

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.

“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.



FAITH'S MIGHTY QUESTION, "HOW LONG?"

PSALM xiii. 1, 2.

ANOTHER year is past, and the vast unchangeable eternity of joy to the saved, and of woe to the unsaved, is nearer to us all than ever it was before. Cowper well says—

"The lapse of time and rivers is the same,
Both speed their journey with a restless stream ;
The silent pace with which they steal away
No wealth can bribe, no prayers persuade to stay :
Alike irrevocable both when past,
And a wide ocean swallows both at last."

But noiseless and unceasing though Time's current be, it seems, to waiting, longing saints, to bring on only *slowly* the long looked-for day of their at last beholding their Lord and Master, and of being in a moment made like to Him, in order to be FOR EVER with Him.

True, "yesterday, when it is *past*," does seem short; and to most of us who are beyond the meridian of life, each year as it *closes* looks briefer than any before. Time *flies* as it passes us. Time *in prospect* is the only time that seems long, either to the child of God or to the man of this world.

This seeming slowness of Time's approach is greatly increased when some bright and much-loved object is expected and waited for. To the worldling this slow-

moving interval causes impatience and fretting. In her misgiving and impatience, "the mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?" (Judges v. 28). And her impatient attitude and language told plainly how merely human and earthly her hope was—a hope never fulfilled; for God had ended Sisera's wickedness by the nail and hammer in Jael's hand. Again, Isaiah says (ch. li. 14), "The captive exile *hasteneth* (*i.e.* impatiently) that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail."

To the careworn child of earth a future life is either a blank, from which he expects nothing, or else an uncertainty, or even a foreboding, which he would gladly have set at rest; but to the child of God it is a bright and blessed hope—a hope too that is so sure of fulfilment, and so little "maketh ashamed," that he never questions that it is really coming, but only asks, "How long?" And still as time moves on this question remains in the hearts of God's people, and on their lips, "O Lord, how long?" God's precious promises gave it birth: the "word of His grace," to which Paul so commended the saints, is ever nourishing it; and not all the length of the waiting time, nor the floods of tribulation that intervene ("in the world ye shall have tribulation"), can stay the asking of this precious question.

Indeed, it has been in the hearts of God's saints throughout all the ages more or less. Abraham in substance said, "How long?" as "he looked for *the* city [see Greek] that hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God;" for his tent-like pilgrim life showed how he expected it and longed for it. Jacob's command to his sons to bury him in Machpelah, and *not* in Egypt;

Joseph's bidding his brethren to carry up his very bones out of Egypt with them; Moses' prediction of a "Prophet" whom the Lord their God would one day raise up to them from amongst their brethren like to himself (Deut. xviii. 15); and David's expectation of One to rule over men who should "be just, ruling in the fear of God" (2 Sam. xxiii. 3)—all these hopes and longings utter the same cry, "Lord, how long?"

Still more is "How long?" the question and the cry of waiting saints of this dispensation, now that the Son of God has come, has died, is risen again, and acknowledged and enthroned at God's right hand; and the full-orbed, blessed object before our view is **His coming again to take us to Himself to live and reign with Him.** Even the creation itself is groaning in "earnest expectation" now, and we who have the Spirit in us do still more "groan within ourselves, *waiting for* the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." "My heart and *my flesh,*" says the psalmist, "cries out for the living God;" and in our case, too, our very bones seem to say, as well as our thirsting spirits, "Lord, how long?"

The actual words, "How long?" occur here and there all through the Scripture as the utterance of God's waiting, and especially also of His *suffering*, saints. In each place the context, if searched out, will be found to add much force and meaning to the words. Psalm xiii. 1, 2, at the head of this paper, is instanced for its *frequency*. "*How long* wilt thou forget me, O Jehovah! for ever? *How long* wilt thou hide thy face from me? *How long* shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? *How long* shall mine enemy be exalted over me?"

Gathering up all the utterances of it in Scripture from the weary cry of it by Job (chap. xix. 2)—addressed,

however, to men, not to God—down to the voice of it in Rev. vi. 10, "How long, O Lord, holy and true," &c., we find that "How long?" may be fairly called—

1st. Faith's *mighty* question;

2nd. Sorrow's *deep* cry; and

3rd. Labour's strong *incentive*.

1. It is *faith's mighty question*, because it believes the promised good is coming; its sureness is taken for granted, and it only asks *how soon* it may be expected. It is the very language of a child to its parent, who has promised the child some great treat; or of a trusting friend to another friend, on whose word he is relying. **How pleasing, then, this question must needs be to God!** It has underlying it the child-like simplicity of "precious faith." It has also in it **faith's strength of grasp**; for even

". . . though there intervene
Rough roads and stormy skies,
Faith will not suffer aught to screen
Thy glory from mine eyes."

Isaiah had all Israel's apostacy shown him. "Go . . . make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes;" but he adds, "Then said I, Lord, *how long?*" Paul-like, he knew that God had not "cast away His people," nor had "they stumbled that they should fall" finally; his faith grasped the promises of God for the nation's ultimate blessing; and piercing the gloom of all their antichrist condition, as faith's eye can do, he only asks, "Lord, how long?" Thus by this question he showed that inside his waiting heart the day still dawned, and the day star of Israel's bright future was still visible.

2. But it is also *sorrow's deep cry*. This is especially seen in the book of Psalms, and it is here that

the question oftenest occurs. The truth is, if the bright vision of the glory indites it, the sorrows and conflicts of the way no less press it from us. The sight of Christ above awakes the question, and so does the intelligence of the Spirit in us here below. On high we see our Lord ready and waiting to come, and we humbly but longingly say, "Lord, how long?" Within us the Holy Ghost, all along our wilderness path, tells that we are not to be always here; that He is leading us home to God and to the Lamb; and, by His grace believing this, we ask, "How long?" The weary, sore-footed child, walking at his parent's side, has not his father's full knowledge of the distance, and, however sure he is of the home at the end, he thinks the journey great, and often asks if it is not nearly done; and we are sure the father answers gently and with no upbraiding. How much more the way-worn saint utters to his heavenly Guide, "Lord, how long?" plagued, too, as he is with foes within him as well as foes outside. "How long?" then, is sorrow's deep cry, and is ever deepening, until the coming One shall come, and we are ever with the Lord.

3. But it is also, indirectly, *labour's great incentive*. *Love* is the Christian's first and *greatest* motive to all labour, we all know. "Faith worketh by love," says Paul; but the question, "How long?" is ever reminding us how *short* is our remaining time of service and of journeying. The very dawning of the morning which it suggests bids us "owe no man anything" except that which it is sweet to owe; viz., "to love one another;" it bids us hasten to pay our debt of the gospel to the unsaved (see Rom. i. 14) and of all service to fellow-saints that is in our power. One fitting answer to the question, "How long?" is this: "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is

far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." This "armour of light" always worn makes us ready to welcome the dawn of Christ's coming, and our bright eternity, come whenever it may. We are then "found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless," and no arrow of alarm, or even surprise, penetrates that "armour" to wound us, however suddenly the cry be heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." "Let us," then, only "walk honestly [befittingly] as in the day," welcoming the word, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;" and the question, "How long?" will have proved to us one of *labour's great incentives* to stir us this year to be always "ready" to go in with the Bridegroom to the marriage.

But our Lord's parting words, "*Surely, I come quickly,*" form the most heart-satisfying answer to the question, and stir in us the response, "Come, Lord Jesus."

We sometimes sing—

" 'Till He come,' oh, let the words
Linger on the trembling chords!
Let the 'little while' between
In their *golden light* be seen."

And "till He come" does shed a golden light on this "little while" in two ways: 1st. By joy to our hearts that the "little while" is so *short* and His coming again is so *near*. 2nd. By exercising our hearts to make *the best* for God and for Christ of that which is at most but a "little while."

Thus our little waiting-time becomes *brighter* than gold to our gladdened eyes, and more *precious* than gold by our heavenly use of it.

Be it so with every hour given us of this newly-opened year, for our Lord Jesus' sake. Amen. H. D.

THE BEGINNINGS OF GOSPEL HISTORY.

LUKE i.

THE SILENCE BROKEN.

THAT was a wondrous day when the silence of four hundred years was broken by the voice of the celestial messenger who addressed Zacharias in the holy place of the temple at Jerusalem. The last command given by inspired lips called for obedience to the law of Moses on the part of those who waited for God to raise them up a Prophet like unto Moses, according to His promise; "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." (Mal. iv. 4.) This command Zacharias and his wife were fulfilling. They were both righteous *before God*, and not, like many of their day, *before men* only. In all His commandments and ordinances they were blameless. They met the moral requirements of His law, and answered to all its demands in the way of ceremonials. Therefore they were in a condition to receive the announcement of the fulfilment of the promises of God, and to bear their part in that fulfilment.

In a degenerate day, Zacharias and Elisabeth were honouring God, and He marks them out for signal honour. One sorrow pressed heavily upon their hearts; for it is not always those who are most approved of God that are most free from sorrow in this world. They had no child, and they seem to have given up the hope of embracing one. For a child they had prayed, and their prayer appeared to be unheard or disregarded. But it had nevertheless been both heard and treasured up by Him in whose

ears the prayers of His people are as sweetest music, and He had only delayed the answer that it might be richer and more abundant when He bestowed it. The child which it was God's purpose to bestow was to be His gift, in the fullest sense of the word, not to his parents only, but to Israel as a nation; and the special interposition of God took such a form as to show that where all was hopeless naturally, whether in the case of a childless couple or a fruitless nation, He could and would accomplish His great designs.

The offering of incense before God in the temple was the highest priestly act, except the entrance into the holiest once a year. The priest who should perform the service was marked out by lot, and it is said that no one could render that service twice in his life. At the time indicated in the opening of the sacred narrative, the course of Abia, or Abijah (Luke i. 5; 1 Chron. xxiv. 10), the eighth of the twenty-four courses, was on duty, and on this particular day the lot, of which "the whole disposing" is the Lord's (Prov. xvi. 33), fell upon Zacharias, and marked him out as the one who should "enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense." (v. 9.) It has been thought, from the fact that a "multitude of the people were praying without," that it may have been the Sabbath-day. To many of the priests even this honourable service came as a matter of course, and they passed through it, doubtless, as a mere ceremony. Not so could it be with a godly man like Zacharias. He would not enter the sanctuary to render this service without some sense of the glory and holiness of Him before whom he offered the incense, nor without taking advantage of this one distinguished opportunity to gather up into one great petition his prayers of a lifetime, so to speak, to present to the Most High; and, if he no longer prayed for offspring of his own, he would

at least pray for Him who was the Hope of Israel, and for whose appearing it is evident he greatly longed. Nor would he be alone in this. We may think of aged Simeon, and godly Anna, and others "who looked for redemption in Jerusalem," as amongst that crowd outside silently praying for the long-promised Messiah. This was the prayer of every true Israelite, just as now the heart of the believer who is taught of God, and is walking in the Spirit, will ever cry, "Come, Lord Jesus."

Suddenly Zacharias, who thought he was alone in the sanctuary, beholds a radiant form on the right side of the altar of incense; fear and trouble fill his heart and find expression in his countenance; but he is soon set at rest by the gentle voice of his visitor bidding him "Fear not." With such gracious words is the long silence broken, and the new communications of God with men are begun—words which stand in bright contrast with the closing sentence of the Old Testament.

The name Zacharias signifies, "Whom God remembers;" and now he has indeed evidence of its truth: "Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard." Years had he prayed and waited; and perhaps he had been tempted with the unbelieving question, entertained by those who know not God, as to the profit of prayer. (Job xxi. 15.) But at length the answer comes; and what an answer! Surely he gets more than ever he asked or thought. Not only does he receive the promise, "Thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son," but he learns also that that son is to be the very forerunner of the Lord Himself. What an encouragement to pray patiently, "to pray and not to faint!" Sooner or later must it be said to every truly praying soul, "Thy prayer is heard." And if we receive not the answer exactly in the way we looked for it, or at the time expected, it must come in a better way, and at a more season-

able time, and be so far richer and higher than our feeble hopes as God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours. The promised child is to be marked as God's gift of grace by his name *John* (meaning either "Jehovah given," or "Jehovah is gracious"); and his birth is to be a source of joy and gladness, not to his godly parents alone, but also to many others who shared their faith and hope in God. (v. 14.)

Then as to the child himself, true dignity was to be his: "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord." Without earthly glory and dignity, arrayed in no soft clothing as a courtier of kings, turning even from those priestly robes which as a son of Aaron he might have worn, his was to be a divine greatness that should distinguish him from all that had ever been born of women. Further, he was to be a true Nazarite, fully consecrated to God according to the requirements of Num. vi.; and then, as the last of the order, giving place to Him in whom we see the reality and perfection of the Nazarite character without the outward tokens of it. He was not to taste the wine of earth, but was to be "filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb." The cup of this world, in whatever form it may be presented, must be refused by those who would obey the command to be "filled with the Spirit." (Eph. v. 18.) We must, however, distinguish between the exhortation of Paul to believers now and the promise of the angel concerning John. This promise, understood in the light of Old Testament Scripture, marked him out as a true prophet of Jehovah, while the words following declare the result of his ministry. He was to go forth "in the spirit and power of Elias;" not indeed in his miraculous power, for "John did no miracle," but by his bold and fearless preaching in the power of the Spirit to bow the hearts of the people.

Beneath the rigid formalism and Pharisaic strictness with which the divinely-appointed ceremonial was carried out in those days, He who "looketh at the heart" saw the same estrangement from Himself as when of old Jezebel through Ahab drew all the people save a hidden remnant to the worship of Baal. And, therefore, like Elijah in those times, John in his day was to stand between a degenerate people and the God from whom they had departed, and be the instrument of turning many of them back again, and thus to make ready a people who should be prepared to welcome the Lord when He was revealed.

To this wondrous message of divine grace Zacharias listened, with deep reverence doubtless, but not in the spirit of humble faith. To the great things God had promised He at once confronts the weakness of nature, just as though God needed nature's strength to fulfil His designs. He asks a sign, and he gets one, but it is in the way of chastisement. Still the reply of the angel is one of assurance, and expressive of the condescending kindness of God: "I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God." Gabriel means *strong one of God*; he is one of those angels "that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." (Psalm ciii. 20.) "The presence of God" is his honoured place, and direct from that glorious presence he had come with this message: "I am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings." (v. 19.) The verse quoted above is a beautiful description of God's angels. They never run *unsent*, they ever *wait* for "the voice of His word;" when He speaks they never fail to hear, and the moment they hear they obey; they "*do* His commandments." They get their message before they speak; they deliver their message, and retire to the holy presence whence they

came. And regarding their messages, as given in various parts of Scripture, we may at least observe three things; they are always very brief, very explicit, and very personal. Good would it be for us, for the Church, and for the world, if those who are called to serve in the ministry of the Word were more like them in these respects.

It was solemnly significant that the first word of God as to the carrying out of His purpose of grace should have met with a response of unbelief, and that too in a godly man. And the sign given was a sure indication of God's estimate of the sin of unbelief. Zacharias asked one unbelieving question, and as a chastisement his power of speech was taken away, and he had a lengthened period of silence. But at the same time the angel did not leave without giving the assurance concerning his words, that they should be "fulfilled in their season." Zacharias was a man of faith, but the things spoken by the angel were so high that he staggered at them, his sense of human weakness overcoming for the time his confidence in divine power. On this question of Zacharias, and the reply of Gabriel, it has been well said, "It is not our holy thoroughness with God that can bear us out in the least sin; yea, rather, the more acquaintance we have with His majesty, the more sure we are of correction when we offend." May this beautiful little narrative of the beginning of God's way of grace in the New Testament encourage the faith and patience of His children; and may the unreadiness of Zacharias to accept without hesitation the answer to his own prayers be a warning to us against the sin of unbelief, which always dishonours God because it limits Him!

W. H. B.

(To be continued.)

SOLOMON'S PRAYER.

2 CHRON. vi.

It is not without design that the prayer of Solomon, at the dedication of the house of God, has been given *twice* in sacred Scripture (1 Kings viii.; 2 Chron. vi.), and it has surely been thus left on record for *our* admonition.

Solomon takes up, in supplication to God, the very conditions which Moses had predicted would ensue on Israel's departure from the truth of God, and these were but the righteous judgments of a holy God, who, nevertheless, "keeps covenant and mercy with His servants who walk before Him with all their heart."

The apostacy of Israel, which Solomon's prayer contemplates, is frequently mentioned in Scripture as a warning to the professing Church. Amidst that apostacy there was a remnant who, in the troubles and sorrows of widespread departure from the truth, still found their consolation in the assurance that GOD remained unchanged, whatever else might fail. Thus we find the expression, "Jehovah, the God of Israel," as much on the lips of Elijah, in the time of wicked Ahab, as we do at the opening of the dispensation of kingly glory under Solomon. In Ezekiel also (viii. 4; ix. 2) the departing glory of a defiled temple, and of a desolated people, was still "the glory of the God of Israel;" and when that glory comes back to a restored people, and to a rebuilt temple, it will still be "the glory of the God of Israel" (Ezek. xliii. 2); for the gifts and callings of God are without repentance. The same line of truth is evident in the New Testament. Amid latter-day evils, those who are overcomers through God's faithfulness will not lose their

blessing or reward, though all beside may have to be judged.

Notwithstanding all the failings of His people, God remains to the end the resource of the Israel nation in its earthly relationship, as He also is of the Church in her heavenly relation. He is likewise the resource of the individual who is content to trust and to obey, or of any company of such trusting ones who rely upon the covenant of everlasting grace. Indeed, from the very commencement, God has used sin, failure, and apostacy as schools in which His people have been trained and exercised to the knowledge of good and evil.

Hence our Master's word, "It must needs be that offences come." (Matt. xviii. 7.) Nevertheless, woe to him through whom they come; yes, even though the unrighteousness of the creature is made to commend the righteousness of God. (Rom. iii. 5.)

Unless God's way in this respect is understood, failure around us leads to discouragement; but if the impotency of the creature is seen as embraced in a divine purpose, we look upon all the failures in dispensations, past or present, as Paul did in Romans xi., and can say with him, "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!"

As Solomon in his prayer looked on to days of sin and apostacy, such a Scripture as Ps. xlv. may have been before his mind. Verses 1-8 speak of God's "hand," "His right hand," "His arm," and "the light of His countenance," which might have been Israel's boast, "all the day long" (v. 8); but the psalm goes on to speak of sorrows in those ominous words, "But thou hast cast off," &c., and ends with the cry, "Arise for our help, and redeem us for Thy mercies' sake."

The first thing we would notice, in regard to Solomon's prayer, is *the place* where he offered it. "He stood before the altar of Jehovah." (2 Chron. vi. 12.) Does not this teach us that if nearness to the cross were more realized by us, there would be more power in our intercession? The value of the atonement is the real basis of all prayer, and alone gives boldness to enter into the presence of God. Thus Paul bowed his "knees unto the Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*," and knew that in virtue of the cross God was "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us."

Then let us observe *the attitude*. "He kneeled down upon his knees." He lost not sight of the place the creature should ever take in the presence of his God, how much soever God may have exalted him among men. Then "he spread forth his hands toward heaven" as one stretching out the hands to receive what the Giver had to give. Surely this reverence and expectancy of attitude is often forgotten by us.* It was not so by the Greater than Solomon, when, in John xvii., He prayed for His people a prayer which is not without a resemblance to the prayer of Solomon. The one was answered by fire from heaven (2 Chron. vii. 1), and the other by Pentecostal fire (Acts ii.), and in either case the prayer was connected with the altar and the cross.

"He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him;" and so here (*vv.* 14, 15), Solomon lays hold on God as the covenant-keeper, who speaks with *His mouth*, and fulfils with *His hand*. Thus had it been in the past, and thus

* We would that reverence of attitude in worship more occupied the attention of God's children. One often wonders what holy angels, looking into our assemblies, must think of the little sense of the divine presence often manifested by those who SPEAK of entering within the veil.

Solomon reckoned it ever would be in the future. The deed would ever follow the word sooner or later. "Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" Words solemnly true, whether in judgment or in mercy; but, alas! easily uttered, and easily forgotten.

From verse 22 the prayer divides itself into seven distinct supplications:

1st. *For righteous judgment.* God had given statutes and judgments to His people, by which they were called to act in their decisions about others, and in which they were themselves to walk. When rules are explicit, and when facts are clear, action is easy. But as with Israel of old, so in the Church of to-day. There are questions continually arising in which our only resource is to bring the matter solemnly to God before the altar, and then to expect that He will "hear from heaven, and do, and judge," by "requiting the wicked," and by "justifying the righteous." Much patient waiting may be needed. God may not vindicate the right, or reveal the matter at once; but with this prayer before us we may, while unable to act, look for divine interference in due time. God will act for us when we have no power to act for ourselves. What quietness and rest of soul this would give in the many perplexities of Church-life if really laid hold of! Alas for the unrighteous haste and the fleshly zeal that leads to action, when waiting on God is the real path of faith. True it is that "to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven," and happy are they who, having the heart of the wise, can discern "both time and judgment." (Eccles. viii. 5.)

2nd. *When smitten before an enemy.* When sin has come in, and the enemy has triumphed, there is a danger lest a feeling of hopeless despair fill the mind. This is met here.

The penitent has to confess the name of the Lord ; that is, to own His holiness, and acknowledge His righteousness, and to make supplication for forgiveness and restoration. Thus Peter, for the pride and self-confidence of his heart, was given into the hands of the enemy and sifted. Satan triumphed for the moment ; but Peter, repentant and with weeping eyes, came back strengthened and humbled, and Satan was vanquished. Thus God hears and forgives ; therefore, to despair of God's mercy is one of our greatest sins ; for despair has forgotten God, and shut Him out.

3rd. *When there is no rain.* Israel's sin brought drought in the days of Elijah, and at other times, and in the experience of the Church of God the spiritual heavens over us may often appear like brass, and the ground beneath us iron ; all is lifeless and cold and dead ; the fountains of God's grace seem closed, and everything around is dry. But we read, " If they *pray* toward this place, and *confess* thy name, and *turn* from their sin, when thou dost afflict them ; then hear thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when *thou hast taught them the good way, wherein they should walk ;* and send rain." The time of famine is to be a time of divine teaching, and a time for prayer and confession also. It is to be a time when true and deep repentance shall bring God's people to sit lowly at His feet. We are prone to be up and doing when our place is on our knees and our faces in the dust ; for we need rain in order to plough. Alas ! how often do Christians seek by fruitless activity to compensate for want of spiritual power, which can only come by means of the rain and dew from heaven.

On the other hand, there are seasons of spiritual drought when the Church is in great danger of sitting still, as if there was no God of Israel, who had promised to hear the cry of the hungry soul. It is well to be reminded that

God restrains the outflowings of His Spirit and grace in judgment on spiritual declension just as He withheld the rain from Israel, because of their outward departure from Himself. Is it not often the case that, after much ploughing and sowing, there is little or no reaping, because God has withheld the increase? The Spirit, as the rain and the dew, must be given from on high. Pentecostal title and privilege does not secure Pentecostal power any more than Israel's land, as a land of rain and dew, secured either, except as they walked with God. In our day many, it may be, are boasting of privileges which are not really possessed, because never laid hold of in the power of the Holy Ghost.

4th. *When there is pestilence, blasting or mildew, locust or caterpillar, or the enemies' sword, or sore, or sickness.* Here we have a catalogue of miseries brought by the hand of God on a rebellious people, all of which have their spiritual antitypes. Of such things Paul writes to the Corinthians when, because of their forgetting the sacredness of the Lord's Supper, many were weak and sickly among them, and many slept. There is much spiritual death that comes in divine judgment from God, because of walking in the flesh. We read of it in Rom. viii., where we are told that if we walk after the flesh we shall die; that is, a condition of spiritual lethargy and death will come on, which will destroy all fruitfulness to God. The fields of toil seem almost ready for the sickle; but mildew and locust, blight and caterpillar, destroy all, and make fruitless the labour spent, even though there has also been the watering of the rain of heaven. What spiritual languor and weakness, what soul diseases and sicknesses, there are in the Church of God, treated too as a misfortune, but which ought to be regarded as signs of spiritual evil that has called for God's displeasure!

When, however, the condition described is recognised, we have a resource and a precious promise of healing, as we read: "Then what prayer or what supplication soever shall be made of *any man*, or of *all thy people Israel*, when every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in [or towards] this house: then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways [*i.e.* of sorrow, confession, and repentance], whose heart thou knowest," and the result is to be that they fear God, and seek to walk in His ways all their days. To this prayer God's fire from heaven on the altar said, "Amen. I will do it." And so He says to us now, if only we will acknowledge wherein we have failed and sinned.

5th. *When the stranger prays.* A precious prayer for the world, that when any poor sinner hears of the name and might of Israel's God, and comes and prays, God would answer the prayer of such, and link them with His believing people. These strangers coming into Israel's midst would have the witness in their own souls (like those mentioned in 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25), that God was among them of a truth, hearing, seeing, and speaking; and the world now sadly needs to see a living God in the Church.

6th. *When going out to war.* What an encouragement there is here for the soldiers of the cross. Out of weakness they were to be made strong, and turn to flight the armies of the enemies. Israel had had proof of this in the lives and conflicts of Joshua, of the Judges, of David, and of others, who, laying hold on God, went forth with Him to maintain their cause. What holy confidence should this prayer inspire for the taking to ourselves the whole armour of God, and standing against our foe, always remembering that our warfare is against those

wicked spirits in heavenly places who are "the rulers of the darkness of this world," and who are led on by him who is the god of this age, and the prince of darkness. The Captain of our salvation is mightier than all that are against us, and will make those who follow Him to join in His triumph day by day, and in the end will award to each the conqueror's crown.

7th. *When taken captive out of the land.* This is the climax of woe. Away from their land, their temple, and their God, they are made to drink the full cup of sorrow and degradation because of departure from God. Yet, notwithstanding all, God is in His temple to hear and to restore. What precious words of consolation for backsliding Israel in the latter days, and for poor backsliding saints of our time, when they learn, by divine judgment and chastening love, that it is not only an *evil* thing to depart from the Lord, but a *bitter* thing too.

But notice especially those consoling words of the Spirit's inditing (v. 36), "For there is no man which sinneth not." They seem intended to show us how fully God takes all our frailties into consideration, and remind us of 1 John i., "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves;" and "if we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar."

As the apostacy has been real, so must the return to God be real, even "with all their heart, and with all their soul;" and if their prayer is "towards this place," then the petition is, "Hear thou from heaven, thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee." Thus does our Melchisedec ever live to make intercession, clothing His priests with salvation, and making His saints to shout aloud for joy.

The prayer is ended, and then comes the divine

response by fire from heaven, that fell and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices, and the house was filled with the glory of the Lord. This was God's ratification of the prayer. It was God's promise, that because of the altar before which Solomon kneeled, all was heard, and all would be answered.

May we bow our heads in worship like Israel, and praise the Lord, saying, "For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever." And may these supplications of Solomon increase our apprehensions of the efficacy of the Redeemer's prayer on behalf of those for whom God has made Him a Prince and a Saviour, seeing "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." H. G.

GOD'S "HUSBANDRY" AND "BUILDING."—God's present special care in this world is His Church. We have in 1 Cor. iii. 9 two separate figures to express the nature and effect of the present ministry of Christ by the Spirit. Each of these has its proper meaning; the first relating to the work of God in its patient and much-hindered progress; the other to its end, when the Church will be presented faultless in His glory; but from first to last the work is *of God*. To exclude the flesh under every form, and to familiarize the hearts and consciences of believers to the truth of their standing as new creatures in Christ, was the apostle's constant aim. In the expression "husbandry," each saint, whether considered as a plant of righteousness, or as a branch of the true Vine, is an object of the Father's unremitting care; and surely a harvest, both rich and plenteous, will crown the husbandry of grace! But a "building" is for the Builder's lasting habitation and His rest. He will occupy the work of His own hands. He will be at home for ever in the congregation of His saints.—*Extract.*

“WITHIN THE VEIL.”

HEB. vi. 19.

“WITHIN the veil” I lean upon His bosom,
I hear His whispers, watch His beaming face ;
I know the depths of God’s eternal welcome,
That tideless ocean of abounding grace.

“Within the veil” I leave life’s many shadows,
Its tiny streams of fellowship below
For boundless deeps : *here* earthly dangers, shallows,
Forbid my knowing all I long to know.

“Within the veil” I breathe the lily fragrance,
Absorbing all my soul in loving praise ;
I gaze on glory ’mid the full exuberance
Of Sharon’s rose to endless, blightless days.

“Within the veil” no serpent slime is telling
Its trailèd course upon the golden pave ;
No lion’s tramp or eagle’s scream is knelling
The deaths of earth, or victories of the grave.

“Within the veil” I bless the Lord of glory ;
His voice so sweet, no angel harps compare ;
His visage, once so marred, yea, wan and gory,
Is changed resplendent—how exceeding fair !

“Within the veil,” shut in with Jesus ever,
Himself my sunshine, holy, pure, and calm,
Where nought without one chord of joy can sever,
Since He Himself doth lead the eternal psalm.

“Within the veil,” my Saviour, Lord, and Master,
In eager love I listen for Thy call !
Haste, loving Lord, speed on the moments faster,
Shout, in Thy triumph, and translate us all !

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Did Matthias or Paul fill the place from which Judas fell ?

WE judge that Matthias did so, for two reasons : *First*, because the Spirit makes no other allusion to the matter in Acts i. than to say, "And he was numbered with the eleven apostles ;" while in Acts vi. he is also reckoned with them : "Then the *twelve* called the multitude of the disciples unto them." *Secondly*, because Paul's apostleship was of so peculiar a character, so pre-eminently belonging to the Church, and so little connected] with those Jewish hopes which gathered round the twelve (who were to sit on thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel), that it appears more consonant with the bearing of the truth to place Paul outside their number, being, as he expresses it, one "born out of due time." It involves a dangerous principle to suppose that apostolic actions were wrong when the Spirit gives no intimation of their being so, and the matter in hand is not opposed to the direct teaching of the Word. In this case reference is made by Peter to Psalm cix. 8 : "Let another take his office ;" for it must be remembered that till Pentecost the apostles stood on Jewish ground. And their action in this matter was to them obedience to what they had gathered from the Word, and shows how profoundly their intercourse with Christ after His resurrection had penetrated their thoughts and opened their understandings (Luke xxiv. 45), and enabled them to understand Scripture as they had never done before, so that they could, after seeing their Lord go away into heaven, return to Jerusalem with great joy.

How are we to understand the few and many stripes in Luke xii. 47, 48 ?

The answer is contained in the closing words of verse 48 : "*For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required,*" &c. The judgment is that of the great white throne, and tells us that eternal punishment will be in its weight according to responsibility. This passage is sometimes most unwarrantably used to deny the eternity of suffering. It has nothing to do with duration, but only with the question of lighter and heavier punishment, which is measured out by the unerring hand of Him who ever measures punishment by guilt ; and the degree of the latter depends on the measure of the sinner's responsibility, known only to God ; for He

alone can measure the amount of light possessed, the advantages enjoyed, and the warnings resisted. The same principle applies to the different measures of reproof which erring and unfaithful saints will receive from Christ as their Master when they stand at His judgment-seat after He has come to take His people to Himself.

What are we to gather from Acts vi. 2, 3 as to Church appointments?

Simply that in matters connected with serving tables, *i. e.* administering the temporal concerns of the Church (a service requiring wisdom and faithfulness), men approved by all according to the description given in verse 3 are needed. The passage does not refer to spiritual service or ministry of the Word; for in that the gift and power must be specially bestowed by God, and with the Church rests the responsibility of owning those whom God has appointed, *their* responsibility being to fulfil their ministry in the fellowship of the Spirit, and in the sphere suited to each one's gift.

What is "the valley of the shadow of death" in Psalm xxiii.?

In the first place the definite article should be omitted: "Though I walk through *a* valley," &c. The expression, "shadow of death," is in Hebrew a compound word, and is better rendered "death-shade." It is used frequently in Scripture for impenetrable darkness, representing the depths of sorrow and woe. (Compare Job iii. 5; x. 21; xxviii. 3; xxxiv. 22; xxxviii. 17; Ps. xlv. 19; cvii. 10-14; Isa. ix. 2; Jer. ii. 5; xiii. 15; Amos v. 8.) We would therefore understand the passage before us as embracing every path of sorrow and darkness through which the Good Shepherd may lead His flock, not excluding that last sorrow which, amidst profoundest peace of soul and visions of glory, is often a valley of deep and bitter mortal anguish; for it by no means follows that to the brightest saints the brightest death-beds are vouchsafed. Here God, as in all else in the sovereignty of infinite love and wisdom, deals as He sees best for His own glory, and for the good of the saint. It is well for the English reader to be reminded that there is nothing in the Hebrew text to justify the rendering "*though*" as implying an uncertain condition. The Hebrew is simply, "*Also when I walk,*" &c., referring to those dark valleys which God's faithful servants have ever found in their pilgrim journey, and which are neither few nor far between. Yet the darker the valley, the nearer is God, and therefore Paul could say, "Sorrowing, yet always rejoicing;" for the rod of God's sovereign rule, His sceptre, and the staff of His sustaining grace, are ever to be realized according to the measure of our need.

“DO THE FIRST WORKS;”

OR, A VOICE FROM EPHESUS.

IN a few remarks on the epistle to the church in Ephesus (Rev. ii. 1-7) we desire to say a word to the wise that may be helpful in the coming months of the present year. In the seven epistles, of which this is the first, we have the priestly inspection of our Lord as the great High Priest; and the mystic number *seven* gives a complete description of what was seen in the early churches by Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, whose feet are as fine brass as if they burned in a furnace, and out of whose mouth goeth a sharp two-edged sword. This is He with whom the churches “have to do” *now*, and to whom they will have to render an account at His judgment-seat before they are crowned as kings and priests.

To the church at Ephesus He announces Himself as the One “that holdeth the stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.” The special announcement by which our Lord reveals Himself to each church is intimately connected with its spiritual character and condition. This we shall see is strikingly applicable here.

It is not without an important object that Ephesus stands first on the list; for not only is there presented a divinely-drawn portraiture of each church, but the order in which they are placed is equally significant.

Each church is characterized by a star and a candlestick—symbols which stand in marked connection with the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, and represent the divine light kindled in the Church on earth on the day of Pentecost.

The candlestick of gold represents the Church as in the world in the place of testimony, of which each local assembly owned by God is the representative. It is amongst these assemblies that the Lord walks; and though the star be held in the firm grasp of the great High Priest, the candlestick may be removed out of its place, as no longer a witness for God.

One feature of special beauty that runs through all these epistles is, that the Lord always commends all that can be commended before He blames what must be blamed. Would that this were more remembered in the Church of God! It would then be found that the godly zeal which will not suffer sin upon a brother, is also a zeal of love with eyes quick to discern and commend all that is good in him. Alas for him who only sees what is wrong, and is ready to reprove it, but is blind or regardless concerning what is deserving of praise!

The fault-finding spirit of proud self-assurance sees the mote in another's eye, while it discerns not the beam in its own, and causes much that is said in righteousness, but not in grace, to be rejected. The heart and conscience are not touched. This was the case in the controversy between Job and his three friends; for while Job was wrong in much that he said, they were worse in their misjudgment of him, and of God's dealings with him. The essential point in all reproof is to touch the conscience, and this our High Priest teaches us how to do, even by first recognizing every good thing. This opens the ear, and makes the heart and the conscience willing to listen. Alas for the spirit of wholesale condemnation that is manifest in the present day, stigmatizing small departures from the truth by the darkest epithets, so that nothing is left in language to designate the blackness of the darkest apostacy. It should be remembered that all are not in

Babylon who have something of Babylon in them, even as all are not in sin who yet have much of sin in them.

Let us ponder our Lord's commendation of Ephesus, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them that say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." And again, "This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." What a picture! Labour for the Master's name's sake, patience in suffering, zeal for the truth, and yet there was a canker at the root that was like to spoil it all. The motive-power of the life and activity was not *love*, for we read: "This [not somewhat] I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." Then follows the solemn warning, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent."

These words come with the piercing of the two-edged sword of the Spirit from the lips of the Son of man, and illustrate what the word of God is as dividing asunder soul and spirit—discerning between that which, though fair, is merely natural, and that which is really spiritual. They reveal the solemn truth that much work, patience, and orthodoxy may continue after love has died out, and therefore, although the works are outwardly the same, God sees the distinction inwardly to be as great as between light and darkness, and says, "Do the first works," as in those early days of first love, when labour and zeal and love of truth were kindled by love to God as the heart's response to His infinite love.

Are we surprised that Christ so looks at matters? Surely not. He who has loved seeks to be loved; this is essential to love. As God has loved with all the greatness of His being, so does He expect to be loved with *all* our heart, and *all* our mind, and *all* our strength. He expects it, and His Holy Spirit is given to draw forth that love, and to stir up within us those spiritual longings after God which in all ages have characterized the faithful of the family of God, and which have assumed a deeper and deeper tone as the love of God has been more and more deeply revealed from age to age till its full manifestation in His "unspeakable Gift."

"Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel [*i.e.* exacting] as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a Jehovah-flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." (Cant. viii. 6, 7.) Let us read these words in the light of the life and death of the Son of God, and see how to the very utmost every expression is fulfilled. But if love is *strong*, and willingly gives itself to death, it is equally *exacting* in its expectation of a response. It must be so; in the very nature of things it cannot be otherwise; and hence the mighty jealousy of the love of God. And here in Ephesus the jealousy of Christ's love is kindled, because in all the service for His name, and in all the zeal for His truth, love to Him was dying out, and man was giving something, even perhaps "all the substance of his house," as an exchange for the devotion of his heart of hearts. True love gives *itself*, and throws all else into the bargain as of little value, even as Christ gave Himself first, and then with that gift of gifts, "all things" also.

As with the Ephesians so was it with the Corinthians,

and with all their gifts, knowledge, &c., they were but babes; for it is *love*, not *knowledge*, that makes men of us. How deeply this is true we all know in our daily experience. It is not to the philosophic Christian or the learned Christian that we turn in the time of sorrow, when we want a man in Christ to bear a burden; but to one who enters into and re-echoes the love of God. That is the man of might and of power; for he can lay hold on God; for God is love. The man of philosophy and of biblical learning may help us in our mental and metaphysical difficulties, but he can bear no burden; for love, not knowledge, is needed for that. Hence we read that all tongues, all knowledge, all mysteries, all charities and philanthropies go for nothing, or are but a noisy discord, when love is wanting. (See 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3.)

But whence all this love? where is it to come from? whence is it to well up in these hearts? Not from within, but from above. This has to be constantly remembered, or we shall be seeking water out of our dry and empty hearts, and foolishly wonder that our broken cisterns can yield nothing. Let us read and meditate on Paul's words, "The love of God is shed abroad [or poured out] in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is [was] given unto us." (Rom. v. 5.) Like the rain and the sunshine, the blessed Spirit comes down, and in our weakest, driest times our resource is not to look in, but to look up, and in living faith open the heart to receive the heavenly showers.

It will be well to connect this epistle to Ephesus with Paul's epistle written earlier to the same church. What marvellous unfolding of the heavenly calling and of the mystery of the Church, of eternal purpose and of assured security! And yet a brief thirty years had taken the brightness and the power out of the realization of those things! The shell remained; the substance was gone.

The theory was held, and the place of the candlestick well known; but the silent footsteps of Him who walked among them had been unheard, His whispers unheeded, His priestly presence in flame and fire forgotten, and now He comes with solemn words, which remind us of those of Eph. v. 14: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." With all their activity of work, and with all their hard fight for orthodoxy, love had slumbered, and spiritual life was ebbing and decaying.

"Remember from whence thou art fallen." Amid all that seemed so fair and so exemplary, what had been the fall? From heaven to earth; from life to death; from heavenly zeal and holy living to carnal, Jehu-like activity against others' sins and other men's heterodoxies, yet this was only as the mint, the anise, and the cummin of the Jewish ritual, that were rightly tithed, but which took the place of what was far higher and mightier. As then, so now. Christ is the same. What, then, is the call? "REPENT!" spoken by Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and out of whose mouth goeth the sharp two-edged sword; and He adds, as with a voice of thunder, "else I will come unto thee *quickly*, and remove thy candlestick out of its place." There are times when in patient grace Christ waits; but *now* He is going to act in judgment, and that quickly.

In all this, is there no special voice from Christ to any in these days? Are there none left of those who a few years ago commenced in weakness and in joy to lay hold of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, as it had not been laid hold of for centuries, if ever since the days in which it was written, and in whose hearts love to Christ and to all saints was a mighty reality? It was so then; and the Word was not only objectively *true*, but subjectively *real*;

as is generally the case in the beginning of any religious awakening or any divinely given revival of truth. But how is it now? How soon has the fine gold become dim!

As it is with assemblies, so is it with individuals; and now, ere another year flows on, we desire that there may be self-judgment and self-abasement before God, deep and real, and then with self-examination let us see where, in this vital question of love, we are standing as individuals and as churches before the all-seeing eyes of our great High Priest. Prophetically we are forewarned, that because iniquity [lawlessness] shall abound, the love of the many will wax cold; and so it has come to pass in these days of democratic, lawless independence in the Church as in the world. But still to the humble and the lowly there is a voice that cries in the secret of the soul, "He that hath an ear to hear, let *him* hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

He who hears is he who overcomes, and to him will the promise be fulfilled, "to eat of the tree of life that is in the midst of the paradise of God."

In this epistle, John the beloved disciple may have remembered the scene of which we read in Luke ix. 51-55, when he and James in their forward zeal would have called fire down from heaven, and when his lowly Master turned and rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save." Let us ask ourselves then, in all that we do, what spirit moves us.

In conclusion, we would make one remark more as to much we see taking place around us. Wonder is often expressed both at what God does and does not condescend to use. On the one hand, we see and hear of much work that is scriptural, consistent, and in the highest sense orthodox, alike in teaching and in practice, and that yet is in

numberless cases entirely set aside by God. On the other hand, we see and hear of much work that violates Scripture, that defies all orthodoxy, and that in practice sets aside the simplest rules of God's word, and notwithstanding is in many cases used and blessed of God. There is a cause for this that needs to be sought out. Is it that God undervalues His precious word, wherein abound so many solemn calls to obedience? Is it that He marks with His approbation any disobedience to its principles, or any disregard to its precepts? Is it that He would have us follow others in any disobedience because they are blest in their ignorance and we are unblest in our knowledge? Surely not. What is it then that causes God to own, often very signally, those connected outwardly with much that His word does not sanction, while He does not own those connected outwardly with what bears every mark of conformity to the Word? God is doubtless speaking to us in these days, and what explanation can we give of the facts we have indicated? for that such is the case few will deny, though real results can only be fully known at the judgment-seat of Christ. What answer can our consciences give to this question?

Does not the Lord's dealing with the church in Ephesus explain it all? Much knowledge may possess little love, much love may possess little knowledge. We believe the secret will be found here. Knowledge of truth puffs up, but love builds up—builds up the individual soul in the truth of God, and builds up those under its influence. But knowledge *of God* is a blessed and a mighty instrument, which ever humbles and prostrates the soul in the dust. Is then orthodoxy to be trampled on as if of no value? or is abstract truth to be despised? By no means. All truth is of God, and from its most important points to its jots and tittles is to be

held sacred to Him from whom it came, or we shall be faulty worshippers in the temple of truth. What of truth we have learnt we cannot unlearn; but it must be anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, for it is the anointing that teaches, and in which we must abide. This is our resource and our remedy for the withered orthodoxy boasted of on all sides, which has everything but life. In the spiritual field of truth, as in the outward world of nature, "a living dog is better than a dead lion." The dog can eat of the crumbs of the Master's table, but the dead lion can but in its withered carcase give room for the bees to yield their honey, that may sweeten the path of some poor heavenly stranger.

May God blend light, life, and love more and more in our hearts, and then the star in the hand of the Son of God, and the golden candlestick placed by the Master of the house in its place, will be a burning and shining witness for Him to all who are in the house and members of the household (Matt. v. 15), and a witness of salvation to all who come into the house from without. (Luke viii. 16.) God give us grace to remember the "first love," "the love of our espousals," when we followed Him into an unsown wilderness, to find Himself there our "all in all."

H. G.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.—It is not open evil that is thus spoken of, but the slow, imperceptible weaning of the soul's affections from the living God; the gradual hardening of those hearts which, when nourished by the pure milk of the Word, were soft and tender in the sweet enjoyment of Christ's love. A most sure symptom of this hardening of heart is an impatience of the fundamental truths of God. When knowledge is preferred to love, departure from God has already taken place.—*Extract.*

A WORD IN SEASON.

LUKE viii. 50.

It is written, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." (Prov. xviii. 21.) Job, in his early day, said, "How forcible are right words!" (Job vi. 25.) Solomon says, "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" (Prov. xv. 23.) Again, "Heaviness in the heart of a man maketh it stoop; but a good word maketh it glad." (Prov. xii. 25.) He also says, "The tongue of the wise is health." (Prov. xii. 18.) Surely there are not many who have not felt the power of the tongue, and the force of words, both to wound and to heal.

The tongue when used by Satan and the flesh is as a poisoned arrow, a sharp sword; but as the instrument of the Holy Ghost and of grace it is health, as oil and honey, milk and wine.

Blessed be God, there has been One on this earth whose tongue and its words, from first to last, from birth until death, were only used for God, and for good, even He who confessedly spake as never man spake, whose gracious words were wondered at and often welcomed.

Truly His words were always in season. Brevity forbids our citing even a few instances in proof of this. Words spoken to His Father and to His disciples, to Satan and to men, to scribes and Pharisees, rulers and doctors, Herodians and Sadducees, Gentiles and Jews, were always in time, and to the point. Unanswerable wisdom was His, as also were both truth and grace.

Not the least interesting and instructive is the example before us in Luke viii.

Having been sent away, or besought to depart, by the Gadarenes, Jesus sends back the freed demoniac to represent Him, and to bear testimony to His mercy and power, and Himself returns to the Galilee side of the lake, where many a needy one waited for Him. Among them was a man, a ruler of the synagogue, named Jairus, who fell at His feet, filled with grief for the sickness of his only daughter, "who lay a dying," and he beseeches Jesus to come into his house, adding (according to Matthew's gospel), "and lay thine hands upon her, and she shall live." And Jesus went with him, and so did His disciples.

We can imagine the scene—Jesus in fellowship with the Father, led by and filled with the Holy Ghost; the father of the damsel accompanying Him with believing expectation of the cure, and the disciples going to witness results. How natural was all this. How many a father since then has hastened from the sick-bed of an only child, perhaps a daughter, to the house of the physician, hoping for healing through his skill, and has returned in company with him to his home, where others watched to see the issue.

Jesus, the Son of God, in ordinary paths of life and circumstances, was extraordinary; a real man, and very God. Love moved His feet. With firm, majestic step of grace, and conscious ability for the service (Cant. v. 15), He went, and on the way His very garment, touched in faith by her who thus made one more attempt for healing, conveyed a cure.

While Jesus was commending the trembling woman for her faith, and comforting her, bidding her go in peace, certain persons from the ruler's house arrived, and said to the father of the damsel, "Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?" (Mark v. 35.)

What discouraging words! as indeed all the words of unbelief are; like the *chill* of death to the warmth of life.

But another ear besides the father's heard those words, the ear of Him who knew their source and tendency; and who shall say but that His eyes, which, although as soft as those of doves, are still like lightning flash, did not trace their saddening effect on the sorrowing yet hopeful father?

The Blessed One ever knew time and judgment; He perceived His opportunity in the father's need, and from His lips the *word in season* dropped: "Fear not; believe only;" or, as Mark gives it, "*Only believe.*" Truly then "His mouth was most sweet" (Cant. v. 16), as it will be evermore.

And have not we, fellow-believer, often heard the same soft yet mighty voice, above the roar of wind, of wave, of thunder, calming the tempest in our souls, silencing the clamour of unbelief, and giving us peace? Surely we have, and if we only trust and listen, we shall hear it often through this year that already is running its course.

At length they arrived at the ruler's house, which presented a scene of sorrow and confusion; mourning women and weeping friends filled the chamber. Suited circumstances these, the proper sphere for the words and action of the Son of God, the Prince of Life, to whose presence death was then to give place, as it must ever do.

Judging from His standpoint, and speaking according to His knowledge, Jesus said, "Why make ye this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." They in their turn, judging by the sight of their eyes, and what they regarded as fact, viz., her death, "laughed Him to scorn."

Yes; they scorned His word, but they must bow to His authority; for, acting as head of the house, having the father with Him, "He put them all forth;" then taking

the damsel by the hand, He called, saying, "Maid, arise! and she arose straightway." Then the life-restorer, with the tenderness of life-sustainer, "commanded to give her meat." Thus were the astonished parents comforted, and the word in season spoken by the way, "Fear not; believe only," proved to be in truth.

Often were those two words, "Fear not," spoken by Jesus, and they were always in season. He had indeed "the tongue of the learned," the instructed ones. But from whence had He it? To this question let the Spirit of Christ in prophecy give the answer.

In Isaiah 1. 4, He says, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." The tongue was given Him by the Lord God, and in order to speak He listened for His voice. This is, and ever must be, the mystery to which the proud reasonings of man must bow by faith, while love adores. The universal Giver condescends to receive, and the Fountain of wisdom stoops to be instructed!

And now, beloved fellow-believer, what instruction is there in all this to us? Much, both doctrinal and practical.

