

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 SHALL 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.*

VOL. IX. NEW SERIES. 1886.

JAMES E. HAWKINS, 17, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.,
AND 36, BAKER STREET, LONDON, W.
W. B. HORNER & SON, 27, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, E.C.,
AND 10, D'OLIER STREET, DUBLIN.
THE PUBLISHING OFFICE, 180, BUCHANAN STREET, GLASGOW.

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THE GOLDEN LAMP.

OBEDIENCE.

THE truest service we can render to God is that of simple, childlike obedience. The whole course of His beloved Son here below was one of perfect obedience, the obedience of the perfect Servant of God, rendered in the unbroken fellowship of the Son with the Father. He came forth from the Father, and came into the world with this word in His heart and on His lips, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." And to accomplish that will He was born of a woman, lived a life of wondrous humiliation, and died the death of the cross. The great characteristic of all His ministry was *obedience*, so that He could say, "I have not spoken of (or from) Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." He never used His voice except as guided by another voice, no accent of which He missed: "Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak." (John xii. 49, 50.) Though in infinite grace He laid down His life for His sheep, and then took that life again, He acted not in self-will, but said, "This commandment have I received of my Father." (John x. 18.)

In the epistles we have two contrasted expressions,

“children of obedience” (1 Peter i. 14, *Gk*), and “children of disobedience.” (Col. iii. 6.) The latter are those who have not obeyed the gospel, and in whom, therefore, “the mind of the flesh” is the ruling principle, of which Scripture says, it “is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” (Rom. viii. 7.) The “children of obedience,” on the other hand, are those who have through grace “obeyed the gospel” of God, who have been born again, and are “no longer in the flesh, but in the spirit.” Being delivered from their natural state, they then enter upon their new course by an act of obedience to which they are sanctified by the Holy Ghost (1 Pet. i. 2), and henceforth to obey God is the rule of their new life, though, inasmuch as the flesh is still in them, their obedience cannot yet be said to be perfect.

Certain attainments which some say they have made, and which others much desire to reach, are sometimes described by the expression “full consecration,” and on the lips of some it may mean only what is simple and true; but if we were to substitute for it “perfect obedience,” there might be less danger of misunderstanding or self-deception, for the very word *obedience* brings before the mind a standard outside and above ourselves by which all attainment must be measured. That standard is the will of God as declared in His word. Now if the word of God, the whole word, and nothing but the word, and the example of Christ, be taken as the standard by which to measure ourselves, we shall be very cautious as to how we speak of attainments. For we shall at once see that we cannot speak of rendering *perfect* obedience until we have a perfect knowledge of the will of God, and in no one particular fail to carry it out. We may indeed have the testimony of our conscience in the Holy Ghost that our

aim is nothing less than obedience in all things, and that as we are learning God's will we are seeking at all cost to do it, and without this testimony none whose first business it is to please God can be content. But such will have that growing conviction of the perfectness of the standard, and that sensitiveness as to every shortcoming, which will check anything like self-complacency, and keep them truly humble.

Nothing is more delusive and damaging than to talk about consecration where the expressed will of God is ignored. Zeal is indeed good, but the zeal that filled the blessed Lord, whose every thought was moulded by the word of God, and whose every act was in accordance therewith, is very different from zeal that is not according to knowledge. And even if such zeal lead to "great sacrifices," as people sometimes say, the question still stands, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" And the statement is unequivocal, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. xv. 22.)

Not that there can be true obedience without zeal and devotedness, for nothing but the knowledge of the love of God as revealed in the cross of His Son, and the response thereto, can enable anyone to abide in Him, and "so to walk even as He walked." The zeal that carries the believer on in the path of daily self-denial and living to Christ is as far above that which can only be stirred by circumstances of special excitement, as the zeal of Elijah was above that of Jehu. And had not Elijah's zeal been as real and true before God's all-seeing eye during his three-and-a-half years of seclusion after the drought began, and for some time before it, as it was on Mount Carmel, it is very unlikely that there would ever have

been such a chapter as 1 Kings xviii. in the Book of God.

Let us take an illustration from the closing chapters of the Book of Exodus. God called for a work to be done that stirred the whole nation; He required them to prepare Him a sanctuary that He might dwell among them, and such was their response that they had to be restrained from giving. But the first command was that they should strictly observe the Sabbath day. (Ex. xxxv. 1-3.) Now suppose some very zealous man had said, "Here is all this work to be done, it is work for God, it ought to be done without delay, and surely it will be better that I should get on with it than that I should spend the day in resting?" Would this have been acceptable to the Lord? Would it not rather have been regarded as an act of rebellion which no motive of zeal could excuse? Again, suppose the people had deemed the holy vessels of the sanctuary too plain for Jehovah's dwelling-place, and had thought that by extra effort they could make something more elaborate, would they have pleased Him? No; they would simply have marred the whole work, and have shut God out. But they were obedient, and their obedience brought blessing; for "according to *all* that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work. And Moses looked upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them." (Ex. xxxix. 42, 43.)

We should further notice the sevenfold repetition of the phrase in Exodus xl., "*As the Lord commanded Moses.*" "Thus did Moses, according to *all* that the Lord commanded him, so did he" (v. 14). And the result was the display of the glory of the Lord: "Then the cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of

the Lord filled the tabernacle" (v. 34). Obedience, let us ever remember, leads to blessing and to fuller discoveries of God.

The word to the sons of Levi, "Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord" (Ex. xxxii. 29), may well come with a loud voice to us; the state of the Church of God, and the condition of a world that is going on without God, alike demand it, and if all the true zeal found in the service of God were at once doubled it would still be far below a worthy response to the love and claims of Him who stopped not short of Calvary's depths of shame and woe for our sakes. And as we pass from one year to another it will surely be good to examine ourselves before God and ask if we know more of the constraining power of the love of Christ, and more of the blessedness of serving and living to Him, than we did a year ago. But let us measure ourselves by a true standard, and remember that, while there may be an imaginary consecration which makes light of strict obedience, there can be no true obedience without consecration of ourselves and all we are and have to God, a consecration which will show itself in what we abstain from doing, as well as in what we do. If consecration does not show itself in our lives, our habits, our houses, our conversation, making us more simple and less worldly, it is a sham and not a reality, and the sooner we learn the truth about it the better.

Let us give the Word of God its proper place of authority, let obedience in all things be our aim, and we shall find that, however lowly our path may be here, we shall have in the day of Christ that which is worth more than the applause of an assembled world, even the commendation of Christ our Lord, with the eternal token of His approval. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by

the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Rom. xii. 1, 2.) W. H. B.

THE BATTLEFIELD OF FAITH.

ONE of the saddest features of our time is the universal "charity" that condones every form and degree of false doctrine. Like the pestilent outgrowth of corruption, these doctrines are spreading their roots and branches in all directions. "*What is truth?*" is asked on every hand, and that which alone meets ready acceptance by many is some agnostic assertion, such as, "All is uncertain"; "we know nothing definitely"; "things may be so or they may not"; "all is in a fog." And men rejoice in the fog that surrounds them, boasting in their breadth of view and depth of research, and not dreaming that their boasted breadth is only the narrowest of the narrow, and the depth so loudly talked of nothing but the shallowest of the shallow.

It seems at first sight passing strange that in this vaunted nineteenth century men should on all sides be found, within the professing church as well as outside it, who glory in their ignorance and pride themselves on their uncertainties. But the reason is not far to seek, nor the cause hard to discover. All uncertainty tends to licence, and mists and fogs are supposed to allow those enveloped in them a presumed right to direct their course as they choose. Hence disobedience passes for loyalty, and self-will is indulged under the plea of a necessity for which God, and not man, is answerable. The result is, that every man thinks as he likes and does as he likes, just as

we read in the book of Judges, where it is said, "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Many explanations may be given to account for the condition of things which with sorrow we see increasing around us, but probably one chief cause is that the certainties of God's revelations are more and more demonstrated, and man, finding himself baffled in every attempt to overthrow the truth of God, shuts himself up in scientific agnosticism, calling his darkness light and his ignorance knowledge.

It is awful to contemplate the issues of these things, for if man does not wish to retain God in his knowledge and therefore rejects God's revelations, while he rejoices in his own self-conceit and vain deceivings, he becomes more and more the prey of the great deceiver, who as the liar and the murderer is ever seeking to beguile and to destroy. We can plainly discern how the way is being prepared for the manifestation of the *man of sin*; the *king* who shall do according to his own will; the *fool* who will say in his heart, there is no God; the *idol shepherd* who will eat the flesh of the fat ones, and tear their claws in pieces; and it is also evident that these characteristics of the world pervade to a great extent the outward church.

In both church and world absoluteness and certainty in divine things are deprecated as presumption and pride, and to say "we know," when God has plainly spoken, is sure to lead, in many quarters, to hostility and opposition. Yet surely nothing is more humble than to say "I know," when God has spoken; and nothing more proud than to express uncertainty when God, who cannot lie, has declared what is true. Those who claim the privilege of saying "we know" in what concerns themselves, will often treat with scorn all certainty that concerns the will or honour of God.

But if God's truth is not sought for His sake who

gave it, and His unfoldings are not accepted because they are divine, can we be surprised if those who thus deal with God's word, while professing to honour Him, presently find that He allows the very foundation on which they are building to be utterly shaken, though it is nominally Christ Himself? If in the matter of practical obedience children of God say they prefer to be in uncertainty, that very uncertainty will soon extend to the fundamental verities of their faith; and amid the storms of conflicting opinions, deep and dark delusions will fill their minds, and instead of having an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom, they will, as shipwrecked souls, only be saved by a miracle of grace at the last, as brands again plucked out of the burning.

In the present day it is painful to notice how any form of doctrine is accepted by many Christians if only it be presented in such a manner as to harmonize with the teachings of the infidel world around us. Few books have given more sorrowful proof of this than that entitled "*Natural Law in the Spiritual World.*" But for the grievously unscriptural statements in this book there is much that might instruct as well as interest an appreciative reader, but the attractiveness of the style only adds to its seductiveness, and many an unwary reader drinks in poison that he little dreams of while fascinated in studying its pages. What saddens the prayerful, reverent reader of the Bible, as he peruses the delusive chapters of this volume, is the fact that the writer has evidently some spiritual acquaintance with the truth of Christ and His work. Had it been the work of an avowed enemy it would have fallen lifeless upon the church of God, like many speculative productions of infidel writers of the past or present time. But coming as the earnest reasoning of a friend, even well-taught Christians

are led away by it. We can but say with the Psalmist, "It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him." (Ps. lv. 12.) There is the Judas kiss of him who means to betray, and there is the kiss of one who betrays but does not mean to do so; and it becomes the loyal heart, while making a difference as to the person, to meet both intentional and unintentional treachery with undisguised and unqualified opposition.

The cause of truth has far more to fear from its friends than from its enemies. If we turn to another quarter we find that some who stand forward as professed ministers and servants of Christ set aside the doctrine of *Atonement* in any form, notwithstanding the clear statements of Scripture. The infidel hates the doctrine of an atonement because he has never known his ruin; but even some Christians hear and therefore know but little of their utterly lost condition, and are not prepared for the humbling doctrine of a salvation secured only by death, and that the death of a Substitute. Death can only be met by death, and until the truth of death in sin is known, salvation by death will never be intelligently accepted; some may be saved through faith in Christ who enter but little into God's thoughts as to the cross of Christ, and hence the feebleness of so much of the Christianity around us.

Take another subject—the *Authority of Scripture*. There was a time, but a few years back, when every Christian held indisputably the inspiration of the Bible; but now lax views of inspiration are corrupting the elements of church life. Readers of the Bible are found who sit in judgment on the utterances of the eternal God, as if God and His word were to be brought to the bar of

human thought. The solemn truth of Psalm xxxiii. 10, needs to be deeply impressed on our minds: "The Lord bringeth the *counsel* of the nations to nought; He maketh the *thoughts* of the peoples to be of none effect;" then we shall be able to rejoice in the blessed contrast of v. 11: "The *counsel* of the Lord standeth fast for ever, the *thoughts* of His heart to all generations." Man has to learn that his thoughts are utterly wrong because they are at variance with God's thoughts. In the end he will prove himself a fool, "for vain man would be wise, though born like a wild ass's colt," untamed and untameable. Want of true subjection to the word of God lessens the believer's hold of doctrinal truth, and also weakens his hold of preceptive truth. The doctrines fade, and the precepts die, for a defiled conscience chooses what suits it, and leaves out what suits it not; and the certainties of truth being gone, the mind is given over to agnosticism.

Again, in regard to the *Creation*. All but avowed atheists used to believe that God not only created the heavens and the earth, but that He formed "every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew," and that "He made the beast of the earth after his kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind." This we are told in the authoritative account of the creation given to us in Genesis i., ii. Now professed Christians are found advocating the utterly unproved and unscientific theory of the evolution or development of creation, which is really the atheist's loophole whereby to escape the awful reality of man's responsibility to God.

Thus the foundation truths of Scripture are surrendered one by one, and would-be teachers of the truth think that by getting as near as possible to the infidel in thought and in word, they will win him to the truth. In this as in

other points the deceived, worldly-minded Christian thinks to attract the worldling to Christ by being like him. How vain a delusion! Not so did the Son of God seek to lead sinners back to God. For Him "It is written" sufficed, whether speaking to devil or to man, and He deigned not to argue when God had spoken.

The scriptural doctrine of *Resurrection* is sharing the same fate. It must now be considered "spiritual," for to hold it as literal would be "unscientific"! Truly we need to recall Paul's words to Timothy, and seek to have them written in living power on our souls—"Study to show thyself approved *unto God*"—regardless of what man's notions may be—"a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly dividing* the word of truth." Let us also heed the warning that follows—"But shun profane and vain babblings;" and when man would speak of his scientific *speculations* (we do not say *discoveries*) in things utterly beyond his depth, let us remind him of God's challenge in the book of Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?"

These babblings are to be shunned, Paul tells us, "for they will increase unto more ungodliness," and in the end the worship of the creature will take the place of the worship of God. Still more strongly does the apostle warn against false teachers—"their word will eat as doth a canker." Thus the apostle gives us his estimate of the profane talkers in his own day, among whom he names two—"Hymenæus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." (2 Tim. ii. 16-18.) Are we sufficiently on our guard against the false teachers of the last days, concerning whom the Spirit expressly speaks? (1 Tim. iv. 1-3.)

Let us, then, carefully shun the setting aside of any

portion of God's word; let that word be to us as the man of our counsel; and the Spirit of truth will then lead into all truth as we patiently wait to be led, slowly or quickly, as the heavenly Teacher is pleased to guide. To young Christians we say emphatically, shun man's reasonings, and contend for the faith "*once for all* delivered to the saints." The truth of God has no development from below; it comes from God, and can only be developed by God in the hearts of those who as new creatures in Christ are beyond the limits of the old creation. In our experience all truth must be objective before it can become subjective. The one object before our souls must be Christ, and as the Holy Ghost takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to us the truth will be inwrought in us.

God tells us absolutely that the natural man, that is, man as in Adam, cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; but we have received His Spirit that we may *know* (not be uncertain about) the things that are freely given to us of God. (1 Cor. ii.) May we have grace to live up to our certainties in Christ Jesus, and be able to say with holy joy, like the blind man whose eyes the Lord opened, "One thing *I know*, that whereas I was blind, now I see." It will ever be true of the natural man that he has eyes to see and does not see; but it is an awful condition of things when in the church of God the uncertainties of the blind are rejoiced in, for then believers in Christ sink down to the level of those who know not God.

Certainties stir up strife, and it is this that a Laodicean church cannot endure; but if there ever was a day when the lovers of truth had to gird on the sword, this is the day. Let us ponder these words of our Lord, "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled?" "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace

on the earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather division." Christ has brought to light eternal certainties and everlasting verities; He has given them to us, and our privilege is, in regard to the revealed truth of God, to use the apostle John's oft-repeated word, "*we know.*" In all wherein God has spoken it is incumbent on us not to be ignorant; and if we are ignorant we shall yet be held responsible.

The words in Isaiah xxix. might well exercise the conscience of the professing church in the present day—"The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned." To the learned all is sealed, or, as they would say, "all is uncertain." But let not the unlearned say, "I cannot read it," for it is to the babes that God unfolds the mysteries of His word.

May God give us grace to stand by what He has revealed to us, knowing that faith's victory is certain, though the battle be long. "The day" will soon reveal all that God promises to us, to our eternal joy; and awful will be the portion of those who now reject the Lord Jesus, when He "shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that *know not God*, and that *obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

H. G.

EXTRACT.—It is God's new-born babes, nourished with the unmingled milk of the Word, who have the enlarged understanding; the men of science, the narrow and the strait. Of them Eccl. i. 18 is true. "In much study is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." But he that increaseth knowledge of Christ increaseth joy and peace and every precious fruit of the Spirit.

DAVID'S REFUGE IN YOUTH AND OLD AGE.

PSALMS LXIII. AND III.

IN writing these and other psalms the Psalmist David was taught to turn his circumstances into occasions of communion with God.

Psalm lxiii. is headed, "A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah." He was in a "thirsty land," where there was no water, a dry and barren land, yielding no bread-corn, and Saul, heading a large body of his soldier-subjects, was seeking his soul to destroy it. But David is a worshipper, and his words of worship begin thus: "O God, Thou art *my* God, early will I seek THEE." Though he suffer hunger and thirst, his soul is "satisfied as with marrow and fatness," and with "joyful lips" he sings to the praise of His all-satisfying God. His sorrow is that Saul is *seeking his life*; his joy is to *seek his God*, and in his worship he says, "Thy lovingkindness is *better than life*" (v. 3). The Lord will not suffer the wicked king Saul to deprive him of life, much less of that which is *better than life*.

The deep desire of David's soul was to have close communion with God—"to *see* Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have *seen* Thee in the sanctuary." The Scripture in very many places both encourages and warns us as to the direction of our eyes. Eve *saw* the fruit, then took and ate, and gave to her husband. The spies "*saw* the sons of Anak," and were discouraged; the Psalmist "*saw* the prosperity of the wicked," and his steps well nigh slipped; Peter *saw* the waves and began to sink. (See Gen. iii.; Num. xiv.; Psalm lxxiii.; Matt.

xiv.) All is well, if we are only "looking unto Jesus," beholding the Lamb of God, according to the word in the Book of Revelation, "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, a Lamb standing, as it had been slain," having all power and glory. Thus it was, though dimly, with David in the wilderness; his eye was directed to God, to see His power and His glory. He had trusted in God from his youth (Psalm lxxi. 5); and being "taught of God" (v. 17), he knew how to turn the wilderness into the sanctuary, and, though sorrowfully circumstanced, he could rejoice under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty, for he remembered the lovingkindness of God and meditated thereon.

We may repeat that his soul was *following hard after God* (v. 8), while the wicked king was *following hard after him* to take away his life. Verse 6 is very instructive, "when I remember Thee," and "meditate on Thee." The help of God is secured *when we remember Him* and His lovingkindness, and meditate upon Him. Let us call to mind that God manifested His love by giving His Son, and in Him eternal life, and with Him all things. Our Lord Jesus Christ loves to be remembered; many of the Psalms of David bring to our remembrance the sorrows of the cross, and "Do this in remembrance of Me" is repeated in 1 Cor. xi. The Holy Spirit causes those to praise God with joyful lips, whatsoever their circumstances, who remember Jesus, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree."

The age of David when he was inspired to write Psalm lxiii. is not known, though he was only thirty years old when he was anointed king of Judah some time after this; but, young as he was when in the wilderness of Judah, he had oftentimes been greatly favoured of God, and now looking back he acknowledges God as his Helper:

“Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice” (v. 27).

In after days when his wicked son Absalom headed the many thousands of Israel who were seeking to destroy the life of their aged king, David's circumstances were again but occasions for communion with God. He does not say to himself or his friends only, “How are they increased that trouble me!” he is not lost in his deep sorrows, but rather hiding in God and worshipping, he exclaims, “LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me; many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God.” (Psalm iii. 1, 2; see also Psalm lxxi. 10, 11, 18.) And God reveals Himself as the shield *for* David, or, as in the margin, *about* David. What matters it how many thousands rise up against him if Jehovah is a shield about him? He tells God what these wicked people of Israel are saying as to his helplessness, for his help is in Jehovah.

God had been David's hope and trust from his youth, and now, if the power of wicked men bows down his back. God is to David what David needs — his shield, his glory, and the lifter up of his head. So the king boasts in the unchangeable Jehovah, and the peace of his soul is not disturbed: “I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.” And again, “I will not be afraid.” “Arise, O Jehovah!”

As in his youth when, in the wilderness, he was pursued by Saul, so in his old age, when he was pursued by his son Absalom, his shelter was the shadow of the Almighty's wings. How great and deep were his sorrows, because of the wicked round about him! how high his joys, because he could say, “O God, Thou art my God!” He diligently seeks God, his eye is directed to God's power and glory, he knows the almightiness of God and His lovingkindness,

so his soul is satisfied and safe, his mouth praises God, and he trusts in Him as his Deliverer and Helper.

In writing of faith as that which pleases God, the apostle Paul says, "He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek HIM." How much better diligently to seek the *Rewarder*, the *Helper*, the *Deliverer* than to be lost in unbelief and trouble, as if the Deliverer would not hallow His own name by deliverance in due season! The soul that follows hard after God, whatsoever evil is following hard after him, shall find, as David found, the "right hand" of the living and true God upholding him. So may we imitate the good example of the anointed David in both his youth and his age, and turn our circumstances into subjects of communion with God!

In verses 9, 10 of Psalm lxiii. David foretells what shall happen to those who seek his soul to destroy it: "they shall go into the lower parts of the earth; they shall fall by the sword; they shall be a portion for foxes." In Luke xvi. we read that the "rich man died, and was buried; and in hades he lift up his eyes, being in torments." His body was buried and given to the worms, while his spirit went to hades. So here, those who should fall by the sword would, on the surface of the earth, be a portion for foxes, while their spirits would go into the lower parts of the earth.

In the last verse of the Psalm, let us observe the faith of David in the wilderness of Judah. According to all *appearance* Saul's desire to shed his blood would be easily accomplished, but the faith of David lifts him above *all* appearances. Only a little while before this he was a stripling keeping his father's sheep; but the prophet Samuel was instructed to anoint him to be the future king of Israel; and therefore David, fugitive as he then was, trusting in the unchangeable Jehovah, calls

himself "the king," saying, "the king shall rejoice in God." So a greater than David, even our Lord Jesus Christ, on His way to the cross said to His disciples, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." To David the path through the wilderness was the path to his throne; to Christ the path of the cross was His path to everlasting glory.

Let us, then, pour out our hearts before God, as did the inspired Psalmist, and God will pour in His peace. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." W. H.

NOTES OF CONFERENCES AT LEOMINSTER.

JUNE 28th TO JULY 2nd, 1885 (*concluded*).

THE TEACHINGS OF BAPTISM.

MR. H. DYER.—There is a marked contrast between the frequency of the Lord's Supper and the one observance of baptism. There is no limit to the repetition of the Lord's Supper, but if a Christian lived to the age of Methuselah he would never be baptized again.

The Lord's Supper is not mentioned many times after the cross—only in Acts and in one Epistle; but teachings on baptism, as well as instances of it, are numerous; and we thereby learn that though it is only once observed by each of us it must be kept in constant remembrance.

Let us turn to some of the Epistles in which baptism is referred to. Romans vi. teaches that the moment you believed, God saw you in Christ, that is, before you were baptized. That moment you were baptized into His death, and therefore in water-baptism you were buried with Him in order to show forth, as raised again, the new

life which you received the very moment you believed. In 1 Cor. i., when contentions were arising at Corinth, and believers were naming themselves after their favourite teachers, the apostle asks, "Were you baptized in the name of Paul?" No angel ever had such honour as was ours in baptism when the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost was named on us. Notice also how appropriately Paul winds up his Second Epistle to these Corinthians with the benediction in the name of the same glorious Trinity.

In Col. ii. 9-15 we have a recipe to keep the young saint clear of ritualism. Your baptism sunk you too low for any outward religion, and raises you too high for any forms and ceremonies.

Now as to strength for suffering with Christ, see 1 Peter iii. 17-22. The trials of faith are thickening fast around us. Men say it is almost impossible to get on in business without telling lies. From the world's point of view this may be true, but who has overcome the world? An ancient fable tells of one whose mother wished to make him invulnerable to spear and arrow, and so she dipped him in a certain river, only she had to hold some part, and that was not immersed, namely the heel. The fable tells that a foe from behind wounded him in his only vulnerable part. But the baptism of the child of God leaves him vulnerable in no part, and he need never be overcome.

How must the martyrs have rejoiced as they looked back at their baptism, and upward to the glory, while they stood at the stake! We have Peter's thoughts as he looked back at the ark and saw the waters beating against it, but the eight souls within could not be touched. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the *request* of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of

Jesus Christ Now comes the lesson as to suffering and so does this occupy the apostle's heart that he does not say in v. 18, "Christ *died* for sins," but, "Christ also hath once *suffered* for sins," and then, in chap. v. 1, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath *suffered* for us in the flesh, *arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.*" Oh, dear young believers, some of you may outlive us elder ones, and you must be prepared for increasing difficulties. 1886 will be more difficult than 1885, and 1889 than 1886. Therefore as these difficulties come on, go down upon your knees, remember your baptism, and then go on in the strength of the Lord.

OUR SOWING TIME.

Mr. R. C. CHAPMAN.—In Ephesians i. we are seen as "accepted in the Beloved," and in chap. v. 1, as children whose ways delight the Father and who are as a savour of rest unto Him.

Beloved, having the mind of Christ, and being taught by the Spirit, we hear the Lord Jesus say, "Behold, I come quickly." And if we are minding our proper business we shall never in our thoughts begin *below*, but always *above*, and shall say, "Oh how short the time! how short the time!" Then again, we shall remember that much is said in Scripture about sowing and reaping, and the chief pattern in this is the Son of God. He Himself was sown as the "corn of wheat," and He is now beginning to reap the harvest.

Beloved, the harder the times, the better for faith. The Lord came to His own, not when they were at their best, but at the appointed time, foretold by the Spirit of God; and "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Paul also speaks in Gal. vi. of a due time for us, "In due season we shall reap if we faint not." "He that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," and then

there is the awful opposite, "he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." The wicked will reap too, and in the darkness of eternity they will be silent as to the justice of their doom. This is our sowing time for eternity. We have time enough for all we ought to do, but none to waste. We use time aright by imitating God, but an imitator must be a close observer, and must also have a heart to imitate Him whom he follows.

More are they that are for us than they that are against us, and Christ's power on our behalf is more manifest by putting our weakness against the devil's strength. The strength of the risen Lord can only be perfected in my weakness, and I am not entitled to confess myself weak unless in integrity of heart I go on to say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is not a light thing to say, I am weak, and I can only truly say it by the Spirit of God.

Our brother has spoken to us of newness of life. When God created Adam, after He had created angels, another life was brought into being by the bare will and word of the Creator. But by the Spirit of God we have a *derived* life. From whom? From the Son of God, and our life has all its beauty from the death of the cross. Adam shewed rather what his Maker was *not*, than what He *is*. Adam's sin crushed the earthen vessel, but the life we derive from the Son of God is an everlasting life, and can never perish, for the Lord says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Just as a babe in the cradle delights its father, so are we God's delight.

In Gal. iv. 3-5, we see the miraculous transition from children under bondage to children who can cry "Abba, Father." Under the law the children had the promise of an earthly inheritance, but something far higher, even access into the holiest by the blood, is ours now (Heb. x.).

At present the world appears to have an inheritance in possession, but by-and-bye the man of sin will be set up, and then it will be all swept away. Let the world be nothing to us now, and all that is in it of no value, even when regarded as a necessity for us. Faith should be exercised by us in all things, but let us ever remember the cup which our Lord drank. The new creature is the image of Christ, and Christ is the image of God.

As to our walk in newness of life, let us bear in mind that God has infinite delight in saving us from hell, but that is a small thing comparatively; we are saved to bring eternal joy and delight to God's heart.

In Rom. xii. 11, we learn that we are not to be "slothful in business." What men call business is but our occasion for serving the Lord, and it is not always in great things that we best serve the Lord, but in little things. Beloved, we shall be sure to please God by trying to be like Him. Let us reckon loss for His sake as gain, for He will always pay like Himself, and will always count Himself our debtor. Let us make the most of the little while. We have no time to lose, and we shall always be gainers if we are pleasing God.

When Jesus was baptized by John He said, "Thus it becometh *us* to fulfil all righteousness;" that is, Christ and His members all together. Sixty years ago I saw baptism to be of the Lord. "Won't you wait?" said one. "No," said I, "I will not delay to be obedient." Next to fulness of faith in the blood to keep us from evil, let the settled purpose of our heart be to begin and end with pleasing God; and let us count all things but loss for Christ, and God will repay. Oh, think of those thirty years of Christ's life before His ministry, of which He could say, "I do always the things which please Him." To have this testimony is our blessing.

Mr. HEATH read Luke iii. 21, 22; iv. 1-13; Rom. viii. 13; 1 Co. ii. 9, 10-12; Rev. xxii. 17-20. These Scriptures do not need much comment. Like all other portions of God's Word they speak with a native simplicity, but nevertheless God is pleased to speak through the lips of redeemed sinners. I was struck with our brother's remark as to the frequency of the Lord's Supper, in contrast with baptism. The Lord's Supper speaks of fellowship, and that is everlasting; but to be baptized twice would be to say that Christ must die twice, which would be altogether false. For the natural man there is nothing but sin, death, and judgment, but for the believer Christ's one offering has for ever put away sin, and he is for ever sanctified. The solemn profession we made at our baptism has been brought before us. When a person submits to baptism he gives himself up to another, who puts him out of sight, buries him, and then raises him—a beautiful figure of God's dealing with Christ. The death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ are strikingly set forth in baptism. In Rom. vi. we are taught that as we died with Him, we are buried with Him and raised up with Him, and that, having died to sin, we can no longer live in it. If a man died out of this place yesterday, how could he be said to be now living in it?

Then that which follows the baptism of Christ is His temptation. He encounters Satan not in a garden, but in a wilderness, surrounded with wild beasts, and where everything adds to the sharpness of the temptation. "If Thou be the Son of God," if what I heard at Jordan is true, "command that these stones be made bread." It was a hungry man tempted to make bread—a penniless man tempted with the offer of a kingdom—one who was brought up in Nazareth as an obscure man tempted to

make Himself famous. But His answer was in effect, "I cannot tempt God."

I read passages from the gospel of Luke to shew that the Lord Jesus did what He did, by the Spirit of God; and passages from the Epistles shew what we are to do by the Spirit of God.

Perhaps, young believers, you have purposed to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have found everything against you; and why? Because that very purpose is an aggressive step, and provokes the enmity of Satan to work on your flesh. Do you say, How can I keep down the flesh and follow God? See here—"If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live." Do you wish to know more of the truth of God? The Spirit of God must be your teacher, and He indwells us in order that we may know "the things that are freely given to us of God." But God will never give the Church rest until that cry of "Come, Lord Jesus," is answered.

ABIDING IN CHRIST AND FOLLOWING HIM.

Mr. STANCOMB read Rom. vi. 2, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God." We are not told to *feel* ourselves dead, nor to *experience* ourselves dead, but to *reckon* ourselves dead. Our strength for this is the power of God; hence the desire of the apostle was to know the power of Christ's resurrection. We are called to abide in Christ, that the living sap may flow through the Vine into us the branches. Once Satan led us about as his captives, but now we are the property of Another, and we are to follow Him, to be led about as trophies of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Now thanks be unto God, which always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savour of His knowledge in every place."

THE ENERGY OF CHRISTIAN LIFE.

PHILIPPIANS III. 1-14.

AMONGST the metaphors used by the inspired apostle Paul to set forth the energy of a true Christian course, we often find that of the *race*, with which his readers were so familiar; and in Philippians iii. he gives us a picture of the untiring zeal with which, in running that race, he sought to reach the goal he had before him. In this chapter he warns the saints against those who would hinder them, and gives a threefold description of those whom God now owns as "the circumcision." They alone are worthy of this honourable title "who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (v. 3, R.V.). The thought of confidence in the flesh leads him to present himself as one who, more than many, had good ground for such confidence until he got one glimpse of Christ, and then his comeliness was turned to corruption.

We see him as a man with his hands full of human goodness, and holding it most tenaciously, but suddenly discovering that all that which he prized was only a hindrance to the reception of Him who was, indeed, worthy to become the one ground of his boasting, and the one object of his heart. While his hands were full of his own goodness he could not grasp Christ, for only by an empty hand can He be laid hold of; and he saw that whatever prevented his acceptance of Him whom God had given was no "gain" to him, but rather "loss." A poor man in the street might highly prize even the rags that cover his nakedness, but should he happen to discover that the moment he was ready to part with his

rags he might be clothed with princely robes, he would regard the possession of them as "loss," and would gladly give them up. Thus it was with Paul. Those things which were "gain" to him from a mere human point of view he "counted loss for Christ." He gladly surrendered them all, and counted them but "dung" or "refuse" that he might "gain Christ." He no longer desired to stand before God as an Israelite, a Hebrew, or a Pharisee, but to be found in Christ. He ceased to seek a righteousness that was the fruit of law and his obedience to it, and gloried only in the possession of that righteousness "which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God," and which is bestowed by Him upon the one condition of faith,* and upon no other.

This was Paul's starting point—an entire renunciation of himself, with all his doings or possible deservings, and a complete acceptance of Christ in all His sufficiency and unspeakable worthiness. He stood in a righteousness to which he had contributed nothing, and to which he could never contribute anything; a righteousness that was absolutely perfect, and the possession of which ensured his final standing in eternal glory.

But he did not then sit down and say, "Now I am saved, I am sure of heaven, and may take it easy." Neither in word nor deed did Paul argue thus; on the contrary, this very chapter shows us, as do all his writings, the unabated fervency and unflagging zeal of his spirit. We have two distinct statements. The first, already noticed, gives his experience at the outset of his career; the second tells us what was his settled mind when he wrote, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord

* This seems to be the force of $\epsilon\pi\iota$ in *v.* 9. The words "gain" *v.* 7, and "win," *v.* 8, are similar.

. . . that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." He well knew that he had obtained a wondrous treasure, of the value of which he could form no adequate estimate. Indeed he knew that it would take eternity to learn out the worth and loveliness and beauty of Christ, but he was not content to wait for the dawn of eternity to enter upon the discovery. From the moment he received Christ the one aim of his soul was to "*know Him*;" and as he had at first counted all things loss that would have prevented his reception of Christ, so he continued to count all things loss that would hinder his growth in the knowledge of Christ.

Any intelligent man who possesses a Bible may know a great deal *about* Christ, but to know Himself is something far beyond this. It is by the Holy Ghost alone that Christ is revealed to any soul, and it is by His gracious ministry that the things of Christ are unfolded to us. But how the Spirit delights thus to glorify Christ! Give Him but the listening ear and the longing heart, the ear that is open to the voice of God and the heart that with true desire ponders the sacred Scriptures, and He cannot keep silence.

"The power of His resurrection" was a great reality to saints of those early days, and it should not be less so to us. We are apt to treat this grand truth somewhat as an article in a creed, which we accept as a matter of course, but which concerns us very little. The great fact that "Christ is risen" should be a living truth to us day by day. Faith beholds Him as the Risen One at the right hand of God, holding the keys of hades and of death. This knowledge of Christ as the Risen One enabled saints to face death itself without fear, and strengthened them

to endure all sufferings for His sake. Hence Paul puts "the fellowship of His sufferings" after the mention of His resurrection, referring surely to those sufferings which the Lord endured from the hand of man as the righteous Servant of God and as the Witness for God in the world—"the cup" of which He promised James and John the privilege of drinking. When we speak of what the Lord endured *as the atoning Victim*, we speak of sufferings in which our only part can be to reap the harvest which He sowed. With reference to those, we can only say He "suffered *for us*," while we seek to learn them out and adore Him for them. But the sufferings which He endured from the hand of man, it is His people's privilege to share. Of these they may know the *fellowship*, and it was Paul's joy to do so. (Col. i. 24.)

In the death of Christ we see Him yielding Himself up without the least reserve to do the will of God. In the full strength of divine affections, and even at the cost of losing for a time the joy of His Father's presence, He fulfilled His one great aim of glorifying Him. In so far as we are "made conformable to His death" we shall arm ourselves with the same mind, and make it our business to please Him at all cost. Paul would turn his back upon everything from which that death had separated him, and pursue only those objects which were worthy of his affections as one found in Christ risen and glorified. Thus would he have his life here below fragrant to God with the fragrance of that atoning blood which had separated him for ever to Himself.

He does not speak as one who has any doubt of reaching the "resurrection from among the dead," but as one who knows that that is his goal, and whose business it is to reach it "by any means." He esteemed no cost too great, and no endurance too much, while pursuing

the pathway that led to the fulfilment of all his hopes and the satisfying of all his desires, when in that blessed resurrection he should awake in the image of Christ, and find no more hindrance to the perfect knowledge of Him.

This is in prospect, but whether to him or to us, it is in prospect only, so long as we are pursuing our pilgrimage, and therefore he adds, "Not that I forthwith attained, or have already been made perfect;* but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

The word rendered "follow after" in verse 12, and "press" in verse 14, is the same that is translated "persecuting" in verse 6, and if we would learn the force of it, we have but to read Acts ix. Mark the zeal, the energy, with which Paul once *pursued* the Church of God to destroy and waste it, and then consider that with that same zeal and energy he afterwards *pursued* that which was set before him, and for the possession of which Christ had laid hold of him. Ponder this, and then say whether Paul knew anything of that "effortless" life to which some with high-sounding but meaningless words are now calling us. What he knew for himself, and called upon others to prove, was a life in which all the powers of his being found their utmost expression, whether amid the activities of service or the endurance of the prison, whether unfolding the rich treasures of the Epistle to the Ephesians or making tents at night to provide the next day's meal for himself and his companions. And we may prove this true vigour of divine life, whether in the monotonous routine of daily duties in the family, the workshop, or the business; in our church relationships and service; or in the patient endurance of suffering and

* This rendering, which presents the distinction of the tenses in Greek, was suggested by one now with the Lord.

sorrow and trial. This, and nothing less than this, will make daily toil a daily service to God, and enable the most obscure saint to sow the seed of an eternal harvest of praise and glory.

Paul had no time to sit down and talk about any perfection in attainment. Indeed he was conscious that he had attained but to *one thing*, and that was the forgetfulness of his attainments, for the simple reason that he saw so much before him. He left the things that were behind and reached forth unto the things that were before, thus pressing along the course to "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." We, like Paul, are called from above, and that call upwards is ever sounding in the ear of faith. There is a most real and blessed sense in which we are so seated in the heavenlies in Christ that we can get no higher; but in another equally real sense we are called to be responding to the voice from above that is ever speaking. "Onward, upward, homeward, heavenward," is our proper motto, and running in the diligence of faith with the eye on the prize, our proper practice. We cannot look back without taking the eye off the prize, nor stop to consider how far we have run without losing time. If we have any worthy conception of what is before us in respect of knowledge of Christ and conformity to Him, our attitude will be that of men who have but just left the starting point, and have all the race before them. Yet shall we press forward with the joyful assurance that at any moment the goal may be reached, for at the coming of Him for whom we wait all our hopes will be fulfilled, we shall at once stand in perfect conformity to Himself, and shall know even as we are known. Then, indeed, shall we be "found in Him," as those who are worthy of all that God can ever bestow upon us, we shall have gained Him to the eternal satisfaction of every

possible desire of our hearts; and with energy that shall never tire, and appreciation that shall put all former experience into the shade, our adoration will find expression in the calm and holy utterance, "Thou art worthy!"

W. H. B.

ON FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IN THE GOSPEL.

NOTES OF BIBLE READING AT A CONFERENCE.

BEFORE we consider the matter in hand, remember that God is always in every act of His a Sovereign, and most solemnly sovereign when He shows His love in Christ. The highest act of sovereignty was, "It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him." Remember also the awful words of 2 Pet. ii. 4, "For if God *spared not* the angels that sinned," and the same word as used in Rom. viii. 32, "He that *spared not* His own Son." In Heb. ii. 16, we read, "He took not hold of angels"—to raise them up—"but He took hold of the seed of Abraham." There is a double barrier to the salvation of the devil; his own enmity and pride is one, God's justice is the other. There is but one barrier to the salvation of any man that hears the gospel, and that is in himself; he will not take his place upon the dunghill to be lifted up by God.

Everything happens according to God's decree. God is the author of whatever honours Him, but the creature is the author of whatever dishonours Him. Sin is the only thing on which the creature can lay his hand and say, "That is mine." It was a high act of sovereignty that enabled God to make children to Himself out of His enemies.

The first action of Divine sovereignty is upon a mass of sin and misery as expressed in Rom. ix. 15, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have

compassion on whom I will have compassion." And that the sovereignty of His grace might redound to His glory and to the salvation of the sinner, He smote His Son.

In Luke xv. the grace of the heart of God is seen in the words, "Let us eat and be merry." Compare Zeph. iii. 17, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing."

In Eph. i. 4, 5, we read of God's purpose, and chapter v. carries us on to its realisation when there will be nothing to hinder fellowship. The words "the adoption of children," are better rendered "sonship." Paul invariably has the two Adams in mind, "as connected with what we *were* and what we *are*. In John iii. 6, we have birth from above and birth from below. "Born *from above*," better expresses the truth in John iii. than "born again," for the object is to show the low estate of every man in the first Adam. We are children of God by birth (1 Pet. i. 23) and by new creation (Eph. ii. 10). Every child of God is a Mephibosheth by adoption and a Solomon by birth. Observe these tender words in Eph. i. 4, "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love," and "*to Himself*" in the next verse. God rejoices and rests in His love. Oh what blessedness! Then comes as the accompaniment in v. 6, "to the praise of the glory of His grace."

In the Epistle of John you do not find the word "glory" but "love." Mephibosheth was to the glory of David's grace, but Solomon was the child of his own bosom, after the hour of his deepest sorrow. At the table there was no difference. Mephibosheth, however, got into David's bosom when he said "Let him take all."

The tenderness of God's heart is also manifest in Luke

xv. in the words "He kissed him much"—again and again! He kissed out of his son's memory the last part of his prayer, "Make me as one of thy hired servants."

If the prodigal had repeated that, it would have been his worst fault. He gained access to his father's heart by his confession, but "Make me as one of thy hired servants" would have been a dagger thrust into the father's heart. "There is forgiveness with Thee," but it is, "that Thou mayest be feared."

Another Scripture that we need to lay upon our hearts concerning the ministry of the gospel of God's Son is 2 Cor. v. 18-21; it will save us from weariness in our service, and above all from any declension in the spirit of the service. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," as on Mount Sinai; "now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

If I would be a true ambassador for the Lord of glory, I must not misrepresent Him that sent me, but must seek always to be what the apostle speaks of in chap. ii. 15—"we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish." In the following verse he inverts the order, "to the one we are a savour of death unto death, and to the other, a savour of life unto life," that he might begin and end with salvation.

The Lord Jesus is still a suppliant by us, and He through us entreats sinners to trust in Him. The gospel is not merely a way of escape from wrath, not only bread for the hungry, but the banqueting house, as Luke xv. shews us.

Every child of God ought to have the testimony of the Spirit that he is a witness for God. Our Lord says, "As

Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." That is true of every child of God, and if he is walking in fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, it will become natural to bear about that testimony in his heart and conscience.

The secret of no weariness is the remembrance that we are a sweet savour of Christ to God.

If we bore this in mind more, our testimony in the gospel would not be considered so much with regard to the advantage of the creature, but rather as to the glory it would bring to God, and the joy that it would give to His heart. If I view the gospel with reference only to the creature's advantage, I may say, "There is no blessing to-night; no souls are saved." Then my hands hang down, and weariness comes in. The question is, "Have I been a sweet savour unto God?" If so, I still can triumph.

A departed servant of Christ used to say that he got on best when he realised that God Himself was the chief and most interested listener to His own gospel. But if the prodigal is reached, we think of the minstrelsy of heaven, nor would we ever wish to be without it.

If we live in the atmosphere of the Father's house we shall be kept right as to our preaching. We are called to preach from it, as if in it.

Let the evangelist beware of any slackness of affection towards the God of love who sends him forth. If he carry that love in his heart it will be better than all knowledge, or utterance of the lips, or the drivings of his own conscience. If his motive be simply love of the creature, let him go back to the Father's house and be better furnished, that he may come out of it to do more work, and to do it in the joy of the Lord; and in the day of the Lord he will find he has been truly successful.

Salvation is of the Lord—not our work, but God's. Unless we have God working with us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, whatever the service may be, it is useless and not pleasing to Him. If the apostle Paul had not been living in the love of the Father's house when he withstood Peter to the face, it would not have been done in the spirit of Christ.

It was because he was dwelling in the Father's house that he so reprov'd Peter. It was to the honour of Paul that he did it. "Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee." Peter shewed how he loved Paul when he wrote of him, "Our beloved brother Paul."

Isaiah i. 2, shews the tenderness of God shining out in all the majesty of His glory, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. . . . I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me;" also chap. lxxv. 2, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people." But God's crowning entreaty is, "As though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God."

Not only have we this glorious gospel in its beseeching character, but in the epistle to the Ephesians we have another aspect of it in its uniting power, by which Jew and Gentile are made one in Christ; it unites those who could not otherwise be united.

