. 5).

There is nothing in this sad and solemn narrative to lead us to suppose that Eli was in any respect, as a son of Aaron, naturally disqualified for the office of Priest, or that he was wanting in the regular observance of the forms and ceremonies connected with his office, or that he was guilty of any outward act of flagrant evil. He judged Israel forty years, and therefore must have had much experience as a ruler of the house of God; and we find he was ready to rebuke drunkenness, or to give a benediction, as circumstances appeared to call for either. But with all this, how stood his own heart with God? What was his behaviour in his family? and what were his principles of action towards the people among whom he officially acted as the servant of God? Healthful inquiries! and needful too concerning ourselves, if we would have a just estimate and measure of our own hearts and ways.

A great discovery was made, when the Lord searched Eli. It was found that *he did not guard the sacrifice*. It was handled with rude and unclean hands, to suit the lawless appetites of the sons of Belial; and he did not hinder them. This was indeed a sorrowful disclosure, and betrayed great distance of heart from

God; for all spiritual comfort and strength depend upon our estimate of GOD'S SACRIFICE, as one has written,

"What think you of Christ? is the test
To try both your state and your scheme," &c.

And I would ask, how can holiness be developed, if that sacrifice, which presents to the soul the love and glory of Jehovah, be not revered and guarded with jealous watchfulness? Can peace, communion, or acceptable service be found, where the heart is careless of what is precious to God? Assuredly not; for the flesh and blood of the "Lamb without spot" is the sole source of all *spiritual* life and power. A *knowledge* of manifested sin, and some readiness to rebuke it in others may exist, but the *conscience* cannot rightly be affected by it, if GOD'S SACRIFICE be thought little of.

It was the sacrifice in Eli's day that was the touchstone, even as the cross of the Son of God is now. Every thing depends on what our thoughts are of that cross. The suffering, death, shedding of blood, and burning of the fat of the guiltless victim, presented no attraction to revolted Israel. They knew no better use of it than for carnal gratification; and even Eli had his conscience so little exercised, as to the spiritual character of the feast which was daily presented on the altar, that he contented himself with the bare mention of the notoriously wicked course of his sons, instead of frowning upon them (chapter iii. 13, margin) and exercising the godly discipline which such abominations called for. "His sons made themselves vile, and he *restrained them not*." He felt it was for present ease to let things have their course, and was content to do so, rather than faithfully oppose and withstand the desires and purposes of those evil workers. And how could it be otherwise, if the eye were closed to the glory and beauty of the sacrifice? Had he believingly traced, in the sufferings and death of the offerings, their great antitype—God manifest in the flesh—he could not but have keenly felt the dishonour done to God, and would doubtless also have gathered up strength to fight against and subdue his natural flesh and bone. How vividly does this little history bring before us the need of a deep, experimental, heartfelt acquaintance with the sacrifice of the Son of God, to enable us to fight the good fight of faith, and overcome the adversary, even in the home circle!

Such conduct, however, cannot be passed over by Him who says, "He that loveth son or daughter more

than Me is not worthy of Me." Accordingly, "a man of God" is stirred up to meet Eli with words of solemn rebuke, and awful threatening, and especially because of GOD'S SACRIFICE and God's offering being so despised. But the censure is unheeded. Neither Eli nor Israel appear either abased or alarmed: and no mention is made of individual or united humiliation or confession. The Lord's rebuke to the unhumiliated heart is like a gust of wind that has passed over the unyielding rock; for being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, it remains unmoved, unimpressed, unbroken. The tremendous rebuke and threatening of God, however, again vibrate on the ear of the aged priest, through the lips of the child Samuel, but again with apparently little effect. The heathen Ninevites might surely reprove such impenitence. Ah! Israel's priest little knew that the Lord loveth judgment, and that if we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged.

But the Ark was to be guarded as well as the Sacrifice. No one in Israel had access to it but the high priest, and he only once a year; and no one had liberty to pack it up in the holy cloths, when the camp removed, but Aaron or his sons; and no one was permitted to bear it but the Kohathites, who were commanded not to touch any holy thing on penalty of death (Num. iv. 5—15). But secret faults unjudged will sooner or later merge into presumptuous sins. Eli had not made the holy preservation of the Sacrifice a matter of conscience, and therefore the mercy-seat and cherubim of glory had little place in his affections.

