

THE

GOLDEN LAMP;

OR,

Truth in Love

FOR

THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

---

"I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD: HE THAT FOLLOWETH ME SHALL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE."

*John viii. 12.*

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"Now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

*Ephesians v. 8.*

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—*Matthew v. 16.*

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# THE GOLDEN LAMP.

## MARANATHA.

MARANATHA, "The Lord is coming," is an Aramaic phrase, and appears to have been a watchword among the saints in Syria and Palestine, where the Aramaic language was spoken; and from its frequent use among them it was carried into the Greek churches and used as a word of deep and precious significance, suitable for all occasions of trial and suffering. It occurs in 1 Cor. xvi. 22, and ought to be disconnected from the previous word "Anathema."

*Maranatha* may well be the heavenly watchword for us as we enter upon another year, before the close of which the message may reach us, "The Master has come and calleth for thee," and thus each may get the summons from on high to meet our Lord, not like Mary, at a brother's grave, but in the air, that we may ever be with Him.

In the early church, *Maranatha* served as a reminder of our Lord's word to John—"If I will that he tarry *till I come*" (John xxi. 22); and of the promise of His advent, which was confirmed some sixty years later, when the Lord sent through the same apostle His last message to the Church, "I come quickly." Years have rolled on, and many an unbelieving heart has said, "My Lord delayeth His coming," and the result has been worldliness of spirit, for the love of many has waxed cold. It is not without

significance that it is in the epistle to the worldly-minded Corinthians that this word is found; a faithful warning to those who need solemnly to be reminded that the Master will soon be here. Happy, indeed, will it be for those whose treasure is in heaven, whose loins are girded, whose lights are burning, and who themselves are like servants who wait for their Lord. Surely we can say, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed," and the salvation of the Church nearer than when the saints of old comforted, exhorted, and warned one another with this "Maranatha," which has been handed down as a password to us, that in sound and in thought it might form a sweet connecting-link between us and them; thus reminding us that we have but "*one hope*" of our calling, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour.

As the consciousness deepens in us that the time is drawing nigh of which God has spoken, there is an awakening of soul, and a kindling of expectation, which reminds us of the words in the Psalm: "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." (Ps. cii. 13, 14.) It was thus with Daniel, the "man greatly beloved" (Dan. ix.), who, when he understood by books that the time of the promise was come, "set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes;" and God has left on record for us his prayer, and his confession of the sins that had led Israel captive to Babylon.

As those so soon expecting a deliverance from the spiritual Babylon that surrounds us, when we shall be taken up to sit with our Lord in His kingdom, let us seek fellowship with the spirit of Daniel in the matter of the sins of the Church of God, and bear them on our

heart in confession and prayer, as those who regard these sins as their own. Thus shall we become cross-bearers indeed. Then shall we own the righteousness of God in the present condition of things around us, and acknowledge that to us belong shame and confusion of face; and conscious of God's mercies and forgiveness to the penitent soul, we shall be enabled, like Daniel, to lay hold of that almighty plea, "*for Adonai's sake.*" (v. 17.)

A cry like the widow's is going up from faithful hearts, though not to an unjust judge, "Avenge me of mine adversary," of him who as a roaring lion goes about to devour, who as the accuser of the brethren accuses them day and night before God, and who as the prince of this world is virtually king of Babylon till the end come. But this cry for vengeance must be connected with the confession of God's righteousness in using Satan's unrighteousness to sift the chaff from the wheat. Verse 24 gives the most blessed answer to Daniel's prayer that can possibly be conceived, when in six short sentences all that could be asked for is promised; but seventy weeks of years had first to elapse. Daniel had to wait, and we have had to wait. To him it was said, "Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." This will be true of the remnant of Israel by-and-by, and is true now of everyone who is really standing in the counsel of God.

But the days we live in call for prayer, and the spirit of the man greatly beloved must rest on us, if we would be among the wise who shall understand. Nothing is easier than, with the clearest outward acquaintance with prophecy, to get off the lines of true prophetic interpretation; for

prophecy is given to guide our feet, and not to enlighten our carnal minds.

Though we are expressly told that the sayings of the prophecy of the book of Revelation are *not* sealed (chap. xxii. 10), yet there will ever be much of which the wise will say with Daniel, "I heard, but I understood not;" for while the divine principles running all through prophecy are given to guide all the people of God through all time, there are specific interpretations which are not designed to give specific light till the time of the fulfilment comes. It is of the utmost importance to remember this, or matters of detail will occupy an undue place in the mind, and become the object of carnal study and fleshly disputation, to the withering up of the spiritual hope of the coming, and frustrating the very object for which prophecy has been bestowed.

God's words are given to guide our hearts, and to direct our steps; but till "the time of the end" come, much of the actual detail will be obscure. This is the *design* of God. It is not a defect in the prophetic revelation; it is the wise purpose of an all-wise Revealer of the future, who has written with the object that the wicked should *not* understand, but that believing, trusting souls should gather in humble, patient, prayerful reading that which will be to faith a light in the darkness.

Let us not, then, allow differences of judgment on prophetic truth to become apples of discord as they have been in time past, but rather let them be a cause of mutual humiliation. With many, decided opinions (probably partly right and partly wrong) have grown and deepened through many a passing struggle in years gone by. These become in time a part of our very selves, and through their medium is Scripture read and prophecy interpreted. If, then, it be true that the details of the events of the future



are not so clear to us as they might be, and if eternal wisdom has thrown a veil over them so that we but dimly see through it, let us bow to the wisdom that obliges the child of God to see "through a glass darkly," or "in an *enigma*," or *dark saying*.\* (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) Alas! how prone are we in our pride to treat the hidden future of our God as if we "sealed up the sum,"† or could lay down "the plan," and were "perfect in wisdom!" It ought not to be so; and remembering that the enigmas of the word of God are designed to make us humble-minded, let us be content to know but in part.

When Christ was about to come, the Jewish and Gentile world was big with expectation; and a holy Simeon received a direct revelation that he should see the Lord's Christ before he was called away. The Church is now, in this matter of the return of the Lord, awakening from the sleep of ages, and the gospel of a coming Christ which was preached in Thessalonica is again being preached; and even among the native Christians of the far East has gone forth the cry, "The Bridegroom cometh."

We would deprecate any forecasting of times and seasons that would give any specific date to that event of which Christ has said, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man." But there are anticipations abroad, strangely identical, from east and west, from north and south, that the hope of those who love His appearing will soon be realized. The world in its unrest and perplexity is calling aloud for some one to solve its difficulties, and to bring harmony into its discord; but whilst it scoffs at Christ, it will accept an antichrist coming in his own name. (John v. 43.)

\* This word "*αινιγμα*" is used in the Greek version for the Hebrew word rendered in our translation "dark speeches." (Num. xii. 8.)

† The word here rendered "sum" (Ezek. xxviii. 12) means the plan of a building. (See chap. xliii. 11.)

In the meanwhile may prayer and prophecy go hand in hand with all saints during this year. Much prayer will make a deep study of prophecy the surest means of leading the soul of the humble believer into fellowship with the heart of God, in the sorrows of the present, and in the eternal glory of the future.

H. G.

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### THE THIRD DAY.

GOD has given to time periods and divisions of His own appointing. Of these some are natural, being linked only with creation, such as months, and years, and the astronomical cycles of years; others are spiritual, and teach us something of Christ, and of God's ways of love and mercy to us in Him.

Of these last are the "third" day, the "seventh" day, and the "eighth" day, periods so often named in Scripture. "Forty" days also is a period of frequent occurrence, and is very suggestive. The same is true of *years* as well as days. The third and seventh year have their meaning for us, both in history and in type, and so have the forty years of manna in the wilderness, and of David's and Solomon's reigns.

But it is to *days*, and to the lessons they are meant to teach us, that we now turn. The *seventh* day evidently sets forth the perfection of completed action and consequent rest, as in the seventh day of the week, and the seventh or sabbatic year. The *eighth* day tells of a new order of things—a new creation displacing and removing the old. (See Lev. ix. 1, xiv. 10, 23, compared with Luke ix. 28; 2 Cor. v. 17.) But our subject is the *third day*. This seems specially connected with *resurrection*, and thus also with *speed* of action, and *certain* fulfilment of promise. Another year is now opening upon us; and it is

to resurrection as our "blessed hope" that the wings of time are bearing us, and it will speedily come; for "yet a little while" and our own blessed "third day," the resurrection morning, will dawn upon us for ever.

Let us now turn to passages in which "the third day," or else the period of "three days," is mentioned.

The first, of course, would be "the third day" of creation; and even in this a resurrection character may be seen; for God's voice then bade the dry land appear from out of the grave, as it were, of only waters, and it came. And the very herbs and fruit-trees with which God that same day covered it had within themselves the seed of reproduction—another of creation's emblems of burial and resurrection.

But it is to the directly spiritual passages that we would most refer.

The first of these is Genesis xxii. 4: "Then on *the third day* Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off." That place was "one of the mountains" in "the land of Moriah," or "the land of *providing*;" for so "Moriah" means. Hence the fitness of the name Abraham afterwards gave to the place—"Jehovah-Jireh," "Jehovah will provide;" for "Jireh" and "Moriah" are closely-related words. It was to Abraham the place of God's gracious providing of the ram to be slain in the stead of his much-loved Isaac; and the time of this divine provision was "the third day." Abraham was not kept long waiting; his deep and painful need was quickly supplied. But Isaac, when unbound and lifted from the altar at mount Moriah, is a type to us of Jesus raised from the dead, after he had by "the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God." And Jesus' resurrection too was on "the third day." How speedily it followed His mighty death! God hastened to loose Him from "the pains of

death" in Joseph's garden-tomb, because of the perfection of His obedience unto the sin-bearing death of the cross.

The Lamb of God's providing is, then, the beginning to us in Scripture of this subject. "The third day" points us first and chiefly to Him. Our Lord's repeated use of the "third day" as the time for His resurrection also gives it special emphasis. (See Matt. xvi. 21; xvii. 23; xx. 19; also Mark and Luke.) Matthew xxvii. 63, 64, shows how well these words of Jesus were known, even by His enemies. In resurrection also He mentions it: "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead THE THIRD DAY." (Luke xxiv. 46.)

In gospel preaching too this fact was named by Peter in the house of Cornelius: "Him God raised up *the third day*, and showed Him openly." (Acts x. 40.) And Paul is yet more emphatic upon it against error in the Corinth Church: "And that He was buried, and that He rose again *the third day* according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. xv. 4.)

In Genesis xl. 20, and xlii. 18, we have "the third day" in a very different connection. In the former passage it represents to us the *short period* in which God's word by Joseph was fulfilled while he was in the prison; for the third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and Joseph's foretellings were that day made good, a lesson to us to cleave during this "little while" to God's prophetic word. In the latter passage "the third day" tells of how *short* a captivity Joseph imposed on his brothers, and may remind us of the "*few days*" in which our God and Lord chastens us, not for His pleasure, but "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." (Heb. xii. 10.)

"Exodus" means "outgoing," and for it a "three days' journey" out of Egypt was demanded by God for His people for *their worship*: "Ye shall say unto him [the

king of Egypt], The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, *three days' journey* into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God." (See Exod. iii. 18; also v. 3; viii. 27.)

Thus only could they worship the living God in complete separation from Egypt's idolatries, and in freedom from its harassing interference with them; and Pharaoh's opposition to this demand only served to accomplish the purpose of God more deeply and thoroughly by their "three days' journey" out of Egypt being made for them through the Red Sea itself. Thus do "all things work together for good" to God's elect; "the wrath of man" praises Him; and a burial and resurrection character was given to Israel's third-day worship and song on the farther bank of the weedy sea.

In Exodus xv. 22 Israel had a "three days'" experience of "no water" in the wilderness, that they might again learn at Marah *resurrection truth*. The tree cut down to make the bitter waters sweet is surely a type of Him who by His death makes earth's bitters yield eternal sweets to such as trust in Him. In Exodus xix. 11 we learn that Israel, at mount Sinai, was to be "ready against *the third day*" for God's gift to them of the holy law; and verse 17 says, "It came to pass on *the third day* in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud." We know how Paul, in Hebrews xii., links this "third day" thunder to them with the mightier resurrection voice to us, which speaks from heaven, and shall ere long make all this creation "shake" and pass away. God's "third day" voice at Sinai, and His similar voice by His Son, are for our obedience. In Exodus, therefore, the worship, experience, and obedience have all a "third day" teaching for us.

In Leviticus the "third day" is used as a guard against slothfulness, or self-pleasing, in our worship and service to our God, just as in Exodus it was used against linking worship with an Egypt world. And all resurrection truth separates us as sharply from the flesh in us as from the outside world around us. Lev. vii. 17 forbid any of the flesh of sacrifice of peace-offerings to be eaten after the second day; "the remainder of the flesh . . . on *the third day* shall be burnt with fire." "Peace-offerings" supplied the ordinary flesh food of Israelites' tables, and they should have called their poorer neighbours to help them consume it by the end of the second day. If in greediness or parsimony they had kept it beyond that time, the fire of "the third day" must consume it, or else, like over-kept manna, it "stank" before God. For a similar reason, in Lev. xix. 23, when they entered the land and planted fruit-trees, they were to count the first "three years'" fruit unclean, to consecrate all the fourth year's fruit to God, and not to use it for themselves till the fifth year.

But *brevity* as well as resurrection purity is taught by this three-day period of time. In Numbers x. is Israel's first march, when they were summoned by the silver trumpets, led by the cloud, and marshalled under their different standards. The date of it is told us, and the God-appointed order of the camps; but when they thus departed from the mount of the Lord it was only a "*three days' journey*," and "the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them . . . to search out a resting-place for them." What divine sufficiency; and what complete arrangement for only a "three days' journey!" And so with us. Brief is the Church's sojourning here below. God by her is but *visiting* the Gentiles "to take out of them a people for His Name." It will all be over soon; it is but as a "three days' journey," and our toil and war-

fare will be ended. Nevertheless, in this "little while," in this time of "our light affliction, which is but *for a moment*" (2 Cor. iv. 17), what pains does the apostle take that the Church of God at Corinth shall move on like Israel of old, called by God's voice of silver trumpets (comp. 1 Cor. i. 2), covered with His cloud (1 Cor. i. 9), and keeping its ranks according to the different gifts and ministries God had bestowed on them! (See 1 Cor. xii.-xiv.)

In Joshua the same lesson of brevity of time and consequent promptitude for *warfare* is linked with the mention of *three days*. "Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for *within three days* ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it." (Josh. i. 10, 11.)

Three days' hiding, too, was enough time for the spies after they had left Rahab's house, in which period they had brought salvation to her and her house, and then patiently waited till they could rejoin Israel's conquering host. (See Josh. ii. 16, 22.) On the other hand, Josh. ix. 16 teaches us the affecting lesson, that a short "three days" will suffice to show how deceived we have been when we have met our subtle enemies in our own wisdom, instead of asking "counsel at the mouth of the Lord." Thus the Gibeonites deceived Israel by their "old garments," and "dry and mouldy" bread; but "it came to pass at the end of *three days* after they (Israel) had made a league with them, that they heard they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt *among them*." Solemn lesson to us surely in these days when living and active enmity to the cross of Christ close by us claims to be let alone, because time and usage have made its religious forms venerable and harmless! Too soon we wake up to find that we have

made a league with the enemies of God and Christ to our own damage! Ah! how differently did our Master spend His three days of earthly service! When told by the Pharisees that treacherous Herod was seeking to kill Him, "He said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox [cunning, that is, but feeble], Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and *the third day* I shall be perfected." (Luke xiii. 32.)

In 2 Kings ii. 17 we have the "three days" of the men of Jericho refusing to believe Elisha's word, that Elijah had been taken up into heaven by a whirlwind. Of course appearances were against it; it *did* seem strange for the two to have left their town in company, and the servant to come back wearing the master's mantle, and saying that God had taken his master to heaven! No wonder that, with their carnal thoughts, they expected they should somewhere find, perhaps, his murdered body! But they knew not God, and they judged Elisha by themselves. Wisely Elisha waited to live down the evil suspicion; and after this *three days'* short but painful trial God rewarded him by making him both a blessing to these very unbelievers, and a rebuker of the Bethel mockers!

So with us. Men disbelieve our testimony of being ere long "caught up together to meet the Lord in the air;" but a short "three days," as it were, will suffice for all their rejection of this purpose and work of God; and our part is to tarry this "little while" in their midst, holding fast the confession of our hope; "for He is faithful that promised."

In the book of Esther we again have "three days" as the time of danger, and an agony of trial to God's people (see Esther iv. 16, and v. 1); but it becomes to them the precious time, both of Esther's courageous approach to the king, and of night and day fasting on the part of the



Jews. And "the third day" brought them God's own deliverance; all the sweeter because it had been so believingly and earnestly sought. The whole narrative justifies the well-known saying founded upon it: "Be willing to suffer only three days under Haman, and you shall ride with Mordecai."

In Hezekiah's case, "the third day" was given him as the time of recovery from *sickness*, God thereby showing it was His own interposition, and not the slowness of nature's laws of healing. (See 2 Kings xx. 5.) "Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: *on the third day* thou shalt go up to the house of the Lord." Thus God's speedy resurrection "third day" power is seen in the sicknesses of His saints, just as it was also at Bethany over the grave of Lazarus.

Jonah's "three days and three nights" in the fish's belly has similar lessons in it, viz., resurrection and speedy deliverance, but with such instructive surroundings as to call for separate consideration. Only one word on it now. When, in 1 Cor. xv. 4, Paul says, "according to the Scriptures," for our Lord's burial and rising again "the third day," it must chiefly be this scripture of the book of Jonah to which he refers.

Hosea vi. 1, 2 is the only remaining passage, and it shows "the third day" to have been a familiar expression of the faith and hope of Old Testament saints: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us. . . . After two days will He revive us: *in the third day* He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight." This scripture points to the yet future blessing of the nation. They will be as a people called forth from the dead. (See Isa. xxvi. 19.) "Thy dead men shall live: my

dead body shall they arise." (See also Ezek. xxxvii. and Dan. xii. 2.) To these Hosea vi. 2 adds how SPEEDILY this resurrection mercy will follow, upon their returning to the Lord and confessing their sins. Blessed "third day" for them, and for the whole world through them! But the same *swiftness* of God's mercy was true for the remnant of that nation that sought their God in Babylon (see Dan. ix. 20-23); and is true also, now and always, for all who will seek God, and make Him alone their trust. "*As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children,*" is true for Israel in the future, but also for us even now.

Thus "third day" scriptures tend to awaken and strengthen our souls, that, as Peter says, "our faith and hope might be in God." We have at God's right hand a "third day" Saviour. May we on earth be more a "third day" people. H. D.

## THE FAITHFUL PROPHET AND THE TWO KINGS.

1 KINGS xxii. AND 2 CHRON. xviii.

THERE is too much reason to fear that many believers read the word of God in a very slight and desultory manner, and so become acquainted with only a small part of it. Certainly the wisest as well as the most reverent and suitable mode is to read the Scriptures through from end to end, so that the whole current and force of the divine word may be allowed to flow through the soul. Even where there is little leisure, it is very easy to accomplish this every year by reading three chapters a day; and if there be also the open ear and mind when the Scriptures are publicly read or expounded, and a real longing of heart to understand and to profit by them, with a sincere and simple dependence on the teaching of the

Holy Spirit as the revealer of the truth of God, there will soon be a very considerable advance in spiritual knowledge.

Few portions of the Word are more neglected than the historical books, and yet there seems to be a special importance attached to the history of Israel in the words, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples [or figures]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [ages] are come" (1 Cor. x. 11); not to mention the general principle applicable to all the oracles of God, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4); and the grand truth that "all Scripture is of divine inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.)

The historical books, though neglected, are full of interest. They contain, we may say, a picture-gallery and a portrait-gallery, and such pictures as none but the finger of God could have drawn, and such portraits as He alone could present to us. Not only is everything real and true, but there is also a divine power and force, and a depth of meaning, which render the study of them unspeakably important.

The great distinction between the two books of Kings and the two books of Chronicles is, that the former are so much more largely occupied with the history of the ten tribes—the kingdom of *Israel*. We have there a full connected history of the apostate nation. First of all the rebellion, headed by Jeroboam; and then the ten tribes, organized as a kingdom, with its false worship and false

priests; then the ruin and destruction of Jeroboam's dynasty and house; then the successful rebellion of Baasha, followed in like manner by the utter ruin of his family; then the conspiracy and death of Zimri; then civil war; then Omri seated on the throne, and a new era established, apparently of deeper wickedness, signalized by the statutes of Omri (Micah vi. 16), which probably marked the beginning of a still more definite departure from the laws and the worship of the one true God. We then come to Ahab; and in the two chapters before us we have the record of a scene so remarkable as to be twice presented to us by the Holy Spirit. Three distinct, strongly-marked characters are there portrayed before us, and it may be well to examine each of them somewhat closely—Ahab, Jehoshaphat, and Micaiah; the two kings and the prophet.

## AHAB.

Of Ahab we read, "There was none like unto Ahab, who did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." (1 Kings xxi. 25.) It was to his fatal marriage that his desperate course of evil was traced; for it is written, "It came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." (1 Kings xvi. 31-33.)

It seems that he was not naturally a bold, bad man, without scruples or remorse; for we read of his having on one occasion humbled himself before the Lord. (1 Kings xxi. 27-29.) But he was led on by a stronger spirit than

his own, into one wickedness after another, till he fell at last a sacrifice to the deceptions of the false prophets whom his wife clustered around him. It was not he who killed the prophets of Jehovah, but he allowed Jezebel to do it. It was not he who slew Naboth, but he connived at the murder, and profited by it; so that the word of the Lord fixed the guilt on him. "Hast thou killed and also taken possession?" We see him, in the last scene of his life, lured on by a lying spirit to utter destruction, while he fancied (even after his doom had been solemnly declared) that he could escape by disguising himself. "But a certain man drew a bow at a venture." There was no thought of aiming at the king of Israel, who seemed safely guarded in his armour; but his time had come, and the arrow pierced him. In that crisis, however, as if he would still fight on and resist his destiny, he stayed himself up in his chariot against the Syrians till the even; and then he died, and his blood was washed in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked it up, in the very spot where the blood of Naboth cried for vengeance.

The word of God says that the way of transgressors is hard; and Ahab found it so. His sin found him out. He died defeated, his army scattered, his purpose disappointed; and as he breathed his last under the irrevocable sentence of the God he had rejected and despised, he knew that another sentence had gone forth by which his whole posterity was doomed to destruction.

Let us not fancy that Ahab's was an uncommon case. Alas! in its essential principles it is found repeated everywhere. We see its resemblance all around us, as we see in like manner the picture of the gainsaying of Kore, and the running greedily after the error of Balaam for reward. Marriages with the ungodly, from the first record of them in Gen. vi. 2, have been the fruitful source of countless

miseries and crimes. There may not be the special outward form of Ahab's wickedness, but, in some other form, Baal, *i.e.* some lord or power, has taken the place of God, and the life has been wasted in its wretched service. Men do not ordinarily design and lay out for themselves a life of evil, but they begin some sinful course; they are incited or stirred up to one thing after another; they become committed to associations and practices from which, after a time, they find they cannot escape, and, before long, conscience is seared as with a hot iron, and they give themselves up, body and soul, to the world in all its hard demands.

Perhaps some who read these lines may remember companions of earlier days, who once promised well, and then slid away till they went boldly and openly into the ways of shame. So, long ago, wrote Richard Baxter—

“He warmed me with his zeal when I was cold,  
 And my remissness lovingly reprov'd;  
 For such a friend I had; but, after all,  
 Himself became my warning by his fall!”

Ahabs are not now seen perhaps at the head of a nation or an army, though it may be that there are more of them in high places in this evil world than we know of; but “Ahab” is the proper name of every one who has yielded to temptation, and is now living a life of sin and folly in the worship of mammon, the love of pleasure, or the love of the world; and there are false prophets by the hundred to preach smooth things, to prophesy deceits, and to encourage men in their lust.

But there was another king to whom we must next turn.

M. W.

(*To be continued.*)

## PEACE.

DOUBTLESS most careful readers of God's word have noticed the frequent recurrence in its pages of the little word "peace." Quite as much is said of it as of joy, which is the overflowing of the cup of peace. There is a joy which disturbs this peace, but there must be true peace before there can be true joy.

Peace is that which no unconverted child of Adam knows. There *is* the "triumphing of the wicked," although it is short; and there are the "pleasures of sin for a season;" but "there is *no* peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (Isa. lvii. 21.)

The natural, unregenerate man, may have health, wealth, wisdom, honour, influence, friends, comforts, a religious creed, forms and ceremonies, and may pass for a religious man, but he has no true peace; for "the way of peace have they not known." (Rom iii. 17; Isa. lix. 8.)

Yet there is unquestionably such a thing as true peace, and such is its nature that it is said to pass all understanding (Phil. iv. 7); it cannot therefore be fully comprehended, and if its possessor attempts rightly to speak of it, his soul wells up with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

There was a time when man, fresh from his Maker's hand, in innocence (*i.e.* in ignorance of evil—knowing only good) knew peace, but by disobedience he lost it; and from that moment it ceased to be possessed by man in his natural state, and can only be known in God's own way, through blood, through the one all-atoning sacrifice of Christ, God's beloved Son made flesh.

To that sacrifice all the sacrifices of the law pointed,

and the blood shed foreshadowed the laying down of His life for sinners on the tree, when "He offered Himself without spot to God," and so "made peace by the blood of His cross." (Col. i. 20.) Hence God the Father, satisfied with His Son's finished work, raised Him from the dead, and is now known to every believer as "the God of peace."

Here, then, we begin to treat of our subject—*peace*.

#### PEACE WITH GOD

Is the sinner's great need, and that which must be known by him before his soul can rest. It is the fruit of faith, not obtained by *working*, but by *believing*; not by religious efforts, or resolutions to improve a ruined condition, to amend a sinful life, and reform conduct, but by taking the place before God of a guilty, ruined, helpless sinner, and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting His finished work, placing all confidence in Him as made of God to every believer "wisdom, even righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

Should this come before the eye of an anxious soul, let me ask such an one to read carefully, as the word of God who cannot lie, that which He says regarding His Son in Rom. iv. 25, v. 1: "Who was delivered for [on account of] our offences, and was raised again for [on account of] our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Peace with God! This is the beginning of blessing. God reconciles to Himself in Christ, and Christ, having effected reconciliation by His death, is the true and immediate object of faith. This is *objective* reconciliation; whilst the change of mind which makes the proud, self-righteous sinner willing to be justified, saved in this way, is *subjective* reconciliation. Such a soul is at peace with God. Not as



one who has *made his* peace with God, for that he never could do, but as one resting in Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has made peace with God *for* him, yet *without* him.

Unspeakably precious as this is, it is but the beginning of blessing; we need more than this, and God has provided more. We have rest—peace *in* God as well as peace *with* Him. The prodigal needed food indeed to meet his hunger, a robe in which to cover himself, and sandals for his feet; but he had a deeper need than all these together—he needed forgiveness to relieve his conscience, for he was guilty; he needed the token of unaltered love to satisfy his heart. The father understood this, and ran to meet him, fell on his neck, and kissed him, not waiting even for his confession, but drawing it forth by the embrace and the kiss. Thus the father relieved his own loving heart and comforted his son's; and whereas other wants were met within the house, the deeper need was met without, and fitted the returning one to enjoy the rich provision of the father's love. So also is it with the sinner who believes God, and looks to, and rests in Christ. Peace takes the place in the conscience of guilt and accusation, and love the place of enmity, and the affections of the renewed soul find their rest *in* God.

Reconciled to God, at peace with Him, justified from all things, accepted in the Beloved, the saved one possesses rest through Christ, believing in God; for whilst Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the immediate object of faith, God, even the Father, is the ultimate rest of the soul. Through Christ we believe in God (1 Peter i. 21), rejoice in hope of His glory, and joy in HIM through Christ. (Rom. v. 2, 11.) Thrice happy state! thrice happy moment when it was first enjoyed!

Between that moment and the glory yet future there

intervenes the journey here in the wilderness and the time of service and of conflict; and it may be asked, Is there a provision of *peace* for this also? There is. It is possible for the believer to accomplish his journey, perform his service, and fight his fight in peace of heart; for the peace the gospel gives is compared to sandals for the feet, which are included in the list of his armour as a soldier. (Eph. vi.) In confirmation of this let us recall the Master's words when about to leave His disciples: "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John xvi. 33.) Thus in the midst and in spite of tribulation (*i.e.* conflict, persecution, temptation, and sorrow) it is our privilege to be in peace in Him. Neither are we left without instruction as to how it may be obtained and maintained. Turn for a moment to Phil. iv. 6, 7. "Be careful for nothing," says Paul, "but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep [garrison] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Mark, dear reader, the two little words—*nothing* and *everything*. Are you tempted, persecuted, needy, straitened, sorrowful, cast down, yea, conscious even of failure in conduct? Then pray about *all*, confess *all*. Pray definitely; confess the particular fault, *the* thing in which you have failed or sinned, and you will soon find your heart relieved of all, and the peace of God, God's own peace, keeping your heart and mind. Remember also Peter's words: "Casting *all* your care [anxiety] upon Him; for He careth for [is concerned about] you."

Nor is this all; for, as the crowning blessing, God has promised to give *His* presence, His company, to be enjoyed by the obedient one, as

## THE GOD OF PEACE.

In Philippians iv. we also have Paul's final charge: "Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things . . . do: and the *God of peace* shall be with you." This is the privilege of each believer, the common heritage of the children of God.

Again, this condition of soul and this manner of walk should characterize each assembly of God's people collectively. Each such assembly is comprised of individuals, and if each one walks after the heavenly pattern, God will delight to dwell among them all as the God of peace.

## THE PEACE OF GOD.

In Colossians iii. 15 we have the holy exhortation, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, *whereunto* also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." Let the *peace* of God rule, direct, and be the arbiter to settle every question and arrange every matter, and let it rule in your *hearts*. The peaceful soul will sow the fruit of righteousness; that is, *peace*, and so make peace. (James iii. 18.) We should be ready to sacrifice any and every thing, save God's truth and a good conscience, for the peace and blessing of the whole body; so should we experience in our midst that to which we are imperatively called—*peace*, the peace of God—and be full of praise.

Once more, this peace is connected with the "blessed hope," the proper hope of the Church of God. The apostle Peter, when exhorting believers on the ground of the coming day of the Lord, says, "Be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless."

Beloved fellow-believers, let us think on these things, and seek to realize them from day to day, that, being at peace *with* God through faith in the Lord Jesus, we may rest, having peace *in* God as the portion and joy of our souls. Our hearts will then be garrisoned with the peace *of* God amid the cares, conflicts, and sorrows of the way; and we shall be so ordering our conduct from day to day that we may enjoy the presence of the God of peace, and rejoice in hope of His glory, waiting "in peace" for the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto Him.

H. H.

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#### NOTES AND REPLIES.

*What are we to gather from Christ's being "driven into the wilderness"?*  
(Mark i. 12.)

It reveals the important truth that our Lord's going to be tempted was no seeking of His own, but a divine appointment. Our prayer is, "Lead us not into temptation;" but when our prayer is not granted, and we are led of our God into the place of temptation, we can then "count it all joy." (James i. 2.) Thus our blessed Lord told the apostles to watch and pray that they might not enter into temptation; but when Satan desired to have them that he might sift them, our Lord did not pray that they might not be brought into the place of trial and temptation to be sifted, but only asked that Peter's faith might not fail under the terrible pressure to which it would be subjected.

*Was Simon Magus (Acts viii. 13), who is said to have believed, a true convert?*

SAVING faith is belief in a person, and not in a fact. To believe in Christ is eternal life; only to believe about Christ is to seal condemnation. Those who received seed on stony ground are said to have believed "for a while;" and so many in the gospels believed, but went back and walked no more with Christ. Peter's solemn words, "I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," seem to show that Simon was still a slave of Satan. His own words (v. 24) are similar to Cain's in Gen. iv., where the punishment, and not the sin, occupies the mind. See the contrast of this in Psalm li., where the sin is everything to David, though God had broken all his bones in His divine, judicial dealings.

## THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

IN type, in prophecy, and in precept, the truth of the oneness of the Church of God is continually presented to us in Scripture. The Church forms one of several circles, yet there is but one common Centre — “God and the Lamb.” Three distinct spheres are presented to us in the fifth chapter of the book of Revelation, each having its characteristic doxology of praise. The Church or inner circle is given in verses 8–10; next, the angelic circle in verses 11, 12; and the outer circle of creation in verse 13. In each the Lamb is especially prominent, whereby we learn that the basis on which all have their standing and security is *redemption*. Each circle from without inwards, according to its nearness to the throne, swells with a higher note of praise, which reaches its climax in the Church’s new song—

“Thou art worthy to take the Book,  
 And to open the seven seals thereof;  
 For Thou was slain,  
 And hast redeemed us to God  
 By Thy blood,  
 Out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation,  
 And hast made us\* unto our God  
 Kings† and priests,  
 And we‡ shall reign on the earth.”

We will look at the *unity of the Church* in various aspects: (1) In divine purpose and ultimate accomplishment; (2) As manifested in the early Church; (3) In its present marred condition.

\* Or them.

† Or a kingdom.

‡ Or they.

## I. IN DIVINE PURPOSE AND ULTIMATE ACCOMPLISHMENT.

In Eph. i. Paul tells us of God's purpose to gather together all things in Christ. Of this the body of Christ is the most perfect and most wonderful exhibition; and to this, in type, the history of the twelve-tribed nation of Israel points (*δωδεκαφυλον*, Acts xxvi. 7), for it always had a common centre (whether in the time of the tabernacle or of the temple) in that *one place* which God chose, and where He recorded His name.\* This common gathering-place for sacrifice and worship had its one altar for the sin-offering or burnt-offering of the individual, or of the nation at large when assembled at their appointed feasts; and the great lesson taught was, that their God was one, and also that they as God's people were one nation. (See 1 Cor. x. 16.)

In the very construction of the tabernacle the same truth was ever prominent. The boards were all coupled together, and the whole united by bars that ran from end to end. The fine linen curtains of blue and purple and scarlet were united by loops of blue and taches of gold, and thus became "one tabernacle." (Exod. xxvi. 6.) In the same way the curtains of goats' hair were joined with loops and taches of brass, and these "coupled the tent together, that it became one." (v. 11.) Thus also a common priesthood and a common sanctuary for all Israel were God's witnesses to His purpose of a united people, subject to the same divine rule, and owning a common centre of worship. This was still further manifested as God's purpose when Samuel anointed David to be Israel's

\* The frequent recurrence in the book of Deuteronomy of the phrase, "The place that the Lord thy God shall choose," deserves especial notice. See chap. xii. 5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; xiv. 23, 25; xv. 20; xvi. 2, 6, 7, 11, 15, 16; xvii. 8, 10; xviii. 6; xxiii. 16; xxvi. 2; xxxi. 11; in all twenty-one times.

king, and was exhibited outwardly when all Israel came to Hebron (2 Sam. v.), and, owning God's choice, united in anointing David as their king. It was then that David took Jerusalem out of the hand of the Jebusite, and made it the centre of his kingdom, and to its stronghold mount Zion gave the name of the city of David; and thus the one king and the one city became additional exemplifications of the same truth. It was here afterwards that God selected the site for His temple, and thenceforth Jerusalem became God's centre of government and of worship in the earth—a type of that heavenly city, the holy Jerusalem, in the midst of which is the throne of God and of the Lamb, and wherein His servants shall serve Him.

This holy Jerusalem, which shall be seen descending from heaven, is the Bride the Lamb's wife, and reveals in ultimate glory that which Old Testament history and prophecy bore witness to and foreshadowed. The book of Revelation thus becomes the key to the literal as well as to the spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament.

The one city, the one bride, the one temple, and the one body, are all divine symbols by which, in various aspects, we learn the unity of the purpose of God. And it is very misleading to regard these various symbols as necessarily presenting different objects. Each symbol conveys its own distinct feature of the same object; but if each is made to present a different object, the unity and harmony of the whole is marred.

In the epistle to the Ephesians, Paul sets forth this paramount truth of unity with the greatest fulness, unfolding therein that "hidden mystery" which, except in type and allegory, was unrecorded in the writings of Moses and the prophets. Nevertheless it is so fully indicated in type and shadow that, in the light of the New Testament revelation of the mystery, it becomes plain that "known

unto God are *all* His works from the beginning of the world." As we trace more or less clearly God's dispensational dealings and the mysteries of the new covenant in the symbols and figures of the old, we exclaim with the apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" The truth is, God has not designed that man should find them out by his searchings; they must be divinely revealed, whether dispensationally, or personally in the experience of the individual.

In Eph. ii. Paul presents this unity in the form of a *building*, and believers in Christ are not only compared to the building itself, fitly framed together and growing into a holy temple in the Lord, but they also are seen as the dwellers therein—fellow-citizens and members of the divine household. Peter uses the same combination of symbols when he speaks of believers in Christ as being, through the Spirit, living stones built upon the Living Stone, Christ Jesus, "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood." Paul again, in 1 Tim. iii. 15, speaks of the house of God, "which is the Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth."

In Eph. iv. the *body* is the symbol employed, and in connection with this we read, first, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;" and in this God the Holy Ghost is the living power, the mighty inworker, in whom all are baptized into one body. Secondly, there is "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." In this God the Son is prominent, and on the ground of His atoning death the Spirit of God works; and upon union in Him, and consequent fellowship with Him in His person and work, in His death and resurrection, the unity of the body depends. Thirdly, there is "one



God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." Thus this infinitely-glorious sevenfold unity has its power, its security, and also its ultimate accomplishment assured in the ever blessed Trinity. It is a unity beyond our making and beyond our keeping (save as sufficed by God), but which will have its perfect fulfilment when the high-priestly prayer of John xvii. is answered. It is then that the principalities and powers in heavenly places will fully understand by the Church "the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which He purposed [made] in Christ," and will see "what is the fellowship of the mystery which, from the beginning of the world [or the ages], hath been hid in God."

In Eph. v. we see the Church as the *wife*, symbolized so beautifully in the garden of Eden, when in Adam's deep sleep God took the rib out of his side, and builded it a "woman." Thus while God *formed* man, we are told that He *builded* woman. The marginal word "builded" (Gen. ii. 22) expresses the Hebrew, and it has reference to that building of the Church for Christ of which Paul tells us the woman was a type. "I speak," he says, "concerning Christ and the Church." The symbol here includes not only union, but communion, which is implied also in the word "help-meet." (Gen. ii. 18.) This expression might be better paraphrased, "a help the exact counterpart of himself," which is needed if communion is to be perfect, full, and unhindered, such as God will ultimately accomplish for Christ in His Church.

We see, then, that the mighty purpose of God in the Church can only be adequately expressed by a variety of symbols, and we must hold each of them for its own particular unfolding of that manifold unity which has its *source* in God, its *centre* in Christ, and its *power* in the Holy Ghost.

It is to the fulfilment of this eternal purpose concerning the Church that our Lord directs His prayer in John xvii. He there prays "not for the world." Creation at large is not the object of the prayer, but the Church of the first-born ones written in heaven. It is only incidentally that the world is brought in, as when He asks that His own may be one, "that the world may *believe* that thou hast sent me," and also "that the world may *know* that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them" (the members of Christ) "as thou hast loved me." The burden of the prayer is the unity of His people. This unity is connected with three distinct petitions; first, that His people may be *kept* by the Father; second, that they may be *sanctified* by the truth; and third, that they may be *glorified* with Himself.

The first petition is in verse 11: "Holy Father, keep through [or in] thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." As the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all," is the source of our union, so His name realized by the soul is the centre of attraction. Christ came to declare the name of the Father, and to make that holy Name the uniting point of the family of heaven; hence the beauty of the prayer, "Keep in thy name." It is as if the Lord would say, Keep them abiding there, retaining its hallowed memories, and fulfilling the words of the prayer, "Hallowed be thy name;" for it is obedience that hallows the Name in which infinite grace keeps those who call upon it. They are kept to be one.

The second prayer is, "Sanctify them by (or, in) thy truth: . . . that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us." (Connect *vv.* 17-21.) In verse 11 the name was the point of union,

and the element of sanctification here given is the truth. The understanding of this would remove many vague ideas as to sanctification. "Sanctify them in the truth."\* The word of God is the expression of that truth, and sanctification is wrought in us by obedience to it. With those who obey it God dwells, even with such as are of an humble and contrite spirit, and who tremble at His word. (See Isa. lxvi. 2.) We are sanctified through the truth that we may be one, and that our oneness with the Father and the Son and with one another may be manifested even here below.

Lastly, the prayer is, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (v. 24); "and the glory which thou hast given me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected in (or, into) one." (vv. 22, 23.) Oneness is here connected with the glory and with our personal nearness to Christ in the glory. Thus we are to be glorified that we may be one.

How unlike is the oneness here spoken of to that arising from any mutual agreement made by Christians on any compromise of truth. Yet, alas, these scriptures are often used to advocate union on some other basis than that of the *Name*, the *Truth*, and the *Glory*; that name in which the Father keeps, that truth in which the Holy Ghost sanctifies, and that glory in which Christ will glorify His own. These are three precious legacies given us as bonds of union, to rejoice in now by faith, while we look forward to their full accomplishment in the world to come. May we seek to keep these heavenly bonds unbroken in brotherly love.

\* See also John xvi. 13; "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth."

In concluding this portion of our subject, we would refer to Ps. cxxxiii., the psalm of the unbroken family: "Behold, how good and how pleasant is the dwelling of brethren even as one."\* It is thus that God regards them. Two similes are then given to describe this good and pleasant thing: "It is as the good oil [that is, precious and costly with its fragrant spices] upon the head, that descended upon the beard, Aaron's beard, that descended to the collar† of his garments. It is as the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, life for evermore."

These precious verses beautifully express the condition of the Church just after Pentecost. They were all "as one," all were "together" (*επι το αυτο*), and no one said that aught he had was his own. They lived an undivided family, with common interests, and common joys and sorrows, and common possessions here, and common expectations in the future. This love of the brotherhood was good and pleasant in the eyes of the Father in heaven. The holy anointing oil that was poured on the High Priest came down upon all the priestly family, and bore witness to all that they had been with Jesus. Their life showed it; their unselfishness, their unworldliness, their power, their fearlessness before man, all testified that the anointing of the Head rested on them. Truly the oil was good, as that brotherly love ever is that springs out of the anointing of the Holy Ghost. It was also pleasant as Hermon dew, that came down and rested on mount Zion, and unselfishly poured forth its freshness. The last clause we

\* See the Hebrew. It may interest some to know that the Greek renders "as one," by "*επι το αυτο*," *i.e.* "together," being the word which is used in Acts i. 15; ii. 1, 44; iii. 1, &c.

† The Hebrew word is "mouth," and is used in the sense of the collar of a coat (Job xxx. 18), and not the skirt. The copiousness of the oil on Aaron's head is what is intended; a figure of mount Zion.

would apply to the first verse, "for there," that is, wherever "the dwelling of brethren as one" is found, there God commands a blessing, even life for evermore; "Yet a little while" and the blessing will be fully manifested! Thus does this psalm put its seal to the truth contained in our Lord's prayer in John xvii., and the being as *one* spoken of in the psalm is but the oneness there prayed for—a oneness in the name, the truth, and the glory of God, and which finds its basis on the will and character of God, and not on the unsubstantial ground of a mutual consent that makes the creature rather than God its centre. Let us not lose sight of the word, "*As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us.*" H. G.

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### OUR LEADER: A MEDITATION.

"He that hath mercy on them shall lead them."—ISA. xlix. 10.

PRECIOUS assurance! The very hand that has reached us in our low estate, that has lifted us out of the depth of our natural ruin and corruption, and will soon set us in the presence of our God as objects of His eternal delight and satisfaction (Jude 24; Ps. xli. 12), *that* is the hand that is upon us *now*, and that can never be removed from us until it has stablished and settled us in the eternal glory to which in grace we have been called. (1 Peter v. 10.)

"He that *hath mercy* on them;" He who in the time of fear said, in infinite pity, "*Fear not,*" and in the time of weariness spoke the "word in season" that gave *rest* to the labouring and heavy-laden soul; He who amid the darkness and gloom caused the *light* to shine, and when all was restlessness and distress spoke eternal *peace* to the troubled heart, and showed in His hands and His side the memorial

of that atoning death and that terrible conflict by which peace was made—HE is the One who leads. And He leads by "the right way;" for He could not lead by any other. The rightness and perfectness of the way are not often discernible by the eye of sense; but whilst the world's order is, *see* and *believe* (John vi. 30; Mark xv. 32), the divine order is, *believe* and *see*. (Ps. xxvii. 13; John xi. 40.) Thus we now by grace *believe* that He leads us by the *right* way, and soon (oh, how soon!) shall we in His own very presence look back and trace out the perfections of that *perfect* way by which He is leading us thither. In the darkness we *believe*; when divine light is shed upon the path we shall *see*.

He *leads*, He does not *drive*; therefore He is *with* us, by our very side (Ps. xvi. 8; 2 Tim. iv. 17); and though our frequent stumblings are evidences that we do not set the Lord "*alway*" before us, yet our recovery proves that He has not left us. If at times our feet seem "almost gone," it is because we have looked away from Him; while that they have not quite "slipped" is due to the blessed fact that we are continually with Him who holdeth us by our right hand (Ps. lxxiii. 2, 23); and He can put the enemy to shame and magnify His own mercy by making the very stumbling a step onward. For if the effect of it be truer self-knowledge and deeper self-abasement, with a more simple clinging to Him, it must be a step onward. But while grace may thus abound over our sins and wanderings, the soul that *knows* grace can never sin that grace may abound.

HE leads, and *Himself* is the object of the heart that is led by His Spirit; while the destiny of the "many sons" thus led is *glory*, the "city of habitation," the "city that hath foundations," the city that has "the glory of God." And when we speak of this leading we must remember

that we are led by GOD—Father, Son, and Spirit. (See Heb. ii. 10, where “bringing” is literally “leading;” Ps. xxiii. ; John x. 3, 4; Romans viii. 14.)

The Father, whose hand was so heavy upon His dear Son when it laid Him low in the dust of *death* as our substitute, is leading us to the full enjoyment of *life* in resurrection power and might. The Son, who laid down His life for the flock, is leading it to the fold which the foot of foe or tempter can never enter, and where weariness and care can never be known. The Spirit, who once led the Christ of God to the conflict of the wilderness, and then to the deep darkness of Calvary, is leading us to the unbroken peace and unclouded light of the eternal God.

But to discern this leading we must be in heart and spirit in the wilderness. It was when Israel had reached “the edge of the wilderness” that we first read “the Lord went before them.” (Exod. xiii. 20, 21.) The way of Egypt they knew well, but as soon as they got into the wilderness they needed a guide. And He who had in “mercy” heard their groaning, and delivered them, was there to “lead them;” as Moses afterwards spoke of Him as the One “who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.” (Deut. i. 33.) And this He did to make Himself a glorious and an everlasting name. (Isa. lxiii. 12–14.) It is good to remember that He changes not; He is the same still—as ready to guide us as He was them. And if the heart be really desirous of pleasing Him, and doing no will but His, then even in the darkness the feet shall not stumble; and the turn in the road that leads we know not whither, shall be found to be one of the predetermined points of the “right way.” “*His way is perfect,*” and cannot be altered; and as we bow to His leading, He

*makes our way perfect, girding us with strength to walk in it.* (Ps. xviii. 30, 32.) And in doing this He reveals Himself; so that His ways of grace discovered, and His perfections learnt out in the wilderness, may be themes of praise and triumph in the glory of His presence above.

Lead, holy Father, lead,  
For perfect is Thy way ;  
Thou leadeest through the gloom of night  
Unto eternal day.

Lead, blessed Saviour, lead  
The objects of Thy love,  
Thy little flock, beset with foes,  
To Thy blest fold above.

Lead, gracious Spirit, lead  
The saints Thou dost indwell ;  
Unfold to us the Father's grace,  
The love of Jesus tell.

Lead on, Thou glorious God !  
Thou mighty Three in One !  
From snares, from foes, Thy ransomed save,  
And let Thy will be done.

W. H. B.

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## THE FAITHFUL PROPHET AND THE TWO KINGS.

*(Continued from page 18.)*

### JEHOSHAPHAT.

POOR pliable Jehoshaphat! He was a good man, and in his own kingdom sought to serve and honour God. On one great occasion (2 Chron. xx.) he nobly led forth his people in faith, and triumphed before the Lord, in the sure confidence of coming victory. But here we find him persuaded to join with Ahab at Ramoth-gilead; then joining with Ahab's elder son, Ahaziah, who did very wickedly



(2 Chron. xx. 35); and finally uniting with Joram against the Moabites, and well-nigh perishing with all his host in the desert. (2 Kings iii.) But, worse than all, he made a family alliance with the house of Ahab. His eldest son, Jehoram, married the daughter of Ahab—"Athaliah, that wicked woman." (2 Chron. xxiv. 7.) Of the consequences of that sad and fatal act, much is told us in the word of God. Jehoshaphat provided richly for his younger sons; he gave them great gifts, with fenced cities in Judah; but Jehoram "slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel." His subsequent course also was full of wickedness and misfortune, as the whole of 2 Chron. xxi. tells us; but the secret of it all was, that "he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab; for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife." (v. 6.) "There was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz (Ahaziah), and he departed, without being desired." This son Ahaziah also "walked in the ways of the house of Ahab; for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly" (chap. xxii. 3); and he perished miserably at the hand of Jehu, in the appointed slaughter of all that mother's house. He was dragged from a hiding-place in Samaria and slain.