Was He essentially the son of the Father? We are by grace the children of God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God." "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Was He the Son in service? We also, who are children of God, are servants of Christ and of God, children in service.

Was He sent into the world to witness for the Father, and to do His will? Even so we have been taken out of

the world as to its spiritual condition, yet sent into it as a field and sphere of service, to be witnesses for Christ in His absence. Was He anointed with the Holy Ghost, and going about doing good? We are indwelt by the same Spirit to serve our generation in our day.

Did He move about in the midst of sorrow, misery, sickness, and death, and find many a weary and heavy-laden one? So are we surrounded, both in the world and in the Church, by misery, and sorrow, and many a burdened heart which needs relief.

Was He sufficient for the occasion, every occasion, and could He speak the *word in season* to the weary? It was even so. This also shall be true in us, as, conscious of our own weakness and ignorance, and surrendering our will, we are able to trust and listen; for then the same divine wisdom will display itself in us, and the mighty power of the Holy Ghost will be perfected in our weakness; we also shall be effectual helpers of others, and able to speak a word in season to the weary.

May it be so with us, more, yea, much more this year than in any former year, to His praise. H. H.

THE PATH OF FAITH.—A Christian is a man of faith. If he ever walks according to a lower principle, he is dishonouring, so far, his standing. Nothing that he does can be merely indifferent; it is an act either of obedience or of sin; that is, he is either pleasing God or himself. Hesitation therefore, or doubt as to any course, is a sufficient reason for abstaining from it; for faith can go nowhere without God. Actions which do not satisfy the conscience before Him are always wrong. God leads in the way of uprightness. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

THE MORNING STAR.

"The bright and Morning Star."
 "The morning stars sang together."

'Twas dark indeed—that dark chaotic night—
 Ere life had breathed or moved, or light
 Had broken in upon the waste and wild
 Of slime, and undefined, contorted heaps,
 That in their void and formless ruin lay,
 Awaiting God's omnipotence and grace.

A moment came—'twas such an one that
 In the vast eternity before had no
 Compeer. The Morning Star beamed forth,
 And in His majesty emerged with
 Holy dignity to do His mighty
 Work as God—Creator of a beauteous world.

Oh, how they sang, those joyous morning stars,
 As He led forth—mayhap did lead their song—
 As in the New Creation He will sing
 The mighty triumphs of Redeeming love!

How silent all till broken thus, and by
 His Spirit-word commanded—"Let light be!"
 And as He spake, the instant flashing beams
 Did penetrate the dismal gloom that
 Reigned in dire monotony below,
 Till every shadow fled and all was light.

But, oh, that fourth day morn, when mighty orbs
 Were hung on fibres of Almightyness,
 Then caught the glitter of Himself, and hence
 With borrowed grandeur pace their destined
 Paths in ceaseless solemn awe at His behest.

Oh, how the life sprang forth as myriad germs
 Heaved in their hidden cells of pregnant earth,

And verdure-clad the lately barren waste
 Shone with His glory, while luxuriant vales
 Bespoke their readiness to welcome life
 In other forms than theirs, inanimate but grand !

And has not each succeeding morn since then
 Sprung into being, and shone with light derived
 Alone from Him ? And does not each succeeding morn
 Succeed a night, yea, banish it, to be
 An antitype of that first shining of Himself ?
 Yea, every morn has still a typical voice
 Of yet another day, so cloudless bright,
 A dawning which Himself, the David Root,
 Shall thrill with vivifying power ; for life,
 The glory-life, shall follow in the wake,
 As in the rapture of His joy the teeming
 Earthy beds or mighty ocean deeps
 Shall yield the saints to life of life in Him.

Oh, what a morn 'twill be, when clouds of earth,
 Nor dense, nor fleeced, nor even fringed,
 Shall dim a moment's joy, or hide His face !
 'Tis day—'tis ever day—night ne'er succeeds—
 For saints are ushered home—home in His light—
 His temple joy, with river streaming free
 And always brimming from His throne.

And so each morn becomes a link
 Of that quick-shortening chain, betwixt that first
 Of power, and final beaming of transcendent love.
 Oh, as the links are one by one bestowed,
 Then gathered up to Him, with hanging clusters
 Of delicious fruit to joy His heart,
 One well may ask, How much of each is mine ?
 How much am I in Him, and He in me ?
 Himself absorbing all, and filling each
 With His inimitable love ; Himself
 To glorify by all ; yet in Himself
 His own to glorify with all He has
 And is in future vast eternity.

THE BEGINNINGS OF GOSPEL HISTORY.

LUKE i. 26-38.

II. THE DIVINE MESSAGE TO MARY.

ABOUT six months after the angel Gabriel had appeared to Zacharias, amid the splendours of the sanctuary, as the bearer of the message of grace from Jehovah, he was sent to a very different spot to announce a still greater event. He had returned to his accustomed place "before God," for he "was sent *from* God" to this city of Galilee. It may have been with some surprise that he saw the gorgeous palaces of Jerusalem, and the great ones who dwelt therein passed over, and the lowly Virgin in the humble cottage of despised Nazareth marked out as the recipient of the message which it was his honour to bear. But both that Virgin and he who had espoused her were of the royal family of David, and to that family the great promise of God had been secured by oath: "Jehovah hath sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne." (Ps. cxxxii. 11.) Some have found a difficulty in the fact that Mary was related to Elizabeth; but it should be borne in mind that the word rendered "cousin" (v. 36) simply expresses kinship, without defining the nearness of it. Zacharias recognized Mary as being of the house of David (v. 69), and whatever her relationship to the priestly family may have been, it was not such as to prevent its being "*evident* that our Lord sprang out of Judah." (Heb. vii. 14.)

That the family of David should be in a very low condition when The Christ should spring from it is not

obscurely intimated in the prophetic word. In Isa. xi. 1 He upon whom the Spirit of Jehovah is to rest in seven-fold fulness is represented as a "rod" springing from the "stem" or "stump" of a tree cut down to its roots; and the meaning clearly is, that the tree would no longer be standing in its glory and beauty, that the house of David would decay, and that from it, in its depressed condition, should come the illustrious Heir who would revive its glories, and raise them to more than their pristine greatness. It was in perfect harmony with the whole course and work of the Messiah that He should spring from the family in its lowliness and obscurity, rather than in its outward glory and majesty, such as that of Solomon's day.

But whatever Mary's lowly condition as to outward things was, there was evidently the grace of a prepared vessel. To no thoughtless, vain woman could God have sent the message that Gabriel carried to Mary; and, therefore, while we reject most heartily all Romish notions of her sinlessness, let us not fail to look upon her as one who was indeed "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use." The very manner of her reception of the wondrous tidings, and the outpouring of her heart in her beautiful song of praise, indicate this. Let us mark it, and remember that no prepared instrument will be left unused. If God's grace prepares us for service, His hand will ever guide us to it.

How perfect is God's way! His Son must be born of a "virgin" (Isa. vii. 14); but He causes that virgin to be espoused, that both she and her offspring might have a proper and faithful guardian, and be above the reproach of a world that could neither know nor believe the mystery of His birth.

With words of heavenly greeting the angel appeared to Mary: "Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is

with thee." The words "highly favoured" may mean "graciously accepted;" and the word "favour" in verse 30 is, literally, grace. *All* is of grace, and Mary is not 'mother of grace, but *child* of grace.' She saw that this was no human messenger, and was troubled; but not so overcome as to be unable to consider what was meant. And now with words of gentleness she is called to dismiss her fears and listen to the honour that is to be hers. "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." (vv. 30-33.) Anyone acquainted with the scripture would see in the words of the angel a reference to such passages as Isa. vii. 14, and ix. 6, 7, as well as to the special promises made to David. "The Son of the Highest" is to receive "the throne of His father David," to reign "over the house of Jacob for ever," and to possess a kingdom "which shall never be destroyed." (Dan. ii. 44.) To some the words of 1 Cor. xv. 24-28 have seemed at variance with these statements; but when they are carefully examined the difficulty vanishes. The time will come when God's anointed King will "deliver" to Him a kingdom in which every adverse power has been subdued; but He will no more deliver it up in the sense of parting with it than Paul parted with the gospel when he "delivered" it to the Corinthians. (The same Greek word is used in verse 3 and verse 24). The Son will indeed honour the Father, and show His own subjection by laying at His feet a conquered kingdom, and owning Him as the source of all authority; but the Father will equally

honour the Son by making it manifest that He is one with Himself in the direct administration of that eternal state in which God shall be "all in all:" not in contrast with *Christ*, but in contrast with the *creature*, and the insubjection manifested during preceding dispensations.

Mary evidently understood that it was of the great Son of David, the promised Seed, and the Hope of Israel, that the angel spake. It seems equally clear that she perceived that the fulfilment of the promise was not to be brought about in a natural way through her union with Joseph, who was not even named. But whatever her perplexity may have been, no question of unbelief escapes her lips. She does not ask, "How *can* this be?" But rather, with the assurance that what has been spoken *must* be performed, she simply asks for information, "How shall this be?" The information thus sought is freely given, in words so plain and simple as to leave no room for further question, and yet so great and lofty that they should ever be pondered with deepest reverence. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy offspring [or *holy-born*] shall be called the Son of God." (v. 35.) To attempt explanation here would be to display folly and presumption; to deeply ponder the words in the spirit of worship is for our profit. A few reflections may help such meditation.

1. The fellowship of the Godhead must be absolutely perfect; and as the Son does nothing apart from the Father, so He does nothing apart from the Holy Spirit. If therefore, in infinite grace, "God sent forth His Son," and that blessed One "became of the seed of David according to the flesh," it was as the result of the action of the Holy Ghost that he was "born of a woman," and could say, "A body hast thou prepared me." That body, which could no

more receive the taint of corruption or the spot of mortality than His holy soul could receive the stain of sin, was the fruit of the creative power and wondrous skill of the Spirit of God.

2. How this narrative illuminates that first great prophecy of redemption which declared that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Here we learn that He who crushes for ever the head of the great adversary is, in the fullest and most literal sense of the word, the *woman's* Seed, in that, though He was most truly man, and verily born of a woman, it was not by natural generation that He was conceived, but by the overshadowing power of the Highest. The word "overshadow" is used of the cloud in Exod. xl. 34, and Luke ix. 34, and suggests how gentle, yet efficacious, that power should be, as well as the secrecy of its operation. What God has been pleased to hide from our curiosity by the cloud of His own glory may we never with irreverent gaze seek to penetrate.

3. There was a *first* step as well as a *last* in the wondrous course of Him who in matchless grace measured the infinite distance from the "light unapproachable" to "the dust of death." (1 Tim. vi. 16 ; Ps. xxii. 15.) That first step was taken when He stooped from the bosom of the Father to the womb of the Virgin, when He by whom all things were made linked Himself with the creation of His hand, and partook of its very substance. This coming "forth from the Father" (John xvi. 28) was the first great act in the path of obedience of the Son of God, an obedience rendered by Him as a servant in the perfect fellowship of an equal.

4. Not of a *nature* but of a *person* is it said, "That holy offspring shall be called the Son of God." In Phil. ii. the expressions "form of God" and "form of a servant" stand in striking contrast, and the special reference of each is to

the *condition* of the Son of God before the incarnation and after it. It was in the "form of God," in infinite beauty and glorious majesty, that He was pleased at times to appear. It was thus, even though perhaps in human form, that He manifested Himself to Moses in the bush and on mount Sinai; to Isaiah in the temple, and to Ezekiel by the river Chebar. But when in "the fulness of time" He really became man, He did not regard His equality with God as a thing to be seized upon and displayed, but, divesting Himself of His rightful dignity, He appeared in the form of a servant, and in that form lived amongst men, and did the will of God. Therefore it was not of essential Godhead that He "emptied Himself;" what He *was* He could not cease to be. Not a single attribute of Godhead could cease to be His, or He would no longer have been Jehovah's "Fellow;" yet this we know He was, at the very time that "He was crucified through weakness." (Zech. xiii. 7; 2 Cor. xiii. 4.) In the epistle to the Colossians we learn that in the risen Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (ii. 9); but with equal clearness we are taught that it was through Him, as the possessor of all that fulness, that peace was made "by the blood of His cross" (i. 19), and thus we see that in the *person* of *Emmanuel* we have the basis of that reconciliation which embraces things on earth and things in heaven.

5. To speak of the 'heavenly humanity' of the Lord betrays a lack of accuracy. When Paul says, "The second man is from heaven," he speaks of Christ in resurrection glory, whose image His saints are soon to bear, even as they have borne the image of the "first man," who was "of the earth." He who was born of Mary was *really* man, even as He was *really* God. Humanity in all its parts was His. "He bare our sins in His own *body*." He could say, "Now is my soul troubled," and, "Father, into

thy hands I commend my *spirit*." We may not look upon that adorable One as though Godhead and manhood were so blended as that out of *two* natures a *third* was made. There can be no confusion; each nature exists in all its own proper perfection in the Christ of God.

And now to her who had expressed no doubt is given a confirmation of her faith in the statement of what divine power had done for Elizabeth, and the assurance that "with God nothing shall be impossible" (v. 37); on His part every word He speaks (*ῥῆμα*) must be effective. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which *spake with His mouth* unto David, and *hath with His hand fulfilled it*." (1 Kings viii. 15.)

W. H. B.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

What is meant by "if a man therefore purge himself from these" in 2 Tim. ii. 21?

The vessels spoken of in verse 20 are without doubt persons, from what is said in the following verse: "*he shall be a vessel*," &c. Vessels of honour are such as subserve the glory of God in their preservation. Vessels of dishonour are such as subserve His glory in their destruction. Thus Pharaoh is referred to, in Rom. ix. 21, as a "vessel unto dishonour;" and in the next verse as one of the "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." In the same way we read "Moab is my washpot." (Ps. lx. 8; cviii. 9.) By the words "if a man therefore purge himself from *these*," some understand from the vessels of dishonour; but we confess that this interpretation has always seemed unsatisfactory, because it is incongruous. No one can *purge himself out* (as the Greek implies) from other persons. It might be said of a church that it purged out certain persons; but here it is "if a man," or "if any one." The same word only occurs elsewhere in 1 Cor. v. 7: "*Purge out* therefore the old leaven," and there it refers to the putting away of "the leaven of malice and wickedness." It appears therefore that, in 2 Tim. ii. 21, by the word "*these*" the apostle means the leavening principles and practices of which he had already spoken in verses 14-19, and more or less throughout the epistle, all of which would be included in that "iniquity" from which every one that nameth the name of Christ has to depart.

How can Judah be said, in Hosea xi. 12, to rule with God after what is said of them in this prophecy?

THE rendering "*ruleth*," as the meaning of the word in the original, is rejected by lexicographers. Gesenius renders it "to wander about, to ramble;" and adds, "Hence used of a people who, having broken God's yoke, go on unbridled." He translates this passage thus: "Judah acts unreinedly towards God." Furst renders the word in a similar way, as indicating the wild roving about of animals, going unbridled where they please. So in Jer. ii. 31, which, instead of "we are lords," we should read, "We have wandered about at our own pleasure; we will come no more unto thee." The last clause of this verse should be read accordingly, and the passage would then be: "And Judah still wanders about unrulily with God, even with the Most Holy, who is faithful," pointing out the contrast between Judah's unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness. It is well further to notice that this verse in the Hebrew Bible is the first verse of the twelfth chapter, and in the closest connection with the following verses, where we read, "The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways."

Is there any difference between the "yea" and the "amen" in 2 Cor. i. 20?

This verse may be better read thus: "For how many soever be the promises of God *in Him* is the yea, therefore also *by Him* is the amen, to the glory of God by us." The "yea," or absolute certainty of every promise, rests on the fact that they are secured to us in Christ, and therefore can be claimed by us as in Him; but as there is the "yea" in Christ, so there has to be our "amen" by Christ, to the glory of God. Amen signifies "it is true," and we bring glory to God when we witness to His promise-keeping grace by giving, through Christ, our experimental amen to the promise. Thus Abraham glorified God when "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief," but "against hope believed in hope," being satisfied because God had said it. And our amen gives the lie to the doubts and insinuations of the tempter; for we side with God against the seeing of the eye and the hearing of the ear, which is the very thing that Eve in the garden did not do. We have now to tread our oft-sorrowful way back to implicit trust in God against all appearances, as Job did when he rested on the faithfulness of God, and proved in the end that He was "very pitiful and of tender mercy."

"THE LAST DAYS."

Notes of an address on Gen. iv. 1-22, given by Mr. H. W. SOLTAU
at South Molton, September 21st, 1864.

THIS is the first chapter of the Bible in which *sacrifice* is mentioned. Cain was a religious man, the first religious man, and he "brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord." Abel also brought an offering to God, but it was "of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." And this chapter, which begins with the subject of sacrifice, goes on to that of human inventions, discovery, and skill. Can there be any connection between these two things? We shall see as we proceed.

You will also observe in verse nine a remarkable question asked by God. Of Adam God had, in the previous chapter, asked the question, "*Adam, where art thou?*" God's second question was to Cain, "*Where is Abel, thy brother?*" These questions are applicable to man still; that is, first, Where are you in regard to God? and next, Where are you in regard to your brother? If you are wrong in the one, you are sure to be wrong in the other.

But this fourth of Genesis tells us of the first murder. And why, we may ask, did Cain murder his brother? Because there was a religious question between them; Cain's sacrifice had been rejected, and Abel's had been accepted; and hence the enmity.

Remember, however, that the great root-sin was *distrusting the love of God*. It was the sin that Satan insinuated into Eve's heart; it was also the first and chief sin of Cain; and it is the constantly-rising and prevailing sin even of the believer, which he has to fight against at every turn. And what is the remedy? It is

to look at the deepest exhibition of God's love—the death of Jesus, the Son of God; nothing else will suffice.

Unbelief, then, was the root-sin in both Genesis iii. and iv. Adam began with it; Cain followed, and soon got to think that he could appease God. He saw he was outside Eden, he saw the earth bringing forth thorn and thistle, and doubtless thought by his sacrifice to make God more kind towards him.

Oh, dear friends, this is the root! and therefore, when I see convents and nunneries springing up in our day, I say to myself, Is not this Cain's service? It is something that must be done, Cain-like, to appease God. People will go through forms of prayer and do much to please God. They think they are not so near God as they ought to be, so they endeavour to bring themselves a little nearer. The Church of England seems going over to the Church of Rome; and Dissenters are so near the Church of England, that often you can scarcely distinguish the one from the other. Fine churches they will build, with stained-glass windows, and carefully-carved work inside and out—all to make themselves acceptable to God, as Cain sought to do. What else can it be for? It cannot be to please themselves, or it would be no religion at all. How true the text, "God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions." Adam began the inventions by making aprons; and Cain succeeds him, seeking to invent a way of appeasing God; and it is followed by all sorts of secular inventions. Verily, Gen. iii.-v. are being acted over again.

See, again, "the way of Cain." He begets a son, and calls his name Enoch; that is, "dedicated." *A religious name*, but in reality he dedicated his child to the world.

Beloved, are you dedicated to the world? Have you dedicated your child to the world? Have I? If your desires and your pursuits are for the advancement of your

child in the world, take care that you do not make a Cain-Enoch instead of a Seth-Enoch. (See Gen. v. 18–24.) It will be so if the ruling thought of your soul is, How shall I get my child on in the world? instead of, Where shall I put him that he may know and serve God?

But to return to Cain. He next builds a city, the first city, and calls it after the name of his son. But what is a city? It is a place where a mass of sinners is brought together. As there is nothing so blessed as gathering saints together, so there is nothing so bad as bringing sinners together; for it only increases their wickedness. And in our day, is not the country drained to fill great cities? It is Cain's day over again.

Then out of this departure from God there springs a man in the line of Cain, who marries two wives. Lamech's taking a second wife was a breach of God's creation law as to marriage, and a setting aside of the first blessed, glorious type in Eden of Christ and the Church.

In connection with Lamech's sons we have also the mention of musical instruments; and we now have sacred music played by unregenerate men. They sing the hallelujah chorus, but will they sing Hallelujah when Jesus comes? The very groans of the Messiah they have set to music! In the Cain music it is the harp and the organ that are specified; that is, religious musical instruments; for we shall use the harp by-and-by in glory.

Then there were artificers of brass and iron, too, in this family. And look at the cannon of the present day, those fearful missiles of war! what are they? Brass and iron. Is there not a god behind it all—the god of this world? Do not these things tell you that the god of this world exercises a spiritual power over man's inventions? Surely he does guide and instruct in this matter.

But remember that in Genesis iv. we have the line of

Cain stretching towards the time of the flood, as we have in the next chapter the line of Seth down to Noah. And it may be asked, What has this to do with us? The Lord Jesus, in one of His discourses, said, "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man: they did eat, they drank, they married wives, and they were given in marriage." There was no harm in that surely, you may say. Nor is there any harm in building a city, in making a musical instrument, or in keeping cattle, is there? Observe that the Lord does not speak of the gross evils of that day. It is the fact that these things were done *without God* which makes them bad. We should not say that anything is harmless; for if it is not *good* it is *bad*. Even eating and drinking become bad things, as to their effects upon the soul, if done without God. Suppose a man has a shop, and his one object is buying and selling, all his desires are there, he thinks of nothing else when he rises in the morning till he goes to bed at night. Ah, dear friends, even his shop under such circumstances is a bad thing for him! This is how they did before the flood, and before the destruction of the cities of the plain.

How, then, are we to withstand this tide of evil things of which we have the beginnings in Genesis iv.? Our standard against Cain-worship, and against all the mockery of the day, must be *the gospel*, which tells us how sinners, ungodly and without strength, through believing God's testimony, are brought nigh to Him by the precious blood of Christ. Add an atom to the gospel and you mar it, you ruin it. It is God's perfection of wisdom and of glory. Spoil the gospel of the glory and you will have Cain-worship, a Cain-city, Cain-music and dancing; you will have a pleasure palace, and a nunnery, such as I saw near one another lately—one to please God, and the other to please self, with all the inventions and glory of

man, all the glitter of the world, the things of Babylon's traffic, that have cost men their souls.

Now, mark what John says: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." All that is in the world is in each one of us, and it will all spring up unless we are watching and fighting against it.

Let me say a word as to the books of the day. The world is full of books, and if a person does not read them he will be counted an ignorant person; but I warn beloved young men and women against worldly books, which many read so eagerly. I speak with confidence from my own experience, and I beseech you who are parents not to allow such books in your houses.

And is not this a day of dress, of shameful dress? a day when women have lost modesty of apparel? a day when "shamefacedness" is nearly gone? Oh, may you who are the daughters of God remember your birth and calling, and not give way to this snare of the god of this world! It is the lust of the eye, it is one of the "inventions" which will show that you are not upright.

God has given us Christ, not only to save us from hell, but also that by His dwelling in us and by our separation from the world we might *manifestly* be the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. May we not only hear of the cross of Christ, but take that cross into our daily walk, and by it crucify the lusts of the flesh.

Beloved young friends, let me again say a word to you. You may have to stand the battle when we who are older shall have passed away. You will find things waxing worse and worse. Be prepared, mark the word of God, know the blessed gospel of Christ more fully, and then when the storm arises you will overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of your testimony.

THE TWO WAVE LOAVES.

“Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat-offering unto the Lord. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves . . . they shall be baked with leaven; they are the first-fruits unto the Lord. . . . Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin-offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace-offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the first-fruits for a wave-offering before the Lord.” (Lev. xxiii. 16, 17, 19, 20.)

WHO is this priest waving the offerings with the bread of the first-fruits before Jehovah? and what is the significance of the whole scene here brought before us?

The act thus described was part of the ceremonial in the feast of weeks, the *second* of the three great feasts of Israel; the first being the feast of the passover and of unleavened bread, the third the feast of tabernacles or ingathering.

In Num. xxviii. 26, and Deut. xvi. 9, we are reminded that during the period called “your weeks” harvest-work had been going on: “Begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn.” But in order more fully to understand this scene let us go back to see what marked the beginning of *the weeks*: “When ye be come *into the land* which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest.”

Passover might be observed in the wilderness, and was so observed, as we learn from Num. ix. 5; but here is something needing a higher experience—something that could only be carried out “in the land” after they had gathered the fruits thereof. Yet ere there could be any partaking of that fruit the sheaf of first-fruits (omer, says the margin; that is, a man’s portion for a day; see Exod.

xvi. 16, &c.) must be brought, with a lamb for a burnt-offering, his meat-offering, and his drink-offering of joy, "to be accepted for you." (v. 11.) But very significantly there was *no sin-offering*.

No reader of Scripture can have much doubt as to what we have here in figure, especially when we remember that on that very sixteenth day of the first month, that "morrow after the sabbath," while the priests in the temple were actually carrying out this shadow, Jesus was being "declared Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." As the Risen One He was accepted for us—a whole burnt-offering, a savour of rest to His Father, needing no sin-offering. He was the Sheaf of First-fruits waved before Jehovah, and only after He was risen could any enter into the enjoyment of those fruits of the land which are now really ours in Him.

Of the resurrection of Jesus, and all our consequent blessings, this figure speaks to us in language so plain that none can fail to hear it. Yet some Christians are not only living, but contentedly living, as though the wilderness were their proper place so long as they remain in this life; but if so, how, we may ask, can they ever attain to the knowledge of "the power of His resurrection" (Phil. iii. 10)? for that is experience, not of the wilderness, but of the land.

But this is not all, nor have we yet reached an answer to the question with which we started. So far we are told of "Christ the first-fruits" (1 Cor. xv. 23); then, in the order of God's sacred year, a space intervenes (known and determined most accurately by Him who has put all times and seasons in His own power), during which harvesting operations are proceeding. In due course the weeks pass on, carefully counted, and the fiftieth day, the day of Pentecost, has fully come. (Acts ii. 1.)

Once more the priests in the temple are laboriously attending to the shadow according to the letter of Lev. xxiii. 15-21; but the reality is in an upper room at Jerusalem, where the brethren were "all with one accord in one place;" "and they were all" (men and women must have been there gathered) "filled with the Holy Ghost," and learned the meaning of those words spoken by the Lord Himself, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

With this thought present to our minds, let us turn back to Lev. xxiii., and think over some of the details there presented to us. In the instance of the "WAVE SHEAF," the selected handful (the product of the corn which had fallen into the ground and died, but now had sprung up, and borne much fruit) was watched from day to day till the right moment arrived to cut it down, and carry it direct from the field to the temple; but in the case of the "*wave loaves*," the grain had passed through the mill, and the loaves themselves were to be brought *out of* their habitations, from contact with their daily ordinary domestic life. If in the one instance the meat-offering was to be of two tenth deals of fine flour, that meat offering which shadows the perfection of Christ's human nature, so were the loaves to be of two tenth deals; for "as He is, so are we in this world." (1 John iv. 17.) It is "a new meat-offering unto the Lord," a very remarkable expression. "I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." (Matt. xiii. 35.) What is this hidden mystery, now hinted at, at length uttered? Can it be other than the mystery of the Church which Paul was especially commissioned to reveal?

There was, then, a peculiarity which must have set every spiritually-minded Jew thinking and wondering, and very little would he have made of it; for was it not declared in the directions for the meat-offering: "No meat-

offering, which ye shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven?" (Lev. ii. 11.) Yet here the direction is, "they shall be baken *with leaven*," the admixture of the human; *i.e.* of infirmity, even of failure. Thence the need for all that fulness of burnt-offerings accompanying (*vv.* 18, 19), and especially the need of the "kid of the goats for a *sin-offering*, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace-offerings," nothing of which has been found along with the Sheaf.

Once more, "As He is, so are we in this world." "Christ the first-fruits," "a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour;" but we also "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures" (James i. 18), "an odour of a sweet-smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." (Phil. iv. 18.)

But if the ceremonial of the sixteenth day of the first month spoke of the resurrection of Christ, has not this ceremonial after "the weeks" also some bearing upon resurrection? Note (*v.* 16) that this also occurs on that remarkable day, "the morrow after the sabbath," a point that is often missed by those dear people who, still clinging to an inappropriate use of the name, fail to see the difference between the sabbath and the Lord's-day.

Here again, then, we have resurrection; and while the day of Pentecost of Acts ii. certainly points to this remarkable ceremonial, we must begin to doubt whether it fulfilled all the requirements. We have the *two* wave loaves, for the mystery was still hidden, "that the Gentiles should be *of the same* body" (*σύσσωμα*, Eph. iii. 6); but in the New Testament we read, "For we being many are one loaf (*ἄρτος*), one body" (1 Cor. x. 17), looking on to a day of Church resurrection, when He who is indeed the Priest shall wave all before the Lord, with the ~~two~~ lambs of the peace-offering. As these *two lambs* both undoubtedly point to the one grand Antitype of all sacri-

face, I can see no difficulty in the *two loaves* also pointing to one grand antitype of a redeemed body: "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, *and shall present us with you.*" (2 Cor. iv. 14.) With these thoughts connect also Eph. v. 27: "That He might present to Himself a glorious Church;" and probably other passages in the epistles will occur to the mind.

And now should all this be in theory and in doctrine only? or should it be a practical reality in the heart and life? If we be, brethren, thus linked in resurrection life in and with Him, let us "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." (Col. iii. 1.)

I. G. H.

"TAKE US THE FOXES."

"Take us the foxes,
The little foxes, that spoil the vines:
For our vines have tender grapes."

CANT. ii. 15.

THE Vine has many clusters
Of budding, tender fruit,
Exposed to blight and danger,
On every branch and shoot;
And many a fox is lurking
With wary, patient guile,
And each unguarded moment
Is seized the vine to spoil.

The *tongue of slander* often
Of leanness tells within,
And only thus discovers
The roots of deeper sin;
Its words to death inclining
Are profitless and vain;
Yea, rob our God of glory,
And give Him grief and pain.

The *love of self* too often
 Indulges needless ease ;
 No ear, no heart for service,
 Still less to love or please ;
 Yet One has knocked, is knocking,
Without He would not stay ;
Within He seeks a dwelling,
 For fellowship each day.

Proud *self-will*, like an idol,
 Usurps a blood-bought throne,
 Keeps captive the affections,
 To live for self alone :
 Deaf to the voice of Jesus,
 Deaf to the cries of blood,
 Deaf to the Spirit's teachings,
 Deaf to the claims of God.

And *wealth* hath many a victim
 By hidden wedge of lust,
 Or jewels for adorning
 This vain and mortal dust ;
 Each store of gold and silver
 Doth bear His claim of right,
 His loan to thee, His steward,
 To use as in His sight.

Our *bread* of daily mercy
 May tempt us to excess ;
 Desire may crave some luxury—
 To God unrighteousness.
 Our *cup* some venomed serpent
 May hide in reddened hues,
 And conscience, drowned in appetite,
 Light's teachings may refuse.

Earth's *fashions* so alluring,
 Sweet *music* with its cheer,
 And *Nature's beauties* charming,
 Enthrall both eye and ear ;
 And *fame*, with strong invitings,
 And *arts*, with fatal lair,
 Yea, every voice that tempteth
 Doth teach us to beware.

What depths are still unfathomed,
 What dangers still unnamed,
 What foes to be discovered,
 What ills to be disclaimed !
 All flesh, though sweet as honey,
 But breeds the worms of death,
 And needs the Spirit's searching,
 And scorching with His breath.

Search on, search on, Lord Jesus !
 Whate'er opposes slay ;
 Spare nothing that doth hinder
 My growth in grace each day ;
 Bring forth the secret lurkings
 That break communion sweet
 With Thee each step to glory,
 Lord, tread them 'neath Thy feet.

BRIEF REMARKS ON THE BOOK OF JOB.

THE book of Job is peculiar. It is not Jewish ; for the events narrated evidently took place before Israel's day. It bears no exact relation to time or to people, dispensationally considered.

It contains that which is truth for all times, whenever and wherever there is a soul exercised under sharp trial and sorrow. It opens to the eye of faith that which would be inscrutable by the senses, so that the believing soul may, under the most trying and incomprehensible circumstances, see God through the dark cloud and hear His voice speaking from it, reminding us that He is to be trusted at all times for wisdom, power, and goodness ; in a word, that our faith and hope must be *in God*.

Let us endeavour to trace some of the leading features of this book.

Job is first presented to us morally, and then rela-

tively, the number of his family and extent of his possessions being stated. As a man, morally considered, "he was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." (Chap. i. 1.) As to his earthly position, he was "the greatest of all the men of the east." Of this good heed must be taken, or we shall not arrive at the lesson contained in the book.

At this point let us read some of Job's last words to his friends, that we may have his own account of the motives and conduct which characterized him in his fear of God and eschewing of evil." The eminence and influence of his position are also vividly portrayed in his own language: "When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street, the young men saw me, and hid themselves; and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out." (See chaps. xxix.-xxxi.)

What a clear indication of godliness, of true practical piety, is given in his care and consideration for the poor, the helpless, and the desolate!

Let us compare with this the instruction of the New Testament. James, the practical teacher, puts it in this form: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the

Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows *in their affliction*, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." The habit of the Church in its first days is seen in Gal. ii. 10: "Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do." And in Acts xi. 29, "Then the disciples, *every man according to his ability*, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judæa." And this accords with the gracious words of our Lord in Matt. xxv.: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

As we seek that these remarks should be practical, we would enquire whether, in the light of Job's early example, and in the clearer light of the words and life and death of our beloved Lord, we have a good conscience in this matter—whether in this respect we are known by our fruits? But to return to Job's history.

From verses 2-5 we learn what was the abiding condition of his soul, and see how the fear of the Lord ruled in his heart, by his careful solicitude concerning his children. The sons of Job were grown up, were of age, each one having his own house, and thus were not under immediate parental control. But did his care for them therefore cease? It was their custom to celebrate each one his day, most likely his birthday, with festivities, having a 'family gathering.' On such occasions it would appear that Job did not make one among them. He feared, perhaps, the tendencies of this merry-making, this "eating" and "drinking wine;" for while under its influence they might sin, and curse God in their hearts. On such occasions his diligence is seen. He "rose up early in the morning," to be beforehand with them, to be at his

altar, offering "burnt-offerings according to the number of them all," an offering for each one.

This is a very blessed scene, for it brings out the definite character of Job's godliness.

Christian parents, let us ask ourselves, How is it with us? Does our solicitude and diligence about our children correspond with this pattern? If God the Holy Ghost were to depict our condition and practice, would they equal this in godly jealousy and watchful diligence?

The next scene is one in which Satan prominently figures. The Lord grant that our faith may be simple and real as to the teaching of Scripture concerning Satan; that we may take good heed to the warnings and counsel of the Word about our adversary the devil, who is ever on the alert to ensnare and seduce. Let us not forget how he is mentioned in Scripture from first to last. Of our mother Eve it is said, "The woman being *deceived* was in the transgression" (1 Tim. ii. 14); and the last act of Satan (Rev. xx.) is to "*deceive* the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth," to gather them to the final battle, when Satan himself shall be cast into the lake of fire. Let us remember also that in all our present deadly conflict with the powers of darkness we need the whole armour of God to enable us "to stand against the *wiles* of the devil."

In the narrative before us, it would appear that "when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord". Satan presented himself for the purpose of accusation. The challenge of the Lord, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" may suggest that he had been successfully accusing others, but he could bring no charge against Job. His reply, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" shows

his quickness to impugn motives, and his readiness to suggest personal advantage as an incentive to piety. "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."

What a spirit of wickedness is here manifested! Where evil action cannot be charged, evil motive is imputed. How opposite to this is the charity (love) which "thinketh no evil," but "hopeth all things." We get here an insight into Satan's penetration, and can see how much it is worth; for he apparently judges others according to the evil of his own spirit. He could not imagine a service that flowed from faith and love, but only one which had self for its object. Satan's judgment may be correct concerning evil; it is his sphere, his domain, his kingdom; but as to goodness, purity, and truth, his every thought must be wrong. Had he believed in purity and sincerity he would not have ventured to tempt the Holy One. Evil is very short-sighted, and is easily defeated if we are but humble before God and obedient to His truth.

"And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord." The real character of Satan now comes out; it displays itself; and we also learn the immense power he can wield when permission is granted him: "Behold, all that he hath is in *thy power*." Satan is a "swift messenger" to do evil. How quickly he came swooping down upon poor Job's family and property when permitted to do so! Death and destruction, calamity and pillage, go before, and follow after him. What a malicious gratifica-

tion there must be to this evil spirit in thus having an opportunity to bring misery, woe, and desolation upon the children of men! He but waits for the most fitting opportunity to make the blow as heavy, decisive, and complete as possible.

There was a day when Job's family were gathered together to eat and to drink wine in their eldest brother's house, and this was the occasion chosen for the onslaught. Messengers of evil tidings rush in rapidly upon the heels of each other, and pour their tales of horror in quick succession into the ears and heart of poor Job. The Sabeans fell upon the oxen and asses and took them away, at the same time slaying the servants with the edge of the sword. The fire of God fell from heaven upon the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them. The Chaldeans, in three bands, seized the camels and carried them away, slaying the servants also. And then comes the final and heaviest blow; the last messenger bears the most crushing tidings: "Behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

Observe in what a variety of ways Satan's mighty energy is manifested against his victim. He could act through the Sabeans and Chaldeans, bringing them down upon Job's cattle and servants; and he still can, if permitted, thus act by men. He is "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," using them to effect his cruel, remorseless, and wicked purposes. He could bring down fire from heaven to destroy sheep and men, and he could direct the wind that it should take the four corners of the house, causing it to fall upon Job's children, so that they died.

Satan loves to destroy life, to inundate God's creation

with sin, death, misery, and woe. In this case he was bringing all his forces to bear upon one man's faith, devotion, and love, to cause (if it were possible) Job to *curse* his God. But, oh, blessed be God! He whom Job served and loved stood by, watching and sustaining Job's poor bereaved heart; and His grace was sufficient to meet all his need.

“Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; *blessed* be the name of the Lord.”

The same grace more abounding teaches our hearts in these last times to say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;” “who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (Eph. i. 3; 1 Peter i. 3.)

May this be the language of our hearts continually to the praise of His holy name. J. J. S.

THE BEGINNINGS OF GOSPEL HISTORY.

III. MARY AND JOSEPH.

LUKE i. 38-56; MATT. i. 18-25.

THE spirit of lowliness and faith in which Mary listened to the words of Gabriel is very beautiful. True humility never intrudes any thought of personal unworthiness in the way of what God is pleased to do; it is the greatest evidence of self-renunciation simply to accept with thankfulness what He in grace bestows. And true faith will always bow to God's will, and leave all results with Him. In this spirit Mary, as the willing “handmaid of the Lord,” accepts

the honour God places upon her, and trusts Him to maintain her own.

As she pondered the revelation given to her, locked up of necessity in her own bosom, she evidently longed for intercourse with one who from late and rich experience of the loving kindness of God would the more readily sympathize with her. The hundred miles that lay between her abode and that of Elizabeth were soon traversed, and at the end of her journey she received such a response to her salutation as she little expected. The *tenderness* of God is a very real thing, and is beautifully manifested in this revelation to Elizabeth whereby Mary was spared the difficulty of unbosoming her secret, and was encouraged and strengthened. Elizabeth, being filled with the Holy Ghost, owns Mary as the mother of her Lord, and the unconscious babe in her womb recognizes the presence of One whom in after years he delighted to acknowledge as greater than himself. What a lovely expression of grace we see in Elizabeth! So far is she from possessing any envious feeling that, losing sight of the distinction conferred upon herself, she can give full vent to her sympathy in Mary's joy, and even express surprise that one so honoured should thus visit her. And, thinking perhaps of her husband's unbelief, she adds, "Blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." (v. 45.) The lofty words of Elizabeth stir Mary's spirit, and, whilst as the result of unbelief Zacharias is dumb, she who had honoured God by her faith has her lips opened still further to glorify Him by her praise.

The beautiful song in which she gives expression to the deep feelings of her heart shows that she was a true lover of the Scriptures, and particularly that she was well acquainted with Hannah's song. (1 Sam. ii. 1-10.) Who

can tell what high thoughts and hopes had filled Mary's soul as she looked forward to marriage with one who, like herself, was of the house of David? And if the question sometimes arose whether their lowly condition might be a barrier to their being the parents of the long-promised Son of David, what a comfort to her heart must have been the assurance that "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill; to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." (1 Sam. ii. 8.) Now she sees the words fulfilled in a more wondrous way than she could have conceived, and she magnifies the Lord for having regarded her low estate and bestowed upon her a blessedness that all generations would acknowledge. She speaks first of God's special mercy to herself individually, but in such strains as to set forth the leading and unvarying principles of His kingdom. There may be great differences in the dispensational standing and knowledge of God's people, but their *personal characteristics* are such as override all dispensations, and they are manifest here. Those who are taught by the Spirit of God are hungry and lowly. They know that they *have* nothing, and it is their delight to find their all in God; they know that they *are* nothing, and therefore can praise Him for what in grace He is pleased to make them. It is "the poor in spirit" that rejoice in God their Saviour. The utter absence of all self-consciousness in this hymn is very striking. It is as though her sense of her own utter nothingness was such as to remove all hindrance to her appreciation of the dignity bestowed upon her. It is possible to talk a good deal about our unworthiness, and to make that unworthiness a barrier to the unreserved reception of God's gift of grace, and then to pride ourselves on our humility. It is hard to learn that we are absolutely *nothing*, and that *self*, whether righteous self or unrighteous self, has to be utterly

denied; but it is only as we learn this, and see our very unworthiness judged and made an end of in the cross of Christ, that we shall be humble enough to make much of the great things God has done for us, and to give Him "the glory due unto His name."

But if God deals thus with the lowly and self-condemned, it is equally true that "them that walk in pride He is able to abase." The "mighty" and the "rich," those who are strong in their own strength and full of their own righteousness, must be brought low, and sent empty away. "God resisteth the proud." Let us watch and pray, for pride takes many forms; but under whatever guise it exists, it is the sure precursor of a fall, even as honour is the certain reward of humility.

In the closing notes of her song (*vv.* 54, 55) Mary widens the embrace of her thanksgiving, and recognizes the fulfilment of God's covenanted mercies to Abraham and his seed. The verses should read thus: "He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy (as He spake to our fathers) to Abraham, and to his seed for ever."

After three months of holy intercourse with Elizabeth Mary "returned to her own house," and then it would seem that Joseph became perplexed in mind concerning her. (*Matt.* i. 18.) By the law of God betrothal was as binding as marriage, and the betrothed were regarded as husband and wife (*Deut.* xxii. 23, 24); hence Joseph and Mary are both thus spoken of. (*vv.* 19, 20.) In the character of Joseph we see a combination of righteousness and grace. It must have been a heavy blow to him to find (as he supposed) that one, whose godliness surely he well knew, had not proved faithful to him, and to have such hopes as only a son of David could cherish apparently blighted. It may seem strange to us that God should have left Joseph in the dark, and thus have allowed both these

highly-favoured ones to be plunged into anxiety and sorrow. One word from Himself to Joseph would have prevented it all, and yet it was neither from lack of thought nor want of messengers that that word was withheld. God has *His own way* of exercising the hearts of His saints, of leading them into closer dealing with Himself, and preparing them for the service He is pleased to commit to them; and "His way is perfect." This very trial was the means of developing Joseph's character, and making it manifest. He was both just and tender; his justice prevented his taking her as his wife, while his tenderness made him unwilling to expose her. "Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and yet [καί]* not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily." (v. 19.) But even this merciful intention he was not hasty in carrying out; he "*thought* on these things." The words imply conflict and perplexity, in which we may surely judge his cry would be for heavenly wisdom. He was not long left in doubt; for "behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for HE shall save His people from their sins." (vv. 20, 21.) The name that had before been made known to Mary was thus disclosed to Joseph. Well may we linger over that name which is and must for ever be the *highest* in the universe of God, and the *dearest* to the heart of every saved sinner.

The name *Jesus* is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Jehoshua* or *Joshua*, and signifies *Jehovah [is] salvation*, or

* This rendering of *καί* is justified by John viii. 55, xvi. 32, xx. 29; it brings out the proper force of the statement, and is a sufficient reply to some who take occasion to pervert the meaning of the word "just."

Jehovah the Saviour. When God "came down" to display His power in that great act of redemption which separated Israel from Egypt, and gave them a national standing as His people, He made known the meaning and fulness of His name JEHOVAH (Exod. iii. and vi.); and when in the fulness of time God sent forth His Son for the accomplishment of that "eternal redemption," which was in His heart from everlasting, the glorious name made known by Moses was for ever embodied in the name of JESUS. In the statement of the reason of His bearing that name the pronoun is emphatic: "HE shall save," He Himself, and He alone. It is the same in Ps. cxxx. 8, where it is said of Jehovah, "HE shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." The comparison of these two verses shows us the divine glory of The Christ, and that it is when we have received *Him*, and then only, that we are able to say, "Behold, GOD is my salvation." The spiritual nature of His work is clearly set forth; it is from their *sins* that He saves "His people"—from sin's guilt and punishment, its misery and power; and when the Spirit of God reveals Him to our hearts in His fulness as the Saviour of the lost, we can with adoring gratitude say, "Thy name is as ointment poured forth."

"The mention of *Thy name* shall bow
Our hearts to worship Thee;
THE CHIEFEST OF TEN THOUSAND THOU,
The chief of sinners we."

The inspired comment on "all this" (*vv.* 22, 23) leads us to see a fulfilment of that prophecy long before uttered by Isaiah (vii. 14); and to discern in the fact that this Child, though *divinely* begotten, was yet born of a woman, the deep meaning of the name "Emmanuel." Thus in the deepest darkness arises a great light in the birth of One

whose name and person are the pledge of "salvation with eternal glory." (2 Tim. ii. 10.)

Joseph, having his fears removed, and "the secret of the Lord" made known to him, "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision;" he did as he was bidden, and did it in such a manner as proved that divine grace had truly prepared him for the great trust committed to him, and the unique circumstances in which he was placed.

W. H. B.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

What is the meaning of judgment beginning at the house of God in 1 Peter iv. 17, 18?

JUDGMENT always begins nearest the holiest. Ezekiel ix. illustrates this when the ministers of God's judgment are sent forth with the command to slay all in the city except those who sigh and cry for all the abominations done in the midst thereof, and God adds, "*and begin at my sanctuary.*" (v. 6.) So again God says to Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." But perhaps the book of Revelation gives us the most detailed illustration of the meaning of these words in Peter. In chaps. i. ii. iii. we see the Lord in His judicial character, walking up and down among the seven candlesticks in the spirit of judgment and in the spirit of burning. Judgment marks His holy footsteps all through these chapters, and the remainder of the book unfolds "the end of them that obey not the gospel of God." Judgment overtakes the saints now, that they may not be condemned with the world, whose judgment is hereafter. (See 1 Cor. xi. 32.) There is no doubt that the persecutions allowed of God in the Church were judicial, as will be the tribulation through which the godly remnant of Israel has to pass in the latter days, when, according to Daniel, "many shall be purified, and made white, and tried." (Chaps. xii. 10, and xi. 35.) Hence Peter adds, "If the righteous scarcely [with difficulty] be saved," needing all God's mighty power to accomplish it, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear," who, rejecting Father, Son, and Spirit, shall stand on their own demerits before God?

REPENTANCE :

AND HOW GOD'S GOODNESS LEADS TO IT.

AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH'S BRETHREN.

REPENTANCE is the soul's turning-point on its downward course to ruin, and hence it is important that the saved and the unsaved should alike have a clear conception of what it is. To some it is a mere change of mind; to others it is simply sorrow for sin. True repentance includes both these, but each is Godward, and is produced by that enlightenment of conscience which sees that God has been wronged by the creature's rebellion, and that He is therefore righteous in His wrath against the sinner. The penitent thief, in speaking of his own and his fellow's punishment, said, "we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds." This is genuine repentance. It condemns self, justifies God, and accepts punishment. It sorrows for sin, and brings forth fruit meet for a new condition of soul.

Such was Paul's unfolding of sorrow unto repentance when he wrote to the Corinthians—"For godly sorrow [sorrow according to God] worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of. . . . For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort [according to God], what *carefulness* [diligent and earnest effort] it wrought in you, yea, what *clearing of yourselves*, yea, what *indignation*, yea, what *fear*, yea, what *vehement desire*, yea, what *zeal* [or jealousy], yea, what *revenge* [or judicial retribution]." These are the signs of true repentance, the measure and the intensity of which depend on the depth of the soul's convictions.

We are in terrible danger, whether in reference to the

world outside, or to the church inside, when we lower this divine standard of repentance, and confound a Judas's regret with a Peter's penitence. The one is the sorrow of the world, which works death by helping to lull conscience to sleep; the other is a sorrow, "according to God," that does not blind conscience, but takes it into the presence of God, and there looking at sin in the light of God, finds pardon in God, satisfaction in Christ, and power over it by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. It was thus Peter saw and felt his sin under the look of Christ, and his bitter tears and his early footsteps at the sepulchre told how real was his repentance toward God.

Feeble thoughts about sin give feeble thoughts about repentance; and in our gospel testimony it is of the utmost importance that "repentance toward God" precede our presentation of "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," who is as the balm of Gilead for the sinner's heartfelt need and troubled conscience. It was thus Paul preached, both to Jew and Gentile (Acts xx. 21), following in the footsteps of his Master, who came to heal the sick, and to save the lost, allowing the "whole" and the "righteous" to turn away from the unwelcome truth that "light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." They said, "We see," therefore their sins hopelessly remained upon them.