Revolted and self-willed Israel, instead of mourning at home (as they will by and by), their wives apart and their families apart (Zech. xiii.), presumptuously "go out against the Philistines to battle," and Eli does not condemn their course. But though the people have turned away from God, they are still professedly religious, but make a *shadow* their refuge, instead of *Jehovah*, in time of trouble. And the sons of Belial, who had trampled upon the work of atonement unrestrained, now fearlessly indulge their sacrilegious desires. They handle the Ark of the covenant with defiled and guilty hands, tear it from its accustomed resting-place, and rudely expose it to the unbelieving gaze of the provokers of *Jehovah*.

Ask not how this unprecedented outrage was met by Eli; for unfaithfulness as to ourselves must ever

be accompanied with unfaithfulness to others; and if ungodliness is unrestrained at home, how can holiness be contended for amongst the ranks of the thousands of Israel? The same false charity that could be silent at dishonour to God touching His Sacrifice, can now without rebuke, see the precious Ark sacrilegiously abused; while the conscience, blunted as to family rule and behaviour, can easily accommodate itself to public position and conduct. I cannot help thinking that, in the mind of the Spirit, there is an intentional connection in this narrative between family and public witness for God; and that both are dependent on the estimate formed of God's own Sacrifice.

Eli, however, could not *now* occupy his accustomed place in the temple; and the feeble patriarch, trembling for the Ark of God, sat by the wayside watching. But having refused to judge himself, he must now be judged; and so also must his wicked sons, and backslidden Israel. The result was, Eli was visited with sudden death, his two sons killed, Israel smitten before their enemies, and the precious Ark of the covenant taken by the uncircumcised enemies of the Lord. It is indeed an awful story; but if it serve to stir us up to regard God's Sacrifice with more holy reverence and fear, and to beget in us watchfulness against the workings of the untrue charity of nature, it will not be without profit to our souls. Let us never forget these statutes of the Lord, "Them that honour Me, I will honour; and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

THE BELIEVER'S ANCHOR.

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."—HEB. vi. 19.

WHAT a volume of mercy our covenant God and Father has unfolded in these few words, for the consolation and support of His dear people! The foregoing verse assures us of His desire that we might have a "strong consolation," by the immutability of His counsel, and its confirmation by oath; while in this verse, He would have us rest with perfect composure of spirit, as those whose anchor is cast, and whose souls are fixed on an immovable and unfailing foundation. "We which have believed do enter into rest" (Heb. iv. 3).

The symbol of an anchor is used to teach us the reality, certainty, and fixedness of our salvation in Christ, who is "for us entered" within the veil. "Because I live," said He, "ye shall live also." The fact that the Lord Jesus has been raised from the dead is the sure proof that He has been accepted for us. Thus we find the Lord comforting His beloved servant when he fell at His feet as dead; "Fear not, I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. i. 17, 18). Yes, beloved, it is Jesus risen, the exalted Conqueror of all our enemies—yea, the Abolisher of death, that *faith* lays hold of and *hope* rejoices in. It is the Lord Himself that is the full consummation of our hope. To see Him, to be like Him, and with Him for ever is the sure and cherished expectation of redeemed souls; for they well know it is only in His presence that there is "fulness of joy"—only at His right hand that there are "pleasures for evermore." And, verily, this blessed hope is secure in Him, who is our Surety and Forerunner, and who now appears in the presence of God for us. Our path may be sometimes trackless and dark; the waves of tribulation may roll over us, and the foaming billows of adversity seem to lie hard against us; but through grace we are anchored. We may be tossed about by the terrible commotions of temptation, sorrow, and suffering, but faith has linked us securely to the Anchor within the veil; and therefore, knowing this, we can "patiently hope for that we see not." We may often feel distressed by present things, but *faith* gives quietness and rest by beholding Him who is our unchangeable Friend and "sure and steadfast" Hope: for,

"Though many foes beset us round,
And feeble is our arm,
Our life is hid with Christ in God,
Beyond the reach of harm."

Does not the Scripture we are considering give comfort and encouragement to our souls when realised in the power of the Holy Ghost? We know in whom we have believed, and to whom we "have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us;" and we are sure that "He is faithful that promised:" "He cannot deny Himself." Then doth it not become us, while contemplating these glorious realities, to sing, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."