Then Athaliah's turn of power came; and "she arose and slew all the seed royal of the house of Judah" (chap. xxii. 10), save only Joash, who was rescued from the massacre, and hidden by the faithful priest in the temple. And so it has been truly said, that when the usurper reigns (as now the god of this world does), the true place of faith is with the hidden King! A pregnant parable for God's people in these last days.

If lessons may be learned from the story of Ahab, what touching and heart-searching warnings do we not find stamped on the history of Jehoshaphat! The prophet asked him: "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love

them that hate the Lord?" He might have answered, that he was allied with Ahab for a good purpose, and that it was right to recover Ramoth-gilead, one of the cities of refuge, from the Syrians; for how often is the apparent goodness of the object made the excuse for means which God has never sanctioned! But the truth is, that Jehoshaphat was already linked with Ahab. It is clear from the dates that his family alliance with Ahab's house was prior to this; and the words with which chapter xviii. of the Second Book of Chronicles commences plainly indicate the fact: "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab. And after certain years he went down to Samaria." There was first the family entanglement, and afterwards the political alliance. Thus, the proper place of testimony was gone at an early stage; and all that followed was but the natural, if not the inevitable, result. And it is very remarkable that, weak and vacillating, and even false to God, as previous kings of Judah had been, *this* step of a family alliance with the kings of Israel, who had walked in the sin of Jeroboam, was never taken till this good king Jehoshaphat was on the throne. And do we not now often find the first spring of ruin to arise in the wilfulness or inconsistency of God's own children?

It was when Jehoshaphat's riches and honour abounded that he entered into affinity with Ahab. So dangerous is prosperity! "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low." (James i. 9, 10.) God has chosen the poor, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. (James ii. 5.) There are many who, though they flourish in the valley of humiliation, yet find prosperity an enchanted ground; hence, "Give me neither poverty nor riches," is the prayer of all who know the snares of poverty, and the dangers of wealth. Old

George Herbert's lines express the thoughts of many an exercised heart—

“How know I, if Thou shouldst me raise,  
That I should praise Thee?  
Perhaps high places and Thy praise  
Would not so well agree.”

But it is easy to see how considerations of expediency might be urged in favour of this marriage-union. Would it not, it might be asked, cement peace between the two kingdoms, and give scope to the influence of Judah? It should, however, be remembered that it is a universal truth, that in all these compromises the influence exerted is always on the wrong side. “Let them return to thee: but return not thou to them.” (Jer. xv. 19.) “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” When once the line of separation is crossed, and we go down to Egypt for help, then human wisdom takes the place of the wisdom which is from above. The one is earthly, sensual, and devilish, however fair and expedient it may seem; and the other pure, peaceable, and divine.

Nothing is more obvious than the practical result of all such failures as Jehoshaphat's. None of us can have lived long, and known much of Christian life, without witnessing many cases similar to his. There has been the real conversion of the soul, the true desire to serve the Lord, together with the possession of unfeigned peace; but earthly alliances, and weakness, and worldliness in the family have introduced an element of decay and sorrow; and the next generation has witnessed the total shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Indeed, it is seldom (though it be a painful admission) that a really faithful testimony is preserved for two successive generations, and very seldom for more than two. Prosperity comes in, simplicity is lost, the pride of life enters, and the

uprightness, integrity, and single eye of former days are seen no more. Thus, certainly, it was with Jehoshaphat and his family.

To obtain a more perfect view, both of Ahab and Jehoshaphat, it is necessary to consider them in connection with him with whom the Spirit of God groups them in this chapter. We turn, then, to the faithful witness for Jehovah—

#### MICAH.

It is a true saying of Philip Henry, if taken in its fulness, that we are *really* that which we are *relatively*; that is, in *all* relations; and there are none which test the real condition of our hearts more accurately than our relation to the world, and to the Lord's people. It is possible to be lovely in the private relationships of life, and upright and honourable above many in ordinary business associations, without knowing anything of heart-separation from the world, or of love to the Lord's people. The presence of Micaiah on the scene sufficed to expose the falseness of Jehoshaphat's position. The alliance had been made, and the enterprise undertaken; but the king of Judah had his misgivings, and suggested that they should enquire of Jehovah; and Ahab was ready with his compliance, as he had his false prophets, and was certain enough of their consent to his will. They would, he knew, use the name of Jehovah when it suited their purpose. But, said king Jehoshaphat, "Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah besides, that we might enquire of him?" (2 Chron. xviii. 6.) Ahab had already enquired at the word of Jehovah, as Jehoshaphat had wished. (*vv.* 4, 5.) But he had not enquired in the right quarter; and Jehoshaphat wanted another sort of prophet to satisfy his mind; and Ahab knew very well the distinction. "There is," he said, "yet one man by whom we may enquire of

Jehovah, but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imlah."

Now it is important to notice that the moment there was a question about consulting a true prophet, there was no doubt as to whom they should send for. Ahab knew the man and his communication. When it came to inquiring in earnest of one who really stood in the counsels of Jehovah, and who could declare His will, there was no longer any pretence that any one of Ahab's four hundred was fit for the occasion. The kings must look elsewhere if they really wanted to consult the only true God. So long as a form of godliness would do, there was contentment with the flattering speeches of those who would not thwart the settled purpose of Ahab; the prophets of Baal would suffice; but Jehoshaphat wanted something more, and so there was an end of Ahab's religious arrangements.

It was just so with Jeroboam. He had his altar, his golden calf, and his priests, and they were comfort enough in fair weather; but the moment a crisis arose, and he felt the need of divine power, he turned to the prophet who had denounced all his false worship. "Entreat now the face of the Lord thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again." (1 Kings xiii. 6.) And thus *it will ever be*. So long as men can go on quietly with something that will meet the need of the flesh—just appease the conscience, and gratify the heart's pride—they will do so; but if once something out of the common course of events occurs, they turn (as Pharaoh did from his magicians, and as this Jeroboam did from his pretended priests) to others who are manifested as the true messengers of God. "A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health." (Prov. xiii. 17.) When there is such a one, he is like an epistle

of Christ, "known and read of all men;" and such was Micaiah.

We see the same thing in Jeremiah. When king Zedekiah wanted to know the whole truth as to the Lord's will and purpose concerning himself and his kingdom, he sent for Jeremiah, and conferred with him, though he had not the faith and courage to obey his warning. In all these and similar cases faithfulness has ultimately won the day. The magicians of Pharaoh, the prophets of Baal, and the false priests of Bethel, all had their day; but there was a point at which they had to stop—they were then physicians of no value. They could not act or speak for God. And thus we may all learn that the way to real influence with others is not compromise, but the maintenance of our character and testimony as men of God. The time may come at any moment when the very men who most despise or hate us will feel that they must turn to us if they honestly desire to hear the truth. So it was with Herod. He "feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him: and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly." (Mark vi. 20.) This was the very Herod who afterwards sought to slay Jesus (Luke xiii. 32), and who, at the last, mocked him, arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him to Pilate, with whom he then made friends.

Ahab, however, made no secret of his hatred of Micaiah, nor of his reason for it. Micaiah had no smooth words for him; no healing of the wound slightly, saying, "Peace, peace, when there was no peace." And so Ahab hated him. It was thus he hated Elijah also, as his reply on a previous occasion showed—"Hast thou found me, O mine *enemy*?" There was, he knew well, a great gulf between them.

But what was Jehoshaphat's place all this time—Jehoshaphat, the friend and ally of the man who hated Micaiah?

His very words themselves are enough to condemn, not him alone, but multitudes who in these days are in positions exactly similar. For nothing is more common than to find saints of God mixed up in the strangest association with the enemies of the gospel of Christ, notwithstanding that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God;" and he who will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God. It is now deemed quite right to make up a fellowship between light and darkness, Christ and Belial, provided there is some common object, national or otherwise, to be attained, some Ramoth-gilead, it may be, to be recovered from the Syrians. Jehoshaphat had abundant work to do at home, in upholding the testimony for God in Judah; and when it was maintained, he knew how effectually it attracted God's true people out of Israel. (2 Chron. xv. 9.) But none of the seven thousand in Ahab's time, who had not bowed their knee to Baal, would have much inducement to leave their tribes and homes to join a kingdom in which the heir to the throne was married to a daughter of their godless king, and in which there were family, military, and commercial alliances with Ahab's family. "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out." (Luke xiv. 34.) "It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." (Matt. v. 13.)

It would be strange if the blush of shame did not rise up in the countenance of Jehoshaphat as he felt himself on the side of the apostate king of Israel against Micaiah, or at best neutral between them. It is narrated of Cranmer that, in the time of Henry VIII., he was so embarrassed in the prosecution of Frith the martyr, that he first endeavoured to induce him to modify his statements of

doctrine, and then afforded him opportunity to escape ; but his schemes did not prosper, and Frith perished at the stake. In all such cases of hesitation or doubt, the Scripture rule is distinct and clear: "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth. . . . Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. xiv. 22, 23.) One wrong step leads to another, and embarrassment to embarrassment, all because the feet have wandered from the path of faith and truth ; for steps downward are easy.

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### UNSANCTIFIED VISION.

"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity."—PSALM cxix. 37.

WHAT mighty channels for good or evil are our eyes ! How many and various the objects at which the soul looks through these transparent windows !

Let us, then, consider two or three phases of the wrong use of the eyes. The first book of holy Scripture tells us of the introduction of sin and sorrow through the eyes ; the last book gives us the wiping away of the last tear, with the shutting up in the lake of fire of him who deluded through her eyes the first created woman of earth. How soon was the first human soul defiled ! "And when the woman *saw* that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the *eyes*, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her ; and he did eat." (Gen. iii. 6.) What an appalling scene ! What a direful catastrophe ! Her soul looks out at the windows instead of up to God. That fatal look gave birth to the first thought of disobedience, which produced the first longing to taste, which gave the first impression of infidelity to God ! She *saw*, ate, fell. What a brief



preface to human history of all ages! and what chronicles of darkness comprise its matter! Do *we* then not need to be on the alert? These are days when sight-seeing is become a mania. The earth is ransacked for wonders to meet the craving of eyes which are never satisfied with seeing. Yes, and the spirits of darkness are invited to take part in the development of magic and devilry, to delude the fascinated gaze even of those who bear the name of Christ!

Let us ask ourselves, Where are the eyes that weep over the desolation of Jerusalem? How many tears of ours does God put into his bottle day by day? How often is our pillow wet with weeping? Oh, let us be careful where and at what we gaze; for the crest of this world's prince is marked in serpent or dragon character on nearly everything, and as the end approaches, and the darkness thickens, the claims of Satan's kingdom will be increasingly powerful; therefore we as children of God need to walk in the light, having our eyes not only washed with the tears of true grief over all that dishonours God, but also anointed with heavenly eye-salve that our vision may be clear.

Only a little further on, and we get another dark page. (Gen. xiii. 10.) "And Lot lifted up his *eyes*, and *beheld* all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord." The earth was the centre of gravitation to poor Lot's heart. He "lifted up his eyes," but saw nothing higher than what he could walk upon. A good possession, the way to riches, the gate of opulence, were before him. It was a testing-time. Shall faith in God, or the sight of the eyes, triumph? Oh the greed of an unchastened, unsubdued will! With him it was *gain* at all costs, and at the risk of losing all but life! He

chooses his own path, and from a dweller in a tent he rises in the scale of society until he sits in the gate—the most guilty of all sitting in judgment upon others. He who needed self-judgment, and yet fell short of it more than any, is blinded to his own failures and passes them by. Is not this a solemn picture? Yet how many of us who are dear to God forget our double need of pilgrim life, ways, and character; *first*, as followers of Him who had no place where to lay His head; and *secondly*, as heirs of a blood-bought inheritance. Does not our God see many of His children seeking to make the best of both worlds? disbelieving that they are as liable to err and fall as Lot, and forgetting that putting themselves into a false position shuts them out from the light of His countenance! Is it not painfully true that the eyes of many dear saints are bedazzled with the flash of arms, the appointments of a mansion, the prancings of steeds, the courtings of “society,” the fashionable attire, and many other such-like things, by which the grace of God is turned into lasciviousness, and the testimony of God is obliterated from their ways?

Their righteous souls may, like Lot's, be vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; but the dignity of their *earthly* citizenship is to them so immensely important that they fail to set the Lord always before them, or to walk according to His truth. Hence many of the senate houses of earth (corresponding to the “gate” of the city in Lot's days) have saints of God filling their chairs; and gifts, which might be of infinite blessing if used alone for God, are wasted in the fœtid atmosphere of carnal politics. Alas! in how many of us is it true that the eyes have failed to look straightforward, and in consequence ours has become a divided heart—one half for God, and the other for the world—with one eye, one hand, one foot for each? Oh for such enlightening of the Spirit of truth, and such

holy drawings of His love, as will not only subdue the Lot spirit in ourselves, but also give us the tenderness of heart that shall mourn and weep over the many Lots who so dishonour our blessed God!

Again we get another dark and solemn page of divine record in Judges xiv. 1-4: "And Samson went down to Timnath, and *saw* a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines (or grovelling ones). And he came up, and . . . said unto his father, Get her for me; for she is right in mine *eyes*." (Margin.) To see the force of this, and the depth of the evil which lies underneath, chap. xiii. needs to be pondered. How soon does disobedience of heart come by a look! The Lord had forbidden the "holy seed" to mingle with the people of these lands (see Deut. v. 2-5), yet Samson was disobedient, and fell, although he lived to judge Israel twenty years. Sin upon sin followed, until the eyes through which he "*saw*" were lost, and he spent his last days in fettered slavery, grinding at mammon's wheel. But some may ask, Do parallels of this occur now? Alas, yes! Sorrowfully we answer, Yes! Instances need not be cited; but how many a promising young Christian has been ruined by the unequal yoke! And how many more have sinned presumptuously in this, expecting God would come in and honour their disobedience! The Word is, "Be ye separate;" "Only in the Lord;" God and Satan cannot have fellowship—light and darkness cannot agree—grace and sin cannot commingle; they are opposites.

And what shall be said of David? Let the Scriptures tell their own sad tale of him who in early days of royalty was a man after God's own heart, but, under that dark eclipse of carnal vision, became the inheritor of another name—"a man of blood." But he takes his lesson from the hand of God, and learnt to pray, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity."

What shall we hear the Lord say to ourselves? Surely in greatest plainness, "Let your eye be single, that your whole body may be full of light;" for in this there is richest blessing. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." (Prov. iv. 25.) "Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He have mercy upon us." (Ps. cxxiii. 1, 2.)

May the Lord enable us so fully, so constantly, to gaze by faith upon Himself, that our eyes may be red with the wine of His joy! and may the life-motto of our experience be, "We see Jesus!" Then shall our eyes be so filled that we shall shrink with aversion from all that is apart from Himself, or that savours not of His holiness and His love.

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#### NOTES AND REPLIES.

*Should a brother be allowed to minister in the Church who is not above the reproach of the world?*

WE think 1 Tim. iii. is decisive on this point. In verse 7, speaking of the bishop or overseer, the apostle says, "He must have a good report of them which are without;" and of the ministers (not deacons, as the word is technically used) he writes, "And let these *also* first be proved; *afterwards* let them minister, being found *blameless*." There can be no greater source of weakness in the Church, or of dishonour to Christ, than the recognition of men in any sphere of service who are not consistent *morally* in the eye of the world in those matters of right and wrong of which the world can form a judgment, and also *spiritually* in the divinely-illuminated eye of the Church of God. Power to teach in a teacher, to preach in an evangelist, or to rule in an elder, is not in either case a sufficient claim for recognition, unless there be also a good report in the world, and a blameless walk in the Church. This has not been sufficiently borne in mind, so that un-sanctified gifts have been submitted to, and wide-spread carnality has been the result.

## GOD'S GREAT GATHERINGS.

OF these we may find many in God's word, from that first *gathering together* of the waters in Genesis i. to make earth habitable for the favoured human race, down to that last awful assembling before the great white throne in Revelation xx. The first affords an early illustration of the solemn work of the cross; for as God said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto *one place*, and let the dry land appear," so did He gather the dark waters of our iniquities at the cross, that Jesus might Himself be our "dry land," our firm foundation, our rock, which no waves can ever again cover, or even shake. From the great white throne, on the other hand, the wicked will be cast into that "lake of fire" in which there will be no rock and no standing.

But God's great gatherings are as varied in character as they are numerous. Some of them are gatherings of His creatures; others are of His saints. Some are by His own power direct; others by agencies HE uses. Some are in mercy, and are for joy and blessing; others are for punishment and woe. Some are only for a time; others, like the wheat and the tares, are gathered for eternity.

Of all God's great gatherings there are, however, *three* in particular which we, His children, should often remember, and deeply ponder. They are—

1st. The gathering together of the sins of all His chosen flock on Jesus *at the cross*.

2nd. His gathering of us together unto our Lord Jesus *at His coming* in glory. And,

3rd. Our gathering together meanwhile unto *His name* here below.

These may be emphatically called GREAT gatherings; and of all three it may be said that God alone is the *author*, Christ Himself is the *centre*, and the blessed Holy Ghost is the *power*; for as it was "through the eternal *Spirit*" Christ "offered Himself" on the cross, so will it be "by His *Spirit* that dwelleth" in us that God will quicken our mortal bodies in the resurrection morning; and by that same *Spirit* also we are now gathered to His name. Truly, then, they are *great* gatherings.

But they differ. The gathering together of our sins at the cross, and of ourselves to Him in glory at His coming again, are absolutely and divinely PERFECT gatherings; for they are wrought entirely by God, independently of us. But our gathering together now to His name is necessarily, and even painfully, imperfect, because it is left to our watchfulness and obedience, and we, alas! often "grieve the Holy Spirit of God," by whose grace alone it can be effected. Yet the blessed perfection of the other two may well strengthen us for diligence and prayerfulness concerning this third one, even "till HE come."

Let us now consider them more closely.

1. The *first* is exactly expressed in Isaiah liii. 6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on Him" (or rather, hath made to MEET on Him) "the iniquity of us all." Here, then, we have God's gathering together on Jesus the sins of *all the flock*.

This, we know, was at Calvary's cross, and in its solemn hour. And it was a divinely *perfect* work. There was not *a single one* whom God had in eternity given to Jesus out of all Adam's guilty race, whose iniquity was not then and there laid upon Him. HE died for ALL

the flock.\* Had only one of those wandering and guilty and lost ones been then forgotten or left out, then must that one of necessity perish for ever! The ransom price for that single one would not have been paid. Justice would not have been satisfied, nor condemnation been removed in the case of that one. Heavenly glory could not open its pure and pearly gates to let that one in, nor God's righteous hell unlock its barred doors to let him out; for if he were let out, Satan and all his legions would have wherewith to reproach God. We truly sing—

“Like sheep we went astray  
Far from the fold of God,  
EACH wandering in a different way,  
But all the downward road.

“How dreadful was the hour  
When God our wanderings laid,  
And did at once His vengeance pour,  
Upon the Shepherd's head!

“How glorious was the grace  
When Christ sustained the stroke!  
His life and blood the Shepherd pays,  
A ransom for the flock.”

It was, however, yet more fully a *perfect* meeting; for there was not even a *single* SIN of each one's countless sins for which the Shepherd of the flock did not then die! For had but one sin of any of them been then omitted, that single sin must call for that one's condemnation. How vast, then, the number! how heavy their weight! Well might the holy Sufferer say, “*Innumerable* evils have compassed

\* Of course it is equally and blessedly true that Christ died also as Lamb of God for *the world* (see John i. 29), and hence the command to “all men everywhere to repent,” and believe on Him; but we are now considering His death only in connection with the flock given to Him.

me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me." (Ps. xl. 12.) With what solemn wonder, as well as "mournful joy," do we thus survey the cross "on which the King of glory died!"

God alone was, or could be, the Author of this great gathering together. God only could know ALL the sinful ones who make up that flock, and verily only God could know the countless sins of each; hence God only could accurately and truly lay them upon Christ. Had the redemption work been left dependent on our laying our own sins upon Him, even if only the sins of a single hour, that precious work must have been for ever marred; for "who can understand his errors"? We do indeed sometimes sing—

"I lay my sins on Jesus,  
The spotless Lamb of God."

But this is only because we credit what God did for us at that cross. Types of this great gathering together of our sins all fail, but the glorious antitype remains; for "HE is the rock; His work is perfect." For instance, Aaron once a year laid both his hands on the head of the scape-goat, and confessed "over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat." (Lev. xvi. 21.) But what could Aaron know of a whole year's sins of all that camp of, say, three millions of people? Why, he did not even know his own sins! And again, what could the poor goat know of what was in emblem laid upon its head? Yet in true divine atonement it was as necessary that the Sufferer should fully and accurately know and feel all that was laid upon Him, as it was that God Himself should accurately lay it there. In this way also the



type fails, but it serves, blessed be God, as an instructive, albeit only an empty, shadow of the divine reality at the cross of Christ. Abraham, too, laid the wood upon Isaac, his son; but how little could either of them know of the weight of guilt that wood represented! But it is all our peace to know that God's infinite hand could gather and lay all our iniquities on Jesus, and that His soul could fully know both the number and the weight of what He bore. "When Thou shalt make His SOUL an offering for sin, He shall see His seed. . . . He shall see of the travail of His SOUL, and shall be satisfied."

The expression "hath *made to meet* on Him" is most fitting; it alludes apparently to the previous words, "We have turned every one to *his own way*." The sinful wanderings of the flock had been as diverse from *each other* as they had all been far off from God. The iniquities of the Jew had been in one direction; those of the Gentile in quite another. The moralist had gone his way, but the immoral person an opposite road. Down through all the ages of time, and spread out over all the area of earth, had been these vastly and solemnly diversified sins. The road to hell was broad enough for all of us to tread it when we were "children of wrath, even as others," without, as it were, jostling or crowding against each other; each making more or less room for another's will, in order also to have his own. Individuality of guilt had not been hindered; each one had sinned his own sins. But "great is our Lord, and of great power: His *understanding* is infinite." (Ps. cxlvii. 5.) The endless variety no more perplexed Him than the number of the sins wearied Him. "Jehovah *made to meet* on HIM the iniquity of us ALL." Truly this was one of God's great gatherings, and will appear as such in the eyes of all us, His children, for ever.

2. Let us now consider the *second* of these three great

gatherings ; it will be found as bright with joy to our Lord as the former one was deep with sorrow to Him. 2 Thess. ii. 1, expresses it : " Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by *our gathering together* unto Him." This also will be a divinely *perfect* meeting. Not one of all the flock that up to that moment has come to Him by faith but will then be gathered to Him in glory. As Paul says (1 Cor. xv. 23), " They that are Christ's at His coming." On the ground that everyone of them was atoned for at the tree, everyone will then be around Him and with Him on His throne. Jesus will then " see of the travail of His soul," so far as God shall by that time have wrought it. His blood-bought ones, who up to that date have washed in the fountain opened, shall all be there. " He *died* for us," says Paul, " that whether we wake or sleep" (*i.e.* whether watchful or slumbering in our habits) " we should *live together with Him.*" (1 Thess. v. 10.) So also Rev. vii. 14, 15—they " washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. THEREFORE are they before the throne of God, and serve Him."

But, further, at that moment of our being gathered together unto Him there will not be a *single sin* of life or habits left upon anyone of that countless multitude, nor any stain of sinfulness existing within one of them. And why? Because Jesus died for ALL their sins, whether of deed, or word, or even thought, at His bitter cross, and was also " made sin " for them that they " might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Consider, too, the Almighty *power* which alone can accomplish this great assembling. It can only be done by One who knows where all the now scattered flock are to be found, whether we include in our thoughts the living saints upon the earth, or the sleeping ones in the grave,

or those in their far deeper ocean bed. Take the living saints of even a single populous district. The most diligent under-shepherd anywhere to be found would not pretend that he knew at all accurately all the living believers around him, so many more has God made His than we know, and so mingled in are they, alas! with the world's religion around them. But this coming moment of "our gathering together unto Him" will not leave one real living saint behind, as it will not mistakenly gather to Him one mere professor, however much like a Christian he may seem. "I am the good Shepherd, and *know* my sheep, and am known of mine."

3. But there remains a *third* of God's great gatherings to be considered—that of two or three gathered together unto Christ's name. In point of time this comes between the other two. It is the blessed Spirit's work in God's children consequent upon the gathering of all their sins upon Jesus at the cross, and whilst they still are waiting to be gathered unto Him at His coming again. It is as necessarily partial and imperfect as the other two are and must be divinely perfect; and that not only by the sun-dering and scattering of the chosen and ransomed flock by separations of time and distance, but still more, alas! by our want of knowing God's mind as to the assembling of ourselves together, and want of patient and stedfast obedience to it when known.

Yet nothing but our being really gathered to His name makes any assembling to be *great* in God's account. Size of an assembly does not make true greatness, still less does wealth, or wit, or human skill of arrangement. Nothing makes any assembly divinely great but its being gathered to His name; and no poverty, or feebleness, or fewness, can prevent its being great if it be really thus gathered; nor can changes it may experience make it lose its great-

ness if only it *continue* to be thus gathered. As our Lord says of the Smyrna church, "I know . . . thy tribulation and poverty, but thou art rich." (Rev. ii. 9.)

In what, then, does being gathered to His name really consist? Thus much may be safely replied: It must be in harmony with the other two great gatherings already named. Only thus can it be really *great*; and in order to this two things must be true: First, it must be an assembling of ourselves together that is open to receive ALL fellow-saints, however feeble they may be in faith or practice. But, second, it must be an assembling that makes no room for allowed sin, or insubjection to Christ in word or deed, in any fellow-saint thus received. At the cross not one of all the flock was omitted, yet not a single sin or wilful wandering of any one was left unnoticed or lightly dealt with. Jesus died for each transgression. Holiness and love will be blended also when we meet Him in the air. These two things must therefore be seen in our present assemblings if they are to be in harmony with the cross and the coming glory; and only thus will they really be gatherings together unto His name.

But such assembling of ourselves will not be easy. As was said before, God must be the author of it, and Jesus Himself must be its centre; and it can only be brought to pass, or afterwards maintained, as the Holy Ghost Himself works in us the needed grace and strength for it. Creature wisdom and our human will is all against it. Church history, past and present, shows this. If left to ourselves we shall be for leaving out some or other of the flock because of the trouble their weakness gives us, or we shall receive them and wink at their low state, and give up the heavenly work of strengthening them.

The truth is, God's Church is a garden in which there is always work to be done for God, even till the Lord shall

come, just as there is in the garden of our own souls; and of both of them we may say—

“Heed we the Steward’s call;  
 Work, brethren, work.  
 There’s room enough for all;  
 Work, brethren, work.  
 This vineyard of the Lord  
 Constant labour will afford;  
 Yours is a sure reward;  
 Work, brethren, work.”

*Catholicity* and *purity*, then, are the two grand features of God’s gatherings at the cross of Christ and at Christ’s throne of glory. Let them also be the basis and the aim of our assembling of ourselves now; so shall we please God, and be acceptable to all who are taught by His word and His Spirit. All varieties of gift and endowment in His Church will then find room for their use, and all the grace He has given to any will find such constant and heavenly exercise as will make it daily increase, to the joy of its possessor, and to the glory of the God who gave it.

H. D.

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## THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

(Continued from page 33.)

### II. ITS MANIFESTATION IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

WE have been considering the Church’s unity according to the eternal purpose of God, as unfolded in type, shadow, and figure, and we have looked onward to its ultimate manifestation in the world to come. For this consummation we are still waiting, when the Church as a whole shall be perfected into one, and that “manifestation of the sons of God” shall take place, for which all creation groans, as do we ourselves also, “waiting for the adoption [sonship], to wit, the redemption of our body.”

Let us now consider the exhibition of unity in the early Church. Ten days after the crucified and risen Christ had been received up into heaven, upon the accomplishment of His mighty work, the Spirit was poured forth on the day of Pentecost according to His promise, and in that one Spirit all the disciples were baptized into one body; and the judgment that fell at Babel (*i.e.* Babylon in the Greek), and which broke up man's union in the flesh, without God, was marvellously reversed. The miraculous power then exhibited was designed to show that thenceforth the Babel confusion of tongues was to be no barrier to that mighty unity which the cross of Christ had effected, whereby "He created in Himself *one new man*, so making peace." The Holy Ghost was to work out union in the hearts and lives of those who, on receiving Christ, were made partakers of His indwelling power. Pentecost was the symbol and the pledge of this, uniting all believers to the risen Saviour, and making them in Him resurrection men. Thus all those risen ones were united together into a common fellowship of life and love and service; so that it could then be said, "All that believed were *together*, and had all things common," and "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." (Acts ii. 42-44.) And at the close of the same chapter we read, "And the Lord added *together*\* daily such as should be saved."

The deep reality of this fellowship was in nothing more fully seen than in its unselfishness, which explains what God means when He speaks of our being "of one heart, and of one soul;" for when that was the case in the early Church we read, "Neither said any [rather, was any one

\* So the best authorities read, omitting the words "to the Church." We would call special attention to this word "together," so characteristic of the fellowship of saints.

saying; imperfect tense] that aught of the things he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." (Acts iv. 32.) To have all in common belongs to heaven, and not to earth; it belongs to the perfection of the future, and is impossible in the imperfectness of the present; nor is it anywhere commanded as that which would be either wise or profitable; but as union in Christ in Pentecostal power laid hold on the mind of the infant Church, when all was in truth and living energy, the bands that self places round the mine-and-thine of a selfish world were burst asunder, and the real and legitimate result of this fellowship in love's co-partnery was for a moment manifested to the angels in heaven and to the world below. Thus a divinely-kindled flame of heaven's unselfish love shone forth in all its might upon the cold and narrow principles of the Mosaic law, even constraining Barnabas to sell his patrimony (prohibited under the law—Lev. xxv. 34), and to lay the money at the apostles' feet.

God owned the reality, and when it was counterfeited, the death of Ananias and Sapphira revealed the lie, and the result was that "great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard those things;" so that "of the rest durst no man join himself to them," while "believers were the more added to the Lord" (not to the Church), "multitudes both of men and women." (Acts v. 11-14.)

Surely this was divinely manifested union, embracing the whole sphere of human life in spirit, soul, and body. The fellowship of the family of God was complete, and God in the midst vindicated and maintained it.

We soon hear, however, of murmurings in temporal matters, but this was met in the Spirit of Christ by the appointment of men of good report among them—men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom—and thus divisions and heart-burnings were prevented.

Troubles of another kind soon arose when in Cæsarea, some ten years later, the Gentiles were received into the Church direct, and not through the Jewish channel of law and circumcision. This union with Gentile believers, as belonging to the one body, Peter at once recognized, and broke through his Jewish trammels, and ate with those whom heretofore he had called common and unclean. For this he was called to account in Jerusalem on his return; but all bowed implicitly to the action of the Holy Ghost, who had manifested His power on Gentile converts, and Peter's words were, "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift that He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, *what was I that I should withstand* [or forbid] *God?*"

Here again schism was prevented by their simply being content to own the action of God, and to receive outwardly by baptism of water into the Church, and into social fellowship, those whom Christ had in one Spirit baptized into one body. All else is withstanding God, let the zeal that prompts it be what it may. This beautifully explains the meaning of that passage, "Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." (Rom. xv. 7.)

Another attempt was made by the enemy of God and His Church to cause schism, when in Antioch some came preaching the need of circumcision in order to salvation, and thereby reopening the question settled fifteen years before in the matter of Cornelius and his household. This fresh trouble sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem (Acts xv.), and in the first council of Christians we see again how grace and wisdom triumphed. It was fourteen years after Paul's conversion (Gal. ii. 1) that he went to Jerusalem, going first to those of reputation, "James, Cephas, and John," and others (compare Acts xv. with Gal. ii.), and told them what the gospel was that he preached, and



in God's mercy a united judgment was formed, not, as far as we can see, by any direct prophetic revelation, but by a comparison of past events (as recorded in the Acts) with the Old Testament prophets; and the Church at large "rejoiced at the consolation." In the details of this Church council there is much that would well repay a careful investigation, and guide our footsteps in the present day, if we would stand in the breach against the inroads which schism is ever making in the Church, by men zealous of one part of the truth and forgetful of another.

The evil leaven, however, is seen at work all through the events recorded in the Acts, jeopardizing again and again the unity of the Church of Christ. Of this Paul makes mention in Acts xx., when he tells the Ephesian elders, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to lead away the" (art. in Greek) "disciples after them." This was then still future, but Paul saw how matters were tending, and commanded them to watch. While men sleep tares are sown, but "in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird."

All the epistles speak of declension in truth, in heavenly-mindedness, in unselfishness, in sobriety, righteousness, and godliness; and the prophetic epistles, 2 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, and Jude, as also John's epistles, reveal but too plainly what was coming. Our last insight into the condition of the early Church is in the seven epistles to the churches in Rev. ii. iii., yet even then the churches were undivided, and owned in their golden-candlestick character, though warned to repent, and Ephesus was reminded that the candlestick would be removed unless first love was restored. Till then outward unity was unbroken; for those who were not of them went out from them (1 John ii. 19), and the command as to "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the

bond of peace," had been so far kept that the schismatic spirit which says, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ," was restrained, and Christ still found a place in the midst of the churches.

Notwithstanding failure and weakness, the holiness of God's house had not been altogether forgotten, and hence the golden candlesticks remained, each having its separate place and its separate responsibility; for the absolute unity of the Church is still a mystery, and not a manifestation; for while visibly the seven are not one, mystically the seven form a perfect whole. In the holy place there are seven branches, yet but one candlestick; the seven are one in mystery now, as they will be one in manifestation hereafter.

Exhortations to maintain the unity of the Spirit, and warnings against strife (still applicable in all their force to us), are abundant in the epistles, some of which we would call to mind. "The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with *one accord* and *one mouth* glorify God." (Rom. xv. 5, 6.) "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all *speak the same thing*, and that there be no divisions [schisms] among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. i. 10.) "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, of *one accord*, of *one mind*." (Phil. ii. 2.) "Mark them that cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have received; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." (Rom. xvi. 17, 18.)

Such, then, was the life and such were the principles that guided the early Church, though gradually, as a whole, it was receding more and more from the beauty and glory

of the Pentecostal original. Up to the end of the first century, however, though spiritual bands were weakening and spiritual power lessening as the Church increased in numbers, schism had not taken place, and each assembly of believers in any place was practically one. But, in view of thickly-besetting dangers, a loud call to "repent" was given to the failing churches in Asia, and doubtless to all others through them.

We have next to consider an impenitent Church going into Babylon and swallowed up in the mystery of Babylon the great, the mother of harlots. H. G.

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## THE FAITHFUL PROPHET AND THE TWO KINGS.

*(Continued from page 44.)*

THE scene at the gate of Samaria was no doubt an imposing one. The two kings were there in stately pomp, each on his throne in his robes, and the hundreds of prophets, bold and confident, predicting victory. There is in man something of the spirit of the war-horse; "he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting." It was not reserved for a late French prime minister to be the first who should rush into a disastrous war "with a light heart;" nor has there usually been wanting any of the "pride and circumstance of glorious war" (as an earthly poet speaks) to excite the spirit of ambition. In this case public opinion was quite decided; and Micaiah's warning voice would not have been heard at all but for the troublesome scruples of Jehoshaphat. But Micaiah warned in vain. It was not only Ahab who yielded to the counsel of the false prophets; it is clear that Jehoshaphat yielded also, and so another war was added to the black catalogue of kingly and national crimes in the history of

this unhappy world. And doubtless wars will go on to the end. No industrial palaces of peace, no treaties of commerce, will put an end to war. Our Lord very plainly tells us so. "Ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass; but the end is not yet." (Matt. xxiv. 6.) Besides wars there must be many other things, and even these will be but "the *beginning* of sorrows."

Micaiah's testimony was of such a character that, if words of man could have arrested Ahab in his delusion, his would have sufficed. He lifted the veil of the unseen world, and exposed the secret working of the great enemy of man, and the thoughts and purposes of God. And what an awful and instructive lesson then fell on the dull ears of that company! The voice of the false prophets had spoken, but the words were the words of a lying spirit, employed in the work of enticing Ahab to destruction. And this is the very business in which Satan's agents are engaged now, though many of them are transformed into angels of light, and appear as ministers of righteousness. It is the most melancholy of all melancholy truths upon the earth, that Satan is triumphing most of all by means of his varied forms of religion, and in so-called Christian lands, by the smooth sounds of "another gospel." He changes his tactics and adopts new means continually. We do not in this scene read a word of the priests of Bethel. They had served their purpose, and perhaps were summarily dismissed by the statutes of Omri or the command of Jezebel, as they had been set up by Jeroboam; but it is manifest that there was generally a swarm of prophets of Baal at hand. We read of four hundred and fifty at Carmel, as well as of four hundred prophets of the groves. Here, again, are four hundred, and after this, when Jehu gathered them, they filled the house

of Baal from end to end. (2 Kings x. 21.) So, in 2 Chron., we find that under Athaliah they had penetrated into Judah. The true saints of God may at times so decrease in number that the Elijahs of the day may imagine that they stand alone. But false prophets are always of luxuriant growth, and they increase and multiply; for the people love to have it so. One special characteristic of their work—"flattering lips and a double heart" (Psalm xii. 2)—exactly suits the children of this world. The father of lies is fitly represented in his servants, and they again are speedily "snared in the work of their own hands." They rise up, prosper under the favour of men, and soon perish in their own deceiving.

One special part of the calling of such teachers in all ages has been to encourage the madness and blood-thirstiness of men in cruel and needless wars. No prophets of Baal ever excelled St. Dominic (a *saint* of the Romish Church) in his hellish rage for the extermination of the Albigenses; or the fanatical priests who roused all Europe to the Crusades for the recovery of "the Holy Sepulchre." But fashions change; and if the fury of such rude zealots shock the delicacy of modern Agags, then there is ready the effectual agency of some hireling orator, like Bossuet, to add the sanction of his eloquent praise to the fame of the military heroes of the hour. Any who are curious in these matters may consult such productions as that mighty deceiver's funeral orations on Condé and Turenne, and then picture to themselves the worldly court of Louis XIV., sitting, bedizened and entranced, in some grand cathedral, called a place of worship, in all the pomp and pageantry of a great occasion, listening to descriptions of campaigns involving the slaughter of thousands, and excited to emulation by the skilful prostitution of Scripture to the adornment of deeds of iniquity and shame.

Micaiah stood alone, and unmoved; but there was no little provocation on the part of the false prophets. The reply of Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, as he smote Micaiah, was, "Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me, to speak unto thee?" A very similar scene is described in Jeremiah xxviii. In both cases the prophet of Jehovah was content to test the truth by the result. "The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall it be known that the Lord hath sent him." (Jer. xxviii. 9.) But the Lord often delays to vindicate His people; and the welcome promises of peace and safety, however vain, may be allowed for years to satisfy the foolish hearts of the multitude. It is so now. There is no lack of confidence in the prophecies of a good day coming. "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." (Isa. lvi. 12.) So it was in Noah's days; they ate and drank and married, and were given in marriage, till the flood came and swept them all away. And in Sodom, where the arts of civilization seem to have advanced much further, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded, till the very hour when the storm-cloud burst with its rain of fire and brimstone to destroy them. Warnings and calamities are of no avail to change the hearts of men. Pharaoh was for a while terrified and subdued when the plagues culminated in the death of all Egypt's first-born; but his rage was only suspended to gather fresh strength, and he again rushed on to ruin in the overwhelming judgment of the Red Sea. So true is it that "madness is in the heart of the sons of men." (Eccles. ix. 3.) Sometimes we may marvel as we read in the Revelation of the terrific judgments of the closing years of this age, and of the infatuation which will again and again inspire the dream of "peace and safety," and then excite the bewildered nations to a final struggle

with God. But it is a common thing to see towns rebuilt on the very sites where hidden volcanoes have rent the land by earthquakes, and swallowed up the population by thousands. We need not therefore wonder, if the pleasing prophecies of man's progress in wisdom and happiness are believed up to the very moment when the final storm shall burst on a guilty world, to sweep out of Christ's kingdom all things that offend. Meanwhile the testimony of Micaiah reminds us that the truth may yet have to be spoken only by a few, and spoken amid the derision and contempt of the popular priests and prophets of poor fallen humanity.

There was something very noble in the plain, honest courage of Micaiah. He had never prophesied good to king Ahab, but always evil; and when the messenger of the king said, "Behold, the words of the prophets declare good to the king with one assent: let thy word, I pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak thou good," his answer was, "As Jehovah liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak." Unhappily there is too often a failure in the servants of God when they are tried, not by threatenings and force, but by the persuasion and entreaties of the great.

Allusion has been made to the case of Frith the martyr; and his answer to the servants of Cranmer, who presented to him the means of escape, may be taken as the right answer of a true-hearted man, resisting, like Micaiah, the temptations to forsake the truth. "Being taken by the higher powers, and by Almighty God's permission and providence delivered into the hands of the bishops only for religion and doctrine's sake, such as in conscience, and under pain of damnation, I am bound to maintain and defend; if I should start aside and run away, I should run from my God, and from the testimony of His holy word; worthy then of ten thousand hells. And therefore I most heartily thank you both for your good will towards me, beseeching

you to bring me where I am appointed to be brought; for else I will go thither all alone." Wonderful words in the prospect of an unutterably suffering death by fire! There was here the true spirit of one prepared, like his Master, to witness a good confession. And so it was that Micaiah went forward to speak for God, and at once took his place far above those who sat on thrones before him. Just as Paul the prisoner in his chains, hated by his countrymen, could say to king Agrippa, "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." It is not rank and power which give moral superiority; God's honour is put on them that fear Him.

The words which Micaiah first spoke to the king have often been a difficulty. "Go ye up and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hands." But doubtless they were spoken in irony, as the king plainly saw. In fact, he answered the fool according to his folly. Foolish jesting is indeed forbidden us; but there are several instances in the Word in which the truth has been so pointed with the weapon of irony, as no other weapon could point it. It was so when Elijah urged the prophets of Baal to call loud enough to awaken their sleeping god; and when Paul told the Corinthians that they were already reigning as kings without him in the kingdom. (1 Cor. iv. 8.) Jotham's parable too (Judges ix.) is another remarkable example of this form of speech. Thus we may see that it is not unlawful, though perhaps not suited to common use. We have an admirable specimen of it in Bunyan's description of Faithful's trial, in times when there was no improbability in Lord Hate-good presiding as judge, as Richard Baxter, before Judge Jeffreys, could testify. In another form we have the touch of irony in Cowper's suggestion to those who attended the performance of the



oratorio of Messiah at the commemoration of Handel—to sing Messiah's praise for Handel's sake !

Micaiah spoke as he did because it was very plain that Ahab's mind was made up, and he would show the king that he knew it; as if he said, "You are determined to go, and of course you *will* go. You have the warrant of your prophets, and you believe them; so the way is made plain, and there is no more to be said." But this did not suffice. Micaiah was required to deliver a real testimony for the satisfaction, not of Ahab, but of Jehoshaphat; and seldom has so solemn a testimony been spoken by man. The sentence had gone forth from God's presence to the lying spirit: "Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so." But Ahab had his stratagem to defeat God. Jehoshaphat was to go to battle in his robes; but the king of Israel would escape, because disguised. It is indeed true, that

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

But, on the other hand, when He who has "the keys of hades and of death" summons the soul, human skill and strength of will avail no man. There is no discharge in that war. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." What that counsel now is we fully know without any fresh vision. God spake in times past and in divers manners by the prophets; but now, with His word in our hands, we can tell forth His mind as impressively as Micaiah. It is not His will that men should go on in the ways of their own heart; it is not His purpose that the world should become, under the improving hand of man, a paradise restored. Far from it. There is a war going on with the usurper, the prince of this world, and certainly man must fall in the battle. Mankind struggle with the strong one in their own wisdom and

strength, and seek to counteract the evils which he is secretly working throughout the world; but they labour in vain. Science cannot exorcise the evil spirit which reigns, though unacknowledged, in the children of disobedience; nor can any form of man's religion say to the fainting soul, "Come unto me, and I will give you *rest*."

It is very evident, both in the case of Micaiah and in that of Elijah, that while they were hated they were feared; or rather, perhaps, they were hated because they were feared. And this feeling, often unacknowledged, has secretly influenced thousands who seemed to have had no fear left. With all their daring wickedness they have shunned, because they have not dared to face, the word of God. They have dreaded to come to its light; trembling, as Felix trembled, at the true testimony to "temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come." After swift judgment had fallen on Ananias and Sapphira, the people saw that there was no room for trifling, and that there must be a whole-hearted surrender to the Lord, and nothing less. The lesson is, that we must commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

(*To be continued.*)

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#### NOTES AND REPLIES.

*Do the words in Acts xx. 11, "When he . . . had broken bread and eaten," refer to the Lord's Supper?*

FROM the wording of verse 7 we answer in the affirmative, but would further observe that it is to be inferred from 1 Cor. xi. that the Lord's Supper partook far more of the character of a meal than at present, whereby the family fellowship of the Church of God was made a more direct object; and it is not improbable that this is the love-feast, the *agapē* ("feasts of charity"), spoken of in Jude 12. Christian life partook, in the early Church, in its days of power, of the character of a daily worship, wherein, figuratively speaking, "every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah" was "holiness to the Lord." (Zech. xiv. 21.) Would it were so now! But we cannot force it, and in the decline

of whole-heartedness to God a separation between the holy and the common becomes necessary, lest all be profaned. On this account Paul tells the Corinthians to eat at home to satisfy hunger, and not to dishonour the table of the Lord by their carnality; and this intimates to us how early in the history of the Church the Lord's Supper had to be separated from the social meal, and guarded by most solemn warnings against partaking unworthily, and being "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

*Of what are the sins confessed over the scape-goat typical? (Lev. xvi. 21.)*

IN order sufficiently to answer this question it is needful to correct an almost universal misconception of the real meaning of "confess" in the Bible. To most, confession signifies the telling out or recounting of sins committed, whereas the word signifies *to own, to acknowledge*; and hence in Hebrew the same word signifies *to praise*; *i.e. to own God to be what He is, and to confess sin, i.e. to own what we are*; and both under a revelation from God. This is even more fully brought out in the Greek word *ὁμολογέω*, which signifies to speak in accordance with something said by another, to own a charge made; and hence the word is used, as in Hebrew, of both God's praise and man's sinfulness. Confession on the part of the creature is the acknowledgment of what God has said in reference to him, and confession of sin in the believer is properly the owning of the testimony of the grieved Spirit of God as to sin committed. The confession of the high-priest on the Day of Atonement therefore is the acknowledgment of sin, not according to man's acquaintance with it, but according to God's declaration of what man is (comp. Gen. xi. 5; Isa. i. 4, 6), and probably has reference to the year following, so that as the months rolled on, Israel might rest under the shelter of the Day of Atonement, which could not be the case had it reference to sin already committed in the year past. In Scripture sin never seems to be looked at, as we are often prone to regard it, as if the sins of the past were to be separated from the sins of the future, but the mighty, all-sufficient atonement is so presented that there should remain "no more conscience" of sin (Heb. x. 2); and the once-for-all offering of Christ is spoken of as having effected a once-for-all taking away of sin, whereby those under its healing efficacy are "perfected for ever." Any other view of atonement will fail in the establishment of the soul in the grace of God, and in the peace and holiness designed to flow therefrom. How many a feeble child of God, under a sense of sin, is in misery, lest sin should find a place before the judgment-seat of God, forgetting that one of the foremost blessings of the new covenant

is, "Their sins and iniquities *I will remember no more.*" In conclusion we would remark that *judicial* forgiveness is not to be confounded with *parental* forgiveness. The unsaved sinner confesses and acknowledges sin to the Judge of all; the believer confesses it, with a double sense of his sin and shame, to a loving Father; and in this latter category we would reckon such passages as Matt. vi. 14, 15; 1 John i. 9, &c. Sin in the believer, and unjudged transgression, will sooner or later bring him under the discipline of the heavenly family (see 1 Cor. xi. 30-32; 1 John v. 15-17), but this in no possible manner can invalidate salvation, which is secured to all who, believing in Christ, have everlasting life.