In 1 Thess. i. 5, we read, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost." That is, the gospel was in power and in much assurance in the preacher, bringing what nothing else could bring, a certainty of the truth of what He preached. It is only the gospel thus held and thus preached that can bring divine certainty to others.

The very object of man's religion is to keep the soul in uncertainty. One of the doctrines of the Council of

Trent is, that it is a damnable heresy to teach that any man can say he has eternal life ; so that damnation was passed upon Luther, and Paul, and the apostles and prophets.

The gospel that does not bring in the resurrection of Christ according to Rom. vi., the triumph of Christ according to ch. viii., and the membership of the body of Christ according to ch. xii., is an imperfect gospel. When you get Christ as Head of the body you get evangelists in that body, but the evangelist in the divine view is but a member of Christ. You cannot have a limb without having the whole.

A man cannot be an evangelist in this sense without being more or less a shepherd. And a man cannot be a full teacher unless he be more or less an evangelist, or a full evangelist unless he can talk to children. If he is in the condition of soul that the apostle describes, he will not go in for questionable ways and means for making God's glorious gospel known.

The expression, "the gospel of God," very rarely occurs ; we find it twice in Romans, viz. ch. i. 1, "separated unto the gospel of God," and ch. xv. 16, "ministering the gospel of God." Christ is the expression of the gospel.

Two more Scriptures touching fellowship with God in the gospel are—(1) Matt. xi. 25, where the blessed Lord speaks as though He were already in the glory as Head of the new creation ; as if all the purposes of God were brought to pass. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Perfect sovereignty, infinite love ! Then, in the light of the work of Calvary, He says, "Come unto Me, I will give you rest." (2) Luke xix. 41, "He beheld the city and wept over it." Let us lay these Scriptures on our hearts.

Christ rejoiced in the hiding of those things from the wise and prudent, as well as in the revealing of them to babes. So we, in fellowship with Him, can still rejoice whatever may be the results.

“Ministering the gospel of God,” brings in the idea of worship with it. It is not the common word for minister, but a word implying priestly service, as though in lifting up Christ Paul was a worshipper; he left results with God.

Rest, in Matt xi. 29, is in connection with doing the will of Christ; but that in the previous verse, “I will rest you,” is with special reference to the babes, and the babes correspond with the poor publicans and sinners of Luke xv. 1.

As to results, let us ever remember Isaiah xlix. 1, “Jehovah hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name. . . . He hath made me a polished shaft,” always hitting the mark, always bright and sharpened. “Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” He does not say Jacob, for here it is the Son of God. “Then, I said, I have laboured in vain.” (“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!”) “I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain, yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.”

It is not possible that any one can labour in vain as to the chief result. We use the word *result* because we fear Satan makes a bad use of it. The chief result is being well-pleasing to God, for we are a sweet savour of Christ unto God, and neither the perverseness of rebellious man, nor his pride, can prevent this. Nothing can prevent my having this result if I am pleasing to God, and content to be nothing. But let me in my soul have a wish to be something, and I lose my chief result.

We would not discourage in the servant the desire and expectation of fruit, but would make it our aim to

encourage him and to prevent discouragement. If we are in the Father's banqueting house, we shall have the Father's fulness of blessing.

There are two respects in which we ought to travail in birth: (1) In saving souls from the wrath to come, and (2) that Christ may be formed in those who are already children. (Gal. iv. 19.)

FAITH'S STEPPING STONES.

“Great peace have they which love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them.”—PSALM cxix. 165.

If my soul be not in the possession of peace, yea, “great peace,” it is because of my lack of love to God's law. If, on the other hand, I have this great peace, nothing which happens to me will be a stumbling-block.

I desire to be helped myself and to be a helper of other children of God in the knowledge of this peace “which passeth all understanding,” that God may be glorified by the undisturbed happiness of His children.

One requisite is, not merely to be acquainted with God's law, but to *love* it, and to seek by grace to be obedient to the word, “Rejoice in the Lord alway.” Occasions of sorrow, yea, it may be of great sorrow, there will be, but though “sorrowful” we are to be “alway rejoicing.”

God's law, which is to prevent our being offended, is to be found in different parts of the Scriptures, and we may gather the mind of God from it, either directly or indirectly. Let us seek to learn from the mistakes of others.

If Joseph had known that the pit and the prison were but the path to the fulfilment of his glorious dreams, they would have been no stumbling-block to him. Nor would his father Jacob have stumbled, and said “all these things are against me,” had he believed what we in this

dispensation are bound to believe, that "all things are working together for good to them that love God."

Had the children of Israel considered the all-mighty power of their Redeemer in bringing them out of Egypt, and had they believed the promises that God had made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, they would never have murmured in their wilderness journey.

If Joshua had called upon all Israel to join with him in giving glory to God when his fame was noised through all the country; and if he had consulted with God about Ai, and not with his men only, he would not have had to rend his clothes, nor fall to the earth upon his face. (Comp. Luke v. 15, 16.)

Similar things might be said of many more of the patriarchs of the old dispensation; and we may say the same of many among ourselves under the new dispensation. But let these instances suffice to remind us that, if we love God, and manifest our love by obedience to His law, the Holy Spirit of God will so instruct us, to our great joy, that we shall turn the stumbling-blocks of unbelief into steppingstones of faith, *knowing* that all things shall work *together* for good, and we shall be looking for the fulfilment of such Scriptures as these—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, *because he trusteth in Thee,*" and "The Lord of peace Himself give you peace *always, by all means.*"

Let us bear in mind, however, the difference between being *sorrowful* and being *unhappy*. We may be sorrowful, and ought to sorrow because of many things; but the sorrows of faith do not prevent her joys. To be unhappy, however, is to be disobedient to the command, "Rejoice in the Lord alway." The apostle well knowing the dulness of nature, doubles the command, "*Again, I say, Rejoice.*"

Owing, perhaps, to false teaching, we may make many and great mistakes, to God's dishonour and our discomfort, but, as we confess, God will forgive and will instruct us. Even he who after the inward man delights in the law of God, sees also another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind; yet in the enjoyment of communion with God concerning this warring law, he thanks God that he has in Jesus Christ our Lord a deliverer from that law in his members which ever tends to bring him into captivity. If we are feeding upon Christ, remembering that we have been redeemed by His precious blood, the Spirit of God will bring to our remembrance the word, "sin shall *not have dominion* over you." An aged believer has well said, that "in-dwelling sin is one thing, and out-breaking sin is another."

He who walks in the light, as God is in the light, hates in-dwelling sin as if it were sin in *deed*, and so far from allowing it, he cries to God against it, and is taught to say (if sin has not broken out), "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." And he thanks God for deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord, hating even the "thought of foolishness," which is "sin." Such an one is not in the flesh, but in the spirit, and though the flesh dwells in him, he makes Jehovah his hiding place, dwelling in God, and he proves "that to be spiritually-minded is life and peace."

Let us encourage one another to maintain communion with God whatever happens, even by pouring out the heart to God, for "God is a refuge for us." "Who is sufficient for these things?" we may ask, and we are taught to say, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."

W. H.

PAUL AS AN EXAMPLE.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS ON ACTS XX. 17-38.

MY object in reading these verses is to make a few remarks upon the character of Paul, because God has given us in him the picture of a mighty one, in order that we may all seek, by God's grace, to tread in his footsteps.

There is a special mercy in this record. Looking at the life of Christ, it might be said, "He was God, whilst I am only a man;" but here we have a man, a sinner like ourselves, so that in Paul we see what God can do, and we should remember that what He did for him, He is prepared to do for us; and, what He wrought out in his service, He is ready to work out in ours.

In Scripture much is said of Paul in the special features of his apostolic office, but little about the *man* Paul. God made him what he was, because he yielded himself into His hands to model and to fashion. The great hindrance with us lies in the insubjection of our hearts and affections.

When Christ revealed Himself to Paul, he in response gave himself, spirit, soul, and body to the Lord. It was no half-and-half thing with him, and that was the real secret of his life. He began with Christ, he went on with Christ, and he died with Christ.

In Acts xx. we have the Holy Ghost's portrait of Paul. It is not simply that he writes or speaks of himself, but the Holy Ghost bears witness to what he says, and the record is left on the page of divine truth for us to ponder. "Be ye imitators of me," he could say, "as I am of Christ." We may talk great things about ourselves, but the Holy Ghost may say, "It is not true."

Miletus, where Paul was on this occasion, was a small town not far from Ephesus, and he sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus to meet him there. What a grand beginning when he could say to them, "*Ye know!*" They well knew the truthfulness of his words, when he said how he had been with them, "serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations."

It is a great thing for us, wherever we go, to be "*serviug the Lord.*" We may meet with opposition and abuse, but he who is serving his Lord will not be angry if he is kicked out of doors, because a child of God never gets a kick for the Lord without getting a kiss from the Lord. The servant of the Lord may be serving the saints, and they may not appreciate him, but it is all the same to him, except for the grief and tears. Personally it was all the same to Paul, and he could say, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat." (1 Cor. iv. 12, 13.) "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake." (2 Cor. xii. 10.)

In daily life and walk, in the workshop, in the house, in business, in the world, if we can only write "serving the Lord," it will make us satisfied with everything; we need never grumble because we have a good pay-master. Paul grieved and sorrowed, but never grumbled. In James v. 9, we read, "Grudge not," or "grumble not, one against another."

Notice, it is "serving the Lord *with all humility of mind.*" Thus Paul began and went on. Let young Christians begin there, and let older ones shew the example. How many Christians begin with a humble, lowly, gentle, loving, Christlike spirit, and end with self-

will and pride! Both the life and service of the apostle were characterized by humility, and we all need constantly to cultivate the same spirit. If we have not humility we have not begun aright. Christ was "meek and lowly in heart." "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant . . . and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. ii. 7, 8.) He practised what He taught, sitting down on the lowest seat, taking the lowest place. Oh that our life and service for God might be "with all humility!"

Next to "humility" we have "tears." If we had more tears through fellowship with others in their griefs and wrongs, if there were more sympathy in each other's joys and sorrows, what life, what joy, we should have! When the apostle had to warn the Philippians against some who walked not after Christ, he said, "I now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Thus in sympathy with his Lord, he served, he warned, he wrote, with many tears. Till we have learned to water with our tears what we have sown, it will not grow. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." (Psalm cxxvi. 5, 6.)

But besides serving in the Church with humility and tears, he had trials from without—"and temptations, which befel me by the lying in wait of the Jews." Instead of being "a Pharisee of the Pharisees," and highly esteemed by his people, the reality of his faith had brought him down to tread in the footsteps of his Master, and he willingly took the low place in every relationship—"least of the apostles," "less than the least of all saints," and "chief of sinners."

In verse 22 he says, "*I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there.*" What blissful ignorance! He is going where bonds, imprisonments, and afflictions await him, but as he is "serving the Lord," it matters not where he goes, or what he suffers, and he knows no fear. Is it so with us? Do we not sometimes feel we cannot go to this place or that, because we are afraid? Paul went on, not knowing what was before him, and God would have us cultivate this submissive spirit.

"*None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself.*" One grand secret of Christian life is to know that there is something so much better, that we do not count life dear. In Psalm lxiii. 3, we read, "Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life my lips shall praise Thee." If we are ready for Christ's sake to lose our life, we shall find it again, enriched with His lovingkindness. The devil said, "All that a man hath will he give for his life," and he said what is true; but Paul learned in his heart what Psalm lxiii. teaches. How have we learned it—by lip or by heart?

"*So that I might finish my course with joy.*" The apostle was not content to stop short in his course. If God had given him a hundred miles to run, ninety-nine would not suffice. And does not God lay before each of us a course? Perhaps we have only run a few miles of it; but consider the loss we shall find in eternity, if the course is not run. Some part of it must be run every day, and if we miss to-day's part we cannot make it up to-morrow. Let us take a higher conception of our Christian course, and press onward, leaving our circumstances and surroundings in the hands of Him whose "lovingkindness is better than life."

"*And the ministry which I have received of the Lord*

Jesus." To each man, woman, and child brought into the church of God, He gives a ministry. Are we fulfilling ours? It may be a ministry so lowly that few but God and the angels see it, but if we have received it from God, we shall not care what man may think about it.

"To testify the gospel of the grace of God." Do our lives testify to this? It is not done simply by talking or preaching; the devil can talk and preach, but he cannot live a godly life. To testify for God is to live out the gospel in life and conduct. If He says "Speak," then speak; if he says, "Be silent," then be silent. Let His light shine through us and bear witness to all that we belong to Him.

To the elders Paul says, *"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock."* They were not made overseers by man, but by the Holy Ghost. If there were more fellowship in the Spirit in oversight work, there would be more joy and life in the Church. Paul speaks to these elders of the realities of his own experience, and God has left His experience on record that we may have it before our eyes, and seek to know it for ourselves.

"To feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." There is not a Christian on whom God does not set the value of that blood; and He wants us to estimate our fellow-Christians by that precious blood. Let us take this word in connection with our individual love and service for one another. It may be that some are very ungracious and unkind, and may treat us very badly, but let us look upon them in the value of that blood, and that will kindle love in our souls towards them. We shall then be like Paul, weeping tears night and day, and loving on in spite of everything. Though some may be very crooked and give much trouble, we must remember they are purchased by the precious blood

of Christ. However poor and ignorant, or even crooked and cross, Paul found any of the Lord's people to be, that holy man of God was ready to serve them, for he could say of himself from the heart, "less than the least of all saints."

"Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." It is very beautiful to notice that in speaking to these overseers the apostle twice brings in the word "tears." There were tears in his gospel ministry and tears in his church ministry. Some seem to regard the path of ministry and service in the church as a smooth one, but all true ministry knows something of tears, and they who give themselves to it may even be well-nigh broken-hearted. Christ weeps for sinners, but He weeps even more for saints. We have need to keep these things in mind, otherwise we shall get shaken and troubled, and be ready to give up service and lose the reward promised in 1 Peter v., "Feed the flock of God . . . and when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Oh, for hearts like Paul! Let us seek this mind for ourselves and for others. We may have to weep bitter tears, but let us never utter hard words of one another. There are different kinds of tears. Selfish tears fall and lie, angry tears fall and are lost, but such tears as Paul shed are kept; they are highly valued by God and put into His bottle.

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace." In view of perils from within the church and from without Paul does not commend them to apostles or men, but "to God, and to the word of His grace, which" he adds, "is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me." The sin of covetousness is one of the especial evils of the last days, and we need to be on our guard against it.

The question arises, Could not Paul have been better employed than in making tents? We might also ask, Could not Christ have been better employed than as a carpenter thirty years of His life? No. We have each our various duties in our respective positions in life, and none of us could be better employed than in fulfilling those duties and in seeking to please God in them. Some may say, Oh, if I were only such a one, if I were only like Deborah or Daniel! Let us not grumble, but seek to please God and to honour Him in the smallest duties in the circumstances in which He has placed us. God may take us somewhere else, and give us other work, but let us be prepared to stay where God puts us, and to do what He gives us to do, and regard that as holy work. Let us therefore bow to the will of God, and accept our circumstances, and glorify Him in them, taking care how we put ourselves into other circumstances, by marriage or in any other way, lest we entangle ourselves. The devil often comes in and mars life by getting Christians to act without God. They act without asking His counsel, or if they ask they never wait, and because they do not wait they tumble into the mire and often never get out.

"Ye ought to support the weak." Paul was not ashamed to toil at making tents while preaching the gospel of the grace of God, that he might help others. There are poor weak brethren and sisters who cannot work; support them. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said "It is more blessed to give than to receive." H. G.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

What are we to understand by 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21 ?

THE "great house" would appear to correspond with the "great tree" in Luke xiii. 18, 19, and represents the outward growth of a dispensation which degenerates as it extends, not of necessity but because of human weakness that is not counteracted by power from on high. We have to learn that not only does all good come from God, but that good can only be maintained by God. He creates and He must sustain, and to show this, deterioration under the hand of man is allowed. Only in eternity will the fine gold maintain its lustre and never wax dim. It has been noticed that the expression "great" is never used of Jerusalem, but of Babylon. (In Rev. xxi. 10, all the old MSS. leave out the word "great" and read as in the R. V., "the holy city Jerusalem.") God attaches the thought of glory to *holiness* and not to *greatness*, which is ever man's proud boast. (Dan. iv. 30) Another question is, Does "these" in v. 21, from which the man of God is to purge himself, refer to persons? We unhesitatingly refer the pronoun to the *things* alluded to in verses 16, 17, 18; and the apostle's words in v. 22, "Flee also youthful lusts," make this evident. Timothy was told to shun profane babblings, which would lead to "ungodliness" and become as a canker to the soul, but he had *also* to flee those inward corruptions to which our fallen nature is exposed. To assert that Timothy was to purge himself from certain persons, and to apply "these" to the "vessels of dishonour" is to mar the context and to do violence to the simile employed. It deserves also to be mentioned that the word is literally to "purge out," which shows that the action is one which takes place within the man.

Of vessels to honour and dishonour we have a striking illustration in Psalm lx. 7, 8, where Gilead, Manasséh, Ephraim, and Judah would correspond with vessels of honour, while Moab, Edom, and Philistia are vessels of dishonour ("Moab is my wash-pot"). These dishonourable vessels were needed to fulfil God's purposes regarding His people, for His own glory, and for their ultimate good. Evil is used by God to bring out good, as the darkness makes manifest the light. In the old creation the *night* and the *sea* are essential elements, but they will be wanting in the new creation (see Rev. xxi. 1, 25) for their end will have been attained. Physically, morally, and spiritually the deep mystery of evil meets us everywhere, and we await the unfoldings of eternity to understand why it was allowed, and then it will for ever have passed away for all who are in Christ.

IMMANUEL :

HIS NAME AND GOVERNMENT.

THE prophecies of Isaiah contained in chapters vii. to xii. may be called "The book of Immanuel," and from it we learn who the "Servant of Jehovah" is, of whom the last twenty-seven chapters speak so fully.

Few days were darker in Judah's sad history than those of the idolatrous king Ahaz; but the darker and more cloudy the days are, the brighter shines the lamp of prophecy, and the more joyfully will the faithful turn to it, and take heed to its sure light.

In chapters vii.-xii. the promised One is presented to us in three aspects: (1) as the sign of God's grace to the unworthy and the rebellious; (2) as the Name of power to disciples in the midst of a world's rejection; and (3) as the Branch from the root of David, on whom all the glory of the coming kingdom rests. Correspondingly, He is (1) the Immanuel of the past—God's gift to a guilty world, as expressed in John iii. 16; (2) the Immanuel of the present, at the right hand of power, guiding and governing all according to the counsel of infinite wisdom, as the Lamb in the midst of the throne; and (3) the Immanuel of the kingdom of the heavens, when all His enemies shall be made His footstool.

All names divinely given are promises and prophecies, and above all is this true of the names of our blessed Lord. The very title before us unfolds the gospel, and as the gospel of Matthew begins with the statement, "They shall call His name IMMANUEL, which being interpreted, is GOD

WITH US," so it ends with His own assurance, "Lo, *I am with you* always, even unto the end of the age."

The portion, however, on which I would specially dwell now is the *second* of those referred to above (Isaiah viii. 5 to ix. 7), being desirous of drawing attention to the force of the Name as bearing upon our present life and walk.

From the day that man shouted "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him," to the present, the world at large has refused the waters of Shiloah (the Sent One) that flow softly, and in consequence Immanuel's inheritance has been given over into the hands of the Gentiles; yet the promise to the Lord's people holds good, that, though the peoples associate themselves and take counsel together, their power shall crumble, and their counsel come to nought, because "God is with us."

In the meanwhile God speaks to us with a strong hand, as He will to "the remnant of the woman's seed" (Rev. xii. 17) in the days of Antichrist, warning us against joining a confederacy, and bidding us find our safety in Himself, thus obeying the word: "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread"—an exhortation taken up by the Spirit in 1 Peter iii. 14, 15, for the purpose of stirring us to arm ourselves with the mind of Christ, and be content to suffer now for righteousness that we may reign hereafter.

Before examining the warnings given in chapter viii., and that we may the better apprehend the glory of Him who speaks to us, we will look a little at the names and titles given to Immanuel in chapter ix. 6: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace."

In giving us Immanuel God has given us a "Prince" as

well as a Saviour, One to whom all government belongs; and the epithets that follow indicate His fitness for the government that rests on His shoulder; a government that embraces the greatest matters as well as the smallest, the ordering of the universe and of our own individual lives. The same deeply important truth is set forth in Isaiah xxii. 20-23, where we see the key of the house of David given to Eliakim, the type of Him who is spoken of in Revelation as "He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth." (Ch. iii. 7.) God has committed all government to the Holy One and the True, and we have to learn the full meaning of this in reference to time as well as to eternity; for we read that "of the increase of His government and of the peace (of it) there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever."

It is perhaps easier to see how all will in the *future* subserve His glory and establish His throne, than to see how all is *now* doing this, and therefore we do well to ponder the precious truth expressed by "*from henceforth*"—from this very moment. It was uttered before Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem, yet with that destruction full in view (see Isaiah vii. 17-25; viii. 7, 21, 22); uttered in view of Calvary with its darkness, its agony and its woe; uttered in prospect of the failure of dispensation after dispensation. It is spoken in wonderful whispers to our souls when within and around the enemy seems so mighty, and God's cause so feeble and so feebly upheld even by those who are His. Our mighty Captain knows what He is doing, and let us not be surprised if He allows apparent defeat, as Joshua did at the second attack on Ai, when he

said "We will flee before them, and they will come out after us." It looked very like a second defeat, but it secured a complete victory; and much which is now regarded by the enemy and by little-faith as defeat, will, in the result, prove a glorious conquest. So let the words "from henceforth" ring in our ears, and we shall be able to adopt the triumphant strain of the eighth of Romans: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Thus God entrusts all government to Him who alone is able to bear it, and it becomes us to do the same, with the assurance that none can rule and control the destiny of things like Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. We are not left to the rule of a stranger, and our affairs are not under the guidance of one whom we know not. God has given Him a Name, that we may know what He is and who He is to whom He has entrusted all, and to whom He would have us leave all, so that we may carry out what we often sing:

"I leave it all with Jesus day by day;
 Faith can firmly trust Him, come what may;
 Hope has dropped her anchor, found her rest,
 In the calm, sure haven of His breast:
 Love esteems it heaven to abide
 At His side."

If we can believingly entrust our circumstances to the Lord we can easily roll on Him the ordering of all that belongs to the world around.

The five titles given to Immanuel are but unfoldings of that one Name which is above every name, the Name of Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person.

"WONDERFUL" is the first title, and its position stamps

a divine significance upon all that follows. The word itself is remarkable, and properly belongs exclusively to God, for of Him it is said: "Who *alone* doeth great wonders." In Gen. xviii. 14, with reference to the birth of Isaac, we read: "Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?" and in the Greek this is identical with what the angel says to Mary in regard to the birth of Christ, "For with God nothing shall be impossible." (Luke i. 37.) Thus the wonder-working Christ is the God with whom there are no impossibilities. In Judges we find the Angel who appeared to Manoah's wife calling Himself Wonderful. "Wherefore enquirest thou after my name, seeing it is Wonderful?" (See chapter xiii. 18, marg.) And when God foretells in the days of Israel's weakness and captivity that He will return and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem again, He says by Zechariah, "If it be wonderful in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be wonderful in mine eyes? saith Jehovah of Hosts." (Chap. viii. 6.)

The first title given to Immanuel should thus prepare us for all that God would reveal regarding Him who is the embodiment of the mystery of godliness — "God manifest in the flesh." (1 Tim. iv. 16.) Until this mystery is realized by faith, Immanuel's name will never be known; but if this mystery be revealed to us, all others will be plain in comparison, and we shall be able to sing with rest of soul:

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm."

He who is the Wonderful is also the COUNSELLOR. In Him the counsels of God have their centre, according to His eternal purpose, and He becomes the counsellor of the

people of God because He is the centre of God's thoughts concerning them. It is the forgetfulness of this that so often makes our counsel evil, for we are prone to counsel according to the natural mind and not according to God's purpose in Christ. But we can truly say, "He is wonderful in counsel," as we read in Isaiah xxviii. 29, and also "excellent in working," that is, in the bringing to a successful issue that which He hath counselled.

He is also the "MIGHTY GOD," and on Him rests the divine "Spirit of counsel and might," of which the double emblem is given in Rev. v., where the Lamb in the midst of the throne is described as "having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God." Therefore it is that "the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of His heart to all generations," for He backs the wisdom of His counsel with the omnipotence of His right arm. Contrariwise, we read that "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the nations to nought; He maketh the thoughts of the peoples of none effect." (Psalm xxxiii 10, 11.)

A fourth title is "FATHER OF ETERNITY." The future lies before Him, and He is its source, its centre and its end. All its hidden destinies are in His hand; its heaven is open unto Him, and of its hell He has the key. The darkness and the light, the weal and the woe, find their measure and their depth by His cross and passion, for therein He triumphed over time and put His seal on eternity. We are told in Col. ii. that He freed Himself from the cords and bands with which the principalities and powers of darkness had bound Him; they vanished like the bands of the three children which were consumed in the fire. He showed their utter impotence and weakness, triumphing over Satan and his host in His cross, and thenceforth in Resurrection He became the Head of a new

creation, upon which eternity is stamped, and of which He is the Father and the King.

Lastly, by reason of all that has gone before He becomes the "PRINCE OF PEACE." There will be no peace till He reigns, save as individuals enter into the peace which He has made; because He said He came to bring not peace to the world, but a sword, and thereby to disturb the world's dream of rest and peace. At present we can only say to a rebel world what Jehu said to Joram, "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" But the discord of earth will give place to the harmony of heaven when its rightful King comes, for the sword shall be beaten into a ploughshare and the spear into a pruning hook.

Having dwelt thus on the Name of our Immanuel as unfolded in Isaiah ix. 6, we will again turn to the closing verses of the previous chapter, where we are told that He is a sanctuary, in which those who receive Him find safety, and a stumbling-stone, over which many will "stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared and be taken." To those who sanctify God in their hearts, and justify Him in all His ways, Immanuel becomes a sanctuary, thus fulfilling to them Ps. xci.; but to both the houses of Israel as well as to the world at large, He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, because they seek to establish their own righteousness instead of submitting to the righteousness of God. (Rom. x.) But while Israel and the world reject God's Christ, He takes up "the poor of the flock," and says (chapter xiii. 15) "Bind up the testimony, and seal the law among my disciples." He thus gives over the testimony and the law to His church, of which He says, "Behold I and the children whom Jehovah hath given me"—words quoted in Heb. ii. 13 to shew that He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. It is thus the

Spirit applies these words to the church now, though they will yet have a fulfilment also in the Jewish remnant of a future day. These verses end with a solemn warning against neglecting the will of God and substituting for its holy guidance the unholy intercourse of man with the spirits of the unseen world. There is a fearful significance in this. When Saul had rejected God and His word, and God answered Him no longer, neither by vision, nor by dream, nor by prophet, he sought to the familiar spirit, and God sent Him an answer he little anticipated. So now Christendom is fast losing the hold the Bible once had on it, and man in his perplexity is turning to spiritualism—the devil's last device—and seeking light on his troubled path and help in his difficulties from the "murderer" and "liar," who will allure him on to his doom by means of the unclean spirits like frogs that will come out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.

Spiritualism is the effort of the living, in their woe, to obtain help from the dead, instead of from God; and God will send them strong delusion to believe the lie, because they turn not "to the law and to the testimony" which is sealed up among the disciples of Christ; or, as Paul tells the Thessalonians, "because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." The second epistle to the Thessalonians is a fearful unfolding of what we read here: "They shall pass through it [the darkness] hardly bestead and hungry; they shall fret themselves and curse their king [Antichrist] and their god [Satan], and look upward [towards heaven]: and they shall look towards the earth, and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish, and they shall be driven out into darkness."

May we, as children of God, take warning lest we be led away by the error of the wicked and fall from our own stedfastness, remembering that our only safeguard is in

subjection to the government of our Immanuel, and in dependence, as His disciples, on His word and testimony. In the meanwhile, whatever present appearances may indicate, we are told for our encouragement that “the zeal of the Lord of Hosts” shall accomplish all that He has counselled. That zeal revealed itself in the sending of Christ out of the Father’s bosom to make Him the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending of all God’s purposes, and He will not “fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for His law.” He will not rest until the righteousness of the holy city shall go forth “as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.” H. G.

“ HIS HOLY PROMISE.”

PSALM CV. 42.

THERE is much similarity in Psalms cv. and cvi., though there is also a very great difference between them. The former simply recounts the mighty works of the Lord, while the latter links with the narrative of them the faithlessness of the people on behalf of whom they were wrought. The psalm before us is a call to the “seed of Abraham” to remember how God had fulfilled to *them* the promise He had made to *him*, and is a beautiful illustration of the manner in which, sometimes by very unlikely means, God ever fulfils with His hand that which He speaks with His mouth.

Meditation on the opening verses is well calculated to stir our hearts to worship, but our present object is specially to observe God’s *promise* and His mode of carrying it out. He made a covenant with Abraham, a covenant of unconditional promise, He sealed it with an oath to Isaac, and established it unto Jacob. The one

part of the promise here singled out is that of the land, "Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance." This promise was made to them when they were "few men in number, yea, very few and strangers in it;" when they wandered from one part of the land to another, sojourning as strangers amongst the various peoples that were settled in it. And the fulfilment of this promise God kept steadily before Him, and allowed nothing to turn Him aside from it.

First the few were the objects of His special care, and though, by their folly and unbelief, they often got into circumstances of danger, He protected and delivered them. Such was the case in the history of Abraham (Gen. xii., xx.), Isaac (xxvi.), and Jacob (xxxv. 5).

If Israel had remained in Canaan they would have become just one tribe amongst others, or they might have mingled themselves with the nations and so have been lost as a distinct people. Therefore part of the promise to Abraham was, that they should go into a strange land and there sojourn for a time. To Egypt accordingly God would take them, and for this purpose "He called for a famine upon the land: He brake the whole staff of bread" (v. 16). This in itself would not have been sufficient, but He who had called for the famine had made provision against it: "He sent a man before them; Joseph was sold for a servant." Here we have a picture of many transactions; we see the human side and the divine. Joseph's brethren in their envy sold him, but God in His wisdom and goodness sent him before them to preserve their lives. And just as in the over-ruling providence of God the sale of Joseph, his affliction, and the glory which in due time was his as governor of Egypt, were *steps* toward the departure of Israel from Canaan to Egypt, so their sojourning in Egypt was a step toward their possession of

the promised land. For in Egypt they were kept as a separate people, they grew and multiplied, and from a family developed into a nation. But with prosperity their hold of the promise waxed feeble, their hope grew dim, and Jehovah the God of their fathers had no very prominent place in their affections or their worship. Had they remained at ease and in favour they would never have been willing to leave Egypt for Canaan. But a permanent settlement there God could not permit, and therefore "He turned their hearts to hate His people, to deal subtilly with His servants," (*v.* 25), exercising His sovereign control even over the free acts of His sinful creatures, and making those subserve His own designs. He suffered His people to feel the yoke of the oppressor, and to prove the bitterness of the bondage of Egypt, in order that they might long for deliverance.

As soon as they cried to Him out of their afflictions He had the instrument of deliverance at hand. As of old "He sent" Joseph to prepare for their reception in Egypt, so at the proper time "He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen." Through them He executed His judgments upon Egypt which in *v.* 5 are called "the judgments of His mouth," because they were inflicted by His word, for "*He spake* (*v.* 31, 34) and it was done." Thus He made Egypt willing to let them go and even "glad when they departed." He fulfilled the promise that they should "come out with great substance." "He brought them forth also with silver and gold; and there was not one feeble person among their tribes." In the wilderness He made full provision for their need—a cloud to shield them from the sun, a fire to give them light by night; He gave them quails, "the bread of heaven," and water from the rock. By the hand of Joshua, another chosen instrument, He led them into Canaan, "and gave

them the lands of the heathen and they inherited the labour of the people."

The reason given for all this is "For He remembered His *holy promise* and Abraham His servant;" while the object of it all was, that He might have an obedient people (*v.* 45). The expression "His holy promise" is very beautiful, and may well remind us that every promise of God is a holy promise—a promise that can never be violated. God is free to make a promise, or not, as it pleaseth Him; no power could extract a promise from Him which it was not His pleasure to give, but when once He has spoken, He has bound Himself, and all the perfections of His being are pledged to the fulfilment of His word. Such fulfilment may sometimes *seem* to be delayed, but what to human observation appears like delay is, in the account of "Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will," but a step towards the carrying out of that will. The statement is absolute, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." God's people may break or profane His statutes and He will chastise them for so doing, but still the word stands, "My covenant will I not profane," for it is a "holy promise." (See Ps. lxxxix. 31-34, *R.V. marg.*) He could suffer the first possessor of the promise to wait till mere natural hope was dead, ere the seed was given through whom it was to be fulfilled; He could permit Joseph, who feared Him, to suffer the agonies of the pit, the bondage and the prison; He could suffer the chosen people to be afflicted and oppressed, and allow Moses to be a stranger in a strange land for forty years; because He saw beforehand, what we can only see afterward, that all these things were so many links in that chain of circumstances by which the end was reached. He could call for a famine upon the nations for seven long years, and then

bring to nought the mightiest nation upon earth, for the sake of those upon whom it had pleased Him to set His heart, but He could not allow one thing He had promised them to fail. And let us not forget that all this is as applicable to the future of Israel as it was to the past.

The question as to the extent of our liberty to appropriate the promises of God is a very important one. There is a strong tendency in the present day, in some quarters, so to deal with the Scriptures that very little is left for personal appropriation. That Israel means Israel, we must fully believe, and that all promises made to the nation must have their literal fulfilment is absolutely certain; but the Book of God is given to us, who have received Christ, with the assurance that "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (2 Cor. i. 20.) The difference of dispensation must indeed always be considered, and the fact be borne in mind that whereas in a former day the promises of prosperity in circumstances and health of body were given to Israel so long as they were obedient, *we* are taught to regard trials and discipline as tokens of God's Fatherly care. This is one great lesson of Heb. xii., yet in the very next chapter we have a beautiful example of the way in which faith puts its finger upon a promise of God, and claims it to the full. "Let your behaviour be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have for He hath said, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*; so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The promise here quoted was given to Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 15), to Israel (Deut. xxxi. 6), to Joshua (Josh. i. 5), to Solomon (1 Chr. xxviii. 20); and, we may add, to Israel in the future. (Isa. xvii. 16.) But it is quoted as the common heritage of all God's pilgrims who, having no

continuing city here, are seeking the one to come. By this and other quotations God has been pleased to show us how we may lay hold of His promises to His people of old, and take them to ourselves, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." The Psalm we have so briefly dwelt on is well calculated to minister this patience and comfort and consequent hope, by its revelation to us of the unlimited resources which the Almighty God has at His command for the fulfilment of "His holy promise."

One point more: His object was to have an *obedient* people in whom He could take pleasure. He did everything for them, making them simply the receivers of His blessings; He led them into the land and established them in it, and gave them abundance therein, "that they might observe His statutes, and keep his laws." So God has saved us and blessed us by His own sovereign will, and His own absolute grace, without any works of ours, but with the object of our walking in good works and being zealous of them to His glory. (Eph. ii. 10; Titus ii. 14; John xv. 8.)

W. H. B.

FRAGMENTS.—The giver may impart a value to a gift which it would not otherwise possess. It is because we are the *Father's* gift to Christ that we are of value to Him, though in ourselves worthless.

Earthly glory severs, but heavenly glory unites—"The glory which Thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one."

That "God is Light" is a *message* declared to us. That "God is Love" is a *manifestation* made to us in the life and death of Christ, from the manger to the cross.

THE WAR IN HEAVEN.

WHEN our Lord Jesus Christ had warned His disciples, in Matt. xxiv., of the impending destruction of their temple, and the desolation of their house, so vitally dear to their Jewish hearts, far from doubting or disbelieving the events, dreadful as the shock must have been to them, their anxiety was to learn the commencement and the termination of these sorrows. Great was their confidence in Him, simple their faith. He tells them of the beginning, some fearful features of the interval, and of the end (*v. 14*), but makes no mention of the long centuries that were to intervene before His return.

Is not our faith in sad contrast with theirs? We have been favoured with a further and a fuller revelation, given by the Father to His Son, and by Him transmitted, through His angel, to His servant John, accompanied with a special intimation of blessing to those who read, hear, and keep what is thus revealed. Yet for ages this, the last revelation, has been laid aside. And if in these latter years the attention of the learned has been directed to this subject, has it not been rather to explain away its supernatural incidents than to admit them in their simplicity?

Amongst these events is one of such an extraordinary nature that no conception of man could possibly have imagined it. So utterly inconceivable is it that at first view we are prepared to say, Impossible, impossible that there could be any opposition in heaven! The authority of the Most High would not permit any vestige of it; His power would, as with a thunderbolt, at once destroy the offender. The serenity of the heavens would be

disturbed by any symptom of want of concurrence with the pleasure of God. However natural such reasoning may be, the astonishing fact is disclosed, and the apostle is authorized to record both opposition and even actual "war in heaven." (Rev. xii. 7.)

Two opposing armies are seen, each under its own commander: Satan leads one host, comprising one third of the stars of heaven, angels; Michael, the other. Of the vastness of these armies some idea may be obtained from Dan. vii. 10, and Rev. v. 11, where ten thousand times ten thousand angels are seen assembled. Of their individual prowess an instance is given in Isaiah xxxvii. 36, where one angel destroyed 185,000 human warriors. We have read of armies of a million men, but here are armies of fifty or a hundred times as many mighty angels. What a conflict must this be! It differs from an earthly one. No death is inflicted; none are slain. It is a battle on the one part to drive out from heaven Satan and his angels; and on their part to resist the expulsion. The result of the fearful battle is that all are driven out. It is to be remarked that neither our God Himself nor His glorious Son is seen in this all-momentous contest. It is purely an angelic battle, the directing authority not displaying itself.

But who can conceive the sigh of relief pervading "the heavens and those who dwell in them" at the issue of the dire combat? Their hateful enemies are gone, to return no more. All opposition to the will of their God ceases. He who had access to the Holy Presence, and used his privilege for no other object than to thwart the Divine purposes; to injure those whom God loves; to point out perpetually their depravity, their crimes, their worthlessness; to detract from the justice, the equity, the holiness of God, in showing favour to such despicable beings--

thereby to induce the Judge of all to abandon His merciful purpose, and leave them to the fate they deserve in sharing for ever his own impending misery—he is now cast out, and his malice against them is at an end. Of the weight and force of his accusations we have little idea, but the plague of our own hearts bears witness to their justice. Bearing this in mind, does it not greatly enhance the supreme importance of the intercession of our gracious Master, as well as that of the Holy Spirit in unuttered groanings?

“When the restless foe accuses,
Sins recounting as a flood ;
Every charge our God refuses,
Christ has answered with His blood.”

All this seems to have peculiar importance in relation to the events recorded in the rest of Rev. xii.

The expulsion of the enemies by the agency of the holy angels brings out a deeply-interesting feature of loving subjection and obedience. We learn from Col. ii. 10, and Heb. ii. 5, that their office and position is to be superseded. The Lord Jesus, receiving all authority in heaven and on earth, displaces them from their offices, which are to be filled by the members of his body, in association with Himself, their Head.

The self-abnegation of these holy beings and their joyful acquiescence in the Divine purposes are evinced by this fearful struggle, and they thus gladly prepare for the reception of those at present inferior to themselves, to whom, nevertheless, they are hereafter to be subordinate. (1 Cor. vi. 3.)

Scripture tells us in Job i. that, when the sons of God or the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came as one of them, was spoken to by Him, and received permission to afflict God's righteous servant. To

this day he is also permitted to exert his immense influence in beguiling the hearts of men, and so successful is he that the whole world lies in the wicked one. (1 John v. 19.) Yet he has long been aware both of his doom and of the period of its enforcement. (Luke iv. 35 ; Matt. viii. 29.)

How shall we account for the endurance of our God in permitting such a being to exist, and to continue his death-dealing career, with the appalling ruin he has occasioned, and still continues to occasion ? How account for the further woes he will bring about in his great wrath after his expulsion from heaven ? How for his being allowed access to the presence of the Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty ? Must there not be some motive, deep and mysterious, of overwhelming magnitude, as yet unrevealed to man ? The character of our God demands this ; and in the day when He is pleased to reveal it, every tongue, mute at first it may be with astonishment, will burst forth with acclamations of praise and delight. (Rom. iii. 4.)

It may help us to form some idea of this mystery if we notice the uniformity of the Divine procedure upon earth. At the first a marvellously-constructed dwelling-place was prepared, provided with everything that wisdom, power, and loving consideration could devise, and a human being was placed in it. That being preferred to attend to the voice of another in opposition to that of his Creator. Was there any reason why he should not have been destroyed at once ? Yet he was suffered to live and beget a race, which, after more than two thousand years, proved itself so vile that it had to be exterminated. One man alone was allowed to retain life, and from him the race was reconstructed. All however came short of the honour due to God, worshipping the works of their own hands instead of

Him who made themselves. Then came a fresh arrangement. Another man was taken, the progenitor of a separate branch of the same race, which, after receiving innumerable acts of kindness and condescension, became so much worse than their neighbours (Isa. lii. 5 ; Rom. ii. 24) that they too had to be set aside as worthless. In all this long series of ages, filled day by day with fresh insults to the God of heaven, who all the while was continuing to feed, nourish, and with tender solicitude care for every one of this host of rebels, is not His longsuffering most conspicuous ? Who but Himself would for an instant have endured such baseness, such ingratitude ?

But far beyond all other favours shines forth the magnanimity of our God in sending His well-beloved Son into this world of rebels ; yielding Him up to death itself, the most agonising of deaths, in order to win us to Himself ; to satisfy at once the demands of inflexible justice, and to have the joy of beholding a new family of sons and daughters obtained at so costly a sacrifice.

Another instance of forbearance and endurance is presented in the conduct of our Lord to His disciples. Well knowing that in the hour of peril they would all abandon Him, there was not the least diminution in His affection towards them. But chiefly towards Judas was His endurance shown. No mask could conceal that man's character from the piercing eye of the Son of God. It was His Father's desire that He should have him among His personal attendants ; therefore He chose him, though He knew that he was a devil (John vi. 70), a thief (John xii. 6), a deliberate traitor, by whom He was to be delivered into the hands of His murderers. Yet the Lord treated him with as much respect as the other eleven, giving him the same powers as to the others ; making him even His purse-bearer, His almoner, the one to provide for

the family. But how must His holy soul have revolted from contact with such a person? The very sight of him must have been extremely painful. Ages before these events, in the plaintive language of Psalms xli. 9, and lv. 12-14, the inward anguish of our Lord's heart in the prospect of betrayal was described. Even at the last there was no diminution of respect towards the traitor; the very gift of the sop being, according to Eastern usage, a mark of kindly consideration. But his end was foretold in Psalm cix.

The state of the things below seems to correspond in measure with the condition above. Here the whole world is in rebellion, few only in comparison having availed themselves of the amnesty, and laid down their arms, owning allegiance to their God and His beloved Son Jesus; most prefer association with Satan, reckless as to the consequences. There the rebel angels behold God's glorious majesty; they believe, they tremble, they are fully aware of their doom; yet persist in their defiance.

Hitherto the long-suffering and tender pity of our God has postponed the day, the dreadful day when His wrath will be displayed. Long has He extended the day of salvation to guilty men; but the wrath must fall. Who shall escape? Only those who have yielded themselves to Jesus, His beloved Son.

In Eph. vi. 11, Christians are told to "put on the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." And the reason for doing this follows immediately, "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the authorities, against the powers; against the world-rulers of this darkness; against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." In the same Epistle (ch. i. 20) very similar words are employed in describing the authority and power with

which God has invested Christ in the same locality; "When He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all authority, and power, and might, and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come." The apostle adds, in Heb. ii. 8, "but now we see not yet all things put under Him."

Forasmuch then as the security of Christ's church, as one with Him, and "risen in Him," is not changed, are we to consider that our wrestling is needless, that our antagonists have lost their power, ceased their opposition, or abandoned the heavenly places? On the contrary, we are told that they are yet in heaven; that their accusations are continued day and night; and that our wrestling must be maintained. Happily for the people of God, our Lord has broken the yoke of Satan from off our necks, setting us free from his dominion. Both Satan and his angels have been placed under the feet of Christ, but those feet have not yet been raised to trample upon him. Hence the warfare on his part, the need of resistance on ours. The passage in Luke x. 18, judging from the context, and from what was subsequently revealed, does not apparently refer to Satan's ejection from heaven, but to the excessive rapidity of his descent to counteract the invasion of his kingdom by the powers entrusted to the apostles. R. N.

(To be continued.)

THE WORLD'S THREEFOLD REJECTION OF CHRIST.*

IN Isaiah lxiv. 4, we read, "Since the beginning of the world *men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen*, O God, beside Thee, what He

* Note from a Bible-reading.

hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him." Cain, with all his wisdom, failed to perceive the only way of approach to God; and are men of this day sharper in intellect than he?

The religion of this world, the wisdom of this world, and the power of this world, agreed to crucify Christ. This was expressed in the three languages in which His accusation was written over Him—Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. He was also rejected in the person of Paul His apostle at *Jerusalem* the city of religion, at *Athens* the city of wisdom, and at *Rome* the city of power. This triple rejection beautifully shews how close Paul kept to his Master. Each of these cities would have welcomed him without Christ.