"WELL DONE!"



HAT great things are often done to obtain the praise of men. How many deeds, noble and ignoble, will man do to win the favour of his fellows.

And are not the children and servants of God continually beset by this same lust? How hard is it to go on patiently continuing in well-doing, perhaps amidst reproaches and scorn, waiting for the "well done" of Jesus, the Lord. Let all who are in any measure treading His path *look unto Jesus*. The joy set before Him filled, cheered, and strengthened His heart. And now His voice from the excellent glory is, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

The "well done" of Jesus must be heard *in resurrection*. It crowns the end of the course. Though whispered by Him oftentimes by the way to the heart of His faithful ones, its full and public utterance is reserved for its place amidst the wonders of the day of glory; pronounced then on ways condemned now by men, and, alas! too often by Christians also; ways which only the Spirit of Christ can guide us into, or the love of Christ make us happy in, or the faithful grace of Christ sustain us in.

Oh! to live for "*that day!*" This is faith. This is the single eye. To commit all to Him, waiting humbly for His welcome, and His verdict before His throne of glory.

How important is it, then, to be sure that we are walking in the path which the Lord will approve in "that day." Not to be flattering ourselves that *our* way will be commended by Him, while such or such an one's way will be condemned. "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself; but let every man *prove his own work* . . . for every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. vi. 3, 5). And again, "So then every one of us shall give account of *himself*" (not of others) "to God" (Rom. xiv. 12).


Here appears the unspeakable importance of the word, as the present expression of the mind and judgment of the Lord. How solemnly is this taught by the Lord Jesus in John xii. 48, 49; words which, though addressed to His enemies, have in them a voice also for His friends. His own word is His standard both

now and then. Our souls should ponder this, beloved in Christ. Have we His word for all we are doing or teaching in His name? If not, how can we expect to be rejoiced by His "well done" in that day? And will not this be "loss?" "He shall suffer loss yet he himself shall be saved" (1 Cor. iii. 15). Surely, in proportion as we are laborious and influential, should we carefully try our words and acts by the light of His holy word, in order to walk surely, as well as humbly, in our way towards "that day." In a word, Christ must live in us now, in order to our honour then. God will never approve aught but Christ. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John ii. 6). This is the only *sure* path. The branch abiding in the vine *must be fruitful*. For how living and fruit-producing is that vine! "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John xv. 5).

Will the world commend? or the worldly-minded? "If the world *hate you*," continues Jesus, "ye know that it hated *Me before it hated you*."

Poor, poor world—what will it behold in "that day?" Jesus glorified—His words fulfilled—His faithful ones commended—all who have trusted Him perfected—and itself condemned!


OBEDIENCE.

HRIST came not to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God; yea, Thy law is within My heart!" Christ ever walked in the perfect and blessed will of God. In the Scriptures, written for our instruction, we have all things revealed, all things that Christ heard and learned of the Father are declared. The holy will of God is presented therein to the faith of the children. To walk as Christ walked is to walk according to the Word. This is the imitating or following of Christ, who hath left us an example: this also is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. The obedience of Christ is not the seeking, even with much simplicity and godly sincerity, to attain to this, or to do that, but it is having *the Word of God* for a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

We insert the following papers on this Epistle sent by valued correspondents in response to our suggestion on page 123.

I.

HE following brief remarks may contribute somewhat toward the further opening up of this precious portion of Scripture, and a clearer understanding of it.

"The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. i. 16), and the fulness of that salvation is unfolded to us in this epistle, together with the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, upon Whom it all depends. He having in grace, through suffering "become the Author of eternal salvation unto all those who obey Him," now lives above as the "Captain of their salvation," to bring unto glory the many sons—"heirs of salvation," who are here viewed as in the world subject to temptations, suffering, and trials of every kind. The design of the Spirit being hereby, to encourage faith, and stimulate to obedience, patience, and perseverance. For their salvation, full and eternal is secured, although not yet attained in their experience; secured, because He who died for them "ever liveth to save to the uttermost," yet not fully attained until the toil of the desert is ended, and the rest in heaven entered (compare ch. iv. 10, and xii. 2).