*Who are intended by the "deacons" of 1 Tim. iii. 8? and who are "their wives" in verse 11?*

THE word *diakonos*, here rendered "deacon," occurs thirty times in the New Testament, and is always translated "minister" or "servant," except here, *vv.* 8, 12, and in Phil. i. 1. Minister is the better word, to distinguish it from *doulos*, a slave or servant. The word is used in various connections: (1) Of *Christ*, in Rom. xv. 8; Gal. ii. 17. (2) Of *servants generally*, Matt. xx. 26, xxii. 13, xxiii. 11; Mark ix. 35, x. 43; John ii. 5, 9. (3) Of *ministers* or servants in the house of God—of Paul, &c., 1 Cor. iii. 6, vi. 4, xi. 23; Eph. iii. 7; Col. i. 23, 25; of Tychicus, Eph. vi. 21; Col. iv. 4, 7; of Epaphras, Col. i. 7; of Timothy, 1 Thess. iii. 2; 1 Tim. iv. 6; (4) Of *Phœbe*, in Rom. xvi. 1, as a *female minister* in the house of God. (5) Of the *civil ruler* as God's servant in the world's government, Rom. xiii. 4. The use of the word "deacon" is calculated to mislead, by giving a technical and unscriptural signification. A minister of the church is one who engages in any of its various ministrations, whether spiritual or secular. Both occur in Acts v. 1-4, where the serving or *ministering* to tables is put in contrast with *ministering* the Word. It is necessary to protest against the translation—"use the office of a deacon" (*vv.* 10, 13), instead of simply "minister;" and we would say here, as Dean Alford says in regard to the rendering of the "oversership," or "oversight," in verse 1, by "the office of a bishop," that "it is merely laying a trap for misunderstanding." The New Testament knows nothing of "office" in the Church of God; there all is gift—held and used in responsibility to the Giver. The females alluded to in verse 11 are not the wives of the ministers, but those women who, like Phœbe, had addicted themselves to the ministry of the Church in all the many spheres of female service, as described by the apostle in 1 Tim. v. 9, 10. It is needful to remember that the seven chosen in Acts vi. to administer the church's alms are nowhere called deacons.

## THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

### III. THE UNITY BROKEN, AND OUR PRESENT POSITION, WITH ITS CLAIMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

THE essential unity of the Church can never be broken. It is centered in Christ; it is maintained by God. The Spirit has recorded, "There is one body." Hence it becomes us ever to own this unity, to set up no new centre, but to keep our eyes fixed on the divine reality so soon to be manifested. When the Lord Jesus walked amidst the golden candlesticks at the close of the first century, His call to the churches was to *repent*, as has been already noticed.

It was like Israel's call to Bochim (Jud. 1), when the Angel came up from Gilgal (where the reproach of Egypt had been rolled away), and reproved all Israel for their utter failure to maintain their Nazarite character among the nations. The Angel of the covenant then told Israel they had not obeyed His voice, though He had brought them out of Egypt and given them the land. The people lifted up their voice and wept, and sacrificed. But, alas! they turned not from their evil way; yet doubtless some among them heeded the warning. No doubt there was also many a sigh and many a cry from faithful hearts in John's days as they heard the solemn words from Patmos, and recalled Pentecost days and Pentecost separation to God. But as in Israel so in the Church, there was not a continuance in "the goodness of God." The sins that called for repentance were not repented of; and as Israel was first rent in twain, and then suffered to go into a Babylonish captivity for sin, so now the rending

asunder of the Church, which should have presented to the world a united front in life, in love, and in obedience to Christ, has been followed by her going into the mystic Babylon, under dominion to a system in which the church is the world—the apostate Christendom of our day.

To be delivered in mercy from Egypt, and to be sent in judgment to Babylon, has characterized the history of man in all God's dispensations. The result, however, is always the same. God is glorified, and the deliverance from Babylon redounds to His glory even as did the original deliverance from Egypt; and while God's holy name is exalted and extolled and made very high, the creature learns, what he is slow to learn and too ready to forget, that not only does the blessing originally come from God, but the continuance of it is from God also. God must save and God must keep, or all is lost.

Departure from God is the real precursor of schism. It may not always seem so, but it is so nevertheless. This is strikingly illustrated in what we read of the two staves, Beauty and Bands, in the hand of the Shepherd in Zechariah xi. The first is emblematic of the beauty of the Lord (see Ps. xc. 17), which in His covenant grace was the portion of His people; and the second is emblematic of the bond and brotherly fellowship which should have subsisted between all the tribes that owned a common fatherhood. "Beauty" is broken first, and then "Bands." Relationship to God, like the great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," stands first, and the relationship of a common brotherhood, like the second commandment, to love our neighbour, stands next. If the former is broken, the latter will be broken too. Thus true brotherhood in the Church can never be secured or maintained while obedience to God is forgotten or set aside. This divine order we need continually to

remember, or we shall be attempting to form a fellowship with one another apart from obedience to God, and the result will be a compromise of truth and confusion. The staves of Zechariah will one day be united again, as the two sticks of Ezekiel became one in the prophet's hand; but "Beauty" must be restored to its unity before "Bands" can be re-united.

In the present day there is much ado about unity, but little proportionate care about our covenant relation to God and our obedience to His will. It is a unity that makes room for sin in its worst, that is, its religious form, and must fall to pieces. The attempt begins at the wrong end. Everything must begin with God if it is to last. Thus Israel must be restored to God before they can be restored to one another. Then God will "make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel," and they shall no more be two nations and two kingdoms. (Ezek. xxxvii. 22.)

Divine unity is the result of a common inward life, and grows and developes from within: man's uniformity is the result of lifeless pressure from without. God's trees are full of sap, and each species grows with a shape of its own, so that while every tree of the species has its identity with every other of the same species, each tree grows with peculiarities of its own, which do not arise from any peculiarity in the seed, but from some difference in the circumstances and surroundings of its growth. For this diversity in unity the New Testament allows ample scope in the Church of God, and such differences are easily traceable in the churches of the apostles' day; yet no difference must violate the common fundamental unity of the Spirit.

But as spiritual life waned and worldliness crept in, it was needful, if appearances were to be saved, and

the hollowness within was to be hid from view, that outward pressure should be brought to bear to maintain a fair show of unity and catholicity, though the inward catholic spirit and life were wanting. Hence arose in the second and third centuries that ingrafted spirit of Judaism which sacrificed the inward to the outward, and bishops and church rulers became the centre of ecclesiastical life and power, and not Christ Himself, living and moving by the Holy Ghost in the Church which He had redeemed by His precious blood. The controversies of Acts xv. were again and again repeated, but with a result the very opposite of that which is there recorded. James and Peter could truly say of their decision, in fellowship with the assembly, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us;" for they had come to their decision by no self-willed inward guidance, but by the divine facts before their eyes and the divine word in their hands. When will the presumptuous leaders of the professing church learn that "the letter" can but kill unless quickened by "the Spirit"? and when will they cease from introducing lifeless forms, man's vain substitute for God's living presence and power? Never, till the hour of Babylon's judgment comes, and the beast and ten horns hate the whore and make her desolate, and eat her flesh and burn her with fire, when God puts it into their hearts to fulfil His will. (Rev. xvii. 16, 17.)

It is of importance to notice here that to man the Church is a mystery, and to sight remains a mystery till it is manifested with Christ its head, as in Rev. xix. And the Babylon into which the Church is led captive is a mystery too; hence we read in Rev. xvii. 5, "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." The one mystery stands opposed to the other. The one has its home in heaven, and the other has it on earth below. (Compare Rev. xvii. 3 with xxi. 10.)



Babylon is a mystery because it is not what it professes to be, and a mystery is unravelled by God alone; for in Scripture a mystery is that which man's unaided reason never would find out, and which without God never could be known. Hence our heavenly Joseph is our true Zaphnath-paaneah (*i.e.* revealer of secrets), who unfolds to us the progress of evil in the professing church, that we may not be deceived by its false names, its lying doctrines, and its empty appearances. (Read Matt. xiii.)

It is sometimes said that Romanism is Babylon's mystery. This is too exclusive, and also fatally deceptive; for then all out of Rome is out of Babylon. It is true, doubtless, that Rome contains a full manifestation of the mystery, but wherever the world rules and worldly principles have sway, wherever God's word is set aside and man's traditions are put in its place, wherever the Spirit of God is ignored and the spirit of the god of this age occupies His place, *there* is Babylon's fatal mystery, whether in its darker or in its lighter shades. We are constrained to say this by having seen a growing tendency in many deceived souls to suppose that because they are outside certain systems and certain enclosures they are therefore out of Babylon. It may be far otherwise; for a deeper form of Babylon's mystery may be found in the nutshell of some small coterie than in the larger spheres of Christendom's ecclesiastical systems. Babylonianism is nothing but a modern form of the old heathen creature idolatry, that calls itself by the name of Christ. Indeed, so gross are the forms of Roman Catholic idolatry in heathen lands in the present day, and so complete is the identity between it and heathenism, that a practised eye is needed to discern the difference between Vishnuite and Christian idolatry.

Under these circumstances the voice of Christ still calls

to the Church to repent. Few may heed the call; but it does not come with the less force to each one who hears. But, alas! whilst all have ears, how few have "ears to hear!" God's command all through the dark ages of corrupted Babylonish Christianity has been, "Come out of her, my people," as it will be hereafter to repentant Israel, when God shall call them out into the wilderness to plead with them there. To them it will be a call to leave the nations of the earth, the Babylon of the fourth monarchy, and to return to their land and to their temple, to the place where God once chose to put His name. So now we, the people of the heavenly mystery, are called to leave that which is of the earthly mystery; and he who comes out into the wilderness will find God—His name, His centre, His Christ; and all who obey with a hearing ear will, even to the last, enjoy all the blessings of the heavenly calling.

It was thus Ezra and Nehemiah gathered those who had come out of Babylon to Jerusalem, God's only centre, and God's only dwelling-place; and though they were but a few "feeble Jews," God was there, to own their building, their temple, and their wall.

Let us ask, Who are those now maintaining the unity of the Spirit, those in Babylon, or those outside?—those satisfied with the greater or with the smaller ecclesiastical systems of worldly polity and earthly authority, or those who own no head but Christ, no power but the Spirit, no authority in the things of God but God Himself? Certainly the latter; only let not pride mar this precious anti-Babylon testimony, and turn it to a double-dyed Pharisaism, doubly hateful to the God of living reality.

Schism can only be chargeable where the *spirit* and the *truth* of God are violated, and the former needs as much to be borne in mind as the latter; for only when they

are united can there be true worship, such as the Father seeks. Some sacrifice spirit to truth, and become fiery bigots; some sacrifice truth to spirit, and become deluded fanatics.

God had no new code for Israel when they returned from Babylon. His last command by the prophet Malachi was, "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for *all* Israel, with the statutes and judgments." And so it is now; for in 2 Timothy, when the apostacy of the last days lay in prophetic vision before the apostle, he had only this counsel to give to Timothy then, and to us now, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned;" coupling with it the all-sufficiency of sacred Scripture to the end of the dispensation to make the man of God, that is, the God-taught man (*θεοδιδακτος*), perfect, and thoroughly furnished for everything; for the word of God is profitable, not only for doctrine and reproof, but also for correction (*επανορθωσις*); that is, for setting straight what has become crooked. We need nothing more, and can be satisfied with nothing less. In Romanism the world is ruled by the Church, and in Protestantism the Church is ruled by the world.

But while called out to God's Centre, and able to own no system and no name but Christ; called out not to hold the body, but to hold the Head, collectively as well as individually, ecclesiastically as well as personally, let us beware of narrowing our sympathies to anything less than the whole Israel of God, even the comprehensive "all saints" of Paul's precious catholic prayer in Eph. iii., addressed on his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. There is one Shepherd, and there will be one flock.

It was thus the captives who returned from Babylon owned the unity of God's purposes in a united Israel, as seen in their early history under David, and in their prophetic future, as foretold by God's servants Haggai and Zechariah. The expression of this is beautifully seen in the offering of the "twelve he-goats for a sin-offering." Observe, the sin-offering was but one—"a sin-offering for all Israel" (see Ezra vi. 17; viii. 35); for in a common sense of transgression the remnant remembered, not only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, but the other ten tribes who had long ago gone into captivity to Assyria. So also for their burnt-offerings—"twelve bullocks for all Israel." (Ezra viii. 35.) Faith enabled them to realize the ultimate fulfilment of the covenant promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, even as faith now enables the Christian to see the perfect fulfilment of all new covenant promises in the future, whatever the present broken state of the Church may be; for the great high-priestly prayer of John xvii. remains yet to be answered.

Whilst true faith thus sees things that are not as though they were, in the light of God's purposes, and God's accomplishment of those purposes, it yet never ignores the *facts* of the present, but in lowliest confession owns things as they are, and never proudly talks of attainments. On the one hand it has full confidence in the eternal purpose of God *for the whole* as its joy and hope, and takes into its bosom the weight and burden of the sins, transgressions, and iniquities *of the whole* as its reproach and sorrow, and cries to God in the spirit of Daniel's confession (chap. ix.), and in the spirit of the remnant's confession in Ezra ix. and Nehemiah ix.

Thus is it with the faithful few who now sigh and cry because of the sins of their fellow-saints and the iniquities perpetrated in the heritage of the Lord by those who as

Nazarites should have been holy to the Lord, "purer than snow," "whiter than milk," "more ruddy than rubies"—Christ-like. (Compare Lam. iv. 7 with Cant. v. 10.) Thus was it with weeping Jeremiah, as seen in his broken-hearted pleadings in the book of Lamentations—a book that might well be studied by those who see how deeply the Church has fallen.

But it is easy to boast in a false gift; that is, a gift that is not a reality to the receiver. Thus it was with those who came back from Babylon. The same spirit soon grew again which in former days had proudly said, "The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these" (Jer. vii. 4), and which afterwards in the days of Christ boastingly cried, "We have Abraham to our father." They boasted in a prerogative that had lost its proper accompaniment of lowly confession of sin, and gloried in a calling that had lost its true condition of a broken spirit and a contrite heart.

This is ever the danger of a reclaimed remnant who, forgetting that they are but a few, a broken fragment, begin to regard themselves practically, though not theoretically, as if the whole glory of the dispensation, or at any rate of its closing days, centered in themselves. How true it is that "there is nothing new under the sun!" "The wind goeth to the south [warm], and then turneth about to the north [cold]: it whirleth about continually; and the wind returneth again according to its circuits." Such is all here; and therefore, whether in the Church below, or in the unbelieving world, "all things are full of labour: man cannot utter it." Apart from God disappointment meets us everywhere. "The thing that hath been, is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is nothing new under the sun."

It is well for self-satisfied spirits to remember this, and

while all is vanity and vexation here, looked at apart from the future, there are lessons for eternity which will one day be understood, even if we are not wise enough to understand them now. "The meek [and the meek only] will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way." God's presence takes the pride out of us, and then we learn to abhor ourselves in dust and ashes.

If then, in days such as these, we would keep the unity of the Spirit, it can only be done by not forgetting what we are in Christ, and by remembering also whence we have fallen—by standing in our high calling, and bearing at the same time the reproach of God's people, so as to be able to say with our Master, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me," words written in connection with bearing the infirmities of the weak. (See Rom. xv. 1-3.) It was thus Christ pleased not Himself, and it is thus we are to please our neighbour for his good in building him up. How easy to cut off and cast out! How easy to despise the weak and to scorn the strong! Christ humbled Himself to all. He humbled Himself to accept the feast of a proud Pharisee, who thought the poor carpenter's son might well be content with the honour of his cold civility, without either water, or oil, or kiss; and He humbled Himself to accept in loving gratitude the poor sinner's unworthy tears, her costly ointment, and her lowly kisses. How few humble themselves to a brother's pride! Instead of this, pride stirs up pride, and we learn to our consternation "how great a matter a little fire kindleth."

May these remarks be as words to the wise. We could illustrate what we mean by names and facts, but we would rather pray the blessed Spirit of our God to exercise godly souls, that with hearts laid bare to much of the truth of God which has been neglected they may judge

themselves. The blessed doctrine of the unity of the body, in order to be truly held, needs more than talk; for those will ever talk the most of that of which they know the least, when they have only got hold of a pretty picture, and not the deep and mighty reality, which involves burdens, sympathies, sorrows, and tears. Let the unity of the Spirit, then, be to us what it was to Paul, who wept in Ephesus, wept for Corinth, and wept over Galatia. Thus he ministered in the bonds of the gospel, keeping the unity of the body as tenderly as the apple of his eye. His was a ministry of tears, of carefulness, of conflict, and of prayers, that explained in his life what 1 Cor. xiii. really means in relation to the one body. Without this all boasted knowledge of the one body is but as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

Many have been creeping back to Babylon and its lordly spirit and its self-willed temper, who little dream where they are going, and may never know till the judgment-seat of Christ reveals the popery, the Romanism, the Babylonish garment, now covered by high-sounding words and lofty phraseology. Big words sometimes hide a little mind, and holy expressions unholy actings.

May God give to us all the bowels of Christ Jesus, and His holy, tender sympathies for His body, together with His burden-bearing and His sorrow-bearing spirit. A bleeding heart like His own, and that of His servant and follower Paul, can rightly use strong words; while in the lips of all others, however just the blame, the language is unbecoming. Paul bled for Galatia, and therefore wrote, "I would they were cut off that trouble you;" and when he spoke of professing Christians as "enemies of the cross of Christ," it was with weeping eyes he said it. May God preserve us from profaning His truth by lordly self-willedness.

H. G.

## THE FAITHFUL PROPHET AND THE TWO KINGS.

*(Concluded from page 70.)*

AFTER Micaiah had given his faithful testimony he was sent back to suffer. Ahab, in his pride of place and power, and in the presence of Jehoshaphat, consigned him to "the tender mercies of the wicked." Jehoshaphat witnessed it all, and apparently did nothing even in the way of intercession. It was to the honour of Moses that by faith he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. But Jehoshaphat was trammelled by his unscriptural alliance, and had to leave God's prophet to endure in an eastern prison all the suffering that was implied in the words, "Feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction" (1 Kings xxii. 27), his only offence having been faithfulness to God.

Thus in all ages has power been abused, and the saints of God have had to bear their share of trial. "I saw under the sun, the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there." (Eccles. iii. 16.) The portion of the saints has ever been to glorify God by enduring; hence the apostle says, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." (James v. 10.)

But a terrible day of reckoning is coming. The Lord God of recompenses will surely requite. (Jer. li. 56.) He now endures with much long-suffering and patience; but assuredly the earth shall disclose her blood, and no more cover her slain. (Isa. xxvi. 21.) When He makes His inquisition for blood (Ps. ix. 12), it will be seen that He



forgot not the cry of the humble. He has appointed a day and a Judge to deal with the secrets of men, and awful is the thought of the righteous adjudication which must follow. Power in the hands of fallen man has often been the instrument of injustice and cruelty in their grossest and bitterest forms; nor will there be an effectual change till a King shall reign in righteousness, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. As the mind now dwells on the sufferings of millions, and sees the hopelessness of man's changing the aspect of this sin-stricken world, the heart bounds forward in hope to that time when He shall come whose right it is to reign. (Ezek. xxi. 27.) "For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight. And He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised." (Ps. lxxii. 12-15.)

#### THE LESSON FOR THE PRESENT TIME.

A review of this whole subject may well suggest enquiries which should weigh heavily on every child of God. Should *we* help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Are we in truth separated from the company as well as the ways of the world? and are we walking in known and recognized testimony against it? It is impossible to foresee what embarrassments may arise from its associations. We are indeed in the world, and, it may be, with duties which prevent our retiring as much as we desire from daily contact with those who know not God; but even then the character of our walk may mark distinctly the spirit of our mind;

and if we are faithful the Lord will keep us from its defilement.

This, however, is not the sole point for consideration. There are many who are kept free from intimate connection with the world, but who nevertheless are suffering great loss, and are brought into a low condition under the power of its attraction. "Take heed what ye hear" is an inspired word of warning. (Mark iv. 24.) "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." (Prov. xix. 27.) False doctrine may be rejected, and yet there may be a toleration of that unfaithfulness which tones down the warnings of the word of God, and fails to separate the precious from the vile. The insidious influence of this kind of teaching is not felt at once, but it surely lowers the sensibility of the conscience, and destroys spiritual discernment. This prepares the way for an easy departure from the simplicity of the gospel, and for every other form of declension. Let us remember that we are bound to try the spirits, whether they be of God, and not to acquiesce in the popular judgment of the proceedings and practices of the day. We need something more than clear and accurate statements of the way of salvation by Christ; there must also be the unequivocal testimony of an unworldly walk to support the preached word, and a full and faithful dealing with the whole counsel of God in all its bearings on the life. If these things be wanting we may well withdraw ourselves, whatever appearances there may be of devotedness and zeal, and whatever may be the force of the eloquence that works wonders for the time among the people. We must ever remember that we have a solemn responsibility to younger Christians, and that if we are lax and indifferent they will follow our example.

It would be well if we all more carefully pondered the

frightful mischief wrought by false and unfaithful teachers. "If the blind lead the blind," says our Lord, "both shall fall into the ditch." To enter a parish where the people are accustomed to some outward form of worship, and the instructions of an accredited teacher; to find nothing but darkness and death, or at best some easy and inoperative ministry, which awakens no fear and imparts no light; and then to think of the hundreds who are deprived of the bread of life, and who live on contentedly with an empty profession; and to consider further what must be the end of all who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—this is almost as trying a spectacle to any soul not darkened by the traditions of men as can be conceived. If there is open profanity, or the avowal of that which is known to be heresy, many will be on their guard; but when there is nothing of this kind to awaken suspicion, but much perhaps which the natural heart can admire, though with no real grace and no practical truth, the danger is melancholy in the extreme.

Let us, then, consider the special responsibility of the present time. Micaiah had his testimony for the day and the circumstances in which he lived, and he could speak with the confidence of one taught of God; but we see a far more terrible destruction hurrying on than the overthrow of Ahab and his army. As certain as is the coming of the next midnight hour is the coming of the day of the Lord; and as we see a busy and deluded world lulled to security, or lured to schemes of pride and folly by teachers who never stood in God's counsels, we have to warn all to flee from the wrath to come. But happily our testimony does not end here. We are put in trust with the gospel. We have to tell, not only of danger, but of a glorious way of deliverance, and to point to Him who died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. We do not speak to a

world forsaken of God, but to the world which He so loved as to give His Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. And as we tell of the shedding of His precious blood, we speak of that which can meet the need of the vilest sinner on the earth, and restore him, though lost and dead, as a rescued, happy child, to the favour which seemed to have been forfeited for ever. We speak as ambassadors for Christ, and in His name beseech and persuade. But to fulfil this charge we need to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, and to live in such holy communion with our gracious Lord as shall impart warmth and unction to our service, and attest the reality of our faith and love. And the present hour is one of great opportunities. We are not exposed to the sufferings of Micaiah and the elders who won a good report through faith. In these days we can scarcely apply to ourselves the words, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." (Phil. i. 29.) On every hand we see open doors. Many are prepared to hear us gladly; and the Spirit of God is so working in the hearts of men that we are cheered by "signs following" which tell of the power of the preached gospel. May the Lord therefore arm us for more earnest and more fervent labour.

Finally, we ought to be prepared for growing difficulties and trials; for the elements are already active from which will be evolved and developed the false prophet and his followers of the last days. The power of deceiving, which will be his in such perfection (Rev. xiii. 14), is already ensnaring multitudes through the proud pretensions of criticism and learning. The fascination of human schemes of a boasting philanthropy, varnished over by a colour of sentimental religion, is tending to combine the varied sections of unstable professors with those who either

openly or unconsciously deny God. The tide of popular delusions is certainly gaining strength in many of its most subtle and fatal forms ; and it becomes an urgent duty on the part of all who would be faithful in the day of trial to cleave tenaciously to the faith once for all delivered to the saints, and to maintain that sound speech and sound doctrine of which the apostle writes so earnestly in the epistles which are manifestly designed for the last times. Hopeless as the struggle may be as to its issue, in the current of this present evil age, we are called to stand, having the loins girt about with truth. We may look around and weep, like the prophet of old, as we discern the coming crisis and the deepening gloom, and may be disheartened by changes and decay. And so we may need continually fresh views of the land of the living, without which the psalmist in his distress must have fainted. (Ps. xxvii. 13.) But such views are again and again granted, and faith discovers, shining brightly, as though they were near at hand, the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off. (Isa. xxxiii. 17.) Thus are we saved in hope, and are enabled to bear the trials of the way. It is old experience, well expressed in the lines of a former generation, who have finished their course, and have kept the faith—

“I tread a narrow path and rough,  
And I am tired and weak,  
But soon I shall have rest enough  
In that blest place I seek.

“I once have tasted Canaan’s grapes,  
And now I fain would go  
To where my Lord His vineyard keeps,  
And where those clusters grow.”

The toils and the trials of the pilgrimage are soon coming to an end, and we have the alternative encourage-

ments, "Behold, I come quickly," and, "Be thou faithful unto death." If the Lord come not for us, we shall be called to go up higher to Him; and in either case we shall be "for ever with the Lord." Not a service rendered to Him here will then be forgotten; for "He is not unrighteous." Every prayer will be answered, or returned to our own bosom; and as we enter on the endless enjoyment of the boundless blessings of redeeming love our wondering thought will be, "Lord, who is like to Thee?" To have been permitted to suffer for Him here, to have been kept faithful to Him, and to have been used to protect, or feed, or gather in His sheep below, will magnify our joy then; for the praise will redound to His glory, and that glory will be our delight through eternity. May the dreadful thought, that our negligence may possibly contribute to the everlasting ruin of some among the lost, stimulate our watchfulness and zeal now, and lead us to consider our ways. It is not by man's judgment that we can be safely directed. We must be guided distinctly by the unerring Word. It is not man's praise that will satisfy us, but the Lord's rich and gracious "Well done." Many are striving for the mastery, and running for a corruptible crown. We who are seeking one that is incorruptible are called to strive *lawfully*. It is only as we do so in the power of the Spirit that we shall be kept safe from the foolish fancies of our own hearts, and shall walk so as to please God. Every step astray will certainly entail weakness and sorrow.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. xv. 58.) "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." (Ps. xxvii. 14.)

M. W.

## THE CROSS: ITS WORK AND TEACHING.

IT is unspeakably precious and blessed to know that the all-important question of salvation and peace with God is settled by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as having been delivered up for our offences, and raised again on account of our *justification by His blood*. This effected, the next important subject is *fellowship with God* in the path of obedience to His word—a fellowship that grows by increasing acquaintance with His truth.

For this growth we are as dependent on God as for life; dependent on the teaching of the Holy Ghost to enable us to discover not only the truths of Scripture, but the place assigned to each, and its relative importance to other truths, in order that they may occupy a corresponding place in our minds, hearts, and ways. Lacking this our growth will be distorted, and we shall neither have spiritual strength nor comeliness.

Whatever is presented to our faith in the word of God is *essential*; for that which is not essential to salvation from hell is essential to full obedience and communion.

There is one truth to which these remarks especially apply. It is that presented to us by the little word with which we are so familiar—the “*cross*.”

Often is this word repeated in Scripture because of its importance; oftener still by the lips of old and young around us, being sometimes spoken or sung without thought, without faith, and without heart—a solemn mockery to God; often, too, through grace, with deep thought, faith, and love; but even then it is not fully understood nor properly valued. Indeed, he who under-

stands its meaning best, and feels its value most deeply, will be the first to say, "How little I know!"

Thousands now wear a crucifix attached to their neck-ribbon or watch, made of gold, silver, steel, or bone, whose state of soul and worldly, sinful life proclaim their utter ignorance of that which is meant in Scripture by the word "cross;" the outside symbol usually indicating either the absence of the reality, or the scanty and imperfect knowledge of its worth and power.

What, then, does the Holy Ghost mean when He uses the term "the cross of Christ"?

When speaking of it in the gospels He refers to the material instrument of torture which Jesus carried, to which He was transfixed by the wicked hands of His enemies, and on which He died. Again, when He records the loving act of Joseph and Nicodemus in taking down His body from the cross, He means the same, but never attaches any sacred power or any virtue to the wood. He simply records the facts. But when using the term afterwards, either to show its mighty work, to present its teachings, or illustrate its practical power, He does not mean by the "cross" the instrument of death, but the depth of humiliation to which He who hung on it descended, the nature of the death He suffered thereon, and its power with God for men. I say WITH GOD, for the divine, Godward aspect of the cross, although not always, nor even generally first discerned by the sinner, is the primary aspect, and man's benefit the secondary.

Shall I say that Abraham understood this when he answered Isaac's pertinent, piercing, soul-stirring question, "Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" It might be too much to say he understood it, but not so that the Holy Ghost, who knew it, dictated the answer, and fitted to his lips the words, "GOD will provide HIMSELF the lamb



for a burnt-offering." He might have said, God will provide a lamb, or provide for *us* a lamb; but "*Elohim* will provide HIMSELF THE LAMB" was the proper answer, and therefore the answer given. Yes, the Son of God made flesh—the Word incarnate, born to die the sacrificial atoning death of the cross, is God's provision for the display of His own glory in the salvation of sinners.

It may be well now to examine a few Scriptures in which the cross is mentioned, and may the Holy Ghost help me to write, and also make profitable to the reader that which may be written.

First, let me call attention to some of those Scriptures in which the work of the cross or the virtues of the death of Jesus on it are presented. I observe this order because it is God's order. The Holy Ghost never presents Christ in the moral glory of His life for *imitation* until the sinner knows the value of His death and resurrection for *salvation* and *peace*; in other words, the Spirit never presents Christ as a pattern until He has been received by faith as a *Saviour*.

There are passages of Scripture in which the work of the *cross* and the blessed results of Christ's death are described, but the word itself does not occur in them, while there are others presenting the same truth by means of the word "cross."

Of the former are such passages as these: "Whom God hath set forth, a propitiation through faith in His *blood*;" "Who was *delivered* for our offences;" "When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the *death* of His Son;" "He hath *made* Him to be *sin* for us, who knew no sin;" "Who *gave Himself* for our sins;" "In whom we have redemption through His *blood*, the forgiveness of sins." Of the latter are such as: "That He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the *cross*;" "Having made

peace through the blood of His *cross*;" "Nailing it to His *cross*;" "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the *cross*."

In these and similar scriptures the Holy Ghost presents to faith the blessed work of covering of sin (atonement), reconciliation to God, the fulfilling of prophecies and of types as to the bearing away of sin, the meeting of all the claims of justice, effecting perfect, eternal deliverance from guilt and condemnation by the death of Christ, the spotless Lamb of God, on the tree. This is our *gain*, not the *material cross*.

In all this blessed work of the cross the mind of God is declared and His character revealed. Jehovah proclaimed His name to Moses when hidden in the cleft of the rock and covered with His hand; but it was in connection with the *second* pair of tables, which were deposited in the ark and covered with the mercy-seat, on which and before which was sprinkled the blood that covered sin. There Moses learned Jehovah's name, and saw that which might then be seen of Him and of His glory.

The cross also instructs us. It teaches those who are saved by its work. Jesus crucified proclaims the *love* of God: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son, the propitiation for our sins."

If the act of God in giving His Son and delivering Him up to death for us teaches us His love, the sufferings of that Son, when made a curse for us, reflect equally the holiness and justice of the God of love. God is holy, and cannot behold iniquity nor look on sin; therefore when He made that blessed One "sin for us," He hid His face from Him, He forsook Him. The cross teaches the *holiness* of God with a clearness and fulness which neither the flood nor the overthrow of Sodom could do, and that because of the sinlessness of the Person who suffered; His

absolute purity, while under the imputation of sin, made Him "an offering and a sacrifice [or victim] to God for a *sweet-smelling savour*."

Having sin imputed to Him, the inflexible, uncompromising justice of God took action against Him, judged and condemned Him—condemned sin in the flesh, that the believing sinner might justly be freed from guilt and condemnation, and fully accepted in the beloved One who died. The cross, then, teaches the *justice* of God, and in the death of Christ for sinners it proclaims the truth of the sentence of God against sin, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Moreover, this wondrous plan of salvation, alike honourable to God and safe for the sinner who receives it, displays His *wisdom*; in a word, the cross reveals God.

If it reveals God, and teaches us what He is, so also it manifests man, proving what is in him. Man's blindness, enmity, and guilt were all fully proved by the rejection of Christ, and by His death on the cross; and they still are proved by the rejection of the gospel.

If what has been said of the action of God towards Jesus, the Son of God, be true, as it unquestionably is, so also the Holy Ghost teaches us lessons of heavenly wisdom by Him who endured the cross. He instructs us in the path of perfect lowliness, patience, and love.

In Philippians ii. we have our lesson of *lowliness* taught by the humiliation of Christ, in His voluntary and, to us, immeasurable stoop from equality with God to death, the death of the cross. Nothing is here said of advantage to us as *sinner*s; it is not a question of salvation, but the presentation of a pattern mind, a perfect example of lowliness: "Let this mind be in you which was also *in Christ Jesus*," and which displayed itself by the cross.

Our lesson of *patience* is read out to us in the gospel

narrative of His steadfast endurance of the contradiction of sinners (Gentile and Jew), in His trial, mockery, and shame. He patiently endured the cross, He reviled not the reviler, nor threatened the insolent, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously. (Heb. xii. 2, 3; 1 Peter ii. 23.) He did say, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if *well*, why smitest thou me?" but He did not say, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." This, His patience, is our perfect pattern. Let us seek by grace to reproduce it in our daily life.

And what of the lesson of *love* taught us by the cross of Christ? Oh, fellow-heir of glory, the doctrine of the cross has depths for our eternal sounding! Howsoever much our line may be lengthened, we shall never reach the bottom any more than we shall measure its height, its length, or its breadth; this is our joy. There will be no end to our discoveries of His love.

But what saith the Scripture on this point? Let us hear. If Scripture says, "God so loved the world that He gave His Son," it also says, "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." His love to us was and is perfect, even as John confessed it to be: "Unto Him who *loveth* us, and *washed* [bathed] us in His own blood . . . unto Him be glory." (Rev. i. 5, 6.) This is blessed; it is lovely, attractive, and powerful; but there is another aspect of this truth, a Godward side of it; namely, the mutual love, delight, and gratification of the Father and the Son; and this we must next consider.

H. H.

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POWER WITH GOD AND WITH MEN.—"If children of God knew their power at the mercy-seat over the hearts of kings and all in authority (1 Tim. ii. 1, 2), they would not disquiet their souls and mar their communion with God by entering into strifes as to earthly government, but would take as their guide their Master's words: 'Who made me a judge or a divider over you?' 'They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;' 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.'"

## THE MASTER'S "GUEST-CHAMBER."

"The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?"—MARK xiv. 14.

"GUEST-CHAMBER" was the name given by our Lord to the place where last on earth He kept the passover with His disciples, and where He first used the loaf and the cup to institute the Lord's Supper; and the word itself carries much meaning with it. Jesus there entertained the twelve as His *guests*. True, He was indebted to the owner of the house for the use of the place, and in this minor sense both Jesus and His disciples were that man's guests; so poor for our sakes had become the Lord of all, the Maker of heaven and earth. But Jesus was Himself the substance shadowed forth by the passover lamb in the first part of their feast, and it was His death alone that could give meaning or value to the bread and wine of the after part. In its divine reality and deep significance the whole of what was spread upon that table was of His providing, and was all at His sole cost. None knew this so deeply as Jesus Himself did; and His love to them and to His Father made Him rejoice to be the provider, let it cost Him what it would. He received them to that chamber as His own guests. It was to Him a "guest chamber," and He was entertaining them in it. So was it also at Emmaus after His resurrection. The two refreshed and wondering disciples begged Him, as their fellow-traveller on the road, to come in and be their guest. He went in; but presently "as He sat at meat" (or reclined) "with them, HE took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and GAVE to them," as one who was Himself in reality

the Master of the house, and who made them to be guests of His.

And is it not still the same wherever the Lord's Supper is truly partaken of? Are we not the guests of the Lord Jesus each time we sit at it—His most costly and well-provided guests? Should not this produce in us the thoughts, and feelings, and manners proper to guests, and guests too of such a Lord? When entertained by an earthly friend we pay respect to our host, and behave otherwise in the house or at the table where we are another's guest than we should were it our "own supper" (see 1 Cor. xi. 21), and were we our own providers. But if indebtedness to an earthly friend thus affects our behaviour at his table, and makes an ordinary dining-room a place for honouring him, how much more when it is the Lord Jesus Himself who has us in His "guest-chamber," and is saying to us, "Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of ME!"

Indeed it may be safely said that the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper never are any real profit to our souls except as we are thus conscious of His own presence with us as we partake of them; and we grow in love to Him by our use of them only as we feel ourselves to be then and there His guests, and the place, be it large or small, or of whatever kind it may, has become to us for the time His "guest-chamber." It is part of the "song of songs" to our waiting souls to be able to say, "While the King *sitteth at His table*, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." (Song of Solomon i. 12.)

And it is always *our own fault* if the "upper room," or any other place where we are taking the Lord's Supper, does not wear to us this "guest-chamber" character. Jesus our Lord is always there to make it such if only we are gathered together unto His name, and if, as par-

takers, our eyes are single; then our whole body is "full of light" (see Luke xi. 34), and the very *hands* and *lips* with which we make use of the commanded loaf and cup aid our souls' view of Jesus Himself present "in the midst." The apostle's word, "*We see Jesus*" (Heb. ii. 9), becomes more and more true of us; and we welcome the further exhortation, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Heb. iii. 1), and find no difficulty in obeying it. We then no longer treat the Lord's Supper as if it were "each one taking before other *his own* supper," but we joyfully and reverently give both the Lord of the supper His place, and, if need be, we also "tarry one for another" (1 Cor. xi. 33), and thus give all other of the Lord's guests their place, even the feeblest. In honouring them we also honour Him, even as Jesus honours the Father in making any of us His guests at all; and the *goodly number* of our fellow-guests teaches us something of the largeness of our Master's "guest-chamber," as His felt presence there makes its blessedness.

But the more exact meaning of the word here rendered "guest-chamber" is also instructive. It is the same word that is rendered "*inn*" in Luke ii. 7, where the evangelist tells of the place in which the infant Jesus was born—"There was no room for them in the inn;" and it is used in the New Testament *only* in these two connections. The word signifies *the place of unloosing*. An eastern "*inn*" or "guest-chamber" was just that. The ass and the camel were unloosed from their burdens, and when the tired traveller was received as a guest he unloosed his girdle and sandals from his weary loins and feet.

What a fitting name to give to the chamber where Jesus as the "Lamb of God" ended for Himself, and for us also who believe in Him, all observance of the Jewish ritual respecting the paschal lamb, and *unloosed* Peter, and James,

and John, and all such from that "yoke upon the neck" which Peter says "neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." (Acts xv. 10.)

And every place where we now "show forth the Lord's death till HE come" should be to our souls a place of *unloosing*, and that in three ways.

1st. As to stain and burden of any *sin on our conscience*. It is true that we became worshippers "once purged," once and for ever, the moment we knew a Saviour as our own before God, and had "no more conscience of sin" as that which could banish us from God, or sink us to hell. But the more fully we know this our abiding acceptance in Christ, the more does any known allowance of sin *in our walk* become a *burden* on our souls affecting communion with God. This burden, however, ought not to remain on us, and least of all need it do so when at the Lord's Supper. We are then at the place of *unloosing*; for that precious feast of love reminds us afresh of Him "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." Paul also says, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup;" and then as he thus discerns "the Lord's body," and how fully it once was broken for him, the very place will be to him the Master's guest chamber, the place of *unloosing* as regards his otherwise burdened conscience. As we sometimes sing—

"Sweet feast of love divine,  
 'Tis grace that makes us free  
 To feed upon this bread and wine,  
 In memory, Lord, of Thee.

"*Here conscience ends its strife,*  
 And faith delights to prove  
 The sweetness of the bread of life,  
 The fulness of Thy love."



And, alas! for all those children of God who, having on their conscience any such burden as to their walk and ways, sit at what should be the place of *unloosing* and partake with the sinful weight unremoved, because secretly and, if need be, also *openly* unconfessed. A worse case still is that of those whose daily habits of soul have so *long* been loose and sinful that their long-accustomed conscience does not even *feel* the burden, and they jauntily sit with it on them, and outwardly partake, and that too at the place of unloosing. How the Lord of the feast, the Master of the guest-chamber, must feel for all such among His guests! How *uncomely* their attitude at His table!

2nd. But Jesus' guest-chamber is also the place of unloosing as to *earthly care upon the mind*, and unbelief as to temporal things. Anxiety about future earthly supplies often presses as a load upon God's children spite of all God's love to us, and His own gracious word: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow;" and the assurance, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of ALL these things." Such distrust is sinful in us always and everywhere; but never and nowhere is it more so than when we are taking from His own hand the emblems of that love to us which led God to give His only Son, and led Jesus our Lord to give Himself for us. The load of care should roll off us there, for it is the place of *unloosing*; and the love we are there contemplating should dissolve the cords which bind any such burdens on our minds.

"Why should I ever careful be  
 Since such a God is mine?  
 He watches o'er me night and day,  
 And tells me, Mine is thine."

3rd. We keep the Lord's Supper "till HE come;" and as we sit at it we look upward and onward to our being

*unloosed* ere long from this burdensome mortal body, and our being clothed upon with the body glorious! Our Master's guest-chamber is full of this "blessed hope," and is thus by anticipation, both to Him and also to us, the place of our unloosing. It was at that table that HE said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until *that day* when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Nor even then will the full extent of our blessed unloosing have been reached. Even *then* the promise to us of new heavens and a new earth will not have been fulfilled; nor will the creation have been "delivered from the bondage of corruption" finally and fully. But this also will be done; and the loaf and cup which point us to Calvary's cross are the pledge to us of a new earth and heavens. In this way also the Master's guest-chamber is to us the place of unloosing. "For," as Paul says, "ALL the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Blessed place indeed to us is that feast of love!

To Him, alas! it was the place of *binding with cords*, of coming woe and death, even the death of the cross. The more it is now the place to us of our unloosing, the more do we remember what it was to Him. In His breaking of the loaf and pouring of the cup HE saw His own coming death, and went from it to the garden and the cross. HE had entertained His guests; He next went to pay the cost of having done so. At His birth there had been no room for Him "in the INN" at Bethlehem—man's earthly "guest-chamber." All His days He had been poor, and without a place "where to lay His head;" but to make us rich in His new creation "guest-chamber" for ever, He must become poorer still. As our Surety His bed must be taken from under Him (see Prov. xxii. 26, 27), and HE

must become "sore broken" (Prov. xi. 15)—the cords of death must bind Him, and the iron of justice and of wrath must pierce Him. Let all this enrich to us the Master's guest-chamber as our place of unloosing.

In conclusion, let us not forget that there are *duties* of the guest-chamber that belong to us, as well as present privileges and blessed hopes. We should make it the place of serving one another, as it is also of the Master Himself serving us. If HE there unlooses our burdens with His own gracious hand, and at such a cost to Himself, we should seek to help loose each other's burdens. By pointing burdened fellow-saints to the ever-cleansing blood we should seek to loose from them any load they may have on their conscience; and if care weigh them down, we should then and there tell them that our God shall supply all their need "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus;" and if their feet are weary with the length of the earthly journey, we should point them to the day of the glorious unloosing that will dawn ere long.

Our Master did all this at that very supper at the first. John xiii. shows this. In the narratives of the supper by Matthew, Mark, and Luke we are simply told He sat down with them, but in John xiii. we learn the patient service with which He then and there served them, and of that Lord's Supper service HE said, "I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

May grace be given us both to enjoy the supper, and to fulfil its duties even "till HE come." Amen. H. D.

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EVERY flock bears the mark of its owner; so the sheep of Christ have their mark—even poverty of spirit. Each one is a poor, needy sinner, self-judged and self-condemned, according to the justice of God.

R. C. C.

## THE CROSS: ITS WORK AND TEACHING.

(Concluded from page 96.)

WE have already considered the cross of Christ as providing for the sinner's need; we have now to dwell upon the fellowship of the Father and the Son together in that solemn work.

This aspect of the cross is both touching and instructive to every saved sinner. Our first thought and appreciation of the cross is our *personal advantage* by it in forgiveness and salvation. But when that is known, and the cross becomes the subject of meditation and fellowship with God, how differently is it viewed. This is one mark of the difference between the babe in Christ and the father, or even the young man. Of this divine mutual joy and fellowship we have a beautiful illustration, if not a type, in the scene on mount Moriah. Jehovah delighted in Abraham's prompt obedience, as evidencing his *love*; Abraham took pleasure in Isaac's obedience, as proving *his* love; and to Isaac it must have been pleasure to please his father. Anguish of heart there must have been, but love prevailed. On Calvary also, judgment, anguish, and delight found their place; displeasure and judgment against sin, anguish, unutterable anguish, in the Son as the victim, suffering under the stroke of death, the accursed death of the cross; and who shall undertake to describe what in this sense it cost both the Father, and also the eternal Spirit through whom He offered Himself without spot to God? Yet with all this there was satisfaction and delight; not indeed in the suffering, either as inflicted or endured, but in the love manifested and in the purposes of grace

accomplished. The Holy Ghost took pleasure in the perfection of the offering thus presented, and although the God of truth, holiness, and justice, whose name is love, bruised the Son, yet as the Father He delighted in the person and obedience of His Son ; whilst the Son delighted in rendering obedience unto death, thus meeting the deep desires of the Father's heart, and accomplishing His holy will.

This is not mere imagination ; it is the burden of the testimony of the whole word of God.

As early as the baptism of Jesus in Jordan (Jordan means river of judgment, and was a shadow of the cross), when coming up out of the water, the heavens opened, and the Father testified His delight in the Son, and in His typical act. This was repeated in connection with a very opposite scene at the transfiguration, when the coming kingdom was presented in its heavenly and earthly glory. This approval the Son appreciated ; the knowledge, the assured understanding and belief of it, was the daily rest and delight of His soul, even as He once expressed it when speaking of the Father, "I do always the things that please Him."

To His full knowledge of this fact He also gives expression in John x. 17, 18, when as the Good Shepherd He says, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I *lay down* my life that I may take it again. . . . This commandment have I received of my Father." To Him love and obedience to the commandment were inseparable, even as John testifies, "*This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.*" (1 John v. 3.)

Again He refers to this in John xiv. 30, 31. He had walked and talked with His disciples, and taught and wrought miracles in their presence, and now when the time of His death was drawing near He said, "Hereafter

I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know *that I love the Father*; and as the Father gave me *commandment*, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence." Where? To Gethsemane and to the cross. He had encountered Satan as the serpent in his wiles, during the forty days' temptation in the wilderness, and Satan found nothing in Him; He was now about to meet Him as the roaring lion, with the "strong bulls of Bashan," the angry passions of men stirred by the devil, the deep-seated enmity of Jews, and the scorn and derision of Gentiles; but Satan would find nothing of evil in Him, nor would man draw forth anything like bitterness or retaliation from Him. Thus He went on; and why? To accomplish our salvation? Doubtless; but, as He said, while effecting that, to prove His *love* to the Father, and to obey His commandment, by laying down His life. He laid it down, and if none can describe the elements of sorrow and satisfaction known only to Him in doing so, neither can any creature fully appreciate His delight and joy when He took again His life. He had done that which man in innocence could not do, much less man in his fallen condition, and which neither Michael nor Gabriel could accomplish, for He had fulfilled the deep desires of the Father's love, and had done *all* His will.

Again, who shall describe the Father's joy, only equalled by that of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? We can believe it, and in a very little measure understand it; but in this divine fellowship there will ever be secrets hidden from all creatures. Christians have joy in common, yet each has a secret fellowship with the Father and with Christ. The Son of God has a name whereby He is owned—"The Word of God," and "on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords."

(Rev. xix. 16.) But He also has a name which no man knows but Himself, which expresses the incommunicable secret fellowship and joy between the Father, the Spirit, and Himself. We delight that it should be so, for He is worthy.

His reward will be full, His recompense abundant in the blessing of the Church, Israel, and the nations; His glory will be great in God's salvation; but the source of deepest joy to Him is, and ever will be, that He has pleased, delighted, glorified, and thus gratified His Father. "The Father loveth the Son," said He, "and I love the Father."

Such are some of the lessons taught us by the cross and its work. Let us now enquire as to its practical power on the hearts and lives of those who have come to that cross for salvation.

We might speak of its power to win the heart for God; for "we love Him because He first loved us" (1 John iv. 19); of its constraining power to live to Christ, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because . . . one died for all . . . that they which live should henceforth live . . . unto Him" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15); of the use Paul made of it to induce the Corinthian Christians to open their hearts and purses for the poor. (2 Cor. viii. 9.) But there is one very definite testimony to its power in Gal. vi. 14. Here Paul is defending the ground of a sinner's justification by Christ alone, which he had so fully laid down in his epistle to the Romans. The Galatian churches were encountering Judaizing teachers, who sought to enforce circumcision on Gentile converts as essential to salvation; and he bursts forth with holy indignation, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom [or whereby] the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Thus did he in a few words (not only, nor chiefly as an apostle, but as a believer) declare himself to be separated from the world and the world from him by the power of the cross. He thus declares that the world—profane or religious, wise or unwise, sordid or light and vain, base or refined, whether in its own outside sphere, or as seeking to creep into the church—the world was to him, as a crucified man, only to be turned from and avoided; and, as a consequence, he was such also to the world. May we thus learn the practical power of the doctrine of the cross of Christ, and obtain victory over the world.

H. H.

## PRINCIPLES OF REALIZED BLESSING.\*

Read 2 CHRON. v. 6-14.

THERE are three great principles of realized blessing and of manifested glory.