But God does not willingly leave the sinner in his sin, but is, in His infinite goodness, ever leading to repentance. (Rom. ii. 4.) In illustration of this we would make some remarks, based on Joseph's dealing with his guilty brethren. In the wisdom given to him of God he sought to make them feel their sin, to repent of it, and thus be restored to God and to himself. But while with weeping eyes and sorrowing heart he sought their restoration to that place of blessing which belonged to them in the election of God's

grace, he did so only in the way of righteousness and truth, making no compromise with sin, but letting it work out its bitter fruit of full self-condemnation.

In all this Joseph stands as a type of Christ, and as such we see in him some of that "grace and truth" which will hereafter bring Israel to repentance with mourning as for an only son, and which now leads sinners to the feet of a crucified Saviour. In Joseph's conduct we see God's way of leading to repentance. It was not brought about by speaking soft things. There is no healing of the wounds of sin slightly where God works, no hurried hushing up of the memories of guilt. On the contrary, Joseph is *severe* in his language, *deep* in his probing, and *patient* in his expectation of result, yet all the while it is with weeping eye and breaking heart.

God sent to Judah a weeping Jeremiah, when with terrible words of warning He sought to bring them to repentance; and our Lord Himself must have resembled both Joseph and Jeremiah, when He wept over sinners refusing mercy and ripening for judgment. Indeed the words of Matt. xvi. 14, in answer to the Lord's question—"Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" seem to show that the popular mind of the Jews singled out Jeremiah as the prophet of whom they were most reminded as they gazed on and wondered at the "Man of sorrows," whose tears are more than once recorded in the gospels.

In Genesis xlii., xliii., and xliv., we see the steps by which Joseph sought to bring back his brethren to repentance, to confession, and to God. These steps are seven; viz., three of severity, three of kindness, and then a final test with its results. Let us now consider

I. JOSEPH'S THREE STEPS OF SEVERITY.

1st. He *made himself strange*. (Chap. xlii. 7.) He takes the place of distance and alienation; not that he was really

estranged, or his love alienated, for his tears flowed, and his affections were kindled; but seeking their good in God's way, he causes them to *feel* the alienation that had led them to sell him to the Ishmaelites. Righteousness is the keystone of the arch of that repentance which is to bring the guilty back to God. Let us be careful not to preach forgiveness to the impenitent. Pardon must *follow* repentance on the part of the guilty, and can never precede it, otherwise conscience is violated, and the sense of sin weakened. This does not set aside the blessed truth that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself; but the reconciliation only takes place when faith in God's willingness to be reconciled brings the rebel to His footstool. The acknowledgment of wrong committed, of judgment deserved, and punishment in store, lies at the threshold of all the glad tidings of gospel truth.

Much of the preaching of the day passes conscience over very lightly, and gives little time or room for its exercise, and thus a great hindrance is caused to the action of gospel truth upon the soul. God ever acts with and upon conscience, that conscience may act for God, and prepare the way for that acknowledgment of guilt, and of the justice of condemnation, which leads the sinner to feel his need of salvation through Another.

2nd. He *spake hard things* to them, or spake roughly. It was thus also that in Exodus xx. God hid Himself behind the dark cloud of mount Sinai, and amidst its blackness, and darkness, and tempest spake hard things, and from all such Scriptures there comes ringing in the ear, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii. 10.) Alas for a testimony for God that has no hard words in it, that has no living power to make bare to the soul what the curse of sin is, what the holiness of God

demands, and which exercises not the conscience to acknowledge that the law is holy and just and good. By all such faulty testimony walls are built with untempered mortar, sin is condoned, and "peace, peace" is preached where there is no peace. Of such teachers God would complain now as He did of the foolish prophets in Ezekiel's day: "They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord saith: and the Lord hath not sent them." But the day of "the great hailstones" will come hereafter, if not here, when "the overflowing shower" shall fall upon the wall built with this "untempered mortar," "and a stormy wind shall rend it." (Ezek. xiii.) Compare with this our Lord's words regarding the foolish man in Matt. vii. 26, 27—"And the rain descended, and the floods came," &c. May those who are teachers seek special help rightly to divide the word of truth.

Joseph's hard words brought forth an expression from his brethren's guilty lips that ought to have sunk deep into their hearts—"one is not." By it God was speaking to them, and saying, "Where is he? where is thy brother? Where? where?" And while that terrible question was being awakened in hitherto sleeping consciences (for had they not lain dormant their sin would long ago have been confessed), time for deeper reflection was given by their being all put in ward three days—that mysterious period which often recurs in Scripture. It may be well to remember that God sometimes uses unfounded charges to punish but too well-known sin, as here Joseph's brethren thought that He was dealing with them about their brother, though they knew that the charge of their being spies was without foundation.

3rd. *Simeon is bound* before their eyes. How strangely they must have felt as they all stood helpless in the presence of the lord of the land! He next condescends

to allow all to return with corn for their households ; but God, it would seem, had been speaking to their consciences in the prison ; for now, apparently for the first time, comes out a confession one to another of that dark sin which they had committed more than twenty years before. "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us." (Chap. xlii. 21.) They stand, like the thief on the cross, acknowledging their guilt. The ten brethren were in the same condition now as that, in which Joseph was after they had sold him. The iron of sharp conviction had entered into their souls as the iron of captivity and distress had before entered into his soul. (Ps. cv. 17, marg.)

It is thus we are led to real repentance. Sin must be *felt*, its iron rod trembled under, and till that iron sceptre has broken the stubborn, wilful heart, the golden sceptre of grace and glory will be stretched out in vain. It is thus God works now among men, and thus will God lead Israel to repentance in the latter days. God has no second way ; He deals with all alike. The paths may be very various, but the way is one ; it is God's highway from death to life, from ruin to salvation, from hardened guilt and impenitence to the broken and contrite heart.

There is, in rightly exercised natural conscience, a self-accusing power, and this we have seen in the language of Joseph's brothers ; but there is also a self-excusing power that makes an excuse, but does not attempt self-justification. This we see in Reuben's words—"Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child ; and ye would not hear ? therefore, behold, his blood is required." His sin was that of the weak and unstable man that could acquiesce in a crime he would not perpetrate.

Joseph could not stand all this; every word made his soul bleed, not for himself, but for them in their sin, and for his father in his disconsolate grief. Joseph turned from them and wept. A weaker or less wise man would have assuaged their sorrow and relieved their fear by an immediate revelation of himself; but he felt this was not God's way. A far deeper sense of sin had to be wrought out, and a recompense to be made to God and to their father, if not to himself, before the dark past could end in a holy and happy reconciliation. He was in no haste; he could wait, and let repentance have its deepening, perfecting work, on which a reconciliation based on righteousness could finally and fully rest.

To lead men to repentance we must act with God. We must seek spiritual intelligence to know how to deal with an awakened but yet feebly exercised conscience; for only when conscience sees self in its true light, is it prepared for the *divine* revelation of Christ, and all *human* attempts to make that revelation to the soul will be ineffectual and unreal. In everything we must be followers of God, and not go *before* Him; but pre-eminently is this true in dealing with souls. Work with the Holy Ghost. When He is deepening the sense of sin, seek to deepen it also, and aim not at a premature revelation of Christ to the mind.

II. HIS THREE WAYS OF KINDNESS.

1st. Joseph *restores their money, giving them the corn they had come to buy.* It is thus with God in His dealings with us, even while we are still unreconciled to Him. In leading us to repentance, He shows us both His righteousness and His mercy, His severity and His goodness.

No sooner, however, is the returned money discovered than their hearts fail them, and they are afraid. So true it is that sin makes cowards of us all.

When they had reached home, the hand of God was

still felt to be stretched out, and a dread seemed to be caused in the recollection that they would have to go to Egypt again. In Judah's pleading with his father to send Benjamin, and in his giving surety to his father for him, it is evident that God's dealings with their consciences had not been in vain.

2nd. They *are invited to Joseph's house* on their return with Benjamin. This was truly an act of hospitality and kindness; but "the men were afraid," thinking they were to be enquired of about the money. This is, however, satisfactorily explained, and Simeon is brought out to them. Doubtless not without cause had he in whose dwelling were "the instruments of cruelty" (Gen. xlix. 5) been selected from among them to be placed in confinement, and given time for reflection.

When Joseph came at noon his bowels yearned over his brother Benjamin, and he had to go and weep alone, and then come out and refrain himself before them all. All this must have cost him much; and if he was trying them in all his mysterious dealings with them, he was yet more deeply trying his own heart, as he was seeking to win them for God.

3rd. They *are all made to sit down in the order of their birth*. Another kind and gentle action. No wonder we next read, "They marvelled one at another." They had to learn that they were all known. Someone certainly knew all about them. Thus Christ convinced Nathanael who He was, by reminding him he had been under the fig tree; for little things bring conviction to a guileless spirit. God is ever convincing the sinner, as He leads him to repentance, that He knows all about him. Thus also the Lord, when dealing with the woman of Sychar, puts His finger on the guilty spot which conscience would fain forget. Well might Joseph's brothers marvel. He who thus received

sinner and ate with them, made them conscious that there was in his presence a hidden mystery, which as yet they did not understand. But all these kindnesses did not suffice; for we read, "they drank and were merry with him." They hoped all was right now, and all was past. Simeon was restored; the money trouble was explained; and they were well-nigh overcome with the happy conviction that their path was smooth now with regard to the governor of the land. Thus far also many in our day come, who never come to genuine repentance. They are like the stony-ground hearers; they receive the word with joy, but have no root in themselves. They have not the broken heart and the contrite spirit. They bring forth no fruit worthy of repentance, and in time of temptation immediately fall away. Their repentance has no depth; their faith is but superficial, and not abiding. (Luke viii. 13.) Sin has been looked at from the creature stand-point rather than from God's, and the soul has not learned to say, "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." (Ps. li. 3, 4.)

III. THE FINAL TEST AND ITS RESULTS.

We now come to the point that tests the repentance of the brethren of Joseph. The sword was to enter yet deeper into their souls. The silver cup was placed in Benjamin's bag, and they all left, hoping soon to reach their homes in safety. They had not gone far, however, when they were overtaken, and charged with taking the cup. In conscious innocence they professed their willingness that he with whom it was found should die, and that all the rest should be bondsmen to Joseph. The steward replied on Joseph's behalf, "He with whom the cup is

found shall be my servant, and ye shall be blameless." (Chap. xliii. 10.) The cup was found in Benjamin's sack. They might have gone forward on their journey and left Benjamin to his fate, as they probably would have done in the state of mind in which they sought to kill Joseph; but instead of that they one and all return to the city, so that if aught could be done to save their father the anguish of losing Joseph's brother, they were willing to risk all in the effort. Judah here takes the lead, which he maintains to the end. In words of broken-hearted penitence he tells his sorrowful tale, beginning with their sin against God, in those touching words: "What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? *God* hath found out the iniquity of thy servants." They are helplessly and hopelessly undone. The unrepented-of sin of twenty long years He had at last brought with terrible vengeance upon them. God was just; they were guilty. Judah then in affecting words pleads for his aged father, and begs to be allowed to remain in Benjamin's place, a servant to his lord. It was thus he sought to fulfil his promise to his father, and to atone to his God as far as possible for the terrible sin that had brought on them this overwhelming calamity.

Let us note this feature of real repentance, that it is willing to make to God and man what reparation it can for sin committed. It is well to be reminded of it. It was thus that Zaccheus indicated to our Lord his repentance, when he said, "If I have taken anything by false accusation I restore it fourfold." There must ever be this state of heart; and though to God no real reparation can ever be made, and man in his hopeless condition learns to his exceeding joy that he is once and for ever frankly forgiven, yet the mind is in the sinner to do it if it could be done. It was thus that he who had shed the blood of God's saints, and

persecuted them in times past, when converted gloried in the occasions that his Lord gave him to suffer for the saints in persecution and in martyrdom.

In the case of Joseph's brethren the work was done. Repentance had brought forth the fruits of righteousness, and all that remained was to pour the balm of peace and reconciliation into their bleeding hearts. The divine time had come, and Joseph makes himself known to his brethren in the wondrous yet comforting words, "I am Joseph, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." Now that their repentance and confession had come, God's part in the matter of Joseph's sorrows was to be more to them than their own. And thus it is now. Till repentance brings the sinner to the cross, he is the betrayer and the murderer of the Son of God; but no sooner does faith see Christ by a divine revelation, than the murdered Saviour becomes to the awakened penitent a divine sacrifice—the Lamb of God slain by the sword of God rather than by the sword of man. (See Zech. xiii. 7.) Nor is this an intellectual disclosure to the mind; it is a divine unfolding to the heart of the penitent, without which there can be no true conversion to God; for in that revelation of Christ to the soul by the Holy Ghost regeneration consists, which is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Here repentance finds its goal, and the sinner his salvation, through faith in Christ, whom the Father in heaven has Himself revealed.

In conclusion, let us take a brief glance at chapter xlv., as it so blessedly unfolds the real place into which repentance brings the exercised soul. Truly it is Luke xv. over again. Joseph's tears are turned to joy, and the sinning ones' fears into peace. Sweet and hallowed

memories never to be forgotten! And when in our faithless hearts the ungenerous thought rises up that the forgiveness may be cancelled, past transgressions re-imputed, and the reconciliation recalled, let us treat it as an emissary from Satan that makes our Joseph weep again. (See chap. 1. 17.) Well may we sing—

“’Tis God that justifies!

*** Who shall recall His pardon or His grace?

Or who the broken chain of guilt replace?

’Tis God that justifies!”

The famine is nothing to Joseph’s brethren now. He holds the key of the nation’s storehouse, and he promises to supply all their need.

May God instruct us by this history and give to our gospel ministry more of the solemnity of eternity, more of the righteousness of truth, and more of the tenderness of love, that, if more slowly, yet at least more securely, souls may be led back to God through Jesus Christ our Lord and by the inworking of the Holy Ghost! H. G.

THE BEGINNINGS OF GOSPEL HISTORY.

IV. BIRTH OF JOHN AND SONG OF ZACHARIAS.

LUKE i. 57-80.

IN due time the promise made to Zacharias was fulfilled, and Elizabeth “brought forth a son.” The prediction of the angel, that many should rejoice at his birth, was also verified. Elizabeth’s neighbours and kinsfolk heard how the Lord was magnifying His mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. They had heard probably of the vision of Zacharias in the temple, and of the promised greatness of the child now born. It seems to be of these sympathizing and rejoicing friends that it is said, “On the eighth

day they came to circumcise the child." On account of the dumbness of the father, they were taking upon themselves to give the child a name, and "were calling him Zacharias, after the name of his father." The mother objected, and the father, being appealed to by signs, declared that the matter was settled beyond discussion. "He wrote, saying, His name is John." He thus obeys the word of the Lord, whose grace he owns; and while friends marvel, his own mouth is opened, "his tongue loosed," and the use he makes of his newly-restored power of utterance shows how profitable had been God's wise discipline in those months of silence. The last word spoken to him by the angel is now fulfilled; and having learned how true and faithful is every word of God, he gives vent to his long pent-up feelings in a song of praise, poured forth under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. This song, though uttered over his own son, is not occupied with him, but with the greater One who was to follow. When the Holy Ghost fills the heart, Christ fills the vision, and all lesser objects are lost sight of in the contemplation of Him whom the Spirit of God delights to glorify. Then indeed the tongue is as "the pen of a ready writer," to pour forth into the ear of the Most High the excellencies of Him with whom He is ever well pleased.

The song of Zacharias is a beautiful expression of worship and of faith, and it shows how the great and precious promises of the Scriptures were treasured up in his heart. Some of its statements are so far-reaching that, like many of the utterances of the prophets of old, their deep meaning may not have been fully comprehended by Zacharias himself. But he had at least learned that God's "work is perfect;" that what He begins He finishes; that the first stroke is the unfailing pledge of the last. And, therefore, as he looks upon the infant, who is in due time

to be the forerunner of the Messiah, he speaks as though he had been one of the "hundred and twenty" in the upper room at Jerusalem, who had heard the "It is finished" of Calvary, and been witnesses of the resurrection of Him who with His dying breath declared His work complete; for he says, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people." In the Old Testament we see the word *visit* used in the sense of judgment (Exod. xxxii. 34); here in the way of mercy. The word *redemption* shows that Zacharias had lofty thoughts of the work of the Messiah. He may have used it in the sense of redemption by power, as the two at Emmaus did, who said, "We trusted that it had been He which should have *redeemed* Israel." (Luke xxiv. 21.) But it is good to see that the Spirit of God, who knew all that was involved in the word "redeemed," thus puts *the cross* in the very forefront of the gospel narrative. The expression, "horn of salvation," is taken from Jehovah's promise to David, as recorded in Ps. cxxxii. 17: "There will I make a horn to bud to David: I have ordained [trimmed] a lamp for mine anointed"—the horn being a symbol of power and glory, the lamp one of joy and prosperity. In God's anointed One all His promises centre, and in Him the kingdom shall be established for ever.

In the child so soon to be born Zacharias sees the fulfilment of ancient prophecy from Genesis onwards (see v. 70), and marks a performing of God's promised mercy, and a remembering of His holy covenant. While *mercy* alone could be the source of such a salvation, the *faithfulness* of God is seen because of His covenant and oath. God's *promise* is the offspring of pure mercy and self-moved love; the *fulfilment* of the promise displays combined grace and faithfulness. In the height of His own perfect and glorious liberty, untouched and unaffected by

any power outside Himself, God is absolutely free to speak or to be silent as it pleases Him; but when once He has spoken, His word is irrevocable. "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." (Ps. lxxxix. 34.) To the covenant of promise, made with and confirmed to Abraham, is traced all this action of God in grace and redemption. (See *v.* 73, and Gen. xxii. 16-18.) Thus is the very teaching of Paul, in Gal. iii. 15-18, anticipated in these inspired words of Zacharias.

On verse 74—"That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear"—a scholar has said, "The form of the Greek indicates even more definitely than the English that this was the end to which the 'covenant' and the 'oath' had all along been pointing." The words are very comprehensive, and we may note five points:

1. The first result of redemption is *deliverance*; this must ever precede service, though it will surely be followed by it. It was not until Israel had been delivered from Egypt that they could worship God in the wilderness; and not until as a nation they shall again make proof of His power for their final deliverance from all their foes shall the word be fulfilled—"Ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God." (Isa. lxi. 6.) So it is now with us as individuals; when we can say, "Thou hast loosed my bonds," we can add, "O Lord, I am *thy servant*." (Ps. cxvi. 16.) The very word of forgiveness, which strikes off for ever the iron chains of guilt, creates the golden fetters which bind the forgiven one to the Forgiver with the eternal bond of love—a love which makes service a delight to the servant, and acceptable to the Lord.

2. The service of believers is a *priestly* service, rendered in the very presence of God. The word for *serve* is the

same that is used of the service of all God's redeemed ones, both on earth (Heb. ix. 14) and in the heavenly city. (Rev. xxii. 3.) The expression "before Him" (v. 75) is the same that Gabriel uses of himself in verse 19. The presence of God is as great a reality to the *faith* of the believer as to the *sight* of an angel, and those who "enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" have a nearness to God that angels never knew, and draw near to Him with a word on their lips that angels never utter. God's *children*, by His Spirit, alone cry, "Abba, Father."

3. This service is a *fearless* service, though conducted in the spirit of "reverence and godly fear;" all guilty and slavish fear being superseded by that "fear" which is the standing characteristic of the children of God (1 Peter i. 17), who have learnt to pray, "*Hallowed be thy name.*" Those who are able, from the depth of their heart, in holy freedom of soul, to address God as their "Father," can never be content till they "walk even as He walked," who was the Author of this sublime petition which found its perfect fulfilment in His own wondrous life and death. No heart was ever so full as His of that reverential fear, on account of which He "was heard" when in the deep gloom of Gethsemane He poured forth His supplications to God (Heb. v. 7); but though He knew, as no one else ever did, what "the valley of the shadow of death" was, He could say, as none other ever could, "I will fear no evil." (Ps. xxiii. 4.) Once in David's history we read, "David was afraid of the Lord that day." (2 Sam. vi. 9.) He had begun the day with gladness, and with much zeal and heartiness had set about the good work of bringing up the ark; but for once in his life he forgot the reverence due to the things of God, and instead of seeking guidance from God's word, He followed the example of the Philistines, and brought it up upon a cart. (1 Sam. vi. 7.) The result

was a solemn act of judgment, by which God asserted His holiness, and filled David with alarm. The lack of true reverence for holy things is one of the sad marks of the present day, and we have to be on our guard against it. What can angels think of the listlessness and inattention they often witness in the assemblies of the Lord's people? And what must HE think who sees angels, who owe Him so much less than we do, bow before Him with deeper reverence than those who are showing forth the death of His Son—that death which has redeemed us from sin and its eternal consequences to the light and joy of His own holy presence? Such a reflection should surely cause us in fear to say, "Let us search and try our ways."

4. It is "in holiness and righteousness" that this service is rendered, the heart being set right both with God and man. (See Eph. iv. 24; Titus i. 8.)

5. The *duration* of this service; viz., "all our days;" for thus the last clause of verse 75 should be rendered. This blessedly includes all our life here below, and may remind us also of that best of all our days; viz., "the day of eternity." (2 Peter iii. 18, Gk.) The service that is begun in brief and feeble days of time shall be continued in that day that shall never know a night, and in which no weary one shall long for the rest we now so constantly need. There, in the inner circle of heavenly worshippers, no irreverent thought, word, or attitude shall ever find a place. The very nearness to God and acquaintance with Him, which must be the portion of His saints, will lead them to bow in lowliest reverence before Him; for whether on earth or in heaven, humility and reverence go hand in hand, and are deepened by growth in the knowledge of God, and unrestrained intercourse with Him. Those who know Him best bow in deepest humility in His presence, and render to Him the loftiest adoration.

In verse 76 Zacharias turns to his own son, but he speaks of him only in his relation to the greater One upon whom his heart is fixed. Christ is still the burden of the song, though less directly. The relation of the child to the gladdened father is even lost sight of in that higher relation to the Child yet unborn, but here owned by Zacharias as "the Lord," even as He had been by his wife Elizabeth. He had spoken of Christ as "the salvation;" now he speaks of his son as the one who shall give knowledge of that salvation, defining at the same time its spiritual nature as consisting in *the remission of sins*, and tracing it up to its source, even "the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us." (*vv.* 77, 78.) How beautiful is the figure of the "dayspring" casting its glow upon those who in the night hours had been sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, bringing life and gladness, and guiding the feet of the poor wanderer into the way of peace—first, that "peace with God" which is the present result of justification, and then the deep everlasting peace of His own glorious presence above!

It may be well to remark that in verses 65 and 66 we have a historical parenthesis recording the awe produced on those who heard the events that attended John's birth, which they laid up in their hearts, asking, "What then shall this child be?" meaning, "What shall he become?" In verse 80 we have the record of thirty years of his life, indicating, in strokes full of grandeur, the bodily and mental development of the Baptist, and bringing his life up to the period of his public appearance. The conflicts, the discipline, the prayers of those years in "the desert" are not unfolded to us, but their record is on high, and can never be forgotten by Him who in His own way trained His servant for the service he was to render, and the testimony he was to bear. If God is pleased to *use* us He

must *prepare* us for His use; we must know something of being alone with Him in "the desert," if we are truly to serve Him in public. But even the cost to us of such preparation will have its acknowledgment in the day of Christ, from Him who perhaps takes most account of that which is known to Himself alone. W. H. B.

ON TRUE MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF GOD.

BY THE LATE W. H. D.*

GOD has declared the Church to be the living body of Christ, guided by Him through the Spirit; but according to the thoughts of many the Church is a system of members, officers, and rulers, more or less copied from Scripture. Hence churches formed in this way are societies, as indeed they are very frequently called.

Now those who have learnt, even ever so feebly, what *God's family*, *Christ's body*, the *Holy Ghost's temple*, really is, must shrink from human organizations, whether wider or narrower than the Church of God—whether founded on the national or any other principle.

A society composed of so many members, so many officers, and so many rulers, is not the Church of Christ, nor even a church of Christ, though each person in that society be a Christian. It would then be merely a society of *Christians*, with its officers and its laws.

Faith knows only the body of Christ; of this body He is the *living Head*, and the Holy Ghost dwells therein, to

* These remarks were written many years ago in reply to a tract called "The Deacon's Office," an expression to which our English version of the Scriptures erroneously gives rise, "Let them use the office of a deacon," being really, "Let them minister." (1 Tim. iii. 10.)

guide in the name and power of the Lord Jesus, to the glory of God.

This is the clear light given by the Word, and if we really have learnt these holy and precious things, can we turn back to any human union, even though godly men who have not learned otherwise are connected with it?

True it is that the path of faith and truth will be the path of trial, with many humblings. Satan hates it, the flesh hates it; and the flesh has its own devices and plans which are preferred to it. True it is also, that persons in "societies" may move on more evenly and regularly than those who seek to walk together under the Lord Jesus as their living Head, led by the Spirit as their unerring and ever-present Guide. The churches in the days of the apostles show this, and do not we also abundantly prove it in our own experience?

Yet the *path of faith* is the path of true honour to the Lord, and of real blessing to us, whatever the conflicts and the humblings endured therein.

Office in a society is a widely different thing from that of service in the Church of God.

True service is life and love labouring for Christ. This will move without office. It is faith, it is the Holy Ghost working in a living member of Christ. This will not wait for the appointment of man; it will labour in happy obedience to Christ. Thus is seen true subjection to the living Head, and true liberty in all ministry.

Human order makes office necessary to service, so that real gift is silenced, because not put into office; and those who only wish to be somewhat may become something by office. And again, those really gifted for service to Christ are often put out of their *right place* of service through these human arrangements.

In a word, the living body of the living Head, energized

and moved in its varied members by the Spirit of God, is something wholly different from a number of Christians formed into a "church" or a "society," choosing their own officers, and making their own rules, even if the titles of those officers, and the words of many of those rules, be taken from the word of God.

If then any brother, or any member of the body, be led to serve the blessed Master in any way, is there not liberty and room for him to do so? Let such make full *proof of their ministry*. Let their gift, their service, be it what it may, be used in solemn, believing accountability to Christ, the Head and Lord, and saints will value and accept the ministry. If not, this will only cast the servant more on Christ, who will thus the more fit him for holy, patient, waiting service.

But just in proportion as the gift and call of the Lord is felt and humbly obeyed, so will the faith of the servant grow, and he will be the last to demand official appointment.

In all the New Testament do we find *one instance* of a really gifted, gracious servant demanding or seeking official appointment? Do we not always see such making quiet, holy, humble *proof of their ministry*, and others acknowledging them in it as the servants of Christ, and as His gifts to the Church?

When in Acts vi. certain "helps" were needed, do we not see the apostles and the Church looking round for men who were day by day living and acting as holy, devoted servants of the Lord? Such these men *had been, and were*, and hence when men for a certain service were needed every eye saw their manifest fitness. Service therefore went before office, and was really the manifest qualification for it.

Now is not the usual way in societies this, that no one

serves until chosen to an office, and then he serves *because so chosen?*

This destroys all true liberty of ministry; and also, what is more precious, all *direct* obedience to *the Lord* and His call in ministry.

Herein lies the *very root* of the difference between ordinary religious bodies or societies and those who seek only to follow the word of God.

Appointment to office cannot give the true spring of service in the Church of God; neither can appointment supply the true sense of responsibility to serve in the Church of God. For the *true* source of responsibility and real qualification for service of whatever kind, must be the grace and call of the blessed Head of the Church, Christ Jesus our Lord.

To serve without formal appointment to office is not necessarily self-will; for the service may result from simple faith and obedience to Christ by the indwelling Spirit.

To serve simply *because* of such appointment to office is evidently *not of faith*, and therefore must be of sin and the flesh.

Appointment by the Church can add nothing of grace and power to a man, though the laying on of an *apostle's* hands was used of the Holy Ghost in conferring spiritual powers. But this was always on men *already serving* in faith, and grace, and power.

Let each one, then, who would really serve God listen for the *call of Christ*, and obey it, but in *direct obedience to Him*, and as led by the Holy Ghost.

As each one does this, so will every member fill up its place in the body; and the whole being nourished by that which every joint supplies, will increase with the increase of God.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

What is the meaning of 2 Tim. iv. 1?

ALFORD translates the passage thus: "I adjure thee before God and Christ Jesus, who is about to judge living and dead, and (I adjure thee) by His appearing and His kingdom, preach the word," &c. This rendering entirely removes the difficulty arising from the statement that the dead are to be judged "at His appearing." The living will then be judged, but elsewhere (Rev. xx.) we read that the dead will be judged at the end of the millennial kingdom, before the great white throne. Of the saints it is distinctly said, in John v. 24, that "they shall not come into judgment," as the word "condemnation" should be read; and also in verse 29, where "the resurrection of judgment" (not damnation) is put in contrast with "the resurrection of life." The use of the word rendered "charge," in the sense of "adjure," is found in the Old Testament Greek in such passages as "I call heaven and earth to witness," rendered by, "I adjure you by heaven and earth." (See Deut. iv. 26; xxx. 19, &c.)

To whom does the prophet refer in the words, "Who is blind, but my servant?" (Isa. xlii. 19.)

THE "*servant*" is supposed by some to be the nation of Israel; but the expressions which follow are so remarkable that we cannot but refer it to Christ Himself, as in verse 1, where God calls Him "My servant," "Mine elect." In the *second* clause of verse 19 He is called "My messenger," or *angel*. This name is never applied to Israel as a nation, though it is sometimes to prophets, as in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16; Isa. xlii. 26; Hag. i. 13; Mal. ii. 7. Its most remarkable use is in reference to "the messenger [or angel] of the covenant" (Mal. iii. 1), where also, as here, he is called emphatically "My messenger." In Exod. xxiii. 23, 32, 34, the same word is rendered "Mine angel." Again, in Isa. lxiii. 9 we read of "the angel [or messenger] of His presence." In all these passages Christ appears to be the one intended, as the mighty Messenger in whom God's very name was. (See Exod. xxiii. 21.) In the *third* clause He is called "He that is perfect." This rendering conveys but inadequately the sense of the original. He is the *Meshullam*; that is, the one in whom all things are *ratified* or *confirmed*. The same word in the active voice is used in chap. xlii. 26, where God is said to be the One "who *confirmeth* the word of His servant," as here Christ is the One in whom it is confirmed. Referring then the passage in Isa. xlii. 19 to Christ, it shows the way in which He set His face steadfastly to accomplish the purposes for which

He came, as the Messenger of God and the Ratifier of the covenant. He was blind and deaf to all that would oppose; blind to all the hardness of heart and ingratitude of the people, and deaf to any remonstrances, such as Peter's "Lord, spare thyself," which He met with the stern rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan." (Compare Ps. xxxviii. 13, 14.) The result of all is, that God is well pleased on account of His righteousness, which was fully met in Christ; and with His law magnified and made honourable God can now accomplish His purposes towards a blind, deaf people, who were (as we read in verses 22-25) "robbed," "snared," and "hid in prison." Hence, in the next chapter, He can use those precious words, "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee," &c. (Chap. xliii. 1-10.)

What death did Judas Iscariot die?

COMPARING Matthew xxvii. 5 with Acts i. 18, it is evident that he hanged himself, but that from some cause he fell down headlong, probably by the breaking of either that to which or by which he was hung. In this we see a striking analogy with the death of Jezebel, narrated in 2 Kings ix. By the awfulness of the circumstances in Judas' case all the dwellers in Jerusalem would know that he who had sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver had met with his death under the special curse of God. God sometimes avenges sin here, stamping it with a divine infamy. Thus *Aceldama*, "the field of blood," would last in the memory of the guilty nation till Jerusalem and its temple was trampled in the dust. God leaveth not Himself without witness.

How are we to understand "Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve"? Rev. iii. 18.

LUKEWARMNESS brings in dimness of vision. Things heavenly and spiritual are not seen. The eye cannot see afar off (2 Peter i. 9); for it has ceased to be single, and but for the rebuking and chastening of God would land the soul in nature's darkness again. But eye-salve has to be *bought*. It will cost more than the dull heart dreams of. The price, however, must be paid; and to stir up the slothful spirit the terribleness of falling into the hands of the living God is felt; yet behind it all come the gracious words of love and pardon, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." Hence the living and offended God is the God of love still, and makes supposed riches and wealth to be seen as only wretchedness and misery, so that the lukewarm soul finds itself to be but "poor, and blind, and naked." Painful revelation! but better now than hereafter.

JOSIAH.

2 CHRONICLES xxxiv.

ONE of the striking features of Bible history is its testimony to the unchanging love of Jehovah God, love which, whilst changing its form of manifestation, remains in itself ever the same. This is clearly seen in Israel's history; indeed we might expect it to be so, as Jehovah had made that nation eminent above all others; it was His centre on the earth. His love and sovereign favour are not only traceable in His raising them from their low estate in Egypt to the pinnacle of glory in their own land under Solomon, but also, nor less strikingly, in His dealings with them in their declining and corrupting course, by so frequently interposing for their deliverance and restoration. In His grace He raised up godly kings in Judah, the royal tribe, who recalled the people to Him, correcting abuses, reviving worship, and so bringing peace and blessing.

Prominent among such stands Josiah, who proved himself to be, as his name signifies, "Given of Jehovah." As it now is, so was it then—every good and perfect gift was from above, and came down from the Father of lights. If in this age or dispensation the ascended Lord Jesus, who stooped in order to rise (the only way in which the Son of God could rise), has given gifts unto men, even "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers," even so then God gave, and Josiah was Jehovah's gift to Judah.

The name Josiah admonishes Christians who speak of the lack of gifts to the Church in these days, that they should unitedly ask them of the Head of the Church; for they are all God-given. No man can make a Christian,

nor can any one or any number of Christian men make an evangelist or teacher; all such must be given of God to the Church.

The gift of Josiah, like all Jehovah's gifts, was timed by him—bestowed when most needed, and when true hearts would really prize the gift, and praise the Giver. Thus God gave His Son, and thus also will He send Him the second time.

It was a time of deep need in Jerusalem; for although Manasseh in his last years proved the reality of his repentance by seeking to undo the evil of the first part of his reign, yet Amon, his son, brought Judah low again through his sin and the evils committed during his short reign; so that Josiah was born at a time of corruption and iniquity, over which he mourned, and which he sought to correct and remove, although he was not personally responsible for them. It is much the same now. When one is born again, and from an exercised-heart and conscience desires to obey the word of God only, he finds himself in the midst of error, corruption, and difficulty, but for its existence he is not personally accountable. As a faithful soul he will mourn over such a state of things, and where he can he will correct; but where he cannot, he will purge himself from it.

At the early age of eight years Josiah ascended the throne, and succeeded to the kingdom of Judah, commencing a thirty-one years' reign, during which he so lived and acted as to obtain from Jehovah this testimony: "He did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left." Truly grace is not hereditary, neither is it the fruit of ceremonies, nor the result of education, nor the reward of merit, but sovereign and free through Christ, in the prospect of whose

blood-shedding all blessing came to man before His death, as all since has flowed only in virtue of it.

At the age of sixteen, in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father. Observe, not Amon his father (as if the iniquity of his short reign had, as a cloud, blotted out his name), but David, who, with one exception, was a pattern king, and his conduct the standard for judging his successors.

The first public manifestation of Josiah's devotedness was in his care for the neglected and defiled temple of his God. This was the characteristic of godly kings; whilst an opposite spirit marked the ungodly, who made even its gold subservient to their unbelieving, unholy practices. In this holy zeal such kings as Josiah were shadows of Him who is yet to come, the Son of man, the King of kings, in His kingdom, who will not only purge the floor of Christendom with the fan of judgment, gathering out all that offends, and them that do iniquity, but, coming to His temple, He will also purge the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord a sacrifice in righteousness.

Josiah trusted in Jehovah, not in man; yet he valued fellowship, and in all that he did had counsellors and helpers. True fellowship and co-operation in the Lord's service is indeed blessed, and every right-minded servant of Christ values it. Of this Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, is a bright example; his estimate of help in the Lord, and the high value he set on the prayers of all saints, is easily traced in his letters. We also remember Him who said to Peter, James, and John, "Tarry ye here, and watch *with me*;" who yet had twice to awake them out of sleep, saying to Peter, "Couldst thou not watch with me one hour?"

To return. Let us trace the order observed by Josiah.

He first purged the land and the house, destroying images, both carved and molten, and fulfilled the man-of-God's words to Jeroboam by burning the bones of the idolatrous priests upon their altars. He next "repaired the house of Jehovah his God."

Let us notice this order again. He first purged, then repaired. Man, even religious man, reverses this order, seeking, and that by his very religiousness, to repair his past imperfect life before he is cleansed by the blood from his uncleanness; indeed, he thinks by reformation and amendment to cover past guilt and imperfection. A great, a fatal mistake! Let him, on the contrary, by faith in the blood of Christ shed for sinners, first get cleansing, an entire and eternal purgation, and then let him diligently correct evils, and abound in good works. Believers should likewise remember that by the cleansing of the conscience light enters still more to show faults and defects, and that by the Spirit of God power is communicated to correct and amend.

This special service of Josiah's was fulfilled in the eighteenth year of his reign, and the record of it and of the offerings is given in verses 8-16, the Holy Ghost testifying to the faithfulness of those who did the work. Nothing that is done for and to God can be forgotten, nor go unrewarded. Let us also, by washing at the laver, prepare to correct evils around us.

The purgation and repairing in Jerusalem and the temple led to a most important discovery. There was found in Jehovah's house the book or roll of His law, the book neglected and forgotten by former kings and people, who had forsaken the God of the book. God and His word are strength to the obedient and the upright; but the careless neglect both Himself and His truth, and utterly fail.

At the king's commandment the recovered law was brought into his presence, and read before him. Such was the convincing power of the words, exercised by Him whose words they were, that the king rent his garment with grief of heart, for in their light he saw the sad departure from them of his people, and owned the justness of Jehovah's past and yet threatened correction.

Let us, brethren in Christ, beware of neglecting the word of God, of reading it carelessly, or even of making it our *second* book. Rather let us (as we are sure the blessed Master did) love it, delight in it, read it in faith, feed on, judge by, and walk in it, and although we may, yea, shall often have to rend our garment (*i.e.* judge ourselves), and sorrow for defects, we shall still be blessed and honoured.

Josiah's next step was to consult the prophetess, by his messengers, respecting the book found in the temple. He was not independent either of priest, prophet, or people, yet determined in his work of reformation. The members of Christ's body are all dependent on Him, the Head, and mutually dependent on each other. No one member can properly say to the other, "I have no need of you."

The prophetess heard the message, and returned answer to the king—an answer both solemn and cheering. She confirmed all that former and contemporary prophets had declared against Judah for their departure from Jehovah; but to Josiah she sent this word, "Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest His words against this place, and didst rend thy clothes and weep before me; I have even heard *thee* also, saith Jehovah. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see the evil that I will

bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same.”

A tender heart, dear reader, is an invaluable blessing, essential to well-pleasing conduct before God—a heart easily impressed by the touch of truth, and exercised to please God. Such had Josiah, and he gave proof of it. It was acknowledged by God, and honoured.

All this encouraged the king to proceed in his work of recalling the people to Jehovah, for he summoned the elders of Judah and Jerusalem, accompanied them to the temple, and then, calling together the people, small and great, caused the words of the book of the covenant of Jehovah to be read out to them. This resulted in a solemn covenant to serve Jehovah, and the work of reformation was continued even out to the cities of Samaria.

The next recorded act of the king was to commend the observance of the Passover to Jehovah, “*as it is written in the book of this covenant.*” It was kept, and the testimony to its observance is that “no such passover had been kept since the days that judges judged Israel.” Hezekiah’s passover was a remarkable one, but it was observed on the fourteenth day of the *second* month, whereas Josiah’s was held on the fourteenth day of the *first* month, in more strict accordance with the original institution; for the holding of it on the fourteenth of the second month was only allowed by God in consideration of certain unavoidable circumstances. (Numbers ix. 14.) Surely, fellow-believers, we are most happy and honoured when living in closest conformity to the word of the Lord.

Thus far Josiah’s ways pleased Jehovah, and secured blessing and honour to himself. But, alas! the next act, and it was the last, was one of disobedience, and brought its sorrowful results. “After all this,” we read, “when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt

went up to fight against Charchemish by Euphrates : and Josiah went out against him." He was met by Necho's ambassadors or princes, who warned and counselled him to desist from meddling with God, who had commissioned their master to go against Charchemish. But Josiah would not hear; he persisted in his purpose, disguised himself, engaged in the battle, and fell by the arrows of the uncircumcised Egyptians. He meddled with strife not belonging to him, and paid his life for it. (Prov. xxvi. 17.)

And now, dear fellow-Christian, what instruction can we derive from Josiah's end? What says the voice of God to us in it? One fact, and perhaps the most important to be noticed, and to be admonished by, is this, that he did not, so far as the narrative informs us, enquire of God, either directly or through His prophet; but he acted on his own judgment, leaned to his own understanding and feelings, and did not acknowledge Jehovah. Let us learn from this in everything to pray *first*, submitting our thoughts and feelings to God and His word. Thus acknowledging Him, He will direct our steps. Lastly, let us beware of leaving the path of separation from the world and service for Christ, to meddle with things of the world which do not belong to us as citizens of heaven, who are but strangers on earth, because born from above, and pilgrims, because bound for glory. Happy and honourable would it have been for Josiah if he had gone on with his service for Jehovah in Judah, keeping the place of separation from Gentile idolatrous powers, leaving them to strive, as potsherd of the earth, with the potsherd of the earth, trusting Jehovah to preserve him and his from both. He did not do so, but meddled, and fell.

Let us, beloved, admire and imitate all that was of God in Josiah's course, but be warned by his end. H. H.

THE BEGINNINGS OF GOSPEL HISTORY.

V. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

LUKE ii. 1-20.

WITH a grateful sense of God's distinguishing grace, and with expectations such as no daughter of Abraham had ever cherished, Mary was quietly awaiting at Nazareth the birth of her promised child. But not at Nazareth could that birth take place; for had not the Scripture said that the Christ cometh "out of the town of Bethlehem where David was"? To that spot therefore, so long ago marked out as the birthplace of the ruler of Israel (Micah v. 2), must the virgin mother be led, for "the Scripture cannot be broken."

Hitherto angelic messengers had been used to express the will of God to Mary and Joseph; but not by an angel does God at this time bid them depart to Bethlehem. One great lesson of the Bible is, that the mightiest potentate of earth is often made the unconscious instrument of carrying out the decrees of the Most High, and nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the narrative before us. A decree goes forth "from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed;" that decree brings Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. The design of the mighty Cæsar is to learn the greatness of his kingdom; while the carrying out of that design causes the King before whom Cæsar must bow, to be born at the place fixed upon in the divine counsels. The word "taxed" here signifies rather "enrolled," and seems to mean that Augustus ordered a *census* of the whole Roman Empire. This enrolment, we are told, was the *first* under Cyrenius's governorship of Syria, and it

seems thus to be distinguished from that spoken of by Gamaliel (Acts v. 37), which was some years later, when Cyrenius was a second time governor of Syria. The latter was probably a "taxing," in the stricter sense of the word. The decree was carried out by Roman *authority*, but according to Jewish *custom*, the latter requiring persons to be registered in their own town. It was this combination that brought about the important result—a result not sought by Mary, much less intended by others, but fore-ordained by Him who accomplishes His will in such a manner as may well lead us to adore the depth of His wisdom and the height of His power; while it should encourage us to trust in Him under all difficulties.

The four days' toilsome journey accomplished, Joseph and Mary found Bethlehem full to overflowing with the many whom the imperial decree had drawn thither. Those who were first had secured what accommodation was to be had, and apparently none were willing to give up a quieter and more retired spot to one who so much needed it. Therefore, in that very city, where in former days Ruth had found "rest" in the house of Boaz, "a mighty man of wealth," and where David was born and crowned, Mary, who formed the last link between the promise of God possessed by the royal family of Israel and its fulfilment, had to take refuge in a stable, and lay her new-born Son in the manger. How touching is that statement, "There was no room for them in the inn!" What a foreshadowing of the treatment that blessed One would find in the world that was made by Him! How little any of that crowd knew who was being born in their midst. Had they but known, would not the best room in the town have been given up at once? And if it was ignorance that prevented doors being opened, then is it not deeper and more terrible ignorance that keeps hearts sealed against the Lord now?

There is no room in the heart of the natural man for the Christ of God, because the eye is blind to His attractiveness and beauty. And if, on the other hand, our hearts *are* opened to receive Him, we thankfully own that it is because He "hath *given* us an understanding that we may *know* Him," and prove His power to save, and His fulness to satisfy.

But when we turn to consider the great fact of His birth, what thought can conceive, or words express, the riches of His grace who chose to be born thus? Had He willed it, earth's noblest mansion must have been opened to receive Him; but being free to choose, He chose not dignity but lowliness, not riches but poverty; and therefore not a palace but a stable was the scene of that birth

"Which would no glory borrow,
No majesty from earth."

But if no earthly glory or majesty attended His birth, it could not pass without special record. If the cradle tells of deep poverty and lowliness, there is, as usual, not far distant, some special token of the true glory of Him who lies therein. For 'while the many were left in their accustomed indifference,' there were some who caught glimpses of the stir that birth had made among the spirits that wait upon God.

If we bend over the Bethlehem manger, and desire to learn more concerning the feeble infant lying there, we have but to turn and listen to the celestial messenger proclaiming His birth. In this proclamation we see a striking combination of grandeur and simplicity, in beautiful harmony with the birth itself. The announcement came direct from God by the voice of an angel; but it was made not to the priests in the temple at Jerusalem, nor to the great council of the nation, but to a few obscure

and simple shepherds who were keeping the night-watches over their flocks. If we judge that these men were men of faith, waiting for "the consolation of Israel," we only draw an inference from the recorded ways of God. As they kept their flock in or near the very spot where David of old kept his father's sheep, may not the promises made to him, and embodied in some of his psalms, have occupied their hearts? It is at least evident that they were prepared for the revelation that was made to them, even though they were "sore afraid" as they saw the glory of the Lord shining around them, and an angel of the Lord standing before them. "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a *Saviour*, which is *Christ the Lord*." (vv. 10, 11.) The expression "all people" is properly "all the people," and has strict reference to Israel as "the people of God;" there is no word as yet with reference to the Gentiles.

Of the three significant titles here given to the Infant of Bethlehem, the first points to His wondrous work of *salvation*, the second to His authority and fulness as God's *anointed One*, and the third, which is constantly used for the Hebrew word *Jehovah*, expresses His *supreme dignity*. These titles were His at His *birth*, and yet He receives them afresh as the One begotten from the dead. In resurrection He is exalted as a *Saviour*, and made "both Lord and Christ." (Acts v. 31, ii. 36.)

Strange indeed must have seemed the token given to these shepherds: "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in the manger." (v. 12.) Our very familiarity with these words often prevents our taking in their full force; but how those who first heard them must have felt the over-

powering *contrast* between the titles just given to the new-born child and the lowly circumstances in which He should be found. This was the sign by which they were to find Him; they could make no mistake; they well knew the one inn of Bethlehem, and the one stable of that inn; there they should find a babe—only one in such circumstances, and that one the Heir of David's house, the Saviour, Christ the Lord!

The message being delivered, a grand sight was opened to the eyes of the wondering shepherds, and 'for a moment that chorus swept down out of the midnight sky which makes the motto of the new dispensation.' "Suddenly" this burst of praise began, as though the "multitude of the heavenly host" were impatient to begin that song which, surely we may judge, ceased not until from every one of the "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands" of God's blessed angels its echoes had reached His glorious throne. How beautifully the song expresses the object of the birth which it celebrates! "Glory to God in the highest" (*i.e.* the highest heavens, His own uncreated dwelling-place), "and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."* In the birth, life, and death of that Holy One, His great business was the glory of God. By the blood of His cross He made peace, and He shall yet be known upon earth as the "Prince of peace;" and in His person and work He is the great expression of God's goodwill toward men.

Simple and true indeed was the faith of these shepherds. They raised no question, but said one to another, "Let us now [or therefore] go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." (*v.* 15.) Let us accompany them, and as,

* Or, according to some of the old manuscripts, "on earth peace among men of good pleasure;" that is, among men of God's good pleasure.

with the angel's message in our hearts, we bow in spirit by that manger, we see that humble spot lighted up with a glory such as Eden never knew; for we behold Him who is "the beginning of the creation of God," even that new creation, the glory and blessedness of which are secured for ever in Him as its Head. He is the last Adam, the second man, at once "the Branch of Jehovah" and the "Fruit of the earth." (Isa. iv. 2.) The *first* man was *created*, the *second* man was *born*; the *first* Adam came from the hand of God with fully-developed powers of mind and body as the head of a creation which God pronounced very good, but the stability of which depended upon an obedience that quickly failed; the *last* Adam came in the feebleness of infancy, passed through all the stages of human development, glorified God by His wondrous life, and then in death laid the foundation of that new creation of which in resurrection He is the Head, and the stability of which is dependent upon that obedience which has been tried to the utmost and proved to be *perfect*.

The shepherds in their turn became evangelists; for "they made known abroad the saying that was told them concerning this child" (v. 18); and the last mention we have of them is as worshippers. The song of the heavenly host found a response upon earth in the hearts of these men, who believed what they *heard*, and then, with the "haste" of faith and love, went to see for themselves. The words "praising God" are used both of the angels and the shepherds (vv. 13, 20), and by this praise God was glorified. (Ps. l. 23.) Are we thus glorifying God? Are our ears so open to the heavenly message, and our eyes so unveiled to the glory of Him who now lives at the right hand of God, that our hearts are filled with praise for what we hear and see?