The Apostle Peter in his first epistle ch. i., writes of it as "a salvation ready to be revealed," unto which the elect are "kept by the power of God, through faith;" and in which they greatly rejoice, though, if needs be, in heaviness, through manifold temptations for the trial of faith, the object of their love being a Person not yet seen. The *Epistle to the Hebrews* opens by presenting to the eye of faith that glorious Person, the God-Man, after having accomplished the work of atonement, seated in the place of power.

This salvation predicted of old, foreshadowed all down the ages, concerning which prophets enquired and searched diligently, at length appeared in the Person of God, the Son incarnate, after four thousand years of the world's sad history had run their course. Simeon, having looked upon the infant Jesus said: "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke ii. 30-32). And, upon His death, resurrection, and ascension, God the Holy Ghost in Person came, the Divine Witness to those great accomplished facts; and to make more fully known the truth as to His Person, His work, and the blessed and eternal results therefrom, hence the solemn warning to those who neglect "so great salvation" (ch. ii. 3).

The teaching of this Epistle may be thus considered. 1st. *Truth*, respecting the Person of the Son of God (ch. i. and ii.) His Word (ch. ii. 1; iv. 12; and xii. 26, 27). His sacrificial work (ch. ix. to x. 18). His official work (ch. ii. 17, 18; iv. 14; to ch. v. 10, and connect ch. vii.), all being found to be infinitely perfect as Himself.

2nd. *Exhortations* (as always) based upon this doctrine,

viz., "Consider Him (ch. iii. 1), the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;" the object of reverential love, faith, and hope. Consider Him (ch. xii.), Who was the patient sufferer for righteousness sake, "lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Watch against unbelief and disobedience (ch. iii. 12), lest any one fall after the example of those whose failures have been recorded for our instruction (1 Cor. x.); for, as with Israel "the mixt multitude which was amongst them fell a lusting" (Num. xi.), so ever is the flesh in the Christian, and it must be judged: hence the need of diligence so often pressed in this epistle. Let us labour to enter into the rest of God which remains for overcomers of whom Caleb and Joshua are types (connect ch. iii. 12, 13 with iv. 1, and 11 16). The Word must be used for the discernment and judgment of the flesh, and the throne of grace for mercy and help in time of need. Failing in self-judgment, there must needs be the governmental discipline of God (ch. xii.; compare 1 Cor. xi. 31, 32).

Further, where there is life there must be progress; a living person cannot remain in a state of infancy, therefore, "Let us go on to perfection" (ch. vi. 1-3, connect with verse 9); in those addressed there was life, evidenced by things which accompany salvation, although their progress was not as it should have been; the apostle then urges them to more diligence in the things of God. They were worth all the care bestowed upon them, inasmuch that fruit for God was produced (they might, indeed, need pruning, in order to more abundant fruitfulness), but not so the ground, which brought forth thorns, for no amount of care and culture could change them.

Further exhortations follow ch. x. 19-25, which connect with verses 32-39, and chapters xii. xiii.

3rd. *Solemn warnings* to all professors of Christianity. Here, as elsewhere, man is taken upon his profession and will be judged accordingly; responsibility being ever proportionate to privilege (see Matt. xxiv. 48-51; xxv. 24-30). All profession is tested, and the result evidences what of it is real or otherwise (Matt. xiii. 18-23).

The "if" (Heb. iii. 6 and 14) does not imply a doubt as to the security of the child of God; the passage is not intended to teach that if persons hold fast and persevere, they may at length become partakers of Christ. Is it not, rather, to those addressed? You are of the house, and you are made partakers of Christ, and your continuance to the end will evidence the fact; the latter being dependent upon the ability and faithfulness of the Lord to keep His own. Nevertheless, they (and we also) had cause to fear, lest through lack of diligence they should seem to come short, or should suffer loss through a break down in the path of faith. See similar teaching in 2 Peter i., and Jude 17-21 and 24, in connection with solemn reference to those who turn from truth once known, or a position once ostensibly occupied, so likewise, in the epistle under consideration, exhortations and warnings go side by side; "whoso has an ear to hear, let him hear." We ought to give earnest heed to the Word of salvation; for, how shall they escape who neglect it? (ch. ii.). "Let us go on to perfection," for, it is impossible to renew unto repentance those who, after sharing Christian privileges, deliberately reject the Son of God and put Him to an open shame, as they

of old did who crucified Him (ch. vi.). Let us do so and so. For, what can he expect who returns wilfully to sin after having received a knowledge of the truth? thus making nothing of the blood that sanctifies (ch. x. 22-25).