*First*, all our spiritual blessings for time and for eternity are founded on *atonement*.

Verse 6: Solomon, and those "that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be told nor numbered for multitude." As though all were too few and small to show forth the inestimable value of the sacrifice of Christ which those offerings foreshadowed! Indeed, its priceless value is beyond all human estimate. No mind but the mind of God, no heart but the heart of the eternal Father, will ever be able to fathom its boundless depths and reach its wondrous heights.

Hence, too, we begin each fresh portion of time, in imitation of the Spirit-taught disciples, by meeting together on the first day of the week in remembrance of that sacrifice and of Him that offered it.

\* Notes of an Address, published as a tract by Mr. Hawkins, 36, Baker Street. W.



The *second* principle is, giving the Lord Jesus His own proper place—central and pre-eminent—“*Jesus in the midst.*”

Verse 7: “The priests brought in the ark of the covenant unto his place.”

In time and in eternity, the place which the Father gives to the Son is the centre. In the bosom of the Father, as the centre of divine affections; in the midst of the throne, as the centre of universal empire; and in the midst of the Church, as His proper and rightful place on earth.

In the midst of the Church universal He is seen as walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands; and He is in the midst of the assembly of disciples gathered to His name; not *in* His name merely, but *TO* or *UNTO* His name; that is, to His person.

When the Lordship of Christ is owned, every question is easily settled as to the Church and its discipline; and when the Lordship of Christ is recognized and submitted to in the assembly, the blessing is unbounded; when none lifts hand or foot without Him; not only not acting *contrary* to His will, but not acting *without* His will; none daring to give out a hymn, read a chapter, speak or pray, without having first caught His eye, and obtained direction or permission from Him.

Now that the Lord Jesus is away, the Holy Ghost is not setting up a democracy, but maintaining the Lordship of Christ, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Him.

Some seem to act as if they thought that having got rid of the “one man ministry,” every one is at liberty to do what is right in his own eyes. Hence the spiritual poverty and misery of many assemblies. Better be under the tyranny of one man than of a multitude. As a remedy

for all this, let the ark be brought into his place. Let the Lordship of Jesus be owned.

“Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown HIM Lord of all.”

The *third* principle is, *harmony and fellowship in the Spirit.*

Verse 13: “As the trumpeters and the singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Jehovah . . . . then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of Jehovah.”

Thus was it also at Pentecost. A solemn responsibility rests on those who profess to lead the worship of God’s saints. No chord of discord should be struck, but all should be harmony and unity; every word should be so distinctly uttered that all may hear, and no sentence should be spoken but such as all might have fellowship with.

Where there is unity in the Spirit the glory comes in, and there is no room for the flesh; but where the flesh has its place the glory is shut out, and the Spirit is quenched. Then the more fleshly are the more prominent.

The first principle is represented by Calvary, where the Sacrifice was offered to God.

The second by the mount of Olives, whence the SON ascended to the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high.

The third is Pentecost, when the SPIRIT descended to baptize into one body the members of the risen and exalted Lord, and to form them into an holy habitation for God, and for the manifestation of His glory.

THOMAS NEWBERRY.

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## "SOME BETTER THING."

HEB. xi. 39, 40; xii. 1-3.

"AND these all" (these worthy witnesses forth of faith in the living God and His promises) "having witnessed a good confession through faith, yet received not the promise;" *i.e.* died before obtaining what God had promised. For God's promises were not limited as to time, but were absolute as to fulfilment in the future.

These worthy ones died in certain hope that they would obtain what God had promised, and they knew that death could not deprive them of it. See, for examples, Jacob and Joseph. (*vv.* 21, 22.)

It was so ordained by God, who in His wisdom had foreseen "some better thing" concerning us; namely, that we, His people—new-born and newly-created in Christ Jesus—*should complete the manifestation of faith*, and illustrate in this present dispensation a higher place of faith even than that before shown.

The faith of those mentioned in Heb. xi., when taken in detail, illustrates the various phases which faith exhibits under adverse circumstances. They form patterns for us, for whom God has designed a yet further, a "better," showing forth of faith in Himself and His word, *so that they and we together should complete faith's exhibition*. For it is His intent that "now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places should be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God."

Thus *they without us* could not perfectly represent faith. They spake in hope; we speak with positive certainty. They hoped in One to come; we trust in One who has come. Our relative faith should therefore be proportionate.

Wherefore seeing we then are compassed about with so great a cloud of worthy witnesses to true faith (and who had but scant material to go upon compared to what we have), let us lay aside every weight and sin, so easily besetting; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking off unto Jesus, the Prince-leader, and perfect example of faith.

He is here set before us as the complete fulfiller of faith—the perfect exemplification of faith in the living God (the thought of *our* faith is not here in question). He crowns all as a witness. He, "for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

For us there is reserved the life-long illustration of faith in God, by looking off to Him who is faith's perfect example, and who, that He might do God's will, allowed nothing to deter Him, not even the prospect of the death of the cross, but for the joy of doing God's will in saving us endured even that.

The "*better thing*," then, foreseen by God concerning us is, that we, having the Lord Jesus as our Life, His Spirit as our Indweller, should perfect the showing forth of faith to an unbelieving world by a daily life of faith in the Son of God, that each blood-bought member of the Church might say, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

A. O. M.

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"I DESIRE the Spirit of God above and beyond all other possessions, interests, satisfactions, or enjoyments; both as a controlling principle, discernible in its effects, and enabling me to command myself and all my powers for God; and as giving a distinct inward feeling or consciousness and foretaste of heavenly happiness. I think both are held out in Scripture, and the one can hardly be without the other in any heart."—T. A., 1763.

## ELISHA.

THE early history of Elisha has been already traced in connection with that of Elijah (see vol. ii.), with which it is interwoven. On receiving his commission at mount Horeb, Elijah, passing up the valley of the Jordan on the road to Damascus, finds Elisha at Abel-beth-meholah, not far from the river, and near to Bethbara, or Bethabara, where John afterwards baptized. At that time, for reasons to be stated hereafter, Elisha's age could not well have been more than sixteen or eighteen. From that period he appears to have been the close personal attendant and servant of Elijah, whose force of character seems to have won both his admiration and his ardent affection. From about the eighth year of Ahab to the second of Ahaziah, a space of fourteen years, he accompanied him in his wanderings, witnessing his devotedness to God and zeal in His service, and doubtless becoming thereby educated in some measure for his future office.

During this time Elijah has to confront Ahab, and announce the judgment of God upon him for the murder of Naboth; also the judgment upon Ahaziah, son and successor of Ahab, with which was connected the calling down of fire from heaven upon the two captains and their fifties.

This interval was also remarkable for the many prophets whom God was pleased to raise up to testify both in Israel and in Judah. In 1 Kings xx. 13, 20, we read of a prophet being twice sent to Ahab. Again, in the same chapter (*v.* 28), a man of God is sent to him with another message, and (*in v.* 35) one of the sons of the prophets conveys a fourth announcement to him. Besides this Micaiah, son of Imla (2 Chron. xviii. 8), prophesies his death in battle.

All this was during the lifetime of Elijah. Jehu, the son of Hanani (2 Chron. xix. 2), is sent to Jehoshaphat after the death of Ahab, and also Jahaziel (2 Chron. xx. 14) and Eliezer. (xx. 37.) Here are nine special messengers of the Most High all living at the same time, besides the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel, and those at Jericho. (2 Kings ii.)

We do not hear of Elijah having intercourse with any one of these servants of the God of Israel. With Elisha it was otherwise.

We now recur to the time of their separation on the eastern side of the Jordan. The hand that divested Elijah of his earthly garment when passing upwards in the whirlwind caused it to fall upon Elisha. Up to this period he had not exercised any prophetic office. When he saw the departure of his master, deeply feeling the loss he himself as well as Israel had sustained, he cries out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." This expression is afterwards applied to himself by King Joash. (2 Kings xiii. 14.) But Joash was an idolater, putting his confidence in the arm of flesh, not knowing the arm of Jehovah, the God of Israel, whereas Elisha was a servant of God.

In the extremity of his distress, Elisha rends his own garments into two parts. Other persons are described as rending their garments, but not to this extent. He seems to feel acutely that his loss is overwhelming and irreparable, and that all hope for himself and for Israel is at an end. Such was the anguish at the moment at being separated from him whom he so ardently loved and venerated.

However, he takes up the mantle, goes to the brink of the Jordan, and with it smites the waters, as he had already seen Elijah do. His cry is significant. So full is

his heart of Elijah that he can think of nothing else. He does not say, "My God," but ejaculates, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" The God of Elijah replies by again causing the waters to divide, and he passes over.

Elisha now re-enters the land. His introduction is equally miraculous with the former entrance of the tribes under Joshua, though not attended by so imposing a display. Then there were 600,000 warriors, with their wives, their children, and their cattle, with all the priestly and Levite retinue attendant upon the tabernacle; now only a solitary individual appears, but by him God intends to show forth both His grace and power.

The sons of the prophets who had been looking across the river, spectators of what had occurred, seeing Elijah's mantle fallen on Elisha, and that the Jordan on being smitten had again become dry for his return among them, now come to meet him. They prostrate themselves before him, perceiving that the spirit of Elijah rested upon him, as evinced by the miracle, in the same manner as, in 1 Sam. xvi. 13, 14, the Spirit of God, which had been upon Saul, came upon David to qualify him for the regal dignity to which he had just been anointed. David, it may be noticed, in Ps. li. 11, fearful lest the same thing might happen to himself as had happened to Saul, makes his petition, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

After this acknowledgment of subjection to Elisha, they ask to be allowed to send a large number of themselves to search for Elijah, on the plea that the Spirit of the Lord, after having taken him up, may have cast him upon some mountain or into some valley. They were aware that whirlwinds scatter far and wide the objects they gather up from the earth, and in their ignorance they presume to think that God may have thus treated His servant, who may therefore be liable to perish without their succour,

which they are anxious to render. Elisha, who, more anxious than they were, has not these hard and unbelieving thoughts of God, refuses permission; but on their importunity he at length consents, seemingly under the impression that they will suspect **him** of not wishing to save his master's life. They send, and search in vain for three days. On their return Elisha reminds them of his refusal. Had they attended to it they would not thus have dishonoured their God, reaped confusion for themselves, and practically disallowed their own previous prophecy. (See 2 Kings ii. 5.)

During his stay in Jericho the inhabitants sought to avail themselves of his presence among them to represent the barren condition of their land consequent upon the badness of the water. They had little reason to look for any favour, and perhaps their expectation was but small. The place had once been fertile, with a large population; but in the time of Joshua the sword of the Lord fell heavily upon them. Then, too, was uttered the curse upon whosoever should rebuild the city. (Josh. vi. 26.) It had lain waste from that time to the reign of Ahab, when Hiel, the Bethelite, ventured to restore it in defiance of the prophecy and the penalty attached. The walls that had lain prostrate for hundreds of years were again raised by this impious man of Bethel; but the inhabitants could not prosper, for the water that should have fertilized produced only barrenness. "He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." (Ps. cvii. 34.) There could have been no rational hope of any amendment; for their occupation of the spot was in opposition to the declared will of their God; and likewise the power and character of Elisha was as yet untried and unknown. However, their acknowledgment of him as "my lord" is met in wondrous grace. All that lies



against them is overlooked. A new cruse is called for, in accordance with the new order of divine dealings which Elisha came to introduce. Salt is put therein, and when cast into the fountain is made to undo the work of destruction. The waters are healed. The Lord God, whom they had forsaken, shows Himself again their benefactor and their friend. The flow of fertilizing water thus graciously bestowed is permanent.

After this sojourn in Jericho he proceeds to Bethel, about eighteen miles off, along the road he had recently travelled with his friend, his mind no doubt filled with recollections of him. On approaching that idolatrous city he is met, not by the welcome of its inhabitants, but by a concourse of little children, who receive him with shouts of derision. Tidings of Elijah's ascent had reached the place. In mockery of the event, of the God who had taken him up, and of His servant, they call out, "Go up, bald head; go up, bald head." Where were little children likely to have learnt such expressions but from their parents? Who but they would have caused the throng of little ones thus to go forth and meet the approaching stranger? Elisha, indignant both at the profanity and at the dishonour to his master, turns round, looks on them, and curses them in the name of the Lord. That day many a parent in Bethel had to rue his own wickedness, and to learn that though the God of Israel is long-suffering, yet that He will be feared. By the terrific visitation on their children they might also discover His goodness to themselves, in allowing them a further space for repentance. This was the only instance in which Elisha was concerned in the taking away of life. And before this, the first fulfilment of the acts of divine judgment awarded at Horeb (1 Kings xix. 15-17), many years' delay occurred, as we have already seen.

Bethel, a place first brought into notice in the days of Abraham, was the scene of Jacob's wonderful vision, where God made him those glorious promises of favour and protection. It had now, however, become the focus of Israel's idolatry. About eighty years previously Jeroboam had set up there one of the calves, which he commanded Israel to worship, asserting that these were the gods who had brought them out of Egypt. It was here the king had had his hand dried up, and restored on the intercession of the prophet. And here was the tomb of the prophet slain by the lion, with the inscription upon it, he having dared to disobey the Lord's command, beguiled by the falsehood of another. The authority of the God of Israel had here been entirely rejected, and this continued to be the case long afterwards; for in Amos vii. 12 that prophet is ordered away by the priest of Bethel, who declares that the city is the king's chapel or sanctuary, a servant of Jehovah, he intimates, having no business there. The audacity of the children, and the contempt shown to Elijah, Elisha, and their God, comports with this their senseless worship. The dishonour done to Jehovah and to his master may well have exasperated the loving servant; and God confirms his curse (see Prov. xxvi. 2), for the she-bears are sent forth from the wood to destroy a portion of the youthful rebels, while the rest probably carry back to their homes the sad tale of their sin, of the prophet's curse, and of the immediate accomplishment thereof upon some of their number. The wickedness of the people of Bethel is further heightened by the fact that the intended rapture of Elijah had been revealed beforehand to the sons of the prophets who dwelt there, for they spoke of it to Elisha as a well-known expected event. (2 Kings ii. 3.)

The prophet now visits Carmel, where, on the prayer of Elijah, his master, the Lord God had condescended to dis-

play His ever-flowing mercy towards His guilty people, by sending down His fire from heaven upon the offered sacrifice. Elisha had not been present on that occasion as an attendant on Elijah, for his call did not take place till afterwards. He might, however, have been there among the Israelites, all of whom Ahab summoned to be present. If he were indeed there we may feel sure that his heart and his voice would fully have joined in the shout, "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God."

Full as was his soul of the recent bereavement, what could be more natural than that he should desire to visit the scene where his dearly-loved master had displayed such triumphant faith before the hosts of his enemies, and where that faith had been so signally honoured by his God? Nothing was now to be seen there, the very stones of the altar having been consumed by the fire. If every traveller, or so-called religious pilgrim, to places noticed in Scripture, were but to read the lessons God has written there of His mercy to poor fallen man, and lay it to heart, then would some real profit be obtained from such visits, instead of it being, as it so often is, the mere indulgence of sentiment, of curiosity, or the spirit of adventure. What is the benefit of pilgrimages to such spots? They may be called holy places by men, but God has not sanctified them. In His sight they are as unclean as the rest of this earth's surface. Even if the very spot could be ascertained where stood the cross on which our Lord expired, or the identical footprints from whence He departed to the heavens from off the mount of Olives, what would it avail? A fond superstition might attract persons thither; but the Christian knows that salvation is to be found solely in the crucified and risen Jesus, now at the right hand of God, and that whosoever calls upon Him, from any region of the earth, will be saved.

## NOTES AND REPLIES.

*Does not the Apostle view the disembodied state differently in 2 Cor. v. 4 and Phil. i. 23?*

YES; in the one he was desiring it, in the other he was not. The context explains the difference. *Service* to Christ and to God was occupying him in 2 Cor. v., and he was longing to exchange the mortal body for the body glorious—the “house which is from heaven” (comp. 1 Cor. xv.)—because in it he should *serve* God and the Lamb fully and for ever (see Rev. xxii. 3, 4); and the hope of this nobler service in a resurrection-body made him overleap the disembodied state, and say, “Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon.” But in Phil. i. 23 strife and contention even in God’s church were paining him, and he was feeling his own need of a “supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” for his “salvation” from it. Hence his *spirit* was full of watchfulness and self-guarding, and for him “to depart and to be with Christ” would be personally “far better.” See also “thou shalt rest” in Dan. xii. 13, and “they . . . rest from their labours” in Rev. xiv. 13; in both which “Babylon” with its filth and its spiritual dangers and defilements are the context.—H.D.

*Will only the lost be raised at the judgment of the great white throne?*  
(Rev. xx.)

It is clear that all the finally lost are there; that is, all those “not found written in the book of life;” but that *all* those raised at the second resurrection are lost, this passage does not teach. It is said of all that “they were judged each one according to their works;” and further, that “whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire;” but had the passage been designed to convey the idea that all were lost, it would certainly have been very differently worded. A valued writer in the *Golden Lamp* (vol. ii. 246–48) regards that resurrection as including the righteous who die during the millennium, the promise of patriarchal longevity (Isa. lxxv. 20) applying to Israel, he considers, and not to the Gentiles. But if, as we think, Scripture does not warrant this distinction, the question remains, Who are those whose names are in the book of life, seeing that all the believing ones were raised at the first resurrection, and that the millennial saints are all alive, and therefore not in this judgment at all; for it is only the dead who are here judged? We can only say that we know of no scripture that enables us to speak decidedly on the point, and speculations are out of place when God is silent.

## THE "RIBBAND OF BLUE;"

OR, THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATION TO THE WORLD.

ISRAEL'S history is given to us for an ensample, and Israel's ceremonial law and its specific commands are for our admonition. They tell out to us in the sphere of everyday Christian and spiritual life what the mind of God is concerning us; and here also, as well as in the New Testament, God says, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

In Numbers xv. 37, 38, we read: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue."

Let us now consider—

I. *The Ordinance itself, and its significance.* The fringe was commanded to be put on the four corners of their outer vesture (Deut. xxii. 12), and was properly a tassel made to resemble a flower, from which, in Hebrew, it derives its name.\* This word for flower is used for what, in Exod. xxviii. 36, is translated "a plate," in the phrase, "a plate of pure gold" (which would have been better rendered "a flower of pure gold"), and on which was to be engraved with the engraving of a signet, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." This word "flower" again occurs in Isa. xl. 7, 8. There man's goodness is likened to a fading flower, as if in direct contrast to that which is in Christ. In Him, as represented in the golden flower on the mitre, all is unfading and unwithering. Man's goodness and righteousness is but as a morning cloud that vanishes before the

\* *Tzetzeth*, a "fringe," comes from *tzetz*, a "flower," which it was supposed to resemble.

sun of temptation and trial, or like the seed on stony ground, which withered up because it had no root. That which is in Christ is divine, and is as "the word of our God" that "shall stand for ever." This striking contrast between man and God—between all that is of the creature and all that is of the Creator, is specially to be noticed. The crown of pride of Israel's beauty and glory in the flesh, spoken of in this passage, is a fading flower that shall be trodden under foot; while the excellency seen in Christ, the Jehovah of hosts, is to His people "a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty."

This flower-like fringe was to be on the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and upon it was to be put a ribband of blue. Here again we are directed to the high priest's mitre; for "the ribband of blue" is, in Hebrew, identical with "the lace of blue" in Exod. xxviii. 37, to which "the plate of pure gold" was to be attached, that it might be fastened to the forefront of the mitre. Thus the *fringe* and the *ribband* both point to the words on the mitre, "Holiness to the Lord;" and holiness is the object of this command respecting their dress, as God says, "And it shall be unto you for a fringe that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye used to go a whoring: that ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and *be holy unto your God*. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God." (Num. xv. 39-41.)

Thus the fringe and the ribband of blue were to be a witness to each individual of the nation that they were God's people, whom He had brought out of Egypt "on eagles' wings." He also said to them, "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the

earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." (Exod. xix. 4-6.)

II. *Israel's position as a holy nation.* Israel's high calling as a holy nation brought them under a double claim of sanctity; *inwardly*, that is within the Israelite nation itself, both in personal and relative matters, because of the holiness of God; and *outwardly*, that is in relation to the Gentile nations outside. It is with this latter that we shall chiefly concern ourselves, but a few remarks on the former will be helpful. It is in Lev. xi. to xxii. that their *internal* typical and ceremonial holiness as a nation is dealt with. In these chapters the expressions relative to the holiness of their standing as the people of a holy God occur with remarkable frequency. It may be well to mention for ordinary readers of the Bible that the words *sanctify, make holy, hallow, &c.*, are various translations of words which all belong to one Hebrew root. Note also that the great day of atonement, which secured this typical standing before God, is commanded in Lev. xvi., and forms the centre chapter of the section. With this must be joined chapter xvii., as unfolding God's purpose in the use of the blood. "The life (or *soul*) of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your *souls*: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." (v. 11.) Thus the thought of holiness came to be attached to every article of food, and certain things were esteemed clean and others unclean—the one to be eaten, and the other to be refused. Divine holiness necessitated, too, the putting away of the leper from the camp, and the avoidance of all contact with other forms of "uncleanness." It was also brought to bear on matters of moral evil and iniquity, and in all things, great or small, the written law of God was their only guide; and for each precept of that law the

universal plea was, "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy." The result of all these requirements was, that Israel became in the purpose of God a peculiar people to Him, and unable to mix or associate with the nations around them; so that Peter, as a Jew, could say to Cornelius and his friends, "Ye know that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto, one of another nation." (Acts x. 28.) By the will of God Israel had been surrounded with a hedge of legal observances, over which there was no passing. God commanded that the stranger should be loved, and that those who came to sojourn among them, and submitted to their laws, were to be welcomed; but the entire divine training of the nation was designedly calculated in its intense exclusiveness to tolerate nothing, either great or small, but what was enjoined in the law of Moses. And it was to keep this isolated and separate position always before Israel's eyes and heart, that the fringe and blue ribband upon their garments was commanded.

And what was Israel's relation to the outside world? It is summed up in the words given to Balaam: "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. xxiii. 9); or as Moses says in his farewell address, "Israel shall dwell in safety alone." (Deut. xxxiii. 28.) The name of the Lord was a strong tower to Israel; and when walking in obedience they wanted nothing from the Gentiles. They dwelt where God had put them, and they meddled not in the politics of the surrounding nations. God's eye watched over them, God's hand protected them; and when going to battle they had to remember the battle was the Lord's; and faith learned that, whether with few or with many, they were equally safe, because God was their salvation.

When the wicked Ahaz, instead of looking to the living



God, began to look to other kings for help against his enemies, God said to the faithful, "Say ye not, A confederacy, to all to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread; and He shall be for a sanctuary." (Isa. viii. 12.) It is as if the prophet should say, "You sanctify God, and hallow His name by acting up to your hallowed relationship to Him, and then the God whom you have hallowed shall be to you a hallowed place of safety." Alas! how many now, like Israel of old, "refuse the waters of Shiloah that go softly," and rejoice in the arm of man and in the power of the flesh! The remedy for all our need and all our weakness can be found only in the Son born, the Prince of Peace, who has the government on His own shoulder. (Isa. vii. viii. ix.)

We once find the good king Josiah meddling with the politics of the surrounding nations, and going out against Pharaoh-necho to help the king of Babylon; yet going with a bad conscience, as is showed by his disguising himself when he went into the battle, and with him perished the last light in Israel. (2 Chron. xxxv. 20-23.)

Thus God's purpose with Israel was to separate them by national laws, institutions, and ceremonies, as well as by personal, family, and social restrictions, from all the nations of the earth. In everything, small and great, they were called to recognize the sacredness of their calling, that so God might preserve a holy seed through which He might accomplish His purposes in the earth. He planted them "wholly a right seed," as in a vineyard which He fenced round and planted with the choicest vines. (Isa. v. 2.) God had brought them out of Egypt with His mighty hand, and by His power had brought them into the land of promise, and under the severest penalties

required of them to maintain their national Nazariteship to Himself. Under Joshua they maintained this separation, but the book of Judges unfolds their repeated apostacies; for they mingled with the nations, and learnt their ways. The ribband of blue in the fringes of their garments was forgotten, and the lesson it was designed to teach them was lost sight of; their holy standing was ignored, and their place as God's separated ones forfeited.

III. *The lesson Israel's history is to teach us.* By their outward symbols of history and of ritual we are to learn our separation unto God. It is a lesson the Church is slow to learn and ever ready to forget. To this Paul refers in 2 Cor. vi. 16. Quoting the spirit of the Old Testament he says, "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." And in order to this the command is, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The wording of these quotations is very remarkable. It blends together sentences from the Pentateuch and from the prophets, as if drawing a united testimony from the whole of the Old Testament as to God's purpose in Israel. The apostle also expounds the deepest and fullest sense of these scriptures when he applies them to the spiritual relation of the Church of God, to whom he gives this solemn command, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." He here uses the very form of expression found in Num. xxv. 3: "Israel joined [yoked] himself to Baal-peor." This yoking is as unequal and as distinctly prohibited as was the yoking together of the ox and the ass (the clean and the unclean animal) under the law (see Deut. xxii. 10), and is protested against as follows: "For what *fellowship* hath

righteousness with unrighteousness? and what *communion* hath light with darkness? And what *concord* hath Christ with Belial? or what *part* hath he that believeth with an unbeliever? And what *agreement* hath the temple of God with idols?" Surely where there is no fellowship, or communion, or concord, or part, or agreement there must be separation and antagonism; for the absence of these forms absolute barriers, forbidding any harmony or cooperation. Such barriers can only be removed by the breaking down of God's own laws of difference, so as to make light and darkness harmonize in a dim twilight, which, like Laodicean lukewarmness, is neither one thing nor the other. All such twilight God abhors; for it has sufficient light to quiet conscience, and yet sufficient darkness to allow of men still walking in the obduracy of their own will. "God is light," and God is holy, and this precious truth is embodied in the colour of the ribband of blue. The Hebrew word for blue, the light blue of the heavens, is linked with words signifying perfection and completeness, and would raise the thoughts of the godly Jew from earth to heaven, from the creature to God. Israel was to be reminded by it that Jehovah alone was their God, and that He had brought them out of Egypt for the very purpose that He might be their God. In Egypt, in a sense, this was not possible; for owning God implied obedience to Him, and they could not serve two masters. Pharaoh was king in Egypt, and God brought them out that He might be their King, and that the shout of a king might be heard among them. To this redemption of them unto God the blue ribband bore witness. On this ground Peter stands in Acts iv. when he says to the rulers, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Christ was Lord, and His will alone was absolute.

H. G.

*(To be continued.)*

## GOD-TAUGHT ENMITY.

“I will put enmity between thee [O serpent] and the woman.”

GENESIS iii. 15.

It is a mighty and precious truth that “GOD IS LOVE,” and to make it known is a chief part of the grandeur and glory of God’s revelation of Himself. It is in Christ, and in His work on the cross, that we are taught this truth; and it was a vast and priceless discovery to our hearts when any of us first learned it: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us [or, in our case], because that God sent His only-begotten Son, that we might live through Him.” Indeed, as yet we have only begun to learn it. Eternity itself will be occupied with knowing more and more of this blessed truth—that “God is love.”

But there is also another and an opposite side to God’s character. God hates as well as loves, and hates too with the *same intensity* with which HE loves. If there is no searching of His love, it is equally true that none can tell, nor even think, the measure of His wrath. Moses, in Ps. xc. 11, says, “Who knoweth the power of thine anger?” The truth is, love and hatred *must* co-exist, whether it be sinful love and hatred in sinful man, or a holy and blessed hatred and love in the ever-blessed God. Love does itself beget hatred, and would not be a real love at all if it did not. The miser’s love of his gold makes him hate and shun the person who would take it from him; a parent’s love to a child inspires hatred of the person or thing that would injure the child. Hence, in the same book of God from which we learn His love of righteousness, holiness, and obedience, we learn also the hatred with which He hates iniquity and rebellion in any of His creatures: “The

righteous Lord *loveth* righteousness; but the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul *hateth*." (Ps. xi. 5, 7.)

Indeed, so self-evident is this truth that we may boldly say, no revelation of God that did not contain to the full these two opposite views of His character would or could be acknowledged as coming from Himself; nor would it command the reverence and obedience of men.

But this power of a holy hate as well as love is not in God only; He graciously implants it also in all those whom He blesses, and especially of course in His own children. His holy and elect angels have it, as we see by the conflict between Michael the archangel and Satan about the body of Moses (Jude 9), and a similar contention between the angels sent to praying Daniel and the resisting "prince [*i.e.* angelic prince] of the kingdom of Persia." (Dan. x.) And the same thing will take place on a far larger scale ere long, when there shall be war in heaven. Michael and his angels fight against the dragon, and the dragon fights, and his angels. (See Rev. xii. 7.)

We may therefore well expect this hatred of evil, and contending against it, to be still more taught us of God's own children; and so it is. In the case of the holy angels, we only know of it as a thing acted by them now and then. It is only here and there named of them in God's word; but in God's children it pertains to every age of time, and is, or should be, as incessant in every believer as it is innate.

This inborn, divine enmity of God's children against what is evil, and separation from it, may be traced in the Scripture as true of them in every sphere they occupy. The *great* object of it is Satan himself; but it is also felt in us towards all those who are led of the devil, and are doing his work. Witness such Scriptures as—

"The God of peace shall bruise *Satan* under YOUR FEET shortly." (Rom. xvi. 20.)

“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha,” said gentle but fiery Paul. (1 Cor. xvi. 22.)

“If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, *let him be accursed.*” (Gal. i. 9.)

“I would they were even cut off which trouble you.” (Gal. v. 12.)

“We wrestle not against flesh and blood [*i.e.* not against flesh and blood *only*], but against . . . wicked spirits [see margin] in heavenly places.” (Eph. vi. 12.)

“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision . . . enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction,” &c. (Phil. iii. 2, 18.)

“Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words” [*i.e.* “preachings”]. (2 Tim. iv. 14, 15.)

These Pauline passages (and many more such might be quoted) show that the New Testament breathes enmity and opposition to whatever hates God and rebels against God, quite as truly as does the Old Testament; but with this difference: In the earthly Israel of Old Testament God was leading on His people in bodily and bloodshedding fight against His and His people’s foes; but now in our New Testament day the fight is spiritual (see 2 Cor. x. 4), but it is not a whit less actual nor intense. It also brings with it open and visible *separation* from those who are fighting under another banner and in opposition to them; hence Paul says, “Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and the table of devils;” and again, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” (2 Cor. vi. 17.) Another difference may also be named. In the New Testament the bodily fight of the saints against the wicked is on one solemn day at the END of

this age—"the battle of Armageddon," when Christ and the riders on white horses, the risen saints, will visibly and bodily destroy the armies of the beast; whereas in Old Testament times it was a series of battles all through the age. Grant this difference, and then it may be scripturally said that the infliction of bodily punishment upon the wicked will as truly belong to the saints of this age as it did to Moses, or Samuel, or David, or any others of a former age; for it is written, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?"

As God's children, then, we are on His side in this world of rebellion against Him, and are therefore in holy antagonism against the wicked and their wickednesses. This view of ourselves and of our high calling is solemn, and should be very heart-searching. Rightly understood and received, it would direct us in all our thoughts and feelings about men and things around us, and would fashion us also in our outward lives and habits. To quote the psalmist's words, it would teach our "hands to war" and our "fingers to fight" in this holy warfare. Like Joshua, we should be on the watch, and should be saying to any armed or powerful one we met, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" The busy multitude of men and women around us would then in our view be divided into either friends or foes; all would be known to us either as friends of God or as His enemies, and on that account they would be reckoned by us as *our* enemies. (See Ps. cxxxix. 21.)

This was the warrior view of their calling to which Paul sought to raise his own children in the faith at Corinth; for the Corinthian saints had sunk sadly below it. So the apostle begins with reminding them that the "preaching of the cross" among them (a unique expression) had been that God by it might "DESTROY the wisdom of the wise," and "*bring to nothing* the understanding of the prudent."

Thus the cross had in it a *warfare* character *against* "the princes of this world that come to nought," in addition to its bringing salvation and blessing to such as believe.

So too with the Hebrews. They formerly "endured a great *fight* of afflictions," and some among them, as Stephen and others, had "*resisted* unto blood, striving against sin," but now it was otherwise. It was hard to Paul even to speak to them about a Melchizedek ministry; for they had become such as had need of milk, and could not be met with Melchizedek bread and wine in returning from the fight against Sodom's king, as Abraham was. But though we know but little of this God-taught enmity in these lax and feeble days, the power for it still dwells in us, and only needs to be strengthened and called forth into action by the Spirit of God and by obedience to the Scriptures.

Before closing it may be well to name the chief ways in which this holy enmity implanted in us has to work, and some Scriptures to illustrate each of them.

*First.*—It works in the *heart*. The town of Mansoul itself, as Bunyan puts it, becomes freed from Diabolus, and at enmity with him. See Gen. iii. 15: "I will put enmity between thee [O serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." A guilty agreement and oneness of mind had sprung up between the serpent and the woman; but God graciously declared HE would break it, and put enmity between them, even of heart and mind. This is what the mighty gospel does when once believed. Compare also Gal. v. 17, "The flesh lusteth *against* the Spirit, and the Spirit *against* the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot" (rather, that ye may not) "do the things that ye would." Here we have the same spirit of enmity and antagonism to sin maintained within the believer all his days, more or less, which was implanted at God's first mercy to him.



*Secondly.*—It works in the *family*; e.g. John ii. 4, “Jesus saith unto her, *Woman*, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come;” also Matt. xii. 48, “But HE answered . . . Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?” We here see in our blessed Master Himself this holy antagonism to the undue claim which natural affection in His mother and His brethren would make upon Him; and in Luke xii. 51 and xiv. 26 He teaches us, as His disciples, a similarly separate path in family life. The words “If any man come to me, and HATE NOT his father and mother . . . yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple,” must have sounded strangely in the ears of “an evil and adulterous generation;” and so they do now to most of even God’s own children; but they are the natural and necessary warnings of a God-taught enmity against an ensnaring world.

*Thirdly.*—This holy enmity is to be seen also in our *church* work. See Matt. xvi. 23, where Jesus “turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” This rebuke came quickly after the blessed words, “I will build my *church*”—that church in which the wood, hay, and stubble of the flesh, the world, and the devil must have no place allowed them. Compare also Jude 23 as to church work, “And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; HATING even the garment spotted with the flesh;” also 2 John 10, “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine” (of the Father and the Son), “*receive him not* into your house, neither bid him God-speed,” and 3 John 10, “Wherefore, if I come, *I will remember his*” (Diotrephes’) “deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words;” also Gal. i. 6–9, before quoted.

*Fourthly.*—This enmity is to mark our relation to the

*world.* Ps. cxxxix. 21 shows this: "Do not I *hate them*, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies." The ungodly are not here named as persecuting the psalmist; but still it is enough for him that they are God's enemies, and he therefore *counts* them to be *his* enemies. See also Zech. xi. 8, "Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul *loathed* them, and their soul also *abhorred* me." Compare John xv. 18 and 1 John iii. 13.

*Lastly.* This utter antagonism of the saints to the wicked, and separation from them, is seen in ETERNITY. The new earth and heavens and the lake of fire never approach each other. Luke xvi. 26 shows this. Abraham there, with Lazarus in his bosom, says to the rich man in hell, "Between us and you there is a *great gulf fixed*: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." True, the case differs from what it was when they were on earth together; for active hostility of the wicked against the righteous has ceased, but the essential difference of their moral nature remains. This continues as eternally as do their respective assignments of joy and of woe. On earth they were opposed to each other, and in eternity they never meet. Each knows the other's portion, but neither the righteous nor the wicked sees God to be unjust in having appointed one to the lake of fire and the other to an inheritance in His own new earth and heavens. "For the *wages* of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Oh for grace, then, not only to manifest the love of God, but, as those alive from the dead, to yield our "members as *weapons*" (see Greek, Rom. vi. 13) "of righteousness unto God!"

H. D.

## ELISHA.

*(Continued from page 119.)*

ELISHA now returns to Samaria, where remarkable events had recently occurred. There it was Ahab and Jezebel had basely murdered Naboth, the Jezreelite, by the hands of the elders of the city, ready accomplices in his crime. Elisha had most probably been present when Elijah was sent to denounce the guilt of the king and his wife, and to declare the punishments that awaited them with the extermination of their family. No prediction could be more unlikely; for Ahab had seventy sons around him to maintain his dynasty. His daughter also had intermarried with the heir of the royal house of Judah, by whom there was a large family. Yet the judgment of God was fulfilled upon both branches, by events equally unlikely.

Samaria had been besieged by Benhadad, and two marvellous victories over the Syrians had been granted to Ahab (see 1 Kings xx.), with three subsequent years of peace, previous to the time when Jehoshaphat stirred him up once more to his fall. Then, according to the word of the Lord, "the dogs licked his blood at the pool of Samaria," just two years previous to Elisha's arrival. It was then the seat of government.

We next find him in the wilderness of Edom. The army of Israel, led by its king Jehoram, was on its march to recover Moab, which had thrown off the yoke of Israel. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, had agreed to assist with his own troops, and with those of Edom, which had recently been again subdued to Judah. They do not attack from the north, the nearest side; but, passing through the country of Judah, make their onset round the south of

the Dead Sea, the land of Edom. Here the three armies are in danger of perishing for want of water. So great is the distress that Jehoshaphat is constrained to institute a search for some prophet of the Lord, through whom they may seek Him. Strange that this should not have been done before by this good king, especially as he had only four or five years previously narrowly escaped death in the battle where Ahab was slain, and had received a special warning from God not to ally himself with this ungodly man. Since then he had also experienced that marvellous deliverance recorded in 2 Chron. xx. It would have been easy for him to ask for guidance through Jahaziel, the prophet, who conveyed to him the divine commands on that occasion; from Jehu, the son of Hanani; or Eliezer (2 Chron. xx. 37), or through the high priest, the appointed channel for communicating with his God. But disobedience brings on declension. While persisting in doing what he well knew was forbidden he cannot seek the face of God. Not until dire alarm for his own safety, and that of his whole army, is upon him does he recover any right feeling.

Elisha, who happens to be there, probably as one of the levy of Israel, seems to have been up to this time unnoticed or even unknown to Jehoram and his people. But one of the king's servants notifies his presence, describing him as he that poured water on the hands of Elijah; that is, his menial servant. Jehoshaphat has heard of him. He knows more of the prophet than does Jehoram, Elisha's own king. The alarm is so great that royal dignity is for the time laid aside, and the three kings are found waiting upon him. Elisha's distress at the surrounding misery is so great, and so indignant is he at the conduct of Jehoram, for whose sake principally it would seem this overwhelming calamity has come upon

them all, that he utters the solemnizing oath, that, "as the Lord liveth," he would not take any notice of him but for the presence of Jehoshaphat. A minstrel is summoned. (Compare 1 Sam. x. 5.) Then the hand of the Lord comes upon him. He directs ditches to be dug in the dry bed of the winter stream, and announces by the word of the Lord that, without tempest or shower, the torrent bed shall be filled with water for the sustenance of the army and the cattle, and that, in addition, God will deliver their enemies into their hands.

This was a great demand upon faith. In the weakened and weary condition of the men, and in the face of the enemy, to employ themselves, not in constructing trenches for defence, but ditches to retain and convey water, when no rain had fallen or was likely to fall; and, moreover, to be told that the bed of the stream should be filled without rain, was an assertion which would cause many a misgiving in the minds of the labourers. But how wisely was it ordered of God. The very fact of their digging in preparation would necessarily dwell in their minds afterwards; and their digging in obedience to God, contrary to all reasonable expectation, would, when the relief came, encourage them thereafter to look to Him in any future emergency.

Wisely was it ordered also as respects their enemies. Had a storm occurred the Moabites would at once have assigned *that* as the cause of the profusion of the water they saw. They would neither have supposed it to be blood, nor would they have made the unguarded attack which led to their overthrow. As it was they rushed into the arms of their adversaries, and were so thoroughly defeated as to be unable afterwards to withstand the triumphant march of the conquerors throughout their territory. Thus was Elisha's fame as a prophet established in the minds of Judah, of Israel, and of Edom; the Lord

God accrediting His servant not by judgments, but by these acts of mercy, wisdom, and power.

The next scene of his life is not in the presence of majesty, or in the tumult of war, but in the matters of a *poor woman*, the widow of a prophet. Her distress is great; the creditor presses, and there is nothing to meet the demand. Her two sons must be carried off into slavery. In her anguish she comes to Elisha. His heart is moved at her misery, knowing also that her husband had been one of God's faithful servants.

He gives her directions: "Go and borrow vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full."

Who ever heard of a pot of oil filling more than one pot? And what possible motive could she give for borrowing from all around? Would it not seem in their eyes as folly approaching to madness, whether she gave her reason or withheld it? Happily for herself and her children she was governed by faith, not by natural reasonings. With what amazement must she and her sons have seen pot after pot fill up, and the supply still undiminished until the last was filled; and with what astonishment and joy would she hasten to communicate the result to Elisha; and with what delight she would hasten home again, and tell her children that her fears for them were now over, for that the oil was all for herself. No fear now of their being separated from her; enough was there to pay the debt and to maintain them afterwards. The neighbours, who were excluded during the filling, might now flock in, and behold how good it was to wait upon the prophet, who was the channel for obtaining such favours from his God. Many a one around would that night be thinking that it

would be better to return to their own God ; for when had their idols done them such good ? Thus was their God seeking to win back their hearts by showing His favour towards them.

R. N.

## THE BURIAL OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

WE often speak of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and in so doing we simply follow the example of Scripture, which so constantly links together these two great events. But while we thus think of them as furnishing the foundation of our hope (1 Thess. iv. 14), we do well also to remember that there was an interval between them ; and that part of the gospel as declared by the apostle Paul is, "*that He was buried.*" (1 Cor. xv. 4.)

Let us stand by the cross after the Lord has with a loud cry yielded up the spirit, and look upon Him as He hangs silent in death. Man has done his worst ; he can inflict no more suffering upon that blessed One ; but there is one additional indignity that to all appearance must follow. Permission is obtained from Pilate "that their legs" (*i.e.* the legs of Jesus and the two robbers) "might be broken, and that they might be taken away," and armed with this authority the soldiers go and do their brutal work upon the two malefactors. They approach the cross of Jesus. Shall the body of the Lord suffer the like indignity ? No. The word that was spoken concerning the *first* paschal lamb, and written with reference to the *last*, stands as the mighty barrier of heaven between the soldier's club and the sacred body of Him who, having given up the life that no man could take from Him, is found to be "dead already." "A bone of Him shall not be broken." The soldier was indeed permitted to pierce His side with the

spear, for Scripture had spoken of Him as the pierced One, and the stream of blood and water that flowed forth both proved the reality of His death, and intimated that all types of atonement and cleansing were therein fulfilled.

The bodies are now ready for burial, and the soldiers too are ready to hasten the work, and take them down, and cast them into a common grave, or at least bury them in the place appointed for malefactors. But the designs of men must again give place to the counsel of the Most High. The same scripture that predicted His being numbered with transgressors in His death, also foretold His separation from them in burial. "He made His grave [or, His grave was appointed] with the wicked, and [but He was] with the rich in His death." (Isa. liii.) There was also a type to be realized. The ashes of the burnt-offering were not to be carelessly thrown aside anywhere. Those ashes were the memorial of a sacrifice that had been offered up as a sweet-smelling savour, and a token of God's acceptance of it, and as such they were to be carried to a *clean* place. (Lev. vi. 11.) And so the body of Him who was the great Burnt-offering must rest in a clean place; that body which could not see corruption must not be placed in a tomb which the corruption of death had tainted; that flesh must "rest" in a spot that is worthy of it, in so far at least as such a spot can be found in a sin-stained earth.

But how shall this be accomplished? Shall Michael be sent to interpose and rescue that body from the hands of men, as he rescued the body of Moses from the hand of Satan? No. The body of Moses was thus honoured; but a greater honour must be put upon the body of the Lord. His burial must be by the hands of men, attested even by His foes, because the glory of resurrection is yet to justify all His claims, and seal His dying testimony that His work was "finished."



But who of all the friends and indebted ones of Jesus can interpose to take charge of His body? The only one of His disciples whose courage keeps him near the cross is the beloved disciple; but much as he and those loving women might desire possession of that precious body, they cannot obtain it. Yet God has *His own way* of fulfilling *His own counsel*, and therefore at the moment when all His avowed followers are helpless, a secret disciple is brought forth to fulfil the great prediction quoted above, respecting the period between death and resurrection.

To Peter, the foremost of the twelve, who, in a moment of natural self-complacency, had said, "Lo we have left all and have followed thee," the Lord replied, "There are *first* which shall be *last*, and *last* which shall be *first*." What an illustration of that word we have in Peter and Joseph of Arimathea. The latter up to this time had not avowed himself a disciple of Jesus for *fear of the Jews*; now he stands boldly forth and claims His body, that he may do it honour. In the council he had not consented to their decision and act, and now he goes further; he seeks an interview with Pilate, and begs the body of Jesus. He does not send in a secret petition, and then in some quiet way order his servants to attend to the matter. This would have been *prudent*, but prudence gives way before the thoughts that now fill that good man's heart. He goes in *boldly* to Pilate, and then with his own hands, assisted by Nicodemus, perhaps too by John and the loving women, he lays the body in his own new tomb. It is beautiful to see Joseph thus joined by Nicodemus, who was perhaps encouraged by the boldness of his fellow-counsellor. This point furnishes an illustration of the word, "Draw me, we will run after thee." (Song i.)

We are so accustomed to the history of these events as recorded in the gospels, that we very little realize what

a bold and noble act this was. Here were two members of the highest court of the nation, taking charge of the body of one who had been condemned by that very court as a malefactor, and bestowing upon it every token of honour. At a time too when every Jew shrank from contact with anything that would render him ceremonially unclean, they did not hesitate to handle the precious body of Christ, though it should defile them for the greatest Sabbath of the year. Love and reverence for Him whom in His life they had feared to confess, now raised them above all thought either of ceremonial defilement or the wrath of the Sanhedrim. The love and devotion of Nicodemus showed itself in a worthy offering. He "brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight." Myrrh was a precious and expensive spice, deemed worthy of being offered to a king (Matt. ii.), and of the aloe it is said the best samples were worth their weight in gold. But love cannot be limited by bare necessity, and if such a quantity seems too large to have been absolutely enclosed in the linen that was wound round the sacred body of the Lord, we may conclude that the body was deposited in a bed of spices, like the kings of former days. (See 2 Chron. xvi. 14.)

But even this costly tribute was not enough for the women who "followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how His body was laid." Their love too must find its expression, and though it was in a service that would never be needed, we may be sure it was one that will not be overlooked. They prepared "spices and ointments" before they could rest on "the Sabbath-day according to the commandment." Truly "He was with the rich in His death, because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth."

Thus does God fulfil His own word, written ages

before, in a way so simple and natural that we are apt to overlook it, and yet in a manner far above natural thoughts and expectations. And in doing so He gives, not an outward display of His glory and majesty, by sending angels from His presence to accomplish His will, and frustrate the designs of men, but a Divine proof of the *sure* though *secret* overruling of His providence. This should encourage our faith in Himself as one who is able, in the most unlikely manner, and by most unthought-of means, to fulfil every word He has uttered.

May we not also find in all this an intimation of the *attracting* and *separating* and *emboldening* power of the cross of our Lord Jesus—that power which was soon to be made manifest on a larger scale by means of the proclamation to Israel, and then to the world, that that same Jesus whom they crucified, God had raised from the dead, and made both Lord and Christ? Thus in larger and also in smaller ways we see our Lord's own word fulfilled: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." May this attractive power of the cross be better known by us, and more truly manifested in our lives! W. H. B.

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#### NOTES AND REPLIES.

*Should Christians vote for a Member of Parliament?*

To do so is to *take part* in Cæsar's government, instead of simply being, like our Master, *subject to it*; for each person who uses his electoral privilege and votes, sends some one to Parliament to *represent him* in that assembly; the voter therefore does, through his representative, share Cæsar's power. But while we can thank God for the rule of this land, under which such liberty is at present granted to us, we must remember whither things are tending, as indicated by God's word, and that the Cæsar power is "the fourth kingdom" or "fourth beast" power of Dan. vii.; for in God's visions this "fourth kingdom" is the last of Gentile powers, and continues till Christ comes in His kingdom

to destroy it. However modified now, by God's goodness, we have to remember that it is the power that crucified our Master eighteen hundred years ago, and is ere long to take its final shape of "ten horns," or "ten kings," among which is to rise up "the little horn" (called "the antichrist," 1 John ii.), whose "great words" will be so blasphemous as to cause the beast to be "destroyed and given to the burning flame." How then can Christians fitly take any part whatever in Cæsar's government? But are we not disobeying "the powers that be," and therefore not subject to them, if we do not vote? Certainly not; for voting is offered in this country as a *privilege*, and not issued as a command. But even if Cæsar did *demand* of us to vote we still must abstain, because of Christ's higher command, "Follow thou Me," and we have no *example* of His for any such action. We can only obey Cæsar as far as obeying him agrees with obeying Jesus, our Lord. Thus only can we follow out our Master's word, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's."—H. D.