The pride of wisdom and the pride of religion are the Jachin and Boaz pillars of the world's temple, or like the two pillars in Dagon's temple, supporting all that is of Antichrist.

In Heb. ii. 6, 8, we see the Man in the glory, and in ch. x. 21, 22, we see our access through Him as High Priest; mere man could not conceive anything of this. Nothing but entire renunciation of the first Adam can enable us to render true worship. In verse 19, we see our liberty and obligation to enter into the holiest, and we have no permission to leave it; we break a hedge if we do.

"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *the world is crucified unto me,*" wrote the apostle, but how *can* the world understand this? Our Lord said to Nicodemus, that one not born of God could not "*see the kingdom,*" and carnal worship cannot really accept the thorn-crowned One, however much it professes to do so.

As soon as man confesses to God that he is a sinner, forgiveness awaits him; see Psalm xxxii. 5. The result of

Cain's refusal to confess was that he turned his back upon God. When David confessed, he first obtained pardon, and then heavenly wisdom. "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go" (v. 8).

In speaking to the unregenerate, if we are in entire communion with God, the peace we have is sure to leave the sinner no peace. We need to see how high we are, in order to see how low they are, and so to have bowels of mercy for them.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Is it right to call any assembly of Christians in a town "The church of God" in that town?

To assume the title of "the church of God" is to ignore the fact that the church of God as a visible unity no longer exists. Yet is it most strenuously to be upheld that no assembly of Christians is rightly constituted, according to Scripture, that does not gather as acknowledging the unity of the body of Christ and the oneness of the church of God. The testimony now borne by the professing church as a whole is that of apostasy from Christ, and not of subjection to His lordship; and all claims to a "catholic unity" arise from false assumptions which the World owns not and which facts disclaim. If a part assumes the title of the whole, it unchurches all other assemblies in the same place, and this no one can do but He who said, "I will remove thy candlestick out of its place;" and this warning was given, be it remembered, not on account of ecclesiastical failure, but for failure of the first love.

As to a distinctive designation, alike clear and humble, which is often needed, it is easy to follow the lines indicated in Scripture in such an expression as "the church in the house" of such an one, and to speak of the church in any locality indicated by a street, hall, or otherwise. Above all things, in these days of loud profession and of high-sounding phraseology, we need to be doubly on our guard lest our language violate that spirit which should characterise us now, for surely, like those mentioned in Ezekiel ix. 4, we should "sigh and cry for all the abominations" that are done in the name of Christ, and even by those who are Christ's, because, after all, we belong to every Christian, and every Christian belongs to us; their sins and failures are ours and ours are theirs. The Lord raise up true Jeremiahs (see ch. ix. 1) among us, and there will then be less of the cry, "The temple

of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these," and the "lying words" (ch. vii. 4) of a falsely-assumed condition will less frequently be heard, and there will be less boasting and more weeping.

Do the words, "in all points tempted," in Hebrews iv. 15, include the suffering and sickness to which man is subject?

The New Testament word "tempt" (in Greek *πειράζειν* and its derivatives) is almost exclusively applied to temptation to sin by him who is emphatically called "the tempter" (Matt. iv. 3), or by those who seek to lead others into what is wrong; hence we read in James i. 13, 14: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." This unmistakably shows that the temptations of Christ alluded to in Heb. iv. are those varied temptations of Satan of which we have an example in Matt. iv. There the three temptations presented to Christ represent the three temptations presented to Eve in the garden (Gen. iii.), affecting the eye, the mouth, and the heart. Compare also I John iii. 16, where "all that is in the world" is summed up in the "desire of the flesh," the "desire of the eye," and "the pride of life." The words "without sin," distinctly point in the same direction, and show that *sin* and not suffering is there intended.

The sympathy of Christ with us in our infirmities, connected as it is in this verse with temptation, has ever proved a fruitful source of unsound speculation, a peccability of nature being attributed to our Lord or else a sick and suffering body, both of which disregard the profound mystery of the incarnation, which out of the virgin's womb brought "that holy thing," the Son of God—Son of God as touching His manhood (Luke i. 35), as well as Only-begotten of the Father as touching His Godhead (John i. 1-18.) Man can *measurably* sympathize (see the word used in Heb. v. 2 of Israel's high priest, *μετροπαθεῖν*) with his fellows because "he is himself compassed with infirmity," but this is *in contrast with* our High Priest, who, without being compassed with infirmity, is able *perfectly* to sympathise (*συμπαθεῖν*), because, though without infirmity, He was tempted, and because, though tempted, He was JESUS the SON OF GOD. The sympathy of Christ has to be laid hold of fully as much on the ground of His *divine* nature, because He made us, and therefore knows us, as on the ground of His *human* nature, against which all the fiery darts of Satan were directed in vain.

HOLINESS

IN ITS TWOFOLD ASPECT.

THE believer's sanctification is, in the first place, complete in Christ; for we read in 1 Cor. i. 30 that He is made unto us from God "sanctification" as well as "righteousness," and therefore in Him we have a perfect holiness as well as a perfect righteousness; and as we think of His name we can sing—

"It tells of righteousness complete,
Of holiness to God;
And to our ears no tale so sweet
As Thine atoning blood."

Sanctification, or holiness, and righteousness are ours by a right and title that is unquestionable, for they were divinely imputed to us when we believed.

In the next place, that which is *imputed* to us in Christ is also *imparted* to us by the Holy Ghost; what God reckons *to us* in His Son is wrought *in us* by His Spirit.

In divine things imputing and imparting always go together, and cannot be separated. There is, however, this essential difference between them, that imputation is complete, for nothing less than a whole Christ is reckoned to each believer; but impartation by the Holy Ghost is progressive, and depends on the measure of faith.

All believers, the weak and the strong, the small and the great, are equally sure of salvation, and equally certain of acceptance, for they are saved in Christ, accepted in the Beloved; in this respect there is no difference. When, however, the power of the Holy Ghost is the question, there are most varied measures, and all degrees of difference. The injunction to all is, "Be *filled* with the

Spirit." But this filling is according to the measure of our faith, and the measure in which the Spirit is ungrieved by us.

This deeply important distinction is represented in the Mosaic ordinances by the fact that, while the altar had its exact measurements (Exodus xxvii. 1), the laver had none (ch. xxx. 17), but was, as far as the record goes, of undefined capacity. God gives not the Spirit by measure; He fills. Our responsibility is to be "enlarged;" and God is ever ready to give an overflowing measure, so that the smallest may say, "My cup runneth over," and the largest can say no more. God's word is, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it."

The two aspects of sanctification are distinguished in Heb. x. in the original, though not apparent to the English reader. The first reveals a *perfected* sanctification in the past; the other a *perfecting* of sanctification in the present.

In verse 10 we read, "By the which will we *have been sanctified** through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (R.V.) Here we learn the once-and-for-ever perfect sanctification of the believer in Christ Jesus, which admits of no increase and no decrease. This perfect sanctification characterizes the "new man," who belongs to the new creation.

Verse 14 we would read thus: "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that *are being sanctified*." Here the verb is not in the perfect but in the present tense, and implies an unfinished work that is going on

* In both verses 10 and 14 the A.V. renders "*are sanctified*;" the R.V. shows that there is a difference of tense, rendering v. 10 "*have been sanctified*," and v. 14 "*are sanctified*;" but in Acts ii. 47, it renders a word similar in tense to that used in v. 14 "*were being saved*." Like sanctification, salvation may be looked at in two aspects, past and present: it is *past* in reference to Christ, and *present* in its development in us by the Spirit; and to the latter the verse in Acts ii. refers.

towards a perfect consummation. This is what is taught by the Lord's prayer in John xvii, "*Sanctify them through Thy truth,*" and by Paul's words in 2 Cor. vii. 1: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness* in the fear of God;" also in Heb. xii. 14, "*Follow . . . holiness.*" To this end the apostle prays for the Thessalonians, "The very God of peace *sanctify you wholly*; and may your whole being, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And he adds this assurance of fulfilment: "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."

In these passages we are directed to a *progressive* sanctification, which is the development of the divine life in the soul, through the presence and power of the Spirit of God.

The indwelling of the Spirit leads to victory and full discipleship, and carries on to a complete consecration and an entire sanctification, to neither of which can we assign any limit, so far as the inworking of the Spirit of God is concerned, for God has assigned none. With God all things are possible, and with him that believeth in God nothing is impossible. It is on the very ground of this present inworking of God that we are called to be "*perfecting holiness.*" *We do by faith what God does by His Spirit in us*, and we thus become fellow-workers with Him. What God has done for us in Christ, is apart from and outside ourselves altogether; but what God does for us by the Holy Ghost is not apart from ourselves, but is altogether wrought within us.

From this contrast arise the strange paradoxes in the divine life—the believer is perfect, and yet imperfect; he has attained, and yet has not attained; he is clean, and yet has to cleanse himself; he is sanctified fully, and yet

groans because of unsanctified self, with its thoughts, its wills, and its desires. Surely this is a deep mystery, and it is no wonder if we are sometimes perplexed at the truth as revealed, when we compare it with those stubborn facts that lie within, deep down in the depths of our being, over which he who ponders most will wonder most, knowing that he is so holy, and yet so defiled; so absolutely made whole, and yet so daily needing to be healed.

A distinction has to be observed between "righteousness" and "holiness." The former refers to *actions*, and the latter to *condition*, and, therefore, in contemplating sanctification, we have to look at it as having mainly to do with what we *are*, and not so much with what we *do*. Had this distinction been borne in mind many opinions put forth in connection with what is called "perfect sanctification," "Christian perfection," etc., would never have been propounded. For our doings and allowings we are responsible; for our nature we are not. Sin has corrupted not only our actings, but our very being; but God has provided a remedy for both in the work of Christ conjoined with the work of the Holy Ghost.

In chapters v., vi., vii., and viii. of the epistle to the Romans, Paul develops God's provision for our need. Chapter v. presents the sinner justified by faith, and, as such, having a *new Head*, in whom he has a new standing (vv. 12-21); a *new life*, through the regenerating power of the Spirit, in which he lives (chap. vi. 1-14.); a *new Master*, whom he is called to serve (vv. 15-23); a *new law*, by which he is bound, and a *new Husband*, through whom fruit is yielded to God (chap. vii. 1-6). But what is the result of his being brought into all these new relationships? War, conflict, strife; and of this we read in the latter part of chapter vii. The mystery of the strife in Rebecca's womb is unfolded here. The children

“struggled together,” or, as the word implies, they oppressed one another. Rebecca went to God to enquire the meaning; and we need to do the same if we would rightly understand our double relationship, and solve the deep mystery of our having a spiritual life in the midst of that fleshly life which is dead in trespasses and sins. We have to view them together, as parts of our own proper *self*, avoiding the great moral danger of making a separation between ourselves and either the new man or the old. Together they constitute “self.” By virtue of our union with Christ we have been brought into direct antagonism to the old Adam, the old life of sin and death; to the old master, sin and Satan; to the old law and its covenant of works; and the result is, that we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body, and we cry out in the bitterness of a double nature and of circumstances beyond our control, “Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

To a right understanding of the seventh chapter of Romans it is very needful to observe the order in which it stands, between the sixth and the eighth. It is not parenthetical. It is strictly consecutive, following the sixth, with its new life of holiness and resurrection, as that follows the one before it, which treats of peace through justification by faith. Some have written about the “unhappy sevenths” and the “happy eighths;” but a regard to the strictly consecutive character of this epistle would have preserved them from falling into the error of saying that the seventh chapter gives the experience of one not established in grace, or of one still in sin. Grace, rightly understood, would give us an ever-deepening apprehension of the truth of this chapter.

We would call particular attention to the fact that while

from verse 7 to verse 11 all is in the *past* tense—"I had not known," "I was alive," "I died," "I found," "it slew me"—from verse 12 to the end is all in the *present* tense. This indicates clearly the fact that in the former verses Paul referred to his experience as an unsaved man, perhaps during those three mysterious days of blindness, when the flood-gates of confession were opened, and after which God could say, "Behold he prayeth."

Christ was henceforth seen as the end of law, and as having made an end of sin; and the truth which Paul now realized for the first time, and increasingly realized afterwards, was this—"I am carnal, sold under sin;" he was no longer a willing votary, but, *as to the flesh*, the slave of sin still. Yet this glorious truth also dawned upon him, "Yet *not I*, but sin that dwelleth in me." By virtue of the new relationship into which he had been brought, he was able to say, "*Not I*;" for in the conscious power of his new life he linked himself to the new Head. Summing all up, he says, "So then with the mind *I myself* serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." On the one hand, he was God's free man, in the full liberty of delight and joy in God and in His law; on the other, a slave, feeling intensely the misery of the bondage of a law or principle of sin which he hated, and under which he groaned.

But we must not confound "the *law* of sin" with the *dominion* of sin. The latter is broken in the cross of Christ; the former is held in abeyance by the law of the Spirit of life, in proportion to the measure in which the Spirit dwells in us. As an essential element of his condition, the apostle assumes, let us ever remember, that the *mind* serves God, and the *flesh* the law of sin. Neither can do otherwise, for each acts by a "law," and it will do so till the end.

In the power of this "Not I," Paul speaks in ch. viii. 2 of himself, the "man in Christ," as "made free from the law of sin and death;" and this, not in opposition to what he had said in chap. vii. 25, but as explanatory of it, shewing how a poor sinner, when saved and united to Christ, could say, "I myself with the mind serve the law of God."

Up to the end of the seventh chapter there is but an incidental mention of the Spirit; but now this mighty factor in the life of the believer is brought before us. From chap. v. 1, Christ was the theme, but now, in chap. viii., it is the SPIRIT OF GOD, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. The knowledge of this draws forth from the apostle's heart that wondrous "*I thank God*" in the last verse of chap. vii., because of his assurance of deliverance and victory, as expressed in the words, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

The prominence given to the Spirit's presence, power, and intercession in chap. viii. is very remarkable, and the chapter is not therefore so much a contrast to chap. vii. as a development of it. The work of the Spirit consummates what the work of Christ had begun, for He is the Revealer, the Unfolder, and the Inworker of Christ *in* the soul, as well as *to* the soul. The triumphant words with which the chapter winds up—"We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us"—tell of victory through the Holy Ghost, however aggravated may be the circumstances that tend to affect the *condition* of the saint; even as the first verse of the chapter—"There is therefore now no condemnation"—tells of the perfect security of his *position* "in Christ."

We can gain no higher place this side the glory than that which this eighth chapter gives us. In *v.* 23 the

groaning within ourselves, while waiting for the redemption of the body, corresponds exactly with Paul's cry in chapter vii., "*O wretched man!*" as he seeks deliverance from the body of death.

Another point that needs attention is, the depth of meaning contained in the words "the *good*" and "the *evil*," which are used in chapter vii. To the heart in close communion with God, *good* is looked at no longer as some good thing which the natural man aims after, and fails to realize, but as that absolute good which has its measure only in God. Hence Paul cries out, "The good that I would, I do not." He never attains to the mark set before him; yet he follows after, agonizing to attain, but seeing it far above out of his reach; for the flesh still weighs him down, and the revelation of the glory necessitates a "thorn in the flesh," "the messenger of Satan," to buffet him—a thorn given by God to keep one of His holiest servants from the filthiness of spiritual pride.

In like manner we read, in Deut. vii. 22, that God would not allow Israel to destroy the Canaanites all at once, even had they sought to do so, lest the beasts of the field should multiply against them. God accomplishes this work by *little and little*; but how this is misunderstood by those who would make an inwrought personal sanctification a single act of faith, like that of justification! The saintly Paul writes: "*I keep under my body*" (or more forcibly still, I beat it black and blue; I crush it down), "and bring it into subjection," or enslave it; and this mighty conflict was ever going on, though the victory was constant also. He ran not uncertainly; but he *ran*, and we know something of what that race was which ended in a martyr's death. His was no fighting of the air: the world, the flesh, and the devil were real opponents. Is no suffering involved in such a struggle? Surely there is, and this

explains the Lord's word regarding the initiatory steps of self-renunciation and cross-bearing which His disciples must take if they are to follow Him. We hear but little of such things in the present day, and instead a kind of sanctification is proclaimed which is, after all, not a sanctification *by faith*. Paul's was the true sanctification by faith, for he laid hold on God, and kept his body (the instrument in which the flesh lives and acts) as a wounded, bruised enemy under his feet. But was there no anguish in all this? Was it not indeed resisting unto blood, striving against sin?

We sadly need wholesome teaching on this point, and the absence of it is fast producing an amount of easy-going holiness that will certainly not stand God's fiery ordeal, but will either break down in utter confusion and disappointment, or live in an unreal atmosphere of *supposed* perfection. Those who are content with this semblance of holiness ignore conflict, and apply to other days and to other persons such passages as, "Strive [or agonize] to enter in at the strait gate;" "Fight [or agonize] the good fight of faith;" "They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;" and "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom."

There are lusts we are called upon to *flee*; there is a world we are told to *conquer*; an enemy we are commanded to *resist*; and all this implies an intensity of action, a struggling, a striving, and an agony, that give reality to sanctification, and present the Christian as a soldier prepared for battle, and carrying on the conflict, though the Captain of the Lord's host has gone out before him.

We would earnestly commend this subject to the careful and prayerful consideration of all saints, and more especially of all teachers in the church of God, lest a fearful delusion carry many away from the realities of the pathway

of true holiness into crude notions easily taken up, and which will only produce a holiness without sacrifice, a sanctification without conflict, and will soon land its victims in Laodicean self-complacency. (Rev. iii. 17.)

What "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" involves, the apostle has told us in its bearing on himself. When seeking to *win Christ*, he says: "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and *the fellowship of His sufferings*, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfected; but I press on if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do: forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press on toward the goal, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 10-14). And what is this prize but conformity to Christ's image, being like Him, and, therefore, being holy, even as He is holy?

This was the goal to which all Paul's energies were directed. God willed it for him, and he willed it for himself; and when he was about to lay aside the soldier's armour, he could say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." And the Holy Ghost witnesseth to us that it was even so. May we seek no easier path than that in which Paul was content to tread. As imitators of him, as he was of Christ, may we seek holiness by faith—a faith that not only brings God into the scene, but girds on its armour and is prepared to walk before God, and to fight under His banner; often faint, it may be, but still pursuing, and sure of victory.

H. G.

ON BEARING BURDENS.

BRIEF NOTES OF AN ADDRESS ON GALATIANS VI.

BY MR. JAMES WRIGHT.

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself.” The word “restore” shows that we are under grace, not under law. The law can only condemn; grace saves. But does every Christian come under the description “*spiritual?*” Are all fitted for this blessed office of restoration? Alas, no! Only those who have realized what they have been saved from, how utterly powerless for good they are in themselves, how liable at any moment to fall, can, in the true spirit of meekness, deal with the erring, each one seeing in his fallen brother only just what he himself would be but for the grace of God. Length of standing, years of careful walking, do not make stumbling impossible. In Hezekiah (2 Kings xx. 12–19) and Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi.) we have proofs of this.

But what is *meekness*? Assuredly it is not “softness.” Men often confound the two; the Spirit of God never does so. Meekness in its perfection must be learned from Him who was meek and lowly in heart, and who said when He was rejected, “Even so, Father.” (Matt. xi.) Moses, we are told, was “very meek” (Num. xii. 3), and when Miriam and Aaron set on him, finding fault with his marriage to hide their real motives, how silently he seems to have borne their attack! But God spake “suddenly” in His servant’s behalf. Where he himself was personally concerned Moses could endure almost anything: where God’s honour was at stake he showed little “softness”—see his

conduct when Israel turned to idolatry. (Ex. xxxii. 20, 26, 27.) In striving to "restore" our brethren, how completely self must be set aside! God's glory and the good of the erring one must alone be remembered.

"*Bear ye one another's burdens.*" Burden here means "weight." In all the afflictions, the sorrows, anxieties and troubles of our pilgrimage, Christ is the great Burden-bearer. In His character of High Priest at the Father's right hand He continually bears His people on His shoulders (Ex. xxviii. 9-12) for strength, and on His heart (v. 21-29) for affection. It is equally scriptural to speak of God or of Christ as the Burden-bearer; but officially Christ is so. The burden of sin is no longer on Him; but now He bears up His people in all their sorrows. "Casting all your care upon Him" (1 Pet. v. 7) means to go on casting, casting, casting every care on Him as it arises, just as in an overshot water-wheel one bucket after another empties itself in constant succession. Let us take care never for a moment to collect our cares on ourselves. Then we are to be Christ-like in our sympathies, willing to share the burdens of our fellows, whatever they may be. Even joy itself is sometimes a burden that we must share. (Rom. xii. 15.)

"*For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*" There is quite a possibility of self-deceit in this direction. Let us beware of it, not looking into the spiritual looking-glass, comparing ourselves with others, and noting what seems like advantage on our part. Let us rather measure ourselves by the perfect standard set forth in God's word. What humility and self-distrust this will produce!

Verses 4 and 5 are connected. "*For every man shall bear his own burden*" seems at first sight a contradiction of verse 2, "*Bear ye one another's burdens.*" How can we

bear alone that which every one is desired to help us in carrying? Finding out the meaning of the word "burden" in each verse will clear up the difficulty. In verse 2 it means "weight;" in this verse the idea is cargo—see Acts xxvii. 10, "the *lading* of the ship." Our work now is to take in our cargo for eternity. Each vessel holds its own cargo, and the owner rejoices in it (verse 4) as that which will eternally concern himself alone. Wise people in this world choose their cargoes to suit the ports to which the ships are going—sugar is not sent to the West Indies, bought dearly here to be sold cheaply there. Two bills of lading are described in chap. v. Let us look at the first in verses 19–21, "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these—adultery," etc. "That is horrible," every one would say; "no one would load his ship with such things." But what of "emulations?" Why, people say that emulation is the very spring of man's natural existence; "How could we get on without it?" Ah, it is bad lading, belonging to the works of the flesh.

How different is the other lading mentioned in verses 22 and 23—"love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance!" Which have we on board? What have we been putting under the hatches to-day? Every day and all day we are loading our ships. This latter cargo is held in light account here; but how precious it is in the port to which we are bound! What returns it will bring us *there*!

One ship appears to be entering the harbour gallantly—all sails set. But what if the cargo in her hold be all chaff? Will there be rejoicing when on examination it is proved to be utterly worthless? Let us all strive so that not only an entrance may be given to us—that will be ours through Christ—but that the abundant entrance described in 2 Pet. i. may be ministered to us.

“*Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things.*” The Galatians had been ready, as it were, to pluck out and give their very eyes to Paul, in their first joy and gratitude at receiving the gospel. How sad a change when he has to remind them of the necessity of looking after the temporal needs of God’s labourers! How is it with us? We say we delight in the spread of the gospel—how do we prove it? Alas, must not the most liberal, those most exercised in soul on the matter of giving, confess that they fall far short of what they ought to be?

“*Be not deceived; God is not mocked.*” What a solemn word! There will be a reaping, and more is always reaped than has been sown. The caution as well as the encouragement is given to believers. The unconverted man is *in the flesh*, and can only sow to it. The Christian has the flesh *in him*; he *can* therefore sow to it, pamper, and yield to it, to his heavy loss in the reaping time, here and hereafter.

“*Let us not be weary in well-doing.*” In the self-denial that we are called to practise, what a cheering word is this—“*we shall reap if we faint not!*”

“*Let us do good unto all.*” Share in God’s liberal spirit towards the evil as well as the good; but especially care for the inner circle, our brothers and sisters in Christ. Now is our season of opportunities for such service. God strews our way with them: let us use them with happy diligence.

FRAGMENTS.—The prince of darkness is never so near as when we are being blessed.

The condescension of divine love is seen in the manger; the condescension of divine grace, in the cross.

THE WAR IN HEAVEN.

(Continued from page 69.)

THE universal persuasion regarding heaven is that it is the abode of perfect rest, undisturbed tranquility and unruffled harmony. Do the Scriptures present this view? * This earth appears tranquil, notwithstanding indications of internal commotion, but presently a tremendous eruption proves that tumult is raging within. In days of old when Egypt would not obey the command to release Israel, evil angels were sent (Ps. lxxviii. 49), that by woes inflicted Pharaoh might be constrained to submit. When Satan received permission to afflict Job, he proceeded without mercy or pity to deprive him of everything he possessed, and then to torture his person. Again, in 1 Chron. xxi. he provoked David to number Israel, thereby bringing heavy judgment on them. In that wonderful conference described in 2 Chron. xviii. 18., where the Lord is sitting on His throne, it is apparently one of Satan's lying spirits who offers himself to bring about the predetermined death of Ahab, by making the 400 false

* A question will arise in some minds as to the meaning of our Lord's words, "Thy will be done on earth *as it is in heaven.*" The solution is doubtless to be found in the use of the singular (heaven) and plural (heavens) in the original, a distinction which the English reader would find always carefully preserved in Mr. Newberry's Bible; thus, "Our Father which art in *the heavens.* . . . Thy will be done on earth as it is in *heaven.*" That there are *three* heavens the apostle Paul unmistakably tells us, but while the conflict in which we are so deeply concerned is going on in heavenly places (and in which war will yet further be waged), there is also a sphere indicated by Christ's seat at God's right hand where God's will *is* done. Other instances of the use, first of the plural (heavens), and then of the singular (heaven), will be found in 2 Cor. v. 1, 2; 1 Pet. i. 4, 12.—ED.

prophets announce a victory. Later on, in Zech. iii. 1, Satan is seen resisting and opposing the purpose of God. Then in the records of our Lord's life on earth how many instances are narrated of Satan's power and cruelty. The man whom he made a terror to the neighbourhood by the lake of Galilee; the woman whom he had crippled for 18 years, with many other cases, attest this. The dreadful sufferings he was permitted to inflict upon the person of the Son of God, to induce Him to give up the purpose of His heart, for which He came into the world, is further evidence. (Heb. ii. 10-14.)

But while his influence over the mind is most evident, we have to bless our God for the long-continued restraint upon his overt power over the body. He can induce men to slaughter one another, and to perpetrate all manner of wickedness; but at present the direct acting of his own personal prowess is curbed. This restraint, however, is again to be relaxed.

Not wishing to enter upon the consideration of the figurative import of what our God intends by the woman clothed with the sun, or the man-child she brings forth, it yet may be desirable to notice that the main object of the book of Revelation is to announce the judgments impending upon the earth, and these judgments, or woes—save in chap. xx. 11-15—are not inflicted upon dead men raised to judgment, as that solemn passage describes, but upon those yet alive in the body.

How many earnest minds have been employed in interpreting these prophecies! Some consider the whole as emblematic, not real; others refer it to the papacy, etc.; while many, finding analogies in secular history, deem that a great part of the events have already taken place. But looking at the whole narration, and observing particularly how the seven last plagues flow out of, and are

consequent upon, the announcements made by the seven trumpets, these again being dependent upon the successive breakings of the seven seals, it would appear that the whole is so bound up together that no part can be regarded as a detached or isolated incident independent of the rest.

Again, as in the event of earthquake or pestilence, men seek for so-called natural causes to account for such outbreaks, and having found what seems reasonable, they satisfy themselves and others that there has been no intervention of Divine power. As Pharaoh disregarded the first gentle droppings of the thunderstorm that was about to lay waste his kingdom and destroy himself, so does the heart of man increasingly harden till sudden destruction follows.

Analogies, which constantly help us in daily life, are in respect to God's arrangements most misleading; His ways are past finding out. That which is seen does not arise from apparent causes, but from His own infinite resources of wisdom, love, and power. That Abraham and Sarah should in their old age become the progenitors of a multitude as numerous as the stars of heaven; that a broad sea should suddenly divide to let a multitude of people escape from their enemies, and then as suddenly close upon and overwhelm their pursuers — could such things be? Judging from analogy the verdict would be "Most unlikely, impossible, inconceivable." Again, that abundance of food should descend from the sky with undeviating regularity for the six days, but not on the seventh; should nourish perhaps two millions and a half of people, in all their wanderings, for forty long years, and then cease, is among the things that man would not conceive. But far beyond all is the wonder, that ONE, dying an ignominious death, should thus annul the power of Satan, be the means of saving all sinners who trust in

Him, and become the bestower of eternal life upon countless millions. None of these marvels arose from what could possibly have been expected.

In like manner, if our poor ruined race, forgetful that we are mortals, looks round upon its vast attainments in science, art, literature, civilization; its inventive genius and assiduity in promoting the general welfare, as well as in preparations for destroying the life of its foes,—if it regards these things, and disregards the announcement of the coming Stone, which is to destroy all these kingdoms, scattering them as the dust of the threshing floor, it will fall an easier prey to him who has been a liar from the beginning, and who now rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, who is soon coming with vastly augmented power, with miraculous authority, even to the bringing down of fire from heaven, and with a retinue far surpassing in number every pageantry that has ever been seen on earth. Each of that retinue, trembling at the certainty of his own eternity in the lake of fire, is yet determined to engulf as many more as he can in that abyss of endless woe, where the fire is not quenched, and where the worm does not die.

Every one will have noticed that, in revealing future events, our God has not thought it well to present them all in a compact connected series, nor always in language as plain as other parts of Scripture. The intimations are dispersed throughout the Book of God, sometimes in type, sometimes in narrative form, sometimes in precise statement. Any attempt to adjust all of them in the order of fulfilment is probably beyond our power, though some approximation may be made. The obscurity has all along stimulated enquiry among those desirous of learning. But progress is sadly obstructed by our preconceived notions. Many declarations are so figuratively worded that

it is thought they cannot be actual events, or, if actual, that they refer to such as are past, and so they do not occasion disquietude. Thus the purpose for which they were given is greatly frustrated.

Viewing the facts noticed in this paper, are we not led to a question of deep importance: Whether the coming of our Lord to receive His people (1 Thess. iv.) precedes the ejection of Satan from the heavens, or whether they are to be subjected to all or to any part of his furious rage? It is a question not to be determined by conjectures, or persuasions, but solely by the word of God; if indeed He has been pleased to reveal His intention. It may assist the research to bear in mind the distinction between the earthly calling of Israel from Egypt to the land of Canaan, and the heavenly calling of God's children now, away from earth altogether, to dwell with our God in heaven; it would be well also to examine whether the saints spoken of in Deut. xxxiii. 2, 3, are, or are not, identical with the saints of 1 Cor. i. 1; and whether the elect in Is. lxv. 9 and 22, correspond with those mentioned in Rom. viii. 33.

Notwithstanding all the conflict that has here been noticed as existing in the heavens, there is a range of Divine mercy, incalculable in its nature, extent and duration. The apostle speaks of departing to be with Christ as "far better." The Lord Jesus in Ps. cx. and Eph. i. 20, is declared by the Spirit of God to be seated at the right hand of His Father-God; and there, in Him, is our appointed place (Eph. ii. 6). When life ceases in our present body, the spirit of the believer ascends to Him who there waits to receive and welcome it. (Acts vii. 59.) There all who depart *rest*. (2 Thess. i. 7; Rev. xiv. 13.) Theirs is absolute rest; cessation from disease, from labour, pain, poverty; cessation from mental anxieties, sorrow, privation, disappointed hopes; cessation from spiritual

depression, doubt, or fear. God's rest is perfect; by faith we now enter into it, in happy anticipation. But gracious as is that rest, under the loving care of the Good Shepherd of the sheep, those in the unclothed condition wait for being clothed with the celestial body, which will not be liable either to decay or to mortality. This will be possessed by each of the heavenly family at the very moment our Lord comes to call our bodies out of the graves, if there; or, if still alive, to change us into the likeness of His own glorious body; the mighty work which is to be accomplished in the twinkling of an eye.

R. N.

 THE BELIEVER'S HEAVENLY PORTION.

The believer in Christ has a Father in heaven.	<i>Matt.</i> xxiii. 9.
His Master is in heaven.	<i>Eph.</i> vi. 9; <i>Col.</i> iv. 1.
He has a High Priest who is passed into the heavens and is made higher than the heavens.	<i>Heb.</i> iv. 14; vii. 26.
He is fed with Bread from heaven.	<i>John</i> vi. 50, 51, 58.
He is a heavenly man.	<i>1 Cor.</i> xv. 48.
He is a partaker of the heavenly calling.	<i>Heb.</i> iii. 1.
His name is written in heaven.	<i>Luke</i> x. 20.
His country is a heavenly one.	<i>Heb.</i> xi. 14-16.
His citizenship is in heaven.	<i>Phil.</i> iii. 20.
He has received a heavenly gift.	<i>Heb.</i> vi. 4.
A heavenly inheritance is reserved for him.	<i>1 Peter</i> i. 4.
He is preserved for a heavenly kingdom.	<i>2 Tim.</i> iv. 18.
He is to lay up treasure in heaven.	<i>Matt.</i> vi. 20.
His reward is in heaven.	<i>Matt.</i> v. 12.
He rejoices in a heavenly hope.	<i>Rom.</i> v. 2; <i>Col.</i> i. 5.
He waits for God's Son from heaven.	<i>1 Thess.</i> i. 10.
He will be clothed with his house from heaven.	<i>2 Cor.</i> v. 2.

“WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS OUGHT YE TO BE?”

God's love is perfected in us if we love one another; not when His love is meditated on in our souls, but when it *flows out* to others.

LETTERS OF DEPARTED SERVANTS OF CHRIST.

I.

On the Opening of a New Meeting-room.

“WE shall think of you in your new Room to-morrow, and as our Lord commands and encourages us to assemble ourselves together as well as to proclaim His love to sinners, there can be no doubt of His presence and favour.

“The world is making a great show and a great noise with its *religion*, and speaking about ‘a nation on its knees, a nation with its praise.’ Nevertheless it is the world that crucified its Lord, and would do it again, and it is lying in the wicked one. We would not set up a worship-place *in it*, while the Holiest is now open for us. We would not set up a name *in it*, while connected with His exalted Name in the heavens. But we would glory in the cross of our Lord, which has crucified the world to us, and us to the world, and would show forth by our separation from it that the death of Christ has closed our fellowship with the world, and that we wait for God’s Son from heaven. So may you all walk and worship together in the village where you sojourn, having your hearts knit together in love, the love of Him who hath washed us from our sins in His own blood. Our love to our dear Brother and Sister ———. It is cheering to such a halting one as myself to contemplate one who has, through grace, run well, and is about to be led with flying banners, after the chariot wheels of the Conqueror, into the heavenly home. Thanks be to God who leads us captive *in triumph*, while our praises, as His willing, happy captives, spread abroad a savour of Christ as we journey on.

“*Torquay, March, 5th, 1872.*

LEONARD STRONG.”

II.

On Christ’s destroying “him that had the power of death.”

“You have set me a more difficult task than you imagined in asking me to explain how the devil had ‘the power of death;’ but Scripture acknowledges it. The passage which contains

this expression gives rise to many thoughts. Let us turn to it: 'Forasmuch therefore as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) For an instance of this bondage read the words of Hezekiah in Isaiah xxxvii. But to see how Satan's power of death was acquired we must go back to Gen. iii.: 'The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.' 'For Adam was first formed, and then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.' (1 Tim. ii.) Thus we see how sin originated with the devil; and the penalty of death followed. 'The devil sinneth *from the beginning.*' (1 Jno. iii. 8.) 'The devil was a murderer from the beginning.' (John viii. 44.)

"When the Apostle in Romans v. begins a new argument as to the question of righteousness between God and man, the point of the argument was to show the analogy between man's fall in a head, and the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It was not to the point of the argument to go back to the arch-deceiver, who by his subtilty acquired the right of death against man, and made death to be 'the king of terrors.' But we must not pass over the great primeval oracle, when God pronounced judgment on the serpent (Gen. iii. 15), viz.: that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and that the serpent should bruise the heel of the woman's Seed.

"We find that the devil was the prime mover in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The devil first put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray his Lord and Master; then, after the sop, it is said that 'Satan entered into him.' (John xiii. 2, 27.) Thus was accomplished the bruising of the heel of the Lord Jesus Christ; but the great *public* act of bruising the serpent's head is yet future, and in that act the Lord allows His redeemed to join with Him. 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under *your* feet shortly.'

"Now let us recall the way in which the Lord Jesus Christ destroyed him that 'had the power of death;' even by His own

death, the most wonderful event which ever happened under the sun—the Prince of Life died, the Lord of Glory was crucified! This great fact we show forth, or proclaim, in the Lord's Supper, even the Lord's death, till He come. The Lord's death is *the* miracle of miracles, and will be eternally the theme of our praise. Read Rev. i., 'And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as *dead*. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last, I am He that liveth and WAS DEAD, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and *have the keys of Hades and of death.*' Thus death was taken out of the hands of the devil by Him who had gone under its power, and victoriously triumphed over it by His resurrection. See how triumphantly the Apostle speaks in 2 Tim. i. 8–11—'Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath *abolished death.*' 'Abolished' is the same word as 'destroyed' in Heb. ii. 15. Read also John v. 24.

"Though we are linked to a groaning creation, we are, as believers, 'saved by hope;' see Rom. viii. 23–25. We died judicially in Christ's death; our old man was crucified with Him; we are raised up together in Him; and hence we pass into the *new* creation of which Christ is the glorified Head. (See 2 Cor. v. 13–17.) To faith, that is to those whose life is a life of daily dependence on Christ, 'old things *are* passed away; behold, all things are become new.' Blessed standing indeed!

"I hope I have expressed myself plainly, but if not, study *the Word*, which seems to me more wonderful than ever, and I believe that God is calling us to recognise the authority of His word, 'which liveth and abideth for ever.' It is two-edged, and searches our innermost hearts, at the same time revealing to us more of the glory of the cross of Christ, and the preciousness of His blood.

J. L. HARRIS."

"May, 1876.

III.

“ *Christ is all.*”

“ WE went yesterday to Mr. —’s, in order to read carefully the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, which has been made by a recent writer the foundation of the doctrine of Perfectionism. I also take my stand on this chapter, but refuse to allow that when the apostle says in verse 2 that ‘ we died to sin ’ (not ‘ are dead ’ to it), he means that we are *morally* dead, for I believe it means that we died *judicially* in Christ’s death ; and this writer acknowledges that if it is judicial death ‘ the whole of the modern teaching of holiness must fall to the ground.’ Happily we were all of one mind as to the principle of *judicial* interpretation of the passage.

“ My own judgment is that we are passing through a solemn crisis. Our first duty, it appears to me, is to give the Lord Jesus Christ His due place. He must be ‘ ALL ’ or nothing. He is ‘ the First and the Last,’ ‘ the Alpha and the Omega,’ ‘ the Beginning and the Ending.’ The word of the Father once and again is, ‘ This is My beloved Son;’ and on the mount of transfiguration ‘ Hear Him ’ is added. I do not regard the salvation of sinners as the *chief* end of God’s sending His Son into the world, but rather the manifestation of His own glory ; and then God claims that ‘ all should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.’ ‘ What think ye of Christ ? ’ is still the great test.

“ From what I hear I gather that there is a general feeling as to the low tone of worship amongst us. We are saved in order to be *worshippers*. Surely the Lord’s Supper is becoming more and more interesting to us, and more and more instructive. Blessed be God for His grace and mercy that the promise remains unrepealed—‘ Where two or three are gathered together unto My name, there am I in the midst of them.’ May we know more of Christ’s authority as Son over His own house, and realize to the full that in His presence there is fulness of joy.

J. L. HARRIS.”

“ *May, 1876.*”

PRAISE, CONFESSION, AND PRAYER,

AS SET FORTH IN PSALM CVI.

WORSHIP and confession are more closely linked together than may at first sight be apparent. That there may indeed be celebration of the wondrous works of the Lord and of His grace in the fulfilment of His covenant without special reference to the ways of those on behalf of whom He wrought, is evident from Psalm cv. There we see God in His rich grace and absolute sovereignty, simply carrying out His deep designs and fulfilling "His holy promise." In Psalm cvi. we get another picture, and yet not another. The same glorious God is before us, and the same people too; but whereas in the former Psalm *His* deeds are the theme of praise, here the deeds of the people are the subject of confession. It is a great confession of the repeated sins and provocations of the nation, and a prayer for deliverance from the judgment those sins had brought upon them. Yet there is true adoration of God, and acknowledgment of His mercy and might, and while the former Psalm ends with "Hallelujah," this *begins* as well as ends with it. Only as God's "favour" is known, and He is apprehended as "The God of Salvation" (v. 4), is any room seen for confession, and only in the spirit of worship can true confession be made. But, on the other hand, when the soul is really abased before God under a sense of sin and failure, the result will be fuller and richer worship.

The first verse is a favourite and worthy expression of Israel's praise on their festive occasions. It formed the conclusion of their song of gladness when the ark was taken by David to Zion; and it was the spontaneous out-

burst of the people at the dedication of Solomon's temple. (1 Chron. xvi. 24; 2 Chron. vii. 3.) It was the utterance of those who rejoiced when the foundation of the temple was laid after the captivity; and it will yet be the joyful shout of a restored and saved people in that land which no nation but Israel can possess. (Ezra iii. 2; Jer. xxxiii. 11.) "*O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever.*"

The Psalmist speaks of what has been tested and proved. The course of Israel was a wondrous strain upon God's *mercy*, as the sketch of their history in this Psalm shows, and yet that mercy was not exhausted, and it was the sense of its *eternity* that encouraged in the great business of confession and supplication. He chastened His rebellious people; He visited them for their iniquities; but all was with a view to their restoration and profit, and with the design of leading them to know more fully the depths of that mercy which He was ever ready to exercise toward them.

It is with especial reference to God's longsuffering and patience with His people that the questions are asked, "*Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can shew forth all His praise?*" It is indeed impossible for any of His people to "*shew forth all His praise,*" but the more we consider "*His mighty acts*" the more shall we ascribe glory and praise to Him, and delight to adore Him for His never-failing mercy and goodness.

The first discovery of God as the God of salvation calls forth true thanksgiving; but the proof of His forbearance, His kindness, and His restoring grace—which His people experience during the years of their pilgrimage—must enrich their song. There is a blessedness we should ever crave, and without which we should not be satisfied: "*Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth*

righteousness at all times" (v. 3). Blessed indeed are they who with opened ear, and steadfast gaze, and diligent step, follow that good Shepherd who ever leadeth His own in the paths of righteousness. But who, while here below, will say the ear is never dull, the eye never dim, and the step never halting? Rather do we prove that the higher our aim the more conscious we are of failing to attain it; and the one who so walks as to be above the blame of fellow-saints will find most against himself. It is also evident that those who are making obedience in all things their object, and fellowship with God the business of their lives, will be sensible, to a degree unknown by others, of the condition of the people of God as a whole, and their very fellowship with God will lead to the great matter of confession on behalf of the whole church. They will not merely talk about the failure of the church, as though they were speaking of something distinct from themselves and beneath them, but their hearts will pour out such confession as we hear from the lips of Daniel in Babylon, who, though *personally* upright before God, and faithful to Him from his youth, began his prayer with the acknowledgment "*WE have sinned.*"

It is in this spirit that the writer of this Psalm makes his confession on behalf of the nation: "*We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly*" (v. 6). Of the three verbs used in this verse, the first is said to denote failure to discharge one's obligations; the second, wilful perversion or distortion; and the third, disorderly or turbulent transgression. The order is very significant, and may remind us that the church, like Israel of old, first failed in the matter of strict adherence to the commandments of her Lord, and then allowed that solemn perversion of His truth which the history of early centuries so abundantly testifies; the

result being the condition of things now existing, of which only those who take scripture as their absolute guide, and seek personally to cultivate the lowly mind of Christ and to know the love of His heart toward all saints, can form any estimate.

After the general acknowledgment, we come to a more detailed confession, showing how the writer had taken to heart the record of Israel's sad history : (1) *In their provocation at the Red Sea ;* (2) *sins during the desert wandering ;* and (3) *sins after they were brought into Canaan.* The first reference (v. 7) is to their murmuring when they saw the army of Pharaoh following them, and the secret of that murmuring is indicated. They understood not God's wonders in Egypt, and remembered not the multitude of His mercies. Their thoughts being fixed upon themselves, they could not appreciate what God was doing ; and the first trouble drew forth complaint instead of trust : "*Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make His mighty power to be known.*" He wrought so mightily for them, and gave them such a deliverance, that "*they believed His words ; they sang His praise.*" But such was their propensity to evil, that "*they made haste ; they forgot His works ; they waited not for His counsel*" (v. 13). They had no patience to wait for God to perform what He had purposed on their behalf, or to perfect the great work He had begun. And even after He had borne with them during the forty years of their wilderness sojourning, and by His power had put them in possession of Canaan, they were still disobedient : "*They did not destroy the nations concerning whom the Lord commanded them : but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.*" For this He gave them up to their enemies ; but even then, His mercy did not fail. In verses 43-46, we get a beautiful

summary of His ways of longsuffering over them, the secret of all being that "*He remembered for them His covenant.*"

As we read Israel's solemn history, or listen to their deep confessions, we should never forget that they were figures of us. (See 1 Cor. x. 6, 11.) We have already remarked that in their history we see a sad picture of the course of the *professing* church of God; but it is an equally true picture, alas! of the ways of many who are truly His, and whose sin on that account is all the more grievous. And it is in His patience with us as His people that God so wondrously displays the depths and fulness of those stores of grace that are found in Him alone. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt was an act of rich mercy; but it was in His *longsuffering* with His people in all their wanderings and murmurings, and in the many deliverances wrought for them when they had been brought low by their iniquity, that He made it manifest that "His mercy endureth *for ever.*" So now, the first rescue of a soul from sin and the world is a blessed expression of God's *grace*; but the fact that He bears with so much in those whom He has thus rescued, and so often restores them from their wanderings, shows His patience and tenderness towards them. For us, as for them, He indeed remembers His covenant; and therefore deals with us not according to our sins, but "*according to the multitude of His mercies.*"

There are two prayers in this Psalm—one at the beginning, and one at the end—just as there are two expressions of praise. The first is a prayer for individual blessing; the second is for national mercies. Owing the fact that there is a people in the world who are peculiarly the people of God, the objects of His favour, the psalmist prays, "*Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with Thy*

salvation" (v. 4). Yet even in this he seeks the good of the nation at large: "*That I may see the good of Thy chosen*" (v. 5). The second prayer is still more comprehensive. The sin of the people led to their being scattered among the nations; their repentance caused them to cry out for separation from them: "*Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto Thy holy name, and to triumph in Thy praise*" (v. 47). In like manner, the sin of the church has led to its being so mingled with the world as to lose entirely its place of separation and its attitude of subjection to Christ (Eph. v. 24); and wherever the consciousness of this is wrought, there will be the cry for restoration to the "old paths," in which the flock walked when it listened only to the Shepherd's voice. For, as in Israel's case, separation from the nations meant nearness to God for the blessed business of worship; so it is with believers now. Those who listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, and follow Him, walk in "the footsteps of the flock," and of necessity assemble together, for they cannot be content with any place of isolation when fellowship with those who walk in the truth may be had.