Finally, the Christian is encouraged by the hope of the coming of the Lord (ch. x. 37). By the example of many of like passions, who, in the energy of faith let go the present things in view of the future, overcoming every kind of difficulty; and have had witness borne to them that therein they pleased God (ch. xi.). By the knowledge that the Lord who Himself travelled the path of faith throughout, knows what it is; and from His seat above He now observes each one in the race (ch. xii.), the record is with Him, and the crowning day is coming. He also is able and ever ready to succour, for Himself has said: "I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee (xiii. 6).

The reference throughout to Israel is very instructive; but, it is important to understand the type otherwise we may form erroneous conclusions. Individuals of Israel may not always be taken for types of Christians, for they were not all regenerate persons; but the "elect nation" is a fitting type of an elect individual, or of the elect body of the present dispensation. Thus, the nation chosen in Abraham (Gen. xv.) in due time redeemed by blood (Exod. xii.), came forth from the house of bondage under the protection of Jehovah, whose "I will" (Exod. vi. 6-8), covered the whole distance from Egypt to Canaan, through the people's unbelief and disobedience they failed to enter into God's rest, and, as a nation, to this day suffer under His governmental judgment; nevertheless, because God is faithful, and His gifts and callings are without repentance, "all Israel shall yet be saved."

With Israel as an example before us, we can scarcely doubt that the warnings in Hebrews have a solemn bearing upon Christians also; for those things which characterise unsaved persons, may, in measure, affect the child of God. In the parable of the Sower (Matt. xiii.), we see the threefold enemy at work, not merely in the case of those whose profession comes to nought, but also, in those producing fruit; the degree of fruitfulness being just in proportion as victory is gained over Satan, the flesh, and the world. When the Word is choked so that nought but thorns remain, "their end is to be burned" (compare Heb. vi.); where any fruit is borne, there must be more fruit under the pruning of the husbandman (John xv.). "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29), upon those who persist in disobedience and die in their sins, the wrath abideth ever (John iii. 36), but upon carelessly indolent and disobedient children the rod in discipline falls, to save them from the doom of the world. In Israel, three classes of persons are represented, viz., Caleb and Joshua, "overcomers;" they have "an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ" (2 Peter i.). Moses and Aaron failed and fell under discipline; thus "they seemed to come short" (Heb. iv.), and Korah and his company; compare Jude 11, 2 Peter ii., and Heb. vi. and x.

May we have wisdom and grace to use aright the Word of God; its teaching, exhortation, warning and encouragement, all alike important. "For every Scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for

instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete; furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. iii. 16-17).

R. S.

II.

It would appear that we have the text of the Epistle in chapter i. 3. "Who (*i.e.* God's Son, the brightness of His glory and express image of His person), when He had by Himself purged sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." God had for four thousand years, in one way or another, been occupied with the question of sin; Christ has taken up the matter, once and for ever settled it with God, and has sat down upon the throne of God in the character of Sin purger. And the writer seems to have arrived at the conclusion of his argument in chapter x. 19, 22. That we, sinners though we were by nature and by practice, and liable still to sin, have access at all times by faith into the very presence of God. The epistle generally is more experimental than doctrinal. Ephesians is full of our association with Christ and the heavenlies, that we have been brought nigh, and in the purposes of God are already seated there with Christ, and the enemies we are then regarded as having to contend with are wicked spirits in the heavenlies. But Hebrews tells us that God would have us in His presence as a matter of present enjoyment, and regards us as in the wilderness, on our way to our rest, and exposed to wilderness trials and wilderness difficulties, and with an evil heart of unbelief, all tending to hinder us from this present enjoyment of the rest which is ours in Christ. The great barrier to my coming into the presence of God is *sin*, and the main purpose of these ten chapters of the epistle is to show us how perfectly and completely the question of sin has been once and for ever dealt with and settled by Him who has undertaken our cause; so that I may draw nigh now to that presence with a conscience perfectly satisfied and absolutely at rest. A perfect conscience corresponding with that perfect work.