*Is a general application of the principle in Rom. xiv. 4 to be made?*

THIS verse is often applied beyond its legitimate sphere. The limit of its application seems to be, that when the Master has not spoken authoritatively the servant has no right to do so. Paul elsewhere teaches that those who are within (*i.e.* are fellow-servants) we are called on to judge by the written word in all for which we have a "Thus saith the Lord;" for all else we have to wait for the judgment-seat of Christ. That tribunal sounds forth to us even now the solemn words, "No man liveth to himself," *i.e.* not for personal ends or objects, but we are to be as servants—as those who own "We are the Lord's." This once realized would give great unity in life, and great fellowship in service. Christ is Master, and self is nowhere.

*What is the meaning of the kingdom being "within," in Luke xvii. 21?*

THE *within* (*εἰς*, besides only Matt. xxiii. 26, within the cup) here points to the great fundamental truth that the kingdom must come, "not with outward show," but inwardly to the individual soul before ever the individual can enter into the glories of the kingdom. Each must receive the kingdom of God as a little child, in its controlling spiritual power, before he can enter into it, and be made partaker of its coming manifestation. It is well to note that it is to the Pharisees the verse is spoken, who in their religious thoughts were always occupied with the outward to the exclusion of the inward. In verse 22, however, the Lord addresses His disciples, and then at once leads their minds on to the kingdom in manifestation.

## MOSES' THREE PETITIONS.

Notes of an Address given at Barnstaple June 8th, 1864, by Mr. SOLTAU.

EXODUS xxxiii. 13-19.

I HAVE read this passage in Exodus because it is a very remarkable one in the word of God, a chapter in which all the order and arrangements of God are set aside. Moses had been forty years in Egypt under Egyptian training, and then forty years in the desert under training of another kind. He had brought out the children of Israel from Egypt, and had now gone up into the mount to receive the two tables of the testimony. And what did he find when he came down into the midst of the camp of God's people, who under God's guidance had been brought out of Egypt? He found a calf of gold; yet not a casting off the name of the Lord, but a false worship. He found a worship of a mixed character. He did not find Baal there, nor Ashtaroth, nor the gods of the Sidonians—that was an after step of Israel—but he found a golden calf *and* a feast of Jehovah!

Beloved, this is what has been going on for centuries in this world with the people of God. This is the Christianity of the nations; it is what England's religion is; it is the religion of the Church of Rome, and of the Greek Church—all of it is that same mixed religion; not Christ set aside altogether, but it is Christ and the world, Christ and a god of gold, Christ and respectability, God and human accomplishments and intellect. But, depend upon it, they will never go together. Wherever and whenever you have, according to the world's judgment, Christ made respectable, depend upon it it is time to go outside the camp.

And what was Moses to do under such circumstances? His own spiritual discernment told him what he ought to do. "He took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp." He took the meeting-place with God, and pitched it in the leper's place; viz., outside the camp. He pitched it in the place where the man with an unclean issue would be found—in an *unrespectable* place, in an unclean place.

Now, beloved brethren and sisters, are we content to follow? Are we content to go outside the camp, bearing His reproach? Are we ready to go forth unto Him without the camp, and not stay inside? There is no reproach of Christ for you inside the camp. God is now testing believers right and left; and if you will be anything respectable, you will lose the vast blessing in this present time of bearing His reproach. Let me ask, Do we esteem reproach for Christ's sake as a prize? or are we seeking to be respectable Christians, with respectable buildings, and respectable teachers? If so, remember what Moses did.

In verse 11 you see Joshua, a young man, continued in the tabernacle. There is instruction for the young here. I had a letter from our brother J. L. Harris, of Plymstock, in reference to this meeting, and I have no doubt he is praying for us. He said in it: "Above all things remember the young, and also remember the old." Now why did Joshua, "the young man," remain in the tabernacle? Because he could not trust himself in the camp. He said: "I at all events must be in the safe place; I must abide in the tabernacle." Moses, who had known more of God, and who had had a longer experience, could go back with God's word, and in God's service, without defiling his feet; but Joshua the young man had wisdom from God to know his weakness, and he

would not trust himself near a golden calf. He dreaded a worldly religion, because it joined together a sitting down to eat and a rising up to play. Now perhaps he might have trusted himself if it had been a golden calf and only a "feast to Jehovah;" but it was the rising up to play afterward that showed him its true character.

It was only a day or two ago that I heard from a lady that her son was confirmed by the Archbishop of Canterbury before going to the Epsom races and the theatre. That was what Joshua was afraid of, and so he would trust himself with nobody but God.

Oh, if we trust ourselves with any but God we shall fail! The master-spirit of this world will overcome us, before whom we shall be but pigmies. Satan will twist us around his finger like a straw unless we are with God. That is what Joshua felt.

I speak now to beloved young believers present. Oh, do not go near a worldly religion, or you will get into worldly ways! You may go to hear the best sermon, and the most eloquent preacher; but the end will be worldly ways, because God is outside the camp. There may be good men in it; but I defy any believer to go on with God in these things, for they lead to a rising up to play. Let us ask ourselves, How much do we know of truly going outside the camp? The time is come for realities. Have we got a good measure of the reproach of Christ? I believe that in proportion as we are unworthy in the world's esteem, we have the reproach of Christ; and in proportion as they think us worthy, so do we lose it. If you unite with the world in any way, you will lose reproach for Christ's sake. The world will then give you some credit, some applause; but remember what the Lord Jesus said: "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

Now what were Moses' petitions before that tabernacle? I find that he first bore on his heart these poor worldly worshippers as wanderers from God. But besides he made three blessed petitions, which I would wish to pray every day of my life—First, "Show me thy way;" second, "Let thy presence go with us;" third, "I beseech thee show me thy glory." These are three remarkable petitions. First, God's path, God's way. This probably meant the pathway for Israel through the wilderness; but what is it for us? The cross is God's way now. Show me the cross; and if I see the cross, I know where God's way is. Show me where a crucified Christ is, and that is God's path. Show me where I cannot carry that cross, and that is not God's path for me. Show me where I am obliged to conceal the cross, and I may be sure it is not God's way.

The order, too, of these petitions is all-important. Before you ask for God's presence take care that you are in God's way. We often ask for God's presence and guidance, but would that we made it our first concern to be close by the side of God's crucified Son, shut out from the world's revelry, the world's music and delights! Dear friends, are we in the pathway of the groans of Christ, where we hear the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Are we where we can find refreshment from the precious blood of Christ? or are we trying to keep that way only on certain occasions? Moses did not say, "Show me thy occasional way." And ought *we* to be separated from God at any step of our way? Does not Christ say, "Follow?" and if we are to follow, does He not go before? Beloved friends, if I am in God's way I shall find out God's name which He here promises to proclaim. I can't know the *name* of my God but by the cross; nor shall I know the *name* of my God in my daily matters, in my home, or in my heart, unless I have God's *way*



in my heart. Show me *thy way* that I may know thy *name!*

Moses' next request is for the *presence* of God. That is sure to follow. If we are in God's way we shall be sure of His presence, and what is our life worth without it? I ask you, dear fellow-believers, What is your life worth without the presence of God? I would rather a thousand times over be at rest than be here without the presence of God. God will not let us be happy without it. You and I might turn our thoughts to the world and its fascinations, but nothing but sorrow would come of it. But in our moments of sorrow, have we not known how the presence of our God has made us glad? And if we lose it now, we shall suffer loss in the day of Christ's coming.

As you go on, young believer, toil and sorrow will multiply before you; and if you have not the presence of God you will try to find happiness in what the world offers—the devil's bait will be held out to you; but don't accept it. It is no use making up accounts with the ear closed against God and His word. The time will come when the poor naked soul, even of God's child, will be found out. Then, if we want the presence of God in sorrow, we must be acquainted with God and His ways while we have strength and hearts free of care. Oh, young believer, don't be satisfied with any day of your life if you pass that day without the presence of God! Consider it your great loss if you have not been consciously with God. If you have gone into circumstances, even though accidentally, without God, and have not been unhappy *in* them, then be unhappy *after* them, and confess it to God.

And then mark the third request, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory." Moses gets bolder and bolder; he makes petition upon petition. So it will be with us; we shall get bolder as we know more of God. He says, "*I beseech*

thee shew me thy glory." He adds the word, "I beseech;" he does not say it is necessary. It was necessary to have God's presence; but now he says, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." And oh, beloved, what is God's glory? "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." God's goodness is God's glory. And what will the glory be by-and-by? It will be the same—the goodness of God. What will the coming of Jesus be by-and-by? It will be GRACE brought unto us. What will heaven be but the expansion of the cross! What will it be to us but the knowing more of the goodness of God as there displayed! What will every feature of the glory be, the pleasure of it, the joy of it, but something that comes from that marvellous proof of God's eternal love—of God's power and holiness—the cross of His beloved Son! Yes, if you wish to wait for the coming of the Lord, you must look at the cross of Jesus, and that will make you long for His coming.

"I beseech thee, shew me thy glory," is in our New Testament language, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." His coming will be grace revealed. We shall see Him as He is. We shall know Him by the tokens of His deep eternal love, and then be ever drinking it from His hands, and feet, and side. Do you think that anyone will need to tell us who Jesus is, to show us Jesus? Oh, no! We shall know Him by the tokens of the cross. He knew us on the cross; His knowledge of us there was in all our deep sins. He became acquainted with us under the wrath and bruising of God. He knew us there as He never knew us from eternity; He was there knowing us experimentally, if I may so speak. He knew us in our ruin, and God made Him feel what we were.

On the other hand, we know Christ at His cross. That is the place where we become acquainted with His heart,

and where we shall never cease to know Him; and because we have known Him there, we shall know Him in the glory.

Oh, may these three petitions be in our hearts—*God's way, God's presence, His coming glory!* And may God fill us with answers, and cause us to go out without the camp bearing Christ's reproach, looking for that glorious city to which He will bring us, and not to that city only, but to Himself, for He will first receive us unto Himself!

“WHERE IS THE GUEST-CHAMBER?”

LUKE xxii. 11.

“WHERE is My guest-chamber?”

“Nay—wherefore, Lord,  
Shouldst Thou ask *me*? Doth not all Heaven afford  
A banquet-place, where Thou, as seemeth best,  
Canst bid to Thy great feast each blessed guest,  
Thou who art Lord most holy?”

“I who am God most holy,  
Yet am I meek and lowly;  
Tho' Heaven is Mine, I seek a humbler rest  
To make My guest-chamber.”

“Nay, Lord, indeed,  
Since Thou art lowly, Earth has one at need.  
With folded doors, around Thy Table meet  
Thine own who love Thee. Let Thy heavenly feet  
Pause at that feast and bless it.”

“Yea, I pause there to bless it,  
Yet—can thy heart not guess it?  
Tho' Heaven and Earth are Mine, I still entreat  
Another guest-chamber!”

“Pass in, dear Lord,  
Since my poor heart must e'en the feast afford.  
Oh, with Thy Presence make it pure and sweet!  
That while it feeds on Thee, it may grow meet  
To be Thy guest-chamber.”

## THE "RIBBAND OF BLUE;"

OR, THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATION TO THE WORLD.

*(Concluded from page 127.)*

ON this subject we have already considered—

1st. The ordinance itself (as given in Num. xv. 37, 38) and its significance.

2nd. Israel's position as a holy nation ; and

3rd. The lesson Israel's history is to teach us.

Let us now learn by it—

IV. *The Christian's path in the world.* The true path of the Christian here can be no other than that of his Master, whom he is called to follow ; and just in proportion as it is anything else he forfeits his claim to be a follower of Christ. Our blessed Lord came here as the heavenly Stranger, who lived for God, and worked for God, whether toiling in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth till He was thirty years of age, or after that in His mighty ministry of those few years that ended in Calvary and the grave. His ever-recurring utterance regarding Himself was, "I am from above;" and when He prays for His disciples He says, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." (John xvii. 18.) But He takes them out of the world first, saying, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (v. 16.) He speaks prospectively in the power of His own resurrection, as if He had already taken them into heaven ; just as Paul tells the Ephesians they are quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. From these heavenly places He sends His disciples back into the world again, as the three apostles were

brought down from the mount of Transfiguration. Hence Peter writes to his fellow-believers as "strangers and pilgrims," or rather, *sojourners* and *foreigners*—sojourners, that is, those away from home (*παροικοι*, not simply strangers), and foreigners, or those dwelling on an alien soil (*παρεπιδημοι*, from a verb signifying to dwell in a foreign country). Both these words occur in Gen. xxiii. 4, when the pilgrim Abraham—the true father of the faithful—stood up in the presence of the inhabitants of the land, and seeking to buy a burying-place, told them that he was among them a sojourner and a foreigner. As such he needed, even in the land of promise, only a tent, an altar, and a grave. Paul told the Philippians (chap. iii. 20) that their conversation (or rather citizenship) was in heaven, from whence they were expecting the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But a foreigner may engage in all lawful occupations in the country where he sojourns, as the carpenter's shop of Nazareth bears witness. The command given to the Thessalonians to work with their hands shows the same thing, and that too in whatever calling they might be called, so far as they could abide therein with God. A foreigner has also to be subject to all lawful ordinances of the country where he may happen to be; hence Peter says to those to whom he writes as strangers and pilgrims, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." (1 Peter ii. 13.) And in this he is but remembering his Master's word, "Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." In the matter of the Christian's relation to the world there is no real difficulty; nor in our being taken out of the world by the redeeming power of the cross of Christ, and being at the same time required of God to carry on our earthly occupations as His servants to His glory. In the

word of God there is no confusion between these two things, and to the honest heart there will be no ambiguity. What is true of the servant in his relation to his earthly master, is also true of the believer in reference to every relation in life. He is man's servant, but he is God's free man, and as such should be faithful to the conditions of life in which the providence of God has placed him, whether as a master or a servant, whether in his merchandize or in his handicraft—in all he should be the servant of God, and therefore in all he should make it a point of honour to please Him well, and in every avocation to be as efficient and as heavenly-minded as possible. It is thus the follower of Christ brings the ribband of heavenly blue into his earthly life, and stamps a divine and heavenly character on all he does. Thus he demonstrates to all that he is one who walks in the presence of God, is redeemed by God, and therefore glorifies God in his body, which he regards as sacred to the indwelling of the Holy Ghost and as His temple. (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.)

V. *Our relation to the world's politics.* This will not be a difficult point to anyone who has gone along with all that has been already said. Only admit clearly and absolutely that we are foreigners in any country where we may dwell, because heaven above is our fatherland, and read the following verses in Heb. xi. as our own, and there can be no uncertainty as to our relation to the world's politics. Of Abraham and the patriarchs we read: they "confessed that they were *strangers*" (ξένοι) "and pilgrims" (παρεπίδημοι, *foreigners*, the same word as in 1 Peter ii. 11) "on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country" (or rather, *their fatherland*, πατρίδα). "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned; but now they desire a better

country" (fatherland) "that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." (Heb. xi. 13-16.)

The Scripture draws living contrasts, and the Spirit of God points to the pictures thus supplied, and bids us make from them our own deductions. Contrast for a moment Abraham on the mountain, with his altar and tent, and Lot pitching his tent toward Sodom, then forsaking his tent for a house in Sodom, and then, as an elder of the city, sitting in the gate of Sodom. Contrast also the moral condition of the two men, and compare their end and that of their posterity. See Israel, the people of God, on the one hand, and the Moabites and Ammonites, Lot's descendants, the very types of spiritual fornicators, on the other; and how do we read the lesson, and what is its warning to us? And this, albeit Lot was "righteous Lot," "who vexed his righteous soul from day to day." Truly *he* did it, and not God; he vexed himself, for God never sent him there. To his own family he was as one that mocked; and lingering himself on the very verge of destruction, he in the end brought out none but his two daughters, who brought Sodom out with them; and to the Sodomites he appeared as a self-constituted judge, to whom they refused to listen. Abraham's power on Sodom's behalf was with God, and Lot's influence for good in Sodom was nowhere.

Delusive indeed are the endeavours which children of God often make to impart a Christian character to this world's politics. God brings the influence of Christian truth to bear on the world's affairs for man's benefit, and by that same Christian truth will condemn the world's final apostacy under the antichrist. There can be no real Christian character but what is of God, and nothing is of God that violates the principles of His word, and does not follow in the footsteps of His blessed Son. We

need to live Abrahamic lives of faith and strangership, remembering every step we tread that the Canaanite dwells in the land now, and that we shall have our inheritance when He comes who is King of kings, but not till then.

We are living in a doomed world, and the judgments on the antediluvian world, and on the cities of the plain, are given us as types of what this world has to pass through. To those to whom prophecy is not a sealed book, but "a light that shineth in a dark place" (better, in a dark and dirty place, *εν αυχμηρω τοπω*), we would commend this momentous subject. The book of Revelation has been written that we might read and understand our real relation to this Babel world which crucified Christ. In it the beasts of Daniel have ruled, and will rule till the advent of the Son of God. Till then the potentates of the earth are but horns on the dragon's head, and the dragon is that old serpent called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world, and who finally gives his throne and his power to the beast, the eighth head, "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." (2 Thess. ii. 8; see also Rev. xii., xiii., and xvii.)

It is not to be inferred from this that God disowns the governments of earth. They are the appointment of God, and the governor, whether a cruel Nero or a gentle Antonine, holds the sword from God, and is God's minister in the use of it, and responsible to Him for its exercise. Yet Satan is the recognized "prince of this world" still, whose actions God *overrules* as He does those of all men, good or bad, to the accomplishment of His own ends; but in all this neither the free agency of Satan, nor of man, is set aside.

Here the difficulty of God's sovereignty and the free-will of the creature meets us, and we shall not be in a



position to solve it till in another world we know as we are known. But it is a difficulty with which we are brought face to face in every turn of human affairs. What Satan does God allows, and we owe subjection to all the permissions of God, seeing His appointments in them, even though Satan be the active agent. Hence in Paul's day subjection was commanded to the vile and wicked Nero as much as to any other.

To Christians seeking political power, or the prosperity of a political party, we would earnestly recall Jotham's parable. The trees went to select a king, but neither the vine, the fig tree, nor the olive would consent to sacrifice the *fatness* of the oil, the *sweetness* of the fruit, or the *joy* of the wine. The bramble has none of these to lose, and may readily undertake the charge, and call on the trees to trust in his shadow.

The Christian can never enter into the strife of earth's politics without some sacrifice of the *fatness* of his spiritual communion with God, or the *sweetness* of his fruitful service to his Master, or the *joy* which the new wine of the kingdom gives. And if but a little, or any, or all of these be lost, no earthly gain of any kind can compensate for it. One of our own time has well said, that five minutes' real communion with God is worth more than all the treasure in the Bank of England.

May these things be pondered, the fringe of our garment be understood, and the brightness of the ribband of blue remain untarnished by the strife and contentions of political life. The higher our aim is, and the closer our fellowship with God, the less time have any of us to spare, to say nothing of the unhallowing effect of the blood that boils in these hearts of ours if we only give it an occasion.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

H. G.

## ELISHA.

*(Continued from page 139.)*

## THE SHUNAMITE.

ELISHA is next seen at Shunem. Here dwelt a person of large landed property. She eagerly showed him hospitality, and, with her husband's concurrence, prepared for him an upper chamber where he might rest whenever he passed that way, which he frequently did. Surmising that there might be a secret motive for this kindness, he sends for her, and enquires whether she has any request to prefer to the king or the commander of the army which he could further. By this we learn incidentally that Elisha was now a man of some importance, as one must needs be who had saved the lives of the king and all his army, and who had also been the honoured means of gaining the victory for them. Gehazi also is here first seen as the servant of Elisha, who had himself filled a similar position towards Elijah. Happy for Gehazi if he had been of a kindred spirit.

The answer of the Shunamite is, "I dwell among mine own people." She is wealthy; has friends and servants around her, has no ambitious object, nor need of any soldiers to defend the household. With this she retires.

On consultation with Gehazi, Elisha learns that she has no child, and that her husband is old. The motive long concealed is now apparent; for offspring was joy to godly ones in Israel who had the coming birth of Messiah in their view. She is again summoned, comes submissively, and stands at his door with matronly dignity and female modesty. He is then empowered to announce that she shall live, and embrace a son in due season from that period. She is a woman of few words. The hidden chord of her heart is now deeply stirred. Her emotion shows

itself in the exclamation, "Nay, my lord; do not lie unto thy servant." From the reply it is not difficult to discern that it was indeed a son she had been longing for; that she had given up the hope of obtaining such a blessing; and that now, when suddenly the prospect is opened to her, and the promise given, she can scarcely believe in the fulfilment; yet with this hesitancy there is also glad acceptance. She does not reject, but earnestly desires its accomplishment. One is here reminded of the way in which the promise of a son was received by Abraham and by Sarah. Both laughed. The laughter in each was that of incredulity, and also that of joy. The impossibility, according to nature, brought out the first emotion; the promise of the Almighty God, overcoming the unbelief, occasioned the joy. Their gracious God, in naming the child Isaac (*i.e.* Laughter), perpetuates to them the memory of the two emotions they had displayed, besides the still deeper significance of His purposes of love in regard to the heirs of promise, as seen in Gal. iv. Elisha's word came to pass, and the child was born.

Some years afterwards, when the child is grown and able to go out to his father to the reapers, he is affected as by a sunstroke; is carried home to his mother; sits on her knees till noon, and dies. Without giving herself up to grief, or wasting time with the family in unavailing sorrow, or in consultation with physicians for embalming, she calmly and silently carries the body of her loved one to the upper chamber, lays it upon the prophet's bed, closes the door, and there leaves it. Had she not with a firm composure of spirit done this quietly and quickly, there would probably have been no means of carrying out her further purpose.

Having obtained from her surprised husband the ass to go to the man of God, and the lad to drive it, she gives

but one direction; it is to slack no speed unless she bids him, which she is not likely to do. Setting out on this journey from Shunem to Carmel, seemingly about twenty-five miles, she heeds not fatigue; her soul was occupied with one idea, that of reaching the man of God as speedily as possible. She evades the enquiry of Elisha's servant, who asks whether there is peace with her, with her husband, and with the child, by replying, "Peace." Her heart is too full and her business too urgent to say more. Catching Elisha by the feet, she can only give vent to her feelings by saying, "Did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me'?" It was true she had not asked, though the desire was deeply imbedded in her bosom. The favour had been spontaneously granted; and her thought is that, having been thus bestowed, the short enjoyment she has had of her son is scarcely adequate to a fulfilment of the promise. She can add no more.

Elisha, who is quite unaware of what has occurred, suspecting from her intense emotion that it must relate to the child, sends Gehazi with his staff, the symbol of power, doubtless, as in the case of Moses; but it has no effect. The bereaved mother has no confidence either in Gehazi or in the staff. From the man of God she had received the treasure, and from him alone she looks for its restoration. "As the Lord liveth I will not leave thee," whether he remains on Carmel or not. What can he do but rise and follow her over the long distance she has already travelled? Now he perceives the cause of her distress. The child is dead!

To restore life is altogether beyond the commission entrusted to the prophet. Elisha knows this, and prays to the Lord, who alone is able to restore. Moreover he has, as it were, to impart his own life to the dead one; his mouth touches the little mouth, his eyes are placed over

the closed eyelids, and his hands clasp those of the child. What follows? The flesh becomes warm. He goes down, walks about in the house, and again visits the child, repeating seven times the same process. The mother and the family would perceive the anxiety of the prophet, and his inability to accomplish what he desired. At last, when the eyes are opened, he is able to call out for the mother, and say to her, "Take up thy son." Full of joy, she falls at his feet, then takes up her living boy, and retires.

Throughout the narrative one feature is conspicuous. All the woman's confidence is in Elisha, who has to make manifest his helplessness, save as obtaining help from his God. The mother has to learn this lesson. The arm of flesh is powerless unless energised by the power of Jehovah.

While all Scripture is given for our instruction, have we in our day learnt the lesson this passage inculcates? When afflicted with disease, do we not, as a matter of course, apply to the physician in whom we have most confidence, placing ourselves confidingly in his hands, forgetting too often that in God alone is the power of prolonging life, and that if he takes away our breath we die, and return to the dust? And if the physician be a man of God, our confidence in him is greatly enhanced. If the illness increases, and the soul be troubled, some man of God, or one who is supposed to be so, is sought out. To him the heart is opened, and the distress made known. All that he can properly do is to relate the promises of God, and point to the Lamb of God as the means provided by Him for the salvation of the sinner. Is the servant more to be confided in than the Master? Is he more accessible? more gracious? Has he the power to give pardon and eternal life? The Lord Jesus alone has the power. He delegates it to no one. "Come unto ME, and be ye saved," is the word of His grace. R. N.

## LOVE BETTER THAN WINE.

THERE are many whose thoughts one rightly seeks to divert from the consideration of their own love to Christ to that of Christ's love to them. Such are the mourners who dwell upon their sins rather than on the Sin-bearer; on their ruin rather than on their Saviour; on their failure rather than on their great High Priest. They forget, or never knew, that the love which is the fruit of the Spirit is not for their own gathering, but for that of their heavenly Father. Hence they are always lamenting the deficiency instead of abiding in Christ, through whom alone deficiency can give place to fulness. Let us continue to exhort all who confess their lack of love to look away from self to God; for "we love Him because He first loved us."

But are there not many in the present day in whom we might almost wish to see a little of that "morbidness" which is so painfully exhibited in the class just referred to? May it not be that zeal, and knowledge, and sound principles may co-exist with a coldness toward Christ which self-sufficiency will not detect? May it not be well for some of us who complacently claim to deserve Ephesian commendation (Rev. ii. 2, 3), to consider whether the startling words in that short epistle, "Thou hast left thy first love," are not equally applicable to us? Evidently there may be everything apparently to commend as to service—"works, labour, patience;" and as to soundness of doctrine—"thou canst not bear them which are evil." And yet there may be in the faithful discernment of the Lord that which will ensure, unless repented of, the

removal of the candlestick from its place. This threat is actually executed when the Church reaches in its seven-stage decline the Laodicean condition, a condition which says, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Blind as to its true state, it imagines itself to possess still the ancient Ephesian excellence; whereas the first love has been left, and this, unjudged, has of necessity resulted in that lukewarmness which induces complete indifference to Christ, while His name is still professed.

Let him then who claims to have Ephesus zeal ask himself in all faithfulness the question: "Have I, or have I not, left my first love?" The Lord Jesus desires our love. His own He loves unto the end, and He values a return of love to Him far more than that external correctness which has its value, but the value of which will be largely lessened if we put it in its wrong place. If the Corinthians, with all their "gift" (chap. i. 7), failed to edify one another because of their blindness to the "more excellent way," much more shall we fail to please the Lord if love be not the mainspring of our aim to obey. (John xiv. 24.)

If we ask, How can we increase in this much-to-be-desired love? let us consider the picture before us in Luke vii. 36-50. Whence comes Simon's want of hospitality to his guest? From his little love. Whence the woman's disregard of every one but the Lord? of every thing but that which concerned Him? She loved much. Whence this much love? She was much forgiven. If, then, we keep in view those lessons as to self and Christ, which are continually brought to our recollection at His table, surely we shall, like this woman, have a deep consciousness of sinfulness, and then shall we love much.

This much love will bring its own reward in the

brightening of our hope; for it is to those that love Him that the crown of life will be given (James i. 12), and those who love Him whom they have not seen, greatly rejoice in the salvation ready to be revealed. (1 Peter i. 5-8.)

Obedience to the Lord, communion with Him and with the Father, and love to the brethren, will all flow from this much love. (See John xiv. 23; 1 John v. 1.) In other words, a happy life here, with its happy prospect, profitable service to Christ, and the fulfilling of the law (Rom. xiii. 10; Gal. v. 14) amongst our brethren and our neighbours, will be the assured result of that love to Christ which only he can manifest who delights to say: "The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me."

As with love to the brethren, so with love to Christ; it is the fruit of the Spirit. May we in whom the Spirit dwells be subject to His teaching. Christ is His theme: "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John xvi. 14.) J. C.

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### DWELLING IN UNITY.

IN Psalm cxxxiii. we are summoned to "behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in *unity*."

How good for the children of one Father thus to dwell; and how pleasant to the eye of our God. Truly He has then His joy over us with singing, and encompasses us with songs of deliverance.

In verses 2 and 3 we are told what this unity is like.

"It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments."



Turning to Exodus xxx. 22-33, we find a description of the holy oil with which Aaron was anointed. The proportions of each article are given by God; and the fragrance thereof was pleasing to Him.

All the vessels of the tabernacle, including the ark, were anointed therewith, as also Aaron and his sons, so that the same sweet savour filled the holy and most holy places, and ascended from Aaron and his sons.

How beautifully this pictures that divine unity we are exhorted to keep. (Eph. iv. 3.)

The Lord Jesus was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows; and yet we learn from 1 John ii. 20, that the weakest babe in Christ partakes of that unction from Him—the Holy One.

God now enjoys the fragrance of His Son in the holiest; and He desires to find in us the same sweet savour that fills the most holy place—the fruit of that unction which flows from our glorified Head to His weakest member, and which flows in order that our oneness may be seen. (John xvii. 21.) We are to “walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us; and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a *sweet-smelling savour*” (Eph. v. 2); so shall we give to God in some measure that sweet savour which He ever found in His Son. (See 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.)

But this divine unity to which God calls our attention is also compared to the *dew*—“the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion.”

How beautiful in nature the dewdrop sparkling in the sun—fit emblem of a redeemed sinner, reflecting Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings. But the divine unity is like all these drops together descending to refresh the parched lands beneath.

How beautiful is the comeliness of Christ upon even one Christian; and how fitted is each one to tell out the

virtues of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

But Christians *united* in love, the bond of perfectness, and enjoying sweet and happy fellowship, are like the dewdrops together pouring down their blessing upon this barren world.

As we live in the Spirit may we seek to walk in the Spirit, so that God may have His joy in us even here ; and that our brethren, and even the world, may be constrained to own that we have been with Jesus. T. C.

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#### NOTES AND REPLIES.

*Does the reign of death in Rom. v. 14 refer to the death of the body exclusively ?*

DEATH in Scripture, when spoken of in connection with sin (unless there be some special limitation), looks beyond the mere death of the body, and takes in the whole man. Man consists of spirit, soul, and body ; and when God said, "Thou shalt surely die," the "thou" refers to man as a whole, and the death of the body is only the outward and visible result of the judgment. On the day man ate of the tree he died ; and as *death* reigns, and will reign, over spirit, soul, and body of all who stand in the first man, Adam, so *life* reigns, and will reign, over all who are in the Second Man, Christ Jesus, as it regards spirit, soul, and body. This truth explains our Lord's proof of the resurrection from the fact of God being called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt. xxii. 31, 32), because their living spirit needed their body to secure their full identity. It was not of Abraham's spirit that God is said to be God, but of Abraham himself in his whole being. He who believes never sees death (John viii. 51) ; for the spirit is already in regeneration quickened into eternal life, and the mortal body shall be quickened in resurrection through the indwelling Spirit. (Rom. viii. 11.) Resurrection is only regeneration consummated in the individual. Adam stands a representative man to all under his federal headship ; *i.e.* the headship of nature ; and Christ stands a representative Man for all under His federal headship, by which in resurrection He becomes the first begotten from the dead. Of Him as our representative we can say, "*As He is so are we ;*" and as our federal Head we can say, we are "*complete in Him.*"

*Can predestination, as shewn in Rom. viii. 29, 30, be reconciled with man's free agency?*

THEORETICALLY it will probably never be reconciled till with clearer vision in eternity we see harmony where now we seem to see discord. Scripture never attempts to harmonize these things, but leaves them in all their simplicity before us, and commands our acceptance of both. Practically there is no difficulty. What is true of Israel in Acts ii. 23, is true everywhere of every human action. There we see God's "determinate counsel and foreknowledge" placed side by side with man's wickedness and sin. No one for a moment thinks the Jews were justified in their act of crucifying Christ, or that Judas's treachery was one whit the less deserving of judgment, because an eternal counsel and a divine foreknowledge had so decreed it should be. Till we know God, as here we cannot, we must remember that "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those that are revealed, unto us." Decrees are with God—precepts for us.

*What was typified by the morning and evening lamb of Exod. xxix. 38-44?*

THE morning and evening sacrifice was a *burnt-offering*, and hence represented not merely the forgiveness of sin and the salvation of the sinner, but also the abiding acceptance of God's people under the advocacy of a risen and accepted Christ, as we read Eph. i. 7, "Accepted in the Beloved." This acceptance, arising out of our "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins," points back to Christ as the Paschal Lamb, securing redemption and pardon by His death. This value of the Passover Lamb was afterwards more clearly unfolded in the subsequent ordinances relative to the sin-offering. This distinction in the sacrifices was not brought out till after the law was given on Sinai; for as law was given that transgression might abound, and sin become exceeding sinful, God's provision for sin was then more distinctly unfolded. In Exodus xii. it is the conversion of a sinner that is typified in an Israelite, sheltered under the blood in Egypt, and immediately brought out of it in haste, and crossing the Red Sea. Temporal salvation was secured to an Israelite by the Paschal lamb; but eternal salvation is secured only by Him "who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God." (See Heb. ix. 13; x. 4.)

*What is "the circumcision of Christ" alluded to in Col. ii. 11? and what is its bearing on the believer?*

THE taunt of the Jew against the Gentile believer was, that he had not been circumcised; and the apostle here warns (as he does more

fully in the Epistle to the Galatians) against being carried back to a mere elementary sign ; and this warning is needed now as much as it was then. The circumcision of Christ pointed on to His death, with all its blessed results ; and the Gentile believer was taught not to heed these Jews or Judaizing teachers, for in the death of Christ he had the mighty reality which circumcision faintly prefigured. Circumcision has in type the same signification as baptism, with which it is here connected, though rather in its "putting off" than in its "putting on." Christian baptism is not only death, as symbolized in the words "putting off," but resurrection also, and therefore sets forth a putting on ; and so the apostle advances, in verse 11, from "the putting off of the body of the flesh" (the words "of the sins" should be omitted) and the burial, to the being risen with Christ through faith in the operation of God, as stated in verse 12. Nevertheless, though circumcision refers exclusively to the death and the putting off, its time of accomplishment—the eighth day—at once points to the hope of resurrection that lay beyond, as that in which alone covenant mercy could stand secure. Thus, then, every believer, Jew or Gentile, is "circumcised with a circumcision made without hands," and stands before God not only as having died with Christ, but likewise as buried and risen with Him. Circumcision and John's baptism occupy precisely the same ground, and both were preparatory to the work of Christ consummated in resurrection.

*Is it right to say Christ was the propitiation for the whole world?*

THIS is certainly the teaching of 1 John ii. 2, and on this truth hangs the very essence of the freeness of the gospel, "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." It is, however, wrong to say that the sins of the whole world are propitiated for ; that would lead to universalism, a doctrine which Scripture repudiates in the clearest manner. Propitiation Godwards is universal, as seen in the proclamation of pardon and salvation made to all ; manwards it is by God made conditional on faith and acceptance. The gospel comes from God to each sinner with the new covenant blessing of pardon. It bears the signature of God in the blood of Christ, and awaits the acceptance and signature, as it were, of each hearer. Till then the covenant is not valid to any individual, and God can say to all such as have not thus accepted it in faith, "What hast thou to do to . . . take my covenant in thy mouth?" (Ps. l. 16.) Godwards the atonement is *universal* in God's desire that all should come to repentance ; manwards it is *limited* by the appointed condition of faith.

## GOD'S BUYERS.

## BUYING WINE AND MILK.

GOD's love to man is seen in the many varied and attractive ways in which He sets forth the great salvation, that He may win men to it. Sometimes it is as light for man's darkness, or as bread for his hunger, or living water for his thirst; or, as in Isa. lv. i., as "wine and milk"; or, as in Isa. xxv., "a feast of fat things." Or, again, Christ is set forth as "the best robe" for man's nakedness, or as the "ring on his hand," telling of God's endless love, and of marriage union to the rich Redeemer. These and many more are the "acceptable words" with which the Preacher seeks to make men for ever wise.

But in addition to these there is the *character* also in which men are invited to come and possess themselves of all these unspeakable blessings. They are bidden to come as BUYERS; and though they have nothing whatever to buy *with*, they are nevertheless to come in that character. They are to come and take salvation and eternal life with all the freedom and boldness and confidence with which a buyer approaches some earthly merchandize, and makes it his own. What marvellous goodness of God to set forth the freeness of His salvation under such a figure! and what encouragement to the consciously unworthy one to *come!* The words are precious: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, BUY, and eat; yea, come, BUY wine and milk without money and without price."

It is not that God ever *sells* one blessing of His salvation, therefore Cowper well says—

"Christ as soon would abdicate His own,  
As stoop from heaven to *sell* the proud a throne."

And yet it remains true that all who do ever partake of it do so in the character of *buyers*. God hates sellers of His heavenly things—from Esau, who sold the birthright, to Judas Iscariot, who sold His own blessed Son—but He loves buyers who come to buy His salvation on His own God-glorifying terms. To show how this character of buyer is fitted to encourage needy, seeking souls, we have only to remember the buyer as we see him in every-day life.

Three things characterize him : 1st, the *eye* with which he sees the object and desires it, and sets his mind on having it ; 2nd, the ready, confident *foot* with which he comes up to it ; and 3rd, the *hand* with which he grasps what he has bought, and knows it is indeed unquestionably his own.

All these are true of God's buyers. They first *see* there is salvation and eternal life set before them, and within their reach, and that these priceless blessings are just what they want ; like the dying thief, or the woman at the well, who saw there was a Saviour near, and wished to possess Him. They next *come up* to this "gift of God" with a boldness like that of the Syrophenician woman, or blind Bartimeus on the Jericho road, and make the mercy at once and for ever their own, so that our Lord delights to say of them, as He did of such when on earth, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." And thirdly, God's buyers *grasp* what they have thus acquired, and *know* it is their own, just as an earthly buyer is confident that what he has bought is his. "At that day," says Jesus, "ye shall *know* that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." And the apostle John says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life." (1 John v. 13.)

## BUYING THE TRUTH.

But it is not in our first gospel mercy only that God speaks of us as buyers. This character belongs to us also in all our after acquaintance with His grace. We still are to be the eager, ready, and confident buyers of all He so delights to give us.

In Prov. xxiii. 22, 23, God is equally urgent with us after we are His own children. "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." A quick *eye* for all God's precious truth; the ready *foot* that advances and makes it our own, and the same grasp of *hand* that retains it when once possessed—all this is needed in us for ALL that God has revealed to us as His children, as much as it was for the gospel wine and milk at the first. If, like the church of Sardis, we have become dull and dead in soul, the awakening word of our Lord to us is, "Remember . . . how thou hast received and heard, and *hold fast* and repent."

To "buy the truth and sell it not" may cost us the loss of this world's and this life's things; but it cannot cost us too much if it is really God's truth we are buying. Our Lord knew it was the truth of God and the will of God that He should make us His own; and He at once became as a man who, having found treasure hid in a field, "for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and BUYETH that field;" or again, He was as a merchant-man, "who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and BOUGHT it." In neither case did the buyer reckon that he had given too much. And shall we on our part count that we can ever "buy the truth" at too great a cost, or too self-sacrificingly refuse to sell it? To

carnal minds the truth will often seem as small a thing as the birthright did to Esau, when he sold it for a mess of pottage.

The truth of believers' baptism (Matt. xxviii., Mark xvi.), or of the Lord's supper each first day of the week (Acts xx. 7), or any other part of "the apostle's doctrine and fellowship," may seem even to God's children not sufficiently important to be always and everywhere adhered to. The fear of man, or the love of fellow-creature's company and smile, may tempt us to *sell* the truth of God in these matters, and not to buy it. But let us never yield to this. That which is God's truth for this or that time or place is His truth also for all times and all places, even till our Master comes; and as such it has been handed down to us, not perhaps, as Solomon says of the truth in the passage above quoted, from our earthly father and mother, but by elders in God's church before us; and we must ourselves also "buy" it, with its precious accompaniments, and "sell it not."

#### BUYING GOLD AND WHITE RAIMENT.

In Rev. iii. 18, backslidden saints, who have declined in soul, and have become "poor and blind and naked" in heavenly things, are nevertheless still bidden to come and be *buyers*. "I counsel thee," says our Lord to Laodicea, "to *buy* of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." What precious, changeless grace of God is this! Laodicean saints might reckon that they had lost, at least in some degree, their liberty of access to their God, and their boldness at the treasure-house of His grace. But no, they have not. Although their impoverished spiritual state is only and entirely their own fault, yet God giveth liberally,



“and upbraideth not;” and if they are but willing to open the closed and fastened door \* (see Sol. Song v. 4), and let in their wronged and dishonoured Lord and Saviour, He Himself will bring all that the supper of restored communion requires, and supply it to them in that same happy character of *buyers* in which they first became His saints at all. What excuse is there then for any children of God now remaining in a lean state of soul?

#### BUYING A SWORD.

There is one other kind of buying to which we are exhorted, which still more needs wisdom to understand and courage to practise. It is buying *a sword*. In Luke xxii. 35, 36, it was our Lord's way of teaching us the persecution of His “little flock” that would follow close upon His own rejection and death. His words were: “When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then He said unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and BUY one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.” In plainer language He taught the same when He said (Matt. xxiv. 9), “Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake;” and again (John xv. 18), “If the world hate you, ye know that

\* The words of the sinfully sleeping bride in Sol. Song v. 4, “My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door,” followed by, “I rose to open to my beloved,” imply that the door was fastened as well as closed, and could only be opened *from inside*, and by the sleeping one. So also our Lord's words (Rev. iii. 20), “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and *open* the door,” &c. All restoration of soul must be by ourselves being made willing and desirous of it. In this, as in the matter of our conversion at first, there must be in us the buyer's *eye*, which desires the object it sees.

it hated me before it hated you ;” and (xvi. 2) “ the time cometh, that whosoever *willeth* you will think that he doeth God service.” Here we see the “ sword ” to *buy* which we are bidden to sell our very garment ; that is to say, we are, with a buyer’s eye, to see its value ; with a buyer’s foot, to advance willingly to it, and to grasp this privilege of suffering for Christ’s sake as being rightfully and truly ours, just as the buyer’s hand claims what he has purchased. But, alas ! how few of us do in our day thus sell the garment of ease, and buy instead of it the precious sword of suffering for Christ’s sake. The disciples themselves did not understand their Master’s words when He uttered them. Always expecting an earthly Palestine kingdom, which should be gained by an earthly sword, they thought their Master did at last intend them to take what swords they could get, and fight for themselves and for Him. Hence they said, “ Lord, behold, here are two swords,” meaning they would thus make a beginning ; but our Lord’s word, “ It is enough,” shows that He regarded it as sufficient to have given them a warning which coming events would soon teach them to understand, and He dropped the subject. (Comp. John xvi. 12.)

But at and after Pentecost suffering for Christ’s sake became both understood and valued, and had to be endured. In Acts v. 40 two of these same disciples—Peter and John—after they had been publicly *beaten* (a common and disgraceful punishment among the Jews), “ departed from the presence of the council, *rejoicing* that they were counted *worthy* to suffer shame for His name,” and “ they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” Paul also not only himself sold his garment (see 2 Cor. xi. 27, “ cold and *nakedness*”), and bought this sword of suffering for Jesus’ sake, but teaches also *all saints* to do the same. See Rom. viii. 35, &c., where, after naming “ tribulation,”

“distress,” “persecution,” “famine,” “nakedness” “peril,” and “sword,” he boldly says, “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” See also Phil. i. 29: “Unto you it is GIVEN in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to *suffer* for His sake.”

The sword, then, is not a thing for us as Christians to use on others; but we are to expect that men of this world's politics and this world's religion will use it on us—hating us for Jesus' sake; and we are to count it worth selling all we have in order to possess a sword, in this sense of it.

In what shape this sword may come upon us we know not. It may be in family life (see Luke xii. 52, 53); it may be in gospel and church work for Christ “from city to city;” it may be in the loss of property, or health, or friends, or in the keen and cutting form of “evil report” and false accusation; but so long as it is indeed suffering for Christ's sake, we may well esteem it highly, and buy the sword with the same readiness and joy with which we bought God's gospel wine and milk at the first, or His truth afterwards, or the “gold tried in the fire,” when, like Laodicea, we had at all declined in soul and become poor. May this wisdom from above be given us for Christ's sake.

H. D.

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FRAGMENTS.—We are perfect, not by arriving at a certain point of perfection, but by always going on; as a traveller is equally perfect in every step of his journey, who knows his way, and proceeds in it without stopping. —A fall is God's advantage as well as the devil's, and according as we incline, we may rise higher from it or fall still lower.—The truly humble man is humble in secret; it is a pain to him to have his humility observed; and whenever he has occasion to confess his defects, it is for no other end but to take shame to himself.—*Adam* (1763).

## DESIRABLE TREASURE.

"There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up."—PROV. xxi. 20.

COVETOUSNESS is a dreadful evil, a great sin; it is idolatry. It is the more dangerous because it works so subtly; and if detected seeks to hide itself under fair names, such as prudence, carefulness, and the like.

An idolater will sacrifice his all, even his life, to his idol; and covetousness, unsubdued by grace, rules the man, and ruins whom it rules. This is true, whether the term is taken in its general meaning, as the antithesis or opposite of full contentment, or in its special and more limited application, as indicating the love of silver.

Still there are lawful objects of desire, and that desire of the largest capacity and greatest vehemence. "Covet earnestly the best gifts," and also the excelling grace, "love," of which gifts properly used are the handmaids.

Yes, "there is treasure to be desired [to be coveted] and oil in the dwelling of the wise." This is one of Solomon's proverbs—fruit of the divine wisdom asked of Jehovah, promised and given by Him.

The proverbs are as a sword with two edges, cutting two ways, right and left. They are of double interpretation and application—literal and figurative, natural and spiritual. Such is the proverb we are considering. It is a literal and every-day fact, that a wise man, as a rule, gets treasure. A wise agriculturist, for example, will plough and sow at the right time, watch, weed, and reap his field in due course, and (with God's blessing of course) will have treasure in his house or stock. The wise olive grower will plant, manure, and prune his trees in the proper

season, casting the berries into the press at the proper time, and he will possess oil. The foolish man does nothing of the kind, but spends up all that he has, and that of others also if he can. The instructed and diligent florist and the thrifty merchant both prove that wisdom is profitable to direct, and diligence obtains its recompense.

My object however, in this paper, is to give the proverb a spiritual application, and to show that God has made this proverb spiritually true to individuals, and to others through them, making such to be recipients and channels of divine wisdom and grace, having the treasure of truth and the oil of unction and power. Let us look at some instances.

#### JOSEPH.

Such examples might be found from the beginning; but I shall commence with that remarkable young man Joseph. In him we see the envied, hated, chided one, sold into Egypt, where God had determined to display the wisdom which He would give him, and which would be desired. The time came when He who had filled him with the treasures of wisdom called for its use and manifestation. It was seen in his private life and walk, in the fear of God; then in the prison, in the presence and for the profit of his fellow-prisoners; and lastly before Pharaoh, by interpreting his dreams, and suggesting plans to meet the circumstances foretold in those dreams.

Such circumstances demanded special wisdom; that wisdom was *desired*, and it was found in him to whom God had imparted it. Moreover, the oil of grace was there. Joseph was *wise*, and he was *gracious* also. He "showed out of a good conversation his works with *meekness* of wisdom."

## MOSES.

If in Joseph, who, if I may so say, introduces us to the history of that nation of which Abraham was the father—the nation of Israel; if in him we see this, so do we also in Moses, who was chosen by Jehovah to lead forth the nation from under the hand of the oppressor by the power of God, through blood which sheltered them, and by judgments destroying their enemies.

Mighty in word, through diligently—acquired wisdom of the Egyptians, but specially as made wise by Jehovah, who filled him with wisdom from above, Moses proved to Pharaoh on Israel's behalf, and to Israel when among them, that he had desirable treasure, even the treasure and oil of knowledge and grace.

## SOLOMON. DANIEL.

When that nation reached its typical climax, and became *the* nation of the earth, Solomon's excelling wisdom proved the same; for his wisdom (God's wisdom in him) was desired, sought after, and used.

Moreover, when that nation had fallen, when the mighty yet shameful rent had taken place in it, and when even Judah had gone into captivity for their sin, then, in their low condition, Daniel and his companions, diligently following Jehovah, walking in separation from idolaters, from their feasting and revelling, sought wisdom from above, and distinguished themselves, so that all their enemies were compelled to acknowledge their superior wisdom, and the superiority of Jehovah to idols. Here again we see treasure with the wise, and oil, and these both desirable and desired.

## THE LORD JESUS.

So was it also with Jehovah's servants in successive generations, until He came in whom this simple truth, like all other good and blessed things, was, and still is, true in fulness, in perfection.

The treasure we have noticed as dwelling in and drawn forth from others was originally from God; for if there is *no* power but of God, He is also "the *only wise* God." It is indeed true that in Christ, the Son of God made flesh, "there is treasure to be desired and oil."

Declarations and examples of this abound in the New Testament, a few of which, for brevity's sake, I will select.