W. H. B.

OIL FOR THE LIGHT.

LEVITICUS xxiv. 1-4.

BRIEF NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY MR. T. NEWBERRY.

“*And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying.*” The words of God in the Scriptures never become a dead letter. If we have only the ear to hear, we shall hear the echo of these words spoken in present living power to our souls. The Scripture is, if I may use the expression, God’s telephone, and if we listen aright, we may hear the voice of God speaking to us.

“*Jehovah spake unto Moses.*” This word “spake” is written as though God was still speaking, and we find it is so, if the word is ministered in the spirit, and not in the letter.

“*Command the children of Israel.*” This is a commandment with authority. May it come with power to us now; “for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.” Those who are the children of God by faith are now the Israel of God; and it is by faith that we are to learn the will of God.

“*That they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light.*” The word “bring” is the same as “take” in the fifth verse; it has both meanings, and they are to take and bring. And what does the oil mean? We have not to do with the letter, but with the spirit; we have not to turn to the weak and beggarly elements. Of what then is oil the type? This Scripture shows us: “We have an unction from the Holy One.” (1 John ii. 20.) The oil is the emblem of the Holy Ghost. It is not simple oil, but “oil olive.” By this expression the mount of Olives is

brought before our minds, with its summit and its foot. At the foot was the garden of Gethsemane, or "press of oil." It was to this garden that Jesus resorted, and there the oil olive flowed forth—that Spirit by whom He was anointed. It was from the top of this mount that He ascended to His Father, and when He returns again it will be to that spot. The oil olive is thus connected with Jesus in His lowliness and in His glory.

The oil for the light was not to be pressed; but the olives were to be beaten in the mortar. Can we fail in comprehending the spiritual truth there? In order that there may be a testimony for Christ, there must be a special preparation. There must be a beating and pounding. Discipline of soul is needed for the light of the sanctuary.

"To cause the lamp to burn continually." In the lamp-stand the centre shaft is the type of Christ as the source of power. The three pairs of branches represent the three-fold testimony respecting Him. The margin says, "to cause to ascend," and testimony for Christ in the power of the Holy Ghost has special reference to God. The testimony must ascend continually in the presence of God in the power of the Holy Ghost, and having the Lord Jesus Christ as its centre, subject, and source.

"Without the veil of the testimony, in the tent of the congregation." Within the veil that word will be fulfilled—"Whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be prophecies they shall fail." It is *here* we want the light, "without the veil," during the present night-time. While Christ was in the world He was the sun and light of the world. That sun has set behind Calvary, and since that sunset night-time will continue, "from evening until the morning." Then the Day Star will arise, the bright and Morning Star, for which we are waiting. Christ

will come to receive us to Himself; and until then, during the night, God would have a testimony in the power of the Holy Ghost.

The word in verse 4 should be "lampstand," not candlestick. The difference between a lamp and a candle is great. The lamp is God's emblem of testimony; the candle, man's idea. The word "candle" is really never mentioned in the Scriptures, though the word for "lamp" is often so translated. The candle burns by self-consumption; its supply of tallow is in itself. This represents man's idea of ministry; it is self-sufficiency; man's making. As the candle is dipped until it is of a certain calibre, so a man may get a stock of sermons, and have his supply. The lamp is dependent upon the oil, and if there is no oil the lamp goes out. God tells us that we are not sufficient of ourselves "to think anything as of ourselves."

"In the tent of the congregation, shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning." Aaron is the type of Christ. The lesson which we all have to learn is, that ministry is not merely depending upon God for support, but that He is to *order* it. In Matthew ix. 30 the Lord said to the two men whose eyes He had opened, "See that no man know it." But they "spread abroad His fame in all that country." Their ministry was contrary to the order of the Lord. When the Lord said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few," He added, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that *He* will send forth labourers into His harvest." Testimony must be in obedience to His authority.

"Before Jehovah continually." Before Him the light has ever to ascend. We have to remember that the Majesty of heaven and earth is listening to every word of the testimony. "Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him." (Mal. iii. 16.)

The children of Israel were made responsible that the

pure beaten oil olive was brought, and God holds His people responsible for the maintenance of the testimony during the present night of time. Even the apostle Paul says, "Brethren, pray for us," and so every servant of Christ needs the prayers of his brethren. The word was, "Command the *children of Israel* that they bring." The sons of Jacob and children of Israel are different. May we be broken-down Jacobs, clinging like Israel, and saying, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." We must wait upon God continually. In Acts iv. we see that a supply of the Spirit was given in answer to united prayer. We can pray that the vessel of ministry may be filled to overflowing, that the Lord Jesus may be magnified. The wick is the emblem of the human part in the light, and if burnt without oil there is nothing but an offensive smoke. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

BRIEF REMARKS ON THE BOOK OF JOB.

(Concluded from page 66.)

LIKE "all Scripture," the Book of Job is food for faith, and the heart in which "precious faith dwells" can gain strength, comfort, and enlightenment from meditating on its contents. In this book are both "things which are seen," and "things which are not seen." The means used by Satan to deprive Job of the all that he had were evident to the senses. The great wind from the wilderness could be felt and known by its effects. The fire from heaven, the bands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans doing their work of rapine and destruction, were visible things; but the source of all these was unseen.

In the most direful calamity, if the soul can but see the hand of God in it, it can rest, endure, and hope, and patiently wait; but if the soul sees only the instruments

employed, the means used, or the channel through which the trouble comes, then disquietude, distraction, and much increase of suffering are sure to follow.

Faith, however, pierces the veil, and with unclouded eyes sees God in all, God above all, God accomplishing all His own purposes, and that means (or second causes as they called) are but the mode of His action. When God is thus seen there is quiet of spirit, security, strength, and the endurance of faith in the midst of all the sharp and heavy sorrow through which we may be called to pass. May our Lord give us more of this faith which endures as seeing Him who is invisible; for without it we shall surely be weak, fretful, and impatient. It was thus with the apostle Paul, the source of whose strength and endurance is seen in 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. Let us now resume the narrative given us in Job ii. 11-13.

Three of Job's friends, on hearing of his calamities, make an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. Their object in so doing was good and commendable; for surely the knowledge of another's suffering should ever create in us a desire to comfort, to sympathise, and "to weep with them that weep." But the sequel shows how little they were qualified for the work they had undertaken.

Job's afflictions had so altered his appearance that they did not even know him! This in itself tells a sad tale as to the nature and intensity of his sufferings. "They lifted up their voices and wept." How true, how natural, are the descriptions given in Scripture of poor suffering humanity! There is no Stoicism here, no crushing down the emotional, and assuming a hardness contrary to nature; but we have a simple outflow of sorrow from human hearts.

"So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him:

for they saw that his grief was very great." The sight of a sorrow far beyond anything that our own hearts have ever entered into or experienced imposes silence upon the tongue; for we feel our impotency to deal with grief so intense. Nevertheless we remain with the sufferer, and that is almost all that we can do.

In chapter iii. we observe an entire change from that which has heretofore characterized Job, and a difficulty will perhaps be experienced by many in understanding how it is that such an one as Job—one who had endured so well, who manifested such submission to the divine will—should now so utterly break down. But it should be remembered that the sad utterances of this chapter flow from the heart of one who now regards God as *against* him (see Lam. iii. 3), not as *for* him. (Rom. viii. 31.) Job's heart is crushed and broken by a succession of terrible calamities; he is in misery and anguish, and has no hope of deliverance. If this is the end and object of his existence, it would have been better had he never been born. The anguish is so great, it drinks up his spirit; it is more than he can bear; there is not a moment's relief; it is intolerable; and in a frenzy of hopeless, unrelieved misery he curses the day of his birth, and earnestly craves for death to put an end to his torment. All this is very natural, and would be found to be the real condition of most hearts in like circumstances. Contrasts are sometimes drawn between Paul and Job, to the disparagement of the latter; but it should be remembered that in the Christian course there is the passing through the "valley of the shadow of death," as well as being on the "hill-top." There is the experience which draws forth the exclamation, "O wretched man that I am!" as well as the enjoyment of the "green pastures and still waters." The discipline by which the Father of spirits corrects and chastens His children is a discipline in ac-

cordance with His own infinite wisdom and perfect will and method. The light given to Paul through the revelations made to him was of course much greater than that possessed by Job, and no doubt differed greatly in its character. Christian calling, standing, hope, and walk is a clearly-defined revelation, of which Paul was a vessel of communication, and also a vessel in which the blessed *power* of the truths communicated dwelt, energized, and acted. Nevertheless Paul was but a creature, but he occupied a place given to him in the divine counsels, which necessitated that he should be that which God had made him; he served, suffered, and endured, "according to the power which worked in him mightily." He was but an earthen vessel, and none knew it so well as himself. "By the grace of God," said he, "I am what I am," and such a sentence sets forth his estimate of that which he was and did.

If it had pleased God to bring out through Paul the lessons that He has shown us in Job, and which are for our instruction and profit, Paul would perhaps have been no more than Job in his afflictions. If Paul was the greatest apostle, Job was without an equal in his day; for was not the Lord's testimony that there was "none like him in the earth," "perfect and upright"? They both occupied definite places, and were raised up for distinct purposes.

We need the subjective teaching of Job, as well as the objective teaching of Paul; and as to practical condition, none are Christians who desire not to learn of both. To have the mind filled with knowledge without also having a humbled heart, is a very sad and dangerous condition to be in. We learn from Paul, and we learn from Job also; and we thank God for them both; for He gave both.

But to proceed with the narrative. Job's friends are appalled at his utterances, and though they came to comfort him, they only succeed in adding greatly to his sufferings.*

They are horror-stricken and indignant at what they consider the impiety of his language, and they take the attitude of champions for God and His truth, little dreaming of their own insufficiency to deal with such a case. They say many good and true things, but they misunderstand Job's case, and consider his afflictions to be the result of sin and hypocrisy; and they seek to sustain their position by eloquent argument on the equity of God's ways.

Job, on the contrary, being conscious of his own integrity and uprightness, judges that the ways of God are not according to equity, because here is he, a righteous man, suffering in a way that might easily be harmonized with justice if he were being punished for wickedness. He has sought to live to God scrupulously and with watchfulness; nevertheless suffering and ignominy have come upon him, his honour is cast into the dust, and he is clothed with shame. Job is in confusion, his confidence in God is shaken, and he is in misery. This is a terrible exercise, fearful in proportion to the soul's former confidence and peace. His hope is gone, and he is in a maze of conflicting emotions; heart, mind, and spirit are all in the conflict. Meanwhile he is suffering unbearable torments in body also, added to which his words of complaint produce only lecturing from his friends, who are unable to give him any explanation, comfort, or encouragement.

* Surely care should be taken as to those who visit the afflicted and tried, in order that a "word in season" may be given to such as are in "deep waters." Fathers in Christ should themselves attend to the work, and not leave it to well-meaning but inexperienced Christians; then should we hear less often of persons causing pain, instead of healing, in their injudicious visits to the tried and suffering.

Rebellion now takes the place of his former resignation, fretfulness and chafing the place of patience; and in his ignorance and darkness he charges God with unrighteousness, and at the same time maintains with persistence his own righteousness. This is a sorrowful exercise, and a terrible case; but still God, for His own purpose and for Job's profit, permits it to go on, yet carefully watches over the poor struggler through the whole process.

God does not expect anything better from his servant, because He knows all about him. He knows that Job is but dust—poor, lame, and blind—and He intends to show him what a poor, helpless, vile creature he is; and when Job discovers it he is thankful for the lesson, painful as the ordeal has been; but while in the fire, the darkness, the shadow of death, it is more than he can bear.

Job's friends, however, continue their speeches, and utter much that is right and much that is wrong; but in the main they miss the mark altogether, at first hinting their suspicions, and at last turning them into direct accusations. They misjudge the disease, and so apply the wrong remedy. They do no good to Job; they cannot convince him, but irritate and torment him, and in the end wear themselves out. With all their wisdom and platitudes they cannot answer Job's challenge, so they at length keep silence.

Elihu now comes forth to the battle, his spirit strong within him, and impatient for utterance, only he has held his peace hitherto in deference to his elders. He affirms the truth that wisdom does not always dwell with grey hairs; it is the Spirit of God which giveth true wisdom, discernment, and understanding. Elihu deals with more fairness, impartiality, and judgment than the others, who are now silent. He does not wish to condemn Job, neither does he intend to spare him. Wisdom and mercy, righteousness and truth, more characterize the speech and

arguments of Elihu than of the other three. Job evidently feels this; for he does not answer him. Nevertheless Elihu cannot heal the wounds, nor yet get at the root of the disease.

The fact is, that the true Judge, Healer, and Deliverer must be God Himself. He alone knoweth the disease and its remedy. Other physicians had made the attempt, but they had not the skill to cure. The Physician of souls, the Father of spirits, He that made man, is the only One that knoweth man. All the machinery that we have seen at work has been set in motion by the permission and will of God, to accomplish His own designs in His own way, which is the only possible *right* way. But He Himself now takes Job in hand, and reveals Himself in a way adapted to meet Job's condition, bringing before him His wisdom in creation. The result is that Job now sees himself *as he really is* in God's sight—a poor ignorant man, who, knowing nothing, has suffered himself to judge of things beyond his reach. He shrinks into nothingness, loaths himself, and repents in true humiliation. The seat of the disease is now reached; the error is revealed, felt, and confessed; and the Lord in His ways with Job proves Himself really to be “very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” (James v. 11.) “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are *exercised* thereby.” (Heb. xii. 11.)

Job is now restored; he also intercedes with God for his friends, and his captivity is turned; he had learned how to walk with God, enjoying Him for his portion. God also gave to Him more blessings than he possessed at first, but Job could receive them with a humble heart; and without a humble and contrite heart none of us can be trusted with anything.

J. J. S.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

What is meant by "the condemnation of the devil," and "the snare of the devil," in 1 Tim. iii. 6, 7?

ANY position of authority is one of danger. God created Satan "full of wisdom" and "perfect in beauty," when he was placed as "the anointed cherub" upon the "holy mountain of God." Through pride he fell, "corrupting his wisdom by reason of his brightness" (Ezek. xxviii. 14-17), and was brought into condemnation. This is a warning to any one who would be an overseer in the house of God; and hence he must not be a "novice" in the ways of God, lest, becoming blinded by pride, he fall as Satan fell. On the other hand, Satan has a snare for those who are not careful to maintain a good report in the world, and who, on being reproached, are caught in the meshes of sin. The two expressions seem to point to evils arising from two opposite causes: the one corrupting through a pride that lifts up and blinds, the other, the snare of outward entanglements which overtakes any one who does not stand above their unhallowed influence, as is shown by his not possessing the confidence and respect of those "which are without." There is matter for grave consideration here on the part of all rulers in the Church of God, and of those who desire to be such.

How is the commendation of the "unjust steward," in Luke xvi. 8, 9, to be understood?

The steward is commended by his lord for his forethought, "because he had done wisely," or rather "acted *prudently*." The Lord then adds a comparison: "For the children of this world [age] are wiser in [*more prudent* in respect to] their generation than the children of light," in reference to the things of eternity. Connect with this Matt. x. 16: "Be ye therefore wise [*prudent*] as serpents, and harmless as doves." Prudence is a characteristic of Satan, as it is here of the children of darkness. In perfectness of character prudence and heavenly wisdom are combined. Prudence, and not wisdom, is the point of commendation here; for nothing unrighteous can be *wise*. In His subsequent words, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail [or it shall fail], they may receive you into [the] everlasting habitations," our Lord teaches us to send before us to heaven what we possess, to lay up treasure there, that so death, which bankrupts all, may find us only the richer there. Alford says: "We are to use it to make ourselves, not palaces, barns, estates, or treasures, but *friends*; i.e. to bestow it on the poor and needy." (See chap. xii. 33.)

HINDS' FEET FOR HIGH PLACES.

IT is well we should be reminded of Israel's "high places," of which we read in the following passages of the Old Testament: "The Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him to ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields." (Deut. xxxii. 12, 13.) "Thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." (Isaiah lviii. 14.) And in the well-known words of Habakkuk: "The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon my high places."* (Chap. iii. 19.)

The "high places" spoken of in these passages beautifully correspond with the "heavenly places" of the New Testament. In the epistle to the Ephesians Paul takes the believer up into the high places, and says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (chap. i. 3); and again (chap. ii. 6), "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

This, then, is our position as made partakers of a "heavenly calling;" but we are called to *walk* there, and for this we need "hinds' feet."

There is much deep and important truth couched under that familiar Bible phrase *walking*, which we would seek for a little to dwell upon. We can never get higher than

* The word in these passages is used in a good sense; it is often made use of in a bad sense to describe the world's high places of idolatry and sin. "Thou shalt tread upon their high places." (Deut. xxxiii. 29.)

our high places ; for they are those heavenly places into which Christ has entered, and where He sitteth at the right hand of God. But the higher the standing the greater the danger from unprepared feet and an unsteady walk. Hence Habakkuk says, that in order to walk on his high places, God had made his feet like those of the hind ; and the blessed Lord, in speaking of His resurrection pathway, makes use in Psalm xviii. of the same form of words : " He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me up on my high places."

The epistle to the Ephesians is pre-eminently the epistle of " the heavenly places," and on that very account it deals so frequently with the walk of the saints of God, and explains to us the spiritual significance of those hinds' feet with which alone we can tread those holy heights in safety. Judas sought to tread on high ground with unhallowed foot, and fell by his iniquity, and went to his own place. Many have thus fallen before and since, and many a back-sliding believer has fallen and broken many bones when the need of the hind's foot has been forgotten, and pride and carelessness have been indulged.

The hind (the female of the hart) is among those clean animals that chew the cud and divide the hoof. Its clean step teaches the very opposite of that profanity seen in Esau's case, which makes the world its portion, and only values the things of the future as they seem to influence the prosperity of the present. When Esau found he was prospering and securing the good things of this life, he was ready to forgive Jacob the fraud that robbed him of the birthright, and which ultimately sent the children of the birthright as wanderers into Egypt, while kings and dukes were reigning in Edom. Esau possessed the present ; Jacob was content to wait for the fulfilment of the four hundred and thirty years of bondage spoken of to Abraham.

The natural man ever walks, as Paul told the Ephesians they had once done, "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience fulfilling the desires [or wills] of the flesh and of the mind," being "by nature children of wrath." (Eph. ii. 2, 3.) Such was Esau; that is, Edom.

But the same God who has prepared the heavenly places has prepared heavenly feet to walk there, and this not as a provision for the future in the heavenly city only, but for the present also, that, as raised so high by our calling and standing, we should walk on earth with holy steps and consecrated feet, as those placed there by Him to show to fallen man what it is as heavenly strangers to tread with angels' footsteps the paths of earth. Let us, then, briefly ponder the fourth and fifth of Ephesians as instructing us how to walk on our high places with hinds' feet. There never was a day when this was more needed than the present, when much high and precious truth is often learnt, and when the deep lesson of fellowship in the cross, which teaches us to say, "I am crucified with Christ," is little known.

1st. These "hinds' feet" make *meek and lowly steps*. Read chap. iv. 1, 2: "Walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called, with *all lowliness and meekness*," &c. These words carry us back to those of our Master when He said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." (Matt. xi. 29.) Pride and self-will make the yoke a galling one, and the burden heavy. The will of God then seems a bitter thing, and the commands of Christ are grievous. These meek and lowly steps are here contemplated in our walk in the Church as fellow-members of the family of God, the household of faith. Those who have had most to do in the Church of

God know how often pride leads to a fall from our high places, and will bear witness to the need of this aspect of the hinds' feet being ever remembered. Verses 1 to 16 should be read together, showing the connection in which they all stand to verses 1, 2.

2nd. They tell of *unworldly steps*; that we walk not as others walk, "who are alienated from the life of God." This necessitates walking much alone; for the realities of heaven agree not with the vanity of the carnal mind, nor can the enlightened understanding of one born of God find fellowship with that which is darkened by enmity to God; nor can the eye opened to the glory of God see as the eyes of those see who are blinded in the hardness of their heart. It was thus Abraham walked on the mountain-top with God beside his altar and his tent; and it was in forgetfulness of this divine principle that Lot first pitched his tent toward the cities of the plain, *then* dwelt in Sodom, and *afterwards* sat in its gate, in the place of authority and rule. Thus he fell, and thus all fall who seek to maintain a heavenly calling without coming out from the world and being separate unto God. The command is, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" &c. (2 Cor. vi. 11-18.) Thus are the hinds' feet seen to be those of "the new man, who after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Read here verses 17-28, and see how they further unfold this unworldly walk.

3rd. The hinds' feet have *steps of love*, and we are instructed to "walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us." (Chap. v. 2.) Love is essential to those who have to tread the streets of the heavenly-city, and also to those who would walk in resurrection life down

here. "Love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." (1 John iv. 7.) It is one of the divine proofs of regeneration to love as God has loved, and to love *because* God has loved.

There is a danger of our lowering the high standard of love to that of the world around us, forgetful of our Saviour's words, "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?" Oh that God would raise our thoughts in this matter as high as heaven is above earth! Divine love demands not love, it *draws it out* by rendering it; and though the more it loves, the less it be loved, it is still content to have it so, except for the sake of its object, to whom it would say, as did Paul to the Corinthians, "Now for a recompense of the same, be ye also enlarged." Oh for this enlarged walk in the Church and in the world, according to the divine precept, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be [become] the children of your Father which is in heaven : for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust!" How easy to say we *are* His sons and daughters! how hard to *become* His children in practical conformity to God!

With this subject of walking in love let us connect all that is said between chap. iv. 25 and chap. v. 2, remembering that "we are members one of another," and that therefore untruthfulness, anger, corrupting conversation, bitterness, &c., must be for ever put away, that we may become imitators of God as children beloved; so that the ungrieved Spirit may cause us to hear the heavenly Bridegroom's voice saying, "How beautiful are thy steps" (so Heb.) "in shoes, O prince's daughter!" (Cant. vii. 1.)

4th. *Steps of light* are another characteristic of the hinds' feet; for we are commanded "to walk as children of light." (v. 8.) In John's epistle we are first taught that "God is light" (1 John i. 5), and then that "God is love" (chap. iv. 8); but in the Church of God walking in light follows walking in love. This is not without its significance. There is a dazzling glory in light that may deceive; for even Satan can transform himself into an angel of light. There is in *light* a necessary self-attestation, an outward manifestation demanding the homage of beholders. There is, on the other hand, a self-abnegation in *love*; it never asserts itself, but contemplates only the circumstances of another, and its power to meet them. There is no real love out of God, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God. Hence in the creature love must precede light, if the creature is to stand in the light into which it has been brought. Otherwise "wisdom and beauty" will be corrupted "by reason of the brightness," as we read of the king of Tyre, in Ezek. xxviii. 17. Alas! how many seek to walk in light who have never learnt to walk in love, and as a necessary consequence pride brings about a fall, proportioned to the light received. As bearing out the due order we read that "the fruit of the light [not of the Spirit] is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth." It is well to remember that in Rev. ii. love had failed in Ephesus, though truth was earnestly contended for.

In connection with these footsteps of the children of light, read the entire passage from verse 3 to 14.

5th. The *steps are strict* as under the very eye of God; for, lastly, we are told to "walk circumspectly" or, far better, "*strictly*."* Circumspection has the thought of

* The word *ακριβής* signifies exact, accurate, precise, strict. Thus Paul walked after the straitest or strictest sect of the Jewish religion. It stands as the very opposite of laxity, and describes that which is *punctiliously exact*.

a carefulness of consequences; but the thought in the obedient heart of Paul was an exact, uncompromising following out of the ways of the Lord. What carefulness and watchfulness is implied here, what thorough acquaintance with the will of God, what strictness in following it up! It is thus the hind walks securely in dangerous places, and treads with safety paths that no unclean animal with undivided hoof dare venture on. This last point in the heavenly walk calls for special attention in a day when all strictness in the things of God is called bigotry, and when any want of it in the things of this life is regarded as culpable neglect and inexcusable laxity. Alas! how man plays fast and loose with things as they refer to himself or to God; but God will not be mocked; and as we sow in the exactness of our obedience shall we gain in power here, and in eternal blessing hereafter. May we aim at strictness in what concerns our God, so that, like Daniel, our only fault may be that we will obey Him. We would connect this walking strictly with the whole passage regarding family life from chap. v. 15 to chap. vi. 9. Carelessness in home connections will mar all our relations with the Church and with the world, and bring a feebleness into our Christian life for which nothing can compensate.

Let us then ever keep in mind these divine delineations of what is taught us under the figure of hinds' feet, without which we shall never be able to walk in heavenly places in the ordinary path of our daily lives. Let us seek to be characterized by lowly, unworldly, and loving steps, steps of light, and steps as exact as the holiness of God would make them—steps from which pride, self-will, self-love, worldliness, and laxity have been eliminated. May it be our aim thus to walk among the holy things of our God, and then we shall be able to take

up those closing words of Habakkuk, so needed in these days: "Though the fig tree shall not blossom . . . yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon my high places."

In conclusion, let us remember that it is God who makes our feet like those of the hind, and not ourselves; that it is He who must lead us safely along that high pathway, and that He alone can keep us from falling. To Him, and not to us, be the glory and the honour. Amen.

H. G.

"AT EVENTIDE IT SHALL BE LIGHT."

See LUKE xxiv. 15.

"Jesus Himself"—there was none else to hear
How each to each spoke sadly His dear name ;
Poor doubts did mar their words, and yet He came,
"Jesus Himself:" one gentle word of blame,
"Oh, slow!" and then their slow hearts leapt to flame,
While His wise lips made all the mystery clear.

"Drew near." they thought to tread the way alone
Through the hot hours, while still from each to each
Passed the sad echo of that grievèd speech—
"We thought it had been He, so wise to teach,
So strong to heal—ah! gone beyond our reach ;"
But He "drew near" and comforted His own.

"And went with them :" yes, all their further way
His presence blessed them, and His teachings wise
Gave to each doubt divine and calm replies,
Till all the gracious love of risen eyes
Gleamed on them ; then, in rapture of surprise,
They knew the Lord. So joy closed up the day!

A. L. B.

THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE.

I COR. xiii.

IF the assent of the judgment carried with it the consent of the will, there is probably no part of the divine injunctions to the Christian which would obtain more ready obedience than this passage. So beautiful are the sentiments, and so appropriate to our present condition, that the mind at once assents to their propriety. Yet on looking around we have sorrowfully to own that they are almost entirely forgotten. The warning, the exhortation, and the instruction they contain too often pass out of sight as completely as if they had never been written. How great in consequence our loss is here, and how great it will be hereafter, none can estimate.

In the previous chapter the apostle had been giving a description of the gifts of the Spirit bestowed on the members of Christ, with the purpose for which they were bestowed—the common benefit of the whole body; each member having an assigned position, whether foot, hand, or eye, and being entrusted with the performance of its function, not towards the outside world, but towards its fellow-members in the body of Christ. Instructions as to conduct towards unbelievers, whether the old or the young, are given elsewhere; these chapters apply exclusively to those within the family of God. After noticing the nature, the great importance, and the munificence of these endowments, with the admonition to covet them earnestly, the apostle adds, I am about to show you something still better. Could anything be better? Yes; far more excellent. For unless there be a principle to regulate the use of them in accordance with and subservient to

the expressed design of the Giver, the exercise of them would be disastrous, not beneficial.

He then explains how he himself would be affected if devoid of the love which he presses upon our attention. Though speaking by inspiration more languages than any other person, vast as had been the utility of such endowments on the day of Pentecost, and though in addition he were gifted with angelic utterances, yet if he had not love he would be no better than a lifeless instrument of music!

And were he acquainted with all that the mind of the spiritual man most highly values, all the deep secrets of God, with power to utter them, all the rich treasures of divine knowledge; and in addition were he possessed of such faith as the Lord speaks of in Matt. xvii. 20, yet in the absence of love all these things would not raise him or profit him in the least. Yet these are the very things by which we all are captivated. He that possesses them in any measure, however feeble, becomes exalted in general estimation, is followed by admiring crowds, whether he is pursuing the more excellent way or not. Is it not apparent, therefore, how much this Scripture is obliterated from the general mind?

He next speaks of benevolence carried out to the extent of giving away the whole of his property. We have heard of such things being done through ostentation or from some other motive. But even if self-denial and self-abandonment were to go to the extremity of giving oneself to excruciating martyrdom, if these were not governed by this all-important motive of love, it would be of no benefit to the individual, though it might incidentally be productive of good to others. What a check is here furnished to the blindly following one's own impulse, or the guidance or advice of another. That which our Lord

desires is the action of each heart towards Himself. The profit here referred to must of course be expected in resurrection, life itself being brought to a close by the circumstances mentioned.

Then follows an enumeration of the characteristics of this love. Self-restraint is a marked feature throughout, a curbing of natural pride, anger, malevolence. The propensities to be counteracted are such as mar all cordiality. Discord reigns wherever they are indulged. Fraternal intercourse is impossible wherever they are allowed to operate. So great is the diversity of purpose, temper, knowledge, and education, that human infirmity finds it more convenient to separate into societies having some leading bond of congruity than to practise the self-control here advocated and enjoined. All parties thereby sustain incalculable loss here, and forasmuch as such a course is in open disregard of the declared will of our Master, His approving smile can scarcely be looked for hereafter.

Love, as is witnessed in the conduct of an affectionate mother towards her children, does not blazon forth their misconduct, perverseness, or ignorance. Her love covers it over; believes there are circumstances which extenuate, hopes for amendment; and even if this hope forsakes her she endures. But divine love surpasses all human love! Our Father does not needlessly mention to anyone the sins He knows we commit. His endurance of our waywardness passes all conception. Never has He spurned from His presence any one of His children, however naughty. Most remarkable instances of God's forbearance are found in the history of Israel. Not until the time of the prophet Amos does He make known that during the sojourn in the wilderness they had carried with them Moloch's tabernacle as well as His own; nor till it was

revealed to Ezekiel did He mention their rebellion while still in Egypt. For nine or ten centuries these monstrous acts had been kept secret, not told to anyone. And when at length, in consequence of their long-continued provocations, these facts were revealed, the disclosure was accompanied with renewed declarations of His unalterable affection towards them, with fresh promises, not of mercy only, but also of boundless favour and indulgence. The conduct of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was, and is, a perfect exemplification of this love. Not less perfect is that of His beloved Son Jesus Christ, in His affection to the saint, as well as towards those yet strangers and enemies.

The gifts of prophecy and speaking other languages, whether those exercised in days that are past or those yet future, all come to an end with the occasions for which they are granted. The gift of knowledge also (all three being among the gifts of the Spirit named in chap. xii. 8, 10), will be swallowed up in the abundance of the knowledge to be hereafter bestowed upon us. Our present knowledge, however great, the apostle adds, is but partial, likewise the power to prophecy; but in the perfect state the partial will disappear. This is illustrated by the difference between childhood and manhood. All these are temporary, pertaining to our temporal position. Love is permanent. Throughout eternity it never ceases.

Hereafter we shall see each other as we really are; shall know thoroughly, and be thoroughly well known by our brethren. No concealment will then be possible or in any way desired. Mutually transparent, the reasons for each act, and the circumstances conducing to it, will be fully apparent. Then there will be no need of concealment, no room for the belief, the hope, the endurance spoken of above. But now they remain, essentially and

imperatively demanded by our present faulty condition. The greatest of all is love. It includes, combines, directs all; never terminating, but ever expanding; for it is the atmosphere of heaven.

R. N.

ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE.

AMONGST children of God marriage is that relationship of life in which perhaps, above all others, grace and wisdom from God are needed that we may do His will, and not "the will of the flesh," both in the forming of the marriage tie and in the fulfilling of its holy and God-given claims.

So important a matter has marriage amongst Christians always been regarded, that from the apostles' days to the present time it has been the subject of pastoral care and godly instruction and exhortation by under-shepherds in God's Church. Paul's delicate and earnest words as to the formation of the marriage tie, in 1 Cor. vii., may well be read again and again by all who are in any danger of entering on it in carnal haste. The very gentleness with which he gives some of his words in that chapter as his *advice*, not enforcing them as *commands* from the Lord Jesus, only obtains for them the more access and weight in the hearts of all who are spiritually-minded. The largeness of heart with which he elsewhere says, "Marriage is honourable in all," and the space he gives in his epistles to his counsels to such as are married, show his value for the marriage tie as an element of life here below and a path of service to our common Lord; and all this pastoral care over the married harmonizes perfectly with his cautions and counsels as to the formation of the tie in the case of the still unmarried.

And who can wonder at all the labour of the apostle in this direction when it is evident that he saw in every earthly marriage a brief and feeble, but precious foreshadowing of the marriage of the Lamb, the glorious union-day of Christ and the Church? It is true that to Paul marriages of saints were important for their powerful influence, for evil or for good, on the life and service of saints here below; but they were to him additionally important as types and shadows of the glorious future, with which he would fain have the hearts of all believers to be constantly in love. Every comely, suitable, and godly marriage of a brother and sister in Christ was to him a pleasant and attractive picture, leading on the heart and thoughts of all who witnessed it—and still more of the married ones themselves—to the grand and joyful reality so soon to be accomplished when Christ shall come. All must deplore, therefore, the least marring of the picture by anything worldly-minded or uncomely.

The following suggestions are offered for prayerful consideration:

1. Let the child of God commit to his heavenly Father any question of marriage at all; and let it be clear that it is according to His will, lest Christian marriage be, as it often is in the world, merely a matter of personal inclination. We know that the Lord Jesus is typified by the Hebrew servant of Exodus xxi. 1-6. Of him we read, in verse 4: "If his master *have given* him a wife," and then if he plainly say, "I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go out free," his ear is to be bored through with an awl at the door of the house, and he is to serve for ever. That is, love to the master stands first; for the wife was the master's gift. When perfectly "buildd," Eve was God's great typical gift to the first Adam; and so also our Lord says in John xvii.: "Thine they were,

and thou gavest them me." "All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them."

2. The choice should not be according to the self-will of our own heart and eyes; but if we really honour God we shall seek to be assured that it is *His* choice for us. Samson's history is full of instruction on this point. Unrestrained by any thought of pleasing God, he "went down to Timnath and *saw* a woman of the Philistines" (Judges xiv.), and then sought his parents' help to obtain her as his wife. To seek their counsel would have been right, and had he done so it might have been better for him. When they remonstrated because she was a Philistine his only reply was, "She pleaseth me well," or (as in Hebrew) "She is right in my eyes;" and he who began with doing what was right in his own eyes, ended life deprived of his eyes, and a slave to the Philistines. Samson's case is a warning against yielding to the lust of the eye; and the believer has watchfully to guard against all associations that may lead, often very unconsciously, to entanglement of the affections with anyone who evidently would not be God's helpmeet for him.

3. Godly care as to association will tend to prevent lightness of choice, and that changeableness often witnessed in the world, but which is very far from the mind of God. The sanctity of betrothal in the Old Testament shows how solemnly He regards the mutual plighting of love, and how He would have us avoid any breach of those tender affections which He has implanted. Where it is apparent, however, that God's will has clearly not been followed, and that a mistake has been made, it would not be well to perpetuate it by marriage.

4. Let the choice be a *personal* one, and let no secondary motive intervene. Thus Christ loved the Church that He might enrich her. Spiritual and eternal interests should

be the mutual aim. There are many unequally-yoked marriages, even where both persons are truly converted, because a whole-hearted purpose of living to God in one has been quenched by a worldly mind in the other. In all things as equal a yoke as possible is desirable, but oneness of heart and mind according to Christ is essential to happiness and blessing.

5. It is scarcely necessary to add that the affections should be diligently won when once the heavenly-appointed choice has been made, but the claims of all other relationships should not be forgotten. Thus Isaac sought Rebecca through his father's servant Eliezer, who was the bearer of the proofs of his regard and tokens of his affection; and thus Christ, who loved the Church, gave *Himself* for it, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." God's time is needed for the fulfilment of the union, and care is required that no undue haste on the one hand, or postponement on the other, be made.

6. A home is needed. It is sweet to think of the heavenly Bridegroom having gone "to prepare a place." (John xiv. 2.) Referring again to Isaac, "his mother's tent" was prepared for the reception of his bride, whom he went out to meet as she came on her lonely desert way. So will the Son of God meet His bride in the air when He shall descend from heaven to take her to be for ever with Him. Whatever interferes with the home character mars the completeness of the typical beauty of marriage. For lack of a home of some kind a check of early love and mutual delight in each other may be experienced. To begin married life without means to provide a home (however humble), and even with the burden of debt, are mistakes likely to lead to much sorrow, and which need to be most carefully avoided.

7. Suitable publicity should be given to an intended marriage. All in family relationship whom it may concern ought to know of it; and with equal care fellow-saints in the assembly to which the parties belong should be apprised of it. That the marriage take place in the assembly—the church composed of living stones—may well be desired. Surely loss accrues to those who, from an undue desire for privacy, fail to secure an interest in the prayers of the godly, and to receive the “God bless them” of their fellow-believers. Let not shyness or pride hinder this. Even the law of the land demands a certain publicity. Again, what a striking exemplification have we of this in the marriage feast of the Lamb of God, when the voice of many thunders before the throne shall say, “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.”

8. Even on the happy occasion of marriage our position as strangers and pilgrims here is not to be lost sight of. Absence of the world’s customs, and quietness of dress, may help to tell that our thoughts are occupied with heavenly things, and that we seek higher joys than those of earth. The presence of Him who turned the water into wine at the feast of Cana will more than compensate for the lack of all things of outward show, and He will rightly estimate the desire to please Him well in such matters.

In conclusion, may the Holy Spirit, by the linking in marriage of children of God, raise our souls to ponder more on that “great mystery” of which the apostle speaks “concerning Christ and the Church;” may all who are united in this blessed earthly tie seek grace better to show forth the great heavenly truths represented by it, and may those who are unmarried prove the blessedness of serving the Lord “without distraction.”

THE BEGINNINGS OF GOSPEL HISTORY.

VI. THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE.

LUKE ii. 21-38.

ON the eighth day after His birth the visible token of the covenant was imposed upon Him who was its great Mediator; the seal of the Abrahamic promise was set in the flesh of Him who was the true Seed, to whom the promises were made. He who became "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. xv. 8); was not only "born of a woman," but was also "born *under the law*," and thus He *voluntarily* entered into an obligation which, of all the seed of Abraham, he alone fulfilled. He magnified and made honourable that law which He came not to destroy, but to fulfil; and having fulfilled it to its utmost requirement, He took it out of the way by bowing under its curse to redeem those who were under it, so that the blessing of Abraham, that is, the blessing of gratuitous justification, might flow forth without any hindrance, and that in addition thereto, and as a consequence thereof, "the promise of the Spirit" might be received through faith.

We see a contrast between the circumcision of John and that of Christ. The former was the occasion of a gathering of friends with gladness and rejoicing; the latter was marked by quietness and obscurity, the only unusual thing being the bestowal of a name that had been previously announced by the angel. (v. 21.) But let us observe that it is *the giving of that name* that is the main statement of the verse—that name of such deep meaning, so dear to every contrite heart, and, above all, so precious to Him who gave it; *first* given in such lowly circumstances,

and *again* bestowed in surpassing glory and exaltation (Phil. ii. 9); a name never stained by any failure on the part of Him who bore it amid scorn and opposition here, and now "a name which is above every name; that *in* the name of JESUS every knee should bow."

Thirty-three days after the circumcision, or forty days after the birth, was the time appointed for the mother to offer a sacrifice for her purification. (Lev. xii.) A birth to which no defilement attached might have precluded the necessity of purification; but in the absence of any contrary command Mary bows to the requirement of the law. Her very offering betokened her lowly condition, a pair of pigeons being the substitute permitted in the case of those who could not afford a lamb. But this was not the only business of that day; for every first-born male child had to be presented to the Lord and ransomed. After the destruction of the first-born of Egypt, God claimed the first-born of Israel as His own in a peculiar sense; and though He afterwards substituted the tribe of Levi for the first-born, yet the claim was always to be specially recognized by the act of presentation and the payment of a ransom. (Num. xviii. 15, 16.) But no ransom could be necessary in the case of One who came into the world with the word in His heart—"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God"—and whose devotion to that will was far beyond that of any Levitical substitute for the first-born of Israel. This presentation was a thing of common occurrence, and "when the parents brought in the child Jesus," priests and lookers-on saw nothing more than common, but *we* know that there had never been such an object of God's delight in His earthly courts before. One writer remarks: "Here is the Son presented to the Father within the holy place on earth, as He enters upon that life of service, suffering, and sacrifice, the glorious issue of

which was to be His entering, not by the blood of bulls and goats, but by His own blood, into the holy place not made with hands." The usual rites were gone through, and no indication was given that the Child now presented was more than an ordinary child; but He was not to depart unrecognised. As the *Son* was presented to the *Father*, the *Holy Ghost* was present to bear witness to Him whom he delights to glorify; and thus the first time He is in the courts of His Father's house, even though as a helpless babe, a twofold testimony is given to Him as the promised Messiah, His high dignity and destiny being revealed to two faithful souls.

One of these was Simeon, of whom we only know that he "was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him." (v. 25.) He was an Israelite indeed, one of the few *watchers* in days of general *slumber*; one of the few who were full of faith and hope when the many had sunk into superstition or infidelity. God has always had His faithful watchers, and always will have them till the Lord shall come the second time. Well may we seek to be of the number. Simeon's prayers and longings were rewarded, and he was honoured by a distinct revelation from "the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." (v. 26.) The words *see* and *seen* express a beautiful antithesis; and we may ask, When his eye was full of *Christ*, how much of *death* would he see? At the exact moment "he came by the Spirit into the temple." (v. 27.) The Spirit both *leads to Christ* and *reveals Him*. Do we sometimes ask, Am I led by the Spirit? We may answer the question by putting it in another form. Is Christ the desire and delight of my heart? Simeon needed no information but that which the Holy Spirit gave him. He looked upon that babe in Mary's arms, and

beheld what numbers never saw who witnessed His miracles in after days; he saw His glory, and spake of Him as God's salvation. "He took Him up in his arms, and blessed God." (v. 28.) Significant action! He embraces the Saviour, and his heart is filled with peace; he receives the gift of God and worships. In the first sentence of his expressive song the Greek words for *Lord* and *servant* beautifully correspond, the former (which does not occur often) expressing the sovereignty of God as the absolute Lord, Ruler, and Disposer of His servants, and, on the part of him who used it, an entire prostration of himself before His might and majesty; and the latter being used of a slave, who is by purchase the absolute property, and therefore entirely at the disposal, of his master. Literally rendered, his words are: "Now thou art releasing thy servant in peace, O Lord, according to thy word;" and their meaning is well expressed in the following quotation: "Simeon speaks as a slave who, through the night of long, weary years, has been standing on the watch-tower of expectation, and is at last set free by the rising of the sun."

Not the least striking part of Simeon's song is the prominence given to the Gentiles. In verse 10, the words "all people" refer strictly to Israel; here (v. 31) we have the plural, *all peoples*, corresponding with the *Gentiles* in the next clause. This is the first intimation in all the inspired utterances recorded in these chapters that the veil spread over the nations is to be withdrawn, and that Christ is to be known as "a light to lighten the Gentiles." But while, as those called out from among the Gentiles, we "glorify God for His mercy," let us never forget that even yet He who is our hope is to be the glory of God's people Israel; for "in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." (Isa. xlv. 25.)

Siméon saw the wonder depicted in the countenances of Joseph and Mary, and "blessed them." He "blessed God" as a *worshipper*, he blessed them as a *prophet*, but he did not in the latter sense bless *the child*; for "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." (Heb. vii. 7.) But ominous words follow his blessing. He sees a cloudy future, and intimates that, universal as is the aspect of this salvation, not all who hear will believe. His word is based upon Isa. viii. 14, 15, and may refer to *two* classes, or it may mean that some who fall will rise again, as did Saul of Tarsus and "the brethren of the Lord." (See John vii. 5; and Acts i. 14.) To see the fulfilment of the word, "a sign that shall be spoken against," we have only to read the gospels; and there too we learn how contact with the Lord Jesus reveals "the thoughts of many hearts." What was true during the Lord's earthly ministry is still true. As Christ is preached the heart is subdued so as to yield to God the obedience of faith, or its carnal "reasonings" are manifested, at least to Him who searches the heart and tries the reins. One personal word there is for Mary, a dim intimation of sorrows in store for her, well calculated to chasten present joy and to lead her to look up for needed grace. The treatment the Lord met with during the whole of His ministry must have been a sore grief to her; but above all, how keen must have been the piercings of that sword when she saw Him numbered with transgressors, and dying in the agonies of crucifixion. "Highly-favoured" ones are not exempt from sorrow here, but sorrow used rightly leads to a harvest of deeper joy.

Before the babe can be carried out of the temple court yet another testimony must be borne to Him. Anna, a prophetess, whose character, as briefly sketched for us, is a beautiful one, was standing near at the same time; and

she in turn gave thanks to God, "and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." (v. 38.) They had doubtless encouraged one another as they waited and watched, and now the glad tidings that "God had visited His people" filled their hearts with joy and thanksgiving. If they were but few, they were bound the closer together by the holy bond of the promise which they cherished, while their godly words, by which faith and hope were strengthened, were acceptable to Him who "hearkened and heard." (Mal. iii. 16.) Oh that we may know more of this spirit of godly simplicity, and this "exhorting one another," in days of growing formality and unbelief! "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." W. H. B.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Is there any difference between speaking God's truth and delivering God's message?

CERTAINLY there is. To get a message from God is what all who speak for God should aim at, whether addressing the saved or the unsaved. When a message is thus received, and then given forth, it comes, like Paul's words to the Thessalonians, not "in word only" (as is the case with much that is orthodox and eloquent), but "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." In 2 Cor. ii. 17 we learn that when Paul handled God's word, he did so, first, "of sincerity;" secondly, "as of God" (as received from Him); thirdly, as "in the very presence of God;" and, fourthly, as "in Christ;" that is, he realized his standing and ministry as in the anointed One, in whom all power is vested, and out of whose fulness he was ever drawing grace for grace. If there was more of God's message in what is spoken to the Church or to the world, there would be more of God's power; but God sends not His message by unfit messengers, and many, alas! go to minister who have received no message at all.

Did our blessed Lord die as Son of man or as Son of God?

ALL such distinctions divide the Person of Christ, and have to be avoided. "The Word," who "became flesh," the Christ of God, died. Had Christ died as Son of man only, there would have been no re-

demption ; for "man can by no means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Had He died as Son of God only, there would have been no substitutionary sacrifice ; for *man* must bear the punishment of human guilt. It was the God-man Christ Jesus who died on the cross ; hence the efficacy of that death. This unity of Person in the death of Christ was beautifully illustrated when the veil of the temple was rent ; for in that veil lay hidden the symbols of both the human and the divine, and death rent the undivided Person. On this hangs all the virtue of the atonement, which is no less divine than human, and no less human than divine. To some death has the idea of going out of existence. Such is not the Scriptural way of regarding it. Death is the opposite of life. Life implies, not existence merely, but joy, peace, and salvation. Death implies, not non-existence, but suffering, misery, and woe. Hence the believer in Christ never tastes death, albeit he dies, because Christ tasted death for every man, and faith gives eternal life. It is, however, not in accordance with Scripture language to say "the blood of God," though the passage, "the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood," comes very near it ; but in divine mysteries we are never safe in going beyond the phraseology of the word of God. In doing so we are certain to say too much or too little.

What is the meaning of "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" ? (Eph. vi. 15.)

THE context has reference to our character as soldiers, and hence having the feet shod seems a preparation for the fight, rather than for the proclamation of the gospel to the unsaved, to which it is often referred. Instead of "preparation" it would be better to read "preparedness," referring it to the subjective preparation of soul which the soldier of the cross needs to keep him in peace in the midst of the conflict with the powers of darkness. It is interesting here to remember our Lord's words in John xvi. 33, where having peace in Him is connected with tribulation in the world, and He adds, "Be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world." This is the good news of the gospel, that Christ has triumphed, and thus the gospel of peace becomes part of our equipment for the conflict. The peace of the gospel has to be written upon our hearts if we would tread with well-shod feet the arena of the battle, so as to stand against the wiles of the devil, and be able to take a straight path, whether rough or smooth ; for our Captain would have us march straight forward, turning neither to the right nor the left, nor seeking an easier path for ourselves than He Himself trod, who would ever lead us in the wake of His triumph.

THE THRONE, THE ALTAR, AND THE PRISON.

GOD'S children are now living in days when governments and throne-power are being called in question, and rudely assailed in new and unusual ways. This is true even in these monarchical and law-abiding British Isles; but we need not be surprised at such things, for they are amongst the divinely predicted features of the last days. "Dreamers," who "defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities," were foretold in the apostles' days; also others who would be "truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce" whilst professing the name of Christ, and "having a form of godliness." These solemn declarations we see only too plainly fulfilled in the social and political faction fights of the present day, and in the insubjection of the various parties, more or less, to the throne-power over them.