Chapters i. and ii. speak of the personal glories of this One. Chapter i. as the Divine Son by whom God is speaking to us; and His glory is contrasted with that of angels, by whom the law was given (Acts vii. 53.) In chapter ii. He is presented as Son of Man; becoming such in order that He might go under death. For as the Leader of our salvation He could only be perfected through sufferings. We being so far from God, sunken in sin, this was the only way, suitable to the holiness and righteousness of God, by which we could be brought unto His glory; a perfect atonement (the penalty of death having been exacted) being thus made for the sin, and we brought, through Christ's death and resurrection, as *sons* into that glory (ii. 10). As Man, too, He is fitted to be the perfect succourer of the tempted. By death He delivers from the bondage of Satan (verses 14-15), as Israel of old were, by their passage of the Red Sea, delivered from the power of Pharaoh. This brings us, in due order, to the wilderness experience of chapters iii. and iv. Moses is spoken of, as the one appointed of God to lead them into Caanan rest: Joshua later on (iv. 8.) as the one who took up the work, consequent on Moses' failure.

These two chapters are full of solemn warning. The wilder-

ness is the place of testing. It proves those who are really separated to God in heart, and those who have come out in name only. They may run well enough when things go smoothly, but when trial and difficulties arise they manifest their weakness. Notice the solemn "ifs" of verses 6 and 14, shewing that it is only those who are in Christ, and resting in Christ, who will really hold on to the end. In chapters vi. and x. we have again reference to the falling away of mere professors. Notice, too, the frequent reference to the "heart" in these two chapters; "Harden not your hearts" (iii. 8 and 15, and iv. 7.) "They do always err in their heart" (iii. 10). "An evil heart of unbelief" (v. 12). Elsewhere we read, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," not with the head. Mere assent to the truth, and head knowledge, will never stand the test of wilderness trials. In chapter iv. we have reference to the "rest of God"; that to which our "Captain" is bringing us, as Moses and Joshua were leading Israel into Canaan. Though we may now be by faith enjoying the fruits of the land, the full fruition is reserved—"there remaineth a rest (*a Sabbath-keeping*) for the people of God." Israel failed to enter in through unbelief; it is only by faith we stand. Reference is made both to the Sabbath (Creation) rest, and to the Canaan rest of God. Both had been broken into by sin, because both were dependent upon the obedience of the creature: Only in His redemption rest in Christ the Divine Son, will God be fully satisfied, and to that rest He calls us now. "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest." Salvation as a *present* thing is a matter for "holding fast," for "fearing," for "labouring," because of the constant tendency to unbelief, ever ready to succumb under the pressure of wilderness trials. Moreover, we are in the presence of that all-searching and intensely penetrating Word of the living God. We have to do with One to whom our inmost thought, our most secret emotion is plainly manifest. Who not only judges the outward action, but by Whom the hidden motive, scarce realized, perhaps, by ourselves, is equally as well known. To others, an empty profession might, perhaps, pass current as real to the end of the course, but not to His unerring judgment. What then? Surrounded thus by temptations and difficulties on every side, an evil heart ever prone to unbelief within us, exposed to the searchings of such Omniscient gaze, are we to be cast down and say we struggle in vain against such opposing forces, and shall never attain to this rest? In nowise. These things are but to cast us upon the strength of Him whose all-sufficiency is ours. "Let us hold fast our confession," seeing that we have a great HIGH PRIEST; "one touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and "in all points tempted like as we are, *apart from sin*." And in our need (and the farther we tread the wilderness *with God* the deeper we shall realize our need to be) ever coming "boldly unto the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help." And His sinlessness will in nowise detract from His power of sympathy for us who know the bitterness of indwelling sin, for who has ever *suffered* from sin as His holy soul must have done.