In Luke ii. 40 we are told that the child Jesus "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom." At the age of twelve years the treasure of wisdom astonished the wise of the Jewish teachers. They "were astonished at His understanding and answers." Moreover, the oil of grace was in Him; for He heard and asked questions with meekness we are sure. And in verse 52, after He had returned to Nazareth with Joseph and His mother, and was subject to them, it is witnessed: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." He had treasure which He did not spend up, but used.

Throughout His three years' public ministry we trace the same. Not only does His daily teaching prove it, but the spirit and way in which He dealt with His bitter enemies—meeting the speculative and the formal, the self-righteous Pharisee, the reasoning lawyer, and sceptical Sadducee with unanswerable wisdom, and placing on the horns of a dilemma those who sought to entangle Him in His talk; while to the humble, listening inquirer grace and truth flowed from His lips, at which even those wondered

who presently after sought to thrust Him headlong from the hill's brow: "They wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth."

Thus was it with Him in humiliation down here among men, among friends and foes. What do we know of Him now, since He ascended, and was enthroned at the right hand of God? Let us hear the testimony of the Holy Ghost, sent down to take of His, to reveal, testify of, and glorify Him. In 1 Cor. i. 30 we are told that we are of God in Christ Jesus, who is made to us, as He was to them, "*wisdom, even righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*" To the Greek, wisdom included everything. So Christ is made to us wisdom; that is, everything that we can need. Again, Paul testifies to the Colossians (ii. 3): "In whom [or the mystery connected with Him] are hid all the *treasures* of wisdom and knowledge." Treasure indeed to be desired, possessed, and used by us. It was possessed and displayed by men of God in the beginning of this dispensation, such as Peter and his companions at Pentecost, and Stephen, whose wisdom was irresistible, as was also that of Paul. We also, beloved reader, are exhorted to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, and that our speech should be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that it may minister grace to the hearer. Our lips should keep truth, and feed many, the *grace* of Christ being with our spirit.

This of course can only be realized in the path of diligence in the word and ways of the Lord; for it is the diligent soul that shall be made fat. (Prov. xiii. 4.) As we abide in Christ, and He dwells in our hearts by faith, abiding in Him as branches in the Vine, we shall bear much fruit, be filled with wisdom and the Spirit, and enabled to enrich, instruct, admonish, and encourage others. May it be thus with us, to His praise. H. H.



## THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

SOME WORDS INTENDED AS A HELP FOR THE SIMPLE.

THE apostle Peter says, in the first chapter of his first epistle, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;" and as there is no redemption without that precious blood, how important it is that the Christian should be clear and simple in his mind concerning it, so that in his heart he may very confidently rest on it, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In Scripture the blood generally means the life (*Lev. xvii. 11-14*), and the shedding of blood means the taking away of life. Death without blood-shedding may also go under the name of blood-shedding; for "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (*Gen. ix. 6*), means of course, whoso murders a man in any way. Our Lord said, "It is finished; and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." That was atonement; yet we learn from *John xix. 34* that His blood was shed after that. The idea of virtue in the blood to save apart from the death is a fallacy, and the blood of Christ should never be spoken of in a way which might at all mislead the un-instructed.

The sacrifice of Christ was offered on earth, and we are made nigh by the blood; that is, by that sacrifice. (*Eph. ii. 13.*) But looking at *Hebrews ix. 7-12*, we perceive that the Jewish high priest went into the holiest with blood

(of a bull and a goat—Lev. xvi. 11–15), and that Christ went into the holiest by His own blood, the whole passage teaching us that as the high priest went into the holiest part of the tabernacle with blood, so Christ entered into heaven itself (*v.* 24), bearing the virtues of His own sacrifice which was offered at Calvary, and which is as fresh in heaven this day as it was on the day in which He died, and will be so eternally.

From 1 John i. 8 to ii. 2 we see that the confession of the sins of Christians is connected with the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. *He is*, not *He was* only, but *He is* now in heaven, the propitiation for our sins. The division of the chapters tends to hide this connection.

There is no forgiveness or washing of the feet (speaking figuratively, as in John xiii. 10, 14) irrespective of that propitiation, and to talk of cleansing by the Word irrespective of and without that propitiation is a dangerous fallacy, coming in under the guise of advanced truth, and grounded probably on Ephesians v. 26, which gives no support to it, because the washing there referred to fits for heaven "*without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;*" that is to say, those so washed have the righteousness which all believers have in Christ, received through the belief of the gospel, as in 1 Peter i. 23–25; Titus iii. 5–7; for no washings of the feet or growing sanctification could ever make them perfect, or be a substitute for the righteousness which they have in Christ.\*

The worthiness which our Lord has in heaven, as the Mediator to bless us His saints and to do good to mankind, proceeds from His atoning sacrifice. (John xvii. 1–3; Rev. v. 9.)

If people speak of the blood of Christ in heaven, and

\* The cleansing of one's way mentioned in Psalm cxix. 9 is "by taking heed thereto, according to the Word," and needs no explanation.

are right in heart, trusting in *Him*, they only need to substitute for the word blood "propitiation" or propitiatory sacrifice, as in 1 John ii. 2, and they then express their scriptural thought in equally scriptural language.

The imperfection of a Christian's life after he believes, and his deep and constant need of the intercession of his great High Priest, do not alter or contradict the great fact that by the one offering of Christ he is perfected for ever.

It is written, "If we [who are perfected for ever] confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We are sometimes told that when a believer has sinned and confessed his sin, he is bound to believe that God has forgiven him. But a Christian with a conscience exercised to walk in the light before God discovers that he may, when troubled about some sin, repeat most sincerely, over and over again, these words, "I have sinned," and yet get no relief; but that if while he is confessing his sin he looks upward in faith to the everlasting and all-prevailing intercession of his Saviour, he finds immediate rest and peace.

The intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ for His people is unceasing and everlasting, whether they do or do not realize it; but the believer who walks in the light apprehends and realizes it, and with such an one the consciousness of failure is immediately followed by the sigh of confession and the consciousness of forgiveness. Thus, according to 1 John i. 7, the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses him from all sin. It is true that the real confession of sin, which has been delayed, will notwithstanding be accepted; but the delaying of confession is not characteristic of walking in the light.

The Christian's confession of sin mentioned in 1 John

i. 9 is not a soliloquy, nor is it spoken to a fellow-creature; it is a confession to God as a Father by one who knows himself to be reconciled to God, because the Son of God, the Redeemer, his Sacrifice and Priest, is in God's presence.

Thus the real intelligent confession of sin is acceptable by Jesus Christ, and going up from a believing, contrite heart, is felt to be so by the worshipper, because of God's promise and His character, as He is made known in the great Redeemer, the Mediator of the new covenant.

Jesus said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." There is no approach to God as a Father but by Him. Praise, prayer, confession are all acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, and only by Him. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." (Heb. xiii. 15.) Acceptable approaches to the mercy-seat in prayer are not only acceptable by Jesus Christ, but it is a mercy-seat only because He is there as the Sacrifice and High Priest.

Walking in the light implies a knowledge of the character of God as He is revealed in Christ; and may we not reverently say, it was never intended that the confession of sin by a child of God should be separated from the heartfelt and thankful apprehension of the intercession of his great High Priest?

"For if," says Romans v. 10, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Those therefore who are united to Him in His life are saved to the uttermost through His intercession (Heb. vii. 25); that is, through the constant presentation of Himself, slain and risen, as the accepted propitiation.

The Jewish high priest had upon his forehead a plate of pure gold, with the words engraven on it, "Holiness to the

Lord.” It was always on his forehead, that the people might be accepted before the Lord; and the name of the Christian’s Advocate with the Father is “*Jesus Christ the righteous.*”

Further, the Jewish high priest never stood in the holiest without blood; and the blood which he sprinkled on the mercy-seat was never washed off, and Jehovah appeared in the cloud on the mercy-seat. (Lev. xvi. 2.) Our great Redeemer appears in heaven with all the virtues of His sacrifice. On Him and in Him our heavenly Father rests in peace, and, blessed be His name, on all those and in all those who are “accepted in the Beloved.” J. P.

“ONE THING.”

“One thing is NEEDFUL.”—LUKE X. 42.

JOHN ix. 25.

I KNOW not much, dear Lord; I am not wise,  
 Only a foolish soul that clings to Thee;  
 But since Thy hand was laid upon mine eyes,  
*One thing I know—though I was blind, I see.*

PHIL. iii. 13.

There is not much, dear Lord, that I can do,  
 I am so weak, and all the way so dark;  
 But yet, forgetting past and present too,  
*One thing I do—I press toward the mark.*

PSALM xxvii. 4.

I have so much, dear Lord, and yet ask more!  
 For I the beauty of my Lord would see;  
 And that I may behold Him evermore,  
*One thing have I desired—to dwell with Thee.*

A. L. B.

## ELISHA.

(Continued from page 161.)

## AT GILGAL.

THE prophet now revisits Gilgal. Here also are sons of the prophets. Famine was there. He wishes to give them an ample meal, while apparently no means are at hand. These must be sought for abroad. Wild gourds are brought in, and when the pottage is served out and tasted, an outcry is made by the guests that it is poisonous. At his word some flour is thrown in, and now they eat without danger. Here then are sons of prophets in the midst of the general destitution made to partake of divine provision. That which was poisonous to themselves and others is now made to yield them wholesome nourishment. The gourds, rejected perhaps by their famishing neighbours, become sustenance to them. All Gilgal cannot but learn that their God is nigh at hand to do good; the sons of the prophets being ready to attest His interference in their behalf. All this was in harmony with Gilgal's history in the past. Gilgal was the place where their forefathers had been circumcised on coming out of the wilderness, and where their God had rolled off from them the reproach of Egypt. From having been slaves they were then victors; and about to become, by the favour of their God, landed proprietors in a territory of their own. Rendered by the act of circumcision utterly defenceless physically in the presence of their enemies, as in Gen. xxxiv. 25, they showed, by their submission to this command of their God, that they did not trust in an arm of flesh as Egypt did, and now they were not afraid to trust Him to do what He had undertaken to accomplish in their behalf.

## THE BRINGING OF FIRST-FRUITS.

Next in the recorded events is the presentation to the man of God of twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn, as first-fruits. It must have been the offering of some godly soul. The temple at Jerusalem was the divinely-appointed place for the presentation of first-fruits, but by the wicked law of the kings of Israel their subjects were prevented from going thither. Also it was to the priest that first-fruits should have been given, according to Deut. xviii. 4, and Elisha was no priest. Yet such as this godly one was able to do he did. He brings voluntarily to the servant of God; and perhaps we should not be wrong in saying that it was with a thankful heart, in recognition of the mercy extended to him amid the prevailing dearth. When corn was more than usually scarce and costly, he acknowledges hereby the gracious hand of the God of the harvest, who alone is able to send rain and fruitful seasons. And doubtless his God was mindful of him, according to the promise: "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." If he had to wait till next harvest for the fulfilment, is it not the trial of faith which all the Lord's people have to pass through, thereby increasing our conscious dependence upon Him?

These barley cakes and the corn are now made by the word of the Lord to satisfy the hunger of a hundred men, apparently the same party of prophets in whose behalf the former miracle had been wrought. The man can now go home and tell his family and neighbours how the Lord has honoured him by making his small present the means of so much good to so many of His people. The former

miracle would make the God of Elisha known to the inhabitants of Gilgal; this would spread His fame in Baal-shalisha and the villages around.

#### NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN.

But now the God of Israel designs to make Himself known beyond the confines of that land. His power to destroy the armies of the Syrians had recently been fully exhibited in the two battles mentioned in 1 Kings xx. Then the two little flocks of kids—for so the Israelites are described—were made to triumph over the vast hosts of the Syrians. God now shows Himself to Syria as the healer of disease. Had there been any medical skill in Syria which could have cured leprosy it would have been at the disposal of the commander-in-chief of their armies. But there was none. Honourable, valiant, and successful in war, he was in high esteem with the king; yet afflicted with this incurable malady.

A little maid of Israel, in her earnestness for him and in the simplicity of her faith, tells her mistress of the prophet in Samaria, who could cure him if he were there. Her boldness in asserting this is the more remarkable, since we are told, in Luke iv. 27, that “many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed.” She could not therefore have known of such healing; and, by her venturing to assert it, she risked not only her own credit, but her life also, in the event of disappointment. The little maid’s faith in the God of Elisha is thus seen to be of no common character. The taunts and insults she would be exposed to from the rest of the household, while the issue was in suspense, may be imagined.

But Naaman credits the statement. The king sanctions the journey, and gives him a letter to the king of Israel.



In it he makes no mention of the prophet; but directs the prophet's superior, as he judges the king to be, and who he supposes has the command of all the resources in his dominions, to heal his servant, on pain of his high displeasure.

Well may Jehoram rend his clothes from astonishment and distress. "Am I God," he exclaims, "to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy! Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me!" All the resources of the state are unequal to the emergency. Such a thing had never been heard of. No one but God can do it, and towards Him the king does not look.

Great must have been the dismay of Naaman when he learns the consternation of the court. His long journey has been in vain; his hopes are defeated; he must return home with his disease still upon him; perhaps vowing vengeance upon her who had been the means of his coming on so fruitless an errand.

Elisha hears of what has happened. He sends the king a calm remonstrance, and desires that Naaman may come to him. The great man accordingly goes; and with his cavalcade stands at Elisha's door; no doubt looking upon himself as dishonoured by having to do so; but the urgency of his case obliges compliance. When the message comes, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean," his wrath bursts forth. Highly indignant at such humiliating treatment he turns and goes away in a rage, probably intending to return at once to Syria.

The servants, wiser than himself, appeal to him to follow the prophet's instructions; so easy to be done, and so simple. Whether Elisha is still residing at Gilgal we know not, but the narrative implies that he is not far from

the river. In a happy moment Naaman relents. He dips seven times in the Jordan, and his flesh came again as the flesh of a little child. He is healed. Such is the result of obeying the voice of God, rather than the dictates of human reason or human passion !

With the healing of his person his spirit too is changed. Now he has not merely the flesh, but the spirit also of a little child ! Whence this sudden transformation ? Was it not that he had received mercy, pure mercy, inconceivable mercy ? and this not from any of the idols worshipped in Syria, but from the God of Israel, whom neither he nor his fathers had known ; and against whom he had even dared to wage war ! And is not this the way which our God takes to subdue the pride of man's heart ?

Naaman now returns with all his retinue to the man of God ; and there before them all he makes the bold confession of his new faith. " Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel." Let who will report it in Syria he cares not. Nay the very fact of his returning healed from his leprosy proves what his lips avow. The miracle speaks loudly to Syria.

He urges the prophet to take a present ; but no, the servant of God cannot do this. The healing must be altogether gratuitous. To accept money would be to lower the character of Him whom he served. " As the Lord liveth I will take none." The God of Israel does not sell His mercies. He gives of His own royal bounty to all His creatures, taking no recompense. " Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits . . . who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

He then asks for some of the earth of the land of Israel, supposing the soil of the God of Israel's land will be the only proper soil with which to worship Him, and to build

an altar in Syria, and offer sacrifice, declaring in the fulness of his heart that he will no longer worship Syrian gods, but only the Lord. And then he appeals for pardon for what is inconsistent with this promise, when he goes with the king into the house of Rimmon, and bows down there before the idol. He clearly sees this to be wrong; but then his rank and position as commander-in-chief, and perhaps his life also, will be forfeited if he refuses to conform to his master's ways. Truly the flesh is always opposed to the spirit!

What is Elisha to say? Can he sanction an altar to the Lord in a foreign land? "Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." It was there the Lord had established His great name. It was there His honour dwelt. His altar, and His domestic servants, the priests, were there. He was not to be approached elsewhere, nor by other means. This law had not then been abrogated. Elisha has no authority to set it aside, or to grant a contrary dispensation, nor one for the worship of Rimmon, even with the simple reservation with which the request had been preferred.

Shall he refuse? To do this would be to expose the new-born faith of the young disciple to so rude a shock that it might probably be overset. Time and circumstance are not suitable for explaining. He cannot grant, and he fears to refuse. "Go in peace," is the answer. If thine heart is tender, and thou art faithful to thy promise, light will be given thee, as thou art able to bear it. God will not forget nor forsake thee.

The good Shepherd often used this expression, "Go in peace," towards those who had obtained mercy at His hands; and it still is true that He never over-drives His flock, nor lays upon them a burden they are not able to bear.

R. N.

## NOTES AND REPLIES.

*What is the quenching of the Spirit in 1 Thess. v. 19?*

From the next words, "Despise not prophesyings," it is evident that the quenching here has especial reference to the Spirit's ministry in the house of God, and this quenching may be either in ourselves or in others. In ourselves it may be either by putting the kindled lamp under the bed of our self-indulgence, or under the bushel of our lawful business activities; thus that light is quenched which might have been a blessing from God to all brought within its influence. Or the Spirit in others may be quenched by want of spirituality in us to discern the inworking of God in their ministrations. In such cases we quench the smoking flax (or rather, the dimly-burning wick), instead of giving to it help and encouragement, as Christ ever does, so as to fan what burns dimly into a flame; or it may be quenched by proud supercilious criticism, that has in it none of the tenderness of God, and nothing of the lowliness of Christ. What might not the gifts in the Church of God be, even in these days; were the Spirit unquenched in regard to the Church, and ungrieved in us as individuals, and had we power to quench only the flesh in ourselves and others!

*Did the Lord keep the Law for us?*

All Christ's work was for us from the incarnation to the resurrection; but it is not Scriptural to regard the legal righteousness of Christ as that which is imputed to the sinner. His perfect law-fulfilling righteousness proved Him to be a lamb without blemish and without spot, and was sacrificially essential to His fitness to become an atonement. Christ's death was the consummation of His obedience, for He had received the commandment to lay down His life (John x. 15, 18); and therefore we read, that "as by the disobedience of the one many were constituted (*κατεσταθησαν*) sinners, so by the obedience of the one shall many be constituted righteous." (Romans v. 19.) And again we read, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. ii. 8.) Hence "imputed righteousness" presents us to God in the atoning efficacy of the death of the Son of God, who bore our sins, and thereby God justifies the ungodly; and it is not the imputation of a law-fulfilling life, which can never be substitutionary. Obedience to law is as characteristic of a believer as it was of Christ. Through the eternal Spirit, He offered up Himself in His infinite and perfect measure; and we are called through the same Spirit in our measure to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. And this, as living and walking in the Spirit, we are enabled to do, and thus become followers of Christ.

## CHRIST AS "DOOR" AND AS "GOOD SHEPHERD."

JOHN x. 9, 11.

UNDER these two titles our Lord presents to us two very different characters in which He had come into the world, and two widely diverse aspects of His approaching death upon the cross. Both of them were illustrated in the case of the man born blind described in chap. ix., on whose behalf, as "a lamb" of His Father's flock, Jesus encountered the "lion and bear" like power of the Pharisees (see 1 Sam. xvii. 34-36), and delivered him; for Jesus our Lord is the true David, and could say to His Father, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." (John xvii. 12.) As "Door" and as "Good Shepherd" He had proved Himself enough for this once blinded one, as He still does for all who come to know Him.

All the saved of necessity know Him in both these characters, and also in the order here given; viz., first as the Door, and afterwards as the Good Shepherd. It is true that Christ is both these to them at one and the *same moment* by His precious death, and by their "precious faith" in Him; but we learn to *know* Him first as Door, and next as Good Shepherd.

We will now point out the distinction in these two aspects in which Christ stands presented to us.

I. As "the Door" Jesus died that He might open a way to God for the sinner simply *as* a sinner, and therefore for all the world—a sure, free, abiding and ever-open way to God, and *out of* condemnation and coming wrath. The emblem of "Door" does itself imply no distinction between one sinner and another. A door has no knowledge,

and makes no distinction between those who use it. It is simply a provision—a means of passing *out of* one place and *into* another. Out of an outside place of storm and danger, it may be, into a house and a home of security and plenty. And just such is Christ to the sinner by His atoning death, and such was God's intention in providing Him as the "Door." It was that there might be in Him an opening wide enough and costly enough for the biggest and the vilest sinner of all mankind to pass in to God by Him, and also for *any number* of such to do the same; yea, of width enough and worth enough for *all the world* to come to God by Him if they only would.

In this "Door" view of Christ's cross and death He paid a price *sufficient* to enable God to receive to Himself an entire world of sinners, did that world of sinners only come. So John the Baptist preached Jesus: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away" [or rather, the Bearer away of] "*the sin of the world.*" Hence, in John x. 9, Jesus no sooner says, "I am the door," than He adds, "By ME if ANY MAN enter in, he shall be saved." He is a door that faces all mankind, and with this written over it, "*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*"

This is well expressed in the hymn—

"The door of mercy's open still,  
And Jesus cries, 'Whoever will,  
By Me may enter in;  
*I am the Door*, and I have died  
Salvation's door to open wide  
For sinners dead in sin.'"

God therefore, by this "door" character of Christ's death and resurrection, not only lovingly and righteously *invites* all men to enter in, but also divinely *commands* them to do so; and eternally condemns them as rebellious if they do not.

Over against this gloriously wide and costly doorway of

life and mercy there justly stands the no less righteous and God-honouring gateway into eternal punishment. At an unlimited and infinite cost God provided mercy's open door, therefore unlimited and eternal punishment is of necessity the portion of all who refuse *that* open door.

II. But there is also "the Good Shepherd" aspect of that same precious death of Christ, as He says (*v. 11*), "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life *for the sheep*." Observe, it is "for the sheep" that Christ in this good shepherd character gives His life; no word "*if any man*" is uttered now, such as He used when speaking of Himself as "the Door." And the emblem itself is a perfectly different one. A door is simply an opening, but a shepherd has intelligence, and knows accurately *the number* of the flock given to him to care for. That precise number He makes sooner or later to pass "under the rod" (see Lev. xxvii. 32) of His power and watchfulness, and not one more nor one less will he be expected to bring home to the One who put him in charge with them. How different then are the two emblems!

So Jesus at His death knew perfectly the number of that flock which had been eternally given to Him by the Father; and His death for that flock had a character in it which His death as "the Door" for all mankind had not.

The "Good Shepherd" has a definite knowledge, both as to who are His sheep, and as to what their wandering steps have been, which is not at all taught us by Christ as "the Door." Nor is Christ as the Door responsible to God to cause every one to pass in by Him to salvation; but as the Good Shepherd He is accountable to bring home to God and to eternal glory every sheep and lamb ever given Him by the Father; and Jesus understood that responsibility at His hour of death, and is now in resurrection fulfilling it. Another well-known hymn gives this aspect:

" We'll sing of the Shepherd that died,  
That died *for the sake of the flock* ;  
His love to the utmost was tried,  
But immovable stood as a rock."

The truth is, there were, so to speak, many *deaths* in that one precious death of Jesus, as it says (Isa. liii. 9), "He was with the rich in His *deaths*" (see margin); and these two aspects of Door and Good Shepherd are among the many treasures His death contained.

It is for want of combining these various characters of Christ's one death, as God's word combines them, that saints and servants of our God often misunderstand, and even contradict each other, both in their gospel testimony and in their church work.

Some see in Christ's death *only* the fully-admitted truth of His being the bearer away of "the sin of the world," and thus becoming the world-wide "Door" for sinners one by one to enter by and be saved, and they pass by any other aspect of His atoning work, as if it were not told us in God's word with equal plainness.

Others learn from God's word that Christ had a flock given Him by His Father before time began—a definite portion and number of the human race—and that as the Good Shepherd He gave Himself and died for those sheep, and that as the consequence of that death for them HE will bring them every one to eternal glory. Filled with the blessedness and beauty of this most definite truth, they are not willing to admit the wider view of Christ's death already mentioned; and because not *willing* to do so, they become morally unable.

Once severed from each other, by our weakness or our wilfulness, these different aspects of Christ's one death are made the starting-points of different schools of doctrine, and become at length the centres of different religious



sects. The feebleness of human language too is taken advantage of. The words, "Christ died FOR us," is wide enough to mean either of the two aspects of His death now named. "FOR us" may mean *on behalf of us*, simply as sinners in common with all mankind; and in this sense it is that we rightly use it when we are speaking to the unsaved; but "FOR us" may also mean strictly *in our room and stead*, so that those of whom this "FOR US" is true cannot themselves ever have the sinner's doom; and it is in this sense that we use it of such as we know have by grace believed in Christ, and of them only.\*

All this becomes plain and also precious to hearts and minds that are subject to God and to His word. The wider and the narrower aspects of Christ's one death are no more a difficulty to them, and no more clash with each other than do larger and smaller circles that are drawn upon paper from a common centre. But we shall not find it so if we seek to suit ourselves to the reasoning of human minds in our gospel preaching, and endeavour to make our statements more logical than God Himself has done in His word.

In the vision which God gave to Ezekiel of the living creatures, there were also *wheels*, whose "appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel" (Ezek. i. 16); but far from questioning how such intricacy of workmanship and of movement could be, the prophet only reverently records what he saw. Wondering at their straight onward movement, he says, "As for their rings, they were *so high* that they were dreadful;" yet he adds, "They were full of eyes round about"—guided, that

\* Each Scripture that speaks of Christ's death for men, whether in the gospels or the epistles, must be considered separately in order to know whether it applies to the wider or the narrower aspect of His death. The context also usually settles this question. All that is now attempted is to show that there are these various aspects side by side in God's word.

is, by a divine intelligence. And all their movements only drew forth worship; for he says in chap. x. 13, "As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel."

If God showed the prophet such a throne of deep counsels, and such wheels of inworking power in the future of His own then scattered nation (for which nation also Jesus died), what wheel within wheel ought we not to expect to find in the fuller wonders, that are now being wrought, of

"the wondrous cross,  
On which the King of glory died"?

and with what reverence ought we not to view the working of those wheels?

Ezekiel also says, "The Spirit took me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of Jehovah *from His place.*" The same leading of the Spirit that was in the wings of the living creatures, and in the wheels, bore him on to carry God's comforting message to the captives by the river Chebar, and to rebuke a sinful nation.

And does not the same Spirit of our God, that wrought infinitely and unerringly in our Lord Jesus *at the cross*, dwell now in us, both to unfold to us its mysteries, and to speed us with its messages of warning or of comfort to sinners or to saints around us?

Surely as we obey that Spirit, and are led by Him through and by means of the "God-breathed" Scriptures, we too shall be "lifted" above our own or others' natural reasonings about that cross, and shall be privileged to see that by a world-wide proclamation of the risen Jesus as the open "Door," God is even now gathering to Him for ever, as the "Good Shepherd," those sheep for whom at the cross He gave Himself. Well may all gospel labourers therefore cry, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" H. D.

## DIVINE PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL MINISTRY.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS ON EZEKIEL III.

BY MR. T. NEWBERRY.

1. "MOREOVER *he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest ; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.* The providence of God and the leadings of the Spirit of God often go together. I have very often found that that portion of Scripture which comes in my ordinary daily reading is the word in season for ministry at the time. This portion came in my daily course.

"*Eat that thou findest.*" Feed where you are reading. The sheep in pastures of tender grass need not roam over the fields; it just feeds where it is.

"*Eat this roll.*" Special direction. Often, as in chap. i. 3, the word of Jehovah comes "expressly."

"*Eat.*" Feed upon the Word. Do not merely skim the surface. A friend lately told me that he has seen far out at sea the thistle-down borne along over the surface of the ocean, and pitching nowhere. It is possible to go over the mighty depths of the word of God and pitch nowhere, and hence bear no fruit. Read, not simply as chemists, to analyze, but as living men, to feed.

"*Eat . . . and go speak.*" Speak that which has already fed and feasted your own soul. Talking of that which has not been fed upon will yield but little nourishment to hungry souls. "The talk of the lips tendeth only to penury." "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith Jehovah." Ministry after feeding is like the exercise we take after our food, which converts the food into bone and sinew. And we sometimes get as much blessing in giving out as in taking in.

2. "So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll." Opening the mouth is our part; feeding, like natural digestion, is God's care. We are not sufficient of ourselves, but are dependent on God for real profit from His word. "Consider what I say," says Paul, "and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

3. "And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness." Similar is the word in Isaiah lv. 2: "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Also the word of the Lord Jesus: "Let these sayings sink down into your ears." Then shall we find, as saith the Psalmist, the word of God to be sweeter than honey, or the droppings from the honeycomb.

4. "And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel. . . . not to a people of a strange speech . . . . Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee." There is often less difficulty in preaching the gospel to sinners than in teaching saints.

"The house of Israel will not be willing to hearken unto thee; for they are not willing to hearken unto me." The hindrance is not want of understanding, but want of will.

"They are impudent [strong of forehead] and hard-hearted . . . a rebellious house." God calls them such. It is not for us to say so. Moses lost the land for doing so.

"Son of man, go . . . speak." The prophet is reminded that he is one of the very class who are rebellious.

"Speak with my words unto them." Not with your own words, but mine. Not with words stolen from your neighbours (Jer. xxiii.), but mine. With a "Thus saith Jehovah."

8, 9. "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces. . . . As an adamant harder than flint have I made

*thy forehead: fear them not.*" The lion-like character of ministry—with all boldness, fearlessness, and faithfulness.

10. "*All my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears.*" "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah shall man live." Receive all experimentally, investigate intelligently.

11. "*Tell them, Thus saith Adonahy Jehovah; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.*" Cast them over upon their responsibility to the sovereign, triune, everlasting God.

12 "*Then the Spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of Jehovah from His place.*" The leading thought connected with this vision of the glory is similar to that connected with the lamp-stand in Zech. iv.: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts."

"*Then the Spirit took me up.*" This *uplifting* of the Spirit we meet with again and again in the sacred word. The fluttering wing is the first emblem of the Spirit of God in Genesis i. 2. It is used also in Exodus xix. 4: "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." Then again, Deuteronomy xxxii. 11: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so Jehovah alone did lead him." So too in Isaiah xl. 31: "They that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles." If we knew more of this waiting upon God we should know more of this *uplifting* of the Spirit. It used to be said, "Nature abhors a vacuum." I fear too many are afraid of a little silent waiting together upon God; and oftentimes the renewing of our strength by doing so is hindered by the restlessness of the flesh.

Another manifestation of the Spirit is in His irresistible power—"a voice of a great rushing." So at Pentecost—"As of a rushing mighty wind." But whatever the manifestation, the result is the glory of God. His language is, "Blessed be the glory of Jehovah from His place." So in 1 Peter iv. 11: "If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified."

13. "*I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched [or kissed] one another.*" The thought or truth connected with the cherubim or living creatures all through Scripture is the agency which God employs for the communication of His mind, the fulfilment of His will, or the manifestation of His glory. First angelic, then by the Holy Ghost in His various ministries. Here in Ezekiel it is prophetic ministrations in its fourfold characteristics—the intelligence and sympathy of the man, the fearlessness and strength of the lion, the patient perseverance of the ox, and the keen sight and lofty flight of the eagle. The wheels are spheres of service.

In its present application to us this vision illustrates the gifts and spheres of service of the evangelist (the lion), the pastor (the man), the teacher (the ox), and the prophet (the eagle).

Prophecy is *threefold* in character.

*First*, it is the communication of the mind and will of God received by direct inspiration. This, when committed to writing, becomes Scripture.

*Secondly*, during the apostolic age, before the completion of the New Testament inspired writings, prophecy was a sign-gift, also by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but to be judged by the other prophets. It was given for the time to supply the lack of Scripture.

*Thirdly*, prophecy, such as we are exhorted to covet

earnestly, is the communication of the mind or will of God, learnt in communion with God through the inspired Word, in which case Scripture becomes prophecy.

There may be a speaking to edification which is not prophecy; but prophesying is always to edification.

The wings, touching or kissing one another, may remind us of fellowship in service, and also of that word, "Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer."

*"And the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing."* The individual minister belongs to a ministry. Each living creature, with his four faces, had a wheel with its four faces. There are distinct spheres of service, as well as individual servants. The private soldier belongs to his regiment, and the combined regiments compose the army, representing and wielding the strength of the throne and of the kingdom. As the individual soldier goes forward to the charge, he hears the measured tramp of the army behind him. Hence his courage; hence his irresistible strength; hence his assurance of victory.

14. *"So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me."* There may be, amidst all the working of nature within us, a little of the Jeremiah spirit; but God's grace is all-sufficient, and His almighty power will carry us through. We may be inclined to say, "I will speak no more;" but the word of Jehovah will compel an utterance.

15. *"Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days."* True ministry puts us into the very circumstances and position of those ministered to; and then silent sympathy often does more and is more eloquent than words. So Job's comforters sat silent seven days and seven nights.

16. "*And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying.*" We may have to wait long for a word from God, but when it comes it comes with power; but it brings with it a solemn responsibility. People sometimes say to a teacher, "How could you sit silent, and allow others to occupy the time so unprofitably?" The answer might be, "If I had spoken before getting a word from God, I too should only have occupied the time unprofitably."

17. "*Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.*" It is a solemn thing to be put into the position of a "watchman." The soldier who has to stand sentinel often occupies a perilous post. The gay regimentals which look so well on parade make him a more conspicuous target on the field of battle. Well if we are able to say with Paul, "I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts xx. 27.)

22. "*And the hand of Jehovah was there upon me: and He said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee.*" As Jesus said to His disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart, and rest awhile," so God oftentimes calls His servants aside into some ordinary place, or valley of humiliation, and there holds communion with them, and thus reveals to them His glory, and they worship Him there.

23-27. "*Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of Jehovah stood there . . . and I fell upon my face. Then the Spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and said unto me . . . Thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover. . . . But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith Adonahy-Jehovah; He that heareth, let*



*him hear ; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear.*" It is well to feel upon our spirit a holy restraint, a consciousness of our own utter inability of ourselves to speak to profit. When God speaks by us He will give the opening of the mouth, the door of utterance. This again puts the hearers into a place of solemn responsibility, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear.

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### CHRIST'S THREEFOLD PERFECTNESS.

"A THREEFOLD cord is not quickly broken," says the Preacher, who was king in Jerusalem ; and we have this beautifully illustrated in the threefold character of the fine-twined linen of the high priests' vestments, and of Israel's tabernacle. It was of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet. Our purpose is to apply this truth to the glorious person of the Lord Jesus, that each saint may rejoice more and more in the *infinite* preciousness of this threefold cord in relation to himself. Thereby Christ's perfect relation to us is maintained, and through it we are enabled to look beyond the broken covenants and broken hopes of the first Adam to those unbroken and indestructible blessings that are secured in the last Adam.

The threefold perfectness of our Lord is seen, first, in His *perfect Godhead* ; second, in His *perfect manhood* ; and third, in the *perfect union* of the two. Our subject unfolds to us the threefold Sonship of our Lord. He is the Son of God, who in the beginning was with God, and was God, perfect God. He was also the Son of God, "that holy thing" born of the Virgin, God made flesh, perfect man ; and He is now the Son of God in resurrection, of whom it was said, "Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee"—the perfect God-man, at once the "Second Man," and "the Lord from heaven."

In these three relationships we will seek to trace out some of the glories of our great Immanuel, "God with us," and trust that while discriminating we shall not divide, and while uniting shall not confound, these glorious mysteries.

I. We commence with His perfect *Godhead*. Of this the apostle John says: "In the beginning *was* [ἦν] the Word, and the Word *was* with God, and the Word *was* God." It is of great importance to observe the verb *to be* used in relation to the Godhead, while in relation to the manhood the word used is *to become*. Thus in verse 14: "The Word *became* [εγενετο] flesh." The same distinction is observed in that important passage: "Before Abraham was [or rather, came into existence—γενεσθαι] *I am*." Not "I was," as mortals speak, but "I AM," as God alone can say, to whom past and future are ever present; for He is the "I am that I am" of eternity.

Again, in Hebrews i. 3, when speaking of the divine glory of the Son, Paul says: "Who *being* the brightness of His glory;" while in verse 4, in speaking of the result of His incarnation, he says: "Being made [or better, *having become*] so much better than the angels." This distinction of the *being* in relation to the Godhead, and of *becoming* in relation to the manhood of the Lord, should be borne in mind—a distinction which at once sets aside all teaching that lowers the glory of the Only-begotten into a "He became" instead of "*He was*;" or rather, the present *He is*. In Exodus Jehovah claims as His own the title, "I am," and this in the Septuagint is rendered, "I am He who is" (εγω ειμι ο ων), and from which comes that fuller designation of Godhead in the New Testament: "Who is, and who was, and who is to come," which in Revelation i. 4 is applied to the Father; while in verses 17, 18 Christ says of Himself, "I am the

first and the last: He who liveth [ὁ ζῶν], and who became dead; and, behold, I am alive [ζῶν εἰμι] for evermore."

The question before us is, what Jesus was before incarnation, and it is remarkable how unhesitatingly that which in the Old Testament would often appear to be spoken of the Father is applied to the Son. Thus in Hebrews i. 8 the apostle quotes Ps. xlv. 6, 7: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," prefacing the quotation with the words: "But unto *the Son* He saith." Now God has said, "My glory will I not give unto another," and it is this which makes so striking the perfect freedom with which all that is predicated of God is predicated also of the Lord Jesus. Beyond this the loving heart needs no other proof of the perfect and essential Godhead of his Lord, or of His perfect equality with the Father; so that God commands all men to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; for the Son can say, "I and my Father are one" (έν); that is, one in nature and in essence.

The word *only-begotten* (μονογενής) in the writings of John is exclusively applied to the divine nature, and is therefore to be distinguished from the "First-born" or "First-begotten" (πρωτοτοκος), which is always used in connection with the Lord *after* His incarnation. The words ONLY and FIRST mark the difference between the two truths. The former points to Jesus as *alone*, and one with the Father; the latter presents Him in relation to the "many sons" whom He will bring to glory, in which relation He stands not alone, but *first*. But of this we shall make further mention when we speak of Jesus in the God-manhood of His resurrection.

As the Only-begotten He is spoken of as God's gift to man: "God so loved, that He gave His own (αὐτου) Son, the Only-begotten" (John iii. 16); and again, "God sent His own Son, the Only-begotten." (1 John iv. 9.) The

whole force of God's love, which was so great, lies in this, that when before the foundation of the world God gave Christ, He then gave His only-begotten Son. Deprive the gospel of this, and the constraining love of God the Father, to which the apostles attributed such power, is lost, whatever the love of Jesus on the cross may still remain and exhibit. Thus John, in describing what they had seen in Jesus, says, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Whence this fulness of grace, but that the relation of the Son to the Father, as His only-begotten, was deeply realized? It is this infinitely important truth which alone gives its significance to Abraham's act of offering up his son, his only son—his "Isaac," which was the highest test of his own obedience, and the most remarkable type of God's infinite gift, Who in eternity gave Christ. Thus the perfect oneness of Christ with the Father in glory and Godhead, and the perfectness of that relationship between Him and the Father, in which He is revealed as God, and as Son of God before the incarnation, is the *first* strand of a threefold cord, which unites God and man in His person for our eternal glory. It is the *blue* line in the woven thread that made and adorned the priestly vestments of Aaron, who was to foreshadow the Holy One of God, the only-begotten of the Father, and which made also the tabernacle and its veil a type of Him who was to come.

II. Let us now consider the perfectness of Christ as touching His *manhood*. Christ was *perfect Man*, and for this reason He could not become partaker of a fallen, an imperfect, and a ruined manhood; for that would not have constituted Him perfect Man, but would have brought Him down to the condition to which man, under the dominion of sin, has become reduced, far different indeed

from that "glory as of the only-begotten," which John saw when He dwelt among men. Christ descended into the circumstances of the sinner, but not into the sinfulness of his being; for He came "in the *likeness* of sinful flesh," but not in sinful flesh. (Rom. viii. 3.)

John has already given us his testimony of the Word that "He was God;" let us now turn to Luke to see what the Spirit testifies of the Man Christ Jesus; for as the sacrifices tell each its own tale concerning the one sacrifice of Christ, so do the four gospels give us their own witness of the one Christ, dividing His glory as the rays of light are divided in the rainbow. Luke speaks of Him as the Man, and begins with that momentous and significant fact, the miraculous conception, of which the angel, speaking to Mary, says, "*Therefore* that holy thing that shall be born of thee [in Greek more simply, *that holy-born*] shall be called Son of God." (The article is wanting in the Greek as it is in verse 32.)

What a contrast is this to what David says of himself, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." This is the essential difference between Jesus and man born after the flesh. Of Adam it was said, "He begat a son in *his own* likeness, after *his* image," and the image, and the likeness, was that of "corruptible man." Man thus begotten is born with the crown of his glory in the dust, marred by Satan, a withered, dying thing—dying while he lives, and hastening to corruption. But of Jesus it is said, that as respects His manhood, He was the Son of God, having a body which was prepared for Him fresh from the hand of God. (Heb. x. 5.) It was essential He should be made like unto Adam, who, Paul tells us, was a figure, or type (*τυπος*) of Him who was to come. He needed to be "the woman's Seed," to fulfil the promises made to the fathers; and to Mary's enquiry the divine

reply was, "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore the holy-born shall be called Son of God." Adam came from the hand of God, and so too must Christ come. Adam's origin is traced up to God in Luke iii., and so must Christ's. In His manhood, therefore, as well as in His Godhead, Jesus is the Son of God. This truth must be impressed deeply on the heart, or we shall fail to realize that divine glory of the manhood of Jesus which alone made it what God destined manhood to become.

Luke alone gives us those exquisite touches in the history of the childhood and youth of the blessed Lord, which show that in Him there was even then nothing out of place, nothing out of time. As the babe, He was the perfect babe, and lay on the bosom of the Virgin; as the child, He comes out of Egypt with Mary and Joseph; and it is said of Him, "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." (Chap. ii. 40.) How precious these early developments in the person of the Lord as here recorded! He grew from day to day; in spirit He became stronger and stronger—filled with the wisdom that is from above; and grace rested on Him. How wonderful this sinless childhood, this daily growth, this spotless display of that grace which dwelt in God! We advance a few years more: He is twelve years old, and goes to the Holy City. We see Him in the midst of the doctors; they wonder, but He is the child still. He asks questions of those who might teach, He answers what questions are put to Him, but He never once gets out of the place in which His youth put Him; and yet so had He grown in wisdom, that at the age of twelve He could say, "Thou hast made me wiser than all my teachers."

Again, under the gentle reproof of her whose holiest privilege it had been to watch that holy infancy, what a

consciousness of His earthly mission is contained in those words, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Deep words, deeply pondered by that reverent mother's heart, who with mysterious awe had heard wondrous things spoken of that heavenly child. His work was done, and He rises and goes with them to Nazareth, and is there "subject to them" in their lowly home, taking the child's obedient place in the house of the carpenter of Nazareth, and there still the same testimony is repeated, "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man." (Luke ii. 52.)

Thus at every step of His career was Jesus, the perfect One, ever perfect, and ever growing up into the full stature of manhood; and He who had been when a child the perfect child, became the perfect man; not showing His perfection on few and great occasions of life; but in the ever-recurring little opportunities where mortals ever fail we see Him always in harmony with Himself, and Himself ever in harmony with God. What a thought that He had no unguarded moment! for there was a spontaneity of holiness and of goodness that ever kept watch in the holy heart of the holy One of God. When most weary and most tried this raised Him above all the power of the enemy; and yet in all this He was the man Christ Jesus. As a teacher, how perfect His lowliness and meekness! As a friend, how perfect His friendship and His sympathy! As a sufferer, how perfect His submission! As a Son, how infinitely tender His solicitude! All was so perfect that while the stupendous work of redemption was duly accomplished, not the minutest apparent trifle of life was left undone. He walked as one who knew that all depended on Him, yet never made haste; He had time to take the child on His knee and to bless it.

As man He healed the sick, and forgave their sin; for

the Son of man had power to forgive sin even then before the debt had been paid, or the bond cancelled; for God could ratify in heaven the forgiveness which the cross was to make good. As man we see Him rebuking the winds and the waves. Nature obeys Him according to the dominion given to man in Genesis i. 28 and Psalm viii. In all this glory, this miraculous power, this perfectness, we have the perfect Man before us. Yet He was still in relation to His divine glory *the emptied one*; for Paul, after speaking of His Godhead, and saying, "Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God," continues, "But He humbled [emptied] Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made [became] in the likeness of men." He unrobed Himself, as it were; He laid aside that wherein He was equal with God, and became very man as He was very God. Emptied, He entered into the conflict; for as an emptied one He had daily grown into preparedness for His life-work, His ministry, and His death. There is a deep, unfathomed mystery in this, a mystery so profound that we can only bow before the emptied Son of God, who emptied Himself to become perfect man; and then because "found in fashion as man he humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He emptied Himself as touching His Godhead; He humbled Himself as touching His manhood; and therein taking on Himself man's responsibilities, He became amenable to man's punishment; for He bore our sin in His own body on the tree. As He lived, so He died, in peerless glory, amid circumstances of unutterable anguish, calling forth the exclamation from a Gentile soldier, "Truly this was the Son of God;" and thus, as at the announcement of His birth, so amidst the gloom and terror of His death, this Holy One is borne witness to as God's well-beloved Son.



This explains the type of the *scarlet* line in the woven thread of the sanctuary, and thus our *second* strand in that threefold cord testifies of Him as Son of man. There remains for consideration the third or purple strand, which manifests the union of perfect Godhead and perfect manhood.

H. G.

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## ELISHA.

(Continued from page 191.)

### GEHAZI'S GUILT.

GEHAZI, the servant of the man of God, who had been witness of several of Elisha's last miracles, and an assistant in them, seems to have been of the same mind as Judas in an after day. The miraculous power displayed by the God of Israel and by the Lord Jesus had no influence upon either of them. The consciousness that they must be seen and known by the searching eye of God had been obliterated in them both. The opportunity of making money alone possessed their minds—so great is the blinding power of Satan working through our self-interest. Short-sighted, it is regardless of judgment to come. Gehazi even swears, "As the Lord liveth," he will carry out his intended guilty purpose. The name of God was on his lips, but far from his heart.

So he pursues Naaman, who seeing the confidential servant of Elisha, through whom he had received the message to bathe in the Jordan, running after him, at once turns to meet him. Gehazi is prepared with a lie by which to effect his purpose. Two young men just arrived, sons of prophets, notoriously poor; nothing in the house wherewith to entertain them, and no spare garments to clothe them with. The request for a talent of silver and two changes of raiment is thus supported. Naaman at once bestows what is asked, since the declaration is that

his master has sent him. But his gratitude will not rest satisfied with presenting one talent only; he sends two. In the secret of his own mind he most likely looks upon the matter as a contrivance of Elisha to obtain in secret what in public he professed to disdain, such artifices being common enough in Eastern life. He had yet to learn the sacredness of the oath, "As the Lord liveth," when uttered by a true servant of God. However, the money and garments are obtained and safely stowed away in the house.

Like Judas, who purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, Gehazi with his acquired wealth was dreaming of oliveyards, vineyards, gay apparel, &c., little thinking what awaited him. The great offence could not be passed over. The character of the man of God was at stake, and through him that of the God of Israel Himself. Had the offence not been detected and punished, the people of Syria might have had reason to allege that after all Elisha was not different from their own idol prophets, though superior in power; and that the healing of their noble captain had been amply paid for, so that no gratitude was due to Israel's God. But when the very leprosy that Naaman brought with him and left in the Jordan was made to cleave to the guilty Israelite and to his posterity for ever, there was a standing testimony that the fraud had at once been seen and disclosed by the Most High, and exemplary punishment inflicted. "He went out from Elisha's presence a leper as white as snow." No longer could he indulge visions of earthly happiness. He is unclean under the divine displeasure. With rent clothes and bare head, he must dwell alone, outside the camp, no more to hold intercourse with his family or with his friends, save at a distance. And when beheld in his misery, every one would call to mind his crime, and the righteous retribution of God. "Be not deceived; God is

not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." (Gal. vi. 7, 8.) Gehazi is mentioned once more at a subsequent period.

#### THE WAYS OF THE LORD.

Let us now pause to trace the ways of the Lord. We have seen that all these events were brought about by what had been said by the little maid who was taken captive during an invasion, headed probably by Naaman. How came the land to be invaded, when the Almighty God was their protector? In Lev. xxvi. the explanation is given. They had sinned against the Lord, broken His covenant, despised His statutes, and would not hearken to Him. Therefore "their land had been invaded by the enemy;" they were "scattered among the Gentiles." "He had broken the staff of their bread," and "wild beasts had robbed them of their children." It was not as yet the full outpouring of His wrath. God had remembered mercy, and had sent them many prophets to turn them back from their evil ways.

But while the Syrian army is employed as a scourge, their general is visited with an incurable distemper. Perhaps he had been cruel, gone beyond his commission, as did Nebuchadnezzar. (Jer. l. 17, 18; Zech. i. 15.) God may employ the Gentiles to chastise His people; but they must not rule over them with rigour. Restoration is the desire of His heart. He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.

The disease cannot be cured in Syria; it can only be by the power of the God of Israel, who delights in mercy and is willing to heal the enemy of His people. He must, however, be sought for, and in His own land; and His directions must be obeyed. If He could thus go, as it

were, out of His way to heal an enemy, how much more readily would He heal the diseases and alleviate the sorrows of His own people! But He must be sought by them. As often as they sought Him, He was found of them, many, many times. (Neh. viii.) Thus was the healing of Naaman a perpetual evidence of His mercy and lovingkindness both to Israel and the Gentiles; while the punishment of Gehazi displays His power to afflict if His wrath were kindled against the sinner. R. N.