As God's children, we have to keep aloof from all this "strife of tongues" and this eating by men "everyone the flesh of another." The very sight and presence of it is painful to us, yet we may learn out of it solemn and profitable lessons. The more men despise governments and would set aside earthly thrones, the more are we reminded of that THRONE before which we gladly bow, and in the blessed stability of which we do so rejoice. For the sake of THAT throne, and at the bidding of Him who sits upon it (see Rom. xiii. 1-6), God's children are subject to earthly governments and monarchs, however failing and arbitrary they sometimes see them to be. This subjection has often cost them much, as David's honouring of king Saul, and not taking his life when he could have done so, cost him such lengthening of his afflictions from Saul's hand; but with our eyes up to a higher throne than those of earth we

get both present "grace to help in time of need," and also the sustaining promise, that we ourselves shall reign ere long on that throne with Christ.

To help us in this matter, let us consider the word "THRONE," as the apostle uses it in the epistle to the Hebrews. We find it in chapter i. 8—"But unto the Son He saith, Thy *throne*, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Again, in chapter iv. 16—"Let us therefore come boldly unto the *throne* of grace," &c.; and in chapter xii. 2—"Looking unto Jesus . . . who . . . is set down at the right hand of the *throne* of God." It does indeed occur again in Heb. viii. 1—"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the *throne* of the Majesty in the heavens;" but as this is but a gathering up by the apostle of what he had before said, we may omit it for our present purpose, and fix our attention on the three other places of its occurrence.

Before distinguishing between these three passages, let us first be quite clear that the *throne* and the throne-power here before us is not so much God's throne of Godhead, on which, and from which, God did, as Father, Son, and Spirit, first create all things, and then sustain them. But it is that throne of God's salvation-power for lost sinners and for a ruined creation, which He has rejoiced Himself to set up by means of the death of His Son, and on which He has placed Jesus at His side, raised from the dead. This view of God's throne and its power dates of necessity no further back than the wondrous cross and the mighty resurrection; not that God could not, and did not, put forth this kingly power over sin and Satan from the time that sin entered. He did, we know, for He saved our first parents; but the power by which He did it was not *visibly* and *gloriously set up* till Jesus had died.

It is, then, of this redemption-throne of God and of Christ that the whole epistle to the Hebrews speaks; but the three passages above quoted present it in three different aspects :

1. The words, "*Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,*" are addressed to the Lord Jesus, and tell us of the throne on which He sits as Heir, and from which God, even now, speaks by Him the message of the "GREAT SALVATION." "God . . . hath spoken to us," says the apostle, "by the Son;" *i.e.* His now enthroned Son. In Esther iv. 11 we read that when "Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom," if "man or woman" came into his presence without the "golden sceptre" being held out, death was the sure penalty; but the gracious sceptre of this *heavenly throne* has long been held out, and still is so, for sinners of all ranks and classes, Jew and Gentile, to draw near and touch by faith, and live and not die. But to such as neglect this "so great salvation," which is the first aspect of the throne, there is "no escape."

2. "Let us . . . come boldly to the *throne of grace.*" Here it is the throne of priestly grace and ministry for such as have already believed. On it Jesus sits as our true Aaron. The word of God that speaks from it "is quick [living] and powerful," and searches us who worship at it as to our actions, our motives, and even to "the thoughts and intents of the heart." At it "we confess our sins," adding to our fullest confessions still the cry, "Who can understand his errors?" But, blessed be God, "Jesus the Son of God" sits on it, and we are strengthened in our souls, and rejoiced to find it a *throne* of inexhaustible grace, which all our constantly discovered sinfulness cannot shake, nor can it even dim its glory. Oh, let us, then, come boldly to it! The second aspect of this blessed throne thus refers to our increasing knowledge of ourselves, and of our inward sinfulness and weaknesses.

3. In the passage, "Looking unto Jesus . . . who . . . endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the *throne of God*," we see the throne of *power* which has so gloriously delivered Jesus from all that "contradiction of sinners" with which they compassed Him about like stinging "bees" (Ps. cxviii. 12) all through His holy life, and yet more still at the cross to which they nailed Him. But the nailed One on the cross has been raised and seated by God at His own right hand upon the throne. This last mention of the throne in this epistle is to strengthen us all through the path of *outside* afflictions and trials which may come upon us for Christ's sake. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." (John xv. 18.) Strengthened by this aspect of the throne, we are "more than conquerors," come whatever may. With it in view we can "run with patience the race [or, the running fight] that is set before us," and, Stephen-like, can resist unto blood if needs be.

But we must never forget the costliness of the throne we are considering. It rests on the mighty *Sacrifice*. The once *slain Lamb* fills it, as does God also, who first gave Him unto death, and then quickened and raised Him up. God's *altar* of atoning sacrifice, and His *throne* of saving power, are thus seen to be inseparably connected, and with these there is also the *prison* of deserved and eternal doom for all who to the last rebel against that spotless yet gracious throne. To that place of woe our Lord Himself applied the illustration of an ordinary earthly prison when He said, "I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite." (Luke. xii. 59.)

Before God, as the moral Governor of men, must ever be these three objects: His altar, His throne, and His prison. In the two first He has boundless pleasure and delight, nor is He ashamed of the third; for none but

utter rebels are there, and they have only in their eternal punishment "the due reward" of their deeds. A different character belongs to each of these three great symbols of divine government; but they all agree. The *Altar* represents *payment* to divine law and justice *fully and finally made*; the *Throne* expresses *power in present exercise*, based on that perfect payment made; and the *Prison-house* does but show the same payment still *demande*d, because never adequately made, God's *provided* payment having been rejected. Therefore as God sits upon His throne of salvation for the lost, and points to Calvary's cross, on the one hand, as His altar, and to the torments of His eternal prison on the other, can He not ask the question He put to Israel by the mouth of Ezekiel—"Are not My ways equal? are not your ways unequal?"

The truth is, God shows not the least mercy to a single sinner except by the blood of His Son. Even in Old Testament time God's voice of love and power to His people was on the ground of sacrifice. Mount Sinai was, in a sense, God's *throne* amidst the Israel nation. On it "He loved the people," and "from His right hand went a fiery law for them;" but the voice from that mountain-throne could speak to them only because the Passover Lamb had been sacrificed. Again, the golden mercy-seat with its cherub on either side was, as it were, God's throne of love and authority for all the tents of Israel, but it could only remain among them in "the midst of their uncleanness," because of the altar of sacrifice outside the tabernacle. Solomon, too, knew that his ivory throne was God-given, and celebrated his accession to it with sacrifice so abundant that the usual altar was not large enough, and hallowing the whole court he typically pillared up his throne with the death of twenty thousand bullocks and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep! Thus universally

has God taught us that His throne of gracious command to man must have the altar of sacrifice for its foundation. "Justice and judgment are the establishment (see margin) of His throne." (Ps. lxxxix. 14.)

But how short do all these Old Testament teachings come of the present New Testament reality. What a vastly more glorious throne is built up now, and on what an infinitely richer altar it rests! Observe, too, that whereas in all these earthly thrones of our God the sacrifice on the altar is one thing, and the Sitter on the throne quite another, we now see Jesus on the heavenly throne, who was Himself also the Victim on the altar. "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; THEREFORE God, even thy God, hath anointed thee" (*i.e.* the *kingly* anointing) "with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (*i.e.* thy earthly fellow-kings).

Nowhere was Jesus more seen as the One who "loved righteousness and hated iniquity" than at Calvary's cross, where He gave Himself to purge our sins, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and on the ground of that cross God has anointed Him with the oil of an eternal joy.

What glory there is then to the divine character, and what salvation, and strength, and joy to us in this throne of God and of His Christ! An earthly throne and government which even *seeks* to do justice and show mercy is a gift from God to the nation which has it. But the best of them is fallible, and is as truly sin-stained as are its earthly occupants and supporters. Their very subjects see their faults, and seem to think themselves justified in refusing to bow to their authority.

But here we have a throne which saves its subjects from the power of Satan, the usurper, by its King having Himself willingly died to establish it and make it mightier than its foes. Its laws none need question. Its enact-

ments none may safely disobey. It has the power too of enforcing its punishments, which will bear the strictest scrutiny as to their justice and impartiality. Power to imprison and to punish, even with death, if needs be, is essential to all earthly thrones and governments. No kingdom would long *be* a kingdom that had not this power. Nor need an earthly monarchy be ashamed of its prisons any more than of its palaces, provided only there is an honest aim on its part that only criminals, proved to be such, shall be shut up in them, and that none who are such shall be left at large. But there is only one throne and kingdom of which it can be truly said that it leaves no rebel against it undiscovered, and that no prisoner, when once immured, ever escapes from its just sentence by any strength or by any subtlety. As the apostle says: "How shall we *escape* if we neglect so great salvation?"

Moreover, in God's punishment of rebels the very altar which should have been God's channel to them of mercy from the throne, becomes the ground of their condemnation. Christ's cross becomes the divine indictment against those who have refused salvation by it. This is solemnly shown in the visions of wrath in the book of Revelation. In chap. vi. 16 it is from "the wrath of the LAMB" (once slain *for* sinners) that the finally impenitent are imploring to be hidden, preferring that mountains and rocks should crush them rather than meet HIM. In Chap. viii. 5 it is "with *fire* of the *altar*" that the angel fills his censer, and casts it into the earth, and the trumpet woes of a Christ-rejecting Christendom follow; and lastly, in chap. xv. 7, seven angels are seen with "seven golden *vials* full of the wrath of God." The word *vials* means the *altar-bowls* used for the blood of the sacrifices. These are poured out into the earth—upon that latter-day, atheistic part of it, which will, by that time, have cast off altogether that

name of Jesus which it once professed, and which then will have become openly anti-Christian, and the fifth bowl is poured expressly "upon the seat" (or throne) "of the beast." Thus their sin finds them out. They once professed Jesus' name; they knew all about Calvary's cross and its solemn blood of atonement. That sacrifice would have supplied them with a precious altar-bowl of blood by which to be at peace with God, and to have a place for ever amongst the redeemed. But they cast it from them—even, at last, as to profession of His name. And now the same altar-bowl is seen pouring out upon them a corresponding measure of the wrath of God. How could it be otherwise? God must be jealous for His Son, and according to the greatness of the mercy *must be* the greatness of the wrath; executed, too, by that same One who died to supply the "great salvation." "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." (John v. 22, 23.)

And when these and all others of the finally ungodly shall have been raised again to receive their sentence from the great white Throne, the voice that will bid them depart into *everlasting* fire is the same that said to them in His days amongst us on earth, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" the same that cried on the cross, "It is finished," and that has ever since been saying by the gospel, "Look unto ME, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved."

Thus distinct, yet blended, before God are His altar, His throne, and His prison; all three of them showing forth His character, and proclaiming Him as "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders;" even as Moses and the children of Israel sang of old on the shore of the Red Sea, with Pharaoh and all his host drowned at their feet.

And do we not deeply need these objects before our view, that we also may more hallow His name, seek first His kingdom, and do His will on earth even as it is done in heaven, whether in activity or in endurance?

H. D.

“HAST THOU HERE ANY BESIDES?”

GENESIS xix. 12.

HAST thou any besides in the scene of death,
In the chains of sin, in the sulph'rous breath
Of the serpent's spell, near the lion's lair,
Where hidden with craft lies the fatal snare?

Hast thou any besides in the giddy crowd,
So soon to be robed in a fiery shroud—
Their songs to exchange for the scalding tears
Of a hopeless hell to eternal years?

Hast thou any besides, whom thy heart would reach?
Pursue them for Jesus, His love to teach,
With the yearnings of love, while the Lord doth wait,
Ere the end hath come—then too late! too late!

Hast thou any besides? are thy tears all spent,
Beseechingly urging on men to repent?
Renew them again in that tideless sea
Of pitying mercy on Calvary's tree.

Hast thou any besides? Time soon will be sped,
Thy day for His service for ever be fled,
Unused or abused or unredeemed,
Though brightly its moments with promise beamed.

Hast thou any besides? wouldst thou soar alone?
Not one to present before the throne?
Thy kinsmen, thy children, thy neighbours, *where?*
Wilt thou be in heaven, and they not there?

Hast thou any besides, whom the God of love
Would welcome beside thee in courts above,
As the heirs of life, through the ransom-blood,
For ever, for ever brought nigh to God?

THE BEGINNINGS OF GOSPEL HISTORY.

VII. THE VISIT OF THE MAGI AND ITS RESULTS.

MATT. ii.

THE statement of Luke, that when Joseph and Mary "had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth" (Luke ii. 39), *seems* hardly to leave room for the events related in Matt. ii. To explain this by saying that "Luke was not acquainted with Matthew's narrative, or the facts related therein," is to leave out of the reckoning the truth that each writer was guided by the Holy Spirit as to what he should and what he should not write. And one lesson we have to learn is, that these gospels are not so much a *biography* as a *revelation*, their object being not to satisfy our *curiosity*, but to inform our minds, and to lead our hearts to repose in and adore the glorious One whom they set forth. Luke's statement simply passes over the incidents of Matt. ii., and marks Nazareth as the abode of Joseph and Mary. As to the *order* of these events, it is evident that the departure of the family into Egypt was *immediately* after the visit of the wise men; there could not have been time for the visit to Jerusalem, and it is not reasonable to suppose that the holy child should have been exposed in the temple after Herod's wrath had been excited. After the presentation they seem to have returned to Bethlehem, where (not in the stable, but in a "house") they were visited by the wise men, and immediately after, in obedience to the divine command, they left for Egypt. Of the three events—the visit of the shepherds, and of the wise men, and the presentation—it has been beautifully said, "Each of these has its special wonder; in each a

supernatural attestation to the greatness of the event was given; and, woven together, they form the wreath of heavenly glory hung by the divine hand around the infancy of the Son of Mary."

While the report of the shepherds led many to wonder, and the prophetic words of Simeon and Anna revived and strengthened the faith and hope of the few in Jerusalem who were yearning for the Messiah, they had apparently no effect upon the priests or the mass of the people; so that when the Magi reached the metropolis, expecting to find universal joy at this glorious birth, their question took the startled city by surprise. It is often, alas! solemnly true that those *nearest* to Christ by privilege and opportunity know Him not, while those who are more *distant* seek and worship Him. We, too, who through grace know Him, have to be on our guard lest we mistake *privileges*, of which we do not fully avail ourselves, for *realised blessing*.

The prediction of Balaam links together the *star* and the *sceptre*: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Numb. xxiv. 17); and it is possible that the inspired writings, particularly those of Daniel, who wrote his prophecies in the East, may have been known to these wise men. But of this at least we may be sure, that He who appointed the Star interpreted its meaning, and gave by some revelation a sure basis for the faith of these men, which showed itself in so remarkable a manner. Great must have been the stir at Jerusalem when this company of foreigners (whether small or large we are not told) appeared in its streets enquiring, in no tone of uncertainty, for the new-born King of the Jews, that they might worship Him; and great must have been their surprise at the discovery of the fact that the dignitaries of the nation were ignorant of the birth of any such child. It was indeed enough to shake their faith

if it had not rested upon some sure foundation. "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." (v. 3.) The usurper trembled on his throne, and the people feared that the strange tidings would lead to fresh cruelties on the part of the hated Idumæan. What a low condition is implied in the fact that tidings of the fulfilment of their national hope filled the citizens of God's chosen city with fear!

The crafty tyrant thinks he will not be outdone; he summons the great council of the nation, and demands where the Christ should be born. The answer of the priests and scribes is ready; the words of Scripture are on their tongues; but indifference fills their hearts. They know where the Christ should be born, but they do not trouble to seek Him. They might have satisfied themselves that He indeed came out of the city of David; but they had no heart to do so, and then under God's retributive judgment they were left to stumble at His being (as they supposed) a Galilean. They could quote Scripture, but their quotation was a partial one. The prophet states that the "Governor that shall rule [or shepherd] God's people Israel," who comes forth from Bethlehem, is One "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah v. 2.) This last statement the leaders of Israel ignored; it was a truth they would not face, and hence all their controversies with the Lord as related in the gospel of John, and their final condemnation of Him as a blasphemer. Herod apparently raised no question concerning this prediction; but he added to his many terrible crimes the crowning one of deliberately setting himself "against Jehovah, and against His anointed One." (Ps. ii. 2.) With great subtilty was his plot conceived, with deep cunning was it carried out; but with never-failing foresight and wisdom was it frustrated. Herod

privily called the wise men, procured from them *exact information* as to what time the star appeared, and then bade them "Go and search accurately for the young child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also." (v. 8.) Again they set out on their errand, undeterred by the torpor of the priests and the scribes, and their faith unshaken by the indifference of the city they left behind them. And now "to the upright there ariseth light in the darkness;" for "lo, the star, which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was."

The notion that the star had guided them to Jerusalem has no countenance in the narrative, but rather the reverse. They expected to find the new-born King in the metropolis; God allowed them to go there, and thus gave a further testimony to the fulfilment of His word of promise, and then guided them by the star to the very spot where the young child was. And now the faith that had proved itself to be above all the discouragement it met with in the city rises above all the surroundings of the holy child; nothing deters these God-sent seekers from rendering their worship, and presenting their gifts to His anointed One. *First* their worship, *then* their gifts. God delights in the offerings of His people when they first yield Him the adoration of their hearts, and with a sense of His grace can say, "Of thine own have we given thee." And what gifts were there! Fit presents for a king, expressing in their richness the feelings of the givers. But let us remember that God accepts according to that we have; the most precious offering is the heart subdued by the cross of His Son, and if He *really* has *that* He has all else.

We do well to mark here the special *providence* of God. He knew all the need of that lowly couple and their precious

charge, and by strangers from a far country He supplied it, making provision for the foreseen journey to Egypt, and for their sojourn there.

The Magi have fulfilled their mission, the first-fruits of the Gentiles have yielded their homage to the Babe of Bethlehem, and are ready to return to their own country; and now we have the first intimation that a higher power is at work to frustrate the craft of the wily Herod. They are warned of God in a dream not to return to him, and Joseph is bidden by an angel to "arise and take the young child and His mother, and flee into Egypt," beyond his reach. (v. 12, 13.) He that kept this *true Israel* neither slumbered nor slept. Herod thought "he was mocked by the wise men;" he knew not that he was mocked by a Mightier than they: He that sat in the heavens laughed, Jehovah had him in derision. He might expend his fury upon twenty or thirty little boys in Bethlehem, and fill the place with lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, but the real object of his murderous rage was beyond his reach. His counsel was brought to nought, his devices were made of none effect; and, steeped in iniquity and blood, he was soon called hence to await the day when he shall bow to the sentence of Him whom in deceit he spoke of worshipping, and in rage sought to murder, and shall learn that, in spite of all the Herods in the world, "the counsel of Jehovah standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations." (Ps. xxxiii. 10, 11.)

But Egypt could not long be the abode of Him who was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and therefore, in obedience to another divine command, Joseph "arose and took the young child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel." (v. 21.) Thus was fulfilled in a higher and still more literal sense that word which was originally spoken of Israel as a nation, "Out of Egypt have I called

my Son." (Hosea xi. 1.) Fear prevented Joseph's going to Judæa, and by divine guidance he took up his abode at Nazareth, which led to the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning Christ that are summed up in the word, "He shall be called a Nazarene." (v. 23.) It is usually supposed this word refers to those prophecies that speak of the Christ as "despised and rejected of men," and, considering the repute in which Nazareth was held, this may be true, but perhaps not the *whole* truth. The word Nazareth is thought by Robinson and some other scholars to be derived from the Hebrew for *twig* or *branch*, and to have reference to the trees and shrubs for which the town was conspicuous; and they regard the word *Nazarene* as equivalent to the Hebrew word for branch (*Netzer*) in Isa. xi. 1. Then the general reference to the prophets would be explained by the fact that the same thought occurs in Jer. xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15; Zec. iii. 8; vi. 12, where we have a corresponding, though a different, Hebrew word. If this derivation of the term *Nazarene* be the true one, we may say that the word that fell upon the ears of the early disciples as a word of scorn, reminded them of the language of the prophets which told of the glory and dignity of "the Branch of righteousness" who should spring from the house of David, "bear the glory," and "sit and rule upon his throne." Concerning Nazareth itself, one who has visited it writes: "It is so completely shut in by the surrounding hills as to give it that air of complete isolation and seclusion which so entirely corresponds with the hidden character of the private life of Him who, for so many years, made it His abode."

"Those thrice ten years! their record who may tell,
Which Jesus spent, unnoticed or unseen,
Save by the eye of those who loved Him well,
And knew Him as the gentle Nazarene?"

W. H. B.

THE POOR WISE MAN.

ECCLES. ix. 13-18.

IN Ecclesiastes we have the experience of Solomon, to whom God gave *wisdom* (1 Kings iii.), also access to all that man can have "under the sun" as a source of joy; and the end of all his experience is "vanity and vexation of spirit;" for the cisterns of earth can never satisfy "the spirit, which returns to *God* who gave it."

In chapter i., exercising his wisdom and understanding, he finds "there is no new thing under the sun." He discerns that the study of history even by a wise man can never satisfy, "and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." In chapter ii., pleasure is vanity; abundance of wine, great works, music, and earthly greatness, to its fullest extent, end in vanity and vexation of spirit, and there is no *profit* "under the sun." (Compare with Mark viii. 36.) Even though he was the wisest of men, yet what happens to the fool must happen to him; and the loftiest monument "under the sun" would not perpetuate his fame *for ever*.

But in chapter ix. 13 to end, Solomon, who wrote of wisdom in Prov. viii., is led by the Holy Ghost to write figuratively of Christ, "the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. i. 24.) This wisdom is "*great*" in his eyes. (v. 13.)

In verse 14 we have the great king, Satan, the prince of the power of the air, besieging the city. There are a few men in the city, but what are they against the strong man? (Matt. xii. 29.) In verse 15, there is *found* in the city a "poor wise man," as the shepherds of old and the wise men found Him at Bethlehem.

Jesus was indeed a "poor wise man"—despised and rejected of men. He was rich, yet "became poor," and

therein showed His wisdom; for *only thus* could He deliver the city. The great king could only be vanquished by his own sword, even *death* (Heb. ii. 14, 15); and for *God's Son* to die, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" was for Him to become *poor indeed*. Yet *this* grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sakes became poor, is the grace that saves us; and we, through His poverty, are rich. (2 Cor. viii. 9.)

God also is rich through the same poverty of His Son; for however His heart of love went out towards us before His Son became poor, it was only after His death that He could be rich *in mercy* (Ephes ii. 4); and the exceeding riches of His grace (Ephes. ii. 7) could only be shown "in His kindness toward us *through Christ Jesus*."

Thus, as Abraham was found rich to the full, in Genesis xxiv., *after* the death of his son (chapter xxii. 16, 17), and his servant Eliezer could tell it out in his errand for Rebekah (chap. xxiv. 35), so our God is rich in grace through the death of His Son; and the Holy Ghost is sent to tell it all out in our journey to our home above.

In Eccles. ix. 15 we read further, that though this poor wise man [in Hebrew *ish*; see margin Gen. ii. 23] "delivered the city" by his wisdom, yet "man [in Hebrew *adam*] remembered not that same poor man."*

How thoroughly we discern here the same hand as in 1 Cor. ii. 14 and Rom. viii. 7, guiding the pen of Solomon as He did that of Paul. Does it matter to us whether

* *Ish* is man in his high degree, and hence Christ says, "I am a worm, and no man" (Hebrew, a *lo-ish*); *i.e.* a nobody. *Adam*, on the other hand, is man in his low estate, as made out of *adamah*; *i.e.* the ground. In accordance with this distinction, we read in Isaiah ii. 9: "The *mean man* [in Hebrew *adam*] boweth down, and the *great man* [in Hebrew *ish*] humbleth himself," &c.; and this distinction is maintained throughout in the Hebrew. Hence the moral greatness of the poor man is here placed in contrast with the moral lowness and meanness of those who despised him.—Ed.

God uses Solomon or Paul? Let scholars quarrel as they please; every child of God *knows* His voice.

Thus we see that though this "poor wise man" delivered the city, yet His name, the name of Jesus, is hated by the world. Every *adam* not born again remembers not His mighty work when He triumphed over the strong man and his hosts. (Col. ii. 15.) Hence the Lord's Supper, instead of being a feast of *remembrance*, becomes in the hands of unconverted *adams* a sacrament or a mass.

In verse 16 of our chapter we read: "Wisdom is better than strength;" and in 1 Cor. i. 25 the same Spirit saith, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

The proof of this we find in Phil. ii. 8; for the poor wise man "being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself" (*man's* way to power is by exalting himself, God's way is by humiliation), "and became obedient unto death, *even* the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that *in the name* of *Jesus* every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Hence wisdom is better than strength; for the humbled one is *Lord*.

The Pharisee in the temple glories in his strength; the publican humbles himself. The besieged, in 2 Sam. xx. 15, might have sought *by strength* to keep the city; but a wise woman delivered it by humbling herself *to let justice have its way*. (v. 22.) Even so has Jesus triumphed over Satan, by humbling Himself to be our substitute, letting justice have its way; so that now the darkness of Calvary is past for ever, and the true light of a Father's love shines on Him and all His own.

But further we read: "Nevertheless this poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard." (Eccles. x. 16.) Oh, what a picture of these last days! Salvation *by the blood of the Lamb is despised*, and, as a result, *His words are not heard*.

God's order ever is, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." These two can never be reversed; and so, when redemption through the *death* of the "poor wise man" is slighted, His word is undervalued; for if we value not His *work* we heed not His *word*.

Show us a man—it may be in the learned professor's chair or other high place—sitting in judgment on God's word, criticising or taking from its authority, instead of allowing God's word to judge *him* (John xii. 48), and you show us a man who, however good and learned he appears to be, yet in his heart has never tasted Calvary's love, or has forgotten that he was once purged from his old sins. (2 Peter i. 9.) He despises the "poor man's" wisdom, and will not hear His words.

Great is the danger of putting the WORD out of the *judgment-seat*. This is Christendom's sin. Therefore, let us beware of those who "by *good* words and *fair* speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." (Rom. xvi. 17, 18.)

In verse 17 we read: "The words of wise men are heard *in quiet* more than the cry of him that *ruleth among fools*." With a little quiet time at the feet of Jesus, the still small whisper of His love will be heard above the loud cry of those who say *in their heart*, "No God."

Finally, "wisdom is better than weapons of war" to the young and to the old (see 1 Peter v. 5, 6), therefore let the lowly mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. ii. 5-8); for "one sinner destroyeth much good." (Compare 2 Tim. iv. 14.)

DILIGENCE:

AS COMMENDED IN THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER.

THE diligence of the Son of God can surely never be pondered without wonder! It is therefore no matter of surprise that the apostle Peter, whose earnest spirit seemed to have peculiar fellowship with his Master in this feature of His character, should have brought the subject so prominently before us in this epistle. And all who would be workers in His vineyard may well ponder it; for we are told that "the soul of the diligent shall be made fat," and that "he that watereth shall be watered also himself." There are three passages in which "diligence" is referred to in Peter's second epistle.

The *first* is in chap. i. 5: "Beside this, giving all *diligence* add to your faith virtue," or courage, and to these he joins knowledge, temperance (*i.e.* self-control), patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and love. The expression, "beside this *add*," shows that on their part holy diligence was to bring in, through the working of the Spirit of God, all this goodly increase. The "like precious faith" they had received would then become a sphere of heavenly activity, *in* which all other graces would be gathered as the element in which they could thrive and grow. Thus do God's children manifest not only that God has given them "all things that pertain to life and godliness," but that they in faith have *laid hold* of God's gifts, and have therefore become "neither barren [*idle*] nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." We think too little of the activities of real faith—especially the inward activities it calls forth—and of the progress from faith to that courage which is necessary to obedience. Hence it is that so much faith lies dormant, being "*idle*,"

and becomes "unfruitful." The Lord had forewarned His disciples that faith would be lacking, and that love would wax cold, as the dispensation rolled on; and Peter is here led to warn the Church against a dead faith, inside which no other grace was cultured, and from which nothing came.

The *second* passage is in verse 10: "Give *diligence* to make your calling and election sure." If diligence is needed to make our faith fruitful, it is also needed if we would have our calling and our election to be to us a blissful certainty. This we fear is altogether overlooked by many. The making sure here meant is not the making sure in fact, but in our personal enjoyment. Calling and election are from God, and are immediately dependent on His foreknowledge and predestination (see Rom. viii. 28-30), of which we know nothing, and of which we only become conscious as the Spirit of God bears witness of them to our own souls.

We would press this point, as there are two extremes to be guarded against. One is faith without feeling, and the other is feeling without faith; or, to put it in another form, the work of Christ for us without the power of the Spirit in us.

In every promise in Scripture there is a condition on which its fulfilment rests. Christ died for all, that *whosoever believeth* might have life. Life hangs on faith, and faith on the inworking of the Spirit of God on the soul. They who believe are born of God by the Holy Spirit, and He witnesses to our spirits that we are the children of God. The measure of that witness within us depends upon the measure in which the Spirit is ungrieved. It is only God the Holy Ghost that can, moment by moment, make our calling and election sure to us, and hence the importance of the word "give diligence" in this connection. There are those who would rest satisfied in pointing

an anxious sinner or an anxious believer to a verse, as if the reception into the mind of the letter of the word could give life or fulfil the promise it contains. But it should be remembered that the written word is the channel through which the living Word, spoken by the Spirit, passes into the ear of the soul, and without that the letter cannot give life; for it falls helplessly on the outward ear like the voice from Sinai did on the ear of Israel. The one grand feature of the new covenant is, that under it the word is written by the finger of God upon the heart. This is a divine act. *Then*, and not till then, the soul learns, as taught of God, that its sins and iniquities are remembered no more. Nor is the gospel and its salvation the less free because it rests on the will of God and on the power of God, and not on the will of man or on his power. Nay, it is all the freer, since its freedom is found in the almightiness of God, and not in the feebleness of the creature; and it is all the more sure, inasmuch as God's desire for man's salvation is greater than man's own desire for it. Man's free will would but take him to hell; God's free will brings him home to God.

The *third* passage exhorting to diligence in this epistle is in chap. iii. 14: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things, be *diligent* that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." That to which the diligence here points is found chiefly in the words "in peace," in explanation of which we would recall that solemn expression in 1 John ii. 28, "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear [or be manifested], we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before [away from] Him at His coming." There is a blissful depth of meaning in being found of Him on that day *in peace*. It implies something of that same confidence and joy with which Paul anticipated the future,

when he said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (mark that word "*kept*;" it means that he had lived it, walked it): "henceforth there is laid up for me a [the] crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also who love His appearing." But no children of God who are idle and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ can *love* that advent. To *love* it belongs only to the diligent, even those who, like Paul, have fought, and finished, and kept. Hence it was not of the *mercy* of God that Paul spoke in this connection, but of His *righteousness*; for God is not "unrighteous to forget the work of faith and labour of love" of all His diligent saints. Alas! what loss to our souls do we, as children of God, incur, if we lose sight of righteousness in the matter of our salvation—both the righteousness of God in redeeming us, and the righteousness that is the result of being born of God, without which there is no entering into the kingdom.

May we then, by heavenly diligence, be found of Him in peace when He comes to reckon with us, that we may present the fruit of our life and toil as holy increase wherewith to fill His garner, and to enrich Him who was the mighty Sufferer and the incessant Toiler in the travail of His soul on the cross. Thus also shall we secure to ourselves the bliss of His approval, and His "Well done, good and faithful servant," which to all eternity will be the crown of righteousness placed by Him on the brow of His saints who on earth were diligent.

To sum up the three passages we have considered, we may say that Peter in them enjoins diligence—first, as to our FAITH, that it be not unfruitful; second, as to our responsive LOVE, that no cloud may come in to darken from us the certainty of the love that claimed us from eternity,

by which alone love in us can grow; and third, as to our HOPE, that nothing be allowed to dim our future, or to make the advent of Christ less welcome than it should be.

H. G.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

To whom does the apostle refer in the words, "even so in Christ shall all be made alive," in 1 Cor. xv. 22?

MANY difficulties and apparent obscurities in Scripture are removed the moment we look at the context. This chapter concerns only the resurrection of Christ and His people. The general resurrection is not alluded to, and consequently the words "shall all be made alive," can only refer to those who, redeemed by Christ, are in Christ, and to whom, as Paul says, "there is no condemnation." For them only will death be swallowed up in victory, and they only will "hear the voice of the Son of God" (John v. 25), or the *shout* of Christ, the *voice* of the archangel, and the *trump* of God at the coming of the Lord, described in 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

How is "the spiritual Rock that followed them," in 1 Cor. x. 4, to be understood?

THE "Rock," looked at spiritually, is God, who is often so called in Scripture. (See Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31, 37, and freq.) We are not given to understand that either a rock or water miraculously followed Israel, but the source of all their supplies—the Fountain of all—was always there, and that Rock and that Fountain was Christ. Hence, Israel continually drank of the spiritual Rock, *i.e.* the Rock that had a spiritual significance, though to them purely natural. Christ is the smitten Rock from whom the living waters, even the Holy Spirit, flowed out; and when the Rock has once been smitten, and the Spirit once poured out, as in Pentecost, it is only unbelief that smites again—a virtual denial of the "once for all" smiting of the Son of God, as if that had not been effectual. Hence the word ever after is, and must be, "speak to the Rock," and not "smite." The literal Israel drank of the literal water that God gave, and so the spiritual Israel drinks of the spiritual water, as Paul says in 1 Cor. xii. 13, "and (we) were all made to drink into one Spirit." In that verse we have both the *baptism* and the *drinking* alluded to, which takes us back to chapter x. 2-4, where the *meat*, the *drink*, and the *Rock* are all called "spiritual," as having a spiritual reference to us, and as being, to the Jew, types of spiritual realities.

THE BEGINNINGS OF GOSPEL HISTORY.

VIII. THE CHILD JESUS IN JERUSALEM.

LUKE ii. 41-52.

IF that which God has been pleased to reveal to us is for our profit, the silence and reserve He has maintained on many points is no less for our instruction. The silence of the gospels concerning the first thirty years of our Lord's earthly life is very striking, only one brief incident of that matchless life being recorded. The kind of knowledge man desires is not always that which God sees to be most for his profit. To know all *about* Christ is not necessarily to know *HIM*. It is in order to present *Him* to us, and not simply to furnish a narrative of facts concerning Him, that these gospels are given. His brethren had opportunities possessed by no others for observing and knowing the ways of the Lord during great part, at least, of His private life at Nazareth, and yet not even "did His brethren believe in Him." (John vii. 5.) But there were spectators of that quiet, simple life to whom it must have been a source of great delight. Above all, the eye of God was ever upon His Holy One, and His heart was ever gladdened by the constant display of His true wisdom (Prov. xxvii. 11) and perfect love. But He was also "seen of angels;" they for the first time looked upon and "delighted in a perfect life on earth. They saw God perfectly glorified where they had so constantly seen Him dishonoured. No event of that life, we may well believe, can ever fade from their memory; and if God, according to His deep counsels of infinite wisdom, is pleased to deepen *their* knowledge of Himself by means of His dealings with us (Eph. iii. 10), is there anything very im-

probable in the thought that in ages to come *our* knowledge and fellowship may be deepened by communications from them of what they witnessed of the life of the Son of God in this world ?

But however this may be, the profound silence of Scripture with respect to those many years only makes more precious to us the single incident placed on record. One writer has spoken of this scene in Jerusalem as a "solitary floweret out of the enclosed garden of the thirty years, plucked precisely when the swollen bud, at a distinctive crisis, bursts into flower." The age of twelve was a turning point in the life of a Jewish boy ; he was then called a "son of the law," and began to attend the religious festivals. At this age Jesus accompanied Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem. What a moment that must have been to Him when for the first time, apparently, He stood in His Father's courts, and with His heart full of Scripture, the deep meaning of which He already penetrated as none around Him did, He looked upon all things there and saw pictures of Himself ! Who shall tell what dark shadow of the cross the first sight of that *altar* cast over His young heart ! Who can picture how He may have exulted in the joy that was set before Him as for the first time He beheld Israel's High Priest in his *robes of glory and beauty* ! Of all this we are told nothing ; but the one thing recorded may at least show us that the language of His heart was, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." (Ps. xxvi. 8.)

The feast was over, and the time for returning had come, when, unknown to Joseph and Mary, "the child [or boy] Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem." When they discovered their loss, and their efforts to find Him among their friends proved fruitless, sorrow and anxiety filled their hearts. They must have remembered the design

against His life when He was an infant, and doubtless they reproached themselves for having lost sight of Him. After three days' weary search "they found Him in the temple"—not of course in the holy place, but in one of the temple buildings where the rabbis taught their pupils—"sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions." (v. 46.) This may have been His daily resort during the feast; here He may have been when Joseph and Mary left with the supposition that He was in the crowd, and finding Himself left alone, He continued to attend on the teaching of the rabbis. For He was there not as a *teacher*, but as a *learner*, though indeed He could say, "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation." (Ps. cxix. 99.) *He* read God's testimonies in the pure and simple light of the Spirit's teaching; *they* (like many of the present day) only saw them through the coloured glasses of "the traditions of the elders." If we think for a moment of His mode of answering questions in after days, as well as of the questions He asked, we shall not marvel that "all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." (v. 47.) Yet there was no assumption of the place of a teacher; for *that* His hour was not yet come, and "fruit in its season" was the un-failing characteristic of that perfect life: He never at one stage of His course anticipated the duties of another.

When Joseph and Mary found Him they were amazed, but only His mother addressed Him; her tone implies reproof, perhaps the first that had ever fallen upon His ears: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." (v. 48.) In the reply we have the first recorded words of Him who spake as never man spake: "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

If Mary's statement opens up to us the simplicity and naturalness of the home at Nazareth, the reply gives some indication of the depth and devotedness of the expanding mind of that spotless boy. If He called Joseph *father*, and honoured him as though he were indeed His parent, it was not in ignorance of His true origin that He did so; and the time had come for them to know this. The "my Father" of His question stands in marked contrast to "thy father" in the words that drew it forth. He clearly states that He knows and owns but *one* Father, and the words as plainly imply that, from His whole conduct, *they ought to have known* that wherever He was, or whatever He was doing, He *must* be about HIS business. There may have been a need for Joseph and Mary thus to be reminded of their peculiar relation to this Holy One, and to be made aware that He was fully conscious of it. The statement, "They understood not the saying which He spake to them," can scarcely mean that they did not understand of whom He spake as His Father, or the reality of the peculiar relationship He claimed. "But as we cannot suppose Mary to have herself told her child during the first twelve years the mystery of His birth, or that any one else had told Him of it, how surprised must she and Joseph have been when His reply showed that He knew all—knew whence He came, and for what!" So far as we know this was the first testimony from His own lips to that special relationship in which He stood to the Father as the Son of God, which we find so fully stated in after years, particularly in those discourses of the Lord recorded by the apostle John.

Alongside of this fallibility and ignorance of "His parents" how beautiful is the statement of verse 51! He who was so early conscious of His true dignity, and of the great work He was here to perform, "went down with

them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." Eighteen years longer did He abide under that humble roof, working evidently at Joseph's trade (for He was known in the village as the carpenter—see Mark vi. 3), until the hour was come for His manifestation to Israel. The record of those years is summed up in verse 52: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature." Wondrous statement! The Wisdom of God increased in wisdom! How *real* was His assumption of manhood with all its limitations and powers of development! Great indeed is this mystery; but as to its comprehension—

"Where reason fails with all her powers,
There faith prevails and love adores."

He also increased "in favour with God and man." It seems only natural that superior wisdom with no self-display, unsullied holiness with no looking down upon others, perfect gentleness with no timidity, kindness, courtesy, and all the graces that as a perfect man He displayed, should gain the favour of men, until His claims as the sent One of God aroused their enmity; but how could One who, before days were numbered, was daily God's delight (see Prov. viii. 30), the supreme object of His affection, *increase* in favour with *Him*? Was it not in the new relationship of *Son of man* and *servant* that the eye of God rested with delight upon Him, as He saw in *Him* a child in whose heart no folly was bound up, a youth in whom no evil thought ever found place, a man in whom every grace was perfect? And thus as His obedience grew, the Father's delight grew also. The Father marked His diligent meditation in those Scriptures which testified of Himself; heard His supplications incessantly laid before Him; marked His worship, the like to which had never ascended to His presence; watched that one perfect Flower unfolding itself in a dreary desert,

that Tree ever yielding fruit amid the barrenness around; beheld that unswerving obedience, in which no flaw could be found, that faith which never failed under the greatest pressure; and proved above all, or rather, perhaps, embracing all the rest, a deep abiding fellowship with Himself such as He had never found in any child of Adam.

How could God but discover therein a *new* delight—a fragrance such as creation had never yielded Him—a satisfaction which grew and deepened until, at that moment of the transition of the Lord from His private to His public life, He rent the very heavens to express its intensity in those audible words, “Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”? Thus God gave to the blessed Lord at His baptism a foretaste of that joy that would be His when, from no figurative burial, but from the very depths of death, He would summon Him to His right hand and to His bosom with the word, “Thou art MY SON, this day have I begotten thee.” W. H. B.

FROM “GERM THOUGHTS.”—A man may have all human knowledge, and yet not know the first letter in the divine alphabet.—War is very terrible when one’s own house or heart is the battle-field.—As fruits best evidence the unseen healthy root, so does holy conduct the regenerate heart.—That body will not complain of its fare which has Jesus for the food of its soul.—He whose head was pierced with thorns can feel for those who have a thorn in the flesh.—Words issuing from icy lips are not likely to melt frozen hearts.—God usually tests His instruments before He uses them.—Sin is the most galling slavery, and Christ’s service the sweetest liberty.—Hypercriticism tends not to spiritual edification; even as food, highly seasoned, is rather *pernicious than nutritious*.

THE HOLY ANOINTING.

EXOD. xxx. ; NUMB. viii.

IN Exodus xxx. 22-33, we find among the gracious provisions which God made for His chosen people, there was a "holy anointing oil." It was carefully guarded and set apart exclusively for its own specified use. It was to be employed for the sanctification of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture. And in verse 30 we read, "And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, to consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office."

We hardly need to be reminded that all old covenant anointings pointed distinctly and first of all to the Messiah, the Christ of God, the true *Anointed One*; and that in two lines, both meeting in Jesus; first, *as Priest*, typified by this anointing of Aaron; second, *as King*, typified by the anointing of David. (Ps. lxxxix. 20.) But the command in the passage before us is not merely to anoint Aaron, but "Aaron and his sons with him;" and this is done in virtue of the relationship of sons in which they stand to him already, antecedent to any anointing. In Lev. viii. we find the narrative of Moses' minute obedience to this command of Jehovah. Let us note the steps which led up to this anointing. The oil is not the first thing used, nor is it to be at once poured upon Aaron and his sons; there are certain previous ceremonies which seem to have their bearing upon the restriction contained in verse 32: "Upon *man's flesh* shall it not be poured." If they are to receive the unction, they must be brought beyond flesh and its energies; and therefore certain preparatory steps are in a typical manner to separate Aaron,

and in him his sons from their former fleshly standing, bringing them into altogether new relations.

The detailed order is as follows :

Aaron and his sons washed with water. (v. 6.)

Aaron robed and crowned. (vv. 7-9.)

The tabernacle and all its contents *anointed*. (vv. 10, 11.)

AARON ANOINTED. (v. 12.)

His sons robed. (v. 13.)

The bullock for the sin-offering for Aaron and his sons. (vv. 14-17.)

The ram for the burnt-offering for Aaron and his sons. (vv. 18-21.)

The ram of consecration, on the head of which they put their hands, thus identifying themselves with it. (v. 22)

The blood of consecration *first* applied to Aaron. (v. 23.)

The blood of consecration *then* applied to his sons. (v. 24.)

Aaron's hands and his sons' filled for service ; and then the wave-offering before Jehovah, and the *incensing* for a sweet savour, or a savour of rest. (v. 27.)

At last the anointing oil and the blood are sprinkled upon Aaron and upon his garments, and *upon his sons* and *upon their garments*, sanctifying Aaron and his garments, and his sons and their garments. (v. 30.)

From verse 31 we find them standing typically on *resurrection ground* by virtue of the sacrifice. They feed together on the flesh of the sacrifices, and on the bread of consecrations, and they abide together during the whole seven days at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. Note throughout the blessed participation of the sons with Aaron ; they have nothing apart from him. All this was in view of the whole congregation (who by God's command were gathered as witnesses of it—v. 3), but in solemn separation from them. Each step as it was

taken, and especially the blood of the sacrifice, marked out Aaron and his sons as distinct and separate, and that separation unto God they were responsible for keeping—“*that ye die not.*”

The oil, be it observed, is poured upon Aaron's head alone, to sanctify him; in his anointing his sons are reckoned as anointed. The oil could only come upon his sons along with the blood, and therefore only after the fulness of the threefold sacrifice had been accomplished. The oil speaks to us of the Holy Spirit. John (1 Epistle ii. 20) alludes to the meaning of this oil when he says, “Ye have an *unction* from the Holy One, and know all things.” But the same truth is seen in John's epistle as in the priestly consecration in Leviticus viii.; namely, that nothing can be received apart from our High Priest; everything is enjoyed in virtue of union with Him, and by means of the blood of the sacrifice. John wrote his epistle to regenerate and believing persons, and thus the great ruling principle of Exod. xxx. remains true—“Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured.” If we, who by nature are flesh, are ever to receive it, there must in our case also be a preparation which shall fit us for it. As we consider these conditions, we understand why such a passage as John xx. 22 could only be spoken to Christ's own, and even to them only after His death and resurrection. The sacrifice had been offered, the whole of that typified in Lev. viii. 14–26 had been accomplished, and now in some measure the separating, sanctifying power of the oil along with the blood could be applied. Precious to those disciples must have been the Spirit thus “*breathed upon*” them, yet the fulness of that which was typified in Lev. viii. 27–29 had still to be accomplished, as recorded in Acts ii., when “the day of Pentecost was fully come.” All this, enjoyed in virtue of our union with Christ, brings out

the truth of Eph. ii., that we were once dead, but are now "quickened together," "raised together," "seated together" in Him; or, according to Rom. vi. 5, "planted together in the likeness of His death," that we might be also "in the likeness of His resurrection."

Thus in Him we stand, beyond death and judgment, on resurrection ground; and nothing can ever part us from Him. He, our Great High Priest, has all fulness of the Spirit for us, and blessed with this treasury of oil, with joy we hear Him say (John xvii. 18), "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world;" and again (John xx. 21), "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." He sends us as His witnesses, and for a set purpose, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John xvii. 21.)

If this be rightly understood, it will clear up God's way of working by His Spirit in the earth. The unction is poured out on those who, born of the Spirit, are no longer in the flesh. In Acts ii. it is upon the band of the *disciples* gathered with one accord in one place that the Spirit comes down. In Acts viii. 17, it was those that had "believed" in Samaria who "received the Holy Ghost." In Acts ix. 17, Christ is first revealed to Saul, and then he hears the words: "Receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." In Acts x. it is on them which heard the word that the Holy Spirit is poured out, to the astonishment of those of the circumcision; all which agrees with our Lord's word—"The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." (John xiv. 17.) Yet it is a matter with which the world has much concern; for in each instance of the anointing recorded, and of its blessed result upon His saved ones, we find blessings also coming upon the world of the unsaved. The result of the anointing on the

day of Pentecost was Peter's testimony, and the addition of about three thousand souls. The result of the *filling up* in answer to prayer (Acts iv. 31) was, that "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord"—power not their own, not of flesh, but that promised them in Acts i. 8.

Does it not, then, become a solemn question for us, whether the lack of the power in gospel testimony, so complained of in these days, is not largely caused by our trusting to the flesh, instead of relying on the power of the Spirit, and because we are so little troubled that God's purpose as to the unity of the *one body* is so little manifested before the world? But it may be asked, Is there not a distinct promise that God will pour out upon all flesh of His Spirit? (Joel ii. 28, *ff.*) Certainly there is; nevertheless God's principle can never be set aside—"Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured." Israel, God's own nation, to whom this promise is given, must undergo a preparation analogous to that which we have sought to trace in Lev. viii., and in our own experience. In the context of this Joel passage we find, *first*, the declaration that "they shall know that the Lord Himself is in their midst;" and then it says, "It shall come to pass *afterward* that I will pour out my Spirit;" *i.e.* after they have come to know Him, and to receive Him. The opening words of Joel iii. fix the time for the ultimate fulfilment of a promise of which Acts ii. 16-21 was but an earnest and a pledge.

Most certainly our God can never fail of any of His promises; rather will He, in the performing of them, surpass all our expectations. But as certainly can He never fail of those holy principles which He hath laid down in His word, principles which are as eternal and as unchangeable as Himself.

J. G. H.

CLEAR SIGHT.

“Then shalt thou see clearly.”—MATT. vii. 5.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, in the gospel by Matthew, thus instructs His disciples: “With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” (Chap. vii.) This is immediately followed by words which should be pondered by all who are believers in Christ. “Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”

It is well with the children of God, if heart and eye be directed to Christ. “Looking unto Jesus” is a good word of Paul the apostle; and “Behold the Lamb of God” were earlier words of John the Baptist.

The eye that looks unto Jesus, the heart that is taken up with Christ, sees other things in their right light. If you are “*beholding*” a mote in your brother’s eye, hearken to the reproving word of the Lord—“Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not” (in Luke vi. “perceivest not”) “the beam that is in thine own eye?” Our blessed Master would have us learn of Him how to judge our brother’s fault after a manner that is worthy of our high and heavenly calling. If thy brother hath trespassed against thee, trespass not thou against him by thy *manner* of handling the matter. “He that handleth a matter *wisely* shall find good.” (Prov. xvi. 20.)