The last verse forms the doxology to the fourth book of Psalms; but it also belongs to this Psalm in particular. It is a beautiful expression of adoration, to which "*all the people*" are called to say "*Amen.*" And those who most take to heart the condition of the church (as the Psalmist took to heart the condition of Israel), and bear it before God in confession, will most truly rejoice in the contemplation of Him who "*from everlasting to everlasting*" is the unchangeable God—who remembers His covenant, and who, "for His name's sake," will fulfil it to His own eternal praise.

W. H. B.

THE LAST SONG OF MOSES.

NOTES OF A BIBLE READING ON DEUT. XXXII.

THE invidious attacks of sceptical writers on the book of Deuteronomy are provided against in the repeated use made of it by our Lord and by the apostle Paul. In this book the law is told over again with additions, as we tell our children a thing twice to impress it.

Quotations from Deut. xxxii., in the epistle to the Romans, show that it is an important chapter for gospel workers, and well calculated to meet the wants of the present day. In Rom. x. 19, it is quoted as a back-strengthener in the work of God, and in Rom. xv. 10, as a widener of the arms. The first quotation perhaps shows the sorrowful side, and the second the joyful side.

The first song of Moses (Ex. xv.) is a witness of the mighty works God wrought *for* Israel, but this his last song, while still keeping them in mind, is in the main a witness *against* Israel; yet the sorrow of this chapter is brightened by the great truth that "The Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" (v. 9); and by the intimation of mercy still in store for "His land and His people" (v. 43).

Before God's *choice* of the nation is mentioned in verses 7 and 8, we have in v. 4 the beautiful statement, "He is the Rock, His work is perfect," and in v. 6 the great truth of redemption in the question: "Is not He thy Father that hath *bought* thee?" That this word refers to the deliverance from Egypt seems clear from Isa. xviii. 3, 'I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.' We find this same order in the unfolding of the truth of God in the New Testament. In the Gospel by John the good news comes, dropping as the gentle dew and the

refreshing rain, in the words, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," while subsequent chapters fully unfold the sovereignty of God. So in the epistle to the Romans we have man's ruin and God's remedy—man's guilt and God's provision of righteousness fully set forth, and then the great truth of God's sovereignty. We have first as sinners to receive the good news of God's grace, and then to be taught that we have been chosen of God.

Verse 8 goes back to the time before Abraham was called, or even born: "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel." Here we see a Divine appointment of Israel in the midst of the nations. We should never forget that God has put England into the place she occupies, and holds her accountable for the way in which she fills it. When Eber came upon the scene then came the division of the earth (Gen. x.); God scattered the descendants of Noah that He might leave Palestine free for Israel. Such is the position of that land that even Napoleon in his exile once said, "Whoever possesses that land will rule the world." Its central position is not only to show God's delight in it, but also that righteous rule may one day go forth from it. While the great ones of the earth are fixing what shall be the boundaries of this and that country, it is all being ordered by Jehovah. It is by no hap-hazard or accident, but of God's arranging. His thoughts are not only on the "many mansions" prepared for His people (John xiv.), but also on the earth which is to see the millennial glory.

With this word "Most High" we should compare Acts xvii. 26, with Psalms xci. and xcii., in both of which the title "Most High" occurs. It reminds us of the words

of Jethro : " Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods, for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly He was above them." (Ex. xviii. 11.) From Acts xvii. 26 we learn that whatever arrangement God makes with regard to nations it is that they might *know* Him. " He made of *one* every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation ; that they should *seek God.*" (R.V.) The inscription on the altar in Athens, " To the *unknown God,*" brought out this truth.

Israel was to be as a central jewel in the earth that they might teach His name, and when they failed to do this, God said, I will provoke you to jealousy by a nation of *no-ones*, *i.e.*, by us Gentiles.

In this chapter God is spoken of as " the Rock "—a word which in Hebrew has two meanings, one signifying that which is immutable, and the other that which is unassailable ; and with this we have the emblem of the dew, a figure of that which is gentle and tender. The persuasiveness of love and grace expressed in the name of the Lord is joined with His immutability. There is another beautiful mention of the rock in Ex. xxxiii. 22 : " I will put thee into the cleft of the rock." Moses was the Peter—the Cephas—of the Old Testament ; he smote the rock, and the remembrance of it stuck to him till his dying day. He does not bring himself before us as the rock, but the Lord, just as Peter in his first epistle seems to say, Though I am called Cephas (*i.e.*, a *stone*), it is the Lord alone who is the " Living Stone." (1 Peter ii. 14.) In Habakkuk God is addressed, " O Rock," and in Isaiah we read, " In the Lord Jehovah is an everlasting rock," or, " a rock of ages." (Heb. i. 12 ; Isa. xxvi. 4, R. V.) Rock is the proper word in these places, and where God has repeated a word we should mark its use.

There is another "rock" which in anti-christian blasphemy will set itself up, while the nations seek safety under its shadow : but "their rock is not as our rock." They get armies and taxes and burdens, while we get honey and oil.* They are beset with the fear of what is coming, while we trust in the Rock of Ages.

Immutable as God is, His tenderness is such that He keeps His children as the apple of His eye, and expresses His delight in them in words that are not surpassed in the whole Bible : "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness ; He led him about, He instructed him," etc., see verses 10-14.

The word "Jeshurun" (*v.* 15) means "the righteous one," and is a word of affection and esteem. It reminds us that God ever keeps before Him what His people are in His purpose, and will be in reality. This is why He often speaks of them in the highest terms when their actual state is very different from that described by His language. Thus after the crucifixion Jerusalem is called "the holy city" (*Matt.* xxviii., 53), and often in Daniel we read of the "holy land" and the "holy city." God works out His divine beauties in darkest hours. But this precious Jeshurun "waxed fat and kicked," and "forsook God which made him."

Israel's sin is traced in four stages: (1) "He *lightly esteemed* the rock of his salvation;" (2) "Of the rock that begat thee thou art *unmindful*;" (3) "They have *moved Me to jealousy* with that which is not God;" and then (4) they *trusted* in another rock (*v.* 37). If we are not sucking honey out of our rock we shall soon lightly esteem Him then become unmindful, and provoke the Lord to jealousy

* Honey and oil from the rock refers to the fact that in the holes of the rocks the bees build their combs ; whilst the olive tree strikes its roots into the crevices.

by turning to other objects. It is only intense affection that can be really jealous. A slack affection does not mind another object coming in; but such is the love of God to us that we can cause Him the pain of jealousy. Jealous and zealous are but two forms of the same word, and to be zealous is to give back our love to God. As Wesley says, "True zeal is nothing more and nothing less than fervent love." God says: "I gave all I had to give to get you, and I want your love in return. Will you not turn out all other rivals for Me?" God's own Son could say, "The zeal [*i.e.*, jealousy] of Thine house hath eaten Me up." (John ii. 17.) This truth of jealousy is very frequent in the Old Testament, but we find it in the New as well. Paul warns the Corinthian saints with the solemn question, "Do we provoke the Lord to *jealousy*? Are we stronger than He?" (1 Cor. x. 22.) The saint who says "I can do as I like," and brings carnal things into the Lord's dwelling place, wounds His eye, and vexes His spirit, and grieves His heart.

That relationship in which love is strongest, and in which therefore above all others unfaithfulness excites jealousy, is often taken up to set forth our relation to the Lord. See Rom. vii. 4: "Ye also are . . . married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead." Paul thus expresses his care for the saints at Corinth: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. xi. 2.) In James iv. 5, we read: "The Spirit that dwelleth in us *lusteth to envy*," but the meaning is "*jealously desireth us*." Thus we have a jealous God; a jealous Lord Jesus; and a jealous Holy Spirit. How grieved Eliezer would have been if Rebekah's heart had turned aside to some other person as he was leading her on to Isaac! Yet such is the

grief (too often, alas!) of the Holy Ghost, when our hearts turn from Christ to other objects. Does the Holy Ghost love us less than Christ? Not a whit; and He will give us grace to curb these erring affections. Get a concordance, and find out the words "jealous" and "zealous." The Hebrew word for jealous means "*I have gotten*," "*I have gained*;" it is the feeling of a man who has bought a thing, and says, It is mine.

We learn from verse 21 God's solemn way of retribution. They had moved Him to jealousy with their no-gods, and had provoked Him to anger with their vanities, and in judgment He said, "I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." In Rom. x. 19, Paul shows that this is being fulfilled by the calling of the Gentiles during Israel's rejection.

In verse 29, "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" the expression "latter end" may mean the divinely predicted blessed end of the nation; if so, it is another instance of how God shows us the conqueror's crown, that it may incite us to live more to Him. Also notice how the Gentiles are brought in, *v.* 43: "Rejoice, O ye *nations*, with His people." Paul antedates this in Rom. xv. It is the same exalted Christ who blesses *us*, who are now gathered out of the nations, who will *then* bless those nations. Let us therefore give thanks over Deut. xxxii., and then pray over it, and remember that however sadly the nation of Israel, or the Church of God, has failed, God still says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." (Isa. lxvi. 2.)

ON STRANGERSHIP.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.

THE testimony of Moses for God might be summed up in the names which he gave to his two sons, Gershom and Eliezer—" *A stranger there*" and "*God my help.*" He chose rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. xi. 24-26); and this choice made him a stranger in Egypt; every day took him farther and farther from it, but nearer and nearer to God. This was his *Gershom* testimony; "*He endured* as seeing Him who is invisible," was his *Eliezer* testimony. But the order is important.

"By faith he *forsook* Egypt." He cast no lingering look back on that which he had abandoned. "By faith he kept the passover," thus escaping the judgment of God, and the Red Sea separated him for ever from Egypt.

As believers in Jesus we are sheltered for ever by His precious blood. But our safety and blessing do not depend upon *our* appreciation of the value of Christ's blood, but upon God's estimate of it. Our boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus likewise depends upon God's estimate of its preciousness; our appreciation of it will be growing throughout eternity. On the other hand, we cannot say what we deserved as sinners, but our apprehension of that should be ever growing also. God reckons as if we had died and risen with Christ, and it is our blessing and strength to reckon as God reckons.

Moses took his place as a stranger thoroughly; he made no bridge of boats by which to go back over the Red Sea to Egypt. Are we trying to do so? A stranger is one who belongs to another country. If we are "born of God,"

our Father is in Heaven, and Father and children have only one home ; we belong to heaven. Again, in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are "bone of His bone," members of His body. Where the Head is, there must all the members be brought, for even the least is essential to the completeness of the body. When Christ our Head appears we shall be with Him.

God has made us strangers, and a stranger's joy is not in his circumstances. God begat us from above, and when our second birth took place there was joy in heaven. It is great rest to the soul to know that God gave us to His Son before all worlds. This knowledge would save us from all spasmodic effort to become unworldly. The lever to lift us out of the world is—*We are "not of the world."* What we have to do is to strive every day to enjoy our Father's smile, to hear the whispers of our Lord's voice, and then perforce others will see we are different from them, we are unworldly. But let us not make their verdict our aim, but rather seek to give joy to God our Father and to the heart of Christ.

Connected with strangership there must be personal inconvenience. Those who go to China understand this. The language, dress and food are all different from what they have been accustomed to. One way out of the difficulty is to conform to the habits of the people of the land. But, in another sense, this is not God's way *for us*. "Be not conformed to the world" is the word to us. It is not a command accompanied by the thunders of Sinai, but an entreaty, "I beseech you by the mercies of God."

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." And what are the promises? "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their GOD." "Come out from among them and

be ye separate and I will receive you, and will be a FATHER unto you." Can we dwell on these promises and not be allured by them ?

The world has a dress of its own. "Pride is as a chain about their neck ; violence covereth them as a garment." (Ps. lxxiii. 6, R.V.) The world patronises pride and looks up to the man with a high, proud spirit. And do pride and violence go close together ? Yes ; your heart and mine have the same germs as those in the hearts of the men who lived before the flood and in whom these evils flourished. Let us remember that Romans iii. does not give a picture of some especially degraded people in the time that the apostle wrote ; it is true of every heart, and the tongue that can use loving, pleasant words has under it "the poison of asps."

But as strangers here, as those "not of the world," meekness is to characterize us. "*Put on* therefore as the elect of God . . . humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." Our language is also to be different from that of the world. Our speech is to be "alway with grace seasoned with salt"; then we shall speak the heavenly language.

As the believer has a different moral dress from the world, so he has also a separate table. Isaiah xlv. 28, tells us the world's food—"He feedeth on *ashes*." Look at their bill of fare—trashy, vile novels, newspaper reports, infidel books, philosophical books undermining the truths of Christianity. What are all these but ashes, or poison ? Contrast John vi. 5, 7, "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father : so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." This food we shall only get out of the Book of God, and only by the teaching of the Spirit of God.

Let us then remember the order—Gershom and Eliezer.

We do not know God until we are strangers, and then we learn our God in all His infinite resources in Christ. He can give manna and springs in the desert, but we must first go into the desert with God. (W.)

JOHN MARK :

HIS HISTORY AND ITS LESSONS.

THE close of Acts xi. records a mission of love which had emanated from the disciples at Antioch toward their fellow disciples in Judæa, who were at that time suffering from "the great dearth throughout the world" in the days of Claudius Cæsar. A gift of love to them was for transmission entrusted to the hands of Barnabas and Saul, who forthwith departed on their journey to Jerusalem. It was during their sojourn in that city that Herod the king "stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church, and he killed James [one of Zebedee's children] the brother of John with the sword." Then, because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also, and put him in prison, and guarded him with four quaternions of soldiers. (Acts xii. 1-4.) Thus did that tyrant manifest his enmity against the risen and ascended Christ of God. But how futile was all this expression of anger, for "He who sitteth in the heavens *laughed*" (Ps. ii. 4), and once again delivered His faithful servant, even as He had done when He raised His triumphant Christ from the dead, and "rolled away the stone" from the grave's mouth. To Him it was a no more difficult task to cause the "iron gate" that led to the city to open of its own accord than it was for Him to roll away the stone, or to make the guard as utterly helpless in the one case as in the other.

"Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto

God" for Peter, and in answer to His children's "unceasing" cry, He restored the loved disciple to their midst. When Peter was come to himself "he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together, praying," and having "declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of prison," and having bidden them to "show these things to James and to the brethren, he departed and went into another place."

John Mark did not, apparently, leave the city, but continued to live there with his mother, and we may be allowed to think of him as both comforting and sustaining her; and also as manifesting such holy and godly demeanour, during the persecution and the prevailing dearth, that the attention of Barnabas and Saul, who had brought the gift from Antioch, was attracted toward him. They became so much interested in the welfare of the young disciple that, when the time came for them to leave Jerusalem, having "fulfilled their ministry, they took with them John, whose surname was Mark." The Holy Ghost thus repeats Mark's name (after narrating the miracle of Peter's deliverance) in order that we may make no mistake as to *His* care to notice every true-hearted service to God, though it be merged among that of the multitude of a populous city.

Antioch was the birth-place of much energy for God; and He honoured His children who dwelt there, not only by giving them the blessing of certain prophets and teachers; but also by selecting from their midst, "as they ministered unto the Lord and fasted," certain ones to do His special work in other lands. "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them . . . and being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, they departed unto Seleucia, and

from thence they sailed to Cyprus." Their young companion John Mark had no doubt been their servitor while they were at Antioch, and had been a comfort to them; hence when they departed upon the special mission already referred to "they had also John to their minister." Apostles even were but fallible men; and, judging from the sequel to this journey, it would seem as though the appreciation of his service had biassed their minds a little when they chose him as a companion; and made them overrate his power to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

Their mission led these apostles through the island of Cyprus "preaching the word of God," and they encountered the powers of darkness in the person of Elymas, the sorcerer, in the very presence of "Sergius Paulus, the deputy of the country, who believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." Paul and his company then "loosed from Paphos and came to Pamphylia." The young disciple John Mark appears to have had his ardour somewhat checked, and found the "hardship" of following the Lord Jesus too much for him, for when his feet were once again placed upon the main-land, he bade adieu to his honoured masters; "John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem."

In following John Mark back again to his mother's abode, we may be gladdened with the thought that, despite his departure from Paul and Barnabas, his heart was nevertheless true to his Lord; for after a visit to his mother he seems to have been induced to leave his home to serve again among those Christians at Antioch with whom he had become so intimately associated on his first visit to that city with Barnabas and Saul; and it was there that the apostles again met him, when, after a few years, having completed their special mission they returned

to "Antioch from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled." (Acts xiv. 26.)

After a lengthened sojourn in the city of Antioch, Paul and Barnabas, at the request of the church, made a visit to the apostles at Jerusalem, concerning the question of circumcision; and having returned from that city, whither they had been "brought on their way by the church" (Acts xv. 3), they continued in Antioch "teaching and preaching the word of the Lord." At length Paul suggested that they should pay a visit to every city wherein they had preached: "and Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark; but Paul thought it not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work." It may be that he discerned some latent working of the same spirit of timidity (unbefitting a soldier of the Cross) which had originally been a hindrance to John's service, and that this induced Paul so strongly to object to his accompanying them. Barnabas having "*determined*," and Paul having *objected*, room was given thereby for the adversary to introduce *sharpness* into the controversy, and of which occasion was taken, for "the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder, one from the other."

We may be allowed to infer, that John Mark had relinquished the comforts of a home with his mother at Jerusalem, and had associated himself with the saints of God at Antioch, to bear with them the reproach of Christ. This would naturally be a great joy to the heart of Barnabas, his uncle (John was his sister's son; see Col. iv. 10), when, on his return to that city with Paul, he found him located there. Renewed hope regarding his nephew, combined no doubt with natural affection, caused

Barnabas to *determine* to take John Mark on the proposed fresh journey. The "honey" of nature intermingling with his judgment, swayed his action, and so "Barnabas took Mark and sailed into Cyprus." Paul did not *take* Silas; he only *chose* him, and his choice, it would seem, the brethren recognised. "Paul chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God: and he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches." The Holy Spirit would seem, by this narration, to mark *His* approval of Paul's conduct and course in the matter; while of Barnabas we have no further account, the Spirit merely mentioning his course while graciously abstaining from either comment or censure. What a lesson to us in these days when saints are so ready to blame and so given to find fault! Our patient God is silent where impatient man would be loud in condemnation.

Some few years rolled away, and no account is given us of godly reconciliation having taken place between these two loved and honoured servants of the Lord; but *restoration* and not *estrangement* being God's principle, we may be sure that they *were* reunited, both in love and in service for God—as was also John Mark. In Paul's writing to Corinth, some five or six years after their separation from each other, we gather that this restoration *must* have taken place, since he again associates the name of Barnabas with his own—"or I only, and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?"

The nearer a servant of God is walking to the divine Master, the more will he partake of His spirit, and as He *never* takes His eye or heart off one of His own chosen ones, so does a good servant endeavour to follow in His steps, and keep his eye upon any sheep that may have strayed from the fold, a victim, perhaps, to some defect in

natural character, by means of which the adversary has caused a divergence.

We are not told *when* the apostle Paul fell in with John Mark again, but ten years after their separation Paul was glad of the opportunity to tender the salutations of "Marcus" to the saints at Colosse, and to remind them that if he came to them they were to "*receive him.*" (Col. iv. 10.)

Young man and young disciple as John Mark was when he "departed from the work," he could not have seen and heard the altercation between Paul and his uncle without being moved by it, the more so as he had himself caused it. Doubtless it had often afforded him a sad field for meditation and self-examination, and it seems certain that his soul had profited thereby, and he had grown "in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," for Paul couples his name with others as having been "a comfort" to him in his troubles, and a "fellow-worker unto the kingdom of God." (Col. iv. 11.) About the same time, when writing to Philemon, the apostle also took pains to associate the name of "Marcus" with others as his "*fellow-labourer.*" (Philemon 24.) Contrast these expressions "*a comfort to me,*" "*a fellow-worker,*" "*a fellow-labourer,*" with the words in Acts xii.—"*who went not with them to the work,*" and we see the resplendent grace of our God shining forth in His *restoring* love and power.

The steady onward course of Mark seems to have given him a large place in Paul's heart, for even in his bonds at Rome, when he was nearing the time of his "departure" to glory, his heart yearned for the presence of John Mark; and in writing to Timothy he says, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me; take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

(2 Tim. iv. 9-11.) What a comfort and consolation must this have been to Mark! He had wept many a tear of sorrowful regret, in that he had forfeited blessing in not having kept close to the apostle's side; but the severance from the *servant* had driven him closer to the *Master*, and during the years of his unostentatious service to *Him* he had learned much *with Him*, so that His honoured servant Paul could at length both wish to have Mark with him in his closing hours of service, and could also in his letters apply to him the warm words of commendation to which reference has been made. It must have been to Mark consolation indeed, and it is an encouragement too for every young disciple not to be cast down because of failure at first, for but few of us, at the outset of our course, know ourselves, or are aware of the ready weapons that are at hand *within* ourselves to aid the adversary in overcoming us.

It is more than probable that, after accompanying the apostles through Cyprus, John Mark may have discovered that he was not (at that time, at all events) fitted *for*, or called by God *unto*, the work he had been engaged in, and he departed from the apostles, wending his way toward his mother and his home, *there* to learn lessons from God which eventually bore "much fruit."

Since the apostles, like others, were fallible men, "subject to like passions as we are" (James v. 17), it may be that their judgment about John Mark, as to his capability for service, was not quite correct, not quite perfect; and that Mark's decision to join in "the work" had been unduly influenced. We well know how a young soldier, in the ardour of true-heartedness to Christ, will readily accept counsel, if it be but a word, from an older one whom he may love and respect. But let me not be misunderstood; I would not for a moment asperse

the conduct of the Lord's honoured apostles, and am invariably grieved when I hear it done, but a lesson may nevertheless be deduced from the narrative, and we older servants may get an exhortation from it, not to help our younger brethren too speedily into the fore-front of the battle (Exodus xiii. 8), lest we bring upon them the humiliation and sorrow of being "discouraged because of the way" (Numb. xxi. 4), and bring upon ourselves God's holy judgment for having "defiled" His temple. (1 Cor. iii. 17.)

These are days of haste in every way, and the atmosphere of haste is, alas! breathed but too freely in the church of God. Let us not be too anxious either to be seen or to be heard, but while coveting earnestly the best gifts (1 Cor. xii. 31), let us rather be "swift to hear, slow to speak." (James i. 10; Eccl. v. 1.)

Should any young brother have attempted a work which he finds to be beyond him, or have listened too much to the advice of a fellow-Christian, and have suffered in consequence, let him not be discouraged, but let him, after much prayer and deliberation, follow the example we have had in John Mark, retire for a while, and seek to learn lessons with God. If God have called such an one to be a labourer for Him, He will, as He did with John Mark, teach him "to profit," and "lead him in the way he should go" (Isaiah xlvi. 7), and in God's own time His servant shall have it recorded of him, by the Head of the Church, that he too is "a fellow-worker," "a fellow-labourer," and "profitable for the ministry."

When the apostle Peter was sending his first Epistle to "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," and presenting the salutations of the church at Babylon to them, he specially includes that of Mark—"and so doth Marcus my son." (1 Pet. vi. 3.) Peter had been a constant visitor at the house of Mary, the sister of Barnabas, and had in all

probability been the means of the conversion of her son John Marcus, since he calls him "Marcus my son." Peter's voice was well-known at the house, so that when, on the day of his marvellous liberation from the prison, "he came to the house of Mary and knocked at the door of the gate," the sound of his loved and honoured voice was quickly caught by Rhoda, and her "gladness" of heart as quickly led her back into the midst of those who were "praying," to tell them that Peter actually stood at the gate; yet they did not believe her, but thought that it must be "his angel," until at last the door was opened, and he stood before their "astonished" gaze. Then, it would appear, they overwhelmed him with their joy, and with their questions, so that he had to beckon to them with his hand "to hold their peace, while he declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of prison."

If the suggestion that John Mark was Peter's son in the faith be a correct one, with what joy must the aged servant have beheld his son's restoration and growth in grace! And should it be, as the learned tell us, that Peter was the compiler of the second Gospel, with John Mark for his penman, what happy fellowship must there have been in the holy work of handing down to posterity some account of the life and ways of their one blessed and glorified Lord!

If the restoration of soul and the godly walk of John Mark gladdened the heart of his mother, the hearts of Peter, of Paul, of Barnabas and others, how much more must the tender heart of the Great and Good Shepherd have been gladdened? Let *us* then, to-day, praise Him, trust Him, "with purpose of heart cleave unto the Lord," and endeavour with one heart and one mind "to fight the good fight of faith." "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." (Phil. i. 29.)

THE ETERNAL GOD.

IN one of the oldest recorded controversies on the ways of God, we have a remarkable question touching God Himself: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" And the same book declares: "The Almighty, we cannot find Him out." (Job xi. 7; xxxvii. 23.) This is indeed true, but He can reveal Himself, and, blessed be His name! He has done so. The sun in the heavens is seen only by its own light, and in like manner God is known only by His own revealing. His works of creation declare His glory and greatness, but it is in the sacred scriptures alone that He is made known in all His fulness. There we learn how He unfolded Himself partially and gradually in past times, but fully and completely by the gift of His Son, and the consequent gift of His Spirit. Yet with a perfect revelation we must remember that as yet we have not a perfect capacity; we know only in part, and wait for the day when we shall know even as we are known.

Most fully and clearly does Scripture declare that there is *one* God, but equally explicit is the truth that in the one glorious Godhead are three Persons. Nowhere is this fundamental doctrine enunciated in an abstract manner, as we often find it in creeds and confessions of faith, but everywhere in the inspired pages it shines forth with all the warmth of life and love. It is a truth that is expressed in all the ways of God, and in all His wondrous works, though it stands forth in all its brightness in that chief of His works—redemption. Israel was called as a nation to be a witness to the living God, as the one true God, in contrast with the many false gods owned by the nations around

them, and the statement made to them was: "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah, our God, is one Jehovah." (Deut. vi. 4.) The word here used for GOD is plural, as it is also in the very first verse of the Bible and in many other places, and seems to be an intimation of the distinct personality of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the Godhead, afterwards most clearly revealed. And as with the light of revelation we look back upon that period when no creature existed, before God had begun to manifest Himself by any act of creation, we must think of the Godhead in essential being and uncreated glory—the Father, Son, and Spirit, in a wondrous, unspeakable *fellowship*—eternally blessed and self-sufficing. This fellowship, ever subsisting, and in which all divine counsels and purposes were formed, has been and must be expressed in all the actions of God; and the holy exercise of tracing out the expression of it will tend to our profit and the establishment of our souls, at least if we are enabled to consider it with the lowly mind ever found in those who really "enquire in His temple." It is with the desire of contributing to this that the following points are briefly noted.

1. *Creation.* In addition to the use of the plural in Gen. i. 1, and the word in *v.* 26, "Let *us* make man," we have express mention of Father, Son, and Spirit in the work of creation. It is spoken of as the work of *God* in Acts xvii. 24, Rom. i. 19, 20, and Heb. xi. 2. In John i. 3, after describing the *Son* under the great title of the *Word* as the One who in the beginning was, and was with God, and Himself was God, the writer affirms that "all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." Again in Coloss. i. 16 we read that by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible,

whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him." Yet this mighty work was not accomplished apart from the *Holy Ghost*, for "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The word "moved" or "brooded" has reference to the life-producing power of the Spirit. And while life on the earth was produced by the Spirit of God it is equally true that "by His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens." (Job xxvi. 13.)

2. *God's dealings with Israel.* It was God who sent Moses "to be a ruler and a deliverer," but it was "by the hand of the Angel which appeared to him in the bush" that He did so. And that Angel was no created being, but One who could say, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," and who could further declare His own name to be "Jehovah." (Acts vii., Ex. iii., vi.) It was by the Son that God ever revealed Himself to man, whether to Adam in Eden, to Abraham in Mesopotamia and Canaan, to Jacob at Bethel, or to Moses in the Mount Sinai; He could speak and act as God because He is and ever was in His own glorious person "God blessed for ever."* (Rom. ix. 5.)

Jehovah was indeed the Saviour of His people, for "the Angel of His presence saved them." (Isaiah lxiii. 8-9.) But the blessed Spirit of God was not absent, for when, in response to Moses' complaint, God appointed seventy elders to share his labour, He distinctly said, "I will take of the Spirit that is upon thee and put it upon them" (Num. xi. 17), showing that if Moses wrought mighty works in Jehovah's name it was because He "put His Holy

* It was He who appeared to Isaiah in the temple, as we learn from John xii. 41, where, after quoting from the prophet, the evangelist writes, "These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him." It was on that occasion the Lord asked the remarkable question, "Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?" (See Isa. vi.)

Spirit within him." (Isa. lxiii. 11.) Those who wrought the curious work of the Tabernacle, in which God was worshipped and Christ was set forth, were filled "with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge," and that "good Spirit" was given to the people to "instruct them." (Ex. xxxv. 31; Neh. ix. 20.) Hence we read not only that they "tempted God," but also that they "rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit," while 1 Cor. x. 9 certainly implies that it was Christ, or the Lord, whom they tempted.

3. *The Ministry of the Prophets.* It is expressly declared that GOD spake to the fathers by the prophets, and that this means explicitly the Father, is clear from the statement that He who formerly spake by them hath now spoken by the Son. But of the whole of the prophetic word it is said that men spake from God as they were borne along by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. i. 21), and therefore their words are cited as the words of the Holy Ghost (Heb. iii. 7); and in the new covenant, which Jehovah makes with Israel, the Holy Ghost is said to be "a witness to us" of the finished work of Christ. (Heb. x. 15.) Yet it was as "the Spirit of Christ" in the prophets that He "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow," and therefore the words of the Holy Ghost are quoted as the words of Christ. (Rom. xv. 3; Heb. x. 5-9.) And when God gave Israel one who was "more than a prophet" to prepare the way for His Son, it was His being "filled with the Holy Ghost" that made His ministry effectual.

4. *The Incarnation of the Word.* When "the fulness of time" had come for the accomplishment of that work which was ever first in God's great purpose and supreme in His thoughts, and He sent the angel Gabriel from His presence to announce to a lowly but chosen virgin of the

house of David the great secret of the birth of the long-promised Seed of the woman, the answer to her enquiry, "How shall this be?" was, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luke i. 35.) Thus "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman," and He who ever subsisted in the form of God emptied Himself, taking upon Him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men; the body that was prepared for Him being the fruit of the creative power and wondrous skill of the Holy Ghost. (Gal. iv. 4; Phil. ii. 6, 7.)

5. *The public ministry of Christ.* When the Lord was baptized, God both owned Him by a voice from heaven as His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased, and anointed Him with the Holy Ghost, who in bodily presence as a dove rested upon Him. It was as thus anointed that He went forth on His wondrous ministry (Luke iv. 18), having His ear opened morning by morning to the voice of Jehovah, and ever speaking what He received from the Father. (Isa. l. 4; John xii. 50.) And what was true of His words was equally true of His works: "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me He doeth the works." (John xiv. 10.) Of all His works it must be said that God wrought them by Him, that He wrought them by the Holy Spirit, and that in working them He "manifested forth His glory." (Acts ii. 22; Matt. xii. 28; John ii. 11.) The first and second statements could be made of any servant of God, while the third could not be predicated of any creature.

6. *The death of Christ.* When we turn to the greatest act of the Lord's ministry, even the sacrifice of Himself by which He put away sin, we still see this perfect

fellowship. The death of Christ is explicitly traced to the Father who "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," for "it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him," and it was He who gave the command: "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow; smite the shepherd" (Zec. xiii. 7), and therefore Christ could say, "THOU hast brought Me into the dust of death." (Ps. xxii. 15.) Yet He laid down His own life and offered Himself without spot to God, thus giving Himself for His own, and it was "through the eternal Spirit" that He did so. (John x. 18; xix. 30; Heb. ix. 14.)

7. *Christ in resurrection.* While the kingdom of God filled the thoughts of the risen Christ, and was the subject of His converse with His disciples, it was "through the Holy Ghost" that He gave commandments unto them (Acts i. 2, 3), one of those commandments being to baptize those who were made disciples "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. xxviii. 19.) In the book of the Revelation the Lord speaks of Himself as having the "seven Spirits of God," and He is seen by John as the Lamb "having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." (Rev. iii. 1; v. 6.)

8. *The ministry of the apostles.* The promise of the Lord was that He would send the Spirit of truth from the Father, and that the Father would send Him in His name, and that He would speak as sent both by the Father and the Son. (John xvi. 13-15.) We see the fulfilment of this gracious promise at Pentecost. But if we take the case of the apostle Paul we may note with interest how in his calling and service the perfect fellowship of the Godhead is expressed. Saul of Tarsus was definitely called by the risen Christ and thus constituted an apostle, and was under the immediate care and guidance of the

Lord (Acts xxiii. 11 ; xxvi. 13-18 ; 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9), yet he says that *God* called him by His grace to reveal His Son in him that he might preach Him among the Gentiles (Gal. i. 15, 16), and at the same time he was subject to the direction of the Holy Ghost by whom he was sent forth on this very mission to those who were outside Israel. (Acts xiii. 2, 4.) And what was true of one apostle was equally true of others according to their position and service.

9. *The bestowal of life and sonship.* It is "God who quickeneth all things," and "even so the Son quickeneth whom He will," while every quickened soul "is born of the Spirit" (1 Tim. vi. 13 ; Rom. v. 23 ; John iii. 5, 8), and the eternal life which is the fruit of that "renewing of the Holy Ghost" is the gift of God to His people, and of the Good Shepherd to His sheep. In like manner the relationship which is the result of new birth links us with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is the Father who begets children to Himself and displays His wondrous love in so doing ; yet the "power" or right, the authority and capability, to take their place as such is bestowed by the Son ; while it is by the Spirit alone that this blessed relationship is known, for it is He in us who enables us to cry, "Abba, Father." (John i. 12, 13 ; Gal. iv. 6 ; Rom. viii. 15.) And the resurrection, which will put us into the full possession of sonship with all its glories, and bring us into the enjoyment of eternal life in all its perfectness, is the joint act of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. vi. 14 ; John vi. 40-54 ; Rom. viii. 11.)

Other points might be added, and the foregoing enlarged upon, but it is hoped that these brief remarks may lead to a deeper consideration of the grand truth of the wondrous fellowship of the three Persons of the glorious Godhead in all the works and ways of God. Thus the

conviction will be strengthened that any question as to the true and proper Godhead, or the distinct personality in the Godhead, of either the Son or the Holy Spirit, is a question that goes to the very root of the mighty work of redemption, and the inspiration of the sacred Scriptures. It would be easy enough to give simple textual proof of these fundamental truths, but it is believed that in seeing how they are of necessity involved in all God's ways we grasp them more heartily, because in the way in which He has revealed them, and in a manner more calculated to lead to that worship and adoration which all true knowledge of God must produce. And if what has been thus feebly set forth be indeed a living truth in our souls we shall not regard those precious words we so often use as a mere sign of the close of a meeting, but as a prayer over which to pause with our hearty "Amen." "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all."

W. H. B.

PERFECT AND WHOLLY SANCTIFIED.

THE perfectness of our heavenly Father, which our Lord bids us to imitate, is not so much in the purity of His *nature* as in the purity of His *ways*. He is able to act towards His sinful creatures from an indwelling power and fulness, without needing to wait for any fitness in them, just as a fountain or spring continues to flow day and night whether its waters are appreciated or not. He "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust;" and in our ways towards others we are exhorted to be like Him, and thus to be "perfect" even as He is perfect.

Elsewhere in Scripture the essential purity of God is

brought before us, as when the apostle John writes in his first Epistle, "God is *light*, and in Him is no darkness at all," but he does not there use the word "perfect" of us. On the contrary, even when we are spoken of as walking in the light, and as having "fellowship one with another" we are seasonably reminded that everything in us is *not* "light," and we are told, for our comfort, that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"; that is, it unceasingly answers to God for our innate sinfulness, which is so deep, and so truly has in it the root and germ of every outward evil, that it is spoken of as "all sin." Compare Psalm li. where the precious words "whiter than snow" stand linked with, "Behold, I was *shapen in iniquity*, and in *sin* did my mother conceive me."

In 1 Thess. v. 23, the being sanctified "wholly" is set forth as a thing to be desired and prayed for, but it is not spoken of as a thing *attained*; and thus it should be all our days below. Man as a creature is spoken of as twofold, viz.: as consisting of soul and body, but in the activity of his life he is threefold, for everything that makes up our daily life springs from *thought*, which is warmed into *desire*, and completed in *action*. Thus our first mother *thought* of the forbidden fruit in Eden, then *desired* it, and next *took* it. Hence the apostle's prayer is that we may be entirely the Lord's, in *spirit, soul and body*, and blameless *at* His coming, so that when, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," the Lord shall shout us up to Himself in the air, our last thought, our last wish, and our last action (whether of lips or of any other member of the body) may be such as He can approve and accept as "blameless" in His sight, albeit we had up to that very moment within us the "ALL sin" of an evil nature, and needed the blood of God's Son to cleanse us. Of course it is true that if we are to be thus well-pleasing to God "at

the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" we must seek to be so every moment until His coming, since we know not when that final moment will come. Elijah when taken up in a moment into heaven by a whirlwind is an illustration of this happy state of being preserved blameless. His last *thought* was to obey his God; his last *desire* was that Elisha should get the deeply-needed "double portion" and his last *action* was that he "still went on and talked" with Elisha until the ascending moment came. Young believers need to beware of all interpretations of the words "perfect" or "sanctified wholly" which would imply that sin and sinfulness, whether in root or fruit, are to be no longer a trouble or a danger.

H. D.

"LIVING HOPE" AND "JOY UNSPEAKABLE."

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS ON I PETER I. 3-8.

OUR joy should ever be in God Himself, and not in anything He gives us. Ours would then be a rejoicing pilgrimage, and we should not be found groaning over the thorns of the wilderness, and dwelling upon the difficulties and trials of the way; but our thoughts would be full of the omnipotence of God, and of the shelter of His outstretched wings. God did not remind Israel of the thorns, but of His promises, of His grace and love, of the pillar and cloud, of the manna, and of the water from the smitten rock.

We shall never know the cross until we have borne it. One peculiar characteristic of the Church of God is, that we are not saved out of the sphere of sorrow, but inside it, and this makes the fellowship of the church so much nearer to Christ, a nearness that the angels are unacquainted with. I am not aware that the fellowship of

angels in the sphere of sorrow is ever named in connection with God ; but *we* have a partnership of faith in the cross and in the glory. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.” If we enter into this, then bereavements will lose much of their weight, and we shall know the power of the divine antidote for sorrow given in I Thess. iv., concerning which Paul says, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

To follow up these thoughts, let us turn to the opening words of Peter’s First Epistle.

“*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” We are blessed in God, but do we realize how blessed God is in us? We scarcely understand the surface meaning of such words, to say nothing of their hidden depths. A blessed people with a blessed God! Not one of us is going to be disappointed. A thousandth part has not been told. We shall be satisfied; and shall Christ be dissatisfied concerning us? “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” These are wonderful things to read and speak of. Let us open our hearts to let in the love that all these blessings imply. More wonderful is it to think of the Hand that gives them to poor condemned sinners. Let the most tried child of God realize how blessed he is, and how blessed God is in him, and sorrow will turn to joy.

“*Who hath begotten us again unto a living hope.*” Our regeneration is unto a purpose that lies beyond. There is a joy, a bliss, now, but it leads to something far greater hereafter. When we stand by the graves of our loved ones, and our tears are falling, it is well to look right up into heaven and think of our “living hope” there. May God write in large letters that joyful, living, sustaining word HOPE. It has arms to it and will embrace us in its joy.

"By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

It is this that gives to us the hope. The cross began the work of our salvation, but the resurrection was the consummation of it, its seal and pledge. What a contrast between the tabernacle and the builded house! (2 Cor. v. 1.) The pins of the tabernacle are soon taken up, and the cords are easily loosed. One letter tells us of a *tent* beginning to shake, and another comes to say the tent is down. But in blessed contrast is the eternal perpetuity of the *house* that lies beyond. As we think of this, and know that the tent *must* come down, we are tempted to say, "The sooner the better." But not so; we have lessons to learn here which cannot be learned there. Rather let us increasingly value the instruction which God is patiently bestowing on us by means of the trials, toils and difficulties of the wilderness.

"To an inheritance incorruptible." In the midst of earth's poor, transient possessions, let us dwell on the character of our inheritance. "Incorruptible" is a word which Peter loves to use. In contrast with corruptible "silver and gold," he places "the precious blood of Christ," and God's word in contrast with man's—"born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." The "meek and quiet spirit," as that which is incorruptible within, is also set over against all the outward fading adornments. May we learn, amidst the corruptions of time, the incorruptibility of the eternal kingdom to which we are hastening.

"Undefiled." It cannot be contaminated. It is said of our Lord in the Revelation that His feet were of burnished brass, implying that He walked undefiled amidst the defilements of the churches. Where defilement is, corruption follows, but our inheritance is incorruptible, and

nothing that defileth can enter it. Let us seek in this respect to be more in keeping with our inheritance.

“*And that fadeth not away.*” It is not like the flowers of earth which are cut down and cast into the oven. The beautiful sun rises and sets, and sunsets fade and darken into night; vanity is written upon everything here; but we are going to a place where there is no withering and no fading.

“*Reserved in heaven for you.*” The use of this word *reserved* in Peter’s Second Epistle may well remind us of the mercy that secures the inheritance for us. There we read of “judgment” reserved for angels that sinned, and for the unjust, and of the “blackness of darkness” reserved for those who are the servants of corruption.

“*Who are kept by the power of God.*” “Your life is hid with Christ in God.” Nobody can touch it, for we are bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord. We are “guarded” as by a garrison. “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.” (Ps. xxxiv. 7.)

Elisha prays for his servant that his eyes may be opened, and then he sees chariots of fire and horses of fire. (2 Kings vi. 17.) May we get Dothan revelations to our own souls! If it were not for the eye that sees all the dangers that lie before us, and for the guarding by holy angels, how should we do when the hosts of hell are engaged against us? But we are “kept by the power of God.”

“*Through faith.*” The stronger our faith is, the greater will be our assurance and our joy.

“*Unto salvation, ready to be revealed.*” Not ready to be possessed by us, but awaiting an unfolding by and bye. “Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” (1 John iii. 2.) Present circumstances

cannot affect what we are, but what we are cannot now be manifested. In our own present sense of weakness we are waiting for the "moment" of rapture, and joy, and bliss, and love.

"*Wherein ye greatly rejoice,*" or "*exult.*" Exultation is a bursting joy; not the quiet stillness of rejoicing, but that which cannot be kept in—our hearts full, our lips full, our souls full. Oh how little of this exultation of joy there is in our hearts!

"*Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness.*" Peter knew how hard and bitter chastening is; he recalls it here; the exultation needs to be qualified by an *if*. If there is "*manifold temptation*" there is also "*manifold grace.*" Ye are kept "*through faith,*" says the apostle, but there must be "*the trial of your faith.*" Let us not fear the sorrows, the trials, the fire by which our faith is tested. Faith will have its full approval "*at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*"

"*Whom having not seen, ye love.*" The apostle recalls the Lord's words to Thomas, as to the blessedness of those who have not seen and yet have believed. He had himself seen the Lord after the resurrection, and in answer to His thrice-repeated question had said, "Thou knowest that I *love* Thee," and here he unites in this same love those who had not seen and yet had believed.

"*Ye rejoice [exult] with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*" Even in the "*salvation*" (v. 5) there is exultation, but in the *Saviour* the exultation is with a joy that cannot be told out, and that anticipates the glory. May God teach us more of the love that leads to this exceeding joy, so that, come what may, the living hope may ever inspire our souls. May the Holy Spirit open our eyes, ears, and hearts, and may these words be to us what they were to the holy man who wrote them. H. G.

AHAZ, KING OF JUDAH.

THE history of Ahaz and his reign is full of interest to the heart that seeks to know more of the kindness of our God towards fallen man, and of man's ways towards God.