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### NOTES AND REPLIES.

*Can a child of God be guilty of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost?*  
Matt. xii. 31, 32.

IMPOSSIBLE. Probably Balaam in the Old Testament, and Judas Iscariot in the New, come the nearest to what this question supposes. As the real believer in Christ can never perish (John x. 29, 30), and is already possessor of eternal life (John iii. 36; vi. 40), it is impossible he can ever be guilty of that which can have no forgiveness either here or hereafter. The forgiveness of the child of God is once and for ever, so that there remains "no more conscience of sins." (Heb. x. 2.) Christ's work is absolute and perfect on behalf of every believer, however true it be that our apprehension of it depends on the power of the Spirit acting on the soul as we are walking in the light.

*How are we to understand "of note among the apostles," as spoken of Andronicus and Junia?*

IT has to be remembered that the word apostle is used in the New Testament of others besides the twelve. In 2 Cor. viii. 23 we read of "the messengers [or apostles] of the churches." In 1 Thess. ii. 6 "Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus" are all spoken of as "the apostles of Christ." In Acts xiv. 4, 14, Barnabas is called an apostle. Probably in these latter passages the signification is very similar to our use of the word "missionary"—one sent out on evangelistic work. A point of uncertainty lies in the question whether the name Junia, which is feminine, should not be Junias. If the latter, it may mean that they were themselves apostles. If, on the other hand, Junia be the proper reading, then it must mean that they were of note among others who were apostles.

## CHRIST'S THREEFOLD PERFECTNESS.

(Concluded from page 213.)

III. We now come to the third part of our subject, the perfect union and blending together of the Divine and the human in the person of the blessed Lord.

*Before* the incarnation we behold Him as God, and as ever with God; *after* the incarnation as the Son of man, who, though being in the form of God, emptied Himself and laid aside His Godhead glory, and became the perfect Man. *Now*, however, the resurrection introduces us a step further, and we find the perfect God and the perfect Man in the God-man; the Godhead glory is no longer set aside, nor the manhood glory eclipsed, but both are blended together into such unutterable beauty and majesty that the manifested *union* becomes as marked a feature after the resurrection and ascension as its non-manifestation was before.

The "days of His flesh" were necessary in order to His emptying of Himself, that He might humble Himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. ii. 8.) That emptying alone enables us to comprehend such expressions as the following: "He grew in wisdom and in stature." Who but God could thus empty Himself so that as man He might grow up in wisdom, who was Himself the only wise God? Who but God could thus set aside what He was, and take up what He was not—lay aside the form of God that He might take upon Himself the form of a servant? This emptying does not lower Him, but infinitely exalts Him as the One who thus, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. But from the moment of victory, when death was

vanquished, the needs be of humiliation was past. Man in Adam had sinned; Jesus as man paid the penalty, and wrought out an everlasting righteousness; and in resurrection Jesus, as Head over all, the Second Man, assumes again "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was." For forty days His mysterious footsteps were seen amongst His chosen witnesses, but not as He had been before. He did not dwell among them as He used to do. Another word is used—He *appeared*, or *was seen* (*οπτομαι*) as one from above, and no longer inhabiting this earth, as afterwards He appeared to Paul when going to Damascus. All this belongs to the world to come, into which Jesus entered at His resurrection, as we shall enter into it by-and-by. Christ had been known after the flesh, been loved and followed, but now He is thus known no more; and therefore for full and perfect fellowship the believer must wait till He has followed Him whither He has ascended—to His Father and to our Father, to His God and to our God.

A clear apprehension of this third point in the perfectness of Christ is essential to a right understanding of what we have revealed of Christ from the Acts to the Revelation. We will allude to a few passages. In Col. i. 14-20 we have Christ spoken of as the God-man in resurrection. This relationship not being seen by some, they would seek to prove, from His being there called "the Firstborn of every creature," that He cannot be God; but they forget the fact that it is as the *risen* One that He is the "Firstborn from the dead." (v. 18; Rev. i. 5.) In His resurrection, creation is recreated, "for *in* (*ev*) Him were all things created," even as in the beginning "all things had been created *by* Him, and *for* Him, and He is before all things, and *in* Him all things consist." The difference between the prepositions *in* and *by*, as used in this pass-

age, needs to be particularly borne in mind, or the meaning of the apostle becomes obscured, if not lost. As the eternal Word, all things were created by Him; but in Him as the risen Son of Man creation attains a new and a more glorious elevation; it stands *in Christ* as before it stood and fell in Adam. Hence in resurrection Christ has become the new Head, "the First-born of all creation;" that *in* the name of Jesus (Jehovah, Saviour) every knee should bow, of things in heaven, of things in earth, and things under the earth. This is the Father's good pleasure. (v. 19.) This fulness is a fulness distinct from that essential fulness which ever dwelt in Him *as God*. It is a fulness which belongs to Christ, as having recreated all things in His *resurrection*, and which He will accomplish in heaven and earth when all are brought together into One; and therefore this whole passage takes its rise out of these words, "The Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood." This *risen* Son is the image of the invisible God, and as such is the Firstborn of the new creation, who, through the blood of the cross, brought life and incorruptibility to light out of death, darkness, and ruin.

In Heb. i. we find the same thing. Jesus in resurrection becomes that which we shall see Him to be when we see Him as He is. In verse 3 it is said, "Who *being* (*ὅς ὦν*) the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power;" but in His humiliation unto death, having purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, thus *becoming* (*γενομενος*) so much better than the angels, as He *inherited* a more excellent name. This inheriting does not refer to His original divine glory, for in that respect all was His. He *made* all things, so that coming into the world "He came unto His own;"

but now the risen Jesus *inherits* all things, for He is the Firstborn. It is in this character of the God-man, the Inheritor of the promises and purposes of God, that we have all the quotations made in this chapter. Even in verse 8, where it is said, speaking of Jesus, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," the words follow immediately after, "Thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above *thy fellows*." As the *Only-begotten* He stood, and ever stands, *alone*, "God blessed for ever" (Rom. ix. 5); but as the *First-begotten* He has the pre-eminence among *many brethren*, and is crowned with glory. As the Captain of salvation, He will stand before the throne, and present the children, His brethren, to God, and say, "Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me."

Thus throughout the epistles Jesus is presented to us, not so much, as we have Him in the first three gospels, as the Son of man, nor so much as the Only-begotten of John's gospel, but as the Lord of glory in resurrection life, whom the world knew not. In the book of the Revelation, Jesus is spoken of as the First-born from the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth, who loves us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, yet He there also reveals Himself to His Church as "the Alpha and the Omega, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." But to comfort the apostle under this exceeding glory of His glorious person (which brought even the beloved John as one dead at His feet), Jesus concludes the revelation of Himself in this chapter with these words: "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." Thus does the Lion of the tribe of Judah become the Lamb in the midst of the throne to the hearts and experiences of His faithful ones, whom His glory will not make afraid.



It is the peculiar glory of the millennial and post-millennial period, that the *offspring* of David and the *Root* of David are seen in one and the same Person, who is at once the Shepherd of Israel and "Jehovah our righteousness." It is in connection with this third aspect of the Sonship of the Lord Jesus that it is said of Him, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee;" and it is to this relationship that we would refer the passage in 1 Cor. xv.: "*Then* shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." These words are spoken of the time subsequent to the destruction of death in the post-millennial period. The relation of Jesus to His people will not then be less intimate than before, but to all eternity the God-man will keep all in holy, blessed subjection to God, who shall then and for ever be all in all. No other centre of union and allegiance, no other source of joy and fellowship, will then be known; for Jesus, as the First-begotten, will hold all in the liberty of sonship, yet subject to Him who then remains still our God and Father in Jesus Christ. Jesus binds Himself, so to speak, that we may remain bound for ever, and stand unmoved through countless ages in that subjection of will and of heart to God in which, and in which alone, exists perfect freedom and perfect harmony.

In all this the glories of the Godhead and of the manhood are so intimately united that they cannot be separated; so blended, that neither the one nor the other is seen or contemplated separately. They are mingled together as the blue and the scarlet dye that are to form the *purple line* in the garment of our Melchizedek; for *purple* is the *third* of those sacred colours which speak of the mysteries of the person of our Immanuel, who "was dead, and is alive for evermore."

H. G.

## GOD'S HIGH PRIEST IN VARIOUS ASPECTS.

*“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, CONSIDER the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”*

Such was the Holy Ghost's blessed way of cheering the fainting “Hebrews,” and delivering them from the snares of Judaism around them. The word “Hebrews” means passers-over, or pilgrims, and includes all who are “strangers and pilgrims,” because “the God of ALL grace” has called them to His own eternal glory by Christ Jesus. Hence the value and help of the epistle to us of the present time, whether by birth we be Jew or Gentile; for all who know Christ are partakers of this heavenly (Greek, super-heavenly) calling; and it is for us to diligently consider HIM, whether as “Apostle” (*i.e.* sent One), or as High Priest. In either character Paul's word applies: “Ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.” (1 Cor. iii. 23.) Christ is emphatically God's Apostle, and God's High Priest. He was and is “called of God” to both offices, and did not appoint Himself; nor did man appoint Him. Hence His *authority* in both these characters as well as His *fitness* for them, and His “perfection” in them by means of resurrection from the dead. His divine and human natures “in the days of His flesh,” as well as His personal experiences and His tasting of death, fitted Him for these two offices; and resurrection from the dead installed Him in them, and gloriously robed Him for them.

Christ as High Priest is our present subject. The theme is as solemn and blessed as it is vast and varied, because it is divine. All now attempted is to mention some

aspects of Jesus in the epistle to the Hebrews as God's High Priest, which show Him to be so glorious to God, and so all-sufficient for us. We would, then, attentively consider Him—

First, as a *redeeming and delivering* High Priest, who ransoms "the Israel of God" (see Gal. v. 16) from the grasp of *the devil*, and the power (authority) of death, and presents them to God as the jewels of His mighty shoulders. Of this the onyx stones on Aaron's *shoulders* were a type. (See Exod. xxviii. 9–12.) This aspect of God's High Priest is shown us in Hebrews ii. 14–18.

Secondly, as a *discerning, omniscient* High Priest, whose eyes and voice are always lovingly searching us to deliver us from the power of *the flesh*, by first detecting it for us, and then enabling us to come to God about it, in His name, in this our "time of need." Of this the jewels on Aaron's *breast* were a type, where *each* name stood in its separateness and individuality to teach that *each* of us is individually known to Him who first is God's High Priest, and next is ours. (See Exod. xxviii. 13–30.) This aspect of the High Priest is seen in Hebrews iv. 11–16.

Thirdly, as a *Melchizedek, kingly* Priest, whose royal and *ever-living* priesthood delivers His people from the tooth and ravages of *time*. In this connection we have the expression, "*Eternal salvation*;" for by means of "such an High Priest" the living saints have "strong consolation" *all the days* of their Hebrew-like pilgrimage, however many they may be; and each succeeding generation of the saints finds Him still "yesterday and to-day" the same, and THEREFORE able "to save them to the uttermost [of time] that come to God by Him, seeing He *ever liveth* to make intercession [*i.e.* do priestly work] for them." Of this the *durability* of Aaron's jewels may serve to remind us; for Aaron and Melchizedek characters are combined

in God's one High Priest. Aaron's garments might wear out, as one after another of the Aaron family used them, but the jewels would remain. This ever-living aspect is the subject of Hebrews vi. and vii., and especially vii. 24-28.

Fourthly, as the High Priest of a heavenly sanctuary, who has "entered in once (*i.e.* abidingly) into the holy place," even THAT "holy place" into which no earthly Aaron, nor any human Melchizedek, was able to enter, not being personally fitted, nor divinely called, to do so. But Jesus, as God's High Priest, has entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in *the presence of God* for us," in resurrection garments of glory and beauty. In this connection we have the expression "eternal redemption," for out of the precious redemption work of death and the grave have come the beauty and glory of our High Priest. It was the *varied colour* and *brilliancy* of Aaron's jewels that were a type of this. This heavenly place and ministry of Christ is the subject of chap. ix., especially *vv.* 24-28.

Fifthly, as a High Priest "over the house of God" (Heb. x. 21), and therefore a High Priest of *blessing*. In this aspect Jesus has *all the treasures of that house* at His disposal to be used for God's glory and for our enrichment and cheer, both as worshippers within the veil and as pilgrims here below in a hostile world. *Cohen* in Hebrew means not only a priest, but also a prince (see 2 Sam. viii. 18; xx. 26), in both which places the word for "chief rulers" is the same as for priests. But princely rank implies *riches* also, and God meant His priests of old to have His own treasures out of which to bless His people Israel. We read again and again in the Old Testament of "the treasures of the house of the Lord," and we are expressly told that "Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses (a high-born one of the Levi family), was *ruler of the treasures.*" (1 Chron. xxvi. 24.) But Jesus, as Heavenly

Priest, is over a wealthier house and a richer treasure than Moses or any of his family could be; and it is His *wealth* and *greatness* as a Priest rather than His divine and lofty *rank* that is before us now. He is not so much a *High Priest* in Heb. x. 21 as He is a *Great Priest* (see Greek *in loco*), to whom all the treasury of the house of God is confided, whether it be the treasury of present grace or of coming glory. All riches of grace and glory are God's now through the death of His Son, and all are put at His Son's disposal because of God's delight in Him. Jesus is "Head over all things to the Church."

Now, as Priest "over the house of God," we may be sure Jesus would delight to bestow on us the best and most suited thing that "house" contained; and what could that be but the Holy Ghost? No other gift out of His resurrection riches could He, as our Priest, bestow that would be so much for God's glory or so suited to our earthly and pilgrim need. He Himself said, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, *I will send Him* to you." Aaron and his sons of old, as God's earthly priests, were to pronounce upon the camp the benediction of the Jehovah "Name" by a threefold utterance of it. That form of blessing had reference to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; but it remained for God's "merciful and faithful High Priest" to come, and by making "reconciliation for the sins of the people," actually obtain for us "the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." Thus Heb. x. 21 alludes to *vv.* 15-18 of the chapter, and in this same connection all apostates from Christ are warned that they do "despite unto *the Spirit* of grace." This wealth and treasury of our High Priest may remind us of the *value* of Aaron's jewels, as we were before pointed to their brilliancy and beauty.

Sixthly, and lastly, we see Jesus in this epistle as a

"*teaching priest.*" (Heb. xiii. 10-16.) In Deut. xxxiii. 10 Moses' own blessing upon the *priestly* tribe of Levi was, "They shall *teach* Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law;" but their teaching was to be by their own *obeying* of the law at all costs, even to the sacrifice of "father" and "mother" if need be, and not by lip teaching merely. Levi began well at mount Sinai (see Exod. xxxii. 26), and Moses delights to say of them, "They have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant." (Deut. xxxiii. 9.) But they failed. They no longer "taught the people knowledge," but misled them, and two of Aaron's own sons died for public disobedience and bad example. (See Lev. x.) They failed to fulfil God's word about His priests; viz., "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh ME, and *before all the people I will be glorified.*" The wine of pride and selfwill had disqualified them utterly as God's teachers of His people; so God Himself solemnly instructed all the camp by their death, and then says to Aaron, "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee . . . that ye may put a difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; and *that ye may teach* the children of Israel all the statutes," &c. (See Lev. x. 9-11.) It was in their office as *teaching priests* that God so sought to preserve them; "for," as Malachi says, "the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth." (Mal. ii. 7.) It was as a standing memorial of *this* failure of His priests that God ordained the day of atonement (see Lev. xvi. 1), on which day Aaron himself was to put off his high-priestly garments and his jewels, and was not to resume them until the special sacrifices of that day had been offered.

And this is the aspect of Christ's high-priesthood referred to in Heb. xiii. 10-16. Outside the camp was where the slain animals of the day of atonement were burned;

and outside the gate was where Jesus died, that He might be our incense-bearing and also our teaching priest. Not that He Himself ever failed in the days of His flesh "to put difference between holy and unholy, or between unclean and clean," or ever drank "wine" or "strong drink" to help Him in His holy ministry. On the contrary, when He was about to enter into His resurrection (eighth day) priesthood by the dark gateway of death, He specially put wine from Him, saying, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come." But though

"His life was pure, without a spot,  
And all His nature clean,"

we as sinners needed that He should first sanctify us with His own blood, and then should teach us the difference between holy and unholy, and between man's unclean "camp" worship and those sacrifices which are true "praise to God;" viz., believers' lips, confessing by the Spirit to Jesus' name. This is God's own mind and teaching, and it leads us forth unto Jesus outside the camp.

It is in this connection, therefore, that the apostle warns us against *false* religious teachers, and says, "Be not carried about with divers and strange *doctrines*;" and implies that no "altar" but that which *feeds* us can truly guide us and instruct us. The same lips of the Righteous One which feed many, are the only lips the voice of which His flock may safely follow; for He is "the Great Shepherd of the sheep." And thus His characters of Priest and Shepherd blend.

Christ as a *teaching priest* was typified in Aaron's dress, not so much by this or that feature of Aaron's jewels, as by the whole of them forming one "breastplate of judgment." The Urim and Thummim of that breastplate were

to be Israel's direct and unerring guidance from God in every perplexing case. By it battles were to be fought under Joshua, and foes to be discerned from friends, so that no Gibeonites might deceive them (See Num. xxvii. 21); and without its teaching and guidance no one could be recognized as of the priesthood concerning whom there was any doubt. (See Ezra ii. 63.)

The Urim and Thummim of that earthly priesthood are all set aside; but Jesus Christ as a teaching priest is "yesterday and to-day the same, and for ever" (see Greek); and we of the nineteenth century are as much without excuse, as any of the better days of the apostles and the Church's unity would have been, if we under His teaching do not discern things that differ, and are not found choosing the good and refusing the evil.

But in order to do this we must indeed obey the text placed at the head of this paper, and must not be content with this only, that "we see Jesus," but as "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," we must attentively "CONSIDER the Apostle and High-priest of our profession." Be it so. Amen.

H. D.

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### NEHEMIAH ; OR, DEVOTEDNESS.

EACH day of our life, if profitably lived, convinces us more deeply of the blessedness of salvation by grace, of peace through believing, and of resting in the finished work of Christ.

With this deepening, happy conviction, there is also the ever-increasing sense of responsibility to please God, the growing desire to know His will in order to do it, and to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing;" in a word, to be *devoted* to the Lord.

To this there are three incentives. The first and



highest is *Love* ; the lowest, *Fear* ; the intermediate, *Reward*.

By love and reward the blessed Master was actuated ; but of fear He knew nothing, for He was incapable of disobedience.

To obey from fear of chastisement is better than to disobey ; and it is lawful to have respect to reward ; but love is the highest motive for obedience, and it is also its true spring. "I love the Father ; and as He gave me commandment, even so I do," said the blessed One. While of Him it is written, "Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame."

He bids us prove our *love* by *keeping* His commandments ; and with the exhortation or command to obey He ever connects the promise of reward, in one form or another ; nor does He fail in seeking to deter us from disobedience by threatening chastisement on account of it.

Nehemiah evidently loved. He loved Jehovah, his God ; he loved Israel, His people, his nation ; and he loved his fatherland. His position, honour, and comforts, enjoyed in the land of his captivity and the palace of the king, could not make him forgetful of them,

He was true to his name, which signifies "Comfort or Aid of Jehovah."\* This he proved for himself and to his people. If Jehovah was his aid and comfort, he was a helper and comforter to them. In this character he is introduced to us by the Holy Ghost.

The book opens with a description of Hanani's visit, with his companions, and their report respecting the distress of the people in Jerusalem, the breaches in her wall,

\* His father's name was Hachaliah, which means "Dark flashing of Jehovah ;" and this followed by the son's name, "The consolation or aid of Jehovah," aptly teaches chastisement and comfort, or captivity and respite or return.

and her burnt gates. Alas, alas ! what had sin done for the people and city of Jehovah !

Nehemiah sorrowed. His ear affected his heart, his heart saddened his countenance ; he grieved for the dishonour done to Jehovah's name, and for the sorrows of his brethren. If he could have forgotten God like those around him, or been indifferent to that which he heard of his brethren's condition, he might have revelled as others, virtually saying, " Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But he could not ; he was *devoted*, and therefore he *grieved*.

He was sorrowful, and perhaps lonely, in the land of the enemy, but not desolate ; for he knew Jehovah, and immediately poured out his soul before Him in prayer and confession. In due time the answer came ; for when performing his duty as cup-bearer to the king, the sadness of his countenance drew forth the king's sympathy, and he questioned him as to the cause ; indeed, he decided that it was not sickness, but sadness of heart. Nehemiah replied to the king's question in few but touching words, " Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed by fire ?" This moved the king more deeply, and he said, " For what dost thou make request ?" To this question Nehemiah did not at once reply ; for in his affection and trust Jehovah had a higher place than the king. His sorrow was to God, and his desires were held in subjection to His will. Happy man, and one who could not but be prospered ! He trusted Jehovah to dictate his reply to the king, and was not disappointed.

It is a great thing, by the power of God, to be masters of ourselves ; to hold everything in dependence on, and in subjection to, Him ; to imitate the blessed Master who said,

"As I hear I judge;" and when asked a grave question, stooped down and wrote on the ground, as if waiting for the reply, and His answer was unanswerable. Beloved reader, pray first, then decide, speak, and act.

Having prayed, Nehemiah answered the king, asking to be sent to the city of his father's sepulchres that he might build it. His request was granted, and he set the king a time for his return. Moreover, the king, in answer to his request, granted him further favours—letters to the governors beyond the river, and to forest-keepers for the obtaining of wood to build withal. All this he traced up to God, to His "good hand upon him."

Without delay he departed. He made haste to do Jehovah's will, and in due course arrived in Jerusalem.

Jehovah was now working for His people, and Satan was acting against them. Nehemiah's step was an aggressive one, therefore (as must ever be the case) it provoked his enemies; "Sanballat and Tobiah were exceedingly grieved that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel."

Here observe the wisdom of this devoted one—wisdom, the companion of humility; for "with the lowly is wisdom." (Prov. xi. 2.) He did not sound a trumpet, he raised not his voice, nor did he as yet communicate even privately with either rulers, nobles, priests, or people, save with a few men who accompanied him, and went up by night to view the broken walls. He prayed, viewed, pondered, and prayed again before acting. He practically put counsel before might, and then with good advice made his war. Oh for wisdom ever to know time and judgment, to obey the injunction of Psalm xxxvii. 3-8!

This done, he communicated with those who did the work; told them what was in his heart, and of the king's kindness, through the good hand of God upon him.

Having first sought Jehovah, and then consulted with his brethren, we see him reaping as he had sown. He had sown by devotedness, not only to Jehovah, but to his brethren, and he reaped in their devotedness to him. He had sown in loving self-denying service *for* them, and he reaped in willing service *from* them; for they began at once to work. "Let us arise and work," said they; "so they strengthened their hands unto this good work."

Thus they had fellowship with Nehemiah in service, and they also shared his sorrows; for the scorn which he had endured now fell on them also: their enemies scorned them, and despised their work. Steps which honour God are steps into sorrow, and service must ever bring trial to the servant.

Their enemies taunt and lie, and they are met, as we should meet all such things, with words of faith in God, and independence of the world. "The God of heaven will prosper us, therefore we His servants will arise and build. But ye have no part, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem." Thus should the children of God answer both the professing and profane in Christendom, who reproach them for their simple life of obedience to the Word, and their manner of assembling and serving.

The work progressed, an account of which we get in chap. iii., with the names of the workers, and the portions which they repaired. An honourable list is given of rulers, priests, apothecaries, &c., which the reader will do well to ponder. Only one of them I will notice. It is said of Baruch the son of Zabbai, who commenced where Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, left off, that "he earnestly repaired the other piece." He was an *earnest* worker, and (as his name implies) a blessed one, devoted also to Jehovah and to his brethren.

Beloved, God's work now is indeed like the work then,

“a good work,” and deserves to be done earnestly ; and as then, so also now, the earnest worker will be blessed. Amid the ruins, broken-down walls, and rubbish of Christendom, with its worldliness, formality, creeds, and ceremonies, with the sinful and shameful divisions in it, let us work earnestly for God, by preaching, assembling, teaching, serving, and suffering, in thorough subjection to His word, and to that only.

But let us not mistake bustle and noise for earnestness, nor be anxious as to the amount of work. It is not said that Baruch’s piece was very long, and we believe it was quietly done, but he did it heartily.

In the making of the tabernacle a thousand years previously, Bezaleel and the spinning women also doubtless wrought earnestly, perhaps losing all thought of themselves while doing Jehovah’s will and work, but secretly and silently waiting until their finished, goodly work should speak for them. Let us also remember that we live, serve, and suffer chiefly for the day of Christ, and should patiently wait for it.

The work advanced, and the sorrows of the workers increased. Their enemies changed their behaviour, adding rage to scorn ; they were provoked. “When Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.” If Sanballat and his companions changed their behaviour, Nehemiah also altered his manner of meeting them. At the first he prayed and replied, but now he only appealed to God ; he answered not their wrathful, scornful words, but went on quietly and steadily with the work of the wall. Thus was the half of it completed ; “for the people had A MIND TO WORK.” Let us note this. The mind to work indicated a revival among them, a marked change from the time and mind when the people said respecting the temple, “The

time is *not come*, the time to build the house of Jehovah" (Haggai i. 2); and they ran to build every man his own house, and that a ceiled house. Then they had no mind to work, therefore time was lost and opportunity allowed to pass; but now both these are used.

Every Christian has more or less time and opportunity for service, and all have ability for some kind of service; but, alas! all have not a mind to serve or work. Beloved reader, let us cultivate fellowship with God, which will affect our hearts, give us a mind to work, and enable us to work *earnestly* for Him to whom we are indebted for heart, mind, ability, and opportunity, and who will richly reward our service here and hereafter. "Of Him, through Him, and to Him are all things; to Him be glory."

The difficulties of the work still increased. If Nehemiah and his companions had hitherto gone ankle deep in the waters of trouble, those waters were now up to the knee; for when their adversaries heard that the breaches in the wall were being made up, their rage increased, and wrathful words gave place to open warfare. "They conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder the work." Their object evidently was to surprise the Jews, thus throw them into confusion, and stop the work. But there was in that day, as well as in the days of Daniel, "a God who revealeth secrets." He could do so, either by a voice direct to His servant, or through priest or prophet; or He could accomplish the same end by suggesting to His devoted servant the possibility of such a scheme, and also the method for frustrating the design of the enemy.

He is the same God now, and can effect the same for us in our difficulties; only let us trust Him, and be true to Him, *devoted* to Him and to His work. H. H.

(To be concluded, D.V.)

## ELISHA.

*(Continued from page 216.)*

## ELISHA GOES TO THE JORDAN.

THE next recorded incident is, that the sons of the prophets, not having sufficient accommodation where they resided with Elisha, propose to him to go to the Jordan, cut down timber, and erect there another dwelling. Several things are here indicated. Their poverty is apparent. In our day, if the house is too small, we send for a builder, who provides all the materials, and receives payment upon the completion of his task. This idea does not suggest itself to them. They had neither builder nor money. Further, they are so pinched for room that their only resource is to migrate bodily to another place. It is not that they want a healthier locality, or one better adapted to carry on trade or agriculture; for they do not appear to have any settled occupation; neither is the choice governed by a desire for a more favourable position for the prophetic office. It is simply that timber is to be had there, with which they may construct a building sufficiently large to hold them all. They propose to do all the work themselves; and rude must have been the construction, formed of green timber by inexperienced hands, and covered in with such materials as the forest could furnish. Had the wealth Naaman brought with him been accepted a splendid building might have been obtained, well provided with every comfort, and in a carefully-selected spot.

But such would not have shown out the character of Elisha, nor his mission. Content to dwell with poor men, in the midst of discomfort, and partaking with them of such poor fare as came to hand, he allied himself with

those whose hearts God had touched and set apart for Himself, sharing their destitution, in separation from the ungodly court and nation. His God had made him and them witnesses to the nation. Whenever an emergency arose he was forthcoming to do good; but he would not mix himself up with them, "choosing rather," like Moses of old, "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Now when they ask him to go with them he consents; kindness and self-renunciation he always displays. None are driven away by his austerity. When in cutting down the timber the axe-head falls into the Jordan and is lost, Elisha has but to break off a twig and throw it into the water, and the heavy iron floats on the surface and is recovered; the loss meanwhile having been keenly felt. The wielder of the axe seeing it swim, hesitates to touch it till encouraged by the prophet. Perhaps the strangeness of the circumstance at first alarmed him; the supernatural, however graciously designed, seldom fails to arouse the superstitious within us.

In this sympathy, and readiness to afford assistance, on the part of Elisha, we see typified the beloved Son of God, who was always at the command of others. If invited to a marriage-feast, he goes; or to a Pharisee's house, where He is not even treated with customary respect, still He goes. If Jairus asks Him to come into his house, and heal his daughter, at once He sets out. If mothers ask His blessing on their children, He bestows it. Do the elders of Capernaum beseech Him to come and heal the Centurion's servant, He assents, and accompanies them. Ever accomplishing the most gracious acts in the most gracious manner, no benignity was equal to His. Inheriting heaven and earth, with perfect authority over all therein, since all was created by Him and for Him, He



was nevertheless most condescending, the most gracious Being who ever appeared among men. Such as He was then He is now, though surrounded with the majesty and glory of the heavens.

#### ANOTHER INVASION BY BENHADAD.

The kindness of the God of Israel in healing the Syrian general seems to have had little effect upon his master, for in a year or two Benhadad again invaded the land. But wherever he designs to encamp, in order to take Jehoram by surprise, Elisha is enabled to disconcert his measures, and deliver the king, by sending him word of the intentions of the enemy. So repeatedly are his plans thus frustrated, that Benhadad can only account for it by suspecting treachery among his own people. One wiser than the rest informs him that Elisha the prophet tells his king what the Syrian king says in his bed-chamber. Benhadad, caring nothing for these displays of divine wisdom and power, looking at them merely as obstacles to be dexterously overcome, sends to ascertain where Elisha is to be found. He is informed that he is in Dothan, the very place where Joseph was seized and sold by his brethren. (See Gen. xxxvii.) At once a large force, with horses and chariots, forming the most alarming military equipment of those days, is sent, who surround the town by night, intending in the morning to take him.

The prophet's servant, rising early, discovers the enemy, and is in great alarm; but Elisha assures him that there are more on their side than on that of their opponents, and prays that his servant's eyes may be opened. The prayer was granted, and he saw the whole hill on which Dothan stood encircled with horses and chariots of fire between themselves and the Syrians to bar the approach of the enemy.

When the Syrian army approaches to take Elisha, he prays to the Lord, not for his own safety, for of that he is assured, but that he would smite them with blindness. The whole force is accordingly smitten with blindness. He who formed the eye, and gave it the power of seeing, can with a word obscure that vision, or restore it when or how He pleases. Zechariah foretells that in a future siege of Jerusalem the eyes of the adversaries will consume away in their sockets. It needs but the withdrawal of God's upholding care, according to the word, "In Him [or by Him] we live, and move, and have our being."

Elisha now offers to conduct them to the man they sought, the king, and they follow the friendly offer. Strange must have been the spectacle of a host—horse, foot, and chariots—stumbling as they went along, like men in midnight darkness. Wearisome too the journey, the mass moving on after the head of the column, none knowing whither they were going, nor when the march would terminate. It only needed that the officer at the head should listen for the footfall of their guide, and all the rest would of necessity follow. Neither before nor since has so remarkable a sight been beheld. A single unarmed man could be observed leading captive a well-appointed host of warriors, without a sword having been drawn or a drop of blood shed. Sending on word to the king, who appears to have his forces drawn up in readiness to receive them, he conducts the Syrians through the gates of Samaria into the royal presence.

Jehoram finding his enemies within his grasp, can think of nothing better than destroying them forthwith, and asks leave to do so. The prophet, taught by the Spirit of Christ, has other designs. He not only prohibits it, but bids him "set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master."

Great indeed must have been the consternation of these men, when their eyesight was restored, at finding themselves shut up in a walled city, wearied with a long march in what was to them worse than the darkness of night, and now brought suddenly face to face with the army of the nation they had dared to invade. Under other circumstances instant death would have been their lot; they could have expected nothing else. Not merely, however, are their lives spared, but they are to be made special heralds of mercy, and they have to carry back to Syria the tidings of all that had occurred.

The extraordinary tale could not be discredited, since so many witnesses were there to attest the facts. Fresh proof was thus afforded to Syria, and also to Israel, of the power of their God, and of His goodwill to His enemies, if so be that the wayward hearts of His back-sliding people might be won again to Him. No result, however, is traceable as to Israel; but the bands of Syria came no more into the land. It was useless after this to attempt any such inroads, and perhaps the mercy of the Most High had for the time touched their consciences. Jehoram, too, seems to have been wrought upon; for he entered into the prophet's plans, and not only spared the lives of his enemies, but prepared for them "great provisions." Yet his evil heart remained unchanged still.

R. N.

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#### NOTES AND REPLIES.

*What is God's "unspeakable gift" spoken of in 2 Cor. ix. 15?*

THE "gift" is surely Christ Himself. In chap. viii. 9 He is spoken of as the One who, though rich, became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich, and this is made the very groundwork of the exhortations to liberality contained in these two chapters. We are called to bestow our gifts on those who need (thereby supplying "the want of the saints"), and are reminded of our state of want out

of which we were delivered by that 'Gift of gifts—all other gifts in one.' This is confirmed by the word used by the apostle to characterize this gift, a word of too deep and full a significance to refer to any grace in the Corinthians. The word is *ανεκδιηγητος*, *that which cannot be told out in full and in detail*. In John i. 18 it is said of Christ that He "declared" or *told out* (*εξηγησατο*) what the Father was, as we read in chap. xvii. 26: "I made known unto them thy name." Eternity only can tell out what the gift of God is. This interpretation is also confirmed by a careful reading of the previous verse, where we should render "for the surpassing grace of God *upon* you (*εφ' υμιν*)," words almost identical with those in Ephesians ii. 7, where we read of "the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness *upon* us (*εφ' ημας*) in Christ Jesus." That for which thanks were rendered on behalf of the Corinthians was the grace of God in its surpassing riches that rested *upon* them, and which was borne witness to *in* them by the willing distribution of their gifts to others.

*Is Nathanael of John i. 45 the same as the apostle Bartholomew?*

THEY are supposed to be the same. It was Philip who found Nathanael, and brought him to Christ; and in Matthew x. 3 "Philip and Bartholomew" are named together; they also stand in the same order in Mark iii. 18 and in Luke vi. 14. The name Bartholomew is not found in the gospel of John, but Nathanael is mentioned twice. Bartholomew signifies "son of Tholmai" (a name that occurs in 2 Samuel as that of the king of Geshur, whose daughter was Absalom's mother), and Tolmai may have been Nathanael's father, in which case either name might be used, as Peter might have been called Simon or Barjonas.

*Can Zech. xiii. 6—"What are these wounds in thine hands?"—be applied to Christ?*

THOUGH the language forcibly reminds us of the nail-pierced hands of our Lord, the context forbids its application to Him. It is evidently connected with what has been previously said of the false prophet, of whom we read in verse 3 that his father and mother shall pierce him through when he prophesieth; that is, he shall be treated as they treated the true Prophet, "whom they pierced." (xii. 10.) In both passages the same Hebrew word is used. The reference to our Lord commences with verse 7, and then in the character of the Shepherd, rather than of the Prophet. In all scriptural interpretation it is essential never to violate the context. If we do, there is no saying where a false interpretation may not lead us.

## CHRIST'S THREEFOLD PERFECTNESS.

(Continued from page 221.)

IV. We have already considered, briefly and separately, though, alas! feebly, the threefold perfections of the Lord Jesus; but there is still another point to be contemplated; that is, their entwining *together* in His undivided PERSON.

From the blue and the purple and the scarlet the cord was made, from which the high priest's garments were to be woven; and we must now contemplate the three, not as mingled together like the blue and the scarlet, to make the purple, but as united together to form the one sacred cord which is to bind us to Christ for ever. This may be illustrated by three quotations from the Revelation in reference to Christ, which if entwined into one will enable us to understand the mystery before us. First, Christ is "He which is, and which was, and which is to come," the Almighty—all blue; secondly, He is "the Lamb that was slain"—all scarlet; and thirdly, "He is the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning Star"—all purple. These three united, but not confounded, present to us the *one sacred person* of the Lord Jesus Christ. In viewing His relationship to us, nothing can be taken from His person without marring its perfectness. This threefold cord will alone bear the mighty weight of a new earth and heavens, and all therein, through all eternity—a cord that extends from the throne where, within the veil, the anchor of hope can now rest in safety, to the remotest bounds of the creation of God. It is Christ in His threefold might who sustains the circle of the living creatures, the four

and twenty elders, and the innumerable multitude of the palm-bearing host around the throne, also the wider circle of the angelic hosts, and likewise the outermost circle of the whole creation. All are sustained by Him in their proper place around the throne. In heaven all is harmony, and all will be harmony on earth when He comes whose right it is, and who with this threefold cord of His love will bind all to Himself and to the throne of God.

We need *discriminating* views of Christ in order to comprehend in any measure the infinite height and depth of that glorious fulness that dwells in Him. Thus only can the infinite be unfolded to finite minds. It is God's way of teaching; and from not bearing this in mind many have charged God foolishly, and others have allowed God's truth to remain an inexplicable mystery, as if to understand it were impossible, and to explain it were profane. Christ is an infinite person—infinite alike in Himself and in His relationships to the Father, to the Church, to Israel, and to the world; and when God would teach us about Him, whether in the types of the Old Testament or in the histories of the New, the same manner of teaching is observed. The book of Leviticus gives the various phases of the one sacrifice, and the four gospels give us the various phases of the one life, whether as the Son of Abraham and David in Matthew, the Messenger of the covenant in Mark, the Son of man in Luke, or as Son of God in John. While, however, we take this only possible way to acquaint our feeble minds with the Lord's sacred person, we must be careful to hold all together, and see but *one Christ*, and say, with the apostle, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

It is not to be wondered at that in the Church defective views or opposite errors should have been entertained on such a subject, in itself so vast and so profound; or that

the apostle John, when summing up the utmost that fathers in Christ could attain unto, says, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning." The child could say, "Abba, Father," and could read in the cross sin forgiven for His name's sake; the young man might overcome the world, and be strong in faith and grace; but these were as steps leading from the cross and its perfect work to the throne of God and that infinite Person who is in the midst of the throne.

Let us all be careful to *begin* to learn about Christ at the cross, for that is God's appointed door of entrance, through which must pass all to whom the Father will reveal the Son. Let us remember that to know Jesus is a matter of revelation to the soul, and therefore no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost.

This mystery of Christ has ever been a cause of strife in one form or another. It is in itself a proof of how fundamental all the truths of Christ's person are held to be by the Church, that there has probably never been a revival of spiritual power in which saints have not had to contend afresh, more or less, for what concerns the person of the Lord. Church questions rise and fall. There may be more ceremonialism in one age than in another, more bondage or more liberty, as the case may be, and yet godliness of life. Very differently, however, has the living Church of God ever regarded anything that affected the person of Him who is at once the foundation-stone and the top-stone of all the building of God. It is beautiful to see this sensitiveness respecting the glory of the Lord; but, alas! that with it there should have been manifested such unholy passions, such ungodly contentions, such un-Christ-like deportment, that in a matter so holy, so deep, so divine, man should have trod so often with feet not unshod, where angels stand with covered faces. Sad is the picture that

these controversies have ever exhibited, as if deep feeling were incompatible with holiest awe and lowliest humility. The reason of all such contentions doubtless is that so few hold the truth "according to the proportion of faith." To one it is mostly blue, to another scarlet, to a third purple; to but a few is it a threefold cord, infinite in its individual proportion, infinite in its perfect entirety. With some the Godhead eclipses the manhood; with some the manhood mars the Godhead; with others the unity of the Person is destroyed, and both are misplaced.

In these days, when unsoundness in doctrine is so poisoning many streams that ought to flow with living waters from the Person of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, we are to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. None are free from this responsibility; and let those who think they are, and who would fain throw the duty of trying things that differ and of trying the spirits, exclusively upon pastors and teachers in the Church, read attentively John's second epistle. In it the apostle held the elect lady responsible for rejecting all who brought not the doctrine of Christ—the Christ of God. He commanded her neither to receive such into her house, nor to bid them God-speed, lest she became responsible for their evil deeds and a partaker in them. This thought should deeply exercise the minds of God's people, many of whom think little of attending the preaching and teaching of men unsound in the faith, regardless of the dishonour done to God thereby, and of the injury souls may sustain, for which He will hold us accountable. The greater the laxity in these matters in the Church, the greater need for the alarm to be sounded. The Lord guide us into all truth, and into the right proportion of all truth, to the praise of the glory of that grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

H. G.



## “DEEP SLEEP.”

GEN. ii. 21 ; xv. 12 ; 1 SAM. xxvi. 12, &c.

ON the subject of the word “Bosom,” as it occurs in the New Testament, it was remarked in a former volume \* that much closely-linked instruction may sometimes be gained by studying even a *single word* in the different places in which God has used it. The same may be said of the Hebrew word for “deep sleep” (*tardēmah*).

By “deep sleep” is meant in Scripture something quite distinct and different from even the most profound or lengthened ordinary slumber. It evidently means a something direct from the hand of God, and supernatural. Just as leprosy was an infliction direct from God—a *miraculous* disease (for it was found in a garment, or the wall of a house, as well as in men and women; see Lev. xiii.); and as manna was a special and *miraculous* article of food, and not any part of the six days’ creation, as all other food is; and as the “fire” on the altar (Lev. ix. 24) was lit by God Himself, and was not ordinary flame; so also does “deep sleep” come before us in Old Testament Scripture as something peculiarly from God. Indeed, the very word for it (*tardēmah*) is altogether different from the Hebrew word for ordinary sleep (*shēhnāh*).

Even ordinary sleep is death-like; for it is a nightly suspension of all faculty and all consciousness; and our *usual* sleeping and waking may be fitly used to instruct us respecting death and resurrection, as it so often has been. But the unwonted *deep sleep* was a lesson immediately from God to instruct Old Testament saints. It

\* See *Golden Lamp*, vol. v., First Series, p. 309.

taught them that death was, not as some are pleased to call it, "the debt of nature," but was a mysterious appointment from God Himself, and had a depth in it beyond the act of dying only. It has been said—

"It is not all of life to live,  
Nor all of death to die."

And the different instances given us of this "deep sleep" suffice to show that this depth and awfulness of death is only blessing to the righteous, while it is divine doom to the wicked.

Five passages are before us where *tardēmah* occurs, and they form a chain of instruction both cheering and solemn.

Gen. ii. 21 stands first. "And the Lord God caused a *deep sleep* to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of His ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made (builded; see marg.) He a woman, and brought her unto the man."

Here we have "deep sleep" at once before us in all its wonder and its might as a divine act, and in all its precious yet most solemn teaching. Who but God *could* cast Adam into such a "sleep" as this—a sleep in which his flesh and bone could be taken from him, and he be waked from it only to behold the object for his love and his delight, which had been fashioned for him during his sleeping moments!

It was indeed a mighty act both of the power and skill of the Lord God (Jehovah-Elohim); and dark and deep though the "sleep" had been, its whole object was to increase Adam's life-long joy, and give him one like to himself, a "helpmeet," a true companion.

Such was "deep sleep" before sin entered the world—painless yet preciously fruitful in its lasting results both to Adam and to God. And such will death itself be, even

the deep death of Jesus, when *looked back upon* from new heavens and a new earth, where Jesus and His saints will for ever dwell as in their eternal home, when sin and death are left behind. What delight to God, and what delight to Christ, as "the last Adam," will be these results of His "deep sleep!"

But how unlike the death of Jesus, when He was enduring it, to the painless sleep of Adam! In utmost agony was He pierced at the tree, and the rib of His strength was taken from Him, as the only possible way for Him one day to look upon His church, the heavenly Jerusalem, *built up* for ever, and say of us, as His redeemed, "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh."

Thus does the first mention of "deep sleep" include within it, by means of type and antitype, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the blessed end of all God's *grace to us as sinners*.

The second place of "deep sleep" is Gen. xv. 12. "And when the sun was going down, a *deep sleep* fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him." Here the deep sleep stands connected with the instruction of God's saved ones after they have believed, whether Abram or ourselves, as to *their earthly path*. It was to be a path of trial and affliction. God's voice to Abram while he lay in it was, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs . . . and they shall afflict them four hundred years." Hence in Abram's case "a horror of great darkness" accompanied the deep sleep. But if Abram's soul at all knew what the mystery of the deep sleep meant, if it did at all point him back to that early and gracious purpose of God expressed by *Adam's* deep sleep in the garden, then it would strengthen him to bear the horror of any passing earthly "darkness," however great.

How much more in *our* case, now that "the Son of God has 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." Shame on us, indeed, if *we* shrink from the valley of this world's death-shade, however dark it may yet be. No; let each one who is Christ's, and is thus made of Abraham's seed, and an heir according to the promise (see Gal. iii. 29) rather say with David, "I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." (Ps. xxiii. 4.)

Before this "deep sleep" came upon Abram, with all its affecting instruction as to his children's future path here below, Abram had taken, at God's bidding, "an heifer," a "she-goat," and "a ram," all of three years old, "a turtle-dove and a young pigeon" (every variety of sacrifice), had slain them, and had been all the day learning their value before God, as he guarded them from the birds of prey. How prepared he thus was for the meaning of the deep sleep, and for the horror of the great darkness!

And shall not *we* say, "If God be for us, who can be against us? He surely (see Greek) 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?"\*

The third mention of "deep sleep" in Scripture is in

\* In Daniel viii. 17 and x. 9 another form of the same Hebrew term is used—"Now as He was speaking with me, I was in a *deep sleep* on my face toward the ground." "And when I heard the voice of His words, then was I in a *deep sleep* on my face, and my face toward the ground." Here we see Daniel in the same "deep sleep" from God as Abram had been in long before, and for the same object; viz., as his preparation for learning the future of God's people. The solemn things of these "times of the Gentiles" in which we are living had to be more fully unfolded to Daniel; and once and again therefore is he placed in this mysterious sleep. It is the especial prerogative of the Holy Ghost to show us "things to come" (see John xvi. 13, 14); but they are revealed only to such as have learned out of God's "deep sleep" their own inability to know them.

the case of persecuting king Saul, and it shows us *God's protection* of His afflicted ones in their path of trial. In 1 Sam. xxvi. 12 we read: "So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they got them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; for a DEEP SLEEP from the Lord was fallen upon them." Here the "deep sleep" changes sides, and is seen by the very eyes of God's people to have come down upon their bitterest enemies. David had no hand in this, as he before had had in slaying the giant; he had only *to see it*, and be instructed, and call to mind Psalm xci. (written probably by Moses), "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." And again, "Only with thine eyes shalt thou *behold* and *see* the reward of the wicked."

But while God's enchaining of Saul and his men in *deep sleep* was deliverance to David, both present and future, it was a divine warning to the persecutors. Death in all its depth and awfulness was the sure end of the proud and guilty course that they were pursuing, and this miraculous trance-like sleep was a warning to them of it. For a little moment Saul felt it, and said to David, "I have sinned: return, my son David. . . . behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly." But, alas! it was to David only that he said it, and not really in his heart to God; hence he returned again to his wickedness, as the dog to his own vomit, and he perished in death by his own hand on mount Gilboa. Thus also Pharaoh perished when persecuting Moses, and Sennacherib when reproaching Hezekiah. In them and in king Saul we see that fulness of death which is the end of the wicked; it is no more an actual sleep, or an annihilation, than was Christ's "deep sleep" when, by the grace of God, He tasted death on the tree for each one given Him by God. "Deep sleep" was

dying agony to Jesus; and religious but persecuting Saul should have been warned by the "deep sleep" in which God had laid him, and so should be all in our own time who, Pharisee-like, are "pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness." (See Prov. xxx. 12-14.)

These are the instances given us of this miraculous sleep from God. In other scriptures it is definitely referred to as a theme of instruction and warning.

In Proverbs xix. 15 we read, "Slothfulness casteth into a *deep sleep*, and an idle soul shall suffer hunger." Here it is used to warn God's children against sloth of soul.

True it is, blessed be God, that no child of His can ever come into that death of the sinner of which the "deep sleep" of the former passages so solemnly speaks to us; but nevertheless, *incalculable* is the loss incurred by a child of God through spiritual slothfulness in this his brief time-state; it is incalculable both because it is loss to him, not in earthly things, but in things of God, and in things of God that would have been his own *for ever* had he but been awake in his soul and diligent. As Paul said of the prize that he and others aimed at, "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; *but we an INCORRUPTIBLE*" (1 Cor. ix. 25); and Peter says to those who are shepherding others' souls, "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory *that fadeth not away*." (1 Peter v. 4.) Is not, therefore, the loss incurred by sloth of soul in a child of God simply *incalculable*?