Then in chapter v. we have the unfoldings of the character of our High Priest. His subjection as Man to God; acknowledged as Son in resurrection, and in resurrection life called as

High Priest; and made perfect by taking the downward path of *obedience*, He becomes the Author of eternal salvation to those who are true followers along that path. Then we have mention of the *order* of His priesthood, of Melchisedec and not of Aaron; although He officiates now for us more exactly according to the character of the Aaronic priesthood, the Melchisedec priesthood is millennial and future. But the apostle has to digress, in order that he may deal with the low spiritual condition of those to whom he is writing. Like the Corinthians, they had need of milk instead of strong meat; the one because of worldly wisdom, the other because of formal religiousness, either equally baneful to progress in divine things. And *progress* in divine things is the only sure indication of a healthy condition. The reverse may betoken, and probably so, unreality, and calls forth the solemn warning of chapter vi. Ground receiving the same outward blessing is proved by the fruit it brings forth, as to whether it has received the true seed. He encourages them to press on, by the immutable presence of God and the living witness of it, Jesus, our Forerunner within the veil, and our Hope of coming rest and glory. In chapter vii. the subject is resumed where it was broken off by parenthesis at verse 10, and the Melchisedec priesthood is further enlarged upon, and its infinite superiority to the Aaronic order plainly proved; above all its continuance. And the apostle seems to come to a conclusion in his argument in verses 25 and 26, as having clearly shown the perfect suitability of this One as a High Priest. "Able to save to the very end," because He ever liveth; and (wonders of grace) such an one is spoken of as *becoming us*, "Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." He becomes us because of the Presence to which He is to introduce us, the Divine Courts to which it is God's purpose we should be brought. What a conception this gives us of the dignity put upon us! Compare this with ii. 10.

At the close of this chapter (vii.) we have mention made of what is inseparably connected with priesthood, namely, the Covenant and the Sacrifice; and having now settled the question as to the perfection of the High Priest (viii. 1.), he proceeds to take up the question first of the Covenant, and then of the Sacrifice; the one particularly in chapter viii., proceeding with the other in chapter ix. Man is estranged from God by corruption and sin, and if he is to be brought back to His presence there must be an arrangement as to the terms upon which he can be re-instated. God made such an arrangement with Israel of old, but it was an arrangement by which the responsibility devolved upon them; and by their case the impotence of man to sustain such responsibility was fully illustrated. The old covenant failed, not because of inherent fault, but "in that it was weak through the flesh." It did not fully take into account that man was born in sin, sinful by nature, and therefore utterly incapable of living holily according to God. Its purpose was to make this manifest. But the new covenant no longer exists upon the obedience of the creature, but of Him, the Eternal Son, who learned obedience by the things that He suffered. The question of sin in man has now been fully dealt with by Him who is "the Mediator of the new covenant," because as the Sacrifice He has shed His blood in atonement, and "through the Eternal Spirit offered Him-

self without spot to God." Dying "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant." ("I had not known sin, but by the law.") Then the apostle makes striking and beautiful use of the double meaning of the word *διαθήκη* (covenant or testament), to instruct us as to how we became participators in the blessings. How do men enter upon an inheritance? By testament, and the death of the testator. So here, "That by means of death, . . . they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the "death of the testator"; and so on. Christ has perfectly fulfilled the terms of the Covenant (John xvii. 4), and that through death, and now we, by His will and testament, enter upon the full enjoyment of the blessings. (See the whole of John xvii. the chapter of our Lord's intercession, for its terms.) God's righteousness having been perfectly satisfied, not by any efforts of ours, but by the one perfect, finished work of Christ as sacrifice for sin.

In chapter ix. we have the perfection of the sacrifice of Christ brought out in contrast to the sacrifices under Levitical ordinance. Notice the frequent use of the word "eternal," carrying us back to v. 9, which speaks of "eternal salvation": here its meaning is fully developed. But the great point with the apostle is the effect of that sacrifice as dealing with the great question of *sin*. The heavens themselves purified thereby, and Christ Himself manifested there, by His own blood, in the presence of God for us. Death and judgment, the penalty of sin, now for ever done away, for those who trust in Him, by the One who has offered Himself in atonement for it; and Who, when again He comes, will appear *without sin*. Chapter ix., then, shews us Christ in the presence of God for us, with His own blood shed in atonement for sin. Chapter x. gives us the blessed result in ourselves.—"no more conscience of sins." If God is satisfied with that perfect work, I may rest satisfied too. This being so, the way of access is clear. A way by death and resurrection ("a newly slain and living way;" verse 20), with blood-sprinkled hearts cleansed from a defiled conscience, and bodies washed in the laver of regeneration. The writer has now reached the point to which he was pressing, and what is the exhortation he founds upon it? He brings back again to chapters iii. and iv.; "let us *hold fast* the confession of our hope." And then he adds again a solemn warning to those who abandon the ground they once professed to have taken, the only ground God has upon which He can accept the sinner. The man who despised God's ordained rest of old, died without mercy; for those who now despise God's perfect rest in Christ, far sorer punishment remains.