When the prophet Isaiah invited Ahaz to ask a sign of Jehovah, the reply which he made, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah" (Isa. vii. 12), might appear to be the answer of a humble God-fearing soul, confiding in God and anxious not to displease Him by evincing a doubt either as to His power, or as to His faithfulness in performing His promise. A retrospect, however, is necessary, in order to comprehend the affairs of that period.

In 2 Kings xv. 37, we learn that "in those days the Lord began to send against Judah Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, king of Israel." What could it be that induced Him to send a Gentile monarch and the Israelite king against the house of David? The first three chapters of Isaiah furnish the reason, unfolding the condition of the people and of the nobles, even during the reign of their good kings Uzziah and Jotham. "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity!" "sins as scarlet"; "murderers"; princes "rebellious and companions of thieves." Such was the moral aspect. As to religion, the land was "full of idols;" they worshipped what their own fingers had made, and "small and great" bowed themselves down. So openly did they display their sin, that God says of them, "Ye rulers of Sodom," "ye people of Gomorrah:" thus intimating that they deserved the same deadly overthrow as befel those cities. The conduct of the women also was as bad in their way (see chap. iii. 16).

Ahaz was twenty years old at his accession to the throne of Judah. He had witnessed the favour God had shown to his grandfather Uzziah, in his long and prosperous reign; he had witnessed also his declension at the close and the punishment inflicted on him; though Ahaz was then but a boy. He was brought up during the sixteen years' reign of his godly father Jotham, whose government also God had highly favoured. Instead of following their example, he imitated the kings of Israel, setting up idols, practising every abomination, sacrificing, and burning incense everywhere, even passing his children through the fire to Moloch. (2 Chr. xxviii.)

Under this open rebellion the God of Israel deemed it necessary to afflict His people, after every kindness had in vain been shown. The Syrian king slew numbers of them, carrying away many more as slaves to Damascus (2 Chr. xxviii. 5). Pekah also killed in one day 120,000, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers. The circumstances attending this last destruction have special interest. After the slaughter of the men in battle, the victors carried off women and children, 200,000 in number, to Samaria, with much spoil. Bold indeed must the prophet Oded have been in daring to confront that army, flushed with their victory, and to address them with these words, "Behold, because the Lord God of your fathers was wrath with Judah, He hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage which reacheth up unto heaven. And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for slaves. Now hear me, and restore the captives ye have taken; for the fierce anger of the Lord is upon you." This strong appeal took effect; and being strengthened by certain of the chiefs, whose names are honourably mentioned, the warriors relinquished both their prey and the spoil. Most wonderful

was this instance of subjection to the voice of God. Though all these men of Israel were idolators, worshipping the calves at Bethel and Dan, yet the remonstrance through Oded reached the conscience and the heart, producing a result which has no parallel in history, religious or secular. The tenderness, too, with which they nourished, clothed, and conveyed them back to their own desolate homes is admirable; and Jericho is a long journey from Samaria. Rezin, the king of Israel, does not appear in this scene; he was probably occupied with the siege of Jerusalem, and his people acted without him.

With the foregoing circumstances in mind, we can now look at the wonders of Isa. vii. As the siege went on, and the king of Judah and his people were dismayed at the junction of the two armies against them, and further disheartened by conspiracy within in favour of the besiegers (chap. viii. 6, 12), the God whom they despised lovingly interposes in their behalf. The prophet Isaiah is sent, and he appears before them with his babe in his arms, assuring them of deliverance, and so closely at hand, that, before the child is able to distinguish between what it likes and what it dislikes, their country shall be cleared of both their enemies. The two kings had agreed, not merely to invade Judah, but to dethrone the house of David by setting up a man of their own; but God in His faithfulness would not allow this. Ahaz listens, but his proud heart resists, disbelieving the condescending and most gracious promise. The God of his fathers again speaks to him, offering to perform any miracle he may select, in proof that He will perform His promise. Far from accepting the offer (as Hezekiah afterwards did) the rebel heart of the king, though in great alarm from the enemy, disdains the proposal, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord." His own gods, to whom he offered

sacrifice and incense, are enough for him ; he will not try another.

The reply to this defiance is such as the God of all grace alone could give. " O house of David, is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also ?" Then in the sublimity of the divine purpose the promise is given, " The virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and thou shalt call His name, God with us." (Matt. i. 23.) It was long ere this wonderful promise was to be fulfilled ; but when the mighty One at length sits down upon the throne of David, all enemies must lick the dust ; all kings must do Him homage, or perish if His wrath be kindled, but a little. However glorious the prediction, none but those enlightened, as Abraham was (John viii. 56), could appreciate its vast importance to the nation and to the world. Though for the nation it was full of prospective joy, yet it was of little comfort for Ahaz ; since, if at all comprehended, it involved his being set aside. But the good Lord intended to comfort him and his people, notwithstanding their apostasy. He had been constrained to scourge them heavily, yet had restored the widows and children in a way that had never been heard of before. And now again He testifies approaching deliverance. The enemy were beleaguering the city and occupying the country ; all hope had fled ; yet the child Shearjashub is with them, a living and present witness that neither Rezin nor Pekah shall prevail against them. The deliverance was not to be immediate, but near at hand. Repentance had not been effected.

In the interval another gracious token of the Lord's promised mercy was presented. Another child is born to the prophet, regarding whom it was foretold that before he should be able to lisp father and mother, the king of Assyria should plunder both Damascus, Rezin's capital

city, and Samaria the city of Pekah. Well might Isaiah exclaim in the confidence of faith (chap. viii. 18), "Behold, I and the children whom God has given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwelleth in mount Zion." The general attention could not fail to be attracted towards the father and the babes.

But the heart of Ahaz was not changed nor affected; neither prophecy nor promise are anything to him. The arm of flesh is his reliance. Whereas God had made Israel the head of the Gentiles, Ahaz now sends the humiliating acknowledgment to the Gentile king of Assyria, that he is his slave, beseeching him for rescue from the invaders, and even robbing the Lord of His treasures to propitiate this stranger. The sacrilege is allowed a temporary success, but the after consequences are fearful. (Chap. viii. 6-8.)

The Assyrian invades Syria. The siege of Jerusalem is abandoned. Rezin is slain. Pekah, with "the Assyrian before and the Philistine behind," is powerless, and is himself slain. The purport of the butter and honey as explained in chap. vii. 21-25, by no means indicates general prosperity, but the reverse. When the country is rendered desolate, without inhabitants, then grass and wild flowers cover the fields and vineyards, so that the few who are left have abundant pasturage and honey; very different is this from the corn and wine of Deut. xxxiii. 28.

It may be noticed that all these events occurred in the first three years of the reign of Ahaz, and in the last three years of Pekah's life. Ahaz reigned thirteen years afterwards, sixteen years in all. Bad as was his commencement, the remainder was even worse. Sad is the detail of his increasing hardness and desperate wickedness.

After the above deliverance, both the Edomites and the Philistines invade and occupy much of Judah. (2 Chr.

xxviii. 17-18.) Again he applies to the king of Assyria, sending him as presents all he could lay his hands on in the Lord's house, the golden vessels, the twelve brazen bulls on which the laver rested, with his own money and that of his princes. He went to Damascus for a personal interview, but obtained no assistance. There he saw an idol altar which pleased him, and having made one like it, he displaces the altar made by Solomon, which God had hallowed, substituting the other, yet retaining the proper altar in case he should wish to enquire by it. But as he had shut up the Lord's house, so that no priest could enter the sacred building to perform the appointed ceremonies, it is scarcely probable that he ever approached God's altar. He found a willing accomplice in Urijah, the high priest.

But the anger of the Lord, though delayed, was soon to be poured out, and the trouble was to be such as had not been since the day that the ten tribes forsook Judah. The people had refused the "waters of Shiloah that go softly." They had sought the aid of the Gentile idolator, which was about to prove itself like an impetuous torrent, overflowing its natural banks, and overwhelming Emmanuel's land; like a hired razor (Isa. vii. 20), that should destroy all comeliness and all remaining prosperity, leaving behind nothing but ruin and desolation. (Ch. viii. 7; x. 5; 2 Kings xviii. 13.) This came upon them fourteen years after the death of Ahaz, and during the reign of his successor, the good king Hezekiah.

Since "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works," what are we to learn from this? Each incident has its own peculiar bearing, and must be carefully and humbly studied. There is no room to doubt that all the wicked doings of

Ahaz were with the entire concurrence of the people. The altars in every city and every corner of Jerusalem prove this. King, priest, nobles and people, all were apostate, demoralized. Yet there was a show of religiousness. Sacrifice and incense were offered, but not to Jehovah. The only exception we read of was the king's son, Hezekiah ; but there may have been others.

But God loved Israel. He left not Himself without witness among them. Isaiah was the living witness that their own God had not forsaken them, though they had forsaken Him. But warning, judgment, and consolation were alike unheeded ; and the scourge at length fell heavily. God did not wish them to perish, but to return to Him. Judgment begins at the house of God. Yet in all their affliction He was afflicted. The angel of His presence comforted them, though they would not accept the comfort.

In glaring colours is this record of man's guilt presented to our view, perpetrated too by the only people of all the families of the earth whom God knew—His greatly favoured people. Does it not in brighter light display the endurance of our God in bearing so long with their guilt, and is not His tenderness manifest in His loving expostulations? Does not His faithfulness to His promise made to their father Abraham shine out? Notwithstanding the sentence "Lo ammi" now written upon them, and the enormity of the crime in the murder of God's holy and beloved Son, Jesus, yet God's promise to Abraham, confirmed by an oath, remains unaltered. On man's part there is the proud, contemptuous, rebel heart, which no threat, no punishment, no tenderness, no promise of forgiveness or favour can subdue ; on the other hand we see the infinite condescension of the Almighty in deigning to speak to His

rebel creature, plead with him, entreat him to return and accept His offered kindness! "Why will ye be stricken any more?" "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

R. N.

LETTERS OF THE LATE MR. J. L. HARRIS.

XXIII.

"*He is of age, ask him; he shall speak for himself.*"

"And so, my dear G——, you have come out of the state of legal infancy into the state of competence to 'speak' and act for yourself. On Saturday last you were not able to make a Will, but on Monday you were perfectly competent to do so.

"It is according to this custom that the apostle illustrates the state of the Jewish believers under the law. They were 'infants' in the legal sense, and were not competent to act for themselves till they attained their majority, and were released from the custody of guardians or trustees. 'Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is an *infant*, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the father.'

"A father is not bound to allow his son to come into the full possession and management of his estates on his attaining his legal majority. Human fathers are sometimes capricious—see Heb. xii. 9. God alone is properly and necessarily arbitrary; but His will is always wise, having reference to His own glory and the good of His chosen. And thus the apostle proceeds: 'Even so we [Jewish believers under the law], when we were *infants*, were in bondage under the elements of the world [*i.e.*, under the law, whether in its national, moral or ritual aspect]; but when the fulness of the time was come [the time appointed of our Heavenly Father], God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law that we [infants up to that time] might receive the adoption of sons [attain our majority, and speak and act for ourselves]. And because ye [Gentiles] are

sons [not infants], God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son, into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son then an heir of God through Christ.'

"My dear G——, by God's marvellous grace you attained your spiritual majority before you attained your legal majority. 'God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son.' What a thought! Read Mark xiv. 32-36—'My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless, *not what I will*, but what Thou wilt.' Does God indeed, allow *us* to address Him by the tender name of Abba? And is there in us the lowly confidence of children, the confidence that His will *must* be perfect and good? Oh, then, that we may, under all circumstances, manifest the Spirit of God's Son, even as we see that Spirit manifested in the hour of His deep distress of soul!

"This gracious word *Abba* is only found once more in the New Testament—Rom. viii. 15. Let us treasure it up as a precious *pearl*, not swinishly to be used as a common thing. Let us rather marvel that such a word should be taken up in our lips. When Philip said 'Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us,' he uttered a most profound truth, and our Lord's reply is wonderful, 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also.' The glory of God is centred in the person and work of the Son. The more we study Him, the more we know the Father. The Son not only reveals the Father, but is the only way to Him.

"And now the question may be asked, Does the attainment of the legal majority in any way affect present human relationships? I can imagine a son or a daughter of the 'fast school' saying, I shall soon be of age and be my own master, and no longer under parental control. But *you* have not so learned Christ. Parental authority is not lessened by the attainment of a certain age; it is, under God, supreme, and only becomes annulled by the contraction of a closer relationship, in God's

ordinance of marriage. Then the words of Ps. xlv. may be applied, ‘Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father’s house.’ Hence it very rarely conduces to human comfort for a married son or daughter to live with their parents. There is a conflicting authority. Is it not a mercy that it has pleased our heavenly Father not only to teach us the blessed and eternal realities, but to teach us how to make human and social relationships the very means of glorifying Him?

“In the Epistle to the Ephesians, in which our rich store of heavenly and spiritual blessings is opened to us, the apostle comes down to meet us in our earthly and passing relationships, and brings forward one of the words uttered on Mount Sinai—‘the first commandment with promise.’ Herein he gives us an instance of using the law lawfully. It at once commends itself to our conscience, and leads us to look at Him who ‘though He were a Son, yet *learned* He obedience by the things which He suffered.’ We are scholars, learning obedience, and if we call upon the Father, it should be as *obedient* children. Obedience is the principle from which all right action proceeds, even as it is written, ‘of obedience unto righteousness.’ What an instance is Saul, of religious disobedience! (1 Sam. xv. 20.) Yet Saul spoke of it as obedience! We may well ponder the words of Samuel: ‘Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.’ May we be kept from ever turning away from a plain duty under a religious plea. How sweet to God the savour of the obedience of Christ which is presented to us in that ever-to-be-studied passage in Phil. ii. 6—‘He became *obedient* unto death, even the death of the cross?’ Jesus is ‘the author of eternal salvation to all them that *obey* Him.’ When God redeemed Israel out of Egypt His command was, ‘Obey My voice,’ and out of the glory He speaks to us—‘This is My beloved Son: hear Him.’

J. L. H.”

“*Hill-Cot, August 15th, 1871.*”

ON DESPISING THE MANNA.

I.

ALL that befell Israel in their pilgrimage towards the promised land is "written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." (1 Cor. x. 11.) We occupy a solemn place in the economy of God's dispensations; we are drawing near the time of the end, when God will take to Himself His power and accomplish that of which the cross of Christ is the pledge. But God has duly chronicled His dealings with man in past ages that we may be warned and profited thereby. If we are in the higher and closing stages, the record of events that transpired in the earlier stages contains deep lessons for us.

When the manna was first given to Israel "they said one to another, What is it? [*Heb.* man-na] for they knew not what it was." Hence the name by which it was ever afterwards known, a name that hides a mystery, but the prophet who knows the mind of God can explain it: "This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat." Everything from God that is beyond the reach of natural discernment is a mystery to man, and to understand it a divine revelation is needed.

When Christ came to this earth as the "Bread of heaven" man's ignorance was manifested. To one He was "the carpenter's son;" to another "the Nazarene;" and to all "a root out of a dry ground," without "form or comeliness." But those to whom God revealed Him could say, like Peter, that he was "The Christ, the Son of the living God;" or as John says in the opening words of his Gospel, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the

Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." All depends on the divine unfolding made to the soul. If we have that, our estimate is not according to the blind guidance of flesh and blood, but according to the direct teaching of the Holy Ghost; and the measure of the revelation is the measure of our knowledge of Christ. The highest attainment in the divine life is to know "Him that is from the beginning." (1 John ii. 13, 14.)

The manna given to Israel God calls "angels' food" (or more properly, "the bread of the mighty"), and "the corn of heaven," which came down through the "windows of heaven" that infinite grace had opened. Such was God's estimate of His gift to His creatures; but soon after Israel left Sinai, with its memories of thunder and lightning and its manifestations of mercy and truth, their language was, "Our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes." And yet this followed close upon the burning of Taberah, where the fire of the Lord had burnt many of the complainers! The mixed multitude that had come up out of Egypt fell a-lusting after Egypt's good things, the infection spread to the children of Israel, and they wept, saying, "Who will give us flesh to eat?" Egypt's food was remembered, and God's provision was despised. To them the manna had lost its sweetness, its freshness had gone, and it could no longer sustain them; their appetite for it had failed—and all this because their hearts had gone back to Egypt, instead of onward to Canaan.

Alas, that it should have been so with Israel! But how is it with ourselves? Let the general condition of the church of God answer the question. Let the tastes of children of God answer. Let the enjoyments and the amusements of those who say they are Christ's answer. Let the literature of fiction, or science, or religion, which

is chiefly read, answer. Would not the testimony of the bulk of the professing church, if thus proved, be, that they must have something more than that which the word of truth supplies? Of comparatively few would Jeremiah's testimony be true, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts."

Some crave the "leeks and the onions and the garlick," and others, whose taste is more refined, "the cucumbers and the melons;" but they are all equally Egypt's food, and the desire for any bears witness to the soul's distaste for that which God has given.

There is a gross worldliness whose baneful effects are evident; there is also a cultured worldliness, that has a fragrance to the carnal mind; but they are equally poisonous to the child of God, and against the latter we need to be especially on our guard.

Not many of us can enter into Samuel Rutherford's ecstasy as he contemplated what his "Beloved" was to him, and revelled in the joy of sitting down with Him at His feast of wine and love. What Christ is personally to the soul, the word of Christ will be also; and he who rejoices in the presence of the Living Word, finding His flesh to be meat indeed and His blood to be drink indeed, will joy in meditating on the written Word, and find it "sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb," and "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold." The connection between the Living Word and the written Word is very constant in Scripture, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between them, or we might say that God does not design them to be separated, for the written always points to the Living Word, who in the beginning was with God and was God.

Some profess to hold fast to the Living Christ who yet hold very feebly to the written Word, but sooner or later the disastrous result of this will be seen. Many in our day who began to play fast and loose with the "Scriptures of truth" have made shipwreck of faith, and have learned to deal in like manner with the person of the Only-begotten of the Father.

There was a typical *absoluteness* in Israel's separation from Egypt, and it should be our aim to make our separation from the world correspond with it. But as Israel's heart led them back, in violation of God's purpose and God's command, so are we prone to turn back to that world out of which we have been taken, notwithstanding our acknowledgment of God's purpose and grace; and if we allow our heart to be in the world *we* are there.

As the manna sufficed for Israel's need, so in the Bread of God all our need is met. Paul tells the Corinthians that by the foolishness of God and the weakness of God, as manifest in the cross, the world's wisdom and the world's might are set at nought. They may despise God's Son and His Word, as not being according to their thoughts, but the Bible is what it is, and Christ was what He was, according to a definite design and purpose of God. His intention is to stain the pride of all creature glory, but man will never tolerate this, if he can help it. Pride is the great hindrance to the sinner's acceptance of Christ, and it is the great hindrance to the believer's progress in the divine life. It is against this that the whole energy of the gospel is set, and all attempts to make God's ways and God's writings acceptable to the carnal mind and the natural heart, whether of saint or sinner, will end in a miserable failure. Such attempts abound in these days. There was a time when infidelity took a definite place

outside of all revelation, but that failed utterly, and the truth of God, like the Rock of Ages, stood unmoved amidst the storm. The tactics of Satan are changed now. Having failed in setting aside the Word of God, he now seeks to build up infidelity upon the truth of God. A deceitful eclecticism prevails. Such portions of God's word as are thought to suit carnal reason are accepted, and all that does not is rejected. With a professed reverence for Scripture, there is a denial of God's testimony against evil. This brings in a Laodicean condition of things—of all conditions the worst. It produces a Christianity without Christ, and those defiled by it He will have to spue out of His mouth. It will be with them as with Israel, according to the prophetic warning of our Lord The empty, swept and garnished house will be occupied by evil spirits in sevenfold power, and the highway will be prepared for the coming of Antichrist.

When Israel despised the manna they asked for flesh, and God gave it, but they who had waxed lean on the manna, did so still more on the flesh, for God sent leanness with it. Not only so, but while the flesh was yet between their teeth, the Lord "smote them with a very great plague," and Kibroth-hattaavah hands down the sorrowful memento. But are there now no "graves of lust" or worldly desire? Alas, there are, and Rom. viii. 6, 7 tells us how to apply to ourselves the solemn warnings they give, for the minding of the flesh is death, and works death wherever it exists.

There are children of God who began by a clear separation from the world, but who have again been entangled by it, outwardly and spiritually, and have never recovered the tone of spiritual power that marked the outset of their career. They still bear the name of Christ, but are they not like the "graves which appear not," of which

our Lord speaks? Have we ever looked into the grave of some intellectual folly of our own, indulged perhaps until it marred much of our spiritual life, and which at last we had the wisdom to cut off and bury out of sight? If so, we know from experience what it is to have, like Israel, graves in our journey, which mark our folly and our shame. Sooner or later all making light of God's Christ and of God's truth will leave its mark in blighted hours, days, or years, which will bear nothing to our account into eternity.

II.

But our lesson is not yet ended, as we shall see if we turn ten chapters further on in the Book of Numbers.

Nearly forty years had now passed over the heads of these wilderness wanderers, during which they had sometimes drawn nearer to their promised resting-place, and sometimes got further from it; but at last they were near their journey's end. Yet we read (chap. xxi. 4) that "the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way," and then follows almost a repetition of what had taken place at Kibroth-hattaavah, for "the people spake against God and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water, and *our soul loatheth this light bread,*" or "*despicable bread.*" What words from a redeemed people! What an estimate of heaven's provision after so many years' experience of its value, and that, too, when they had also just experienced at God's hand a special victory over the Canaanites at Hormah! Egypt was still in their remembrance, and therefore they were discouraged because of the way. God's bread was "no bread," and the living water from the smitten Rock was "no water!"

It is sad when in the earlier stages of Christian life

(as typified in chap. xi.) there is such an experience as this, but it is sadder far when near the end of the journey Christ fails to satisfy the heart, and God's goodness fails to encourage us.

Alas for Israel! Though pilgrims for so many years they had, like Moab, "settled on their lees;" they had not been "emptied from vessel to vessel," and therefore "their *taste* remained in them, and their *scent* was not changed." (Jer. xlviii. 11.) In the purpose of God the end of all discipline is to change the "taste" and the "scent," and thereby to withdraw the heart from what it naturally seeks, and to substitute that far better provision which God's grace supplies. He would have us to be as "weaned" or, as it is in the Hebrew (Psalm cxxxi. 2), "recompensed" children, neither proud nor lofty, but, content to be led and fed by God, calming and quieting our souls like one who has been weaned by his mother. Such is the blessed result of discipline when the heart has been exercised by it; but if unexercised, sorrow will leave us where sorrow found us, only more hardened.

What solemn thoughts are here suggested! How possible it is that, after years of discipline, during which God has been seeking to wean our souls from the world, we are still just as we were, our taste and scent unchanged, and God's purposes of grace frustrated by reason of the unwillingness and unyieldingness of our unexercised hearts! We know that *absolutely* this cannot be so in the child of God, but *relatively* how true it may be. In Israel we have a picture of the flesh as it is and ever will be, and it is alike true of the sinner and of him who, though "not in the flesh" as to his standing in Christ, yet "walks after the flesh," which experimentally is still uncrucified and unsubdued.

The real question is, "What think ye of Christ?" It

is not, What are your professions? but, What are the thoughts of your heart of hearts? Its depths are so great, and the power of self-deception is so terrible, that unless there be real honesty of purpose and genuine singleness of eye, the real state, as God only knows it, and as the Spirit of God can reveal it to us, will be hidden from us.

The living Christ, and His words, which are "spirit and life," stand or fall together, as we have said, and if, while professing to have Christ, we have not the conscious enjoyment of Him in our souls, and instead of being invigorated by Him, have in our soul's experience neither bread nor water, how awful is our condition; how near are we to utter ruin! Though this cannot be the end of any child of God, how near he may be to it, and how sad a loser will he be at the judgment-seat of Christ.

Let us, then, "give diligence to make our calling and election sure," that so "the entrance may be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." If there is "all diligence," we are told that "we shall never stumble." (2 Pet. i. 5-11.)

Israel fell on this occasion, and many were destroyed by serpents; and the word to us is, "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." (1 Cor. x. 9.) Is there no fear of our falling into their sin of tempting Christ? There always is, for in the measure in which the flesh is allowed to have dominion in us, in that measure are we in danger, and many a serpent-bitten believer knows the suffering caused by the serpent's venom, as well as the precious deliverance which the cross of Christ ensures, on the confession of his sin. (1 John i. 9.)

To tempt Christ, then, is to call the provision given us by God in Him "despicable," as the priests in Malachi's

day tempted God by calling His table "contemptible." While man despises God's best gift, he regards his worst as good enough for God, expecting acceptance while he brings the lame and the blind in sacrifice, as if he could deceive God. Could we only see aright, how strange would the revelation of our ways often be, and how overwhelming would be God's condemnation of them!

Israel's rejection of the manna and their murmuring against the Giver brought forth fiery serpents in judgment, and the brazen serpent in mercy. So is it now, and for all our departures from God, as sinners or as saints, our Lord's precious words sound in our ears, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

In the light given to us by these Old Testament Scriptures, let us read and meditate on John vi., and we shall learn why it is that in the present day, as well as in the days of the Son of man, so many disciples "go back" and walk no more with their Lord. The essence of the gospel has in it a "hard saying" that no one can bear who is not prepared to deny himself and take up his cross and follow Jesus, the Nazarene, of whom the Jews tauntingly said in their pride of heart, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" Yet these are the very ones of whom our Lord solemnly said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent." What a withering utterance for all those in this day who would bring down the heavenly standard of God's truth to the standard that fallen man has assumed for himself, thereby measuring God by man's measure, as God says, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself!" The Almighty, the Holy One, like the worm of the dust!

May we, then, "as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby," content to be among the babes and sucklings to whom God reveals His truth, in whom He has ordained strength because of His enemies, and by whom He will still the enemy and the avenger. Man may repudiate God's ways, he may kick against them, he may even fly upon the very bosses of His buckler, but God will accomplish His own ends by His own means, and by no other. It is well for us to recognise clearly what God's means are, and to find our joy in following out His lines; so shall we secure constant triumph in our personal walk as well as in our church life, being content to be led on in the triumph of Christ. We shall thus overcome Satan within us and around us by using those weapons which are not carnal, but "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations [reasonings], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity *every thought* to the obedience of Christ." What mighty words! How profound the statement they contain of God's will, and of His unalterable decree, to which Isaiah long ago gave utterance, "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." We who are of "the day" have to walk according to its rules, and as now in the kingdom we must act on those principles only which will be carried out when the kingdom is manifested.

As the exaltation of Christ is the central purpose of God in all the future, may this be our aim now, and may we be content to be weak in Him that through Him we may be strong in the all-sufficiency of God. And amid the derelictions, the departures, and the apostasies of the day, may we hear those memorable words spoken by our

Lord, in John vi., in connection with the manna, “*Will ye also go away?*” and may we reply with Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

It is also not to be forgotten that the deep truth contained in this chapter apparently gave rise in Judas to some inward thought or outward expression (the beginning, it may be, of his downward course) at variance with Peter’s words, which led the Lord to add, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” Truly the mystery connected with the manna tests all men, and it tests all within *us*. Oh that we may be enabled to stand the test, and that all within us may bless God’s holy name, and that, satisfied with good things, our youth may be renewed like the eagle’s! Then we shall not be discouraged because of the way; the manna will be daily received with thanksgiving, and we shall joyfully wait for the fulfilment of our hope in the coming of our Lord to receive us to Himself and to lead us into the heavenly mansions. H. G.

“THE WITNESS OF JOHN.”

JOHN I. 19.

AMONGST the beautiful traits of the Baptist’s character as set forth in Scripture, perhaps the two most prominent are humility and faithfulness. When highest in popular esteem he was nothing in his own eyes, and his testimony to the greatness of the One who was to follow him was clear and decisive. When his ministry was making such a stir that a deputation from the Sanhedrim waited upon him to enquire who he was, he was most careful to tell them who he was *not*, in order that they might not for a moment ascribe to him the honour that belonged only to

Another; and, when still pressed to give an account of himself, he answered, with distinct reference to prophecy, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord." Only a voice, nothing more, the voice by which the Word is introduced to men. "A word," says one, "is something even without a voice, for a word in the heart is as truly a word as after it is outspoken; while a voice is nothing, a mere unmeaning sound, an empty cry, unless it be also the vehicle of a word. But when they are thus united, the voice in a manner goes before the word, for the sound strikes the ear before the sense is conveyed to the mind: yet while it *goes* before, in this act of communication, it *is not* really before it, but the contrary." So John would have been nothing without Jesus, though Jesus would have been just what He was without John, even though to men the first knowledge of Him came through John.

Being further challenged as to his reason for baptizing, he replies by still further contrasting himself with the One who had already taken His stand amongst them; "I baptize with water: but there standeth One among you whom *ye* know not, even He that cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose." High thoughts of Christ and low thoughts of self ever go together, and the lowliest spirits are the most reverent. Such was John's estimate of the dignity and glory of Christ that he declared himself unworthy to perform for Him the menial service that the lowest slave was called to render for his master. Behold here the dignity of a true servant of Christ! With him Christ is everything and himself nothing. His business is to exalt the Lord, and as he grows in the knowledge of Him self-importance vanishes as the mist before the sun, and all high thoughts are indeed brought low.

It would seem that the "priests and Levites" sent by the Pharisees did not care much to enquire about this One who was greater than John, for greatness and glory that appealed not to the eye of sense was beneath their notice, because above their appreciation. But their indifference could not prevent the onward course of the Lord, for if the leaders of the nation were blind, there were babes in it whose eyes were opened, and who were ready to receive and adore the Christ of God when revealed. And the man who deemed himself not worthy to unloose the thong of His shoe was called to take his place as "more than a prophet," and to introduce the Lord's Anointed to the people. In so doing he gave Him a title that linked together the past and the future—the past of type and prophecy, and the future of realization and fulfilment. The day after the "priests and Levites" had questioned John he saw the One of whom he had spoken coming to him. The Lord had come fresh from the forty days' conflict in the wilderness, and the subsequent ministry of angels, and in the calm of holy triumph, and yet with anticipation of still more terrible endurance before the great foe should be finally defeated, He approached him who by God's appointment was to usher Him into that sheepfold from which, calling His own sheep by name, He would lead them out. Yet it is not as the Shepherd, but as the *Lamb*, that He is first announced, for only by being the Lamb for sacrifice could He become the Shepherd of a ransomed flock. He is "the Lamb of God"—the Lamb which God has provided, and given, and, we can now add, accepted. He stands forth as the antitype of the paschal lamb, and of all the lambs offered upon Israel's altars. But we may also link this precious utterance with that great chapter of the cross and triumph of the Lord, Isa. liii. As John had found his own mission indicated in Isa. xl,

so he was led by the Spirit of God to behold in the subsequent prophecies of the evangelical prophet a portrait of the great Servant of Jehovah who would reach victory by apparent defeat, unfailing prosperity by the pathway of suffering, and eternal exaltation as the fruit of humiliation. The prophet had *compared* the servant of the Lord to a lamb led to the slaughter; the forerunner goes beyond this, and is the first to give Him the distinct title of "the Lamb" in which His people will for ever rejoice.

The reference to that chapter is still more apparent by the description of "the Lamb of God" as "the One that taketh away the sin of the world." He came into the world to deal with sin, to bear it "in His own body on the tree," and so to put it away. To Him was this great work committed, and to Him belongs the peculiar glory of grappling with and for ever settling the great question for all who make Him their hope and trust. Thus the first word that introduced the Lord to Israel at the *beginning* of His public ministry on earth pointed forward to the last act of that ministry, and showed that as far as earth was concerned the cross was His goal. And those who teach that the Lord removes sin simply by attracting men from it, and enables them to walk in the path of obedience merely by setting them an example, and subdues the opposition of man to what is good by giving a demonstration of God's love in a death from which the penal and expiatory elements are entirely absent, only prove themselves to be as ignorant of man's need as they are of God's provision to meet it.

This mighty work of bearing and taking away sin was above the ability of any creature, and we should carefully note that, having announced the Lord as the Lamb of God, John at once proceeds to speak of His pre-existing glory as the Son of God, of which he had already borne witness

in speaking of Him as the Coming One. He was *after* John as to manifestation, but He must take precedence of him, as the king takes precedence of the minister who simply acts in his name; and the reason given is “for He was before me.” It is clear that this statement can only refer to the pre-existence of Him who in due time was manifested, for as to *birth* as well as manifestation John was before Jesus. But while the existence of John began after the promise to Zacharias of his birth, the angel Gabriel announced to Mary the birth of One who could say, “Before Abraham was, I AM.”

But though John had a deep sense of the dignity of Him whose way he was to prepare, he knew Him not personally, and was dependent upon the sign previously promised. It is very clear that when the Lord came to be baptized, John knew at once, as by intuition, that He was the Holy One of God. This was revealed to Him by the Spirit of God. But it was after the baptism that John saw Him anointed as the Christ, and heard Him proclaimed to be the Son of God by the voice from heaven. And what he saw and heard, that he testified: “I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

The immediate effect of these statements is not recorded. Doubtless there were some who meditated on what they had heard, though a second testimony was needed to cause them to follow Christ. This was given on the day following, when “John was standing and two of his disciples, and he looked upon Jesus as He walked;” and his loving and adoring contemplation and the deep emotion of his heart found expression in the brief utterance, “Behold the Lamb of God!” Brief though it was, it was mighty and effective: “The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus.” We are not told with what feelings John saw them turn from him to Another, but could they have

been other than feelings of satisfaction? He beheld the true result of his ministry; he had learned the lesson, "He must increase, but I must decrease," and as "the friend of the bridegroom" he rejoiced.

It is good to note the express statement of Scripture as to the *abiding* character of the testimony of John. When the beloved disciple wrote this gospel he said: "John beareth witness of Him, and *hath cried*, saying, He that cometh after me is become before me: for He was before me" (v. 15). The servant might pass away, the voice that had uttered such blessed truths might soon be silenced, and one of the noblest of the true nobility (of whom the world was not worthy) might be sacrificed by one of the vilest of earth's potentates at the bidding of a dancing girl. God could and did permit this, even as He has permitted many other strange things, for which we shall see the reason in a coming day: but He could not permit John's testimony to fail. It was enshrined in the heart of the one who was the first to follow Christ; in his writings it found a permanent record; it has become part of the most sacred heritage of the Church of God; and its fruit will be found in all who are taught to look unto Christ as "the Lamb of God," to prove His power to take away their sins, and to find the deepest longings of their hearts satisfied in the most glorious object that God Himself can present to their admiring gaze. Thus will that humble and faithful servant of God, and all who have followed in any measure in his steps, see in "the day of Christ" the full and abiding fruit of all their service. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

W. H. B.

LOVE'S MEASUREMENTS.

“That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the BREADTH, and LENGTH, and DEPTH, and HEIGHT, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.”—EPH. iii. 18, 19.

To avoid strife, Abraham gave to his nephew Lot the choice of the land of Canaan, and after Lot had gone away God said to Abraham, “Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou standest, *northward*, and *southward*, and *eastward*, and *westward*, for all the land that thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed after thee.” (Gen. xiii.)

In writing to the Ephesians the apostle Paul uses in his prayer in chap. iii. a fourfold expression that may remind us of God’s words to Abraham; but instead of referring to measurements of earthly things the apostle brings before us the infinite dimensions of that love of Christ which passes knowledge. But as there was a definiteness in God’s language to Abraham regarding the land, so is there likewise a definite meaning in the apostle’s use of the terms, “*breadth, length, depth, and height,*” corresponding with thoughts contained in the Epistle. That is, these four words are not merely employed to give a *general* conception of the greatness of Christ’s love, but each has a distinctive truth connected with it.

(1.) BREADTH.—The order in which these expressions are used is not what we might have supposed, and indeed in our ordinary quotations of the passage the due order is not always preserved. Why, then, should “breadth” come before length or height? May it not be that the apostle begins thus in accordance with our Lord’s marvel-

lous revelation to Nicodemus—"God so loved *the world*." We gaze at love's dimensions from our own point of view, as Abraham looked from the spot on which he stood when God spoke to him; and the aspect of love which first comes home to our souls is its *breadth*. At our conversion it dawned upon us that *we* were embraced in God's love, and it ever is and will be a wonder which we cannot explain.

But next we have to learn the width of the embrace of God's love in regard to others, and even the apostles were slow in apprehending this. The thrice-repeated vision of the sheet let down from heaven scarcely sufficed to instil it into Peter's heart, and he let it slip when he withdrew from the Gentile believers at Antioch, and would no longer eat with them. The apostle John points out the great importance of knowing this first feature of love, when he says, "He that loveth not *his brother* whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

In the epistle to the Ephesians this feature is clearly brought out. The apostle dwells on the great distance between the Jews who were "nigh," and the "far-off" Gentiles, and he rejoices in showing that the love of God has in Christ included *all*, and brought them "together," and made them "one." Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, and as he thinks of the Sunderings between man and man by nationality or circumstances, he delights in God's remedy, and says concerning all, whether Greek, Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, "Christ is all and in all."

May we not say, therefore, that the "breadth" of divine love must first be apprehended by us if our souls are to be in a healthy state, and if we are to take in the other dimensions of love? The apostle commends the Ephesians for their "love to *all saints*," and in the prayer we are

considering he says, "that ye may be able to comprehend *with all saints*" what this love is. The comprehensiveness of God's love to the world, as well as of the Father's love to all His children, needs more and more to be entered into by us. The thoughts of the natural heart, against which we have to watch, are, "Stand by thyself, come not near to *me*, for *I* am holier than thou"; "This is the man that brought Greeks into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place."

We have dwelt somewhat at length upon this first term, "breadth," and need do little more than point out the passages in Ephesians in which Paul refers to the other dimensions of love.

(2) LENGTH.—The measure of this is "from everlasting to everlasting," but we are slower in looking backward than in looking forward. "Everlasting life" we rejoice in early, but God's electing love should also become a joy to the soul. This "length" is seen in Ephesians in such passages as, "He hath chosen us in Christ *before the foundation of the world*;" "Having *predestinated* us to sonship;" "Being *predestinated* according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will;" "For His great love wherewith He loved us even *when we were dead in sins*"—these refer to the *past*. The future is seen in other passages—"That in *the ages to come* He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus;" "In whom ye also are builded together *for an habitation of God* through the Spirit," that is, as God's dwelling place for eternity; "Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, *throughout all ages, world without end*," or "unto all the generations of the age of the ages. Amen."

(3) DEPTH and (4) HEIGHT.—These may be coupled

together. "Redemption *through His blood*," in chap. i. 7, brings before us *depth*, the depth of love and the depth of woe; and *height* is seen in the words, "which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand, *far above* all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named." With this corresponds our being raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him, according to the riches of God's grace, as mentioned in chap. ii.

" Lord Jesus, are we one with Thee ?
 O height, O depth of love !
 Once slain for us upon the tree,
 We're one with Thee above."

But it is in chap. iv. when contemplating the fulness that dwells in Christ as the Head of the body, that the apostle especially brings before us the depth and the height of Christ's love (*vs.* 8-10). By the repetition of the words "ascended" and "descended" he would teach us to look again and again downward and upward, and to trace and retrace the wondrous path of our Lord—the theme of Phil. ii. As we think how He "descended" to the cross, and also, according to the mysterious language of Eph. iv. 9, "into the lower parts of the earth," and then "ascended up far above all heavens," we learn in some measure to follow Him in spirit, to humble ourselves, and to await God's mighty exaltation in due time. "He descended *first*," is the great lesson for us. Here also as in Acts i. and Heb. xiii. the Spirit of God reminds us that on the throne the heart of Christ is unchanged towards us. "He that descended is THE SAME that ascended."

As our souls dwell upon this love in relation to our-

selves, to the church, and to all the purposes of God in Christ, we may well sing,

“ It passeth knowledge, that dear love of Thine,
My Jesus, Saviour ; yet this soul of mine
Would of Thy love in all its breadth and length,
Its depth and height, its everlasting strength,
Know more and more.”

And as we remember that “ He ascended . . . that He might *fill* all things,” we may add—

“ Oh fill me, Jesus, Saviour, with Thy love !
Lead, lead me to the living fount above ;
Thither may I, in simple faith, draw nigh,
And never to another fountain fly,
But unto Thee.”

LETTERS OF THE LATE MR. J. L. HARRIS.

XXIV.

On justifying God.

“ The subject of our brief talk yesterday evening is one of deep *moral* interest. First let me say that I believe the rendering in Rom. iii. 4 to be correct : ‘ Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar ; as it is written, That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when *Thou art judged.*’ God *is* judged by his creature man ; and this began as early as the fall, by Adam’s laying the fault on the woman ostensibly, but really on God Himself. ‘ The woman whom *Thou gavest* to be with me.’ And the Lord Jesus, in the parable of the slothful servant, shows that his wrong *judgment* of his master was the cause of his conduct. We *naturally*—naturally, because we are sinners—judge hardly of God.

“ In that magnificent Psalm, the fiftieth, in which God is set forth as calling heaven and earth to witness the righteousness of His judgment, we find Him saying, ‘ Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself ;’ that is, man presumes to judge God. It is well to notice that the ground

of God's judgment of man is the excuses which men make for themselves, 'Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife;' as the Lord in His ministry said, 'Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant;' so that I believe there is essential truth in the French proverb, '*Qui s'excuse s'accuse.*'

"We may with propriety excuse ourselves between one and another, or offer explanations; but our only safe place before God is *confession*. Saul's *explanation* of his conduct was esteemed *rebellion* by God. (1 Sam. xv.) We have need to watch against the spirit of Saul; the spirit of self-complacency is the spirit of disobedience. Whenever we are in a right spirit before God we always justify Him and condemn ourselves (see for example, Nehemiah ix. 23; Dan. ix. 7); and we can only justify ourselves by judging God.

"Let us turn to Job. 'Elihu's wrath was kindled against Job because he justified himself rather than God.' When God Himself comes on the scene, He says, 'Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without wisdom?' (Chap. xxxviii. 2.) 'Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? He that *reproveth* God let him answer it. 'Wilt thou disannul My judgment? Wilt thou *condemn* Me that thou mayest be righteous?' (Chap. xl. 2-8). And where Job was brought in his controversy with God, there we must be brought (see chap. xlii. 1-6).

"It is the first step in the way of blessing to have our 'mouth stopped' *now* (Rom. iii. 19), for assuredly when God Himself is judge, no excuse will be uttered, but *speechlessness* will be the portion of the gainsayers. (Matt. xxii. 12.) I fear that we hold as an abstract dogma rather than a great practical truth that 'the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' Is not this mind daily manifested in the fact that we fret against God, and are impatient of His control, and constantly judge God in His dealings with us? I think we hardly need to look abroad to see how fast man's will is ripening *again* for revolt against the Lord and His Christ. (Psalm ii. 3, 4.)

“We have ever to judge *self*. Except the blessed Lord Himself, no one ever trod this earth of whom it could be said, from the beginning to the end of his course, ‘Lo I come to do Thy will, O God.’ There is a noble passage in Moses’ song (Deut. xxxii.), ‘He is the Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.’ In this passage ‘judgment’ is not the exercise of judicial power, but, as in Matt. xxiii. 23, it is used in a moral sense; and this is common—as ‘to do justly,’ in Micah vi. 8, just as in Titus ii. 12, ‘righteously’ means as the old Catechism well says, ‘to be true and just in all my dealings.’”

“Israel judged God to be dealing *unfairly* with them, saying, ‘The way of the Lord is not *equal*.’ His answer is ‘Are not My ways equal and your ways unequal?’ Let us therefore lay it down as an axiom, that *God must be right*. He is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. His will is the supreme good. To question this *is to judge God*. Be it always our part to justify Him.

J. L. H.”

“*June 18th.*—Anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. Ours is a battle not of a day or year, but every day.”

NOTES AND REPLIES.

- (1) *Are different books referred to in the expressions:* “The book of life;” “The Lamb’s book of life;” “The book of the living;” “The book which Thou hast writen;” “Every one that shall be found written in the book?”
- (2) *How are we to understand the blotting out of the name from the book of life?*

(1) The sub-lying thought in God’s use of the word “book” appears to be, definiteness, certainty, permanence; that which is too clear to be mistaken, too positive to be denied, and too lasting to be obliterated. Hence it is applied chiefly to the counsels and works of His mercy to sinners, but also, as in Rev. xx. 12, to His judgment concerning the thoughts, words, and deeds of all mankind. Some, however, think that the “books” referred to in Rev. xx. are the Scriptures, and of

course it is true that the Scriptures will judge mankind ; see John v. 45-47 ; but it is doubtful whether the word of God would be spoken of in the plural as " books."

The general idea given above applies to all the five passages referred to (Phil. iv. 3 ; Rev. xxi. 27 ; Ps. lxxix. 28 ; Ex. xxxii. 32 ; Dan. xii. 1) ; but each passage is modified in meaning by its context, and hence differs slightly in form. The last three, being Old Testament expressions, are naturally somewhat less exact. The being "*written*" amongst the *living* in Jerusalem" (Isa. iv. 3 margin, "written to life," compare Rev. xxi. 27) simply refers to *this* life, to being enrolled in the divine census book of the nation, and it therefore corresponds typically to the "book of [eternal] life," in the New Testament.

"The book of life" (Phil. iv.) and "The Lamb's book of life" (Rev. xxi.) are evidently the same, but the word "*Lamb*," which is so frequent, thank God, in Revelation, strongly reminds us that it is by *grace* and by His redeeming *blood* that any enter the heavenly city and dwell in it for ever ; not by any merit of theirs, nor by any attainment in believing service, nor by any dispensational difference between themselves and fellow-redeemed ones.