By “looking unto Jesus,” and considering His ways of grace and truth, of lowliness and meekness, of long-suffering and forbearance, we shall be careful in dealing with any mote in the eye of our brother, to prevent, as much as in us lies, the breach of the bond of peace, and by the

help of our Lord we shall be our brother's helper, using diligent endeavour to "cast out the mote" out of our brother's eye according to His word.

On the contrary, if the eye be not directed to Him, if it be *beholding* the mote which is in the brother's eye, our common adversary blinds us, and we do not *perceive*, much less consider, the beam which is in our own eye; and the Lord measures out to us in the severity of His love: "Thou hypocrite"—not the hypocrisy of the Pharisee is here meant, but the hypocrisy of one who, because of the evil manner of finding fault with his brother, is of the two the more faulty; for the *beam* is more blinding than the *mote*—"Thou hypocrite; first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou *see clearly* to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

Observe, this subject in the gospel by Luke (vi. 39, 40) is immediately connected with, "Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?" Can he that is blinded by the beam lead him that is blind by the mote? The cross of Christ in the heart is needed to prevent the beam in the eye.

Nicodemus came to Jesus in the darkness of the night, and for this the Lord indirectly reproves him before he leaves His presence. In speaking of the awful doctrine of condemnation, He uses the word "light" in contrast with "darkness" no less than five times (John iii. 19-21); but before He does this, He instructs Nicodemus that God sent not His Son to condemn, but to save—to condemn sin, to save the sinner. In connection with the doctrine of condemnation is the Lord's gentle, indirect reproof to "the man of the Pharisees, who came to Jesus by night." He says, "*Light* is come into the world, and men loved *darkness* rather than *light*, because their deeds were evil. Every one that doeth evil hateth the *light*, neither cometh to the

light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd ; but he that doeth truth cometh to the *light*, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God."

Nicodemus is both encouraged and reprov'd ; he did come to Him who was the Light, although he came in the darkness of the night. We also should approve and encourage, as far as in truth we may, but in all faithful love we should condemn sin in order to help our failing brother. It is one thing to suffer sin on a brother, to whom we ought to be as faithful as we are gracious, and another thing to perform the part of a severe judge, and so call upon our Lord to say to us, "Thou hypocrite." We should deal with a trespassing brother after a Christlike manner, endeavouring to "gain" him, remembering the word of our Lord : "The Son of man is come to save that which was *lost*." "If he hear thee, thou hast *gained* thy brother."

However much may be said on this subject, unless we bear in mind that He who came to save that which was lost was the Saviour by His own death, and unless we wait on God for the teaching of His Holy Spirit, and so have our hearts softened by the remembrance of Him who died on the cross for us, we shall still, instead of "looking unto Jesus," and beholding the Lamb of God, behold the mote in a brother's eye, and not perceive the beam with which the adversary in his wiles has blinded us.

We should remember that by nature there is that which is beyond mote or beam in our eye. We were so "shapen in iniquity" (Ps. li.) as to be at utter enmity against God, and blind to His love and wisdom—born blind. There are those who, although truly children of God, sometimes act towards their brethren who trespass against them, as if forgetful of the death of the cross ; forgetful that "*while we were yet enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son ;*" forgetful also that the same Lord who made

atonement for our sins upon the cross is the example for us to follow.

It may be profitable for us to turn to God's retribution in the case of the Ephraimites, in the days of the judges, when they came first to chide with Gideon, thinking he had done them wrong, and afterward threatened to burn the house of Jephthah upon him with fire.

Gideon, by gentle words, quieted their anger. (Judges viii. 2, 3.) "With the lowly is wisdom." Jephthah handled not the matter so wisely, nor after so lowly a manner, but "gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim," and killed many thousands of that tribe. (Judges xii. 1-6.) Thus the Ephraimites were punished for their trespass. Had they learned their lesson from the "soft answer of Gideon," which "turned away" their wrath, they would not have "stirred up the anger" of Jephthah by their "grievous words." "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." We may learn, from the error of the Ephraimites, to value the proverb: "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water; therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with."

Under the law of Moses, whatsoever an unclean person touched, that thing, by contact, became unclean; and whosoever touched the unclean thing himself became unclean; but we are under law to Christ, and if we come into contact with one who is un-Christlike, let us beware lest we put ourselves under Moses. Being under Christ, let us be Christlike; let us "recompense to no man evil for evil." If it be possible as much as in us lies, let us live peaceably with all men. If we have a due remembrance of the mercies of God to usward, and do not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, we shall be able to bear with one who may think too highly of

himself, and who by word and deed may make nothing of us.

The Spirit of God by Paul makes large demands upon grace, which is always largely bestowed upon those who, living in the Spirit, do walk in the Spirit. He who said, "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people," gives us this instruction by the apostle—"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Abounding grace is indeed needed for obedience to this exhortation; but God, the Giver of grace, supplies grace to the soul that desires it. "My grace is sufficient for thee;" and again, "Our sufficiency is of God."

The love which comes from God is ready when called upon, not only to be long-suffering, but to be kind while *suffering long*. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, hopeth all things, endureth all things, never faileth."

When David was falsely accused of pride by his brother Eliab—"I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart"—and when he was made nothing of—"With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?"—his wisdom and grace are seen by his answer, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" He is not overcome of evil. He hides himself in God's pavilion, and is hid from the strife of tongues. He has in his heart a business for God, and for all Israel. He has been taught by God to overcome the evil that was in himself; the evil therefore that came forth from the mouth of Eliab did not turn him aside from the great business he had in hand, which was to glorify God, and do good to the people of Israel, over whom as king he had been privately anointed by the prophet Samuel. There is a principle in David's answer worthy of our remembrance—"What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" It is God who gives power to the "soft tongue" to "break the bone."

Let us hearken to God through the words of the apostle Peter (1st epistle): "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing." "He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil . . . eschew evil and do good, let him seek peace, and pursue it." (Ps. xxxiv.) "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "To him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward." "Frowardness is in the heart of the man that soweth discord."

Gideon, Jephthah, the Ephraimites, David, all reaped according to their sowing; and we all, at this moment, are reaping according to that which we formerly sowed, and so will it be in the future. May God give us grace to turn our present circumstances to account.

We do well to remember the words of the apostle John in his first epistle—"And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall be manifested, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

MNASON.

FRAGMENTS.—Little good comes by disputing; pride is generally at the bottom of it, and not love of truth. Let fall a word in season, and wait in patience till the rain drops upon it from heaven.—If an injury is done me, should I do myself a much greater by resenting it? Let others say and do what they will, I must love. The obloquy or ill-usage of others is my opportunity for self-inspection. Not one of the properties of love set down in 1 Cor. xiii. must be wanting.—Never rebuke any man without praying for him.—Say all the good you can of all; speaking ill of others at all, unless it be to prevent injury to the truth or to my neighbour, proceeds from pride, and has no other tendency but to increase it.

THE INSPIRED WORD.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 16, 17.

IN these days, when some parts of the word of God are being called in question by learned men, there is no Scripture we need to keep more in memory than 2 Tim. iii. 16—“*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*”*

In this passage God clearly states that all “the lively oracles” (Acts vii. 38), the whole of the “*oracles of God*” (Rom. iii. 2) committed to the Jews, *and by them transmitted to us*, are GOD-BREATHED; that is, just as in conversation we breathe out our words, so God breathed out every word from Genesis to Malachi, which holy men of old wrote down, *word for word*, at His dictation. Indeed, so much were the prophets of old simply the medium, or pen, by which God conveyed by words *His thoughts*, that they sat down diligently to study their own writings, and reverently sought to understand the thoughts of Jehovah, who spake *by them*. (1 Peter i. 10–12.)

And here we would remark, that there can be no certainty as to God’s mind if 2 Tim. iii. 16 is not true. Nay, no thought of God has ever reached us unless the words which convey the thoughts are correct to every jot and tittle; that is to say, we can only apprehend God’s mind through the medium of *words*, just as the Lord Jesus, “the Word made flesh,” has fully revealed Him.

The Scriptures of the New Testament, from Matthew to Revelation, are on an equality in this respect with the Old

* This is the plain meaning of the passage, although the Revised Version only puts it thus in the margin, its text being, “Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching,” &c. The Revisers apparently wished to distinguish between the scriptures of the Bible and other writings, but in the fifty-one occurrences of the word “Scripture” in the New Testament the word of God is *alone* referred to.

Testament. See 2 Peter iii. 16, where Paul's *writings* are put on a level with "the *other* Scriptures." See also 2 Peter i. 15, 16, and iii. 1, 2, and the closing testimony in Rev. xxii. 18, 19, that every word of God is pure. So that to wrest Scripture, or put a meaning on God's words which they do not warrant, is to do it to our own destruction, so *fully* are they "God-breathed."

This is the bold front with which every redeemed soul ought to face the adversary, whether he come in the guise of the atheist, who says *in his heart* "No God," or in the plausible ways of the man who plumes himself on learning which, however valuable in itself, is worthless unless used in entire subjection to the Master and His word. Satan knows full well the tried metal of which the word of God is made (Ps. xix. 7; Prov. xxx. 5, margin; compare Ps. cxix. 98-104 and John iv. 34), and has often felt its edge (Rev. xii. 11); hence his present aim is to blunt it, and so leave us with a blunted sword, instead of the two-edged one we are exhorted to take up. (Eph. vi. 17; Heb. iv. 11-13.)

Satan is too cunning to take away the whole Book, and say, "that is not God's word;" but he is endeavouring to put in the thin end of the wedge by leading foolish men to sit in judgment on the Book, with words similar to those he uttered of old, "Yea, *hath* God said?" to unsettle more especially *young* believers.

Now 2 Timothy iii. 16, 17 takes our eyes off Moses, Isaiah, &c., and fixes them on *Scripture*; that is, on the words they wrote under God's teaching. Let us not, then, trust implicitly to the learned, or ask them to satisfy us by what they term "Scriptural exegesis," as to whether this is really God's word. Surely a babe knows his father's voice, and our blessed Lord says, "My sheep hear *my* voice"—while, on the other hand, God hath hid these

things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto those who will, like babes, *unquestioningly* receive them. (Matt. xi. 25; John vii. 17.)

Learned men may tell us that such and such portions are the words of this or that man, whose *style* betrays the age in which he wrote, as if the living God could not write in the style of any age! Or they may tell us that because certain passages have Elohim (Gen. i.), and other passages Jehovah (Gen. ii.), the one belongs to an "Elohistic," the other to a "Jehovistic" period, as if He who alone knows Himself did not know how to name Himself, and as if the change had not a design at once perceived by the enlightened worshipper.*

In the books of Ezra and Daniel we have certain portions in Hebrew, and the rest in Chaldee: and in Jeremiah *all* the book is in Hebrew for the *Jew*, and one verse, chap. x. 11, in Chaldee for the Gentile. Critics would say, "A later pen." But ought we not rather to lose sight of the writers, and, fixing our gaze on God (who took up Ezra, Daniel, and Jeremiah as His pen), exclaim, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God"?

Let there be no flinching from this; let us say, as Moses said on another occasion, "There shall not a hoof be left behind." We claim all the Word as spoken by Himself, and this *one* verse, 2 Tim. iii. 16, is enough to convince us; for *one word* from God is surely better than all the words of the learned. This is imperative on every child of God in these days; for the moment we get occupied with the *men who wrote*, instead of *the One who spoke*, we are on a sea whose waves are beating us in the direction of *doubt*.

Let us turn a deaf ear also to the question of *how* inspiration was effected, or rather as to how reason,

* ELOHIM points to the God of creation, and JEHOVAH to the God of covenant mercy.

intellect, and affection in the writers affected their words. All such inquiries simply end in damage to the enquirer, and the only weapon to use is the truth that *all* of that which these men wrote was "God-breathed;" He inspired every word; they spake as the Spirit gave them utterance, as Peter did in Acts ii.

For us to question God's ability thus to act, would be like a savage who should refuse to receive a telegraph message that was sent him by his own father from England, because he could not understand how it came so quickly, although he recognised in the words of the message his father's mind.

If the intellect and learning of man is employed simply to examine the many ancient manuscripts, so as to arrive at the exact original words God spake, we feel at once that reason is in its right place. But these teachers of the school of "modern thought" go much further than this; they ascend the judgment-seat, and presume, by intellectual processes, to tell us what is and what is not God's word. Nothing can be more presumptuous, and such doings show that man, though but a puny worm, must have forgotten that utterance of the Son of God: "The word that *I have spoken*, the *same* shall judge him at the last day." (John xii. 48.)

To go over the flimsy array of *insinuated* errors would be an endless task. The book of Deuteronomy was used by our blessed Lord to furnish Him with weapons wherewith to defeat Satan (see Luke iv. 1-13); it is directly quoted by Paul many times, and by others of the apostles; and to hear this book, in some of its portions, called in question, ought to arouse us to see the brink of the precipice to which Satan is leading professing Christendom.

Let us then turn away from all such critics, and discern our Father's voice in every jot and tittle of the Book.

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We cannot afford to part with one iota of the legacy ; we need the sword of the Spirit bright and sharp, and at no time do we feel its value more than in the hour of sorrow, when one word from Himself is sweet indeed. T. C.

THE LIGHT OF HIS COUNTENANCE.

I CRAVE that my Saviour's glory
 May shine upon my brow,
 And my countenance tell the story
 Of heavenly fellowship now.
 Yes, bathed in that radiant sunlight,
 The shadows of earth shall flee ;
 The meridian sun is twilight
 When His brightness beams on me.

The glory of earth-born gladness
 So soon turns sickly pale ;
 Its songs are the mockings of sadness,
 Soon drowned in an endless wail.
 The light of Thy countenance, Master,
 Is joy above choicest wine,
 And maketh the hours fly faster
 To perfect my bliss with Thine.

I want the unbroken fulness,
 The brimming of heart below,
 That echoes my Saviour's nearness
 To shout us from scenes of woe.
 Thou knowest the language of faith, Lord,
 Thou hearest hope's ceaseless cries
 (Blest fruit of Thy promise—Thy love-word),
 That reach Thee above the skies.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus, come quickly,
 Thy triumph at once complete ;
 In the robings of nuptial glory
 Soon gather us round Thy feet.
 Our hearts say "Amen" to Thy promise,
 And wait Thy responsive call
 Of welcome to glory in this wise,
 To crown Thee as Lord of all.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

What is the instruction contained in Rom. xiv. 22 as to "faith"?

IN matters of faith we must not be influenced by the faith of another. Faith for doctrine or faith for action must rest on God; hence the command, "Have it to thyself before God." Of conscience God only is Lord, and within that sacred domain neither age nor party can claim admittance; and when man's authority is allowed or enforced, directly or indirectly, the control of God over the individual is to that extent set aside. What a solemn word follows, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin!" And no action or course of action is of faith that we have not learnt from God, and which is not pursued in obedience to God. If the truth of this Scripture were more remembered, there would be less of that second-hand Christianity which hangs on the wisdom of man. Without the will and word of God there can be no true faith, whatever the claim to it may be.

In what sense is "converted" used of Peter in Luke xxii. 32?

AN explanation of the word "be converted" will make the passage plain. The word (*επιστρέφω*) is used transitively to *turn* another, as in Luke i. 16, 17; or to *convert*, as in James v. 19, 20; and intransitively to turn oneself to some object, as to the Lord or to God (Acts ix. 35; xi. 21; xiv. 15; xv. 19; xxvi. 18, 20; 2 Cor. iii. 16; 1 Thess. i. 9; 1 Peter ii. 25); and in the following passages without stating the object: Matt. xiii. 15; Mark iv. 12; Luke xxii. 32; Acts. xxviii. 27. The word occurs also in 2 Peter ii. 21, 22, which strikingly elucidates the passage before us. There one who apostatizes from Christ, as Judas did, is said to *turn* from (or be converted from) the holy commandment, and is like a dog that *turns* to his own vomit again; *i.e.* is converted back to it. Peter is here looked at by our Lord as one who for the time had turned back to self and self-confidence, and therefore needed to be turned again. So every fall needs a conversion, and every turning away needs a turning back.

In what sense is Honour to Parents in Eph. vi. 2 described as "the first commandment with promise"?

IT is the first and the only one in the Decalogue that has a promise attached to it; for though the divine attribute of showing mercy to them that love and obey is expressed in connection with the second commandment, it is not given as a promise specifically attached to it. The fifth commandment is the first that lays hold on the conscience

of the child, from which it has to ascend to the higher precept of love to God, and to the more general precept of love to man ; it is also the first law of the second table, and the importance of heeding it in these days cannot be overrated. The "promise" itself has to be viewed, as all Old Testament promises must be, in the spiritual light of the New, and to be understood as we have to understand Peter's quotation from Ps. xxxiv. in his 1st Epistle, iii. 10-14. There we learn that the Christian sees "good days" when called to "suffer for righteousness' sake," for then truly is he happy. (See Matt. v. 10-12.) Temporal blessings in the New Testament recede into the background in the presence of those which are eternal, to which they are necessarily made subservient, and are set aside whenever the higher claims of the eternal world make it needful that they should be—a necessity on which the love of God alone can decide.

What is the "burden" in Ps. lv. 22 (rendered in the margin "gift") which is to be cast upon the Lord ?

"GIFT" is the proper meaning of the word. It occurs nowhere else. The word is used to embrace all that which God gives us, or the responsibilities under which He places us, and the verse tells us to cast all upon Jehovah, and He will day by day grant us the sustenance necessary. The word for "sustain" in Hebrew is used for supply of daily food, as when Joseph tells his brethren, "I will *nourish* [or sustain] you." (Gen. xlv. 11.) It conveys the same truth that we learn through the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. ix. 7, that God does not send soldiers to His warfare at their own charges ; they go with the promise that He will sustain them all the way through, giving them strength for the service and victory in the end.

How are our bodies "the temple of the Holy Ghost," seeing that "the temple of God is holy," and in us there is indwelling sin ?

THE precious expression, "temple of the Holy Ghost," is used of our *bodily frame* in spite of the painful fact that "the flesh," *i.e.* the evil rebelling nature, is still in us. It was of His own bodily frame that our Lord spoke in John ii. 19 : "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." His body was a "temple," for the Spirit of God both formed and indwelt it. Through His death for us our body, becomes a temple, because the same Spirit dwells in us on the ground of "the precious blood of Christ," in whom we have believed. So true and abiding is this grace of God to us in His Son that not all the ill ways of saints at Corinth could make the apostle hesitate to declare this truth regarding them. Indeed, he uses it to protest against their *caral* state, and to raise them out of it.

JESUS AT THE LAKE OF GENNESARET.

LESSONS FOR THE SEASIDE.

A SERVANT of God once said that a single study of Jesus in the Gospels seemed to set him right for the day. And who shall say how often or how richly these four Holy Ghost portraits of our Lord have instructed and sanctified His people? And yet how *brief* their story! Only three and a half years of public life! And how narrow their sphere compared with the width of travel by sea and land in this nineteenth century! It was only the land of Palestine, some two hundred miles long, and sixty or seventy broad, "over whose acres walked those blessed feet" which were nailed at last for our redemption.

Still more circumscribed was the *seashore* that He trod. It was not even the Mediterranean; but, as far as we know, only the busy western and populous south-eastern edges of the fresh water "lake of Gennesaret," a sheet of water some twelve miles long, and seven broad. Yet what deeds of glory to God were wrought within these narrow limits! and what abiding lessons of instruction were given! From then till now all seashores of earth that believers in Christ have trod, have been made rich to their souls by miracles wrought and lessons taught at "the sea of Galilee." How well able is our God to work His "wonders in a small compass, and to teach us wisdom by minutest and most passing things! Just as the mighty cross itself, spite of its unbounded and everlasting triumphs, has not left an earthly vestige of the spot where man's ignorance and wickedness shaped it, reared it up, and

nailed the Saviour on it, so also the Galilee lake has long since sunk into obscurity. In "man's day," as Paul calls it (1 Cor. iv. 3), of military conquest or busy commerce it has small place given it, and, like Jesus and His saints, is

" Among the great unfit to shine."

But its shores are hallowed to the hearts of all God's children, as the place where unlettered fishermen were called by God to be "fishers of men," and where they received some of their first and deepest lessons for their blessed work; and these seashore teachings are "written for our learning." May we have grace to profit by them!

The lessons taught us at the sea of Galilee are many, and must be "sought out" by such as love to learn them. They may be divided into three kinds: First, lessons from its dark *depths*, for, like other mountain lakes, it was deep; second, lessons from its *surface*; and third, lessons from its *shores*. The lessons from its depths may serve to teach us about our *sins*; those from its surface, about our *sorrows*; those from its shores, about our *service*. Of each of these kinds two may be named.

I. THE DEEP.

1. This lake abounded in fish, and its fish are twice used to teach us much-needed lessons about our *sins*. In Luke v. 1-11 we read of the time when the men in both Simon Peter's and Zebedee's boats had fished all night but had caught nothing. Jesus now used Simon's boat. He had it "thrust out a little from the land," as His best and readiest means of avoiding the pressure of the crowd upon Him, and that He might make His voice reach them, and might, if possible, win them for the shore of a blessed eternity. The preaching over, He bids them "launch out into the deep" for further fishing. Daytime is not good for fishing, but they obey; and now, in the quiet of the

lake, away from the crowd on the shore, He prepares them to preach to many a noisy crowd, both before Pentecost and after it. He teaches them the weight and multitude of their own sins; for who of us can preach God's gospel acceptably to God, or so as to be "unto God a sweet savour of Christ," except as we see ourselves to be greater sinners than those to whom we are preaching? This Jesus proceeds to teach them. The fish below obey Him, as much as do the winds and the waves on the surface. They crowded into Simon's net, so many and such a weight of them that his net was broken, and both his boat and Zebedee's were filled with them, and began to sink. Simon Peter saw the lesson, and deeply learned it. He did not ask the Lord to save their vessels from sinking, and thus secure to them so valuable a cargo, by which to provide for His wants and their own; but seeing himself as full of sin as the boats were full of fish, "he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful (sin-full) man, O Lord." Not that Peter really wished Jesus to depart from him; for he had never more felt than then his need of a Saviour; but it was as if he should say, in his deep emotion, "My sinfulness is too great, Lord, for even thee to cure." And it needed all the power of his Master's mighty "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men" (v. 10), to calm a soul so deeply stirred with the sense of its own unworthiness. (Compare Isaiah's sense of uncleanness (Isa. vi.), and how in his case also it prepared him for his prophetic ministry.) How truly Peter and his fellow-apostles profited by the lesson, is seen in the fact that though their ships did not sink, but they brought the goodly freight to land, it is instantly said, "They forsook *all*, and followed Him."

2. A second instance of the *fish* of the lake being used for our instruction is no less remarkable. It is recorded in

Matt. xvii. 24-27. A *multitude* of its fish had been used to teach us our sinfulness; a single fish, with the silver coin in its mouth, is used to teach us of that one only ransom money by which the sinner can be redeemed "from going down to the pit." (See Job xxxiii. 24.) We may be sure it was a divinely-created and fashioned coin in that fish's mouth, as truly as the fish itself was divinely guided to Peter's hook. It was all of God, as redemption and reconciliation to God ever are, however true it be that man does his part in accepting it. The half-shekel commanded by Moses in Exodus xxx. was given by every man as a "ransom for his soul," and as "an atonement." How suitable therefore that the depths of the Galilee lake should yield at Jesus' bidding a coin so expressive of His own redeeming love, and His full redemption work. Nor was the coin a *half*-shekel only, which was what Moses had commanded; it was a whole shekel, enough for two. Thus does Jesus magnify the law in the matter of the sinner's redemption, and make it honourable, besides teaching us also that He *unites* the redeemed one to *Himself*. "That take," said He, "and give unto them for me AND thee."

The *occasion* which gave rise to this seaside miracle was also instructive. The collectors of the half-shekel money who came to Peter for it had no divine claim to it. According to Ex. xxx. it was to be gathered by those who took a census of the Jewish nation. This no one could do in our Lord's time but the Romans (see Luke ii. 1-3); but the priests, it would appear, still used Ex. xxx. as a means of religious income, and came to the disciples for it. Peter timorously, on his Master's behalf, assented to its payment. Our Lord fulfils Peter's promise of the money, but first of all reminds him that they were "children of the kingdom," and were therefore "free," and that He only paid it that the collectors of it might not be stumbled, and might be

left without excuse for their rejection of Him and His disciples. How well the miracle of *coin from the deep* agreed with this lofty teaching! It seemed to utter out the millennial language of Ps. xciv.—“Jehovah is a great God, and a great King above all gods. . . . THE SEA IS HIS, and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land.” Thus suitably did ransom money from the depths of the sea come from Him who was to “die for that nation.”

II. THE SURFACE.

But there are lessons taught us from the surface of the lake as well as from its depths, and these refer more especially to our *sorrows*, as those did to our sins and our need of redemption.

The Sea of Galilee, like some other mountain lakes, was peculiarly liable to sudden storms, and these gave rise to precious lessons. The two we mention are: first, Jesus *with them in the ship* when the storm burst upon them; and second, Jesus away on the mountain, on another occasion, when “the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew,” and He came to them *walking over the waves*.

Both these storms may remind us of the “much tribulation” through which “we must enter the kingdom,” and of Jesus’ sufficiency for us in it all.

1. In the first instance (Luke viii. 22–25), He was already with them in the ship, and had they but better known the Scriptures, the very sight of Him sleeping in their midst would have prevented their cry to Him, “Master, Master, we perish!” He could not be drowned; for from Genesis to Malachi the Scriptures had said that the Saviour of sinners and Israel’s Redeemer must have His *heel* bruised, must have the *iron* enter His soul, must have His *hands* and His *feet pierced*, must be “wounded” and “bruised,” and that Israel should “look on Him” as One

whom they had "pierced." All this forbade the very idea of His being *drowned* in a storm on the Sea of Galilee; and when they awoke Him "He said unto them, Where is your faith?" But, unlike Him, they knew not the Scriptures, or had forgotten them; so in His usual love to them He stilled the storm. But who shall say how much they lost by not learning from His calm sleep to let the storm do its worst—for Jesus was with them in the ship! But they had not the Holy Ghost to teach them as we now have. We now see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and sitting in all the calmness of God's own throne at God's right hand. Shame, then, on us if we cannot smile, and say—

"Why those fears? behold 'tis Jesus
 Holds the helm and guides the ship:
 Spread the sails, and catch the breezes
 Sent to waft us through the deep,
 To the regions where the mourners cease to weep."

2. In the second instance quoted, John vi. 19–22, Jesus, being absent on the mountain, made His very distance from them His opportunity for treading with His oft-weary feet the very waves with which they were contending with their oars. Here the lesson seems to be *His perfect acquaintance* with every wave of sorrow and of trial which beats and buffets us. At a word He could have stilled the sea, and eased His own way to them; or He could have winged His way to them over the sea as swiftly as the vessel itself seems to have reached the wished-for shore when once He joined it (see John vi. 21); but instead of this, by His God, and with His God, He walked over all the tossings of the sea, and thus shared with them the tossings of their boat. Just as at another time *He wept tears* with the Bethany family before He gave them back their brother again.

Here again we are more privileged than they. They knew not that it was Jesus. As His form at one moment was visible on the top of a wave, and then disappeared in the trough of the next wave, "they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit" (see Matt. xiv. 26); but the Holy Ghost teaches us that Jesus on the throne is also One "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," because He was "in all points tempted like as we are;" and hence He is a *merciful* and faithful High Priest; so that we also sing—

"Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."

Peter's also walking on the waves for a while (Matt. xiv. 28-31) is another lesson from the lake's surface; and its teaching is plain. To share the pathway of the waves with the "Author and Finisher of faith" is indeed our privilege (Heb. xii. 1-3); and when our steps of that kind fail, as, alas! they so soon do, Jesus has to say to each of us, as He did to Peter, "O thou of *little faith*, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

III. THE SHORE.

But there are lessons from the shores of the lake still to be considered. These are many, and must have been remembered and treasured by His disciples and apostles. They relate chiefly to our *service* as His sent ones. Only two can be dwelt upon.

1. From the *shore* of the lake His apostles received their *first call* to be His servants in the gospel. They were not idlers when they got it; on the contrary, they were diligent in life's every-day toil; they were pursuing their proper and humble labour as "fishers." Peter and Andrew were in the very act of "casting a net into the sea" when Jesus,

“walking by the Sea of Galilee,” said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” James and John were equally diligent; they were “mending their nets” when they also were called. And in both cases it is honourably recorded that they “immediately” left all and followed Him. Thus also shepherds were diligent, and were “keeping watch over their flock by night” when they became some of the earliest heralds to proclaim the good news concerning “Immanuel”—the new-born Babe. Oh that before we set out on any fresh service for the Lord He might always find us similarly diligent in our lawful occupation, and we might with equal clearness hear His voice calling us, and might as promptly and wholeheartedly obey it! Especially should this be true of us who have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, which they at that time had not.

2. It was on the shore of that same “Sea of Tiberias” that Jesus did, in His resurrection body, RECALL His disciples to their service when they had wandered from it. (See John xxi.) That our Lord should have at all trodden the Galilee mountains (see Matt. xxviii. 16) and the shore of its lake as the Risen One from the dead, is itself most suggestive and instructive. What memories of the past, and of the days of His weakness, must the mountain and the lake have waked up both in Him and His apostles!

But that, standing once again on that same *seashore*, Jesus should see them returned to their fishing-nets instead of keeping at their blessed gospel-work, and trusting Him for bodily maintenance, is *humbling* as well as instructive. They had already preached two and two through Palestine, and had seen wonders wrought through the word given them to utter. They knew their Master had triumphed over the cross and the grave. They had had Him in their midst (see chap. xx.), showing them His

hands and His side; dispelling their fears of the Jews, and making them glad at seeing Him. He had used this very occasion to breathe the Holy Ghost into them as a Spirit of strengthening and intelligence for the work to which He then and there sent them; and yet, in spite of it all, we so soon find them yielding to Simon Peter's merely human word, "I go a fishing;" and he and they are spending their precious hours amongst nets and boats, as if they were still only the fishermen they had been before Jesus first called them! How like it is to Jonah, fainting in heart, and turning aside from the message God had given him to Nineveh, when he had gone only a single day's journey into a city, which was "a three days' journey" in size. And how like to us, alas!—even to us—who are in this Pentecost time, in which even then the apostles were not, when we faint in our gospel service, and get turned away from it. But, as one has well said, "Jesus' grace *as a Master* is not one whit less than His grace *as a Saviour*." He stood on the shore as mighty in His love, and as rich to them in His grace, as when on that same shore He first called them to His service. His wisdom is as great as His power and His love. Once more He allows them to catch nothing. The fish of the lake still obey Him; not one enters the apostles' net; but presently they again obey Him, and even at daytime they crowd into the net and are caught. At every step of the narrative the risen Lord instructs them, and most gently reproves their distrust of Him when unseen and absent; and by nothing more than by Himself making for them "a fire of coals," and Himself supplying them with broiled fish and bread of His own baking. What a meal that must have been to them all, and with Jesus amongst them at it! A meal so hallowed as to rebuke all levity and self-indulgence, whilst it equally reproved all their unbelief.

Oh for grace to go at no "fishing" of our own! and in all our life and life-work for Him may we still hear His voice at each meal-time saying to us, "Come and dine."

Such, doubtless, are some of the lessons to us from the Sea of Galilee, and from our Master's footsteps at it.

Soon we shall need them no more. Our Lord will come ere long, and with "the harps of God" in our hand we shall stand on "the sea of glass mingled with fire," and evermore both praise and serve God and the Lamb. But till then may we be found preserved in all our ways by God and by the word of His grace. Amen.

H. D.

THE BEGINNINGS OF GOSPEL HISTORY.

IX. THE BEGINNING OF BEGINNINGS.

JOHN i. 1, 2, 14, 18.

HAVING dwelt upon the beginnings of the gospel history, which are so full of instruction for our hearts, a few remarks on the opening words of the gospel by John may fitly conclude this series of brief papers, bringing before us, as that gospel does, so simply and yet so grandly, the perfect Godhead and the true manhood of Him whose glory it is the design of the apostle to unfold.

The gospel opens, not with arguments that appeal to our reason, but with statements that command our faith. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The opening sentence at once reminds us of the first words of Genesis; but similar as they are, they yet differ. The "beginning" of Genesis i. is defined by the context to be the *beginning of creation*, when "the worlds were framed by the word of God." The "beginning" of which John speaks is a beginning that is beginningless. Trace out if you can "the beginning of

His way" who is "from everlasting;" go back to "the beginning, or ever the earth was;" reflect on the time when there were no depths, when there were no fountains abounding with water, before the mountains were settled, before the hills; when as yet God had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the first dust of the world (Prov. viii.), and know that *then*—"in the beginning"—the Word *was*. Before sun, moon, or stars were seen; before there existed any created eye to see them; before God had begun to manifest Himself in creation of any kind, *the Word was*.

"And the Word was *with* God." With God as "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father" (v. 18); with God in wondrous union, yet perfect distinction. The preposition used ($\pi\rho\sigma$) seems chosen to mark this personal distinction, while excluding the idea of separation, in the Godhead.

"And the Word was GOD." This sentence should be read with the emphasis on the last word. It asserts the essential *Godhead* of Him whose distinctive title in relation to God is the *Son*; while with reference to creation He is the *Word*.

"The same was *in the beginning* with God." It is not only true that the Word is distinct from God, though inseparable from and associated with Him, but that distinction is as *eternal* as His own existence. There are no *vain* repetitions in Scripture, and therefore if particular stress is laid upon this truth it cannot be without reason.

Concerning this beautiful title of Christ, "the Word," which is given to us in the writings of John alone, there has been much speculation; but surely its meaning is not far to seek! It is explained in this very chapter. "No one hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, *He* hath declared Him." (v. 18.) The word rendered *declared* means *told*

out; it denotes exposition. Christ is the *Word* as the *Revealer* of God. Just as, by means of our words, our thoughts are made known to others, so by *His* Word God is made known to us. All His perfections are unfolded, and His precious thoughts are declared. We know God only as we learn Him in *Christ*. Creation is a standing testimony to the eternal power and divinity of its Creator (Rom. i. 20); but it does not reveal *Him*. "The heavens declare His glory, and the firmament sheweth His handy-work" (Psalm xix. 1); but all this may be admired, and *Himself* remain unknown. In creation we see God's *hand*, in Christ we read God's *heart*, or rather, God Himself in all His perfections. And therefore when Paul sets forth the fulness of Christ, in opposition to the speculations of false teachers (Col. ii. 9), he uses a fuller word for *Godhead* than he uses in Romans i., where he speaks of what may be known of God in creation. In Colossians ii., as one beautifully says, "Paul is declaring that in the Son there dwells all the fulness of absolute Godhead. They were no mere rays of divine glory which gilded Him, lighting up His person for a season, and with a splendour not His own; but He was, and is, absolute and perfect God; and the apostle uses θεότης (Godhead) to express this essential and personal Godhead of the Son."

Even if we think of the revelations of God in former days, we still see the force of the word, "No one hath seen God at any time." If God spoke to Moses with such freedom that it might be said to be face to face, it was not with open vision; for the very chapter which declares this freedom of intercourse relates the fact that Moses could not see God's face, but only His back parts. (Ex. xxxiii. 11, 20-23.) But Christ *is* God's face, "the image of the invisible God," and he that hath seen *Him* hath seen the *Father*. (John xiv. 9.) He is not only the *Revealer* of

God, He is *Himself* the *Revelation*. It is very significant that the glorious title which meets us at the beginning of the gospel of *grace* recurs again in a solemn vision of *judgment*. When the Lord comes forth to tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, we are reminded that, in addition to His other titles, "His name is called The Word of God." (Rev. xix. 13.) Truly "Jehovah is known by the judgment which He executeth" (Psalm ix. 16), as well as by the grace which He bestows; and Christ is no less the executor of His judgment than the dispenser of His grace. It is a solemn fact, that each one must know God, as He speaks by His Son, either in grace or in judgment. Whether the word be one of infinite and eternal mercy, or of terrible and irrevocable judgment, it must reach the ear through Christ, as the WORD OF GOD. As yet He speaks in *grace*, and the Holy Ghost saith, "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

The titles of the Lord Jesus are all of deep significance. They declare what He is; they are so many rays of His glory. But there is one name that must ever stand pre-eminent, and that is, the glorious title of SON OF GOD. All other titles are but unfoldings of the glory of this, and but for this not one of them could exist. All other titles express some relation to the *creature*, this expresses an ineffable and eternal relation to *God*. The title we have been considering brings Him before us as the One who *tells out* God; but He could never have revealed God had not the creature existed to receive the revelation. But suppose no creature had ever been formed, could this have affected His relationship to the Father as Son? Most surely not! It is a relationship that is before, and above, and independent of all creation. And we can form no true estimate of God's ways in creation or redemption

until we see something of His own glory and fulness as the ever blessed God, containing in Himself the source of His own perfect happiness and infinite satisfaction. He needed nothing outside Himself. In the perfect unspeakable fellowship of God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—was the source of eternal joy and boundless delight. And if in this wondrous fellowship was formed the design of creation, and the still more wondrous purpose of redemption, those great purposes arose, not from any necessity on the part of the glorious God, but were self-moved designs of pure goodness and spontaneous love, to gratify His heart's affection, to glorify His beloved Son, and to extend the fellowship of His blessed Spirit.

Having set forth the dignity and glory of Christ as the Word and the Light, the apostle states, with the utmost simplicity, the profound truth, "And the Word became (εγενετο) flesh." The term "flesh," as used by John, signifies entire humanity, including body, soul, and spirit; and it sets forth the *reality* of the Lord's manhood, just as in chapter xix. he takes great pains to declare the *reality* of His death. It is evident from the epistles of John that he withstood with intense vigour the false notion that the body of the Lord was but a *semblance* and not a reality. Those who taught this taught also that His death was only an *appearing* to die. The words before us equally dispel an idea that has sometimes found place, that the body of the Lord was like a *casket* containing the divine nature. All such ideas have arisen from attempts to explain things that are too high for us to comprehend. The statement, "The Word became flesh," marks the *personal grace* of Him who thus linked creation to the throne of God by a link that can never be broken; and also declares the reality of the *perfect union* in that one blessed Person of the fulness of Godhead with all the

fulness of true and proper manhood. He can no more cease to be *man* than in becoming man He ceased to be God; and as the *two* natures that form the *one* Person can never be separated in reality, so they should never be separated in our thoughts. We may not regard Him as acting at one time as God, and at another time as man. Whether we see Him in the wilderness "an hungered," or feeding the five thousand with five loaves; with His head on the pillow, sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, which even the roar of the tempest did not disturb; or calmly bidding the winds and the waves to be still; "weary with His journey" sitting "thus on the well;" or calling Lazarus from his grave; "crucified through weakness," and sinking into the "dust of death;" or in resurrection power and might upon the throne above, we still see *Emmanuel*—"God with us." Whatever the circumstances in which we find Him, His glorious Person is unchanged and unchangeable; He is the *God-man*. The Gospels bring before us, not a nature or natures, but a *Person*, and that Person is both the Son of God and the Son of man, even "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

The word for "dwelt" in verse 14 strictly means *tabernacled*; but the explanation often given, which compares the body of the Lord with the tabernacle in which God dwelt amongst His people, is rather calculated to turn us upon a wrong track of interpretation, because here the truth expressed is that *He* tabernacled among us. The fact that the tabernacle was a type of the Lord is not questioned, and it may be referred to in this verse, only it is important to seek the exact meaning of the statement, which is not that *He* was a tabernacle in which God dwelt, however true that is, but simply that *the Word*, having become flesh, *dwelt amongst men*.

When John says, "We beheld His glory," he refers by

no means exclusively to the transfiguration of the Lord, but rather to the glory which the eye of faith ever saw in that lowly One. To the natural eye He was but the carpenter of Nazareth; but those who were taught of God "beheld His glory"—such a glory as declared Him to be the Only-begotten from the Father; a glory still seen by those who walk in God's light, and, renouncing their own wisdom, as well as their own righteousness, find their all in Him who is indeed "full of grace and truth."

W. H. B.

THE LIVING GOD.

PSALM XVII.

THIS Psalm is one of the portions of God's word which bring us very immediately into His presence, and which make His presence very real—very near to us. We are all prone to have vague and indefinite thoughts of God, and thus fail to live in the power of His presence; but in this Psalm the Spirit of God gives us such details that we can easily apprehend what it is to be before the living God.

In verse 2 we not only have the words, "*Thy presence,*" but "*Thine eyes,*" thus bringing us at once under His all-searching gaze, which tries not only our ways, but our secret thoughts and feelings, our motives and desires; and as we read and meditate on this are we not led to bare our hearts before Him, and to cry, "Search *me*, O God, and know *my* heart: try *me*, and know *my* thoughts: and see if there be any way of pain or grief in *me*"? We need not shrink from His heart-searching eyes, because of the value of the precious blood which is ever presented by our Great High Priest before God, and also because He

searches us in the intensity of His love only to bless and to do us good.

Then in verse 4 we read, "*Thy lips.*" How beautifully this follows! When He has pondered our hearts and our ways, when, with unerring scrutiny, His eyelids have tried us thoroughly, we next find His readiness to talk to us about it; to tell us of any way of pain or grief that He finds in us; to send us message after message, *through His word*, how we ought to walk and to please Him; to tell us of anything too in which we may have gladdened His heart, and which He has taken pleasure in. From His lips we receive words of reproof, it may be, or of counsel or encouragement, each one just suited to our need, as His word is brought home to our hearts.

Next, in verse 6, we read, "*Thine ear,*" and a perfect order is thus preserved. In answer to His words will there not be the response from our hearts? It may be in the secret breathings of confession, and of love and gratitude and trust, in the cry for help to subdue some evil shown to us, or in the sigh or groan of the burdened one for deliverance. All these find the ear of God ever open. How quick to hear, and how quick to read, the longings we cannot put into words!

But more than this; for in verse 7 we are reminded of His "*right hand,*" the hand which will deliver, uphold, and impart strength; and as we take that hand, and cling to Him, we are strengthened to renew our warfare and our service.

And then in verse 8 we read of the "*apple of His eye,*" which reminds us of the tender sympathy with which He feels the least thing that touches, pains, or wounds us. Yes; even more than we do ourselves—just as the apple of the eye feels more keenly than any other member of the body. He is touched by any smart, any wound we

get, any prick from the fiery darts of the enemy, or the thorns and briars of the wilderness, as we walk in the path of obedience. Oh, shall we ever shrink from the gaze, the touch, of that tender One, who loves us with such an intense, true, yearning love? Shall we not take to Him all our wounds, to probe if need be (knowing He will feel it more than we do), or to pour in the oil and wine, to soothe and bind and perfectly heal?

Next we read of "*His wings*," in verse 8; "the shadow of His wings," the place of nearness, rest, comfort, and love; the soft, warm wings under which we may take refuge, and trust and rejoice—"the secret-place of the Most High," where no evil can befall us, and no plague can come. (Psalm xci.)

Yet, best of all, we are carried on (verse 15) to the time when we "shall behold *His face* in righteousness"—when we shall see Him face to face, and be made like Him. Then, and not till then, shall we be fully satisfied. "I shall be *satisfied* when I awake with thy likeness."

But meanwhile may we not *by faith* know and enjoy much of His countenance even now, as we look up and "seek His face continually"? Can we not from His word so learn His thoughts and feelings that we can tell whether or not the light of His countenance is lifted up upon us? We know what it is when the face of some earthly friend beams upon us. Can we by faith believe that such a look we can and do call forth from our God when our ways please Him; when we seek His will, not ours; when in some little measure we have learned to respond to His love, and to live for Him?

Let us then ever seek the presence of God; let us make it the habit of our lives, and take care that we never call forth a look of grief from Him. Let us test our ways, our words, our thoughts and feelings by this, and the more

we meditate upon Him, and learn to know Him, the more easily shall we be able to discern His countenance.

How the habit of this would sanctify and stimulate, as well as cheer and gladden us! As we think of the look of tender sympathy called forth by our sorrows; the look of concern for us when we are in danger; the look of pleasure when we try to please Him; the look of pain should we be careless or disobedient; the look of joy when we return to Him again—how careful we should be of our words and thoughts, and looks and actions! Oh, let us take care that we are always ready to meet His eye; always able gladly to look up into His face with a clear conscience, ways cleansed, and steadfast walk under the sunshine of His approval!

T.

SALT.

“Ye are the salt of the earth.”—*Matt. v. 13.*

FAMILIAR, oft-quoted words! Would that each one of us apprehended and lived up to the position thus assigned us!

Intended for use, and with little about it to attract, the value of salt depends upon its purity. Each minute particle of it helps the whole so far as it retains its savour; and when really pure, what a savour it is! What pungency there is in it, what an unmistakable flavour it possesses, and how penetrating that flavour is! Spreading throughout whatever it may be mingled with, how these atoms (each seemingly such a nothing in itself) pervade the whole mass, thus accomplishing the object intended, by diffusing everywhere their preserving virtue and thereby staying corruption!

Amid many thoughts suggested by these few brief

facts two stand out with special clearness—reality and obedience.

First, *Reality*. Is not this suggested by a handful of pure, pungent salt, corresponding to the apostle's words, "meet for the Master's use"? And is this, let us ask, a true description of each one of us? It should be so, and will be, if by God's grace we can say with the apostle, "The world is crucified unto me and I unto the world" by "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." We will not here enter into the solemn question of what is meant by salt having lost its savour. Let us instead take home the searching truth as to the need of our being very thorough and real. Just as far as I, like a handful of salt, am separated from the world in my words, my works, my ways, my whole inward and outward being, made up, though my life may seem to be, of insignificant particles, so far shall I be of service to Him whom I seek to serve. What it *REALLY is*, not what it *seems to be*, is the point where salt is concerned. Adulterations may be white and sparkling to the eye of man, but what will that avail? Savourless, useless, will be the verdict of Him who seeth not as man seeth; while the space, larger or smaller as the case may be, which has in His providence been assigned to each, will sooner or later bear witness against us. Thanks be to God, He who constituted us salt can again make us such as He can use; and He will make us so, if we but truly desire it. He has various ways of effecting this blessed object: affliction, disappointment, failure, and it may be even spiritual falls; above all, He uses the constant "washing of water by the word."

In connection with Fatherly chastenings, how much meaning there is in the words, "to them that are *exercised* thereby." Yes, when truly exercised by our varied experiences, how much stronger, because purer, will our

influence become; and how much more real, so to speak, the savour of each particle of our spiritual being. Blessed result! Let the thought cheer us on in the patient endurance of the process, no matter what it may be, that the Master puts us through; and let us see to it that nothing on our part shall mar its full attainment.

Second, *Obedience*. This is likewise suggested by the simile of salt. However pure and full of savour, of what use would salt be if it remained by itself apart in some receptacle of its own choosing? or if, when put into the mass with which it was meant to mingle, it obstinately refused to spread and extend its influence on all sides? "Ye are the salt of the earth." Who but its Creator can tell what a scene of corruption this sin-stained earth would become but for the children of God scattered here and there throughout its length and breadth? The prophetic Scriptures give us a glimpse of such an hour of earth's dark state as they lift the veil from the future. But ere that hour comes, let us see to it, fellow-Christians, that as a part of God's salt in the earth, each of us really does, in subjection to His will, occupy the sphere of influence allotted to us. Of this we may be certain, no one can safely neglect his part and trust to another to supply his failure. Nor must ours be a *partial* obedience. It must be entire and unreserved; for the Master Himself declared, "He that is not with me is against me."

This brings us to another important consideration; viz., obedience as to *place of service*. Our service may not be prominent like that of the evangelist, pastor, or teacher. Influence might perhaps describe more clearly what belongs to most of us, and yet, what is influence but service in another form? Well would it be if as Christians we more constantly acted on the principle that *what we are* often brings more glory to the Master than *what we do*. "As

obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as He that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation," and thus fitted to "show forth the praises [or virtues] of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." Am I a handful of salt? Then let me remember that my whereabouts is no trifling matter; that any change of place, be it only from one street to another, any addition to, or lessening of, my circle of acquaintance, in short, anything, however unimportant, that brings me in any degree in contact with a fresh spot of corruption, is a matter that concerns my Lord far more than it does me. Greater or less temporal comfort, some passing change of scene or occupation, may decide the question of a Christian's moving hither or thither—so it stands as viewed from below; but as viewed from above, what infinite interests may hang upon it! Would that we more constantly took the higher level of observation. How many mistakes, how much loss, would be avoided by so doing!

One point needs to be remembered. Salt in its natural sense is simply a preservative, delaying the progress of corruption, but not changing the ingredients of that with which it is mingled. So the presence of God's children in the world does not change the character of this guilty age, which hangs for its continuance on nothing but the patience and forbearance of God. As "the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing," so it waits now, and so it will wait until, gathered into the heavenly Ark, the redeemed family are safe from destruction. And with reverence be it spoken, is not that waiting rendered *possible* to God by the check, partial truly, but still real so far as it extends, which the spiritual salt gives to the corruption of the age? Let us therefore, as passive

salt in the hand of its owner, gladly leave our time and place and circumstance to our Master's will, and, like it, purified from earthly adulterations by a power and wisdom not our own, let us simply carry out His designs, too intent on so doing to have leisure or inclination to harass ourselves with speculations beyond our province.

A. D. P.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

What is the Christian's relation to the Lord's-day?