But the promise is certain to those who believe; what is needed now is the exercise of living faith in the word of the living God (for which we have abundant encouragement by example in chapter xi), and the looking to Him who is the Leader (or Captain) and Finisher of Faith, that we may follow Him in the path that He has trod. The path that led Him to the throne of God, and the sufferings of which He endured in view of the joy set before Him (chap. xii.). Further practical exhortation follows in connection with the glory awaiting us and the path of suffering here.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

NOTE.—Those who endeavour to reply to Questions, desire to impress upon readers their responsibility to “prove all things,” and “hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. v. 21). They make no pretension to infallibility, but give their judgment as those who have received mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—Many Questions are received but not replied to; some not being for general edification, whilst others are laid aside from want of sufficient light to deal with them.—It is requested that all communications be accompanied by the Name and Address of the sender.

QUESTION CCXIII.

Is it according to the Word of God to pray at the Meeting for “the breaking of bread” for the conversion of souls at the Gospel meeting?

REPLY.

The object for which believers come together on the first day of the week ought never to be lost sight of. The occasion is as truly “a feast of the Lord” as any of the solemn convocations of Israel when they gathered unto Jehovah at His tabernacle. It was with intense desire that the Lord Jesus anticipated the time of its first observance, and still His eyes and heart are with His gathered ones—according to His own most precious Word, “where two or three are gathered together unto My name, there am I in the midst.” The table around which, as His guests we gather is spread by Him for us. The memorial bread and wine are His appointment in order to the showing forth of His death. Whatever of prayer, or praise, or thanksgiving, or ministry precedes the partaking of the sacred memorials should surely be in keeping with the occasion and in order to help to a full realization of its blessed import. Alas! how often do hymns and prayers and chapters and exhortations follow one another which have no bearing whatever on the object for which the saints are gathered—a series of services that are felt to be a distraction and a weariness rather than a help, often leaving the observance of the Supper to so late an hour that it has to be hurried anxiously through, on account of some whose duties require them to leave early.

Few seem to understand that a meeting for prayer or a meeting for ministry of the Word differs essentially from the meeting around the Table of the Lord.

A meeting for prayer or ministry is convened by the will of man to supply a felt need at such a time as may suit the convenience of the greatest number. The leading thought in the one is unitedly to seek

the grace of God in connection with the people of God and their service, testimony, and life.

The leading thought in the other is to receive from God, through those whom He has qualified, edification from the Word.

Of course the Word of God is not *excluded* from a prayer meeting. Neither is prayer *excluded* from a ministry meeting. Nevertheless, it is a felt hindrance and a breach of fellowship if the prayer meeting be turned largely for ministry or the ministry meeting be taken up with prayer of a general or indefinite character.

So in the meeting around the Lord’s Table—the main idea is not *prayer*, neither is it *ministry*. It is essentially a *thanksgiving* meeting, to which no term better applies than the beautiful word “*eucharist*” (or “thanksgiving”).

Everything about it combines to demand that its chief character be a *bringing to God of the worship of loyal hearts*.

Again we urge that prayer is not *excluded*, neither is ministry of the Word *excluded*; but prayers and ministry that would be edifying at a prayer meeting or a teaching meeting may be a mere distraction and intrusion on the occasion of the breaking of bread—a hindrance to the outpouring of that worship which the Father seeks.

We believe the best opportunity possible for edifying ministry is *after the breaking of bread*. It was then that John xiv., xvii. was uttered, and it was *after they had dined* that the Lord so pointedly dealt with the conscience of Peter.

It seems to us also that prayer for the various services of the day, such as the Gospel meeting, Sunday school, &c., is most fitting at the close of the meeting.

It is an opportunity when all are together, when hearts are usually touched afresh by the grace of God, and when all who seek to serve the Lord in the Gospel or otherwise would be glad to be remembered in united prayer.