(2) As to the *blotting out*, in Rev. iii. 5 : our Lord and Master always intended that the roll-book of His churches below should, through the watchfulness and diligence of His saints, and especially of His bishops, correspond accurately with His own divinely-written "book of life" above. (See John xx. 22, 23 ; Matt. xv. 19 ; xviii. 18.) At first, that is, at and immediately after Pentecost, this was the case ; none were added to the church except the "saved" (Acts ii. 47). But after a time Simon Magus and such like crept in "unawares." (Alas, for us when any do so, for the parable tells us that it was "while men slept" that the enemy sowed the tares!) It is, however, our Lord's way to designate these mere professors by the daring language they use about themselves. Thus, they are called "guests" at the marriage feast (Matt. xxii.), and "virgins" (Matt. xxv.); and our Lord calls Judas "Friend." So also, in Rev. iii. 5, He speaks of some as having their names in the "book of life;" that is, they thought themselves safely "enrolled" for future blessedness, but He has to show them that they never were His. Similarly, in Rev. xxii. 19, the Lord speaks of taking away "*his part*" from the "tree of life" and out of the "holy city," *i.e.*, the part which the guilty professor supposed he had and *said* he had. Compare Isa. ii. 8—"forsake *their own* mercy." Yes, says Bunyan, although they perished at last, the "mercy" was in a manner their own, and for two reasons, (1) because by the Gospel it was within their reach ; (2) because they so regarded and spoke of it.

THE THREEFOLD ONENESS OF THE CHURCH,

ACCORDING TO JOHN XVII.

IN divine things, even more than in human, old lessons need again and again to be gone over, and pure minds have to be stirred up by way of remembrance, as the apostle Peter tells us; we would therefore recall attention to our Lord's words as to the *oneness* of those whom He loves. An all-important truth such as this, which at one time exercised a commanding influence in the Church of God, very easily loses its power, and that not by being rejected, but by being supplanted through over-occupation with minor matters of detail, with side-issues, so to speak.

The prayer of our blessed Lord in John xvii. has one great theme—the *oneness of His people* with the Father, with the Son, and with each other, according to a purpose that has existed from eternity. The prayers of Christ and those inbreathed in the saints by the Spirit are always in the line of the predetermined counsel of God, which is sure of its accomplishment ultimately, though now it is often apparently frustrated by the craft of Satan and by the unwatchfulness of saints.

Christ will not fail nor be discouraged till He fully works out the divine purpose, and seals, according to the estimate of God, all that in His good pleasure He has foreordained. In the assurance of this we can say with Paul, "There is one body and one Spirit," "one hope," "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all"—these together constituting that unity of the Spirit which we are to give diligence to keep. It is with this oneness that our Lord's thoughts were occupied, as given to us in His prayer

to the Father on behalf of His church, in John xvii, and the intercessory power of that prayer continues all through this dispensation and will have its perfect consummation in the glory.

Taking His stand on the resurrection side of the cross, our Lord claims all that He asks for, on the ground that He had glorified the Father on the earth and finished all the work that was given Him to do. After the introductory words (*vv.* 1-5), the prominent thoughts in this precious prayer are:—

1.—The *Name* of the Father, revealed and known, and in which the church is kept (*vv.* 6-13).

2.—The *Truth* as given in the Word, and as that by which the church is sanctified through the Holy Ghost (*vv.* 14-21).

3.—The *Glory*, into which the church will be perfected in the age to come (*vv.* 22-24).

Then follow the concluding words in the last two verses.

The opening verses clearly show us the place our Lord took, as having brought His work on earth to a close, so far as its foundation in the cross was concerned, and as having, on that account, received authority over all flesh. He again alludes to this in His parting words to His disciples when standing before them as the risen Son of man, the second Man, the Lord from heaven. Because all authority in heaven and on earth was given to Him, He commissioned them to bear His gift of eternal life to all who should believe on Him, to all who were given to Him by the Father.

The glory *given* to Christ is that which was bestowed on Him as the risen Man; but as the sent One, who had fulfilled the Father's will, He asks that He may again receive the glory of which He had emptied Himself when He took upon Him the form of a servant.

We will now take up the three divisions of the prayer which we have indicated. In each of these it is important to notice the occurrence of the expression, "*that they may be one*" (see verses 11, 21 and 22), as if on purpose to bring into prominence the fact that there is a threefold unity into which we are brought in Christ—a unity realized now by faith, and spiritually enjoyed according to the measure of the power of the Spirit resting on us, but which will only be manifested absolutely hereafter in the glory that is to be revealed.

It is not our intention to dwell on the precious fulness of this prayer, but simply to show what the three points of union are, and in what they differ; so that without confusion of mind we may realize our oneness as children of God, discerning what is absolute and what is relative, what is to be found in the present, and what lies in the future. We often expect too little from God and often demand too much from one another, and with high and holy and lofty aims we not unfrequently mar that very unity which we seek to maintain.

While taking up these three points in the order in which our Lord places them, may we sit at His feet and reverently seek to enter into the petitions of His prayer, and ask to have them fulfilled in ourselves and in all saints.

I.—The first bond that unites us together is the *Name* "Holy Father, keep in [not through] Thy Name those whom Thou hast given Me, *that they may be one as We are.*" This was the request, and then the Lord adds, "While I was with them in the world I kept them in Thy name." It was He who taught the disciples to say, "Our Father, who art in heaven," making the bond of their mutual relationship to consist in that all-embracing word "*our.*" Would that we realized it more, not only when on our bended knees we utter those hallowed words, "*Our*

Father," but when we think of fellow-saints or when we meet them, ever remembering that the tie which binds us together is no human agreement, but a divine creation—not a man-made fellowship, but a God-made relationship. When this is realized by faith and practically maintained, our fellowship as saints rests on a divine basis—a basis that embraces the oldest or most advanced in the heavenly life and also the youngest or the feeblest. There are obedient children, and there are disobedient ones; those over whom Paul would rejoice, as over the Philippians and Thessalonians, and also those over whom he would weep, as over the Galatians and Corinthians. There are joys and tears in the church of God, as there are also in family circles on earth; and God who made the family tie, whether the heavenly or the earthly, expects at our hands that it shall not be broken, though discipline may have to be exercised; but it must be according to His appointment and His will, and not according to ours.

The position occupied by the disciples, as here described by our Lord, deserves notice. They were given to Him "out of the world." This marks their relation to the world, as separated from it; compare Num. xxiii. 9; Deut. xxxiii. 28; 2 Cor. vi. 14-18. Further, He adds, "They have kept Thy word." They had recognized God as the Source of all that Christ did and of all that He was to them. They had received Christ's words and had known that He came from God, and they believed that God had sent Him. This describes the ground they occupied, and ignorant and erring as they were, Christ put His seal upon them, and said, "They are Thine," and "Thou gavest them Me." They were given, and Christ accepted them as the Father's gift, and therefore we read: "Having loved *His own* He loved them unto the end." They belonged to Him, and on precisely the same ground and

no other—nothing higher and nothing lower—we belong to one another. We are the gift of God to one another, in the brotherhood of a common birthright, as children of God, and as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Hence the call to each of us is to love “unto the end” those who have been given unto us of God. From this flows the lesson of John xiii., and in the power of this relationship it has to be carried out.

In this connection we would recall the apostle John’s words to the little ones in his first Epistle (ch. ii.)—“I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father;” and again, “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His Name’s sake.” Eternal life consists in the knowledge of the Father, the only true God, and of Jesus Christ as sent of God to bear our sins in His own body on the tree. These “little children” had received the Spirit of sonship, and were able to cry, Abba, Father; they had believed in Christ, and were in Him, and there was no condemnation to them (Rom. viii. 1), because they were justified by faith (ch. v. 1).

Here, then, is the security, absolute and perfect, on which each child of God is called to rest, and on the ground of which he has to be recognized. It is a security that is outside himself, depending upon his being the Father’s gift to Christ and on His preserving grace. This is the true source of that joy which should be fulfilled in us, for which our Lord tells us that He uttered His prayer to the Father, as it were, in our hearing. May the Holy Ghost cause us to hear it deep down in our souls, and then our oneness in Christ with every child of God will become a mightier reality, a bond that this world and sin and Satan will not break. Herein is the *absolute* basis of all church-fellowship; and all that takes narrower ground and excludes saints is sectarian, and all that takes broader ground and

includes the world is profane, for it takes into the circle that world out of which the church has been called, and from which it has been separated. In either case God's unity is marred, and that for which Christ prayed is violated.

II.—We now come to the second point in the oneness of the saints of God, in *vv.* 14–21 ; and the key-note here is found in *v.* 17, “Sanctify them *in* Thy truth : Thy word is truth ;” and in connection with this sanctification, or setting apart for God, our Lord says further, “and for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in the truth,” and He again adds, “*that they all may be one* : as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us.” This sanctification in the truth is dependent on the Spirit of God, who is “the Spirit of the truth,” and who is the guide “into all truth.” (John xv. 26 ; xvi. 13.) Here we at once perceive a basis of oneness quite different from that which we have just been considering, the oneness in the Name. Here the element of *growth* comes in, and the operation of the indwelling Holy Spirit is paramount. The ground-work in connection with the Name is relationship : here progress and development become the fundamental points. But there are endless diversities of attainment in the truth, depending on the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and the measure in which He is ungrieved and unhindered in His operation within us and by us. Hence the Lord prays, “Keep them from the evil,” or “the wicked one.”

It is here that the real difficulties of our fellowship as Christians come in, because the creature may yield to or resist the work of the Spirit. It is for this reason that in the wisdom of God our fellowship is based on the immutability of what He is to us, and not on the mutability of what we are to Him. Owing to the varied measures in the

development of the divine life in different believers, we have those essential calls to long-suffering, to patience, to gentleness and to meekness, in the exercise of which we become more and more conformed to the image of Him who said: "Take My yoke and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." It was thus that His faithful servant Paul, in dealing with the worldly and carnal Corinthians, was enabled to say, "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

Till we see everything as it is in the light of the coming day we shall never know the eternal results which flow from that slow, painful, and progressive condition in which we find ourselves placed by the infinite wisdom of God. There are heavenly characteristics which can only be wrought out in us by means of the varied tribulations, sorrows and difficulties that exist in the church, whereby the truth of God is brought to bear on us, and we learn what it is to mortify the "old man," and to nourish and develop the "new man."

Our fellowship, as children of light, depends on the fellowship we have with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. But even walking in the light has its measures and degrees, depending on our respective nearness to the Sun—the centre of light. The nearer rays of light are to the sun, the nearer they will be to one another.

Every child of God is a child of the light, and he knows the Spirit of truth because he is himself "of the truth," which is the sanctifying, separating power of his life. But this power is counteracted by the power of evil and the subtilty of Satan working in unison with the "law of sin which is in our members" (Rom. vii. 23), and the child of God is often brought under its bondage, though the triumph of the grace of God is certain, and will ere long be complete, and therefore at all times we can shout, "Thanks be to God."

It is from this source that the discord and want of harmony among saints arise, which call for the exercise of that forbearance towards one another which God Himself exercises towards us. The wisdom of God is very manifest in His dealings with us. For as our soul's salvation rests exclusively on the finished work of Christ, and not on our attainments, so our fellowship in the church rests on our common relationship, in which weak and strong, instructed and uninstructed, have a common standing, irrespective of spiritual attainments. But within that common meeting-ground there will be found all measures of fellowship—the fellowship deepening as we are drawn nearer to the common centre of all truth—Christ Himself.

As broad as is the basis of our salvation, so broad must be the basis of our fellowship, and there can be no narrowing of this unless under a special command which requires separation, in the way of discipline, from evil livers or deniers of fundamental truth, as we see in such scriptures as 1 Cor. v., and 3 John.

The ground of our fellowship is called in Eph. iv. *the unity of the Spirit*, which rests on the unity of the body of Christ. That towards which we are progressing, and which will be attained in its fulness hereafter, is called in the same chapter "the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God;" and this oneness of *faith* and of *knowledge* will be realized when all attain "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." These two unities must not be confounded. The one is present; the other, future.

III.—We now come to our last point, bearing on the oneness of the saints (*vv.* 22–24). The oneness here is in the glory, and is necessarily future. We read: "The glory which Thou hast given unto Me I have given unto them;" and again the formula is repeated, "*that they may be one*

even as We are one." Glory attained will be the ultimate realization of all the mighty purposes of God, and to this the next clause points, "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one"; not simply "in one" but "into one." The same preposition is used in Eph. iv. 13, "*into* the unity of the faith," "*into* a perfect man," "*into* the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This beautifully shows what the "perfected into one" contemplates, even the fulfilment of God's purpose, when He "predestinated" His people "to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren." (Rom. viii. 29.) It is to this that the earnest expectation of creation is directed, awaiting the time of "the liberty of the glory of the children of God," when we who have now "the first-fruits of the Spirit" shall receive "the redemption of our body." For this the whole creation groans, and the world travails, and when this is realized, the world will *know* that God sent Christ, and that He loved the church even as He loved Christ. Then will our Lord's last petition be accomplished. "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am: that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

In conclusion, we will briefly connect the three points of union given us in this chapter with the three gathering feasts of Israel—the Passover, the Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

The *Passover* points to our union in redemption through the sacrifice of the cross, whereby we become children of God; it corresponds with that part of our Lord's prayer between *vv.* 11–16. The *Pentecost* points to our union by the blessed Spirit of Truth, of which the outpouring on Pentecost was the witness, as well as the earnest of yet

fuller blessing. To this our Lord's words between *vv.* 17-21 point. Lastly, the feast of *Tabernacles* tells us of the Marriage of the Lamb, the feast of eternal joy, when, in the glory of the Father's house, His Tabernacle will be a bridal canopy of His redeemed.

This gathering of Israel three times in the year thus presents to us faith's realizations of those three unities to which our attention has been directed. As all Israel were required to appear before God on these occasions, so does He seek of us that our faith and life should bear witness to the cardinal points indicated by these feasts, and that, embracing in our affections the whole church of God, we should not appear before Him with an empty hand. (Ex. xxiii. 15 ; xxxiv. 20 ; Deut. xvi. 16.)

There is one distinction, however, between these three feasts which it is well to bear in mind. At the Passover, the Pentecost, and the feast of Tabernacles, all Israel were commanded to appear ; but of the Passover *alone* is it said that he who forbore to come and partake of it, forfeited his place in Israel, and was to be "cut off from among his people, because he brought not the offering of the Lord at His appointed season ; that man shall bear his sin." (Num. ix. 13.)

To this we attach deep importance, for it shows that while an Israelite might fail as to the Pentecost and fail as to the feast of Tabernacles, his place in the nation rested on the Passover, and not on either of the other feasts. In this we see a striking confirmation of what has been already advanced, that the basis of our fellowship with saints and of our relation to the family of heaven hangs on our obedient laying hold on the cross and its atonement alone, and not on our realizing either the power of the truth in the present or the glory of the kingdom in the future.

In this connection Deut. xvi. may be profitably studied, observing the thrice-repeated phrase—“The *place* which the LORD shall choose to put His *Name* there.” We may recur to this at some future date.

H. G.

“ALL SAINTS.”

EPHESIANS i. 15 ; iii. 8, 18 ; vi. 18.

WE are familiar with the high truths of the Epistle to the Ephesians, but the repeated occurrence of the expression “*all saints*” reminds us that enlargement of heart is needed rightly to apprehend these high truths. Let us trace the fourfold use of this expression by the apostle in the epistle.

1. “After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and *love to ALL the SAINTS.*” (Eph. i. 15.) An almost similar form of words is found in the Epistle to the Colossians. This linking together of faith in the Lord and love to all who are His, is also seen in the Gospels; and it is always well to connect the Epistles with the Gospels. “Believe also in Me” is our Lord’s word in John xiv. “This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you” follows, in John xv. Among the Thessalonians the mutual relationship of faith and love is very evident. “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth.” Indeed, may we not say, that if our love to all saints is not true, there must be something defective in our faith? Our knowledge may be abundant, but that is a very different thing from faith. Faith in the Lord Jesus, as it brings us nearer to Him, necessarily makes the tie with His members a more close one. But we must be on our guard against applying

the term "all saints" to those only who see with us in ecclesiastical matters. In our thoughts it is very possible to limit the "saints" in any place to a small number with whom we would have more fellowship in divine things. But the expression "all saints," as mentioned in Ephesians, surely refers to all who are united by a living faith to the Lord Jesus, the Head of His body, the church. They may not know their calling as "saints," but our obligation to own them as such is the same, and frequent remembrance of the Lord's death only increases this obligation.

" Oft we forget that we are one
 With *every saint* that loves His name ;
 United to Him on the throne,
 Our life, our hope, our Lord the same."

2. "Unto me who am *less than the least of* ALL SAINTS is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." (Eph. iii. 8.) If love to all saints is difficult to realize, to be in our own esteem less than all, or as Paul emphatically puts it, "less than the least of all," is even a more difficult attainment. The apostle is about to exhort to a lowly walk, or rather a walk in "*all* lowliness and meekness," as essential to the carrying out of the truth of the "one body," and he first takes the lowest place himself. It is easy for us to repeat his words, but what we need is, to be so low at the feet of Christ, that our lowly spirit may be manifest to all who know us.

This theme of lowliness pervades the four epistles written by Paul when a prisoner at Rome, and it shows how he had learned to value those familiar but little known words of our Lord, "*Learn of Me*, for I am meek and lowly in heart." (Matt. xi. 29.) "I am among you as he that serveth," was the Lord's rebuke to His disciples when they strove for greatness, even after they had just

partaken, for the first time, of the tokens of His body and His blood. (Luke xxii. 27.) His washing the feet of all the disciples, in John xiii., was lowly service indeed, but the laying down of His life on the cross, to cleanse us from our sins in His own blood, was humility's greatest depth.

3. “ That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with ALL SAINTS what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.” (Eph. iii. 17-19.) When the apostle mentions the Ephesians' “ faith and love to all saints ” he utters the marvellous prayer of chap. i. ; and when, in chap. iii., he describes himself as “ less than the least of all saints,” he again fittingly bows his knees in prayer, one vast petition of which is given above. How unselfish is this prayer! His desire is that *all* saints should comprehend this immeasurable love ; not one was to be omitted. This takes us far beyond *our* love to all saints, and teaches us to seek for all the comprehension of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Were this our soul's desire, would not our love to every saint be in full, active flow? And would not every effort of our love help others better to comprehend Christ's love?

4. “ *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for ALL SAINTS and for me.*” (Eph. vi. 18-19.) Not one child of God is free from the attacks of our great and wily foe, and, as we well know, this injunction to “ all prayer ” for “ all saints ” follows the description of “ the whole armour of God.” This mighty weapon is to be used at all seasons, and with all perseverance. But it must be prayer in the Holy Ghost. If we put these four “ alls ” together we shall see

what is love needed to carry out this injunction, and we shall be able to test our state by the measure and comprehensiveness of our prayers.

Fellow-saints who are least enlightened, who have least knowledge of the truth of God, are the easiest prey of Satan, and they surely most need our prayers; but do they get them? If not, is it any wonder that they make little way against the foe? Were we habitually to pray, as the apostle here indicates, for all saints, and individually for those known to us, would not loving efforts to seek their welfare follow? What a different front would be presented to the enemy if in any due measure we availed ourselves of the blessed privilege of drawing near to God on behalf of all saints. How different would be our closet prayer! how different would be our prayer meetings!

In lovely keeping with the place he took, Paul does not include himself with "all saints," but as less than the least of all he adds, "*and for me.*" Owing to his lowly posture of soul, he was the better fitted to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, as one who had the least claim for such a service, and who could all the more give all the glory to God. These words "and for me" also remind us what especial need of prayer there is for all who preach Christ, who boldly attack the strongholds of Satan and tell of deliverance to his captives, because such servants of Christ are the especial object of his wiles. But these little words also remind us of the necessity of taking the low place, and of diligently carrying on the warfare within, by casting down all high and self-exalting thoughts.

May the Lord keep us more and more separate from the world, and enlarge our hearts more and more towards "all saints," so that with sincerity we may take up the closing words of the epistle to the Ephesians: "Grace be with *all* them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption."

THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

PART I.

JOHN I. 35-42.

THE great object of the ministry of the Baptist was "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke i. 17), and it is very evident that the first disciples of the Lord had previously been disciples of John, and thus had been by his ministry prepared to receive the One of whom he testified. Though John's first testimony to Christ as the Lamb of God may have sunk into the hearts of some of those who heard it, there seems not to have been any manifest result of it, but when on the day following, he was standing with two of his disciples, and again seeing Jesus, he drew their attention to Him, they at once followed Him. Hearing their footsteps, probably, "Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, *What seek ye?*" Not for information did He put this question, but rather to give them the opportunity of addressing Him, and to cause them to consider definitely what they were doing.

It was a searching question, and it is one we might often put to ourselves with profit. We go hither and thither, to different meetings and on varied services, but do we ever stop and ask what we are seeking, what our aim is in all this? Are we not in danger of getting so formal, and taking things in such a matter-of-course way, as to get a dull conscience about preparation for our most solemn meetings, and even as to whether we are in time for them or not? If we had a more definite object before us, it may be that that object would oftener be attained.

It was not easy for these two disciples to answer such a

question in a moment, and yet their question formed a true answer: "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?" It was as much as to say, We seek *Thee*, we want some intercourse with *Thee*, and we want to know something of *Thee*. And the Lord understood it, for He can interpret desires which we may not be able to put into words. His immediate response, "Come and see," reminds us of a beautiful passage in the Song of songs, where, the moment the prayer is presented, "Draw me," the happy experience follows, "The King hath brought me into his chambers;" showing that no true desire towards the Lord can be left unsatisfied. He whom they sought at once bade them welcome, took them aside to commune with them, and kept them with Him for the remainder of the day.*

"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother." Who will question that the other was the writer of this gospel? It is his habit never to mention his own name (though there can be no question that he refers to himself when he speaks of "the disciple whom Jesus loved"), and yet he gives clear evidence that he was an eye witness of what he relates. And it is very interesting to think of him as one of the first two whose steps were directed towards the Lord, and perhaps the one who took the first step. He who was thus early attracted to the Lord as "the Lamb of God" and "the Son of God," was the one to follow Him into the palace of the high priest when He was arrested and to linger at the cross as long as the sacred body was there, while he was the first to *believe* in His resurrection (John xx. 8), and the last of the twelve to bear testimony

* The time was probably four o'clock in the afternoon. Some, supposing from other notices in the gospel that John adopted the Roman time, regard it as 10 a.m. But most consider that he reckoned according to Jewish custom, from sunset to sunset, giving twelve hours for the night and twelve for the day.

of Him in the world. And further, he was the one chosen of God to bear the fullest testimony of all the inspired writers to the divine glory of Christ and the reality of His manhood, and the glorious and eternal victory which is the result of His great humiliation.

It is beautiful to see how fresh in his mind, when he wrote this gospel, were the events which occurred so long before. Probably fifty or sixty years had elapsed, and yet he remembered "that day," and the very hour of the day, when first he heard the voice of Him whose words at once took possession of his whole being. With what deep, calm, holy joy must the aged disciple have looked back to "that day" when first he listened to the Word of life, and being drawn by the cords of love, was bound for ever to Him in whom he had so long found all that he could desire! Thank God, he is no more alone in this than he is in being a "disciple whom Jesus loved." Few of course of the mighty multitude of God's redeemed ones heard the voice of Jesus upon earth, and many there are who cannot fix upon the day when *first* their weary hearts found rest in Him, and His voice spoke peace to their souls. Nor is this necessary, for the chief question for every one of us is not *when* we passed from death to life and from darkness into light, but rather have we really done so? Not, *when* the Lord first became the hope of our souls and the joy of our hearts; but is He really this to us? Some dear children of God have been filled with anxiety, because they could not fix upon the time, or even the occasion, of any change of heart; while there are those to be found, alas! who give very little evidence by walk and ways of being children of God at all, who seem to rest everything upon the fact that they experienced some change or emotion at some particular period of their history. Scripture very fully meets both these mistakes,

of which the latter is far more serious than the former for while the former may hinder the soul's peace and joy, the latter may blind the soul on the way to perdition. Those who are relying upon some emotion of the past, while living at a distance from God, and with no exercise of conscience towards Him, may well consider that it is possible to "receive the Word with joy," and yet not prove its saving and sanctifying power, and that the ability to be content with anything less than that present proof of Christ being in them, which the witness of the Spirit affords, is evidence of death rather than of life. And, on the other hand, those who are cast down or disturbed, because they cannot fix upon any definite period when they first received Christ, and yet are looking to Him and Him alone for salvation, may be comforted by the assurance that the very renunciation of all other hope and trust, and the making Him the one ground of confidence before God, is in itself the effect of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, and a sure evidence of life in the soul.

But many are able, like the beloved disciple, to look back to the time when first they turned to the Lord, some with the heavy burden of sin to cast upon Him, and some with desires which they could scarcely express, while their deep need of Him had yet to be learned, but all alike to prove His love, and tenderness, and sufficiency. And it is ever sweet to look back upon those days of early acquaintance with Him—those days of "first love," and fresh joy and gladness. With mingled feelings we must remember them : for any conscious deepening of that joy and gladness, and growth of that love, must call forth deep thankfulness to Him who has sustained what He first implanted ; while the fact that we know so little of a worthy response to His love, and the sense of our frequent

coldness, and dullness, and wanderings must fill us with shame and contrition, and yet lead to more adoring worship of Him who amidst all our changes has proved unchangeable. And we may surely say that as "that day" will *never* be forgotten by him whose heart was then drawn to the Lord, so all the saints will ever look back with delight to the beginning of His ways with them, and trace with joy the expressions of that infinite grace, and the overruling of that divine providence, by which their hearts were first touched and attracted to Him.

It is interesting to note that of the first two disciples one stands forth in great prominence, while the other is never even named after the day of Pentecost (except in the Gospel narratives) and here he is described as the brother of the better known "Simon Peter." We are not to infer from this that Andrew was any less a true servant of Christ than either Peter or John, but simply that his service lay in a different direction. That he preached the Word and wrought miracles, that he was faithful and true, we may rest assured, but just as he was not called to contribute to the Holy Scriptures as Peter and John were, so he may not have been as prominent in preaching. Even this is no necessary inference, for it is very little we are told after early days of the actual labours of John. But however that may be, one great lesson we should learn is, that God appoints each servant to his own work, and apportions the work for the servant, and if by grace we can only do His bidding we must be occupied in the very best way, whether our names be known throughout the world, or we be hid in some corner, and never heard of here below. The names of *all* the apostles are found in the foundations of the New Jerusalem, but each on a different stone from the rest, and the colours that are less striking are as beautiful in their own places as those which

are more brilliant, while the very variety gives greater beauty and glory to the city than would be seen if all the stones were of the same hue. And that which is true of the twelve is equally true of all the servants of Christ. If we are called to some very lowly service, let us only seek grace to perform it in a manner worthy of Him who has given it to us, and we shall see the beauty of it in the coming day; and if we happen to know those whose service we cannot appreciate, let us be careful how we pass sentence upon it, for it may be owned of the Lord, and the fruit of it may be seen in the day of Christ. At the same time we must remember that it would not be right to ally ourselves with anything professing to be service to Christ that in our judgment was plainly contrary to Scripture, to which, as the standard, we must give the first place.

There are links in the service of God and amongst His people that bind them together in a very precious manner. If Peter became the foremost man among the twelve, it must not be forgotten that it was Andrew who "brought him to Jesus." So many a man, whose service has been heard of far and wide, owes his very first step in that service, under God, to some dear soul that lived and died in obscurity, and such a link will never be lost. If Luther became the great champion of the truth of justification by faith against all the power of Rome, it was an aged monk, unknown perhaps beyond the monastery in which he lived, who sat by Luther's bedside in his illness, and helped him to grasp the truth for himself, though he may not have *fully* learnt it at that time. How such facts should lead us to diligence in the service of God, and encourage us to trust Him about the results. Let us see to it that our labour is truly "labour in the Lord," and we may safely leave it to Him to see that it is not in vain. W. H. B.

LETTERS OF THE LATE MR. J. L. HARRIS.

XXV.

“*She hath done what she could.*”

“You have no doubt remarked that it is the way of our blessed Lord to recognise everything in us which He can that is pleasing to Him. This is very plainly brought before us in His messages to the churches, Rev. ii., iii. He touches on all He can approve before He begins to find fault. And so I think His apostles do. The Lord, who could detect hypocrisy under the most plausible speech, separates the precious from the vile in that which His disciples do, and discerns the least thing done with a view to please Him. I think it very important to make conscience of *little things*, and to try to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in the smallest occurrences of daily life. And when we read the words, ‘Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,’ we can certainly glorify God in very homely circumstances. And so again ‘Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ.’ What a dignity this gives to home duties, and the little unobtrusive service we may be able to render to others! We are naturally prone to distinguish between our religious and other duties; instead of trying to be well-pleasing to Christ in all things. Hence religion is made a thing of times and seasons, instead of being a new life, received by the Spirit, and acting in the midst of adverse circumstances. The great example set before us is that of Him of whom it was written, ‘Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God,’ and who could say, ‘I *delight* to do Thy will.’ We too have the desire to do the will of God, but because of the sin that dwelleth in us we only get the power to do it by denying self and taking up the cross, and hence we find it so

needful to keep very close to the cross of Christ, as there we find God to be for us. All our life here we are learning that Christ crucified is, to us who are saved, 'the wisdom of God,' and 'the power of God.' The Lord abundantly bless and keep you.

J. L. H."

" *Feb. 7th, 1866.*

" THE ELIXIR."

TEACH me, my God and King,
 In all things Thee to see,
 And what I do in anything,
 To do it as for Thee :

Not rudely, as a beast,
 To run into an action ;
 But still to make Thee prepossest,
 And give it its perfection.

A man that looks on glass,
 On it may stay his eye ;
 Or if he pleaseth, through it pass,
 And then the heaven espy.

All may of Thee partake :
 Nothing can be so mean,
 Which with this tincture, " for Thy sake,"
 Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause
 Makes drudgery divine :
 Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
 Makes that and the action fine.

This is the famous stone
 That turneth all to gold :
 For that which God doth touch and own
 Cannot for less be told.

George Herbert, 1630.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Has the expression "The Lord is at hand" in Phil. iv. 5 any reference to His coming?

There is no reason to regard the words "is at hand" as referring to the Advent. The nearness of the Lord as a helper and defender is given as a reason why we should make manifest our "moderation" in our claims on others, and our "yieldingness" when wronged. This should be a feature of our Christian character. The nearness of our Lord is also a reason why we should be careful for nothing, for prayer is the remedy for care, and He to whom we pray is always "at hand." *Does I Cor. x. 16 refer exclusively to the Lord's Supper? If so, how does it bear on the context?*

The context from verse 14 to end has reference to idolatry, and the believer's relation to idolatrous feasts and entertainments. Believers were then in danger from two opposite sides, as they are now: (1) from regarding external matters as something, and (2) from regarding them as nothing. The one leads to legal bondage, and is opposed to the liberty of the gospel of Christ. The other tends to a lawlessness that sacrifices the narrow lines of Christian life to the broad lines of worldly conformity; it shirks the cross, and boasts in a licence abhorrent to the holiness of God's name and character.

The Lord's Table and the holy Supper are brought in to show our relation to the body and blood of Christ, and our relation to one another as united with Him in one common loaf, and thereby separated from all that is not in harmony therewith. Therefore while in chapter viii. Paul says the idol is "nothing" for there is no God but one, he here regards the idol in the light of that which is at the back of it, and calls fellowship with idols a fellowship with devils, provoking the Lord to jealousy. The principle laid down here is of very grave importance in the present day when so many rush from a right disapproval of bondage to outward forms, into an unholy alliance with the world and its ways, boasting in a liberty that undermines the power of the cross, and makes worldliness a virtue rather than a vice. But God will not be mocked. He is a jealous God and reads our hearts, and weighs our actions, and if we seek to know His thoughts of us He will reveal them to us by His Spirit. If we do not seek to learn now, we shall know at the judgment seat of Christ to our eternal loss. We are slow to learn that the gate is strait and the way is narrow, and it will be found yet narrower as we advance towards conformity to our Master.

At the Lord's Supper should the loaf be broken in two as the Lord broke it, and does he who gives thanks for the bread and the cup do so in the Lord's stead?

It is well in all things to desire to follow God's Word accurately, but in those points in which Scripture is silent we may well learn a lesson by its silence, and not insist upon our own thoughts. The Scripture says that the Lord did *break* the bread which He took, but we are not told into how many pieces. When in Acts xx. we read that Paul and the disciples had come together "to break bread," we are told that "when they had broken the bread and eaten . . . so he departed;" but we are not told what words were spoken, nor who broke the bread, nor if the same person poured out the wine, and if the same hands passed it round. On all these points Scripture is purposely silent, in order that our thoughts and hearts may be fixed upon the Lord Himself, rather than on the method of our own partaking of the outward emblems.

It is remarkable how little is said about the Lord's Supper at all in the New Testament. There is the command for it in Matthew, Mark and Luke; then only two mentions of it in the Acts—one for the Jerusalem and Jewish branch of the Church (Acts ii.), and one for the Gentile Churches (Acts xx.)—and it is mentioned in only one Epistle. Even when Paul was writing pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus as to caring for the church when he was gone, that they might know how to behave "in the house of God" (see 1 Tim. ii.), he not only says nothing about the spreading of the Lord's Table or the exact mode of conducting "the Supper," but he does not even mention it. His great desire, we may be sure, was that we should partake thereof with lowly minds and contrite spirits, rather than that we should be resting in an outward accuracy.

Whether the brother who performs the simple act of giving thanks should himself break the bread or should pass it on to another to break, is of small moment. As a general rule, the godly brother who gives thanks does also break the bread, but this he does simply as a needed service to all the rest, and he takes the lead in the matter in the same spirit of service to the whole assembly as that in which he may stand up to speak; nor does he, in performing this service, act as the representative either of the Lord or of the assembly. Only of course, this conducting of God's ordinances, whether it be Baptism or the Lord's Supper, does require that any brother doing it shall have the esteem of his fellow-saints, and, in the latter case that he shall also have a godly wisdom and discernment as to when the assembly is in spirit ready for it, that the fitting moment may not be lost.

THE WORLD'S PHILOSOPHY AND CHRIST'S FRIENDSHIP.

NOTES OF A CONFERENCE BIBLE-READING.

MR. R. C. CHAPMAN read Col. ii. 3-10; iii. 16; and John xv. 14; xvi. 6-14, 23-27.

The force of the admonition in Colossians is seen in verses 8, 9. What the world calls "philosophy" the Spirit of God couples with "vain deceit," and against these the child of God is exhorted to be on his guard by letting the word of Christ dwell in him richly.

In Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and we are "complete in Him." When this is received in faith it teaches the believer his true dignity according to God, and enables him to behave aright in the world, and to keep himself separate from it, because he is not of it.

The whole Bible is irreconcilably opposed to the philosophy of the world. There is, of course, a wisdom from God in the natural man which can be rightly used in the things of this life and in what concerns this world, even as God filled Bezaleel with wisdom, and with understanding, and with knowledge, enabling him to make the Tabernacle.

In Romans i. the apostle says of men, that, "professing themselves to be *wise*, they became *fools*;" and in Corinthians he shows that the world's wisdom ends in crucifying the Lord of glory. The cross of Christ is the death-knell to all that man can boast of in the things of God. But in a risen Christ we who believe have a divine fulness of wisdom and knowledge treasured up, and He is to us

the antitypical Solomon. God says, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise," that is man's Cain-like wisdom. Scientists may study geology and astronomy, but let them by virtue thereof have nothing to do with making a "theology," as if the world by wisdom could know and understand God, or anything outside the material world around them. There never was a time when men understood *matter* as they do now, but when worldly men touch the things of God they show themselves to be fools, and we do the same if we listen to them, or are influenced by them.

Men of the world *cannot* know God because they *will not*. The carnal mind is at enmity with God, and the natural heart says, "No God." Man preferred the creature to the Creator, as we read in Rom. i., and consequently God gave him up to a mind "void of judgment" (margin, v. 28.) This is God's judgment upon man.

But what I have on my heart most is to plead the cause of Christ our heavenly Friend, and His injured love, so that we may help each other to please Him well.

Turn to Deut. xxvi. 1. We injure His tender love when we cannot truthfully and experimentally say, "I am come in unto the land;" and so, also, when we forget that we were Syrians "ready to perish." The Hebrew word there is "lost," and is the same word as that used in the passage, "I have gone astray like a *lost* sheep." When we forget Christ's redeeming love and power, we injure His love and rob Him of our basket of first-fruits.

Another passage in connection with Christ's injured love is Canticles v. 2, 3. He knocks and seeks an entrance, but His beloved is asleep, and keeps Him outside. Suppose two friends were both tender-hearted, each one closely knit to the other by the dearest bonds, and yet one

heart is more tender than the other: which will feel any breach of fellowship or any coldness of affection most? Surely the one whose heart is the more tender. So it is as between Christ and ourselves; *He* sorrows most; but we lose most.

Let us compare Joseph's heart with those of his brethren. It was Joseph who was the first to propose the embrace, and to welcome them to his heart, when he said, "Come near to me, I pray you." And then when they came near, he said, "I am Joseph your brother," "I will nourish you," and "he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them." They had been bringing their empty sacks and receiving from his fulness, but they had not thought of delighting his heart. Is not this oftentimes the case with ourselves?

Do we not injure Christ's love, too, in our dealings one with another? "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye," is the figure God Himself has used; and Christ says, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." "And this is His commandment, that we love one another."

The measure of our obligation depends upon the measure of God's revelation. Through grace we are the first-fruits unto God, and the highest of all creation; so, correspondingly, is our obligation.

If I am walking in fellowship with Christ, His choice becomes my choice, and I shall have nothing apart from Him. There is no limit to our friendship with Christ, for He Himself said, "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." The love wherewith God loves the Son is the measure of His love to us, and the hallowed intercourse between the Father and the Son is the rule of our freedom and fellowship with Christ. Such is the wondrous place into which Christ has brought

us, and in which we stand through grace ; but, alas ! how feebly it is understood and appreciated by us.

In John xv. we have both sides of this friendship brought out—God's side in His revelation of Himself to us ; our side in our obedience to His Word.

The friendship of Christ with the family at Bethany was even deeper than the friendship which Abraham enjoyed with God. Abraham made the Lord a feast, but he stood while the Lord did eat. In John xii. we read, "Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him." Thus Abraham stood and served, but when Christ came in the flesh Lazarus was permitted to sit down in the presence of the Lord, and to share the feast with Him. He calls us bosom-friends. There is a platform of fellowship and a quality of fellowship enjoyed by saints now that could not have been before the Holy Ghost came. Lack of this is not because of the lack of education, but because of the lack of heart and will. Self-will is a mighty hindrance to this communion, and against this we have to watch continually.

The result of the enjoyment of this fellowship will be, that the word of Christ will dwell in us richly. It is not by reading much that we shall have the word dwelling richly in us, but by having communion of soul with Christ about what we read. Friendship is the outcome of communion, and communion is the outcome of union—our union with Him as branches of the vine, and as members of His body.

Christians are very prone to be drawn into the snare of leaning to their own wisdom and understanding, instead of being guided by Christ and His word. We chiefly trespass by our words, which influence and guide our acts ; hence the Scripture : "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

There is a beautiful connection in Joshua i. between faith having courage to grasp the promises of God, and faith finding strength and courage to do the will of God. All success flows out of this combination of promise and obedience. Israel sinned by making a league with the inhabitants of the land, and we never grieve the Holy Ghost more than when we make a league with wicked spirits in heavenly places, over whom Satan is ruler, and under whose subtlety, unless we are watchful, we are ever prone to fall, as Israel fell under the Canaanites that were left. That we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, must never be forgotten.

The secret of non-success lies within ourselves ; neither the world nor the devil can gain any advantage over us but that which we allow them. By making a league with the inhabitants of the land we forfeit the enjoyment of God's friendship and the fulfilment of the promises.

There is an all-sufficiency in the word of God whereby we may know ourselves, may condemn the flesh, and may have our faith ever strengthened. That is a solemn word in Joshua xxiii. 13 ; " They shall be thorns in your eyes ; " and is not this an exact description of what is found in the church to-day ? In the great work of the Reformation the corners of errors were left in the Prayer-book, and the terrible result is that to-day Popery is fast covering the land. Tares grow while men sleep.

In Deut. xxv. we read of " divers weights and measures " (*vv.* 13-16), then comes the reference to war with Amalek (*vv.* 17-19), and this is followed by the command to bring the basket of first-fruits. Is it not true that the church has had divers weights and measures in the things of God, and that Amalek has been encouraged instead of being defeated and exterminated ? Consequently God has not had His due from His people ; their basket of first-

fruits (chap. xxvi. 1-11), and their tithes (*vv.* 12-15) have not been brought into His presence, and the result has been that *vv.* 16-19 are not fulfilled in the church of God to-day. There is not the avouching of the Lord as our God and walking in His ways, and therefore we are not avouched as His peculiar people.

There is no such thing as fellowship with God without a tender conscience in respect to the *whole* word of God. (Psalm cxix. 127, 128.) Hence the need of the prayer, "Cleanse Thou me from *secret* faults." I may not see them; others may or may not know them; but God does. We must not have "divers weights and measures" as to the question of sin. We are bound to be walking with God and aiming at intimacy with Christ; but in order to have this, there must be the confession of sin, and the crying to God for cleansing; not as we may think we need it, but as He knows we need it. There is to-day a gross misunderstanding of sin, and of the cross where sin was judged.

Does any think himself sinless? Take such an one to Christ, as He walked in obedience to the perfect law and will of God, and ask if there was any imperfection in Him; then ask if he finds any in himself when tested by such a standard. If Christ had had any imperfection, His sacrifice would have been unfitted for the work of atonement.

God as Father can allow us to say what Paul said: "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you." And God on the ground of sacrifice accounts us blameless as to our standing in Christ; yet, let it never be forgotten that all imperfection and short-coming in obedience—and that obedience according to the balances of the sanctuary—is accounted sin.

In 1 John iii. 9, 10 a contrast is drawn between a child of God and one unsaved. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;" "he that committeth sin is of the devil." "The devil sinneth from the beginning," and the unsaved person *lives* in self-will and rebellion against God; into this condition the believer cannot fall. The characteristics of the two families are given Abel was a man of God; Cain was a man of the world. Cain was full of the enmity of Satan, and this came out, not at the plough, but at the altar. Solemn thought! It is man's religion rather than his irreligion which shows the condition of his heart towards God. "Be filled with the Spirit" is a command for all times, and should be the constant state of the believer in Christ, and thereby the difference between him and the unbeliever would be manifested.

In Romans vi. Paul not only teaches us about *reckoning* ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God, but he teaches us also about *fighting*. It is far easier to please God in our obedience than to satisfy the upright heart and the enlightened conscience in ourselves. There are still lusts within the believer; but instead of being obeyed they are to be subdued.

In 1 John iii. we have two *persons* contrasted, and in Romans vi. we have two contrasted *natures* in one person.

Any imperfection in yielding our members to God, let us remember, is an act of iniquity. May we, then, learn to walk and to please God as children of obedience, not fashioning ourselves according to our former lusts in our ignorance, but as He who hath called us is holy, so may we be holy in all manner of behaviour. Then shall we escape the defilement of this world's philosophy, and live in the enjoyment of unbroken fellowship with that Friend who sticketh closer than a brother.

THE OFFENCE OF THE CROSS.

“ And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution ? then is the offence of the cross ceased.”—GAL. v. 11.

It is possible that the circumcising of Timothy by the apostle Paul (Acts xvi. 3) gave rise to the report that he taught and practised circumcision ; and it may be to this that he refers in writing to the Galatians. There were men in the church who moved on a lower level than Paul, not knowing the freedom he enjoyed, and who were therefore unable to judge fairly of his acts. Divine grace had lifted him clean out of the old order of things into the liberty and joy of the new creation. Herein he walked, using the things of a bygone age for the furthering of the kingdom of God. To him circumcision was nothing (1 Cor. vii. 19), but there were his kinsmen in the flesh who clung to it as an ordinance of God, and that he might the better fulfil the work of the Lord among them he took his young helper Timothy and circumcised him. “ Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.” (Rom. xiv. 22.)

The case of Titus stands on entirely different ground. Unlike Timothy, he had no Jewish blood in his veins ; and had the apostle submitted to the false brethren unawares brought in, who demanded the circumcision of Titus, he would have put in peril the gospel of the grace of God ; for circumcision was by them set forth as essential to salvation. Hence, in this case he would give place, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue.

It is only as we are moving in the place of holy fellowship with our Lord that we are wise to discern what, and

when, to allow or disallow. A hard and fast line in such matters is not according to the liberty of Christ. Where the Lord commands, we have no liberty save that of obedience; but in matters concerning which there is no plain command we have liberty, yet let us be careful how we use it.

Among the things which Paul cast behind him was circumcision. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord constrained him so to do at the beginning of his spiritual life, and in this mind he continued to the end: "I *do* count them but dung that I may win Christ."

Hence the apostle never preached circumcision, though in the case of Timothy he practised it. If he had preached it, then the "offence of the cross" would have ceased.