OUR relation to the Lord's-day is not to be confounded with that of the Jew to the Sabbath. The Sabbath is so called from the Hebrew word which means to cease from toil or work, and hence to have rest; and the Jew was bound to observe the Sabbath as a reminder of man's obligation to God the Creator (Ex. xx. 8-11), and of the Jew's obligation to God the Redeemer from Egypt. (Deut. v. 12-15.) The Jewish Sabbath points the Christian to the rest of the sinner from all his toil and labour in the finished work of Christ. In Christ he ceases from his own works, and can rest in the finished work of salvation as God did in creation. The violation of the Jewish Sabbath by the man who gathered sticks was punished with death, and the moment any work is performed in violation of the completeness of the work of Christ, and of His finished salvation, spiritual death follows. It was thus with the Galatians who would add to the work of Christ, and thus were *ending* in the flesh, after the which, if we walk, we die. The Lord's-day does not specially tell of rest; it is the day of resurrection-life and joy, and of ceaseless activity in service and praise. Christ in the grave on the Sabbath is a fitting type of our relation to it; for we were buried with Him into death, and as on the Lord's-day He rose, so we rose to walk in newness of life. Scripture lays down no law about the observance of the Lord's-day, and to transfer to it the teachings of the Sabbath is but to Judaize it, fulfilling Gal. iv. 10. "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you," says the apostle; and he thus writes to the Colossians: "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days." (Chap. ii. 16.) With these warnings before us, it is strange that the Lord's-day of the Church should have so degenerated into the Sabbath of the Jew. Still we rejoice in that which makes the Lord's-day a

day of cessation from earthly toil, and gives the children of God breathing time to think of that resurrection kingdom into which they have entered. Surely any believer must be in a fearfully carnal state of soul who does not hold doubly sacred to God the time which he is able to get clear of the pressing engagements of life! Let us hold our Lord's-days inviolable, if we would at all lift our heads above the mists and fogs of earth; and let us seek for ourselves and others that *one day in seven be free for heaven and for home*. Creation needs a day of rest, and wise legislators will never allow ceaseless toil to those who labour.

Who is the "porter" in John x. 3?

Probably the righteousness of God is thus impersonated. At the fall the cherubim guarded the way to the tree of life, and hindered any entrance to the garden, out of which Adam and Eve had been driven. Here a somewhat similar figure is used, connected with admission into the sheepfold, and the Good Shepherd's right to enter is seen in the opening of the guarded door by the porter, and He also leads in His ransomed flock. The righteousness of God admits the Shepherd on the ground of *His* spotless righteousness, and admits the flock on the ground of the righteousness of faith; for their claim is through the blood of the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep.

What counsel would it be well to give to Christians as to the use of the Revised Version of the New Testament?

WHILE fully recognizing the many valuable corrections the New Version supplies, and the much labour and scholarship of which it is the result, we believe it needs to undergo the test of time (as the Authorised Version did) before its merits can be fairly estimated, and its imperfections can be sufficiently known and guarded against. The new translation of certain important passages is already widely called in question, and the very many alterations of the Greek Text (following a few of the most ancient manuscripts) require further consideration by competent judges. It is therefore better, we conclude, to use the Revised Version for private study rather than for public reading; an additional reason for this being that unlearned believers need to be gradually instructed as to changes and improvements, lest their confidence in the Word of God be shaken.

DIVINE CATHOLICITY.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH IN ITS THREEFOLD ASPECT, AS
PRESENTED IN JOHN XVII.

IN the present day some are seeking to maintain the unity of the Church by a rigid external coercive power, and others by a shallow latitudinarian laxity. Some would narrow the Church into a sect, and others would enlarge it to embrace all creeds. We may well therefore contemplate afresh the prayer of our blessed Lord in John xvii., the key-note of which is, "*That they may be one,*" that so we may labour for a unity neither narrower nor broader than that indicated by His precious prayer. It will be found to embrace the two correlative truths—that "God is light," and "God is love." These truths are not antagonistic to each other; they conjointly form the very stability of God's throne, and they rear in the heart of him who holds them the temple of that eternal truth in which, both in time and in eternity, the true worshipper will ever worship; imperfectly here, for we know now but in part; but perfectly there, for then we shall know even as we are known.

In John xiii.—xvi. the Lord had been addressing His disciples, and as His eyes of love and pity rested on them He foresaw all that His redeemed would have to pass through, till His coming again should gather them all to Himself in the place prepared by Him. But now He turns His eyes from them to the Father, from earth to heaven, and there He sees the guarantee for all the results of His toil and suffering, resting not on the fallibility of

the creature, but on the infallibility of God ; “for *of* Him, and *through* Him, and *to* Him are all things.”

This prayer is not for the world, though it does mention that authority is given to Christ, as Son of man, over “all flesh ;” it is a prayer for those who have been given to the Son by the Father, to whom He gives eternal life, and not that only, but also the words that had been given to Him of the Father. The *Life* and the *words* thus become the prerogative and the portion of the whole heavenly family, to whom is vouchsafed the manifestation of the *name* of God. A common *life* is given them to enjoy, and that the eternal life ; a common *word* is given them to keep, and that the word of Truth ; a common *name* is given to them around which to rally, and that the hallowed name of Father.

We therefore naturally find the expression, “That they may be one,” occurring three times in this prayer, and on each occasion in a different connection. In verse 11 it occurs in connection with the *name*, in verse 21 with the *truth*, and in verse 22 with the *glory* ; and there are also three corresponding petitions in our Lord’s prayer for His own ; viz., that they may be *kept*, that they may be *sanctified*, and that they may be *glorified*. These three points we will take up in the order in which we find them.

1st. “Holy Father, *keep* through [in] thine own *name* those whom thou hast given me, *that they may be one, as we are.*” The centre and the circumference of the Church’s unity is the Name into which they are gathered, even the *name* of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is also a wall of fire round about them. But for His holy keeping where should we be amidst “the fightings without and the fears within,” through which the pathway of the child of God leads? To this preserving grace Peter alludes when, after speaking of the inheri-

tance reserved for us in heaven, he adds, "who are KEPT by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Here faith rests in fullest confidence; for God's name has been interposed on our behalf in oath, in covenant, and in blood.

The name of *Father* once realized makes all certain, to the feeblest as well as to the strongest; for it is the portion of the babe in Christ to know the Father, as well as the forgiveness of sins. (1 John ii. 12, 13.) The whole ministry of Christ was to reveal that Name to His own, and to keep them in it, that they might walk in the power of it. The precious little prayer that our Lord taught His disciples hangs on the "Our Father," with which it begins. The name of Father runs through the sermon on the mount, and is a pillow of rest on which to lay our heads in all the daily necessities and conflicts of our earthly path.

He who had dwelt in the bosom of the Father came to make known to us what that bosom was, from which God gave His only-begotten Son, that He might gather us with Him there for all eternity. We write of these things, we speak of them, but our lives bear very poor witness to them, and hence the little measure in which the family tie is realized between one child of God and another. One Father, one Saviour, one home, and one hope were designed to form a bond of peace and love that the world, the flesh, and the devil might assail in vain. It shall be so one day, or this prayer will remain unanswered, which cannot be. Alas! that it is so *little* manifested now. Whatever outward appearances may say to the contrary, there is one family as well as "one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all."

While the blessed Master was with His disciples He had kept them in the Name, disarming animosity, lowering pride, and sending them along their several paths

as brethren united in a common relationship by that hallowed name, "OUR Father," and teaching them that no will but His should be allowed, either in earth or in heaven. But who can fathom the measure of the unity here prayed for—"That they may be one, *as we are*"? Who but the Father and the Son knows the extent of that oneness? The Son spake as He heard the Father speak; He worked as He saw the Father work, and whether on the cross or on the throne of the heavens, He always was and is in perfect harmony of mind and will with the Father. It is to all this that the words, "As we are one," point us; and well may we say, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

How this unity manifested itself unbidden at Pentecost we find in Acts ii. 44, when "all that believed were together, and had all things common." The Spirit so brought home to the heart and conscience of all, this unity of the body of Christ and of the heavenly family, that separate interests were impossible, and selfish individualism was not to be thought of. Then was realized what had afterwards to be enjoined by the apostle, "Let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. iii. 21-23.) "All are yours" is still true; but a Corinthian worldliness, sectarianism, and pride has well-nigh driven away every vestige except the outward *name* of the unity of the Church.

Let us not think we understand this unity till it so holds us that selfishness and sectarianism are overmastered, and Christ rules us, and not self. The spirit of the one family would then bear witness to the one God and Father, and the life of the one body would show

forth the common Head. But let us not rest content under present division and discord, as if all attempts to keep the unity of the Spirit were hopeless. It is all the more needed, and none the less possible to each faithful soul who in this matter stands in the counsel of the Lord, and gives diligence (Eph. iv. 3; see Greek) "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

We are all too prone to fall back on the impossibilities of nature, and to forget that the prayer, "Holy Father, keep in thy name," may be fulfilled now to any true heart just as it was in the freshness of Pentecostal blessing. Such a one may have his fleece full of the dew of heaven, though every other fleece be dry; and his will be the blessing of having helped Israel, and on him will rest the gracious word given to Abraham of old—"I will bless thee, and make thee a blessing."

2nd. "*Sanctify* them through thy [in the] *truth*: thy word is truth." (v. 17.) This is the second point in the Redeemer's prayer concerning our unity; and in connection with it we read, in v. 21, "*that they all may be one*, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." In chap. xvi. 13 we read, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." Thus we have the *Spirit*, the *truth*, and the *word* connected with our sanctification. It is not the Spirit without the word, nor is it the word without the Spirit, which brings the power of living truth to the soul, and hence we are told that the true worshipper is one who worships "in spirit and in truth." Sanctification as well as worship has an objective as well as a subjective side. It must be objectively in Christ, who is the Truth, and subjectively in spirit, if it is to be what God would have it be. The mere doctrine of the Spirit without the word leads to

fanaticism and false fire; the word without the Spirit leads to formalism and lukewarmness. Thus are we beset with dangers from which our only safety is to have this prayer fulfilled in us—"Sanctify them in the truth."

The unity of the body is to be sought in a unity in the truth as well as a unity in the Name. It is here that many earnest longers after unity are apt to miss the way. They regard unity in the name of the Father and the Son (*i.e.* union in a common life) as all that is needed. They rejoice that "God is love;" but they forget that "God is light," and that we are called to "walk in light" as well as to "abide in love." This leads to a spirit of compromise in God's truth which is fatal to simple obedience. Everything that professes to be "entire sanctification" or "perfect love" must be brought to the test of the word, and we need to be on our guard against unscriptural expressions. They are often thought to be harmless; but an unscriptural expression is sure to cover some unscriptural idea, which may be destructive of much truth.

Few Scriptures teach greater reverence for the word than this utterance of our Lord, "Thy word is truth;" it is an embodiment, we might say, of Ps. cxix. Every precept in the word has a sanctifying power about it, and any precept ignored, forgotten, neglected, or set aside, hinders our "entire sanctification," though, blessed be God, as to our standing in Christ, we know that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ "once for all." (Heb. x. 10.) Too many confound the "once for all" sanctification made ours in Christ with the progressive sanctification by the present work of the Holy Ghost, which may be checked and hindered by His being grieved or quenched on our part.

It is in connection with this part of the prayer (*v.* 18) that the Lord speaks of His people's mission into the

world—"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world;" and He adds, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through [in] the truth." Hence we learn that the power of our mission depends on our sanctification and separation unto God. Christ came in all the sanctifying power of the truth of God, obeying its smallest precept, and living up to its loftiest requirement, and hence His presence became a mighty sanctifying influence, as His blood was to become a sanctifying atonement. Filled with this same sanctifying influence would He also send His own into the world, that the power of holiness might accompany their ministry and their life.

In this sanctification, then, let us seek to maintain the unity of the body of Christ, remembering Paul's words—"Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule;" and let us avoid all compromise, as those who have learned to buy the truth and not sell it, either to please another or to gratify one's self.

3rd. "The *glory* which thou gavest me I have given them, *that they may be one, even as we are one.*" "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold *my glory*, which thou hast given me." (vv. 22-24.) The future glory is next pointed to as a reason for our unity. Those who are one in the *keeping* grace of the Father, and one in the *sanctifying* grace of the Spirit of truth, are to be one also in the *glorifying* grace of the Son. Here we come to contemplate the things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived, yet are they even *now* revealed unto us by the Spirit as we are able to bear them; that is, as our souls are fitted to receive them. Few things tend more to promote present union among saints than the hope of the coming glory. In that glory

each saint is viewed, not in the imperfections of the present, but in the Christ-like image of the future. We *are* not what we seem to be, but what God has made us in Christ. He who here prays, "Father, I will that they be with me," had before said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, ye may be also."

It is remarkable how much Scripture speaks of the coming glory, and glory in the estimate of God and of faith is not a passing evanescent ray of splendour, such as is often seen in the clouds of an evening sunset (a fit symbol of all the glories of the old creation), but is an exceeding and eternal *weight* of something that abides for ever; and thus it characterizes the inheritance of saints as that which is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. Nothing but the unity of the coming glory can bring to pass that which God purposes His saints shall have. Oneness in glory is not a thing of measure or degree, but of perfected, eternal character; and this is secured to the believer in this third request of our Lord, of whom we read that He "shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His glory." (Phil. iii. 21, R. V.)

On these three petitions then rests immovably the real catholic unity of the Church of the living God. It is preserved and maintained by the Name, by the word of truth, and by the coming glory; a threefold cord that can never be broken, because secured to us in the Father, in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost. All human attempts fail in one or more of these essentials, and prove themselves to be not of God. May our hearts ponder these things, and may our daily request be that in each of us the prayer of the Son of God may be fulfilled.

H. G.

THE BETROTHAL.

JOHN XVII.

FAR back it was, before primeval earth
 Was thrilled by echoes of Omnipotence,
 When heights and depths were universal gloom,
 And lifeless silence lay in solemn shroud
 On all ; and where in space creation
 Was "to be" 'twas awe profoundly deep.

But hark ! what mean those echoing sounds,
 That roll and swell till spheres articulate
 To spheres, and all the astonished heavens
 Are entranced in rhapsodies of joy ?

What meaneth it, this ecstasy of song
 That until now the Godhead never knew ?

Nor Father, Son, nor Spirit heard before,
 This vehemence of praise that thrilled the throne ?

It was as though e'en God Himself had stepped
 Within the range of angel view and ken,
 Or first was speaking stars or sun to shine.
 Oh, if 'twere this alone it were enough
 To nerve each host, enchant each tongue,
 Re-string each harp, and animate all hearts !

But each material sun, each radiant star,
 Doth only *shadow* God and purposes divine.
 Let earth and heavens be beautified and "good,"
 'Tis *shadow* still ; but grace on grace *shall* reign,
 And glory unto glory culminate.

The first betrothal had been long conceived
 In Abba's loving heart, and to the Son,
 That loved One in His bosom, now He gave
 Such promise of felicity that He
 From God's affections had not ever drawn.

A Bride ! a marriage feast ! a supper there !
 And yet not there ; for, ere that hour, must come
 A preparation age of Bridegroom love ;
 A place Himself must choose, prepare, design,
 And beautify—a place well worthy of His cross,
 Which then shall be the measure *how* He loves !
 As deep His woes, so high her glory-joy ;

As dense that dark, dark hour when God forsook
 Him there, so bright her home of perfect bliss ;
 As fierce those waterfloods of awful wrath,
 So brimmed her cup of new, exultant wine.

Oh, if *her* joy be this—then His is hers
 Intensified and filled by all the cost
 Of Calvary's unutterable griefs.

Yet all is ours ; still promise succours hope,
 Which in expectant faith awaits and yearns
 That once marred face to see, and on those
 Thorn-prints place the many crowns He merits well ;
 Yea, myriads more ; for could all angels and
 Archangels join innumerable saints
 Their Lord and God to glorify and praise,
 He worthy is, for He our Bridegroom comes—
 Our King, our Saviour, yea, our "Lord of all."

"A LIVING HOPE."

JOHN xiv.

THE vitality of our hope is the evidence of its reality ;
 without vitality there is no reality.

In the enjoyment of the hope how our hearts delight
 to read, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself ;
 that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv. 3.) "*I
 come.*" Precious words ! How many a fevered brain has
 pillowed on them ! how many a breaking heart has been
 healed by them ! how many a burning tear has been
 wiped by them ! how many a fathomless sigh has been
 hushed by them ! And why ? They are *His* words—our
 blessed Lord's promise of promises. They are the glory-
 fringe of every dark cloud that may steal in silent gloom
 or break in mighty thunders over the heart.

The memorials of deepest woe and the tokens of
 brightest hope were blended in the solemn feast which
 had just ended (John xiii.) ; and our Lord, well knowing

what earth had been to Him, could measure the steps of waiting saints, and gauge the depths of their yet unuttered griefs; hence His prefatory word to that last address is, "I will come again," and His well-nigh closing utterance, "A little while." While at the feast-table night had come on, "and when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Mark xiv. 26), and then came the sorrows of Gethsemane. The precious hope, is soon forgotten by His disciples; their hearts are chilled; they "are asleep." He awakes them twice, but finds them "asleep again." Oh, that terrible failure, so common, so fatal, against which we are so often cautioned, and warned by precept and example!

Is the Bridegroom eager for the fellowship of the bride, His locks wet with the dew of the night? What does she say? "I sleep." "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?" (Cant. v. 2, 3.) Are we instructed in parable of His coming? A mantle of shame is foretold of His Church—"They all slumbered and slept." (Matt. xxv. 5.) Are we needing the cogent instructions of Rom. xii. and xiii., as showing the voluntary and natural fruits of chaps. i.-viii.? We are thrilled by the vehemence of the apostle's words, "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." (Rom. xiii. 11, 12.)

That garden sleep! Does it bring sorrow, or tears, or repentance? Alas! no. One failure soon produces another, and he who is foremost in his protestations of attachment to his Master suffers not with Him, but smites Malchus, without even waiting for a reply to his question. Sorrowful lesson, but how often still it needs to be repeated. Peter had not watched to see what manner of spirit he

was of. His eyes had not been on his Lord, therefore not on his own heart for judgment.

The next step of the disciples was a united one. They all "forsook Him and fled." Not one remained to cheer or comfort, defend or even follow, except "afar off." The fleshly boldness that could wield a sword is unequal to that hour of sorrow, and Peter stoops to the base cowardice that could be ashamed of his Lord's name and company, and even ignores the knowledge of Him altogether.

Declension of soul and the joy of the hope are not consonant with each other; for any ministry of the hope must awaken the conscience to produce *present* instead of *future* shame. Is not declension still marked by sleeping or smiting, self-will, denial of Christ, or *earthly* well-being?

The brightest realizations of the blessed hope will produce the greatest developments of love.

That which is true of individual saints is also true of churches. In Ephesians the hope of the Lord's return is made the axis of all the dispensational purposes of God, "when He shall gather together in one all things in Christ." (Chap. i. 10.) In Philippians it marks the epoch when present humiliation shall be exchanged for glorious exaltation with Christ, and the living hope has its citizenship in heaven. In Colossians, "the hope laid up for you in heaven" (chap. i. 5) is the magnetic attraction for the soul to absorb it in the heavenlies. In Thessalonians it is the antidote of all the sorrows of sin, and supremely the messenger of comfort at the scene of death. In Hebrews it is the cordial of love to sustain and cheer the tired and suffering saint under the brand and torch of human and Satanic persecution. "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

But there is one aspect of the ministry of the hope which is a very solemn one; it has no cheer or joy; it presumes that *some* shall be ashamed before Him at His

coming. It forces upon us the judgment-seat of Christ, the test-time of all service and walk, when each saint, for all loving obedience, all single-eyed service, all godliness of walk, shall have praise of God. Oh, what a searching thought, that any saint should appear there who has quenched the Spirit of truth and love, or who has trespassed against the Lord, and brought iniquity into the holy things, or who has hardened his heart against his poor brother, or who has failed to forgive his brother his trespasses; and more, much more, than all this.

Let us look carefully, prayerfully at the second and third chapters of Revelation, and let us ask what joy did the Lord's "quickly" coming give to those churches to whom He said, "I have somewhat against thee"?

Is not all this representative? Surely, solemnly so. Where are the masses of saints? Where are we? Oh, how many are turned aside to another, yea, many other gospels! How many are turned aside from the simplicity which is in Christ to the dogmas, creeds, ceremonials, and conventionalities of men! Oh, the bewitched hearts at which He is so loudly, so constantly knocking! Oh for a soul-awakening wave to roll over the Church of God that shall deliver all spell-bound souls from this thralldom, and create the yearning cry of deep love, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

It is Himself that our hearts need from first to last. He is the Alpha of Genesis, and the Omega of Revelation; in the former He is the hope of sinners, in the latter the hope of saints; and in this last faithful record of our Lord how often does He say, "I come quickly," as though He desired that His last-uttered word to His Church should keep the strings of her affections continually vibrating with hope until their deepening harmonies, as He draws nigh, should blend in the blessed song of redemption.

W. T.

SALVATION TO THE UTTERMOST.

“Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

HEBREWS vii. 25.

It may help to cheer the heart of some troubled child of God, cast down by reason of indwelling sin, to trace a little in detail the full provision in the Lord Jesus, as our High Priest, to meet every possible need that can arise, and this because of His perfect work on the cross as our sin-bearer, our divine Substitute.

There are four chief aspects of sin in which it has power to trouble the heart. It is felt to be a *burden* on the conscience; a *defilement*, shutting out from communion with God; a *bondage* in the life; and a *disease* in the nature; and these are just the very aspects which stand out most prominently in those Old Testament Scriptures which reveal to us our Lord's sufferings under sin—what He, who knew no sin, felt it to be when He was made sin for us.

First. Sin as a *burden*, a weight upon the conscience, the burden of a debt, a penalty deserved, wrath incurred. Let us trace this as felt by the Lord Jesus under the weight of our sin. “Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.” (Ps. xxxviii. 4.) “Thy hand presseth me sore.” (v. 2.) “I am bowed down greatly.” (v. 6.) “Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up.” (Ps. xl. 12.) “I am full of heaviness.” (Ps. lxxix. 20.) “Thy wrath lieth hard upon me.” (Ps. lxxxviii. 7.) “Thy fierce wrath goeth over me.” (v. 16.) “Trodden . . . as in a wine-press.” (Lam. i. 15.) “I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod

of His wrath." (Lam. iii. 1.) "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed . . . He bare the sin of many." (Isa. liii.)

Is not this enough? Is not He, who now liveth as our accepted Substitute, able to remove the burden *wholly* as we turn to Him? Does He not rejoice to tell us that we are fully pardoned, that, coming through Him, we may lift up our face without spot to God? Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop, and we may take to Him every weight of the spirit, every lingering feeling of oppression which would depress and weaken, and He will save from this to the uttermost.

Second. Sin as a *defilement*, causing shame, and shutting out from God. This was felt by the infinitely pure and spotless soul of the Lord Jesus in an intensity of which we can have but the faintest conception. Sin is many times in Scripture compared to *mire* (as Isa. lvii. 20; 2 Peter ii. 21, 22), the mire representing all the corruption that comes out of our evil and polluted hearts. What, then, must it have been to Him when He said, "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing" (Ps. lxix. 2); "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head" (Ps. xxxviii. 4); "Shame hath covered my face" (Ps. lxix. 7); "I am not able to look up" (Ps. xl. 12); "Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink" (Ps. lxix. 14)? "An horrible pit" and "miry clay" it was indeed to Him; it was then that He was shut out from the light of God's countenance, and the cries were wrung from Him, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" (Ps. xxii. 1.) "O my God, be not far from me." (Ps. xxxviii. 21.) "I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried." (Ps. lxix. 3.) "Lord, why castest thou off my soul?

why hidest thou thy face from me?" (Ps. lxxxviii. 14.) "He hath set me in dark places." (Lam. iii. 6.) "When I cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer." (v. 8.) "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that prayer should not pass through." (Lam. iii. 44.)

And it is because of this, because He has borne it all, that He is now able, not only to pardon, but to cleanse away every stain of defilement, so that the troubled conscience need not shrink away—that we need not have the consciousness of distance, of reserve, of shame; but at once going to Him in confession, He will restore us to full communion with the Father, His precious blood cleansing from all sin, and we may again enjoy the full light of His countenance. It is His joy now to do this for us, His delight, when we lift up our faces to Him, and believe in His power and His love.

Third. Sin as *bondage*, captivity, slavery, chains, snares. How often has the groan gone up, even from the heart of God's children, "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" But in this too He is able to save unto the uttermost. Listen to His cries upon the cross, when, as our Substitute, He endured this bondage to set us free: "The sorrows [cords, marg.] of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me." (2 Sam. xxii. 6.) "The weeds were wrapped about my head." (Jonah ii. 5.) "The yoke of my transgressions is bound by His hand: they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck." (Lam. i. 14.) "He hath made my chain heavy." (Lam. iii. 7.)

He bore the yoke of our sins, as our divine Substitute, to set us free—free indeed—and now He preaches deliverance to the captives. Having died with Christ, we are no longer in the power of sin and Satan. "The servant is free from his master." (Job iii. 19.) The snare is broken, and we are delivered; and should we have allowed any

chain still to bind us, any feeling, or habit, or desire, or the love of some sin which is too strong for us, we have but to show it to Him, to cry out when the pressure is felt, and He is able to save to the uttermost from the thralldom of sin, as well as to pardon and to cleanse.

Lastly, sin as a *disease*, leprosy, plagues, wounds. Here again we find in the Lord Jesus how keenly this was felt. "I am feeble and sore broken." (Ps. xxxviii. 8.) "My heart is sore pained within me." (Ps. lv. 4.) "My flesh and my skin hath He made old; He hath broken my bones." (Lam. iii. 4.) "He was wounded for our transgressions . . . bruised for our iniquities. . . . It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." And thus He became the One who can heal all the diseases of our souls, each one as we bring it to Him. He can bind up every wound which sin has left, every smart. He can soothe every restless, fevered spirit, bind up that which is broken, and strengthen that which is sick.

Thus in all these things He has become the perfect Saviour. Because of His divine nature, the suffering was infinite; but the value is infinite. He made His soul an offering for sin, and poured out His soul unto death. Shall we not give Him the reward He asks, and let Him save us *to the uttermost*, by continually coming unto God by Him? He delights to see His people glad in His presence, unburdened, free, and happy, and with vigour of soul, in spiritual health and soundness. Instead of the chains of sin, He would bind us to Himself by the cords of His most fond and tender love; and He delights to see us bind round our own necks the chains of His holy precepts.

It is by looking at His sufferings that we see sin in its true light, as the abominable thing which He hates, a very horrible thing, which pains Him at His very heart; a

thing which we dare not trifle with, or speak or think lightly of. Surely, if we have one spark of loving gratitude in us, we shall give Him no rest till we are a praise, a joy, a delight to Him; till in us He can see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. And shall we not also seek in every way we can to lead others to know His great and full and costly salvation? T.

CONQUEST AND POSSESSION;

OR, THE EVIDENCE OF POWER.

JOSHUA xvii. 14-18; EPHESIANS vi. 8-19.

IT is said of Abel that "he being dead yet speaketh;" that although centuries on centuries have passed away, the historical page of God's word bears down to the present moment the works of that man of God, and the manner of his death. To this day he witnesses to the only approved way of a sinner's approach to God—through the blood of the Lamb; while his brother's recorded murderous conduct still testifies to the enmity of the natural man against God. "The carnal mind is *enmity* against God," so that "they who are in the flesh cannot please God." With clearness and force the two men represent the true worshipper and the false, illustrating the difference between formal Christianity and the true apprehension of Christ.

The dealings of Jehovah with Israel, and those real circumstances which were earnest to them, are also types to us.

Israel's preservation, deliverances, conquests, and possession were only an earnest of those which still await them, and their sorrows but as a sip of that cup of which they have yet to drink in the days of "the great tribulation"

(Rev. vii. 14); but to us all these things are types or illustrations. Their preservation in Egypt and deliverance out of it; their passage through the Red Sea and wilderness experience; their passage through the Jordan; their entrance into the land and possessions there, all foreshadow steps or stages of the believer's life and experience and of the Church's history.

In the paragraph cited above (Joshua xvii. 14-18) we have the tribe of Joseph appealing to Joshua respecting their portion, complaining of its smallness, and making

ENQUIRY,

"Why hast thou given us but one lot?"

This enquiry resulted from the estimate which they had previously formed, and thus expressed, "I am a great people, forasmuch as Jehovah hath blessed me hitherto." Yes; Jehovah had made good their mother's words, and caused them as a tribe to answer to their name, "Joseph" (*adding*). The seed of the hated and persecuted son had multiplied; Jehovah had added until they could say, "I am a great people." Not only had God added Benjamin as another son, but He had made Joseph to be a fruitful vine, whose branches run over the wall.

Half the tribe of Manasseh, Joseph's eldest son, had obtained their desired portion on the other side of Jordan with Reuben and Gad, and now the other half with Ephraim find their portion too small.

Joshua heard their complaint and their opinion of themselves. Without questioning their assertion, he accepted their estimate, and applied

THE TEST,

saying, "If thou art a great people, go up to the mountain, for it is a wood, and clear for thyself, if mount

Ephraim be too narrow for thee." Thus were their words tested.

Let us remember, beloved, that God is a God of truth, and loves reality. Better be little and have that which is little, yet real, than boast of wisdom and power, and all the while be walking in a vain show. God will hold us to our professions and pretensions. If in self-sufficiency we say, "I am a great people," He will in His own way and time test us, virtually saying to us, "If thou art a great people, do this, or go there, and *prove* it—clear for thyself and possess."

It is very instructive to notice that, although the children of Joseph declared themselves a great people, and craved a larger portion, they at the same time proved the littleness or weakness of their faith in Jehovah's promise; for whilst they said, "The hill is not enough for us," they confessed that the inhabitants of the valley, with their iron chariots, defied and dismayed them. Listen! "The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron."

They had failed to prove themselves a great people; for had they been strong in faith, or of great faith in Jehovah, they would have realized His word through Moses: "When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them; for Jehovah thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

Joshua's reply is also instructive. As when they first declared their greatness, he did not call in question their words, but based on them his exhortation to prove it, "Go up and clear for yourselves," so now he *acknowledges* their greatness and power, assigning to them another lot.

Dear fellow-believer, would it not be well if we imitated Joshua, *sometimes* at least? If we meet with Christians

who are disposed, either by word, spirit, or manner, to boast of knowledge and power, instead of denying it, or meeting pride with pride, and saying, "We have wisdom as well as you, we are not inferior to you at all," let us rather remind them of the greater responsibility of such, that God expects from them accordingly; also that we wait to see the proof of it, virtually saying, "If thou art a great people, go up and clear for thyself." Let us ask them to give

EVIDENCE OF POWER.

Truly these children of Joseph were great, for Jehovah had made them so. They sprang from a great man, who by the way of the prison reached the seat of power in Egypt, and there preserved his family from death. The famine seemed to write the sentence of death on their hopes and on them; but Jehovah had ordained that through the hated and persecuted one, raised as lord of Egypt and master of its stores, they should reach that greatness of which Moses spake. (Deut. xxxiii. 17.)

Jehovah had indeed blessed Joseph and his seed. No over-estimate of power on their part could alter that fact; He had done it for His name's sake.

God our Father has exalted and blessed us also in Christ, raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Him, blessing us there with all spiritual blessings. He has given us infinite resources in Christ; for "it pleased *the Father* that in Him all fulness should dwell," and in and by Him we are complete, fully furnished for enjoyment, for obedience, for service, and for suffering. Through Him who loved us we are more than conquerors in all that is against us; every saint, Gad-like, must "overcome at the last," even principalities and powers must for ever yield, that we may possess; for *we are a great people*, and, in HIM, of great power: "If God,"

even Father, Son, and Spirit, "be for us, who can be against us?" Surely, beloved, if we were simple and trustful, even as the God whom we trust is faithful, we should ever be invincible. Let us, then, seek to be of great faith, and strong in faith, then we shall not need to say we are a great people, but we shall prove it by conquest of our enemies, by possession and enjoyment of our portion in Christ, and by patient, Christ-like, effectual service for Him.

The fact of Joseph's greatness having been admitted by Joshua, he proceeds to direct and encourage the people to take possession of the added lot: "The mountain shall be thine, and *thou shalt* possess it: for it is a wood, and *thou shalt* cut it down: and the *outgoings* of it shall be thine." They were to employ their energies in *ascending* and *clearing* for themselves.

To this they were encouraged by the promise of the "outgoings." They were to make a thorough work of clearing, and then to utilize the soil; they were to possess it entire. Moreover, they were further encouraged to their work by the promise of victory over their enemies, who would dispute and resist their progress and possession: "For *thou shalt* drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong." Thus were they encouraged as soldiers and as workmen; and by acting in faith on such words they would verify their own declaration and prove their power.

Surely, beloved fellow-Christian, *we* have abundant ground for encouragement in God and in the promises of His word, which are all yea and amen in Christ; we also need to remind one another of all that is promised us, for we have many adversaries. Faith's upward flight of thought and affection, and our onward course of obedience and of service, are both disputed and resisted; princi-

palities and powers, wicked spirits in the heavenlies resist; our own flesh and evil heart opposes; evils and sorrows in the Church sadden, and miseries in the world pain us. All these have a downward, backward tendency, and call for the energy of simple faith to lift our souls, and to enable us to stand, withstand, and still to stand.

Strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, equipped from head to feet in the whole armour of God, we shall be more than conquerors through Him who loved us, we shall enlarge our coast, possess increased blessing and enjoyment, and with growing diligence and patience work for the Master, and, if needs be, suffer for His sake. So may it be.

H. H.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

What was the cup used at the Passover?

WE have no allusion to a cup in connection with the institution of the feast in Egypt. At the last Passover, mentioned in Luke xxii. 17, our Lord takes a cup, and says, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." On Him rested the Nazarite vow, and there is here probably an allusion to Num. vi. 20. "The cup of salvation" is also spoken of in Psalm cxvi. 13; but this would harmonize more with the song on the Canaan side of the Red Sea than with the feast in Egypt. Connected with the feast *in the land*, however, were meat-offerings and drink-offerings (see Num. xxviii. 16-25), and out of this a prominence was doubtless given to the cup, though we read nothing of one in the original appointment in Egypt. To our Lord it was the *Egypt* Passover; the Red Sea, with all its waves and billows, lay before Him, and until He had reached the kingdom on the other side He would not partake of the cup which would tell of the fulfilment of His Nazarite vow.

Does the "sinner" in James v. 20 refer to the saved or unsaved?

FROM the words in the previous verse, "*Brethren, if any of you do err,*" we conclude that the erring one is a Christian, who, like Peter, when he denied his Lord, needs to be converted or turned back. Every child of God is sure to be brought back, for his security is in

Christ; but not every backslider is a child of God; for many only backslide from a profession that has no reality. Such are stony-ground hearers, who "believe for a while," and then fall away, and are lost. The expression, "shall save a soul from death," is parallel to the converse statement in Rom. xiv. 15, "Destroy not him . . . for whom Christ died." We become saviours or destroyers in proportion as we act with or against God in His desire for a believer's restoration, and the same is true in regard to the conversion of a sinner from his sins in the first instance. The word of God is given to make us wise in the work of salvation, as Paul tells Timothy (2nd Epistle, iii. 15).

To what does "as ye are unleavened" refer in 1 Cor. v. 7?

THE "unleavened" here refers to our standing in Christ, and corresponds with "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus," in chap. vi. 11. The end of all discipline in the assembly, or of self-judgment in the individual, is to bring the actual condition into accord with the heavenly standing. The Corinthians, like many in the present day, had been glorying in their relation to Christ, and in their standing in Him, and had thereby been led to treat sin lightly; hence Paul's solemn word, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven," the old leaven being the sin referred to, which had been tolerated, and was in danger of corrupting the whole assembly. To glory in the Lord is one thing; to glory in our standing is quite another, and is one of the most delusive forms of Satanic craft; for by it the heart is flattered, beguiled, and led away from the Lord to itself and to a standing, which, after all, may have no reality. May we seek not to be ignorant of Satan's devices.

What is the meaning of being "baptized for the dead" in 1 Cor. xv. 29?

BAPTISM as appointed by Christ has reference to the hope of resurrection. "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him." (Col. ii. 12.) Hence believers may be said to be baptized "for the dead," in reference to their condition as by nature dead in trespasses and sins, but in hope of a resurrection to come, and in faith of an eternal life now possessed, the indwelling Spirit being the pledge of the resurrection of the mortal body. (See Rom. viii. 11.) "The dead" may refer to those who have actually died, in which case the passage would point to believers being baptized on behalf of others who had sealed their testimony with their blood. But the former explanation seems more consistent with the general analogy of Scripture. Few passages have been more variously explained.

“IN THE MIDST.”

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I
in the midst of them.”—MATTH. xviii. 20.

THIS is one of the oft-quoted passages in God’s word, so constantly on our lips and so familiar, that we are in danger, while holding fast the words, of losing their power. May the Holy Spirit remind us afresh what it really means, and what is involved in having the Lord Jesus in our midst when we gather in His name, especially at His table.

Let us consider *who* it is that is in the midst.

“The *just* Lord is in the midst” (Zeph. iii. 5); the One who loves reality and truth. With His even balances and just weights *He* is there, with unerring accuracy weighing our spirits and trying our reins, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. Did we always remember this, how *real* we should be before Him, and how truly our thoughts would be centred on Him in whose presence we are, and before whom we profess to bow; how we should seek to recall every wandering imagination, and bring every thought into captivity, that we might worship Him in spirit and in truth! Is it always thus? or do we not often *seem* like worshippers, whilst He who is in the midst sees that our hearts are but little occupied with Him?

Again, it is “the *King*,” “the *Lord*” who is “in the midst.” (Zeph. iii. 15.) “The King sitteth at His table.” “He is thy Lord: worship thou Him.” If we remember the *majesty* of Him who gathers us around Himself, will there not be reverence of demeanour as well as deep reverence of heart—no careless looking about, no listless

behaviour, no talking one with another? We should not *dare* to behave thus in the presence of an earthly king, and shall we be *less* reverent in His presence before whom angels veil their faces, who is King of kings and Lord of lords? And if *the Lord* is in the midst, should we not gather round Him with loyal hearts, owning Him Lord of all, and letting Him reign supreme in our affections and desires, in our thoughts, and words, and ways?

Then, too, He is "the *Holy One* in our midst" (Hosea xi. 9), who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity. He who walks in the midst must see no unclean thing, no indulged evil, lest He turn away. (Deut. xxiii. 14.) Let us search and try our ways; let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; let us separate ourselves from evil and worldliness of every kind, that we grieve not that Holy One in our midst.

We find also that He is "the *glory* in the midst" (Zech. ii. 5), and there can be no room for glorifying ourselves, or glorying in one another. "The Lord alone shall be exalted." May we learn increasingly what it is with one mind and one mouth to glorify Him.

He is likewise in our midst to lead our praises: "In the midst of the church will I *sing praise unto thee*." (Heb. ii. 12.) How we should look to Him to give the right note, the keynote of our worship! How carefully should we listen and follow as He leads, and seek that no discordant thought or feeling in us should mar the harmony as it ascends to God our Father! But should there seem to be a discordant note in others, we should all the more seek to keep our own hearts in tune.

As *Great High Priest* also He "walketh in the midst of the seven candlesticks." (Rev. ii. 1.) He is there to trim the lamps with the golden snuffers, whilst the continual incense is ascending (Exod. xxx. 7); to remove everything

that obscures our light, and to renew the oil; to fill us with the Holy Spirit that we may shine with His light in the midst of the darkness around.

Again, it is the *Lamb once slain* who is "in the midst." (Rev. v. 6.) We are not likely to forget this; but may He give us ever a deeper sense of what it cost Him to bring us nigh, as He stands in our midst showing His wounded side, and hands, and feet. How glad should the disciples be when they thus see their Lord! How every heart should be drawn out with fervent, grateful love!

"Amidst us *our Beloved* stands,"

Our Beloved as well as our Lord, and He comes speaking peace through His precious blood. As He thus stands He would quiet every anxious, troubled thought, and every unbelieving fear (Luke xxiv. 36-40); and not only this, but He would breathe afresh into our souls the power of the Holy Ghost (John xx. 21, 22), thus empowering us to go forth and live for Him—sent into the world as the Father sent Him, to be His messengers and His witnesses.

If the Lord Jesus is thus in our midst, and we give Him His true place, not in word only but in power, then will the word of Zeph. iii. 17 be true of us: "He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing."

And is not this what our souls should seek after, that He may have joy in us, that He may go from heart to heart and gather His pleasant fruits? There will always be much of weakness, and much of failure; but He is our High Priest, bearing the iniquity of our holy things, and rejoicing to gather up all that is real and true in us now, and looking on to the joy set before Him, when without spot of sin we shall be gathered round Himself for ever, and He will present us "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.”

1 JOHN iii. 15, 16.

“THE world” here means the present arrangement of things, the principles on which men of the world act, and by which wealth, position, and the world’s good word may be gained. Such is the “cosmos” which we are forbidden to love. Love is mutual; the world loves and praises its own; and those who act on the world’s principles, desire its pleasures, its honours, its good-will—these declare their kinship.

But the mutual position of the world, and the single-eyed follower of Christ, with respect to each other, is, that each is crucified to the other. (Gal. vi. 14.) The world regards such an one with contempt. It cannot make use of him, for his principles of action are exactly opposed to its own; it can get no pleasure out of him, for there is no sympathy between them. To the world he is offensive, as a crucified one. And to one in whom Christ dwells the world is offensive; though in it, during the Lord’s pleasure, he is not of it; he is as distinctly separate from it as life is from death.

Neither may we love the things that are in the world—“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.” Under these three heads are gathered all the *things* of the world—its pleasures, its possessions, and the distinctions it bestows on its servants.

The Holy Spirit declares that, to be the friend of the world is to be the enemy of God. (James iv. 4, 5.)

How true this is is evidenced by the world’s past and present attitude towards God. For though God loved it

(John iii. 16), and Christ came to save it (John xii. 47), it loved the darkness. So Christ, "the Light," left it—left it with prayer for His murderers. (Luke xxiii. 34.)

Its present position, after nearly two thousand years of compassionate patience on God's part, is, that it has not known the Father (John xvii. 25); it hates the Son (John vii. 7); it cannot receive the Spirit (John xiv. 17); it lies in the arms of the wicked one. (1 John v. 19.) The world has chosen its own cradle, and is being willingly lulled into death.

Such is the world in its moral aspect; well may Christians be satisfied to be crucified to it, as it is to them.

But towards the world in its material aspect, our position is different. In merely material things the world is the servant of God's children, for they are to use it (1 Cor. vii. 31), though they must be watchful not to abuse it. By our Father's appointment its material supplies minister to our material need. In obedience to His will then, while He keeps us in the world we use it; that is, we make it subserve our purpose.

Now, our purpose being the glory of God (1 Cor. x. 31), who leaves us down here to act in Christ's interests, we must be watchful lest the lawful using of the world's material things should ensnare us into any participation in its principles; for we may not "abuse" or "use to the full" (marg. R.V.) even these things, and we are also commanded to keep ourselves "unspotted" from it. (James i. 27.)

Again, while our attitude with regard to the world is to be that of watchful avoidance of defilement in the using of it, and of entire separateness from its principles and motives and aims, and of crucifixion to itself as the hater of God and the murderer of Christ—to the individuals in

it our attitude must not be one of enmity, but of prayerful, loving solicitude.

In character we are commanded to be like our Father, who is kind to the unthankful and the evil. As yet this is the day of grace; for God is not judging the world (2 Cor. v. 19), but striving in Christ to reconcile it to Himself, *not imputing men's trespasses unto them.*

As our Father is not imputing their trespasses to men, it follows that His children may not do so. Our Lord also has told us that He came into the world, not to judge it, but to save it. (John xii. 47.) That was *the purpose* of Jesus, and therefore from the standpoint also of discipleship a Christian cannot hold any position of judging *in the world.* Our Lord said, "*As thou hast sent me into the world, so have I sent them into the world.*" Seeing then that our "commission" is framed on the same principle as our Master's, it would be to His dishonour and to our loss to decline it, and to accept one from the enemy.

We have full and explicit directions for our conduct as submitters to worldly government (1 Peter ii. 13; Rom. xiii. 1), but none as makers or exercisers of government *in the world.*

Our attitude is to be that of persuasion, not of rule; of instruction, not of coercion; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

So acting as the children of God and the servants of Jesus Christ towards those whose country we are traversing, our position is that of "the stranger." (Heb. xi. 13.) Belonging to another country, where all our property is stored, and our names entered as citizens (1 Peter ii. 11; Matt. vi. 20; Heb. xii. 23; Eph. ii. 19), we have no control in the arrangements of this foreign land, no share in its honours, no time for its pleasures, no right to its distinctions. Like travellers we can give to these things but

a passing glance; and to the world's motives of action we are, as followers of Christ, utterly opposed, knowing, on the authority of God, that they are false, however fair to the eye, and that all connected with this world is awaiting the solemn judgment of God. (2 Peter iii. 7; 2 Thess. i. 7-9.)

E. S. W.

“EVEN AS HE WALKED.”

O HEART most holy,
 O life most lowly!
 Thou who didst stoop to birth
 Here on this dark, sad earth,
 How everywhere Thy sacred footsteps trod
 With heavenly messages to men from God;
 Thy one joy being still
 To do His will.

Was there one yearning,
 Whose poor heart, turning
 To seek from Thy blest eyes
 Pitying love's replies,
 Felt o'er the conscious soul dark shadows sweep
 Of sin and sorrow? Thou for such didst keep
 A word of sweet release,
 Thy—"Go in peace!"

Was there one crying,
 Whose proud heart, trying
 In faith all incomplete
 Thy gracious word to meet,
 Tossed in perplexèd strife? For such, Thy smile
 Of strong and sweet encouragement, the while
 "Help Thou mine unbelief!"
 Brought joy for grief.

"EVEN AS HE WALKED."

Was there one weeping,
 Whose heart was keeping
 Watch for Thy face withdrawn?
 To such Thou cam'st at dawn,
 And with one look laid every doubt at rest,
 While listening love again grew surely blest
 With Thy dear voice, the same,
 Speaking its name.

To each appealing
 Thy touch of healing,
 O Thou who cam'st to save!
 An instant answer gave:
 Sorrow, and pain, and sin, and death, and strife,
 Paused at Thy coming, who wast Light and Life.
 And Thou didst bid *us* show
 Thy life below.

And sad our losing
 If, self-excusing,
 We shrink from so divine
 A path to tread as Thine:
 For, looking stedfastly upon *Thy* face,
 Ev'n ours shall shine with such reflected grace
 That we shall seem to be
 A part of Thee.

O Love unfailing!
Shall unavailing
 Thy path to Thine be shown—
 Yet we still choose *our own*?
 Nay, rather let us take Thy hand, and so
 Most humbly follow, though our steps be slow,
 Our joy, too, being still
 To do God's will.

AT THE LORD'S FEET.

ON three different occasions, and three only, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, is brought before us in the gospels, and each time we find her at the feet of the blessed Lord. There is in this simple fact something very suggestive and instructive, and it may be for our profit to dwell a little on what we are told concerning her.

1. Luke tells us that the Lord "entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat *at the Lord's feet* [see R.V.], and heard His word." (Chap. x. 38-40.) Definite and expressive is the statement, "Martha *received* Him." At a time when the authorities of the nation were against Him, when it was even decreed "that if any one confessed that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue" (John ix. 22), the household at Bethany showed their faith in Him by receiving Him into their dwelling. Then having received Him, Martha did not, like Simon the Pharisee, act as though she was half-ashamed of what she had done, and treat Him with negligence. On the contrary, her mind became fully occupied with the question how she should worthily entertain Him.

The two sisters were certainly of one mind in their desire to honour Him who had honoured them by becoming a guest in their house, but they manifested this desire in different ways. What she could *do* for the Lord was the one thing before Martha, while Mary seems rather to have considered what she could *learn* from Him. In the spirit of faith she gives Him His true place as the very

God of Israel; she sits at His feet and receives of His words. (Deut. xxxiii. 3.) We are not told that Mary did not render any service; on the contrary, the complaint of Martha, "My sister *left* me to serve alone," implies that Mary had been assisting in the preparations to receive the Lord until He came in, when she at once became a learner at His feet. This place was hers by her own *choice*; both could have had it; one "chose" it, and the Lord commended her for so doing, while her sister, who sought to disturb her, brought upon herself a decided, though gentle, reproof.

It is easier to many, perhaps to most, of the Lord's people, to *do* than to *be still*. Yet no one has learned to do anything in the way that is most acceptable to God who has not first learned to sit at the Lord's feet. We may often require to be roused from the stillness of indolence, but indolence can never be the characteristic of a soul that is learning of Christ. When the Lord chose His twelve apostles it was that they might be *with Him*, and that He might send them forth to preach and to heal. (Mark iii. 14.) Their first business was to be "*with Him*;" only thus could they be fitted for service. And the man of most untiring energy in the Church of God, who "laboured more abundantly than they all," was the one who never ceased to sit in lowliness at the feet of Christ, and who forgot all his service in the burning desire to "know Him." The moment we begin to think more of what we can do for the Lord, than of what we need from Him, we are in danger; for if our serving be not in the spirit of lowliness and dependence, it will only minister to that pride and self-sufficiency which are so natural to us.