What wonder then that God warns against it by likening it to the "deep sleep!" The Christian who is slothful is for the time *as if* he were not a Christian at all. He *is* one, by God's mercy to him; but he might well be mistaken at times for an utterly unregenerate person, just as Lot might in Sodom, or, alas! too many might in our own

day. God, in His word, repeatedly warns His own children by pointing them to the state and the doom of the wicked, just as here the Christian is cautioned against the "deep sleep." It is to real believers that Paul says, "If ye live after the flesh, *ye shall die*" (Rom viii. 13); *i.e.* you are *on the way that leads to* eternal death, however true it be that, as God's children, you cannot actually perish. Again, to those "risen with Christ" he says, in Col. iii. 5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. . . . *for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.*"

Isaiah xxix. 10 is a corresponding passage. In it "deep sleep" is declared to be the moral state of a merely formalist and worldly people. "The Lord *hath poured out upon you,*" says Isaiah, "the spirit of DEEP SLEEP, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath He covered." These words point to a state of final and hopeless spiritual darkness, and may remind us of our Lord's own warning to the same nation, that their continued rejection of God's messages of love would end in "the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" which should "not be forgiven unto men." Compare also Paul's awful word about the Jewish gospel-opposers of his own time: "They please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the *wrath is come upon them to the uttermost*" (1 Thess. ii. 15, 16); and his prophecy, in 2 Thess. ii., of yet future rejectors of Christ, both Jews and Gentiles: "God *shall send them strong delusion,* that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." What can more resemble Isaiah's word of Israel having the "spirit of deep sleep" poured upon them by God?

Surely we see the beginnings in our own time of this last "deep sleep" of gospel rejectors; whole districts even of our favoured British isles, where till lately all classes refused the "deep sleep" of Ritualism and Romanism, and raised some sort of protest against it, are now sunk, and are still sinking deeper and deeper into it. Well may we accompany our feeble gospel testimony to all around us with the same warning word with which Paul warned men when he quoted another verse of this Isaiah passage (Acts xiii. 40, 41), and said, "Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish."

There remain for our notice two other uses of the Hebrew word *tardēmah*; viz., in Job iv. 13, and xxxiii. 15.

In both these passages "deep-sleep" is recognized as a form of divine instruction that "falleth upon men;" but a comparison of the two shows that while the results were real and from God in some cases, in others the teachings were merely human and shallow. In Job iv. 13 Eliphaz claims to have had the "deep sleep" teaching; but the vision he describes seems full of himself rather than of God, and it brought neither heart-conviction nor comfort to afflicted Job.

But in Job xxxiii. 14, 15, youthful but wise Elihu gives to "deep sleep" its divine place and holy use. He speaks of it as God's "line upon line, and precept upon precept," for His saints, "that He may . . . hide pride from man," and may "keep back his soul from the pit and his life from perishing by the sword." Elihu puts this "deep sleep" as God's gentler and more chosen form of instruction, and as one only changed for the severer teachings of bodily sickness and pain when our dulness makes the latter needed. (See the word "also," *vv.* 19-28. Compare Ps. xxxii. 9, and many other passages.)



Such were some of God's ways of speaking to His saints of old “in slumberings upon the bed,” to open the ears of men, and seal their instruction (see Job xxxiii. 16); but our New Testament privilege is greater. “The deep things of God”—the things He “hath prepared for them that love Him”—are now taught more fully and more continuously *by the Spirit through the Word*. Oh, may grace be given us to receive this yet richer teaching so truly by the Spirit that all may see and hear in us, that we do indeed “know the things that are freely given us of God!”  
Amen. H. D.

“BEHOLD, HE COMETH!”

“Behold, *He cometh!*” Hear, 'tis Jehovah's word,  
Who sitteth on the circle of the earth,  
Who rideth in His might on wingèd wind,  
Whose cloudy chariot speeds with tireless power,  
Whose fingers poise the everlasting hills,  
And unto whom the destinies of nations  
Are as dust. 'Tis He who claims thine ear.

“Behold!” It is the ushering word  
To launch another age for Jesus  
Into being; for all the ages since  
Primeval earth until the final end  
Are His inheritance; hence due to Him  
Are all the triumphs of eternal love.

“Behold, *He cometh!*” He, the co-equal Son,  
Whose glory was His Father's boundless love,  
Whose dwelling-place His bosom, and to Whom  
The angels pour an ocean-tide of praise  
As He descends for conquest over him  
Who war had made in heaven, but now is doomed  
To final judgment in the lake of fire.

He tabernacled here in sinless flesh;  
His feet were weary with the march on earth,  
His heart oft bled, His pitying eyes oft wept,  
His words were spirit, and His touch was life,  
Or hearing, healing, sight, or strength, or speech.

The "Man of Sorrows" was His title here ;  
 His furrowed cheek, and plowèd back, betrayed  
 His full acquaintance with the keenest grief.  
 But *Calvary* depicts the scene of blood,  
 Scene of most tragic death and direst woe ;  
 For see the accumulated weight of sin which  
 Pile on pile was heaped and laid on Him,  
 And there was met with Justice infinite,  
 Which on the Bearer must inflict its stripes,  
 Even to the hiding of His Father's face.

It is enough. That righteous sword was plunged  
 Into that sinless heart, and as the pall  
 Lifts from creation, so does the shining  
 Of complacent love break in upon His soul,  
 And "Father" greets again Jehovah's ear.

Oh, how the deep responses of the throne  
 Wake up, and holy ministers obey  
 With joy the errand to be watchers in His grave.  
 Yea, more ; for hear the salutation shouts  
 As He ascends in resurrection power :  
 "Lift up your heads, ye everlasting doors,"  
 For He the mighty One in battle enters in,  
 The Lord of hosts, He is the king of glory !

"Behold, He *cometh!*" But *how?* Why? When?  
 A *cloud* received Him—mayhap angelic too—  
 For they themselves with outspread wings would cast  
 A shadow on the blaze of glory's light,  
 Since they are but creations of His hand.  
 But "in like manner" shall this same *One* come.  
 'Tis angel-word, a message from the throne,  
 Again rehearsed to John, the banished saint,  
 On Patmos Isle—"Behold, He comes with clouds,"  
 With mighty trumpet and archangel voice,  
 To rend the catacombs, roll back the sod,  
 And bid the heaving billows of the deep  
 Give up the sainted dust, which waits His word  
 Of transformation to the likeness of Himself.

But *why?* Does He esteem His Father's gift  
 As *small?* which was predestinated His  
 Ere dusty atoms were to mountains piled,  
 Or ocean's bounds were girt with rock or sand ?

Or is *the* pearl—for whom He sold His all,  
 And sank beneath the dark cold waves  
 Of death to make His own—*no worth?*  
 Or is *the* Bride He sought, redeemed, and clothed  
 With bridal garments of the Father's love,  
 E'en righteousness divine, to *Him unbeautiful?*  
 Ah, no! for she, the lily here among the thorns,  
 Must by His gen'rous hand be gathered  
 To adorn His own dear breast, and fill  
 With holy fragrance of His boundless love  
 The throne itself.

But *when?* vain reason asks,  
 While faith waits on, content to trust His word—  
 “*I quickly come.*” Oh, blessed, glorious hope!  
 At which the desert and the vestibule of bliss converge,  
 When faith is lost in sight, and brightest hope  
 Fades in the full fruition of eternal day.

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## ELISHA.

(Continued from page 239.)

### THE SIEGE OF SAMARIA.

AFTER an interval of a year or two Benhadad, notwithstanding all the warnings, the forbearance, and the mercies extended to him, again ventures to invade the land of Israel. Having assembled all his army, he lays siege to Samaria. There Jehoram is shut up with all his remaining forces; and there also is Elisha. Famine ensues. All the supplies are exhausted, and the consequent misery must be extreme. Yet we do not read of any turning to God to ask deliverance from their enemies, though “in all their affliction He was afflicted.” The distress of His people always grieved Him, though it was only by such means their rebellious hearts could be brought to acknowledge Him. Still the city holds out. It will neither surrender to the Syrians nor to its God.

As the king passes along the ramparts a woman cries to him for help. In the bitterness of his spirit he tells her

he has neither corn nor wine remaining. But, oh, it is not that she wants. Such an idea has long been absent from her mind. Then follows that tale so dreadful that human nature shrinks with horror at its enormity. They had been forewarned, in Deut. xxviii. 53-57, that this awful extremity would come upon them if they continued to cast off the fear of their God; yet they would not hear, and the misery had come. The mind of the king is outraged at the disclosure. He testifies his abhorrence and distress by rending his garments. But who was to be blamed for the sufferings of his people except himself? His own pride and stubbornness would neither let him stoop to ask help from his God, nor allow him to submit to the invader, and let his subjects suffer what they might he had no pity for them.

True it is that within the rent garments sackcloth was perceived upon his flesh, but it was merely a self-inflicted austerity, a punishing the body in order to stave off true humility and a return to God. Like all penances, it was calculated to heighten the pride of his heart, not to lower it. But Israel's God has said, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." (Isa. lxvi. 2.) And again, "Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." (Joel ii. 13.) There is no symptom of any of this feeling in Jehoram.

What a contrast exists between the conduct of this Israelite king and that of the Gentile king of Nineveh! In him there was truly the trembling at God's word, and humiliation of soul before Him. There the sackcloth was openly assumed after he had descended from his throne and laid aside his regal robes. There was also the crying mightily unto God by both king and people; and further, there was the turning from their evil way; "and God re-

pented of the evil that He had said He would do unto them, and He did it not." In Jehoram's case we have immediate evidence that his secret wearing of sackcloth was unattended by any lowliness of spirit. Probably his thought was that it might pass for waiting upon God; but since God had not delivered him, he sets about revenging himself for the disappointment, and imprecates a curse upon himself if he does not slay Elisha that very day.

Elisha, who had been enduring the privations and miseries of the siege along with the rest of the people, is sitting in his house with the elders of the city. There was enough to depress them all. Famine to the direst extent in each household; disease and pestilence always following in its train; the ruin of the nation and of the chief city; the army shut up within its walls; all hope of succour from without at an end; the inevitable capture of the city and slaughter of its population—all these things, with the obstinacy of the king, would be upon their minds, and be likely to form the subject of their discourse. These elders would be more or less subdued by what they were passing through; and perhaps they were attending on the prophet to learn if there was any prospect of help from their God. Elisha, having been divinely warned of what was impending, now tells them, "See ye how this son of a murderer," of whom they seem to have been speaking, "has sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?"

How beautiful is the calm confidence of Elisha! The wicked king, whose impious character he well knew, had ordered his immediate death. The sword is on its way, close at hand, yet the prophet moves not. Trusting in his God, abiding "under the shadow of the Almighty," the imminent danger disturbs him not.

The messenger comes, and the king follows immediately afterwards with the exclamation, "Behold, this evil is of the Lord. Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" Thus he avowed his determination to have done with God.

#### EXTREMITY OF THE MISERY.

The climax of misery has now been reached in the city; and so has the audacity of the monarch. The gauntlet of defiance against God is thrown down. The spirit of Satan now rages in Jehoram's heart. (See other instances in Amos vi. 10; Jer. xlv. 15-19; and more particularly in Matt. viii. 29.) But this is the juncture for the God of Israel to interpose in remembrance of His promise to their forefathers, and relief comes through Elisha's lips. "Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria." At the time these words were uttered two-thirds of a pint of the dung of pigeons was costing five shekels, and here is the announcement that thirty quarts of wheat-flour, and sixty of barley, shall be procurable *on the next day* for one shekel! Astonishment might well fill those who heard it, and who knew not the God of their fathers, and the wonders His arm had wrought. The lord upon whose hand the king leaned, asserted that it could not be, even if the Lord should make windows (or rather, cataracts) in heaven. This daring denier of God's goodness and limiter of His power is warned that, though he shall behold the mercy, he shall not partake of it.

#### FLIGHT OF THE SYRIANS.

Next follows the touching tale of the lepers; their dreadful condition, their sudden relief, and the way their consciences were wrought upon to make known what had occurred. The king seems to have thrown aside all con-

sideration of the Lord's promise. He sends not to Elisha to ask if this be the fulfilment, but treats the whole as a stratagem of the enemy to capture the city. The hours consumed by the ride of the horsemen to the Jordan and back were so many more hours of prolonged misery to the people through the unbelief of their king; and their eagerness, after being thus restrained, doubtless occasioned the trampling to death of the lord who had openly mocked at God's gracious message. Had the promise of Jehovah been welcomed and relied on, nothing of this would have taken place. The rout of the Syrians was complete. Man had no share in putting them to flight. The Lord God had caused them to hear a sound which their imaginations had converted into the advance of armed hosts from several quarters, and they fled at once in the utmost alarm. The stores they had brought with them now serve to feed the famished Israelites; their silver and gold to replace the damage occasioned by their invasion. Israel has reason to learn the favour their God has toward them if they will but acknowledge Him.

This is the last invasion of Benhadad, so long a thorn in the side of Israel. In about three years he meets with his death.

#### THE SHUNAMITE'S LAND RESTORED.

In the order of events the raising to life of the Shunamite's son would seem to have taken place soon after this siege. If he was born about the third year of Jehoram's reign, and was five or six years old when he went to his father in the field, his death and restoration would occur at about this period.

After another brief interval of rest, Israel still refusing to own their God, notwithstanding all the warnings and all the mercies they had received, He calls for a seven years' famine upon the land. Elisha announces this to the Shunamite, with the injunction to go and sojourn

where she can during its continuance. She obeys. It required no small faith to abandon her mansion, fields, and possessions, and remove with her young son and household into a foreign land, not knowing what would become of her property. But he who had been the means of restoring that son to life was well worthy of her confidence, and happy it was for her that she did obey.

Instead of going into the land of Judah it is to the Philistines she resorts, carrying amongst them what she knows of Israel's God, and the living testimony her household supplies of His power and goodwill to raise the dead. Another Jehoram, also a wicked king, was at that time reigning in Judah, shortly to be succeeded by Amaziah, as wicked as himself, and he by the notorious Athaliah. Judah would have been no place of rest for the wanderer, either spiritually or corporeally ; for sad scenes of bloodshed were about to occur both there and in her own country. And the good Lord thus graciously removed her out of both these regions.

At the end of the seven years she returns to Samaria, when Jehu would be on the throne. The narrative anticipates all these events in order to complete her little history. She comes then to petition for the restoration of her land. Just then a most unlikely incident was occurring. The king was talking with a leper, and that none other than Gehazi, the former servant of Elisha. Jehu was asking him of all the great things that Elisha had done. When he had arrived at the recital of the restoration to life of the Shunamite's son, his eye falls upon her. He identifies the mother and the son, and points them out to the king. On questioning her Jehu is satisfied, and issues an order to restore her land and the produce thereof all the while she has been absent. Had the king been engaged with other matters, or had Gehazi been elsewhere, she would



scarcely have found such speedy attention to her request ; nor would the goodwill of the monarch have been so active in her behalf. It was a long trial of her faith to absent herself from home for seven years at the word of the prophet, leaving all to go to ruin. But the Lord watched over the obedient one ; and though "the man of God" was not present as before to aid her, her faith was not disappointed, for she was rewarded by the grant of all, and more than all, that she had asked. "My soul, wait thou only upon God ; for my expectation is from Him."

#### BENHADAD'S DEATH.

The seven years' famine in Israel seems to have commenced about the same time as the invasion of Judah by the Arabians, noticed in 2 Chron. xxi. 16, and attended with such disastrous results to that kingdom. In the same year Elisha travels to Damascus, the Syrian capital. (2 Kings viii. 7.) Benhadad is then ill. Hearing of his arrival, the king sends Hazael with a magnificent present, and a message of lowly reverence, to ask if he shall recover from the illness. Though this king a few years before had tried to seize and perhaps slay the prophet, yet disease had wrought a change. He now wishes to appease and honour him, if perchance a favourable answer may be given.

It was favourable thus far, that the disease itself was not unto death ; but something was about to intervene which would terminate his life. Benhadad had had repeated warnings. Many times had he fought against the God of Israel. Neither the repeated defeats he had sustained, nor the favour shown him in the healing of his servant Naaman, nor the power and wisdom of Him against whom he strove, abated in any wise his hostility. His day of grace is now come to an end.

Having said thus much, the man of God solemnly fixed his eyes on Hazael until he was ashamed, and then he

burst into tears. The Lord God had shown him that the individual on whom he then gazed should be the instrument of fearful mischief in Israel, all the details of which, passing before his mind, overwhelmed him with sorrow. Like Jeremiah, he could perceive both the long-continued guilt of his people, and the dire destruction that in consequence awaited them. "For these things I weep; mine eye runneth down with water." Both prophets had been witnesses of their nation's wickedness. Elisha foresees the punishment, while Jeremiah laments after the infliction. But deep as was their compassion and their sympathy, neither could enter into the full tide of His sympathy who uttered those pathetic words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Anticipating the woes about to come upon them, as He beheld the city, He wept over it.

Hazael, whose judgment entirely condemns the enormities the prophet tells him he will commit, answers, very humbly, that he is incapable of such acts, not knowing the word of wisdom, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart."

We have seen in the history of Elijah that when he was at Horeb the Lord God gave *him* the commission to anoint Hazael king over Syria, and that he was to be one of the three instruments of Israel's destruction. His reluctance to have any part in anointing these destroyers has also been noticed. About twenty years had elapsed since that commission had been issued, and as yet, with the exception of the death of the forty-two children at Bethel, nothing had been fulfilled. If Elijah had been unwilling to put such agency in force, how much more the milder Elisha!

About nine years had passed since his entrance upon the prophetic office, and still Hazael was not anointed. The interval afforded a further space for repentance, but in vain, and at length the sentence, long deferred, must be put in force. Elisha, most reluctantly we may presume, undertakes the journey to Damascus, and by a singular train of events, doubtless ordered of God, is at once put in communication with the very man indicated so long before. He does not anoint him. Perhaps his feelings hinder this; but he tells him what will happen as to his own exaltation, and as to the destruction he will cause, at the same time letting him see how deeply he deploras it. It may have been that those tears mitigated afterwards some of the ferocity shown, if Hazael ever remembered how the sovereignty was first presented to his mind.

Hazael does not wait a single day for the Lord to place him on the throne, but, by the murder of his master, at once commences his reign. Not so David, nor David's Lord!

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#### NOTES AND REPLIES.

*How is 1 Cor. xi. 5 to be understood in reference to woman's ministry in connection with chap. xiv. 34?*

1 Cor. xi. 2-15 brings out the divinely-appointed relation between the man and the woman, without reference to the assembly, or to their relative position in it, which is dealt with afterwards. The man and the woman represent two contrasted principles in the economy of God, the one of rule, and the other of subjection; and these principles run through the old and new creation. Man, as such, is "the image and glory of God," and stands in the place of authority; while the woman, as such, is "the glory of the man," and therefore stands in the place of subjection. Of these distinctions the shorn and shaven head of the man, and the covered head of the woman, are the outward symbols, of which nature itself bears witness, and to the significance of this, verse 10 points, where it is said, "For this cause ought the woman to have authority upon [or over] her head," the symbol of which is the covered head. The ground of the woman's subjection is here given as seen in her creation; for she was taken out of man to become a

helpmeet for him ; and this subjection is doubly enforced by the apostle in 1 Tim. ii. 14, in consequence of the place she took in the fall. The argument there is, that she is never to get out of this position. It might be thought, that as in Christ there is neither male nor female, the distinction needful to be maintained in social life would not be required when the woman came before God in prayer, or before others to prophecy ; but even here the same relative position has to be observed, and thus the woman has always the privilege of manifesting what the subjection of the Church to Christ should be. Place and time are not referred to in 1 Cor. xi. ; but in chap. xiv. the subject is the order of the public assemblies of the saints, and here the command is clear : "Let your women keep silence in the churches : for it is not permitted unto them to speak ; but to be under obedience, as also saith the law." (See Gen. iii. 16.) The sphere of woman's work is plainly marked out, in precept and in example, in the New Testament, and it will be found in the hidden, lowly path of unostentatious and unobtrusive labour, all the more holy and Christ-like that it is the less seen, though everywhere felt ; "for neither is the man without the woman" in the Church on earth, any more than in social life. Questions as to whether women should take audible part in prayer meetings, &c., can only be answered by the general precepts and examples of the Word, with due regard to time and circumstance, and the humble subject mind will not err or miss the right path.

*How are we to understand "cleansing" in 1 John i. 9? Is it by the Blood, or by the action of the Word as applied by the Spirit?*

THE cleansing here spoken of is the cleansing of the blood of Christ brought by the power of the Spirit to the conscience. Sin is put away, in fact, and the salvation secured for eternity, the moment faith lays hold on Christ, by whom the believer has "no more conscience of sins." (Heb. x. 2.) But unconfessed sin grieves the Holy Spirit, and the "joy of salvation" goes (Ps. li.), and with it the sense of being clean every whit. This can only be maintained in the soul by the abiding witness of the Spirit, which we enjoy as we are found walking in the light. Then it is we *experimentally* learn that the blood of Christ "cleanseth us from all sin." It is no new cleansing in one sense, and yet it is in another. It is the cleansing typified in the sprinkling of the ashes of the heifer on the unclean, which is designated a sin-offering in Numbers xix. 9, 17. (See Heb.) See on the import of the red heifer, page 179 vol. i. New Series *Golden Lamp*, and on cleansing by the Word, page 168 ; on the question of confession, page 71 of the present volume.

## THINE.

THINE ever, loved and chosen  
 In Thy deep thoughts of grace,  
 Before the world's foundation,  
 Or dayspring knew its place.  
 Thine only, sought and followed  
 When in the far-off land ;  
 Then kept, and fed, and guided  
 By Thine unwearied hand.

Thine, only Thine, Lord Jesus !  
 Whom have we left beside ?  
 For ever in Thy presence  
 Our weary souls would hide.  
 All other refuge faileth,  
 All other springs grow dry,  
 Thyself alone is changeless,  
 And Thou art ever nigh.

Thine, ever Thine, to serve Thee  
 With feet that shall not stray ;  
 To know Thy will and follow  
 Through one unending day.  
 No more to grieve Thy Spirit,  
 No more to doubt Thy love ;  
 But hear Thy voice, and know Thee  
 As Thou art known above.

Thine ever, Lord, Thine only !  
 E'en in the glory-light,  
 When bursts the dawn of heaven  
 Upon our raptured sight :  
 One deep joy shall enfold us,  
 Shall swell our highest song,  
 That we are Thine, Thine only,  
 'Mid all the gathered throng !

Thine only, Lord ; oh, keep us  
 More closely at Thy side !  
 While here we wait and worship,  
 Our hearts would there abide.  
 We seek no other gladness,  
 We know no other rest,  
 Till, risen in Thy likeness,  
 We shall with Thee be blest !

W.

## NEHEMIAH; OR, DEVOTEDNESS.

(Concluded from page 234.)

IF Sanballat schemed, Nehemiah prayed, and set a watch against the enemies day and night.

We do well to remember that the real contest then, as in Eden and in Egypt, was between Jehovah and Satan. Nehemiah and his helpers were the enemies' mark, but they were Jehovah's *care*, and the sequel proved His wisdom to be deeper than Satan's subtlety or Sanballat's plot, and Satan's power to be but weakness before Jehovah's strength.

But this involved *conflict*, and henceforth the labourers must also be soldiers. One half must stand on guard whilst the other half wrought in the work, and each worker must have his sword girded at his side ready at any moment to fight. It was real work, and difficult too, and so devoted were they to it that they changed not their clothes except for washing.

Truly the street and wall were built in troublous times. (Dan. ix. 25.)

But Sanballat and Tobiah were not the only persons who tried and troubled Nehemiah; his own people, his brethren, grieved him.

The rich and influential' exacted from their poorer brethren, and oppressed them by usury. They were selfish instead of devoted, and they caused the people and their wives to raise a cry and complaint.

Moses suffered *for* Israel and *from* them; David did the same, and so also did Paul. Moreover, He who suffered for us all on the tree has had to bear with much *from* us; yet He loves; and so did those dear men of God. Let the

same mind be in us, and their example be our encouragement.

Nehemiah rebuked them sharply, and set a multitude against them, bringing his own conduct, and that of those with him, as an example. His faithful rebuke prevailed. The oppressors were convicted, silenced, shamed, and they reformed ; they promised, and swore to the promise ; they promised Jehovah, and did as they had vowed. " Faithful are the wounds of a friend."

Nehemiah was helped through this trouble, and continued the work of the wall.

Sanballat, although checked, was Sanballat still ; so also are our enemies, whether Satan, the world, or the flesh. He was doubtless provoked by the check, and, with his companions, renewed his assaults, but in a new form. Hearing that there was no breach left in the wall, he and Geshem sent to ask Nehemiah to meet them in one of the plains of Ono. " But," says he, " they thought to do me mischief." Sanballat acted in keeping with his name, which means " Hate in disguise."

The devoted servant of Jehovah and of the Jews had a ready reply for them : " I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease whilst I leave it and come down to you ?" Beloved reader, if we take God's estimate of our service in His work, we shall call it *great*, all else being by comparison small indeed, and we shall be steadfast. Sanballat's message was repeated four times after this, but answered after the same manner. A fifth time it was sent with insinuation of Nehemiah's purpose to rebel against the king, and inviting him to meet and take counsel. This charge Nehemiah denied, imputing it to Sanballat.

Sanballat then hired Shemaiah, a false prophet, to persuade Nehemiah to hide in the temple ; but he boldly

refused, saying, "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." Guilty Adonijah, Joab, and others like them, might flee to the horns of the altar for their life; but the man of God, doing God's good and great work, could trust Him with his life. He was, as Solomon described such an one, "Bold as a lion." (Prov. xxviii. 1.)

"So the wall was finished in fifty-two days." Jehovah was honoured, Nehemiah and his helpers were prospered, but their enemies were dismayed. "When they and the heathen with them saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God."

What an illustration was it of Solomon's words: "Better is the *end* of a thing than the *beginning* thereof: and the *patient* in spirit is better than the *proud* in spirit." Let us remember this, and imitate this patient, devoted man of God.

There was another source of trial to Nehemiah—the alliance of many in Jerusalem with his enemy Tobiah the Ammonite, by unlawful marriages. These spoke of the good deeds of Tobiah, while he sought to put Nehemiah in fear by his letters.

Trial may change its form, but it awaits us to the end, in order that we may learn the manifold, much-varied grace and wisdom of God, and the excellencies of Christ.

All these trials, and those who caused them, were by Nehemiah referred to Jehovah, who still sustained him.

Alas! what sorrow, yea, what sin, has arisen out of the ungodly, unscriptural union of believers with unbelievers, in marriage, in clubs, in associations, in partnerships, in business, and in that which is called the Church with the State. A sad day was it for the Church when a heathen emperor first submitted to Christian forms, and the Church



accepted his empty professions, and thus brought difficulty and sorrow on all simple, devoted souls, who have since sought to walk in subjection to God's word alone. But even for this He is sufficient, and the greater the difficulty the greater the honour if we do so walk.

Nehemiah was mightily helped in the work of the wall, using trowel, line, and plummet, and in a wonderfully brief time he finished it.

His next work was of a different character, for he had to treat with persons instead of handling stones ; and to test both men and their conduct by another and a perfect line and plummet, even the holy, just, and good law of Jehovah, measuring with a divine scale, and weighing in the balances of the sanctuary.

He had to witness, contend against, and correct evils ; evils in individuals, in families, and in the community ; also social, ecclesiastical, and political, all of which grieved his spirit, called forth his holy indignation, and, according to the character of the dispensation, prompt and strong measures. In this also he and his helpers were helped by Jehovah. He effected a mighty reformation, both in priests and people.

The people gathered together as one man into the street before the watergate, and when the book of the law was opened, they all stood up, and with the reader "blessed Jehovah, the great God." The Levites and others read *distinctly*, gave *the sense*, and caused the people to *understand* the meaning. A bright example to all who teach and preach now. The devoted Tirshatha bade the people who wept at the reading of the law to forbear weeping. On that holy day they were rather to eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom nothing was prepared ; for, said he, "The joy of Jehovah is your strength."

On the second day, in obedience to the word of the law, they made themselves booths and dwelt under them, obeying a command which had been neglected from the days of Joshua, the son of Nun. It was a revival indeed. The Lord grant to all of us such a revival in the whole Church of God—a revival of OBEDIENCE.

On the twenty-fourth of the month they assembled again, and in dividing the day one-fourth was given to reading in the book of the law, and another fourth to confession and worship of Jehovah their God. In this they were led by the Levites, whose words are given us in chapter ix. 15–39. The result of this was a solemn, sure covenant, written and sealed by princes, Levites, and priests. Thrice-blessed occupation of time, with precious results!

Beloved fellow-believer, mark the order as stated above: First, reading; second, confession; third, worship. Let us imitate this. Let us read and apply what we read, first to ourselves, then to all around, and we shall discover much imperfection to confess. Let us next make our confession to God, remembering “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;” and as certainly as we do this in truth, so surely shall we worship; we shall *bow* and *adore* Him. Moreover, we shall by His grace be quickened to a more settled godly purpose to obey, to be *devoted*.

Chapter x. gives us an account of sundry acts of reformation and services for Jehovah according to His law, all of them the happy results of Nehemiah’s devotedness to Jehovah and to His people.

Passing over chapters xi. and xii., which my readers can and should peruse for themselves, we come to another important and instructive exercise, both of the Levites and the people. Through another reading of the law, they

were reminded of that which they never ought to have forgotten, "that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not enter into the congregation of God *for ever*." Forgetfulness of this had led to ungodly alliances; but the effect of discovering it was the separation from Israel of all the mixed multitude. This is the proper result, even now, of a faithful application of God's word to our spirit, our words and deeds—separation from all that is contrary to the word of God. "Wherewithal shall a young [or an old] man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto [to his way] according to Thy word." (Ps. cxix. 9.)

Priests and people separated themselves from the heathen; the chambers for offerings to Jehovah, which had been polluted by the priests, were cleansed; evils were corrected which had been practised during the absence of Nehemiah, who had now returned with unabated zeal and devotedness to prosecute the work which he had commenced. Neither absence from the scene in Jerusalem, nor the luxuries of his position in Babylon, could change his mind or unfit him for his work. He was Nehemiah still.

Fellow-disciple and servant of Christ, if love to God and to His children constrains us to serve, and our eye is single to His glory, we cannot but be steadfast; but if any lower, selfish motive actuates us, we shall be fickle and unprofitable.

Lord, quiet my spirit, keep single my eye,  
 Be Thy will and Thy glory my aim;  
 In Thee let me joy, myself e'er deny,  
 Thy faithfulness live to proclaim.

Space forbids our giving more than a summary of the acts of this devoted man of God.

As we have seen, he began to build the wall in troublous times, yet he finished it; he refused alliance with the

heathen, and separated Jehovah's people from them, chasing from him even the priest who had defiled the priesthood and covenant of Levi by unlawful marriage ; he cleansed the chambers and appropriated them according to the law, and set the Levites in their service ; he corrected abuses of the Sabbath, contended with and cursed those who, through intermarriages with the heathen, had corrupted the *true lip*, whose speech was half in the language of Ashdod (to which all the foolish, false, and damnable doctrines taught in Christendom answer), and he smote them and plucked off their hair. In a word, whatever met his eye or entered his ear as contrary to God, he reprov'd, and all that needed to be done for the people's good he did according to his ability, as helped and prospered by Jehovah.

Having this and other bright examples of devotedness before us, and above all that of the Perfect One, may we seek to be imitators, as dear children of God.

H. H.

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FRAGMENT.—If we forget that God's demand upon His children is *holiness*, we shall turn the grace of God into licentiousness ; if we forget His *grace*, we shall be impoverished, and get into bondage, weakness, and sin. Holiness and grace must never be separated ; they are exact counterparts of each other. If God sows the seed by giving us the knowledge of His grace, He looks for the fruit ; and if we desire to please Him by bringing forth the fruit of holiness, we must live in and upon that grace which is its sole and single spring, and which He has made to abound towards us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## ELISHA.

*(Concluded from page 263.)*

## JEHU ANOINTED KING.

ABOUT two years now elapse before anything further is related of the prophet. To understand the events that follow, it is needful to recur to the circumstances of the two kingdoms, Judah and Israel. After the revolt of the ten tribes, and the formation of a separate state under Jeroboam, the two nations were hostile, and often at war. In the early part of his reign the good king Jehoshaphat makes peace with Ahab, forms an alliance with him, and marries his son Jehoram to Ahab's daughter Athaliah. The intimacy between the houses is so close that they give the same names to their sons, so that there are a Jehoram and an Ahaziah in each branch. Politically the arrangement might be looked upon as highly judicious and desirable, not only as affording prospect of stable peace between the two kingdoms, but also a hope might be entertained of eventually re-uniting them in one.

But Ahab was an idolater; he did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all his predecessors, and, stirred up by Jezebel his wife, sold himself to work wickedly in the sight of the Lord. For letting Benhadad escape (1 Kings xx. 42) he incurred the penalty of death. For the murder of Naboth, and other crimes against the Lord, his posterity were to be destroyed. The intermarriage therefore, however sagacious it might seem, was to Jehoshaphat's family the most disastrous that could be devised. It involved the extirpation of his posterity in that of Ahab. Twice was his own life and that of his army endangered by the union of the forces of the two kingdoms against the

common enemy; and, though specially rebuked by a prophet, he does not seem to have desisted from "helping the ungodly," except at the close of his life. (1 Kings xxii. 49.)

We have now to see how the Lord put in force the sentences He had pronounced, but long delayed to execute. Ahab himself was slain by the Syrians in the battle described in 1 Kings xxii. His son and successor Ahaziah, as wicked as himself, died from an injury. (2 Kings i.) He was succeeded by Jehoram, another son of Ahab, of whom frequent mention has been made. Jehu, the son of Nimshi, was one of the three executioners of divine vengeance appointed at Horeb. For about twenty-two years he had not been apprised of the office he had to fulfil, so long was judgment suspended. At length the time was come. Elisha calls one of the sons of the prophets, and sends him to anoint Jehu king over Israel. He is told to do this privately, and to hasten away as soon as his mission is effected. He goes, anoints Jehu, and gives him these orders: "Thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of *all the servants of the Lord* at the hand of Jezebel: for the whole house of Ahab shall perish," &c. And he opened the door and fled. He was not to tarry to have his prophetic authority questioned, nor to receive honour from the newly-appointed king, nor to authenticate by his presence the fresh dynasty. The authority and power were to be from God alone.

Far from crediting the announcement, Jehu treats it as a pleasantry on the part of his fellow-officers; but when he relates what was said to him, corroborated by the oil dripping from his person, they immediately make for him a temporary throne with their garments, and proclaim his accession with the sound of the trumpet; so suddenly are their hearts turned to acquiesce in God's arrangement.

Jehu then, taking efficient measures to conceal his intentions, sets out at once from Ramoth Gilead with his army, crosses the Jordan, and hastens to Jezreel. There he begins the work of destruction by slaying Jehoram in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite; Jezebel also; and likewise Ahaziah, king of Judah. He further orders the death of Ahab's seventy sons in Samaria, with the rest of his family then in the city of Jezreel and in Samaria, to which place he next proceeds.

On the way thither he meets with forty-two persons, brethren of the Ahaziah whom he had recently slain. These were grandsons of Ahab, through Athaliah his daughter, part of the doomed family. They are all put to death. Thus he executed the wrath of God upon all of the race within his dominions, besides rooting out the worship of Baal.

For the slaughter of the rest of the Judah branch of Ahab's race other instruments were employed. (2 Chron. xxii. 1, xxii. 10; 2 Kings xi. 16.) When at length the sword fell, it fell heavily. Their own recorded wickedness, in addition to that of the guilty couple from whence they sprung, brought about the extermination of the race. Had it not been for the sparing of the babe Joash, left for dead among the heap of the slain, the Solomon branch of the house of David would have become extinct. And in after life Joash's character showed him to be no better than his kindred.

After the date of Jehu's accession to the throne, no mention is made of Elisha for a very long period. All the events we have noticed wherein he was concerned were comprised within the compass of Amaziah's reign, which lasted only twelve years; whereas for about forty-nine years afterwards God's history is silent concerning him. But he lived to a great age. This is made apparent by

the duration of the reigns of the kings who were his contemporaries.\*

Those forty-nine years were a grievous season for Israel. Beginning with the unexpired portion of the seven years' famine, they had Hazael, the Syrian king, let loose upon them, whose commission was to slay all that escaped from Elisha and Jehu. Hazael died only a few years before Elisha, and throughout his long reign continued, with one short interval, to harass and destroy. Grievous indeed must it have been for the prophet to witness the cruel oppression under which Israel laboured. But the day of grace had been neglected, and now the long-threatened judgment is poured out. Yet the very continuance of Elisha's life, with the recollection of what mercies God had wrought through him, was a standing testimony that their God was still ready to be appealed to if the hearts of the sufferers were turned to Him.

We are now brought to the last scene of the prophet's actings.

#### ELISHA ON HIS DEATH-BED.

Whatever may have been the motive of the Lord in leaving without record so large a portion of His honoured servant's life, it is evident that the close was in accordance with the character of his early career. King Joash, of whom it is said "he did evil in the sight of the Lord," was moved with sorrow at the prospect of losing him—went down to his house and wept over him, saying, "My father,

\* *Jehoram* of Israel reigned twelve years. It was about the first year of this monarch that *Elijah* was taken up and *Elisha's* office began. *Jehu* reigned twenty-eight years. *Jehoahaz*, his son, reigned seventeen years. *Joash*, or *Jehoash*, his son, succeeded, about whose fourth year *Elisha* again prophesies, and then dies. If to these *sixty-one* years in all be added his probable age when *Elijah* first met him, say sixteen, and the time he was in the company of *Elijah* as his servant, from about the eighth of *Ahab* to the second of *Ahaziah* of Israel, fourteen years, we may approximately consider his age at *ninety-one* years.



my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof” (or riders therein). When we are about to be deprived of things, they acquire an estimation which previously they had not possessed. Had Joash sought the Lord as his father Jehoahaz had done (2 Kings xiii. 4), there would surely have been a respite for him also. Had he come previously to the prophet and listened to his counsel, both he and his people would have escaped much misery; and even now, when, though he seeks not God, he goes to his servant, there is mercy in preparation for him. He is told to take bow and arrow. The prophet, placing his hands upon the king’s hands, tells him to open the eastern window and shoot. And as he shot, the prophetic announcement breaks forth: “The arrow of the Lord’s deliverance, the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them.” So far the word of the Lord. Now for the trial of his faith in that word, on which so much depended. He is again told to take bow and arrows and smite upon the ground. He does so three times and ceases. Had his soul been filled with the high and condescending promise of God he would hardly have been so lukewarm, but, on the contrary, would have continued to smite till the prophet had bid him desist. His faith was feeble; his confidence in the word of the prophet but small. Yet three victories are assured to him, for there was a measure of faith. Our gracious God, far from disregarding or discouraging our faith even when feeble, ever seeks to warm it into life, both by bestowing present blessing, and by showing how much more we might have obtained had the faith been of a higher character. By bestowment of earthly good He encourages the heart to seek that which is permanent in the heavens, weaning us from the lower by the superior attractiveness of the higher.

## THE PROPHET'S TOMB.

The Moabites, attracted by the ripening harvest, which, as we read in Joshua iii. 15, v. 10, &c., was ready at the time of the passover, were making an inroad. The buriers of a dead body, alarmed at their approach, cast it into the nearest tomb, which happens to be that of Elisha. God honours His departed servant by a fresh example of the same goodness that had pervaded the whole course of Elisha's ministry. His mouldered remains are made the means of bringing fresh life to the dead, who rises up a living man. As soon as this wonderful event is noised abroad, what will be the consequence? The prophet comes afresh to their remembrance. All the actings of God through him are talked over anew. While God openly declares His own approval of His faithful servant, He does it in such a way as to reopen to their minds the train of blessing He had long been offering for their acceptance. Life through the death of another had long been disclosed to Israel in the passover, and was afterwards to be more fully displayed to the sons of men through the great Sacrifice, onwards to which that pass-over directed attention.

## CONCLUSION.

In considering the lives of these two eminent servants of God, Elijah and Elisha, one cannot but observe the remarkable contrast in their personal character, as has been already noticed. Elijah has no friends, save Elisha. No one ever comes to him for counsel, aid, or relief. Neither king nor people expect any help from him. Solely occupied with the one great crime the nation was committing, there is no room in his mind for any other consideration. His first and his only thought is to bring them back to

their God ; whilst severity is the means he makes use of to accomplish this great object. No mention occurs of any communication between him and other prophets living at the same time, either with those whom Jezebel cut off, those fed by Obadiah, or those at Bethel and Jericho. He never weeps.

Elisha, on the contrary, has many friends. He is ever ready to do good to those around. Whether it be to the king, in protecting him and his people from the national enemy, or in relieving the poor, helpless widow, the power at his command is always available for those in want of his assistance. His time and personal effort are ever at their disposal. Wherever he went he must have been regarded as a friend. No one in Israel persecutes or seeks to slay him, save in the solitary instance of Jehoram during the siege of Samaria when so highly exasperated. Notwithstanding his intercourse with his fellow-men, there is no abandonment of his high office. His means of bringing back the nation to their God was the constant and unvarying exhibition of goodwill, helping their infirmities in every time of need, whether by recovering the head of an axe, or by taking prisoners a whole army of their enemies. Towards their Gentile enemies also the same goodwill is apparent. And when at length necessitated to nominate Hazael to do the work of slaughter, he weeps at the prospect of the misery he will bring upon his people, whom he has so lovingly sought, to persuade them to return unto their God. From the regret king Joash expresses at his death, it is evident he was to the last looked upon by the nation as a benefactor.

Sunk, however, in idolatry as Israel was, neither severity nor mercy had any permanent effect upon their hard hearts. Far gone were they indeed from their God. The inanimate calves Jeroboam had set up seem to have been recognised

as their deliverers out of the land of Egypt. Speaking afterwards to Judah by the prophet Isaiah, the Lord God thus bemoans the inutility of all the inflictions he had brought upon them: "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it; wounds and bruises and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; your land strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate as overthrown by strangers." Under the figure of a man reduced to a mass of wounds by being beaten all over, their God appeals to them as to whether they will choose yet further infliction, while pointing out that the effect will be to increase their obduracy. The iron neck-sinew and the brazen forehead have truly been conspicuous throughout their history. But the proclamation at mount Sinai, recounting the character of their God, has been abundantly tested and proved even to this very hour. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." "He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy." Nehemiah also testifies largely to the same effect. (Chap. ix.)

The kingdom of the ten tribes was now in a grievous condition as regards their God. There was no worship of Jehovah throughout the country. The way to Jerusalem being barred, they could not present themselves before Him three times a year as commanded. No sacrifices could be offered; there was neither priest nor Levite to officiate had any one the desire to avail himself of their services. Nor throughout these events is there any mention of the law given to Moses for all Israel, nor of any pay-

ment of tithes, nor of any of the appointed ceremonials. The nation was living wholly without God as any Gentile nation.

As we have seen, *justice* in the person of Elijah, acting in severity, did not effect the object of bringing them back to God; nor did *mercy* in the person of Elisha, who ever displayed the divine favour to the helpless and guilty. It is not difficult to trace herein the leading characteristics of two other prophets greater than those we have been considering. One was the introducer of law, and was commissioned to say, "This do and thou shalt live." The attempt was made and long continued. The result was that not one succeeded; for "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified."

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Prophet whom God was to raise up, introduces the New Era in Israel's history. Him at His first coming they refused. But when He comes the second time, with His attendant glory, as their deliverer from the hands of all that hate them, they will in the dire emergency of that day hail Him who cometh in the name of the Lord, and find safe shelter under the power of His arm and the love of His tender heart. Then will mercy be fully displayed to their astonishment. Their sins will be cast into the depths of the sea to be remembered no more against them. Grace will reign triumphant. God will also take away the stony heart and give them a heart of flesh. Under the shadow of their long-rejected King they will then dwell in safety. God will write His laws in their minds that they may not forget them, and in their hearts that they may obey them. Moreover, He will put His Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in His statutes. Then will the land yield her increase, and God, their own God, will bless them. Their future occupancy of that land will not, as formerly, be made contingent

upon their good behaviour. His almighty power will constrain them to obey His voice. All will be righteous! In that happy day righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Grace will reign through righteousness supreme over all man's guilt, ruin, and misery. "The remnant of Israel will not speak lies, nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths; for they will feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid."

And yet glorious as these blessings are, they are not comparable to those which our God has prepared for those, whether Jew or Gentile, who now accept His offered mercy in Christ Jesus. The land of Israel is the region assigned as the inheritance for the children of Israel. Whereas for the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus an inheritance is prepared in the heavens. The earthly Jerusalem will indeed be splendid—"the joy of the whole earth;" but its magnificence will be far outshone by that of the heavenly Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of our God and of the Lamb, and the happy abode of those redeemed by His blood. In our Father's house, and in His presence, His children will be fully at home, brought thither by our Lord; the natural body replaced by the spiritual body, His people having been changed by Him into His own likeness, the likeness of His glorious body. In the great day of resurrection, as the Bride of the Lamb, we shall begin to comprehend the depth and fulness of the love of God, in giving His own beloved Son to die for us, that we might be reconciled unto Him, be saved from judgment, and brought into His own presence as His sons and daughters. How joyfully shall we then unite in the ascription, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." R. N.

## NOTES AND REPLIES.

*Why was the "blood" of the typical sacrifice not to be eaten (see Deut. xii. 23), seeing that the Lord connects the possession of eternal life with eating His flesh and drinking His blood? (John vi. 53-56.)*

THE difference seems to lie between the typical result contemplated under the Levitical law, and the actual result secured in the death of Christ. Blood under the law went no further than substitution, of which, when shed at the altar, it was the symbol. "The life [or properly *the soul*] of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for *your souls*." The Old Testament idea of sacrifice is connected with atonement, whereas in the New Testament there is the deeper thought of the communication of life. The law through sacrifice gave, so to speak, a reprieve to a forfeited life. The Holy Spirit by the gospel gives not only a reprieve, but communicates eternal life, to which man was before a stranger. The blood of the sacrificial victim was a forfeiture to God. The blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, is not only a forfeiture to God substitutionally for us, but is a gift from God to us, so that, drinking by faith, we are made partakers of that life which is hid with Christ in God. There is thus a striking contrast here, as in other Scriptures, between the shadow and the substance. The hidden mysteries of the gospel even in type remained unrevealed until Christ came; so that we may truly say, "The half was not told." It is well to keep this in mind, or we shall be surprised when we find types failing (sometimes in their most essential point) to bring out the truth as we see it in the person of Christ.

*How are we to understand, "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," in Col. iii. 17?*

*Name* in Scripture is used for *person* (see Rev. iii. 4), and the expression, "In the name," points to our standing in Christ—our creation in Him into a new man, in the oneness of a common life, and in the joint participation of the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus we gather to His name, and, as exhorted in this Scripture, act in His name, under its responsibility, and in the consciousness of our oneness in His person. Paul could truly say, "I can do all things *in* (not through) Him that strengtheneth me," illustrating our Lord's words in John xv. about abiding in Him as the branches in the vine. In re-

gard to all we say or do, life is to be one continuous thanksgiving to "our God and Father" through Jesus Christ. He has not sent us into an alien world otherwise than fully equipped, and therefore we are enabled to give thanks at all times by Him in whose name we stand before God. Out of this flow our relative responsibilities, as Christians, in the varied relationships of life, for in each "in the Lord" is descriptive of our standing, and "unto the Lord" shows the ultimate object of all we do.

*How is every creature "sanctified by the word of God and prayer"?*  
(1 Tim. iv. 5.)

WHEN God created every thing He gave all to man for His use, assigning to him the dominion over all that He had made. "The earth hath He given to the children of men." A false asceticism would rob men of that which God has given to be received with thankfulness. The word of God sanctions the use of every good thing created by Him, and when accompanied by the prayerful recognition of God as the Giver, it becomes sanctified to every child of God, having been received in answer to his cry, "Our Father, give us this day our daily bread." Those who "believe and know the truth" accept all their temporal mercies, not as rights, but as answers to believing prayer, and hence they are received with thanksgiving. Thus our blessed Lord is represented as taking bread and giving thanks. (See Matt. xiv. 19, xv. 36; Luke xxiv. 30, &c.) We do not think enough of God as the Giver of all, the One "in whom we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts xvii. 28), and who "daily loadeth us with benefits." (Ps. lxxviii. 19.) Hence the thanklessness and the waste amongst us; for even fragments were precious to the Son of God, who received all from His Father in heaven.

*What place will the temple described by Ezekiel occupy in the land?*

THIS temple, unlike Solomon's temple, stands not in Jerusalem, but in the centre of the priest's portion, which stretches across the land of Canaan from east to west, having to the north the parallel portions of seven tribes; first, Judah, then Reuben, Ephraim, Manasseh, Naphtali, Asher, and Dan; on the south, the remaining five tribes have their portions as follows: Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad. (Ezek. xlvi.) From this it will be seen that not only is the place of the temple changed, but the position of every tribe is also more or less altered.