The difference between the mind of heaven and the mind of earth is clearly set forth in the passage we are considering. The place of the Son of God at the Father's right hand testifies to the value of the cross: "Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again." (John x. 17.) His office as High Priest within the veil rests upon the same foundation: "By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. ix. 12.) And the future exercise of Headship over all things also depends on the value of His sacrificial work. It is the "Lamb, as it had been slain," who is seen in the midst of the throne, and who prevails to open the book. (Rev. v. 6.) Thus we learn that the fulness, beauty and glory of the cross are fully owned in heaven; but on earth the cross is an "offence" or scandal. What can more fully set forth the contrariety of heaven and earth than this fact? The apostle Peter uses it for the convicting of the Jews on the day of Pentecost, saying, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that *God hath made that*

SAME JESUS, *whom ye crucified*, both LORD and CHRIST."

The cross is an offence to the natural man whether Jew or Greek. "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block [an offence], and unto the Greeks foolishness." (1 Cor. i. 23.) In the Epistle to the Galatians the apostle is dealing especially with the former; hence in chap. v. 11 he calls the cross an "offence."

What the cross was in Paul's day, that the cross is still. And the remarkable thing is, that where the cross, as an emblem, is most gloried in, there the true doctrine of the cross is most denied. So completely has Satan shut men's eyes and hardened their hearts, that while, in their way, they honour the symbol, they reject the truth signified.

1st. The cross is the witness to man's entire ruin. The sinner's condition spiritually is that of death; and the cross is the evidence of it. It is no longer a question of the "whole head sick, and the whole heart faint" (Isa. i. 5), but that of spiritual death: "And you, being DEAD in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh." (Col. ii. 13.) If the winding sheet and coffin have reference to the body dead, so the cross has reference to the solemn fact that man is dead spiritually, dead to God. Such is the witness of the cross; its presence in the world stamps death upon the natural man, therefore it is an offence.

2nd. It is an offence because it bears witness to the fact that there is nothing good in man. Had there been anything in man Godward, any desire after Him, the presence of Christ among men would have drawn it out. His grace affected not their hearts, while His appeals to their conscience only stirred their enmity. They hated Him because He told them the truth, and their hatred found its full expression in the cry, "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" The cross was the final act whereby man demonstrated his

entire badness, according to that word, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Rom. iii. 12.)

3rd. The cross is the evidence of man's folly and ignorance: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider." (Isa. i. 3.) "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." (John i. 10.) The princes, the authorities of this world, knew not the Lord of glory when He tabernacled among men. Had they known Him, they would not have crucified Him. Their ignorance was their guilt, and was the proof of the fact that "their foolish heart was darkened." (Rom. i. 21.)

Such being the testimony of the cross concerning man's condition, can we wonder that the cross is an offence? You can never find a natural man that will consent to so truly humbling a doctrine. And even with the Christian there is a constant tendency to look for something in man other than the cross demonstrates. This being so, can we be surprised that when the cross is truly preached there should be opposition? We can scarcely imagine a criminal calmly submitting to the torture of crucifixion. The writhing and struggling might be in vain, but nevertheless resistance would be offered. So with the doctrinal crucifixion of the natural man: there must be the writhing and refusing to be set down as utterly vile. But, "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Gal. v. 24.) Such is the proper way of *commencing* the Christian life. "I have been crucified with Christ," is the judgment of a rightly-taught child of God. And until there has been subjection to the Word in its testimony to man's entire ruin, offence will be taken at the true doctrine of the cross. "*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*" J. C.

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE WORD OF GOD,

AS INDICATED IN PSALM CXIX.

THE various titles under which the word of God is spoken of in this Psalm well deserve consideration, and meditation on them will be helpful to us in the understanding of the psalm itself, which has been well described as the fine gold of Psalm xix. beaten out. The distinctions between the eight different titles given to the word of God in Psalm cxix. will give more definite conceptions to those who seek in the Holiest really to know what the written word is, and this, in turn, will enlarge our conceptions of what the Living Word was when tabernacling amongst men. The eight titles which occur so frequently in the Psalm are as follow:—

(1.)—LAW. (Hebrew, *Torah*; Greek, *nomos*.) This word in Hebrew comes from the verb “to point out.” A beautiful distinction is seen in Ps. xxv. between the word rendered “teach” in *v.* 8 (which is the word here alluded to), and another word similarly rendered in *v.* 9, but which is different in the Hebrew.

“ Good and upright is the Lord :
Therefore will He *teach* sinners in the way.
The meek will He guide in judgment :
And the meek will He *teach* His way.”

The first describes God's pointing out to the sinner the way he has to walk in, as a sign-post does. The other shows God as a teacher, instructing those who joyfully sit at His feet and receive His teaching. *Law* is the word of God looked at as that by which God clearly indicates His mind to man from heaven, as He did when He gave the Law from Sinai.

(2.)—TESTIMONIES. (Heb. *Aedooth*; Gk. *marturia*.) Here the primary idea is *witness*, reminding us that the Scripture is God's witness of Himself and of His will, as well as of ourselves and our ways. It is very important to bear in mind this aspect of God's word, for all that sets it aside is a denial of the divine witness, and virtually makes God the bearer of false witness. Observe our Lord's own use of the word witness, or testimony, in the Gospel according to John, "We speak that We do know, and bear witness of that We have seen; and ye receive not our witness." (John iii. 11, see also v. 32; v. 32-36; viii. 14-18; xv. 26; xviii. 37, etc.)

(3.)—PRECEPTS. (Heb. *Pikkudim*.) These are *directions* given by an overseer [a *pakeed*] to those who do his work. Thus God gives His workmen minute directions as to how His work is to be done. This word only occurs in the book of Psalms; twenty-one times in this Psalm, and elsewhere in Psalm xix. 8; ciii. 18; cxi. 7.

(4.)—STATUTES. (Heb. *Khok*; Gk. *dikaiōma*.) This marks the *immutability* of the Word. It is derived from a word signifying to engrave on stone, and hence points to that which is unalterably fixed. Very often it occurs in connection with the words "for ever," "perpetual," as in Ex. xxix. 28; xxx. 21; Lev. vi. 18-22, etc. From the same root comes the word *lawgiver*: Gen. xlix. 10; Num. xxi. 18; Ps. lx. 7; Isa. xxxiii. 22, etc. This shows the unchangeableness of divine legislation.

(5.)—COMMANDMENTS. (Heb. *Mitzvah*; Gk. *entolé*.) These represent the commandments of a father, and refer alike to what He *commands* us to do and to what He *appoints* for us. The connection between what God commands and what God appoints for us to pass through, whether of joy or sorrow, is very beautiful; it tells us we are to suffer His will as well as to do it.

(6.)—JUDGMENTS. (Heb. *Mishpat*; Gk. *krima*.) God is here the judge, expressing to us His *thoughts of right and wrong*. He puts all into His balances and tells us the result, and enables us to bring a heavenly, enlightened conscience to the estimation of everything here, and thus the *judicial* aspect of the word of God is solemnly presented to us. It was the Word which guided Christ, who judged of things not by the sight of His eyes nor according to the hearing of the ears, but with a divine righteousness. (Isaiah xi.)

(7.)—WORD. (Heb. *Dabar*.) This points to the object spoken of, rather than to the actual utterance itself, and it must be distinguished from that which follows.

(8.)—WORD. (Heb. *Imrah*.) This points to the utterance—the word said, and might be fitly rendered *promise*. The distinction between this and the preceding word is beautifully illustrated in Ps. cv. 19, where of Joseph we read,

“ Until the time that His word (*labar*) came to pass,
The word (*imrah*) of Jehovah tried him.”

That is, until the thing spoken of came to pass, the promise (made to him in his dreams) tried him; for the promise of God *tested* his faith in God during those long years of captivity. This Hebrew word occurs in the following verses in this Psalm, which it is well to indicate, as the English translation confounds it with the previous word; verses 11, 38, 41, 50, 58, 67, 76, 82, 103, 116, 123, 133, 140, 148, 154, 158, 162, 170, 172. Elsewhere this word seldom occurs, but the following passages may be noted: Deut. xxxii. 2 (“speech”); xxxiii. 9; Ps. cxlvii. 15; Isa. v. 24; xxviii. 23; xxxii. 9. The following are interesting as also indicating the testing and proving of God’s promises: 2 Sam. xxii. 31; Prov. xxx. 5.

The distinction above referred to between *dabar* and

imrah serves to explain a rather difficult passage in Ps. cxxxviii. 2: "Thou hast magnified Thy word (*imrah*) above all Thy name," or, "Thou hast made great Thy promise on the ground of Thy name." The *name* is the guarantee of the promise to the person who rests on the name; see the previous mention of the name in the same verse. This gives special beauty to the use of the word *imrah* in the Psalm before us.

May our hearts be directed aright into a deeper meditation on the tone and character of this wonderful Psalm in its unfolding of what the word of God is to those who can say,

"Oh, how love I Thy law !
It is my meditation all the day."

On some future occasion we may take up the twenty-two parts into which, as an alphabetical acrostic, this Psalm is divided.

H. G.

THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

PART II.

JOHN I. 43—51.

THE latter part of John i. may be read as an illustration of that word in the Song of songs, "Draw me, we will run after Thee." It is not *I* will run, but "*we* will run." It is impossible for any of us to run our daily course without influencing others, and therefore the question, What influence are we exercising? is a very important one. If we are dull and worldly, and our minds are occupied with vanity, all this will find expression in our words and ways, and we shall be very likely to drag others down with us. If on the other hand our hearts glow with love to the Lord, and our delight is in Him, and our aim is to walk in nearness to Himself, we may be used to help others

in the same direction. Andrew would not follow Christ alone, but found his brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus. It is not expressly stated that John found *his* brother also, but it seems to be implied in what is said of Andrew: "He was the first to find his own brother, Simon." This certainly may mean that Andrew found Simon before John found his brother. But the case of Philip is very clear: Jesus "findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me," and Philip did not go alone, but at once found his friend, Nathanael.

Philip, apparently, was the first to whom the Lord addressed the distinct call, "Follow Me," a call that received prompt obedience. "Where the word of a king is, there is power," and here was the true King gathering subjects into His kingdom, speaking with authority, and with the command giving the power to obey it. The secret of Philip's ready response may be found in his words to Nathanael, which show that he had been taught of God: "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." At a later date the Lord said, "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Me." (John vi. 45.) Philip had received the testimony of John, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, and therefore he at once recognized Jesus as the long promised Messiah and owned Him as such. The words "we have found" on the lips of both Andrew and Philip show how truly they had been looking for Him. And the fact that they were all so near the Baptist shows that they were making much of his teaching. But the mention of Nazareth startled Nathanael, and drew forth the question, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" There was but one answer to

such a question, "Come and see." Philip might not have been able to argue the point with his friend, but he could invite him to make proof for himself as he had done. This is a good word with which to meet many questions, and often the shortest way to the answer.

In the case of those who raise all kinds of questions about the things of God, and yet *will not* "come and see," mere argument means waste of time. The one who is sincerely desirous of knowing the truth will welcome such a word. What should we think if an inmate of a house, in which a feast was spread for all comers, were to go outside and stand and argue at the door with one who raised endless questions as to what was within, and yet refused to enter by the open door and see for himself? Surely such is the position of a servant of Christ who spends time in mere argument with one who proudly questions the rich and precious truths of God, while steadfastly refusing to come to God Himself as a poor and needy sinner, and to feed upon the very bread of heaven. For one who has learnt more of God and His ways to endeavour patiently to help another who, desiring to bow to God in lowly submission, finds difficulties, is a very different matter; that is a service of love which we should always be ready to seek to render in the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

Nathanael was quite ready to obey the word "Come and see," for he was prepared to "receive the kingdom of God as a little child," and thus to "enter therein" (Mark x. 15); and the Lord's reception of him was very beautiful. He said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" He was one in whom "Jacob" had truly given place to *Israel*. And it has been well remarked that in the very simplicity with which Nathanael accepts the Lord's description of him we see an evidence of the guilelessness

of which He speaks. Nathanael raises no question about the fact, but simply asks, "Whence knowest Thou me?" No child of God should be content without such a state of heart, and such a conscience towards God, as may be thus described. Of failure and sin we must all be conscious, at least unless we are self-deceived (1 John i. 8), but we may be and should be "without guile," walking in integrity of heart before God, and so ever ready to learn and to follow as He leads.

The Lord's reply brought a fuller revelation to Nathanael: "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." The effect of this statement shows Nathanael's conviction that no mere human eye could have seen him under the fig-tree, whither perhaps he had gone to seek guidance from above, that in the present crisis he might not make any mistake, but do the will of God. The Lord's words imply a knowledge of what had been passing in his mind there, and they seem to have brought conviction to him that the One of whom John had spoken was indeed before him. John had declared the kingdom to be at hand, and had testified of Him who was to bring in that kingdom as "the Son of God." Such teaching must have reminded a man who knew the Scriptures of the second Psalm, where Jehovah speaks of the Christ both as "My King" and "My Son." The consequence was that all question of what Nazareth could produce vanished at once, and rising above the statement of Philip, the revelation made by the Holy Ghost to the heart of Nathanael found expression in the joyful confession: "Rabbi, THOU art the Son of God; THOU art the King of Israel." Thus at a simple bound, so to speak, that guileless soul rose to the apprehension of the truth, and the recognition of the glory of Him who came in such lowly guise as to be ignored by the wise and

learned teachers of the day. One of the great principles of the kingdom of God is enunciated in the word of the Lord, "If any man desires to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John vii. 17); for though God does not answer all the curious questions man may raise, yet He always gives sufficient information to enable anyone to know and do His will. Consequently where the wise and prudent of this world are perplexed and stumble, babes see clearly and walk with confidence.

How refreshing to the heart of the Lord must the confession of Nathanael have been! His response is not so much a question as an expression of surprise, "Because I said unto thee I saw thee under the fig tree believest thou! Thou shalt see greater things than these." He who profits by one lesson shall be led on to another, for the heavenly Teacher never keeps His pupils back. "Greater things" are in store for all who thus believe in and confess "the Son of God." Whatever we may know of Him here and now, must indeed be as nothing compared with what we have yet to discover of His fulness and glory in the day when we shall see face to face, and shall know even as we are known. But this fact should not make us indifferent to the matter of growth in the knowledge of Christ now, for in harmony with all God's ways there will be a correspondence between diligence in pursuing the knowledge of Him now, and capacity for the knowledge of Him in the perfect state, where every vessel will not be of the same capacity, though indeed every one will have perfect satisfaction. And even while we are here below, the diligent use of what God has given is the sure pathway to "greater things."

Having given the promise to Nathanael personally, the Lord addressed all who were present in those now familiar words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter (or hence-

forth) ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." He had come to be, what the ladder in Jacob's vision was to him, the great link between heaven and earth, securing intercourse between the two by His mediatorial work.

Though there is no absolute proof that it was so, yet there seems good ground for the supposition that Nathanael became one of the twelve apostles, and that his other name was Bartholomew. The latter name does not occur in the gospel by John, nor does the former in the other gospels. He is found with several of the apostles after the Lord's resurrection (John xxi. 2), and in the three accounts of the appointment of the twelve "Philip and Bartholomew" are linked together.

The following remarks of another on the latter part of this chapter are suggestive: "Those five days were not only the birth-time of the Church, they were the beginning of Christ's public ministry; and how does that ministry open? Silently, gently, unostentatiously; no public appearances, no great works done, no new instrumentality employed; by taking two men to live with Him for a day, by asking [rather *calling*] another to follow Him, by dealing wisely, tenderly and encouragingly with two others who are brought to Him—so enters the Lord upon the earthly task assigned to Him. Would any one sitting down to devise a career for the Son of God, descending upon our earth to work out the salvation of our race, have assigned such an opening to His ministry? And yet could anything have been more appropriate to Him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, than His turning away from being ministered unto by angels in the desert, to the rendering of those kindly and important services to John and Andrew and Peter, and Philip and Nathanael?"

W. H. B.

A MAN OF PRAYER.

AMONG the fellow-labourers mentioned by Paul in his epistles there are several of whom we know but little; yet that little makes their names fragrant with a heavenly perfume which reminds us of the garden of the Lord. Their record, though communicated in few words, tells us of whole-hearted service and of patient suffering and toil, which they have long exchanged for the heavenly rest, and the time of their reward, at the coming of the Lord, draws near. May the savour of Christ which they bear encourage and stimulate us.

Epaphras is one of these. We only know of him in connection with the church at Colosse, and in the epistle written to that church by the apostle Paul he is mentioned twice, and once in the epistle to Philemon.

In Colossians i. 7, he is described as a "beloved fellow-servant" with Paul and Timothy in the service of their common Lord and Master. To be a "fellow-slave" (as the word literally is) with one like Paul, whose conceptions of his Master's claims were so absolute and unreserved, was no common honour; for not to many would the apostle have given a title which had to him so high a significance and which throughout life he sought to make a living reality.

Paul also calls Epaphras "a faithful minister of Christ" to the Colossians; and how much that word "faithful" must have meant to one whose estimate of faithfulness was so exalted! As a minister* of the Colossian church as well as a bond-servant of Christ he had approved him-

* Greek, *diaconos*.

self. He taught, and cared for, and watched the growth of the "saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse," and what he had told the apostle of their fruitfulness and of their love in the Spirit had filled Paul's heart with joy and thanksgiving and prayer.

In the epistle to Philemon the apostle gives Epaphras another designation—"my *fellow-prisoner* in Christ Jesus." Again, how much of faithful testimony, and then of patient suffering this simple expression, "fellow-prisoner" conveys, we cannot tell, but fellow-suffering, we may be sure, had still more endeared Epaphras to the heart of Paul, for we know how strong is the tie that binds those who suffer together in a common cause. "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations," were our Lord's touching words to His disciples, to which He adds, "and I appoint unto you a kingdom." "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him," the apostle writes to Timothy.

The title, however, by which Epaphras is most known to the church of God is, the *man of prayer*. Paul writes of him in this character in concluding his epistle to the Colossians. "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, saluteth you, always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he hath much labour for you and for them in Laodicea and for them in Hierapolis." (R.V.) What prayers were these! How comprehensive, and how high the aim! His desires centre not in the creature, but in God. He does not ask that the saints in these their cities might have peace and joy, but that they might stand *perfect* and *fully assured* in all the will of God, out of which come that peace which "passeth all understanding" and that joy which is "unspeakable and full of glory."

In these days when so much *uncertainty* is preached and gloried in, it is important to bear in mind these words, "*fully assured* in ALL the will of God." God does not mean the true heart and the loyal soul to be filled with uncertainty. It is His delight to make His will clear, and to fulfil Christ's promise, "If thine eye be single, thy *whole* body shall be *full of light*."

Let us also recall the character of the prayer of Epaphras. His was an agony of prayer; a prayer that reminds us of Gethsemane, of Him of whom it is said, "Being in an agony He prayed more earnestly." True prayer, while it gives God no rest, gives God's remembrancers themselves no rest until it gets its answer—an answer borne witness to in the soul by God, even though the fulfilment of the prayer may be long deferred. (Compare Isa. lxii. 6, 7.)

Another word deserves notice here in connection with Epaphras, and that is Paul's witness to his fellow-prisoner's *toil* and labour for those he had on his heart. (v. 13.) The word has special beauty in it, being, as Alford remarks, "a word used for the toil of conflict in war." If we, by reason of closer walking with God, knew more of the antagonism of Satan and the powers of darkness, we should understand better what this warfare of the Sanctuary implied. Priestly service was called in the Books of Moses, *warring the warfare of the Sanctuary*, and the Holy Ghost would lead us into this in the matter of prayer, and enable us to understand what *giving ourselves continually* to prayer (Acts vi. 4), and praying *without ceasing*, really mean.

Scripture records give point to Scripture precepts, giving us examples, that we may follow the steps of those who have gone before us, till we meet them, and all who have gone before, in the presence of the Lord at His coming.

The Lord raise up an Epaphras ministry in His church, suited to the days in which our lot is cast, to His glory and to our blessing.

H. G.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Is any distinction to be drawn in the sufferings of Christ?

The sufferings of Christ appear to divide themselves into two classes. (1) Those suffered by Him as the righteous One from the unrighteousness and sinfulness of man; and (2) those borne by Him under the sin-avenging judgments of God. In the former He stands as the Holy One of God in the midst of a world of sin and rebellion, as the Light of the world in the midst of its darkness; and in the latter as the Sin-bearer, when, "made sin," He bore our sins and drank the cup of woe given to Him by His God.

This is typically illustrated in the life and history of David. In the earlier part of his life we see him as the righteous man suffering under the unrighteous enmity of Saul. In the second part of his life we see him suffering as the guilty one under the righteous judgment of God. Most of the Psalms of David range themselves under one or the other of these different conditions.

The principles involved in the above distinction are very plain; but much confusion and mischief have arisen from seeking too minutely to separate in time and circumstance the one from the other; especially in the typical interpretation of the Psalms. Many of them are historic of David and become typical and figurative of Christ, rather than prophetic and absolute in their interpretation. There are Psalms which are simply prophetic of Christ and not historic of David; as, for example, Ps. xxii; lxxviii; xciii. to c. and many others. Other Psalms again are experimental, and indicate a failing of feeble faith, true of David and others, but not true of Christ; as for example, Ps. lxxiii. and many others of a like character.

Great care is needed in our contemplation of the sufferings of Christ, lest we profanely handle subjects regarding which our hearts are called to worship, and lest we draw sharp lines of distinction where the Spirit is silent. The result of this will always be spiritual loss, and Israel's judgment at Bethshemesh for looking into the ark, instead of worshipping in reverence and silence, is a warning to us.

JUSTIFICATION.

THE gospel of God, with its cardinal truth of justification for sinners, is being assailed with a vigour perhaps never known before. All Romish and Ritualistic practices, of course, ignore this great truth, while the teaching that underlies them denies it. But it is from other quarters that the special attack is now being made in the form of an effort to supersede the truth of God with what men are pleased to describe as "*The Gospel of Fatherhood.*" This is an attractive phrase, but what is meant by it? Simply that all the posterity of Adam are children of God, and that the great object of preaching and teaching is to get them to realise this. And so little are many of the children of God alive to the fearfulness of such teaching that they listen to it with approval. At this moment the voices of such persons help to swell the bursts of applause that greet a popular preacher who ridicules the fall, denies the atonement, explains away the new birth, and expatiates on the "balmier and better days in the time to come, when at last we shall have a theology that teaches the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man."

Such teaching subverts the whole truth of the gospel, and must terribly damage any believers who listen to it, while it is calculated to help the unsaved on the road to perdition with a lie in their right hand; but if we are to be saved from the influence of it, we must have our hearts established in the truth, and sound in God's statutes.

Holy Scripture teaches that the Son of God came to save men from their sins, and to bring them into a new

relationship to God; this "other gospel" declares that He came simply to reveal a relationship already existing, and to make God known to those who are already His children. Thus the actual position of man as a creature, and the fact that he is a sinful creature, are both denied.

Adam, when formed by the hand of the Creator in His own image, and made a living soul by "the breath of the Almighty," was constituted the head of creation, but his position was that of a creature responsible to his Creator, a subject bound to obey his Sovereign. And when he gave his ear to another voice, and failed in his responsibility to obey, that responsibility was in no wise altered, though his condition had become very materially changed. It is of immense importance to see this. God was still the Sovereign, and man still the responsible creature, though he had become a fallen creature and a rebel. And this determines the position of all men at the present day, for the mere lapse of time can make no difference in these matters, nor can any fresh revelation of God alter the *position* of any whose condition remains unchanged, except, indeed, to place them under fresh obligations. As His creatures, men are responsible to God as the moral Governor of His creation, and being alienated from Him and enemies in their minds by wicked works they are objects of His righteous wrath. And God must settle the question that is raised between Himself the righteous Judge and man the sinner, before He can bring him into any fresh relationship.

Looked at from the creature's point of view, there was, of course, but one way to settle that question—a way that excluded the possibility of any other relationship—even by God's executing the judgment which man as a sinner had merited. But it is just here, when no creature could ever have suggested a way of escape, that God reveals Himself

in His absolute sovereignty and grace, and makes known His purpose of mercy. But what was that purpose, gradually unfolded in earlier days and fully set forth now? Was it to teach a rebel sinner, vile and fallen beyond recovery so far as he is concerned, that after all he is a child of God, and that he has only to believe it? If so, what is the meaning of the cross of Christ, with all its darkness and sufferings and woe? What necessity was there for any atoning sacrifice? Men are consistent when they deny the character and value of the death of Christ, but they fail to account for His death at all, and, in fact, intimate that He died for nothing.

But those who bow to Scripture know better; they have learnt that the great purpose of God, carried out by and in Christ, was to *redeem* those who are by nature and practice sinners, and so to atone for their guilt that He might, as the righteous Judge of all, *justify* them, that is, pronounce them free from every charge, and make them His children. And consequently *sonship* is always set forth in Scripture as the blessed result of redemption, and in the epistles to the Romans and the Galatians it is unfolded *after* the great truth of justification by faith has been established. It is as a Judge that God either justifies or condemns, that is, reckons and pronounces men righteous, or holds and pronounces them guilty.

The doctrine of Rome and of all who teach salvation by works is that "to justify" means to *make* righteous, and not simply to *pronounce* righteous, even as it puts infusion of righteousness in the place of imputation of righteousness. Many doubtless, with a sense of sin and need, trust in Christ and are saved, and rejoice in being forgiven, without having any clear apprehension of what justification really is, but this fact does not make it less important to seek to understand the truth. Dr. Hodge

well says: "*To justify* is not simply to pardon. A condemned criminal, in whose favour the executive exercises the prerogative of mercy, is never said to be justified; he is simply pardoned. Nor is it to pardon and restore to favour. When a king pardons a rebellious subject, and restores him to his former standing, he does not justify him. Nor is it *to make just* inwardly. When a man accused of a crime is acquitted or declared just in the eye of the law, his moral character is not changed. *To justify* is a forensic term; that is, it expresses the act of a judge. Justification is a judicial act; it is a declaration that the party arraigned is *just*."

There cannot, of course, be any real separation between what is done *for* the believer and what is wrought *in* him; for every one who has been justified has also been born again, is indwelt by the Spirit of God, and is a doer of righteousness. But inseparable as these things are from justification, they are never confounded with it. And as the meaning and use of the word are very important it may be well to illustrate these from Scripture. The following passages are very clear: "If there be a controversy among men, and they come into judgment that the judges may judge them, they shall *justify* the righteous, and *condemn* the wicked" (Deut. xxv. 1); "He that *justifieth* the wicked, and he that *condemneth* the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xvii. 15); "Woe unto them which *justify* the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him." (Isa. v. 22, 23.) But perhaps the most forcible passage is Rom. viii. 33, 34, where the apostle asks, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" and then gives the triumphant answer, "It is God that *justifieth*." Surely the meaning is that if God acquits, no one can bring a charge, for he who would venture to do so calls in question the judgment

of God Himself; showing conclusively that justification is a sentence of acquittal, a declaration of righteousness, that is subject to no challenge or change.

Of course the contrast between justification in a human court and in the divine is very great. A human judge cannot both forgive and justify; if he justifies the accused *there is nothing to forgive*; if, on the other hand, he condemns him, he cannot justify him though he might be pardoned. But in God's dealing with the sinner the word of forgiveness is the first word that is spoken to his heart. In Rom. iv. we read that God "justifieth the ungodly," and at once learn that He both forgives them and reckons them righteous. But how can God justify those who by nature are ungodly? Can He pronounce a false sentence? Can He declare those to be righteous who are not righteous? That is impossible. But He can *reckon* them righteous in, and on the ground of the work of, Another, and in His rich grace He is pleased to do so. Such is His appointment, and every contrite sinner will rejoice and be thankful that it is so.

There are three expressions in the epistle to the Romans that may well be linked together: "Being justified freely by His grace;" "being justified by His blood;" and "being justified by faith" (iii. 24; v. 1, 9).

In the first the apostle, having shown man's condition as a sinner under judgment before God, and having declared his inability to obtain justification on the ground of works, sets forth the truth that God justifies "freely BY HIS GRACE," without seeking in man any cause why He should do so. The word "freely" is the same that is used in John xv. 25, where we read, "They hated me *without a cause*," and it teaches us the solemn truth that no more reason can be found in us why God should justify us than could be found in Christ why men should hate Him. This

being the case, if God would justify sinners He must find the reason in Himself, and, blessed be His name! He does so. "His grace" is the wondrous *source* of that justification, the fathomless deep, as it were, whence it springs. Unearned and unmerited by man, it comes as the gift of Him who blesses whom He will and as He will.

Yes indeed, *as He will*, but it can only be in a manner that is consistent with absolute righteousness, and that maintains the dignity of His throne, and the glory of His government. Hence justification can come through Christ alone, and the believer is spoken of as "being justified BY HIS BLOOD," or, as we get it in this very passage, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." In matchless grace Christ stooped from the height of His glory to be "born of a woman, born under the law," that He might magnify the law and make it honourable, bearing its curse, and meeting all the requirements of a righteous God. He has thus borne the penalty of sin, and has been accepted in all the infinite worth of His perfect sacrifice. And now on the ground of His atoning work, that great *act of righteousness* (Rom. v. 18, *Gk.*), both the sentence of acquittal and "the gift of righteousness" become the portion of every one who, taking the place of a justly condemned sinner, relies solely upon Christ for justification.

Hence the believer is said to be "justified BY FAITH," because thus the blessed result of the mighty work of Christ becomes his own in actual possession. For faith is simply receptive; it receives what God *gives*, as we read, "therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." Faith may also be explained as *trust* or *reliance upon Him* who is its object. It is no mere assent to truth, but reliance upon a living Saviour, or "on Him who raised up Jesus

our Lord from the dead." And we must never forget that this faith itself is of God (Phil. i. 29), and that it is therefore a living and energetic thing, as both Paul and James teach. Paul indeed teaches that the sinner is justified by faith without works, but he asserts that the faith which justifies is "faith which worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6); while James declares (ch. ii., 17, 20, 26) that anything professing to be faith which does not so work is dead and worthless.

It is this "gospel of our salvation" which brings good news to a consciously guilty sinner, for whom the "gospel of Fatherhood" has no message, and we may well remember the solemn words which embrace any "other gospel" which is not the "gospel of God," "If any man preach any other gospel unto you . . . let him be accursed." Such a sentence, inspired by the Spirit of truth, may well fill us with holy trembling, and cause us to be on our guard lest in any way we even appear to give sanction to "any other gospel." W. H. B.

GOD'S CENTRE:

THE ONE NAME AND THE ONE PLACE.

It is deeply instructive to see how God's thoughts are stereotyped in all His commandings and in all His dispensations. The outward form may change, and external circumstances may be never so different, but God's purposes do not change, and the believer who is wise in his reading of Old Testament teachings reads New Testament thoughts under them, and finds that Moses no less than Paul bears witness to Christ.

The feasts of Israel represent certain great truths, and as in these feasts God called Israel to appear before Him, so we are called to present ourselves to God in the spiritual

apprehension of these truths, and in so doing we express our allegiance to the God of truth.

In Deut. xvi. all the males in Israel were commanded to appear before the Lord three times in the year, in the *place* that He should choose. There they were called to come and there to worship ; not in any place of their own selection, but where the Lord chose to place *His Name*, for it was the Name that gave the place its significance. The Name stands for the Person, and Paul's words in Phil. ii. emphasise this when he says that God has given to Christ "*the Name* that is above every name, that in the Name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth." He is the Angel of God's presence, of whom God says, "*My Name is in Him.*" (Ex. xxiii. 21.)

But as the Name points to Jesus, so the *place* points to Jesus, for He is the corner-stone of the true temple, the veritable Holiest of holies, into which we are called to enter with boldness in the power of His precious blood. The Name and the place are in heaven, and we need ever to remember this, for though we may have escaped the danger of giving sanctity to an earthly building, we may encircle our local assemblies with a heavenly halo on the ground of some outward circumstance or some pretentious creed, while the life, the power, and the glory of the heavenly reality are lacking. It is ever blessedly true that wherever two or three are gathered unto the Lord's name, there He is, but there is more in gathering unto His Name than many suppose. Where His Name is, He is, and where He is there is power, for with Him is the plenitude of the Spirit ; and where He is, the arm of the Lord is revealed.

Let us, then, in the holy soberness of the truth, seek to dwell on the theme before us, remembering that we are

never true worshippers except as we worship in spirit and in truth.

The feasts to which all Israel were to gather were three—those of the Passover, the Pentecost, and the Tabernacles, and these point respectively to the cross, the advent of the Holy Ghost, and the glory of the future kingdom at the marriage of the Lamb.

While meditating on these feasts and the truths they represent, may our hearts be prepared to listen to what the Lord would say to us in reference to them, for as were the feasts to Israel, so are their respective truths to us, and He who commanded Israel's attendance at the place where God had put His Name, likewise commands our fellowship at this threefold gathering place.

THE PASSOVER.

First, then, let us dwell a little on the Passover. The date of this feast is of special significance. It was observed in the month in which God brought His people out of Egypt. Again and again does God remind Israel of their deliverance from Pharaoh's bondage, and so does the Spirit of God, through Paul, bid the Ephesians and all saints remember the bondage of sin and of the world, out of which all who believe are delivered by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Redemption's feast begins a new era, on the ground of which the soul can sing, "Unto Him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood," to which we can also add, "and hath made us a kingdom and priests unto His God and Father." In memory of the deliverance from Egypt, not only was the paschal lamb to be slain, but burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were also to be offered, whereby we are reminded of that fellowship and communion with God into which we are called in Christ Jesus. But while we are

thus shown our position and our calling on the ground of what Christ is to us, we have, like Israel, to partake of unleavened bread, or, as it is called here emphatically, the "bread of affliction," which keeps us in remembrance of our condition as sinners. This aspect of the cross we are prone to lose sight of in the joy of our salvation in Christ, and we thus lose that fellowship in His sufferings which the remembrance of our condition as sinners would produce. The result of this is that we become puffed up rather than humbled, as we contemplate our mighty deliverance from sin and Satan. Against this danger God specially guards us by the truth contained in the expression "*bread of affliction.*" It is added, "for ye came out of Egypt *in haste.*" The word here rendered "haste" implies not merely speed, but the affright and alarm which lead to a hasty flight. The word always implies a danger lying behind, and very solemnly does this speak to our conscience of the doom of Egypt, and the need of an escape like that of Lot from Sodom.

If the power and craft of Satan were more deeply known, the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth would be to us the "bread of affliction." The deep experience of Romans vii. would then be better understood, sin and holiness would relatively assume vaster proportions in our minds, and the gospel of our deliverance would be more like the prophetic roll, sweet in the mouth but bitter in the belly. May the Lord teach us this profound mystery whereby the "unleavened bread" becomes the "bread of affliction" to the soul, and enable us to understand the experience that Paul describes in 1 Cor. ix. 24-27, which led him to keep his body under, and bring it into subjection, lest as a servant he should lose his Master's approval, or as a disciple his expected reward.

The Passover, with its deliverance and its affliction, was

never to be lost sight of by Israel, for God says, "Thou shalt remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life" (v. 3). And we are called ever to remember what we have been delivered from, as well as what we have been redeemed unto, and as we think of both we shall walk humbly, with "fear and trembling," but also joyfully. It is deserving of notice that "affliction" rather than "joy" marks the Passover, while joy especially characterises the feasts of Pentecost and Tabernacles.

As already stated, there was only one place where the Passover could be celebrated, and that was the place which God had chosen, to put His Name there. This is a solemn witness against man's proud independence of spirit, which would say, Any place will do, if only the spirit be right. God will have His service performed in His own way, and not in ours, and that spirit can never be right which does not seek carefully to carry out the precepts of God's word. When in Hezekiah's day Israel in their haste and ignorance kept the Passover without due regard to the appointments of God, and without having cleansed themselves, the Lord smote them, though He hearkened to Hezekiah's prayer: "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary." God heard prayer and healed the people, but we have to learn that rightness of heart and motive does not justify wrong action.

The Passover, then, is our first gathering truth, and in connection with this we would refer our readers to some remarks on John xvii., more particularly on verses 6-13, in the *Golden Lamp*, page 170.

H. G.

(To be continued.)

LEOMINSTER CONFERENCE NOTES.

ADDRESS ON DEUT. IV. 1-31.

As believers in Christ we know what to think of Satan's thunderings, as revealed in the power of Pharaoh, and of Satan's subtleties, as seen in the craft of Balak; God overcomes both. But God has His thunderings, as mount Sinai bears witness, and in this chapter Moses reminds Israel of them, lest they should forget the power of God's law.

In Christ God takes us from under the law and its terrors, yet He leaves us not without law, but in the power of the divine life He writes His law on our hearts, and it becomes our delight.

Whenever we think of *law* let us remember Psalm cxix. The laws, the statutes, the precepts, the testimonies, so often referred to in that psalm, are the light and love and joy of God's children. Let us also remember that power comes from *obedience*, and where there is an obedient soul, there faith will grow, taking root downward and bearing fruit upward, and the world and the church will know and will bear witness to that power.

Moses was here encouraging Israel to go in and possess their "good land"; and if we know little of the land with its vineyards, its fields, its oliveyards and its fruits, it is because we please ourselves and do that which seems right in our own eyes. God only knows how few of His children ever cross the Jordan till their dying day. This chapter begins with, "Now therefore hearken . . . that ye may *live*." If we are found walking after the flesh we shall become *dying* instead of living Christians, and we

are apt to forget the loss we shall sustain, both here and hereafter, through carelessness as to our condition.

Unless our *position* and *condition* agree, we are in danger of falling into the terrible hypocrisy of trying to walk on high places with an undivided hoof. Let us have the hoof of the clean animal, that we may tread high places without stumbling or falling, and thus we may go in and possess the land. We have got the blessed title-deeds, and we hold them and speak of them, but have we walked up and down the land and measured and realized it? We are told in Psalm xlviii. to walk about Zion, and go round about her: to tell the towers thereof and mark well her bulwarks, and to consider her palaces. But for this we need God to open our eyes and to give us the power of vision which Moses had on Pisgah, that, as we look around, we may see the glory which God has prepared for them that love Him. To him who has the eyes open so to behold, obedience will not be hard, and the word in Matt. xi. 40, will be found to be true: "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

In *v. 2* we read, "Ye shall not add unto the word . . . neither shall ye diminish ought from it"; we must allow no partiality in God's word, we must make nothing therein "non-essential." "Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baal-peor" (*v. 3*), when nothing short of the death-dealing javelin of Phinehas served to set things right.

"Keep, therefore, and do them, for this is your wisdom." We are great fools when we fail in our obedience, for the sorrows of disobedience are far greater than the cares and troubles of obedience. As we look back upon the history of a life spent under the guidance of the eye, the heart, and the hand of God, what cause have we for sorrow that we have known so little of the trials of *obedience!*

Let us seek of God that there may be from the world a testimony to the light and life and love we enjoy, even as Israel were to be witnesses for God in the sight of the nations, "which shall hear all these statutes and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." God thinks a great deal of what the world thinks of us, for the world's thoughts of Christ very much depend upon what we are, who call ourselves His.

"God so nigh," v. 7. The secret of joyful obedience is the realized nearness of God, and that which turns all below into "vanity of vanities" is God's revelation of Himself. He teaches us the realities of eternity amidst the vanities of time, and He wants us to make the fact of His presence with us a reality in our soul's experience, that so He may be to us a God ever at hand, to hear and to succour. If we are to be helpers in the family, in the church, or in the world, it can only be as we fulfil the words, "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul *diligently*" (v. 4.). What is a sluggard? One who in this present world lets things go easy. We shall be able to let things go easy in the better land, but all going easy here is going *down*.

"Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves . . . lest ye . . . make you a graven image." This is a caution against all idolatries, and an *idol* is everything or anything that intercepts the love which comes from Christ to us. The apostle John winds up his epistle of love with "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Our *likes* and our *dislikes* are our idolatries; a Christian should like what God likes and be pleased with what pleases Him.

"The Lord brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be unto Him a people of inheritance." God wants something closely united to Himself, and Solomon's Song may unfold what this is. "His desire is toward me," or rather, His desire, or will, or wish, is *upon*

me, as the law of a joyful, cheerful obligation to infinite love, welling up in the soul towards Him. Let the whole ambition of my soul be summed up in the desire to please Him well, as we read in 2 Cor. v. 9, "*I make it a point of honour to be well-pleasing unto Him.*" Nor is this a law from without which says "I must," but it becomes a law from within which says, "I cannot help it." Then shall we have that consecration which leads to the realisation of the words, "The reproaches of those that reproached Thee fell on me."

"The Lord Thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God;" may He write that jealousy of His love upon our hearts.

What a forewarning have we in verses 25-30 of Israel's wanderings! Whenever the flesh is allowed in us, chains will be needed to bind and to restrain it, even as Israel were forewarned of tribulations, because of their disobedience, and of their being cast out of the land. In proportion as we live as those not in the flesh, the chains will loosen and fall off.

Shall we be Christians living in the land, or shall we be Christians dying in the wilderness? Which is it to be? Only as those over Jordan can we be a profit to our God, to ourselves, to our brethren, and to the world around us. A man who has got into the land, and is enjoying it in the fear of God, has never the heart to go back into the wilderness, but he who is in the wilderness is ever being reminded of Egypt's good things. He who is in the land can live above Egypt, for he has found what is infinitely better.

H. G.

ON WHOLLY FOLLOWING.

The last words of our Master in John xxi. are "*Follow thou Me,*" and an Old Testament scripture (Numbers xiii. 30-xiv.), which tells us of Caleb and Joshua, may be

helpful in showing how we may do this. God's comment on the action of Caleb in *following fully* is repeatedly brought before us ; not less than *six* times is this special feature in the character of Caleb referred to: Num. xiv. 24 ; xxxii. 12 ; Deut. i. 36 ; Josh. xiv. 8, 9, 14. What must be God's purpose in this ? Surely that we may take Caleb and his companion as an example. Caleb and Joshua were with the other spies forty days ; they walked with them, they viewed the same cities, and they came back with them to the same place, yet it is said of these two only that they "wholly followed" the Lord. Wherein lay the difference ? It rested entirely on their condition of soul ; "My servant Caleb," God says, "had *another spirit*."

Three points may be noted regarding these two faithful men : (1) They had a good remembrance of God's past deliverances. (2) They had a good and constant realization of God's presence as ever before them. (3) They had good courage in speaking out their convictions. Each day of their journey they remembered how they had been brought out of Egypt, and their wilderness deliverances, and they remembered, too, that the same God who wrought for Israel was always with them. When they came to the walled cities, instead of letting their hearts sink as they looked at the high walls, faith's secret was given to them, and they saw God between them and the highest walls. They could say, "God will overthrow that wall before we enter the city," because God was going before, and they were only following Him. Instead of dwelling on the height of the walls, and comparing themselves with the sons of Anak, their thought would be, "God has given us this land : what is a *wall* to HIM !" They realized the presence of One whom they had been daily accustomed to see by the eye of faith. Their wholly following, day after

day, for forty days, was a delight to God's heart. As they looked at the good things of the land they could say “There is a day coming when all will be ours ;” and when they returned, we read that “Caleb *stilled* the people,” and spoke for God. Wholly following includes speaking that which we know, testifying that we have seen, and bearing witness to the fact that God is verily ever going in front of us. The Lord judges not by the measure of our apparent success, but by the measure of our faithfulness. These men only brought back some of the fruit of the land, but the patience of faith made them content, for they knew that every acre they trod upon had become their own possession. May God make us whole-hearted like them.

E. K. G.

“ ANOTHER SPIRIT.”

A chord has been struck in that expression “*Another spirit,*” which I would touch again.

Many who had seen the wonders of the Red Sea, alas! left their carcasses in the wilderness. In writing to the Corinthians Paul says that these men are examples to us; that is, they are warning beacons. (1 Cor. x.) The Hebrew saints are likewise solemnly admonished by these things (Heb. vii. 5), and the Holy Ghost saith to us “*To-day if ye will hear His voice.*”

This daily hearing God's voice is beautifully manifested in the life of Caleb. Caleb realized God's presence from the earliest starting point of his journey till the very day when he stood in possession of the vine-clad hills of Canaan and asked Joshua to give him that portion which his feet had trodden and his faith had grasped forty years before: “As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come

in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said." (Josh. xiv. 11, 12.) May we be men of like faith.

In the glory we shall know something of the depth and height, of the breadth and length, of our salvation, a salvation that began at the outer door of hell and that fails not till we are in the kingdom of God's eternal glory.

Caleb had to march on through the wilderness into the land, and then to take possession. His flesh was no better than our flesh; he was surrounded by false Israelites, travelling daily, hourly with them, and yet such was the power of God in that man's soul that he was not contaminated by them. Think of their jealousies and their unbelief! The pestilence of unbelief was raging in a thousand ways, yet he was preserved amongst them—a marvellous display of the grace of God. Every day, every moment, Caleb remembered he was the Lord's servant, needing the Lord's salvation.

Although we have been saved once for all, we yet need to be saved moment by moment; hence the force of the word, "*To-day if ye will hear His voice.*" "*Behold, now is the day of salvation.*" We use this as a word for sinners, but it has precious meaning for the child of God. Caleb constantly proved that "*To-day*" is "*the day of salvation*;" each day the prayer of his heart would be, "*Lord, I am Thine; save me.*"

In order to make a good course there must be a good beginning, a clear starting-point, a definite object in view; Caleb commenced, went on, and ended *with God*.