Then let us mark carefully that it was at "*the Lord's feet*" that Mary sat. This seems to be the true reading,

and it intimates the reverence with which He was treated. As "*Lord*" Martha addressed Him, as "*the Lord*" they ever regarded Him. Let us beware how we think and speak of Him whom "God has made both Lord and Christ;" for it is perfectly impossible that the spirit of true humility can exist apart from the spirit of deep reverence towards the Lord.

2. We turn now to a scene of bereavement and sorrow, and see the Lord in His grace entering into it. (John xi.) And here we may just notice in passing the perfect harmony between the traits of the character of both Mary and Martha in the distinct and independent accounts given to us by Luke and John of two such contrasted scenes. The believer may challenge a world of sceptics to account for this beautiful harmony of John's incidental portrait with the statements of Luke, except by the admission of the perfect truthfulness of each narrative. He who would allow for a moment the theory of *invention* here betrays a credulity that may be imposed upon to any extent. As soon as Martha heard of the approach of the Lord she hastened to meet Him, and her sudden disappearance caused no remark, while Mary's was noticed at once. The latter seems not to have known that the Lord had come until Martha went to her with the word, spoken secretly because of the many surrounding her, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." She sat no longer, nor did she move with tardy steps; for "as soon as she heard that, she arose *quickly*, and came unto Him." Then falling "*at His feet*," she gave utterance to the burden of her heart in the same words that Martha had previously used, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." She did not add what Martha had added; her words were very few, but the Lord marked her tears, and read the anguish and longing of her heart

and showed His sympathy therewith. Martha's words had drawn from His lips words of grace and power that have since then brought comfort and hope to many sorrowful hearts; but the deeper feeling of Mary brings to view those deep emotions of the heart of Christ which help to show us the reality of His perfect human sympathy.

And let us note that she who had sat at the Lord's feet in days of quietness and ease, that she might hear His word and learn of Himself, now finds her place at those feet in days of deep sorrow. Let us be reminded of the blessed fact, that there is no sorrow too deep for the Lord to enter into, no anguish too keen for us to bring to His feet, with the assurance that there we shall find relief. Has the heart a burden that no earthly friend can share? Then is this heavenly Friend both able and willing to take the burden and give rest to the weary one. Has the believer a sorrow, concerning which the lip is sealed to all below? Here is One who knows it all in its utmost depths, and is able to deal with it in the perfection of human sympathy and the fulness of divine power.

“And well it is for us our God should feel
Alone our secret throbbings; so our prayer
May readier spring to heaven, nor spend its zeal
On cloud-born idols of this lower air.

“For if one heart in perfect sympathy
Beat with another, answering love for love,
Weak mortals, all entranced, on earth would lie,
Nor listen for those purer strains above.”

At His feet, who is now upon the very throne of God, which His precious blood has made a throne of grace, is indeed the place for the burdened heart; for there, and only there, can we tell out all, whether our burden spring from

circumstances or from deeper discoveries of ourselves in the presence of our God.

3. But once more we find this highly-favoured one at the feet of her Saviour and Lord. (Matt. xxvi. 6-13; Mark xiv. 3-9; John xii. 1-8.) He arrived at Bethany six days before the passover, and apparently spent the last Sabbath before His death in that quiet retreat. There, in the house of Simon the leper, "they made Him a supper," entertaining Him as a guest worthy of all honour. Simon could not have been a leper then, or he would have been debarred from this social intercourse. Like many others, he may have owed healing to the grace and power of Christ, and hailed the opportunity of giving some little expression to his gratitude. Lazarus, too, whom the Lord called from the grave, "was one of them that sat at the table with Him," while Martha was in her accustomed place of service; she had the honour, and that no small one, of waiting on her Lord, and here apparently her service was rendered without distraction. A deeper acquaintance with the Lord, gained amid the circumstances of sorrow through which she had passed, seems to have led to a quieter spirit and more acceptable service.

But the one thing that distinguishes this supper, and makes it ever memorable, is the service of her whose time had come to perform the crowning act and token of her love to Him whose love she had already so deeply proved. She is again in her "chosen" place at the feet of Jesus, not now as the broken-hearted mourner, for her sighing has been turned to gladness; nor is she there so much as the learner, but especially as the worshipper. She has come to render to the Lord the noblest service, perhaps, ever rendered by human hands during His lowly life on earth. She brought a pound of "very costly" and "very

precious," yea "exceeding precious, ointment" as her offering to her Lord. (Comp. the three accounts in the Revised Version.) Thus it is carefully described by that Spirit of truth whose delight it is to glorify Christ, and to see Him honoured. And she not only brought it, but with her own hands she broke the box and bestowed it upon Him. Matthew and Mark tell us that she poured it on His head; John states the additional fact that she "anointed *the feet of Jesus*, and wiped His feet with her hair."

Anointing the head was a customary and, in those countries, a very grateful token of respect. But Mary's act was no common courtesy of everyday life; it was an act of true adoration and love, and an expression of deep reverence and gratitude. It was a response to the word, "He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him." To her faith He was indeed the King sitting at His table, and therefore she caused her spikenard to give forth its fragrance, while she laid her very glory at His feet; "she wiped His feet with her hair." (See 1 Cor. xi. 15.) She thought not of filling the house with odour, much less of filling the world with her fame. Her thoughts were wholly on the Lord, and her service was an expression of whole-hearted devotedness to Him. But the loving service was made manifest to all; while the murmurings of those who could not appreciate it drew from the Lord words of commendation which have ever since gone side by side with the record of His own wondrous service for us, and must abide to her eternal praise.

The "indignation" against her originated with Judas, who knew nothing of love to the Lord; but there is a solemn lesson for us in the fact that some of the Lord's true disciples joined him in his murmuring. No doubt any of them who suffered a word of reproof to escape their

lips, or allowed the feeling of indignation to find a place in their hearts, were truly ashamed afterwards to think of having regarded as "waste" anything that was used on Him who so soon poured out His very life for them. Let us be warned against judging as *waste* any service to the Lord which may be above our appreciation. But, whatever they may say, the Lord will not allow her to be disturbed now, any more than He would when she first took her place at His feet. In wondrous grace He passes over the slight to Himself conveyed in their words, while with equal dignity He accepts her expression of adoration, and defends her from their reproaches. He who as the Servant of God sets us an example of the proper care of God's gifts in gathering up the fragments after miraculously feeding the multitude (John vi. 12), accepts the most costly offering made to Him by His people, with the simple consciousness that He is infinitely worthy of their highest worship. "Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good" (or noble) "work on me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always." The special opportunity of ministering thus immediately to Himself He knew would never occur again, and He intimates it in the words, "She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying." Not that she meant this, but He knew that before the fragrance of that perfume had entirely passed away, He would be in the grave. *This* was His preparation for burial; He would need no other embalming, and His resurrection would prevent it.

Though she sought not her place at His feet this time especially to hear His word, yet she did hear it; and how gratefully it must have fallen upon her ear. Surely we never can bring an offering to the Lord without receiving something from Him. How His word of commendation

must have enabled her to rise above the reproaches of others ! We no longer have the Lord with us, as she had, but our opportunities of serving Him are as real as hers. The adoration of our hearts He can always delight in, while our highest service can be worthily bestowed upon His members, for we have to do with One who can never think less of the manifestation of love to His members than He did of the token of it bestowed upon His own person ; and we do well to consider whether we are pursuing such a course as will elicit from Him who knows the heart and the ability which God hath given to each one, such a word of commendation as that spoken of her, "She hath done what she could." Let us remember that the word of approval spoken by the Lord at His judgment-seat will be as abiding as the word here spoken of Mary. It will never fade from the memory of either the Speaker or the hearers, but will be an eternal joy to those who obtain it. And many a deed of love and tenderness and sympathy, known to but few on earth, and forgotten by the one from whose heart it sprang, will be owned by Him in that day as "a noble work." The thought may well stir us to use precious moments in fellowship with God, without wasting them either in dwelling upon or recording what we fancy we have done. What is worth remembering is recorded on high, and it will be far better to find it is more than we supposed than to discover it to be less. He by whom "actions are *weighed*," and He alone, can give the true estimate, for He only knows the motive from which every act springs.

May we know more of sitting at the Lord's feet as learners, so that if sorrow come, that place of sympathy may be no strange place to us, and that we may find ourselves at home there too in adoration and worship. (See Rev. v. 8.)

W. H. B.

ALL SCRIPTURE "GOD-BREATHED."

SUCH is the *literal* rendering of the first part of 2 Tim. iii. 16, which is well translated in our Bibles, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Two things are declared by the apostle in this verse concerning the written word of God. First, its SOURCE; viz., it proceeded immediately *from God*; second, its USES; viz., it is profitable for doctrine, &c. This twofold significance of the apostle's words is sadly lost sight of in the translation of the verse given in the Revised Version; while the rendering the revisers propose; viz., "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable," &c., reduces the apostle's words to a mere truism, and leaves room for the idea that there are *some* Scriptures which are not inspired of God—a favourite idea with some modern divines, but not to be tolerated by any who love and fear God and His word.

All Christians have rightly claimed these words of Paul as a declaration that the Bible they love and daily read was (in its original languages) given by God Himself in every jot and tittle of it, and the more they read it, looking up to God for His teaching as they read, the more persuaded they become that it is so. From Genesis to Malachi, and from Matthew to Revelation, a thousand tokens and proofs arise to them from the pages themselves, that God Himself was its Author, and that none but God possibly could be; while the enlightenment, and joy, and peace their reading of it gives them are corresponding proofs from within their own hearts. All the objects of the outward creation—above, below, and around—proclaim themselves to our eye and ear as being from God, from the sun in the heavens to the flower or the insect beneath our

feet, marred by sin and the curse though they be, and so does the Bible declare itself to our souls to be God's own utterance and writing, even though it reaches too many of us only through the medium of an uninspired translation.

Indeed, it has been well said that there never have been but two absolutely and divinely *perfect* objects before the eyes of men in this world; viz., Jesus Himself *the Living Word*, and the God-breathed *written word*. All Christians delight to own that Jesus our Lord was the God-formed One in the virgin's womb, and showed Himself such from His birth to His death, and thence also to His ascension to God's right hand, according to that word of His own ere He became flesh—"A body hast thou prepared me." Just so with the *written word*; it is as perfectly God-breathed as Jesus Himself was perfectly God-formed. No Christian would tamper with Christ's person or work, nor allow others to do so; and let none add to, or take from, God's word; but only seek to learn more and more exactly the *ipsissima verba*, the very words themselves which God gave through the pens of His own God-guided writers. The CONTEXT of 2 Tim. iii. 16 adds greatly to its interest and its importance. Paul was describing to Timothy the flood of evil which he knew must come in "the last days," even in the *name* of God and Christ, by means of a formal and false Christianity. He was also telling Timothy that his own departure was at hand. Now as long as the apostles still lived there were living men to appeal to who spoke and wrote with divine authority, as Paul says, "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (1 Cor. xiv. 37.) Weighty words for anyone to use concerning his own pen! but true of the pens of the apostles, as all God-taught readers allow. But in 2 Tim. the day was near when no more of such writers would be left; the apostles would all have died. Fore-

seeing this, Paul assures Timothy that he would still have the "holy Scriptures;" that God's voice and mind would still be present by those Scriptures amongst the waiting and suffering saints; in fact, that they would not be any the less provided for when apostles were all departed than when they had had them living amongst them; for these God-breathed and holy Scriptures were all-sufficient to "*perfect*" the man of God, and to "*thoroughly*" furnish him "unto all good works."

This divine authorship of the Scriptures, even to their every line and word, and this emphatic declaration of their sufficiency for us as God's children, comes most naturally when the world's evil is the subject in hand. Our Lord Himself connected the sanctifying power of the Scriptures with our being left behind in this evil world. His words in John xvii. 15, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil," were quickly followed in verse 17 with, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy *Word* is truth." So also Paul, when warning the Ephesus elders (Acts xx. 32), as he did Timothy, of evil days that were to come, says, "And now, brethren, I commend you *to God* and *to the word* of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

Peter too, when looking, like Paul, for his own departure, does the same. (See 2 Peter i. 19-21.) He gives his readers no expectation of another mount of transfiguration, but reminds them that the vision and voice of "the holy mount" had confirmed *the word* of prophecy; and that henceforth this prophecy of the Scripture was sufficient to make and keep them an "illuminated" people (see Heb. x. 32), and that too because it was "God-breathed." "For," says he, "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of old spake

as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." How parallel this passage is to Paul's words in 2 Tim. iii. 16.

And even as to the "gospel of God," to which he had been "separated," Paul says it had been promised afore in the *holy Scriptures* (see Rom. i. 2); and in Rom. xvi. 25 he again says, "My gospel," and "the revelation of the mystery . . . now is made manifest, and by the *Scriptures* of the prophets . . . is made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."

So whether it is the gospel to the unregenerate, or the word of prophecy to make "the day dawn and the day star arise" within the waiting saints, or the need there would be of church warning and instructions for the last days, it was the God-breathed and holy Scriptures to which the apostles themselves turned, and to which they commended us after them.

And lastly, in Rev. xxii. 18-20 John closes his writings, as Paul and Peter had before him, with the sufficiency and supreme authority of what he and others had written, and pronounces eternal doom on all who should presumptuously either *add* to or *take from* them.

Nor is it in the New Testament writers only that we find such reverence and value for what God had caused them to write. We see the same in the inspired authors of the Old Testament Scriptures—if indeed the current phrase "Old Testament Scriptures" is, strictly speaking, a correct one—concerning writings that cannot in their highest aspect be ever called "old," since they are as full of Christ as are any of the New Testament.

To begin with Moses. He felt the authority and the solemn character of his own "Five Books." Deut. xxix. 29 remarkably shows this. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever,

that we may do all the words of this law." These words belong, of course, primarily to the predictions in chaps. xxviii. and xxix. of the decay of the Israel nation if they gave way to idolatry, a result not seen in Rome or Greece, and a "secret thing" known only to God, and revealed only by Him. But the words have also a larger meaning. They fitly describe ALL that Moses had written. What a brief, and what a divinely-selected, narrative Genesis gives of over two thousand years of this world's history! As Moses reviewed his own pages, well might he wonder at the multitude of "secret things" which God had not revealed, as well as reverence the authority of what *was* made known, and honour it by seeking to "do all the words of this law." Doubtless, for all God's children the brevity of God's Bible, and the consequent ease with which it can be read, is on purpose to leave us so much the more time for pondering its truths, and for obeying its commands.

Turn next to David, and see in Ps. xix. the parallel he draws between the sun in the heavens moving through creation in its majesty, and "nothing hid from the heat thereof," and "the law of the Lord" in its perfectness "converting the soul," a truth well expressed in the verse—

"A glory gilds the *sacred page*,
Majestic like the sun ;
It gives a light to every age—
It gives, but borrows none."

See too, in Ps. cxix., not only the writer's eloquent and manifold delight in even the comparatively scanty Scriptures that were then possessed, but notice especially his repeated prayer for "understanding" by which to know them. See verse 27: "Make me to *understand* the way of thy precepts." Verse 34: "Give me *understanding*, and I shall keep thy law." See also verses 73 and 144. Surely

this shows the psalmist's consciousness that the Scriptures were divine, and needed that God should unfold them.

Turn also to Solomon (Eccles. xii. 10, 12): "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was *upright*, even words of truth. In v. 10 Solomon, as a God-supplied writer, whose words were "given from one shepherd" (v. 11), freely owns his diligent use of his own faculties; while in verse 12 he accounts what God had given even *him* to write to be enough for his son's admonition. How like this is to Paul's word to his son Timothy, "All Scripture is God-breathed . . . that the man of God *may be perfect, throughly furnished* to every good work."

Indeed, every "thus saith the Lord" from Genesis to Malachi might be quoted as proof on proof that "holy men of God" *knew*, as Peter says, that they "spake (and wrote) as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And, in Malachi iv. 4, all the canon of Old Testament closes with turning back again to the Books of Moses as still adequate and all-sufficient for such as "feared the Lord" in even Malachi's evil days. "Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded to him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments."

Lastly, let us learn from 2 Tim. iii. 16 that the highest in authority in God's Church—the apostles themselves, who had "seen the Lord," and had heard Him—yet put "the holy Scriptures" as of authority also over them. Just as a king of Israel, though highest in authority in the land, yet had this appointed for him by God: "It shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law. . . . And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them."

(Deut. xvii. 18, 19.) And what wonder, when He who was Himself the Author of God's spoken law, and the Giver of the written word, deigned and delighted to become man, that He might Himself first study, and then obey, both in life and in death, that law and those Scriptures of which He had Himself been the Author!

Blessed Lord Jesus, teach us and all thy saints more and more to treasure and obey every jot and tittle of the God-breathed and holy Scriptures. Amen. H. D.

NEARING HOME.

THE falling asleep of Mr. MACLEOD WYLIE, at Weston-super-Mare, 25th September, 1881, gives a special significance to these lines, which he sent to us some time ago. The lack of his loving care for God's children, and of his service in many ways, will be widely felt.

THE Spirit's gales blow fair,
 With gentle force they come ;
 And sweeping on they seem to say—
 "Rejoice! you're nearing home."
 Few storms now lie before ;
 My heart no more shall roam ;
 For gleams of daybreak surely tell
 I'm nearing, nearing home.
 The fever'd dreams of youth,
 Earth's weariness and gloom,
 Are passing all ; and now I know
 The joy of nearing home.
 Rough, rough has been the voyage ;
 But, oh, *the joys to come!*
 What strange delight is in the thought
 That I am nearing home!
 Ah, who would change for this
 Earth's pleasures and its doom?
 My glowing heart bursts forth in praise,
 For I am nearing home.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

What is the meaning of 1 John v. 6?

THE Revised Version more accurately renders it, and with verses 7 and 8 reads thus: "This is He that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not with [Gr. *in*] the water only, but with [*in*] the water and with [*in*] the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one." Water here is a symbol of death, and our Lord "*came by water*" at His baptism, taking typically the place of death as the sinner's due, water being an emblem of the waves and billows of God's wrath under which He went. But He also came "*by blood*;" for not only did He die, but it was a sacrificial and atoning death that He suffered. The words "He came" refer not so much to His incarnation as to His resurrection, wherein He rose "through [*dia*] water and blood." Connect His baptism by John with His baptism of blood, referred to in Luke xii. 50. In the one He fulfilled "all righteousness;" in the other He atoned for all unrighteousness; for without sacrificial bloodshedding there could be no atonement. This essential truth is more emphatically stated in the words which follow: "not in the water only, but in the water and the blood." The force of the Greek prepositions is not easily given in English, but the R. V. shows that a different one is used in the second clause of verse 6. The change from "by" or "through" (*dia*) to "in" (*en*) presents the sacrifice of Christ as not only being instrumentally *through* death, but as resting everlastingly *in* or on the ground of death. The R. V. also brings out a similar difference in the use of these prepositions in Heb. ix. 12 and xiii. 20. In the former we read that Christ entered into the holy place "*through* His own blood," obtaining through it "eternal redemption;" in the latter, that He was brought again from the dead "*with*" or rather "*in* the blood of the everlasting covenant," as showing the ground on which our covenant relationship stands. In 1 John v. 7 the Spirit's testimony stands first as foretold by our Lord in John xv. 26: "He shall testify of me," and then we have the threefold testimony of "the Spirit, and the water, and the blood," agreeing in one. There is doubtless an allusion here to John xix. 34, 35, where the fact of the water and blood flowing from our Lord's pierced side is given as the surest evidence of His death. Salvation hangs on the death of Christ; therefore God graciously gives us indubitable evidence of it. Even in John's day the reality of the death was beginning to be denied, and hence the doctrinal value of this passage.

GOD'S SAINTS.

PSALM cxlix.*

THE book of Psalms has been compared to the life of God's child. It is a changeful stream of joys and sorrows all through, but it runs out in Hallelujah Psalms at last ; and Isaac Watts says—

“Just such is the Christian ; his course he begins
Like the sun in a mist, while he mourns for his sins,
And melts into tears ; then he breaks out and shines,
And travels his heavenly way.
But when he comes nearer to finish his race,
Like a fine setting sun, he looks richer in grace,
And gives a sure hope at the end of his days
Of rising in brighter array.”

In this respect the book of Psalms is like the Bible as a whole : its pages are varied indeed, but they close with the book of Revelation, in which is seen finally and for ever the glory and the joy of the children of God, as well as the eternal doom of the impenitent.

The five Hallelujah Psalms which close the book are as instructive as they are solemn and joyful. They have been often called “The *Haggai* Psalms” (the word “*Haggai*” means joyful), from the internal evidence they contain of having been written to express the joys and soul-exercises of the returned remnant of Haggai's and Zechariah's time ; but these closing Psalms suit the gladness and the worship of God's saints of every age. Many a sick one has in spirit sung them when raised up from weakness and pain by God's gentle hand ; and so have different gathered saints

* Brief notes of an address on this Psalm were given some time ago ; the subject is now enlarged.—Ed.

also, when delivered from some heavy and lengthened trial, which pressed on them as assemblies. Martyrs, too, have sung them, when their "way to escape" (see 1 Cor. x. 13) from temptation and trial here below was given them of God by the faggot and the flame.

Joy of the saints bursts forth in these Psalms, but all they utter is full of meaning. When John in Patmos heard the resurrection praises of the redeemed, though they were LOUD as "the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a *great thunder*" (Rev. xiv. 2), yet they were also as articulate and definite as "the voice of *harpers* harping with their harps;" each string and each note of the praise was *distinct*; while the whole combined was a sound too great for mortal powers to bear, and John had to be "in the Spirit on the Lord's-day" even to hear it. So with these Hallelujah Psalms—they *FILL* the ear, but they instruct as well by their every line and word.

With this in remembrance let us dwell on Psalm cxlix., and especially on the three mentions of God's "SAINTS."

Verse 1. "Sing unto Jehovah a new song, and His praise in the congregation of *saints*."

Verse 5. "Let the *saints* be joyful in glory, and let them sing aloud upon their beds" (rather, couches); and

Verse 9. "To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all His *saints*."

The Hebrew word used for "saints" in each of these three places is *khasidim*, and means "gracious ones." (See T. Newberry's Bible.) God uses also another Hebrew word for "saints" in the book of Psalms; viz., *kadōshim* (see Ps. xxxiv. 9, cvi. 16), which means "holy ones," the word being the same as that which was graven on the mitre of the high priest in the words *Kōdesh la Yehovah*, "Holiness to Jehovah." How fittingly do these two words present God's saints to God's own view! As *kadōshim*,

we are made "holy ones" in Christ towards Himself, even as He—our great High Priest—is holy; as *khasidim* He counts us as "gracious ones" for Himself and to our fellow-men, amongst whom we dwell in this evil world, and thus witness for Him (see Matt. v. 44-48), and "show forth the *virtues*" (see Greek, 1 Peter ii. 9) "of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light." These two views of God's saints correspond to the requirements of the two tables of the law; viz., love to God, and love to our neighbour; and taken together they agree with Paul's doctrine in Romans viii. 4, that "what the law (of God by Moses) could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the LAW *might be fulfilled in us* who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Thus does Christ Himself fulfil by the Holy Ghost in all New Testament believers the two characters of *kadoshim* and *khasidim* given us in the Hebrew Scriptures, and makes us to be "God's SAINTS" in very deed and truth.

Men in their religiousness and their folly separate these two aspects of *saintship* from each other. Ritualism and High Churchism lay claim to the *kadosh* character of *saintship toward God*, on the ground of prayer, abstinence, and penance, &c., whilst forgetting or neglecting the *khesed* or "gracious" character towards men; they know not that God's saints show their holiness and sanctification Godward by their "piety at home," and by fulfilling lovingly towards others all the relationships of life, even as our Lord Himself did in "the days of His flesh." On the other hand, Unitarianism and all Broad Church teaching makes the second table of the law share the place which the first should have entirely to itself, and tells men that if they are but *khesed* in their character, and kind

towards their fellow-men, that of itself stamps them as God's saints, and makes them well-pleasing to Him.

Both these schools of error will reach at last the Korah blasphemy of, "All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and Jehovah is among them" (see Num. xvi. 3), although they arrive at it by two different roads. How needful, therefore, to learn from God Himself who His "saints" are, and the grace divine by which He has made them such.

But though the word "saints" in Psalm cxlix. means "gracious ones" in all three places in which it occurs, the context differs in each place.

1. Verse 1 speaks of "the *congregation* of the gracious ones," and shows us what should occupy them when thus assembled. "Sing unto Jehovah a new song, and His praise in the congregation of the saints." The "*new song*" of His praise is the highest offering which His saints render Him in their assemblies. It is the ascending incense from the unseen and heavenly golden altar before the veil. Of Israel's *two* altars in the Old Testament tabernacle, the golden incense altar was nearer to the ark and the mercy-seat than the brazen altar of burnt-offering outside; but none could stand at it to burn incense and send up its fragrance to God, except by virtue of the blood sprinkled on it, which blood was supplied by the sacrifice of the outer altar of death. So with us. The new song of God's praise can never be accepted from us as His assembled saints except as we render it through Christ; as Peter says, "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God *by Jesus Christ.*" Even when gathered around the throne, the new song of Revelation v. 8 will ascend to God and to the Lamb only from those who are gathered there by the redeeming value of the blood He shed. True, the very *sight* of the Lamb makes it burst forth; but still it is

only *through* Him that it ascends to God. How much more should this be present to our minds *now* in assemblies of God's saints, when our sinfulness stains all we utter !

A second requisite for us as united singers of God's praise is this ; we must as His "*gracious ones*" be walking in love, and love's lowly ways, towards *all our fellow-saints*. (See Matt. v. 23, 24.) "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that *thy brother hath ought against thee*, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Too often, alas ! has disregard of this enfeebled the worship in our assemblies and spoiled the living freshness of the "new song." A brother known to be at unholy variance with his brethren takes public part in God's praise, to the secret grief of others' spirits and to the damage of his own. How different is the singing when all the assembly are unhindered in their soul, Godward, because they are brethren dwelling "together in unity !" This *fellowship* of God's saints will be shown also in our "new song" at "the coming of the Lord, and our gathering together unto Him." It will be both *before* the throne of God and of the Lamb, for all will be uttered direct *to* Him who fills that throne ; and it will be *around* the throne, for all will unite in one circle of love in singing it—a circle that can no more leave out any *fellow-utterer* than any singer could himself be willing to be left out.

The very *wording* of the "new song" shows the same. It is not only, "THOU art worthy : for THOU wast slain," but it also tells of those redeemed to God by the same precious blood "out of every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation." It is the song of a twofold love ; first, to the God of our redemption ; and, next, to ALL our fellow-redeemed ones. Truly we shall all be "gracious

ones" *then*, however feebly that God-like feature of character is seen in us now!

2. But the word in *v.* 5 of this Psalm has a different context. Though it looks onward to the heavenly feast, it also applies to the family life and the meal-times of God's "gracious ones" now, as the former word did to their public assemblies. "Let the *saints* be joyful in glory, and let them sing aloud upon their *couches*;" for so the word "beds" should be rendered; it does not refer to our pillows at night, for then we rightly seek needed *sleep*,

"Sleep that may us more active make,
To serve our God when we awake."

But in the East, as we know, they recline on couches for their daily meals, and hence the ease with which one and another got at Jesus' feet to anoint them. Also "the governor of the *feast*," in John ii., is literally "the governor of the *couches*."

It is to the daily *meal-times* of the saints therefore that Ps. cxlix. 5 applies. And who can tell the importance of God's saints being filled with His praise, and being utterers of it in the *leisure* and *ease* of their daily meals? If we need heavenly themes and power to utter them in our public assemblies, verily we quite as much need them in our dwellings, and in the familiar converse of our meal hours. How many a blessing of soul, and how much warmth of heavenly flame within us, that has been gained at a Lord's-day morning meeting, or at an evening preaching, has been quickly lost again by the mere chit-chat of the dinner or the supper table! Oh, when will children of God be as much in communion of soul with God and with each other at their meal-times as they are, by His grace, at the Lord's Supper, or in public prayer and praise! Surely not until this verse is true of us; not until we

are "joyful in glory" in our own dwellings, and nothing is said or done at our meal table which would chill or check us in singing aloud (if need be) the same "new song" we were singing elsewhere in the assembly.

How different must have been the meal hours of Abraham in his tent, and of Lot in his well-built Sodom house; yet both of them were children of God. Abraham's meal-time was such that heavenly messengers, and even the Lord Himself, could happily partake at it, and could *instantly* after it commune with him on the high things of coming blessing and coming wrath. But they were both to go inside Lot's house, and had no ease or pleasure at any meal couches of his.

And so now. Who does not feel the difference between the meal hours, and the converse at meal tables, of some children of God compared with others? Happy those houses and happy those tables where, along with the "necessary food" of the body, God and His word are the theme of the guests, and the voice of His praise could at any time be suitably heard.

But it is as "*gracious ones*" (*khasidim*) as well as godly ones that we are to be both seen and heard at our daily meals. We most eat and drink to the glory of God when we do so with a loving concern for the soul's welfare of such as are *sitting at meals with us*. This is the apostle's drift and meaning in 1 Cor. x. 31, 32. Verse 31 is too often quoted alone, and the point of the passage is lost; the two should always be joined. Paul's estimate of how far God's saints eat and drank "to the glory of God" was not merely with what sincerity or devoutness they individually gave thanks for the food, but how far they lovingly, and in the self-denying Spirit of Christ, sought the good of their neighbours, who sat with them at the table, and not their own ease. For he connects with

eating to the glory of God the *causing no stumbling* either to the Jew, or to the Gentile, or to the Church of God. Thus, and only thus, can we be God's "gracious ones" at daily meals, when we by His grace do love our neighbours somewhat as ourselves.

As George Herbert quaintly and pithily puts it—

"Look to thy mouth : diseases enter there.
 Thou hast two sconces if thy stomach call ;
 Carve, or discourse ; do not a famine fear.
 Who carves *is kind to two, who talks to all.*
 Look at thy meat . . . then eat a bit ;
 And say withal, earth to earth I do commit."

And only thus, as we both keep the body under, and love our neighbour, even at the meal table shall we really be "joyful in glory," or eat our meat as did the three thousand at Pentecost "with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." (Acts. ii. 46.) Such were God's saints at Jerusalem then, both in their public assembly and "from house to house;" and our God can give like grace to such as seek it of Him even now.

3. In verse 9 the context of the word "saints" is again different, solemnly different; for it points to the day when, as God's saints, we shall, in company with Christ, *execute His wrath* on the impenitent and rebellious. As Paul asks (1 Cor. vi. 2), "Do ye not know that the saints *shall judge the world?*" and as we read in Jude 14: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints *to execute judgment;*" so this Psalm says, "Let the high praises of God be in their throat" (marg.), "and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the nations; . . . to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all His saints." What solemn work for God's "gracious ones!" And yet it is just because we were

such here below that in the day of the "white horse" armies of Rev. xix., we are to put forth at God's bidding this awful and destructive power. We, who are now the ministers and witnesses of God's grace, become then the executors of God's wrath. It will be the day of "the wrath of the Lamb." Jesus Himself, who leads us in this solemn work, did, by His cross and by His gospel, make "the grace of God that bringeth salvation" appear "unto all men," and that too through us in our feeble measure; and it is He who will then make the wrath of God equally manifest by the sudden and final cutting off of the rebellious, and will link us with Him in that act.

The *tears* He once wept over Jerusalem will only too well agree with the *eyes* of "flaming fire taking vengeance," with which He will then destroy the antichrist and his armies in and around that same city. So with us. Our eyes should now be the tearful eyes of pity, and our ways the gentle ways of God's "gracious ones" amidst an evil world, *because* we are ere long to have the two-edged sword of God's wrath in our hand, and shall have to execute on men "the judgment written." As Jesus says (Rev. ii. 27), "He that overcometh" (in this day of *faith and patience*; see verse 19), ". . . to him *will I give* power over the nations: and he shall rule them *with a rod of iron* . . . even as I have received of my Father." (See also Rev. xii. 5.) In Exod. vii. to xiv. the Hebrews were God's gracious witnesses to proud Egypt, and were patient sufferers under Pharaoh that they might the more fittingly be united with Moses in using the rod of God's power to Pharaoh's destruction, when they rose up from the Red (or rather, weedy) Sea to the resurrection shore. Hence this judicial aspect of God's "gracious ones" so properly comes third and last in our Psalm.

Observe, it is "the judgment WRITTEN" that we execute,

and not any wisdom or will of our own; still less is it any personally vindictive or revengeful act. The same is said of Jesus Himself as our Leader in it. He sits on the "white horse" as one called "Faithful and True;" and though "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood" of the wicked (compare Isa. lxiii. 2, 3), yet "His name is called *The Word of God.*" He executes judgment on none but those whom that "Word of God" condemns.

Note also the word "ALL." "This honour have *all* His saints." Every one who up to that moment is Christ's must take part in that solemn work of God's wrath. This fact may well cause the most slumbering saints to "awake to righteousness, and sin not," as Paul says 1 Cor. xv. 34, and to "be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." The saints at Corinth had got sadly worldly—boasting, with a fornicator in the midst, and going to law with each other; yet it was to *them* Paul said, "The saints shall judge the world," and "know ye not that we shall judge" (fallen) "angels?" and by showing them this part of their high and solemn calling he sought to put them to shame for their present carnal and ease-loving state. How little did Lot's position and ways in Sodom accord with his being, at the resurrection, one of the "ALL" saints who must judge the world! Even his testimony to his sons-in-law, that the place was about to be destroyed, only made them mock. But when Abraham rides the "white horse" with Christ, and executes "the judgment written," his doing so will solemnly agree with his ways in the day when he graciously but firmly refused to take "from a thread even to a shoe-latchet" from Sodom's king (see Gen. xiv. 23); and his earnest prayer to the Lord for Sodom at his own tent door (Gen. xviii.) will be found to have been his fitting preparation for beholding and assenting to Sodom's eternal doom.

Thus weighty are the closing Hallelujah Psalms, and instructive also for our present walk.

As our years are filling up and our lives running out, may the stream of them be rich with the grace of the book of Psalms—that our last on earth may be like Paul’s, as shown in his words to Timothy, or like John’s in Patmos, full of “Hallelujah” calm and triumph.
Amen. H. D.

“WEEP WITH THEM THAT WEEP.”

AND wilt thou strip the bleeding breast,
And argue calmly o’er its woe?
Nay, on thy bosom let it rest,
And let thy pitying tears o’erflow.

Though to thine eyes the poisoned dart
That Satan flung seemed small and weak,
It pierced thy friend’s unguarded heart,
And sent him forth love’s aid to seek.

Yet well for him, the glance of scorn,
The cold, rough word that met his grief,
But drove him, helpless and forlorn,
To Christ alone to find relief.

’Twas well for him, that he might learn
To lean upon his Lord alone;
’Twas ill for thee that thou didst turn
From pain thou shouldst have made thy own.

For still the Saviour sheds His tears
Of healing balm through human eyes,
And soothes our human griefs and fears
Through tender human sympathies.

Mourner, the comfort is His own,
And, if thy friend his part resign,
The human Heart upon the throne
Can speak, without his aid, to thine.

Yet happy those whose hearts are free
To beat in unison with His,
And share His patient ministry
In such a world of pain as this.

E. S. W.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

REVELATION ii. iii.

	MEANING.	PERIOD IN HISTORY.	CONDITION.	PARALLEL IN HISTORY OF KINGDOM OF JUDAH. †	SUGGESTIVE SCRIPTURES.
EPHESUS . . .	Desire.	Time of apostles.	Decline.	Solomon.	Sol. Song vii. 10; Ps. xxvii. 4.
SMYRNA . . .	Myrrh.	Time of persecutions. †	Suffering.	Rehoboam.	Judges ii. 11-24; Heb. xii. 6.
PERGAMOS . . .	Height, or marriage.	Union with state; <i>i.e.</i> the world.	Worldliness.	Jehoram.	Ezek. xvi. 15; James iv. 4.
THYATIRA . . .	Bruised incense.*	Papal times.	Corruption.	Athaliah.	Ezek. xvi. 38; 1 Tim. iv. 1-4.
SARDIS . . .	Escaping.	Protestantism.	Formalism.	Joash.	Isa. xxix. 13, 14; 2 Peter ii. 20.
PHILADELPHIA . . .	Brotherly love.	Present awakening.	Revival.	Josiah.	2 Chr. vi. 29-31; Gal. v. 12, 13.
LAODICEA . . .	People's justice.	Eve of judgment.	Apostasy.	Zedekiah.	Isa. i. 3, 21; Rom. xi. 22.

* Referring to "the rest in Thyatira" (*i.e.* the *Elijahs*, the *Naboths*), not to Thyatira herself.

† There were ten such, under the Roman emperors, before the accession of Constantine.

‡ The idea of this column is taken, with alterations, from Mr. Newberry's *English-Greek Testament*.

J. C.

“WEIGHED.”

THE close of the year is usually a searching time. The accounts of those who deal in this world's merchandize have to be submitted to the auditor's scrutiny. The gravity of realities has to be looked at. The surroundings of store, shop, bank, counting-house, and home have to be examined, and their present worth tested. All these things are tangible. They are within the range of human knowledge. Books and scales, or tape or measure, will soon determine the length and breadth of a man's position here.

But in the Scriptures we are informed that God “weighs” certain things, each of which is either too great, or too intricate, or too delicate for man to grasp.

1. We read in Job xxviii. 25, “He *weigheth* the waters by measure.” What a marvellous conception, were it only a *thought*! Science has achieved its wonders, and with pride informs us the measure of an hour's waterfall at Niagara, and of the flow of Thames water through London Bridge. But oceans, seas, and lakes have depths unfathomed yet, and who shall measure and weigh those thousands of square miles of water over the globe's surface with its miles of depth? Isaiah tells us of One who has done so—“who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand.” Such is the measure in which they are weighed. That unstable, restless thing—with all its variations of density and nature, and its vast reservoirs at which man has never looked, by which a million springs of earth are fed—God weighs it all! As we think of this let us also remember that those depths of seas are **types**

of other depths, even of those floods of wrath beneath which the Lord Jesus passed, alike unmeasured except by God Himself. How easy therefore for Him to measure the woes of any heart and bid it rest in Himself.

2. "Who . . . *weighed* the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance." (Isa. xl. 12.) Equally immense, unmeasured, and immeasurable as the waters are the mountains. Man has climbed many of their heights, but never delved to their foundations. Man has bored many with tunnel, and mine, and shaft, but who has traced their hidden deeps in all their vast extent? Their foundations—who laid them? Surely none but God, and God alone weighs them. There is none like unto our God. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." (Zech. iv. 7.) No wonder, then, if a mountain shall be threshed (Isa. xli. 15), or that in a future day the mountains shall be removed. (Rev. vi. 14.) No wonder that one shall cleave in the midst when "the King over all the earth" stands upon it. (Zech. xiv. 4.)

3. "He maketh the *weight* for the winds." (Job xxviii. 25.) The highest discoveries of science are only, as it were, inklings of Godhead. Science can tell us the speed of the wind and the breadth of its currents, yet true is it still that "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." Why so? Let the book of Proverbs answer. He "gathered the wind in His fists." (Prov. xxx. 4.) Shall we wonder then that He makes the weight for them, or that they obey Him? (Luke viii. 25.) How different is the wind to the waters or the mountains. It is a mighty invisible force, and its Creator the invisible God. May we welcome the north wind as well as the south, the east wind, and even the rough wind in its season, that so the pleasant fruit of

the garden of our hearts may be prepared for our Beloved.

4. “The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him *actions* are *weighed*.” (1 Sam. ii. 3.) This is another element in which the pride of man boasts of its expertness; but how often does he lamentably fail! The apparently lucid evidence is often fictitious. Actions are often misunderstood or misjudged. Do we not oftener go further, and aspire to judge even the motive? a far more difficult thing than to pass judgment upon actions. But who would not say with David, “Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord . . . but let me not fall into the hand of man”? (1 Chron. xxi. 13.) And who would not say with Job, “Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know my integrity”? (Job xxxi. 6.) He is a God of knowledge. “All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” The scene at Belshazzar’s feast is only a sample of this. The scales were poised, the iniquity was full. He was weighed and found wanting. And, alas! alas! how many more, in like manner, in like suddenness and severity, will one day be weighed by the all-wise and infinitely Holy One, and by Him be “found wanting” too! The flesh and the spirit are the two sides of the scales, in one of which all our works are put. Each word and act of every day is laid in them. Social position secures no favour, allows of no difference. “His servants ye are whom ye obey.” His grace is sufficient to enable us to serve Him instead of sin. His beneficence is so wonderful that He gives us the privilege to serve Him, and then gives *all* the grace needed for the service. Surely, then, our sowings to the spirit should multiply, and our sowings to the flesh proportionately diminish.

5. God “*weigheth* the spirits.” (Prov. xvi. 2.) The

spirits, what are they? They have neither shape nor substance. They have neither limitation of being nor possibility of decay. They are invisible and incomprehensible to human understanding. Yet God weighs them. Was it not so of old, when God said of Caleb, "He had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully"? And in later days, the apostles, ready to act in the flesh, were rebuked by the Lord: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." In like manner now the child of God, in self-judgment, is ready to exclaim, "Oh, what a spirit indwells this carnal self; it lusteth to envy; it is in fellowship with evil!" The flesh is *the* thing in us which needs constant watching, and a constant exercise of energy is needed to sustain a godly conflict against it. The workings of the spirit within may elude the most vigilant eye of man; but He who weighs the spirits can enter into every circumstance, watch every operation, read the thoughts afar off, discern the inward eye, and hear the unuttered desire as soon as it is conceived. Nothing can escape the scrutiny of the eyes which are "as a flame of fire." May we seek to be in true subjection to "the Father of spirits."

The Lord would have us do much of this weighing ourselves in our own hearts, as we learn from the many *active* injunctions in His word, such as, "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves*" (2 Cor. xiii. 5); "*Keep yourselves from idols*" (1 John v. 21); "*Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Jude 21); "*Mortify your members which are upon the earth*" (Col. iii. 5), and many more. All this will be well-pleasing to our God. Doing thus we shall gain many a victory; God will be greatly glorified, and we shall add to our measure of praise from God at the judgment-seat of Christ.

“THE FIRST RESURRECTION.”

“Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

REV. xix. 9.

I STOOD on a holy mountain,
Where angels met and sang,
And the banks of a beautiful fountain
With the echo of harpings rang ;
I knew not if glory were breaking,
Or vision that must not stay,
But I heard an unearthly speaking—
“ My loved one, come away.”

It broke not alone o'er that mountain,
It came not alone to me ;
For multitudes, suddenly mounting,
Sang over the land and sea.
The archangel trump was ringing—
“ The bridegroom comes calling for thee,”
And softly I heard a sweet singing—
“ The beautiful bride is free !”

Not a sorrow is seen at the parting !
In rapture how could she weep ?
For the chariot of glory is starting
Through the bridal halls to sweep.
She has left not a ray behind her—
In midnight is mourning there,
And where shall the weeping find her ?
It never will greet her here.

Ye gates of the mansion surrounding,
Ye golden gates silently close !
For the Lamb to His bosom hath bound Him
His loving, His beautiful spouse !
She is His who was wounded and gory,
She is His, for the marriage is past !
“ She is mine,” saith the Lord in His glory,
“ And I am the first and the last !”

He girdeth His garments around her,
Hark ! break not His whispers of love—
He tells how He bled where He found her,
For joy to be with her above ;

He hath not the voice of reproving,
 His judgment hath perfected all;
 'Tis loving, eternally loving,
 'Tis sov'reign grace resting on all.

He cometh! Behold then--He cometh!
 All nations await ye THE KING!
 And far where the weary one roameth
 Let the desolate wilderness sing,
 And all hallelujah to Thee, Lord!
 Our glory! The loved of Thy Bride!
 The power and the kingdom be Thine, Lord!
 And we shall be queen at Thy side.

W. J. M.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Who are "the great" and "the strong" in Isa. liii. 12?

THE passage is better rendered thus: "Therefore will I divide Him a portion among (or in) the many, and He shall divide the strong for a spoil." "*The many*" appear to be the same as those mentioned in the previous verse—"By the knowledge of Him shall my righteous Servant justify the many" (Hebrew has the article); and again, in verse 12, "He bare the sin of many." The first clause would therefore imply that among or in the many who are justified by Christ through His bearing their sin—that is, among the many sons brought to glory (Heb. ii. 10), He Himself would find a special portion assigned Him of God, "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." But "the many" has a wider application also, and includes saved Israel, and the saved nations too, as the portion of Christ, when, according to Psalm lxxii., He shall be King of Israel and King of nations. "*The strong*," who are given as a spoil to Him, would be His enemies—Satan and his principalities (Heb. ii. 14; Col. ii. 15, &c.), the beast and false prophet with their armies (Isa. xxx. 33; Rev. 19, &c.), and finally death, "the last enemy." (1 Cor. xv. 25, 26.)

What is the meaning of John xii. 31—"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out"?

OUR Lord looks onward to the cross on which He was to be "lifted up from the earth" (v. 32), and sees in the result the judgment of the world and the casting out of its prince. (Compare ch. xvi. 11.) It is thus that in Col. ii. the Spirit regards the cross of Christ as the place where God made a spoil of principalities and powers, "triumphing over

them in it." The weakness of God was stronger than man or devil, and God was victor when the creature could see only defeat. The second advent only executes the judgment that the first advent secured, and consequently the testimony of the Spirit, and the conviction wrought by Him, is "of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged," not "shall be judged," but "has been and is judged," as the tense of the Greek word implies. The real victory of the cross of Christ needs to be fully apprehended if we would know what the cross really is. Thus in the Red Sea we see the doom of Pharaoh as well as the deliverance of Israel.

What is meant by ministering to the Lord in Acts xiii. 1?

THE word here used for "minister" (*leitourgein*) denotes priestly service. In 1 Chron. xvi. 4 we read: "He appointed certain of the Levites as *ministers* [in the Septuagint the same word as here] before the ark of the Lord;" and the character of their ministry is described as threefold: 1st, to *record* or to bring to remembrance; 2nd, to *thank* or confess; and 3rd, to *praise*. These three points, well considered, will be helpful to us as unfolding what worship is—a matter little understood in the present day, when praying, preaching, and confession of sin is all called worship. What immediately follows in this chapter, from verse 7 to verse 36, explains what these words mean. To *record* is to call to remembrance what God has done—His covenant, His salvation, His deliverances, and His protection—and what He has promised, pointing on to the prophetic future; to *thank*, or to confess to His name, is to return the heart's homage for all we receive, and for all we hope for; and to *praise* is to utter our Hallelujah over all that God *is*—not so much what He does or promises, but what He is in Himself. One short word of prayer closes this beautiful ministry of holy priestly worship.

To what does "the doctrine of Christ" in 2 John 9, 10 refer?

It would appear to be the same as would be understood by Christian doctrine; that is, all that comes within that general term, and therefore *not* to bring it, would be equivalent to bringing "damnable heresies," of which Peter (in the second chapter of his second epistle) and Jude warn us, and which embraces all teaching subversive of the truth of God, such as the denial of the atonement, of eternal punishment, of the deity of Christ, or of any fundamental truth. A captious enquirer asks, What are fundamental truths? This the humble seeker will find no difficulty in ascertaining; and to all others God gives no answer. Towards the unintelligent and ignorant may we so manifest the Spirit of Christ, and so aid them in the exercise of their own con-

sciences respecting the word of God, that they may be enabled rightly to decide any question that He has left whereby to test the heart. Thus will their faith stand in the power of God, and not in the wisdom of men, and, as taught by the Spirit, such faith will surely be in accordance with that of God's elect.

Will any who may be alive at the taking away of the Church, and who have rejected the gospel, be saved ?

THAT multitudes will be saved during the time of antichrist is evident, as they form the remnant of the woman's seed who keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus. (Rev. xii. 17.) It is, however, solemnly true that those who *reject* the Scripture revelation of Christ will not be persuaded though one rose from the dead, as was proved at the grave of Lazarus, and more abundantly at the resurrection of the Lord. In the same way we are not to expect that the miraculous removal of the saints will affect those who have deliberately rejected Christ. But we must not confound ignorant rejectors with wilful ones. Of the former was Paul, who thus became a pattern of Israel's conversion in the latter day, and of the conversion of the remnant who suffer under the Beast.

Does the New Jerusalem descend to the earth ?

It is never so represented. It was seen by John (Rev. xxi. 2) as descending *from God* out of the heaven. The Bride had been taken into the presence of God, and there in the highest heaven had been the marriage feast ; and the Bride is now seen descending as the heavenly city, and its place is evidently between heaven and earth (localized perhaps in the second heaven), and thus forming a mediating position between the one and the other. It is of great importance to keep in mind the distinction between earth and heaven. The one is God's throne and the other is His footstool, and this illustrates the distinction between the heavenly Jerusalem and the earthly.

Who are the saved nations in Rev. xxi. ?

THEY are those spoken of all through the prophets, in whom will be fulfilled God's promise to Abraham : " In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The following passages may be read in this connection : Isa. ii. 1-4, xi. 1-10, xix. 23-25, xlii. 1-11, lv. 1-5 ; Jer. xvi. 19-21 ; Ezek. xvii. 22-24 ; Micah iv. 1-5 ; Zeph. iii. 9 ; Zech. viii. 20-23, ix. 9-11, xiv. 16-21 ; Mal. i. 11. Compare also Psalms xc. -c. The above passages will serve as samples of the many precious promises connected with the national blessings of the coming dispensation.