It does not always happen that at first the whole heart is surrendered, but no vessel can be truly *launched* so long

as one single cord or rope holds that vessel to the stocks. When Naomi wanted a *whole-hearted* convert, one who would not follow her for any earthly gain, she found such an one in Ruth. The Lord told His disciples to count the cost, for only such as do so are fit for the kingdom of God. Moses was a man of this stamp. On the one hand there were the pleasures of sin for a season; on the other the reproach of Christ and affliction with the people of God; and Moses, in the power of a living faith and in the light of unseen and eternal realities, made his choice. The worst things of God were, in his estimation, better than the best that Egypt could offer. Hundreds and thousands of God's dear children have never yet started fair; the plough of God's truth has never entered deep into their souls, and the light of an unseen eternity has never shone full upon them. In their voyage through this world the under-currents of life cause them to drift this way and that way. By God's grace let us ever have the bow of our vessel directed towards the port of eternal glory. Left alone for one moment, where should we be?

Let us hear the Lord's voice, let each of us be able to say, He has spoken to *me*, and then let us *follow* all the way. We shall thus be like the ploughman who puts a stick in his field, and then with his eye fixed steadfastly on it goes patiently on and on.

In Psalm lxxviii. it is said of Israel that they were "not steadfast;" in three ways they turned back. First, *as pilgrims* they were dependent upon God to supply all their need, but they said, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" May God save His people from these murmurings of unbelief. The Lord taught His disciples that if they followed Him He would see to their necessities. Secondly, *as soldiers* they ought to have pushed the battle to the gate, as Caleb did, but though they were armed and

carried bows, they turned back in the day of battle. Thirdly, *as worshippers* they provoked God by their idolatries.

Let us, then, seek to go on with a fixed heart, singing and praising God, and like Caleb, Ruth, and Moses, let us yield ourselves to God alone, and His mighty love will enable us to bind the sacrifice with cords to the altar. It may struggle to break away, but those silken cords of Calvary, those bands of love, are strong enough to bind spirit, soul, affection and will, to the horns of the altar.

W. W. W.

“ IN THE BOSOM.”

In John i. 18 we read “The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” Out of the abundance of His heart Christ ever spoke of His Father God. Resting in the bosom of the Father and constantly communing with Him, He could tell out the Father’s character to the world. No other book reveals the Father like the gospel of John. How truly the Lord Jesus could say in the words of Ps. xvi. 2 (R.V.), “I have no good beyond Thee.” His Father came first, and the saints next.

In John xiii. 23 we read of John leaning on Jesus’ bosom, and there we may lean and learn of Him. Bosom friends know each other’s character. *We* are left in the world to tell out the character of the Lord Jesus, as He came into the world to tell out the character of the Father. Our lives ought to be a reprint of the life of Christ. He has left us an example (1 Pet. ii. 21), that is, a copy to follow, as a child at school gets dotted letters to write over. Our whole demeanour ought to be one witness for the Lord Jesus. If we abide in fellowship with Him, lying on His bosom and resting there, drinking

into His love and hearing His words, we shall be able to tell out something of the Lord to those who know little or nothing of Him. It is impossible for us rightly to represent Him if we are not leaning on his breast and enjoying the light of His countenance. John was in the place where He could hear the still small voice—*so near!* We, alas! are often too far away to ask the needed questions. John had not to use any roundabout form of words, but simply asked, "Lord, who is it?" A little talk with Jesus is what our souls need. When were we last alone with God? It is a very bad sign when such communion is rare with us. The company of our Lord Jesus has a transforming effect on us, and we grow like Him. When we see any Christians very like Christ, we may be sure they have been much in His company. We are responsible to tell out the good news concerning Him, and can bear witness by our life and by word of mouth; but the latter without the former is of little use. Sad is it when our life takes the edge off our words. May all be able to take knowledge of us, that we have been with Jesus.

A. F.

ON WAITING FOR CHRIST.

As God's children we should be waiting for the Coming One, who will come and will not tarry. He may seem to us to tarry, but just at the right moment He will come. This is *the* hope of the child of God as each moment passes. If we knew the Lord was coming next year the heart would not be waiting for Him to-night. No sluggishness of soul should exist in connection with this precious hope, but we should be quietly, patiently, expectantly waiting for the Coming, whether at midnight or at cock crow.

Meanwhile there is something to fill up the interval—"The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." In other words, may the Lord grant us to know more of

His very bosom-love by deeper faith and closer communion, while we remain here and He remains in heaven.

We may often learn lessons from God's works around us. The field-mouse makes a tiny hole in a nut and extracts the kernel, and it does not waste time on trying the barren shells. God has given it the instinct to go to the very kernel, and so should it be with us. Thank God for the shell which holds the kernel, but let us get right into the kernel of God's love. Paul's desire for the Thessalonians was, that while they served the true and living God and waited for His Son from heaven, the Lord should lead them into His very heart of love. If thus occupied we shall not be thinking much of the long delay, or of the power of the flesh within, or of the world around us, or of the ever subtle enemy who is about our path, but we shall be enabled to pierce with faith's eye and to tread with faith's foot right into the inner circle of God's love.

The apostle John seems to ring the changes on Truth and Love, and Love and Truth; they are like Zechariah's two golden pipes, through which the oil was ever flowing. The mightiest saint is one who has most of the love of God flowing into His heart. We need not sigh and groan if we have this blessed business of being conducted into the very heart's affections of our blessed God, and He will delight to bring us there during the little while of our Lord's absence, and He will likewise direct us into "the *patience* of Christ." He longs, His heart leaps onward, but not impatiently, and our business is to be down here for Him, willing to abide and serve Him, but waiting for Him.

"How shall I meet those eyes?
 Mine on Himself I cast,
 And own myself the Saviour's prize—
 Mercy from first to last."

W. W. W.

"*The voice of my Beloved ! Behold, He cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*" Mountains and hills are no obstacle to Him ; one leap, one bound brought Him *over* these, for the word should be not "upon" but "over." (Song, ii. 8.)

"*Behold, He standeth behind our wall*"—very close to us ; nor is it a blind wall ; there are windows in it, and lattice work. "*He looketh in at the windows, showing Himself through the lattice.*" The margin reads "flourishing" for "showing," and the Hebrew word is very beautiful—"flowering into bloom," opening into flowers, as it were, for the smell, the eye, the heart. There is great beauty and joy in the contemplation of these lattice-work revelations of our Lord Jesus Christ. He presents, not His work, not His cross, not His atonement, but *Himself*. It is His atoning work which as sinners we first lay hold of ; but as believers we lay hold of His Person, and if we only lay hold of Him thus, we shall hear His whisper.

"*My Beloved spake, and said unto me.*" He spake unto *me*, to me alone. Pre-engaged hearts and pre-occupied minds and thoughts do not hear the voice. It is "*my Beloved*" who speaks "*unto me ;*" and here we may say, as one said of Ps. xxiii., "Take away the *my*, and everything is gone." It is not more precious for us to be able to say "My beloved" than for Him to say "My companion"—which is a better word than "My love." This is what He seeks—*companionship*. And what does He say ? "*Rise up My companion, My fair one, and come away.*" Note *His* use of the word "my," and the gentleness and tenderness with which He speaks ; we hear no cross word, no sharp reproof. These precious words have a two-fold bearing ; one present and the other future. In a little while we shall *all* hear the voice that will bid

us leave this world to be for ever with our Lord, but He is continually saying to each of us *now*, "Come away and let us hold communion together; speak now to Me, and let Me speak to thee." He would not have us now expect a "shout" but a "still small voice," such as that which Elijah heard when he wrapped his face in his mantle. Here again the Hebrew is wonderfully significant; it was "a sound of gentle stillness" (R.V.) that he heard. It needs much acquaintance with God to catch the voice, and then to discern its meaning and its message.

"The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth." The storms, the clouds, the rain of winter, all are gone, and in their stead appear flowers and fruit, of which in the by-gone days we knew nothing. There are flowers to be picked to-day in these wilderness scenes of business and of duty, if only we have the eye and the heart for them. Poor blind eyes ever occupied with something else will not see them, but they are always there for those who seek them.

"The time of the singing of birds is come." Now He "giveth songs in the night," but the night will pass away, and we shall by and bye have eternal songs of our own.

"O my dove, that art in the inaccessible places of the precipice." How safe in such a position, placed high above the archers, and brought close to Himself! *"Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice."* We cannot yet understand the love which says to us, *"Sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."* What shame and sorrow should it bring, that words like these should fall on our hearts, and yet leave them so cold and dull! May the *countenance* of Christ be more precious to us in all our remaining days, and may His *voice* be more dear than it ever was in the days that are past.

H. G.

SONSHIP.

THE false teaching that all men are by nature children of God, both denies the true state of man as a lost sinner needing salvation, and makes light of the real glory and dignity of that wondrous relationship to Himself into which God is pleased to bring His elect. There is no such thing as sonship simply on the ground of creation. By an act of creative power God could and did surround Himself with myriads of glorious beings, some of whom fell from their high estate, while those who are upheld by God ever delight in the high honour of being His *servants*. They are great in power and might, they are swift to do His will, it is their highest joy to please Him and to see Him glorified, but they are not His *children*.*

Again, when God had called this earth and the heavens above it into being, and had prepared the former to be the abode of man, He then, by His own hand, formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Thus man's formation was glorious, and his position as the appointed head of creation was one of great dignity. But he had no right to look up to his Creator and address Him by the wondrous word "FATHER." It was as true after God had

* In the book of Job, angels are probably called "sons of God;" but that this expression does not denote a *birth relationship* (as it does when used of the redeemed) is evident from Heb. ii. : "To which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee?" It is impossible in a brief paper to take up all points of difficulty, or to do more than make a few simple statements on this great subject, but it is hoped that they may lead those who read to consider more than ever the importance of it.

finished His work of creation as it was before He formed a creature, that One only had a right so to address Him, and that One was His Eternal Son, whose proper abode was the bosom of His love, and the uncreated glory of His presence. But it was God's gracious purpose to surround Himself with *sons*, and thus to gratify His affections, and to glorify His Only-begotten Son by causing Him to shine forth in a new relationship as "the First-born among many brethren." And it was not by angels, but by the race of Adam, that He would carry out this high purpose.

God suffered many of His angels to fall, though He upheld "the elect" (1 Tim. v. 21), and while no redemption was found for *fallen* angels, it did not please God to raise *holy* angels to any new position as sons. That their blessedness and joy are enhanced, and that their standing is for ever secured in Christ as the Head of the new creation, we may rest assured; indeed, this seems to be distinctly affirmed in Col. i. 20; but no new position is theirs.

When God constituted Adam the head of creation, He never said: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold," and Adam fell, giving a second solemn evidence of the frailty of the creature unless sustained by the Almighty hand of the Creator. God well knew all that would take place, and in His inscrutable wisdom permitted it, and then took occasion to carry out His anterior designs. He had *foreknown* a people from Adam's race, and "whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." It is not easy for us to distinguish between these words, but if there were not a distinction they would hardly have been used. The *foreknowledge* of God seems the more absolute, and may express that act of grace by which in His deep counsels He set apart a people for Himself; and then those thus set apart He

appointed to the high destiny of sonship ; for the word *predestinate* seems to have specific reference to position, as we read in Eph. i., "having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself."

Premising, then, that sonship originated in the sovereign will and grace of God, let us seek to note briefly the basis, the reality, the dignity, and the consummation of this sonship.

1. *The basis of sonship is redemption.* This is clearly set forth in Gal. iv. 4-5 : "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Christ magnified the law, and made it honourable, fulfilling it to the uttermost, and then bowing even to death beneath its curse. And though it might be said that Israel alone were under the law, yet inasmuch as Gentiles are sinners, they are under the same sentence (see Rom. iii. 19), and need the same redemption ; and the death of Christ, which vindicated the majesty of God's law while it set it aside and opened the way for the full display of grace, is the sole ground on which God receives and blesses all who come to Him, whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

In accordance with this we find all questions that have relation to law are settled, and the great truth of justification is unfolded, before sonship is mentioned. In Galatians ii. and iii., Paul shows conclusively that not by works of law, but only by faith in Christ, can any one be justified, and that only through the redeeming work of Christ can Gentiles receive the blessing of Abraham, and the gift of the Spirit. Not until all this is established does he go on to declare that they who are thus blessed with believing Abraham are "all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus," and that the Spirit they receive is "the Spirit of His Son,"

who cries "Abba, Father." It is the same in the Epistle to the Romans. The early part of the epistle deals with man's condition as a sinner, and his need of justification; it then shows how justification has been provided, and how man is made a possessor of it; but not until we reach chap. viii., and are learning out the glorious *results* of justification, do we reach the blessed statements: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," and "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption (or sonship), whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

2. *The reality of this sonship.* It is by no mere figure of speech that believers are called "children of God," for the words are expressive of a birth relationship. This is most fully brought out in the writings of John. It is in the Lord's conversation with Nicodemus that we learn the absolute necessity of regeneration for every one who is to enter the kingdom of God; and the simple yet solemn statement: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," carries in itself a proof that from the beginning to the end of time, every one who finds a place in the glorious kingdom of God is born again, and thus made a child of God, even though the full truth of this was not brought out until the Son of God was manifested. It is upon the reality of this relationship that John dwells so forcibly in his first epistle. If the Spirit testifies by David touching the old creation "There is none that doeth good, no, not one," He as definitely affirms by John that "everyone that doeth righteousness hath been born of Him." And it is this mention of divine birth that leads to the joyful exclamation: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God." It is further declared to be a *present* as well as a real relationship: "Beloved, *now* are we children of God;"

and those who are brought into it are distinguished from the rest of the world in that their course is one of righteousness and not of lawlessness.

3. *The dignity of this relationship.* What can more fully express this dignity than the words of the risen Lord to Mary: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God?" Such words surely teach that they stood in the same relation as Himself to the Father, and this is further declared by the assertion that the Sanctifier and the sanctified are "all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." The object of this passage is not so much to express the grace or condescension of the Lord in calling the sanctified His brethren, as to affirm that their actual position and relationship to God are so glorious that it is no dishonour to Him to recognize it. He and they own *one* Father, and therefore He is not ashamed to own them as brethren. A difference, truly, there must ever be; He is the Redeemer, and they are the redeemed; He is God as well as man, and thus the worthy Object of their worship: a worship which they will ever delight to render to Him. Yet so truly are they one with Him that they can join Him in worshipping the Father; for when all the children have learnt the Father's name, and are gathered unto Christ (2 Thess. ii. 1), He will fulfil the word: "In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee." This leads to the thought of—

4. *The consummation of the sonship.* In Rom. viii. a distinction is made between "the sonship" and "the spirit of sonship." The latter is spoken of as the present possession of those who are still waiting for the former in all its fulness, which is explained to be "the redemption of our body." John expresses the same distinction in another way when he says: "Beloved, now are we children of God,

and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." All that have been begotten of God are indwelt by the Spirit of His Son, who cries, and teaches them to cry, "Abba, Father." They are called to know the reality of speaking to Him as children, and of trusting Him as their Father. They are under a solemn responsibility to walk and behave as His children, and in so far as they do so the world knoweth them not, even as it knoweth not Him whose name they bear. But who of us, while in a mortal body, can have any adequate sense of the true *glory* of a child of God? The full dignity of sonship can never be known until we prove what "the redemption of our body" is. But when these bodies of humiliation are delivered from the last trace of mortality and corruptibility, and are perfectly conformed to the glorious body of the Son of God, and He shines forth in His new glory as "the Firstborn among many brethren," beholding in each His own image, *then* shall we know what is meant by the simple and oft-repeated—sometimes alas! lightly-repeated—words, a *child of God*. Consequently the last promise to the overcomer, the promise which seems to sum up all others, is that of the full enjoyment of this blessed sonship: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things: and I will be His God, and he shall be MY SON."

Satan's counterfeits. The grand truth of sonship shines too clearly on the inspired page to be denied, but who will be surprised that Satan should seek to obscure and make void such a stupendous truth? This he does in two chief ways, by the promulgation of two of the most soul-destroying lies that have ever issued even from him. The first of these is the delusion of baptismal regeneration, which is the foundation of the Romish system, and of all national

systems of religion. This doctrine is defended more boldly and strenuously than ever by many, and (sadder still) is sanctioned even by servants of Christ who do not believe it, and yet pronounce over every child they sprinkle, the words: "This child is regenerate," without considering all that is involved in such a statement.

But many who would not allow the above doctrine are attracted and ensnared by the other fearful teaching that *all men* are by nature children of God, and that the gospel simply calls upon them to believe it. But both he who asserts that a sinner dead in sins is a child of God, and he who affirms that a child of Adam is made a child of God by "the will of man," through a ceremony of human devising, are alike rendering service to the great enemy of all truth, and are denying the word of God, which asserts that those who receive Christ BECOME children of God, and that it is *by divine birth alone* that they do so. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power [or *right* or *capability*] to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." W. H. B.

GOD'S CENTRE:

THE ONE NAME AND THE ONE PLACE.

II. PENTECOST.

WE will now briefly consider the "*Feast of Pentecost*," or the "*Feast of Weeks*" as it is generally called in the Old Testament, in its relation to the Name and the place which constituted God's centre for Israel, and around which they were called to gather in their second yearly feast.

The Passover might be held in the wilderness, but this

feast could only be observed in *the land*. It was connected with the offering of the wave-sheaf on the morrow after the Sabbath following the Passover ; and as the wave-sheaf points to the resurrection of Christ, so Pentecost, on which the two wave-loaves were offered, presents to us the resurrection of the church of God ; for it is as partakers of resurrection life in Christ that we are " raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places " in Him.

This truth is essentially connected with the power of the Holy Ghost, which raises the child of God, in his new life, above the world, and makes him a citizen of heaven. It is therefore connected with " the land," into which by faith we are now called to enter, and to engage in the heavenly conflict, and in the power of the Holy Ghost to prove ourselves more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

With this corresponds the experience given in Rom. viii., which we have to learn out for ourselves, but our doing so will depend on the measure in which we are " led of the Spirit." It is not here a question of our being " in Christ," and of our being assured that " no condemnation " awaits us ; our passover-standing settles both these points, by virtue of the precious blood of the Lamb. The question connected with the Feast of Pentecost is as to our knowledge of the *power of the Spirit* ; and this depends on us, in so far as we may grieve and hinder the Spirit's operations. All that the work of Christ effects for us is entirely beyond our control, and we cannot lessen its efficacy. It is absolute, and hence our security in the new covenant is inviolable, for neither our failures nor our shortcomings affect our standing in Christ, if we are really born of God. It is thus that the " wisdom and prudence " of God's ways towards us are displayed. (Eph. i. 8.) His.

wisdom makes our life absolutely sure, for it is "hid with Christ in God;" His *prudence* links the enjoyment of our spiritual blessings with our walking in the power of the Holy Ghost, and only as we so walk is our joy full, and are we perfected in love.

Hence, as has been already pointed out, the "bread of affliction" marks the Passover feast, and joy is never alluded to; while in the Pentecost the prominent feature is *rejoicing* before the Lord; and it was not to be an individual joy, but there was to be a fellowship in it with others, reminding us of the communion of saints.

Thus Israel was commanded to gather at the Feast of Pentecost, and thus also believers are now called to gather together in the name of the risen Christ, and in the joy of that relationship in which we all stand before God, in the power of the Holy Ghost. On our apprehension of this precious truth our spiritual condition depends.

"None of you shall appear before me empty," was the command to Israel at the three feasts, but it has to be observed that this one was to be especially kept "with a tribute of a free-will offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee." This again distinguishes the Pentecost from the Passover. In the latter the chief thought is that we are *receivers*, but here we are taught to bring to the Lord His tribute—a free-will offering. Thus blessings received become, according to our feeble measure, blessings returned into the bosom of our God. He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and we echo the words, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We love Him because He first loved us, and to all eternity God will reap as He has sowed.

Using a comparison from Ezekiel's vision of the holy

waters, which flow from under the threshold of the temple by the south side of the altar, we may say that the blessings of the Passover, which belong to the whole heavenly family, are *ankle deep*. But the Pentecostal blessings run *knee deep*, and are the portion of those who enter the land of promise, and have wherewithal to fill their basket, as they come in their worship and service to the place where the Lord has placed His name. See Deut. xxvi. 1-11, and also remarks on John xvii. 14-21, in pages 174-6 of the *Golden Lamp*.
H. G.

THOUGHTS ON HOLINESS.

FROM AN ADDRESS BY MR. R. C. CHAPMAN.

HOLINESS is likeness to God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the great pattern of holiness, and we can only attain it by being imitators of Him.

There may be a lack of holiness and yet great *uprightness* in outward walk, but *holiness* shines forth in the life just in the measure in which Christ dwells in the heart. Mistakes often arise from our confounding what is *naturally right*, with what is *pleasing to God*. The judgment of the natural conscience must not be trusted, for it may greatly deceive us, and we always need the sure word of God. The flesh at its best is but a tiger in chains, and the law of Moses must not be confounded with the law of Christ. Holiness can only be ours through the blood of Christ, for "in the blood is the life."

If we find our rest where God finds His—even in Christ—we shall never be disturbed or at a loss, and never be at the mercy of circumstances. We shall rather prove the fulfilment of the word, "The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall *garrison* your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

We often hear of *practical* holiness. But was not Mary at the feet of Jesus, for that time at least, a more practical person than Martha? It is a false holiness which does not begin and end with pleasing God.

Let us always seek to distinguish between *emotion* and *affection*. Affection toward God is a peaceful stream, clear as crystal, enabling the soul to endure, and to persevere. Emotion is a more occasional thing, and may be the fruit of special circumstances, as we read in the Acts, "The disciples were filled with joy." Our blessed Lord Himself, both on the mount and in the garden, had emotions that were not ordinary, but His *affection* flowed on in unbroken strength and continuance. Affection, not emotion, is the true test of sanctification.

We all need special help from God for special seasons, but this may surely be left to the sovereignty of Him who knows our need.

The "*whosoever*" of John iii. 16 is most precious, but let us go on to the "*whatsoever*" of chap. xv.—"Ye are my friends if ye do *whatsoever* I command you;" then the "*whatsoever* ye shall ask" (v. 16) will be ours also.

If the command in Rom. vi. 11 be obeyed—"Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord"—it will ensure a holy, blameless walk in the sight of God and man. If I fulfil my relationship to God in Christ, I shall never do or say an unworthy thing. Entering into my oneness with Christ, my affections must necessarily run in the same channel as His. Strong and true affection to Him will not let me rest if *one* of His precepts be transgressed; but mere natural uprightness will give me no such exercise of heart. If we walk with God we shall always say, "The good that I would I do not," even though our walk be unblameable before our fellow men. Our thoughts will be

occupied with Christ ; it is Christ that died ; that is, *once for all* : “ who also maketh intercession for us ; ” that is, *continually*.

Let us be on our guard against lowering the standard of holiness. “ The law is spiritual ; but I am carnal.” Yet we can say “ I delight in the law of God after the inward man,” even as the Son of God said, “ I delight to do Thy will, O my God ; ” but He needed no allowance to be made for imperfection. By God, by men, by devils, He was called “ The Holy One of God.”

If I cannot see my own imperfection I must fail to be perfectly pleasing to God ; and any believer who thinks he has reached a state of perfection is under sad delusion.

If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we shall see imperfections which the grosser conscience of one not walking in the light, cannot discern ; but we shall know that God *does not see them*, for He sees us *in Christ*.

ELIEZER, OR FAITHFUL SERVICE.

GENESIS XXIV.

THERE are few subjects on which the thoughts of God and those of men more widely differ than that of *service*, for God’s estimate of dignity and man’s are in perfect contrast ; and this contrast was never more manifest than in the present day. Of old, Jehovah honoured faithful servants, stamping their service with marks of approval and honour, and the Lord Jesus did the same in the days of His flesh, and He does so still. The Son of God has dignified service by taking upon Himself “ the form of a servant,” and in Him we have in perfection the illustration and example of the faithful servant.

In Him, His service and its results, God’s delight in the

faithful servant and his service is also exemplified, whilst in the present exaltation of Christ, together with the future glories awaiting Him, may be traced God's good pleasure to honour faithfulness in service.

Among faithful servants in olden times, Eliezer distinguishes himself, and the character of his later service shows the esteem in which he was held by his master, while his life illustrates the meaning of his name, "God is my help."

Born in Abraham's house, he had grown up in it, and had so served as to attain the first place among his master's many servants. This is proved by Abraham's words to Jehovah: "Lo, one born in my house (son of my house) is mine heir." It is also said of him that "all that Abraham had was under his hand, and he ruled over all that his master had." Being faithful in his master's house, he was counted worthy of honour.

Eliezer was now to be still more honoured, for the service to which he was about to be called outshone all former recorded manifestations of confidence placed in him by his master. Probably he was one of the many home-born, trained servants led by Abraham in the battle of the kings, when he conquered, rescued his nephew Lot, and recovered spoil. Eliezer was trusted then, but now he is to be entrusted with the most important of all matters, the choice and safe conduct of a wife for his master's only Isaac. Abraham's beloved and tenderly-nourished son had been surrendered, as it were, to death, and had been received back as from the dead, and would now be doubly endeared to his father. (John x. 17.) The circumstances attending the journey to Moriah, and the momentous transactions thereon, would doubtless afford an ever new topic and an additional subject for fellowship.

On mount Moriah God had confirmed by an oath His

promises to Abraham and to his seed, and this led Abraham to consider and provide for his son's future. As to history, Isaac is for a time in the shade, and Eliezer becomes prominent, and is called into his master's presence to swear fidelity to him and to his son. Abraham knew his man, and, under Jehovah, who was his own real and full trust, he could confide in Eliezer, and expect good for Isaac, not *from* but *through* his faithful service.

Abraham delivered his solemn charge, and answered Eliezer's enquiries; they mutually understood one another, and placing his hand under his master's thigh, Eliezer swore by Jehovah-God to be faithful.

For the important business before him all else is suspended, and as his master had risen early to do Jehovah's will on mount Moriah, so Eliezer rose the next morning and prepared to commence his journey to Mesopotamia, to seek the wife for Isaac. All this is suggestive. "As a man soweth, so also shall he reap." What the exercises of his soul on the way were, we are not informed, but his prayer on his arrival in Mesopotamia gives us some idea of his thoughts by the way, for surely those utterances were not the result of a passing *frame*, but of a *state* of soul.

Wisdom, said Solomon, is profitable to direct, and Eliezer, in his day, asked for and obtained it. Outside the city of Nahor he rested at the place to which the women resorted to draw water at eventide. There he prayed and proposed to Jehovah the sign, the token by which the chosen damsel should be discovered.

It must have been a solemn moment to Eliezer, a moment affecting the entire future of Isaac's life and his own; yes, and his master's also. A mistake made at that time would have been a grave one, for on the rightness of the choice that evening hung the earthly happiness of

Isaac's life. He felt this, and therefore pleaded earnestly with Jehovah that for Abraham's sake, as for Isaac's, He would prosper his way.

In connection with the sign which he asked, Eliezer's conduct differed, I judge, from that of Gideon with his fleece, and that of Peter when he asked to walk on the water. In both these instances the simple, positive word of God had been given—to the one, "Go in this thy might, and *thou shalt deliver Israel*" to the other, "It is I." Their "*if*" was therefore unnecessary, and proved the weakness of their faith. Had Jehovah drawn Eliezer's attention to Rebekah, and said, "Behold the maiden," and *then* Eliezer had said, "*If* it be she, give me this sign," the cases would have been parallel. There was no word from God, and therefore we may conclude that Jehovah, whom Eliezer had honoured, suggested to him the token he asked.

While Eliezer was speaking, Rebekah passed with her pitcher on her shoulder. He surveyed her; "she was very fair to look upon, and a virgin." Having filled her pitcher she was about to repass Eliezer, when he ran to meet her, and asked to drink from her pitcher, reminding us of ONE who, when seeking worshippers for the Father at the well of Sychar, said, "Give me to drink." Rebekah promptly and cheerfully lowered her pitcher, saying, "Drink, my lord," and he drank. A refreshing draught, indeed, must that have been to him, not only slaking his thirst but refreshing his spirit, for in it he discerned that the first part of his token was granted. No sooner was that done than she volunteered to give his camels drink, and, emptying her pitcher into the trough, kept refilling until all were satisfied.

Eliezer looked and wondered; did he admire? The deed deserved admiration; she was, indeed, a princess,

whose conduct should shame many a foolish, spoilt and affected daughter of the present day.

Having had every request connected with his sign thus fulfilled, Eliezer drew from his treasures an ear-ring and bracelets, according to the custom of the country, and asked her, "Tell me, whose daughter art thou?" and she said, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor," adding, "We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in." Hearing this, Eliezer decked her with the ornaments he had taken from his treasures, and in her presence bowed, worshipped, and gave thanks to Jehovah.

Doubtless Rebekah pondered all this, and she ran to tell those of her house all that had happened. Her brother Laban heard, and ran to meet Eliezer, welcoming him to the house with the words, "Come in, thou blessed of Jehovah; wherefore standest thou without?" The invitation was accepted; the strangers entered, washed their feet, looked well to all under their care, and found that food was set before them.

Thus far Jehovah had prospered Eliezer's way; but he declined to eat until he had told his errand and settled the matter nearest his heart. Faithful in his service, his conduct would have refreshed the soul of his master, had he witnessed it.

At Laban's bidding he commenced his narrative. Owing himself to be Abraham's servant, he described the blessings wherewith Jehovah had blessed his master, closing with the birth of Isaac, the son of Abraham's old age, to whom his father had given all he had. He next recounted the interview between his master and himself, and Abraham's solemn charge, and his oath to be faithful to it, in the choice of a wife for Isaac. He then repeated what he had said to Jehovah in Rebekah's hearing at the well, referred

to the ornaments he had given her, and finally appealed to the parents for an immediate reply.

Eliezer's conduct gave weight to his words ; his simple, godly narrative carried conviction ; it was irresistible, and drew from Rebekah's friends the acknowledgment that the matter proceeded from Jehovah, that they could say nothing good or bad, but gave Rebekah to be Isaac's wife. Eliezer again bowed to the earth unto Jehovah, and then from his treasures he brought forth and presented to Rebekah jewels of gold and silver, and goodly raiment ; also to her friends he gave goodly gifts. Eliezer had prayed, "Send me good speed *this day* ;" he had gained his object ; and now he can sit down, enjoy his meal with his host and family, and rest through the night.

Early morning found Eliezer up and preparing for his homeward journey. His first recorded words to the friends were, "Send me away." They were not prepared so quickly to part with the daughter and sister, but requested Eliezer to tarry with them at least ten days. But he could not yield ; "Hinder me not, seeing Jehovah hath prospered my way ; send me away that I may go to my master." It remained for the damsel to be consulted, and she was asked if she would go with the man. She consented, saying, "I will go," and she was surrendered to Eliezer with a parting blessing, and he, with the integrity and tenderness becoming such a trust, guided and carried her across the desert to meet him whom, not having seen, she loved.

As they neared the future home, Rebekah saw a man coming to meet them, at a place where perhaps he had expectantly waited often ; "Isaac went out to meditate at eventide." Rebekah, finding on enquiry that it was Isaac, alighted from the camel and veiled herself, by her act expressing, "I am *for thee* ; veiled to all but thee."

Thus they met. Eliezer gave the account of his journey and Isaac received Rebekah, brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife. He loved her and was comforted in her love, after his mother's death.

Interesting and suggestive indeed is this narrative. It furnishes a bright example of true service by a faithful servant, carrying with it its own reward. But this is not all, for it reveals to the circumcised ear and anointed eye a deep mystery; something of which we have now the foretaste in part, and which will hereafter be enjoyed in full.

If the scene on Moriah finds its answer in the death and resurrection of Christ, so also the silence of history respecting Isaac between his typical death and resurrection and his marriage, illustrates the time of Christ's absence with the Father. And if the interval was occupied by Abraham in providing for Isaac's future joy, so also now the Father is preparing for the future joy and glory of Christ His Son. Again, if a faithful servant was found, whose service was used to bring to pass Isaac's desire and hope, thus also fulfilling Abraham's joy, so now the Holy Ghost, by the ministry of saved men, as gifts bestowed by the Head of the body, the Church, is winning souls by evangelistic labour to trust in and love an unseen Christ. Then afterwards, by teachers and shepherds, such souls are instructed and guided to their coming Lord, when, neither in heaven nor on the earth, but in the air, He and His will meet, and "so shall we ever be with the Lord."

H. H.

FRAGMENT.—To *lose one's life* is to give it up every day to the Lord Jesus. We must learn to use all circumstances in which we are placed as opportunities of living to Christ and manifesting Him.

THE MIND OF CHRIST.

PHIL. II. 1-15; IV. 1-4.

THIS epistle is emphatically a *wilderness* one. It contemplates the child of God as pressing on through this world to his home in the heavenly city. But though the apostle, as he looked onwards, knew that it would be far better to depart and be with Christ, he was nevertheless willing to remain and help the Philippian saints over the rough parts of the way.

He reminds them that their behaviour on the journey was to be worthy of the gospel of Christ, and that they were to stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving *together* for the faith of the gospel, and thus proving that they were under its power.

In seeking to induce them all to exercise the lowly mind of the "new man," which he well knew was in each of them as regenerate (chap. ii. 1-5), he could not pass over the disagreement between two sisters, Euodias and Syntyche (chap. iv. 2, 3), being well assured that "the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water."

None knew better than Paul that while the "new man, created in righteousness and true holiness," was in each Philippian saint, there was also the "old man, corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," though bridled in so far as they walked in the Spirit.

As a little water from a dam may soon carry devastation far and wide, so, the apostle knew, might the difference of mind between these two Christian women, if unchecked, gather strength and mar the fair testimony of the whole Philippian church.

How vividly he perceived this, and how wisely he sought to correct it, is evident from his words: "I beseech Euodias, and I beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." Where there was a desire for pre-eminence he well understood how very small a matter would feed that desire, and he took care not to *seem* to give more regard to one than to the other, and therefore with heavenly wisdom he addresses both in the same terms, not saying "I beseech Euodias and Syntyche," but "*I beseech* Euodias" (probably the elder), and "*I beseech* Syntyche."* Thinking too of the tendency to leave such a sore unhealed, he adds, "And I intreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help these women who laboured with me in the gospel."

Among the many "lovely" things in this epistle, let us bear in mind the apostle's gentleness and skill in dealing with these sisters, and let us also remember that where there is strife a peace-maker is needed.

If Paul was busy we are sure that Satan would not be less so. While Paul sought to nourish the lowliness of the new man by bringing before them the pattern of the One who humbled Himself, and became of no reputation, Satan would endeavour to nourish the pride and love of reputation of the old man. The apostle would seek to fix their eyes on the excellencies of Christ, and Satan would try to occupy their minds with each other's failures, with the hard things spoken against themselves, and with the humiliation in the sight of others if either yielded. Thus he would urge on to carnal victory and "vain-

* The A.V. has "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche." The R.V. shows they were addressed in precisely the same terms, though a different verb is used, "I exhort Euodias, and I exhort Syntyche." The Greek word may be translated "beseech" or "exhort;" but "*beseech*" seems far more in keeping with the lowly character of the epistle.—ED.

glory," whereas true glory, as the apostle teaches us in chap. ii., is gained by self-abasement.

In these days strife is plentiful, and the solemn warning in Gal. v. 15 is greatly needed: "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another;" that is, take heed lest you so do the work of the adversary that you be utterly scattered.

Contrariwise, may we learn of the Good Shepherd. How different were His ways! How lovingly and tenderly He dealt with His failing disciples! How gentle and wise, yet how telling were His rebukes! When strife arose, He set them at one; and when He ascended He left them *together* on the Mount of Olives with His parting and abiding blessing.

On the way to Emmaus, while He reproved the ignorance and unbelief of the two disciples, He at the same time so made His love to be felt that they said, "Did not our hearts *burn* within us while He talked with us by the way and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

If evil reports regarding those who differ from us are readily received and circulated by us, is it not manifest that we are strangers to the experience enjoined in Phil. ii? We all need to remind ourselves constantly that as children of God we are members one of another, and that if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. God Himself says, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye."

The way in which Paul identified himself with Onesimus, the fugitive slave, is very touching, as seen in his words to his master, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, *put that to my account.*" Reminding Philemon of the relation in which Onesimus now stood to Christ, and of his own indebtedness, Paul seeks forgiveness for the poor member of Christ, "Let me have joy of thee in the Lord,"

saying, "Receive him *as myself*." How thoroughly did Paul bear the burden of Onesimus, entering into his case, and feeling as Onesimus felt !

Thus let us learn to think of others and to bear their burdens. Rightly to consider others, we have, as it were, to put ourselves exactly in their position, and to enter into their circumstances. How should *we* feel if thus placed ? should be our enquiry. What should we wish another then to do for us ? Otherwise we can never cheer the faint nor raise the fallen ; we must get *down* to their level, yea, get beneath them, really to help them.

On the other hand, we see the apostle John entering into the circumstances of the rich Gaius. He rejoices in him as the host of the church, and wishes that he may have as much more of earthly good as his soul's prosperity will allow.

May we likewise be enabled to look everyone on the things of others, letting the mind that was in Christ Jesus ever be in us, and ever rejoicing in Him. C.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.

I AM a little better, but, humanly speaking, there is little prospect of immediate restoration, although with God all things are possible. That there is in His dealing with me a wise and gracious purpose, I am sure, for our Father knows all about us, and He is good and doeth good. It is happy to be in His school, and He makes no mistakes, either in training or discipline. His end is our holiness, practical conformity to His will, and without holiness there can be no real communion with Him, either here or hereafter. Through His wondrous grace He makes us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light when we accept His salvation, and learn what Christ's precious blood has done *for* us ; but there is something else. He would work *in* us a moral fitness for His presence, and a capacity to

know and love and serve Him for ever. Do you think this aspect of the truth is sufficiently pressed upon believers? The Lord has given us in these days a full, clear, and simple gospel, but is there not a tendency to rest content with getting people into liberty without pressing upon them the responsibilities of their position? And is there, on our own part, that pressing on toward the mark which there should be? Is there not, too, abundant evidence in Scripture that our future position in the glory depends in great measure upon our subjection to the will of God and the nearness of our walk to Him here? May God give us grace and wisdom to be more earnest and simple.

P.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Who is the wilful king of Daniel xi. 36?

It is generally considered by prophetic students that the "vile person" of the 21st verse of this chapter was Antiochus Epiphanes. The prophetic history regarding him runs on, without a marked break, into the details of the wilful king and his doings, in *v.* 36 and following verses. Frequently in Scripture the type runs on in a similar way into the antitype without any warning. In this way Solomon, in 2 Sam. vii., merges in the Messiah; Eliakim, in Isaiah xxii., develops into the Christ of Rev. iii. 7; and Zerubbabel, of Haggai ii., becomes the One on whom in the latter days will devolve the overthrow of the kingdoms of the nations. It is thus that Antiochus is replaced by the wilful king of the latter day. This would indicate that he will be a Gentile, and not a Jew, as some have supposed. This latter theory has been advocated on the ground that it could not be said of a Gentile that he would "not regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women." The former expression, however, is rendered "the gods of his fathers" in the Revised Version, and if "the desire of women" refers to the Seed of the woman (Gen. iii.), this cannot be taken as a Jewish promise, but as a promise to the whole human family. But should the difficulties lying in the way of applying what is said in *v.* 37 to a Gentile be far greater than they are, nothing could set aside the Gentile line of prophetic truth that links the king of *v.* 36 with the Gentile rulers out of which he is stated as coming, even as the little horn of ch. vii. comes out of the ten horns that had existed before it came, and stands as one of them.

The expressions, "He shall enter into the glorious land;" "He shall

plant the tabernacle of his palace between the seas on the glorious holy mountain," etc., preclude his being one belonging to the holy land itself. The time to which these statements refer is called "the time of trouble such as never was" (chap. xii. 1.), and this directly points to chap. vii., and identifies the wilful king with the little horn spoken of there, as also with the Beast of Rev. xiii., which comes out of the Gentile sea, and is called pre-eminently "the Beast" all through the latter part of the book of Revelation, and on whose behalf the energies of the second beast, out of the land, are directed. This latter—the lamb-like beast—never has any other place than one dependent on the will and authority of the Beast, whom he serves as a prophet, and he is never represented as a king.

From Dan. viii. the Beast or the little horn seems to arise from the Grecian side of the Roman world, and this confirms what has been already said as to typically connecting the Beast with Antiochus. As we contemplate the circumstances and condition of the present small powers of Greece, Servia, and Bulgaria, we are reminded of the ancient Hellenic commonwealths out of which sprang Alexander the Great. But whether the Antichrist—which is but another name for the Beast—comes from the Eastern or from the Western side of the Empire, he will still come from the Roman earth and will be identical with "the Prince that shall come" of Dan. ix. 26, whose people destroyed Jerusalem under Titus, and who will be the Prince of the future. He will come at the time of the end, when he shall make a league with the Jews for seven years, keeping it for only $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, and then will come the especial period of the last $3\frac{1}{2}$ years when Jerusalem shall be captured again, and the abomination that maketh desolate will be set up in the temple. Then will the holy city be trodden down of the Gentiles forty-two months (Rev. xi. 2.) and then will be fulfilled what we read in Rev. xiii. 5, "There was given [by Satan] unto him [the Beast] a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and authority was given him [probably by God] to work forty-two months," after which "he [the wilful king] shall come to his end, and none shall help him." Compare this with the destruction of the Beast and false prophet as given us in Rev. xix.

A careful examination of these passages leads to the conclusion that the wilful king is identical with the Beast in Revelation, the Antichrist of John, the Man of sin, the Lawless one of Paul, the Wicked one of Isaiah (ch. xi. 4), the king of Babylon (Isa. xiv. 4), and the "head over many countries" of Ps. cx., the one of whom all Scripture speaks, and whom "the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming." Even so, come Lord Jesus! Amen.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE JUSTIFIED.

ROMANS V. 1--3.

IN the previous chapter the apostle has established the grand truth that, for man who cannot be justified on the ground of his own doings, God has provided a justification "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." He now proceeds to set forth the blessed condition of the justified, and to show the fulfilment to us of the gracious prediction, yet to be proved by the nation to which it was first spoken: "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isa. xxxii. 17.)

1. *Our portion.* "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God." This *peace* is the actual possession of every believer, for it is not a mere feeling of tranquillity that is spoken of, but a positive condition; not a state of mind, but a relation to God. In the words of another: "It is not here said, we *feel*, or we *experience* peace, though doubtless we do experience the blessedness of having peace. The point is, that it is not at all a matter depending on *us*, but having been justified by faith *in God*, who raised up from the dead Him who was delivered for our offences, our righteousness is God's act, and peace with Him is the consequence. There can be nothing against us from God who is our Justifier."*

We must never forget that, as a righteous Judge, God's holy wrath must be against the sinner, even though that sinner be destined to be a vessel of mercy, and a monument of grace. The wrath of God is not mere passion, like the

* Notes on the Epistle to the Romans, by the late J. M. Code.

wrath of man, but the Holy One's love of goodness working against evil; and therefore His wrath is a great reality, and cannot be appeased without the removal of that sin against which it must ever express itself. "The judge who sentences a criminal is, however personally kind, *judicially hostile*; and again, the judge who for a good cause removes the sentence, is then *judicially reconciled* to the accused, though he may personally need no reconciliation of *feeling*. Scripture plainly reveals that the God of Love proclaims 'no peace' to the impenitent. Therefore when He 'speaks peace' there is a change, not in His benevolence, but in His judicial attitude; in other words, reconciliation."*

But here we have to be on our guard lest the mind be in any wise diverted from the fact that the God who cannot embrace the sinner without the removal of his sin, has Himself devised the way to make an end of the sin while He saves the sinner, satisfying all the claims of His justice, yet making the sinner an object of His love and endless delight; in other words, to be "a just God and a Saviour." For He it is who has provided the propitiation by which all this is effected, and has proved the deep, compassionate love of His heart towards us who were naturally objects of His wrath, in that He "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Therefore we have peace with God "*through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" not simply in Him, but through Him—through what He is and what He has done. For God has "reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ," and then by His Spirit He has made the death of His Son, and the love expressed therein, realities to our hearts, thus subduing our enmity and leading us to be reconciled to Him. The two sides, so to speak, of this great truth are thus expressed in verses 10 and 11:

*Notes on Romans by H. C. G. Moule, M.A.

“We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son,” and “we have now received the reconciliation.”

We are no longer “alienated and enemies in our mind by wicked works,” and we fear not the displeasure or judgment of God against sin; for we know that in a manner glorifying to Himself He has established a settled and abiding peace between Himself and us, which nothing can alter or disturb; not simply a feeling in our heart which might be ever varying, but a positive condition which, like Himself, is without variableness. Now the *result* of this is indeed tranquillity within, and the better we know what this peace is, and the firm basis on which it rests, the more shall we prove that “the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance for ever.”

2. *Our standing.* Even as it is through Christ that “we have peace with God,” so it is through Him also that “we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.” We neither found the way nor introduced ourselves, for we were both blind and helpless, and therefore shall never have any ground for self-complacency. Even as grace brought salvation to us, so it is in grace we stand. We see an end of the reign of law, as well as of the dominion of sin, in the cross of Christ, and we rejoice that ours is a position of gracious acceptance in Him. The exact rendering is: “we *have had* access into this grace;” we have been introduced into this blessed place of acceptance, where we find a settled peace between God and us.

And in this grace *we stand*, firmly and for ever. It is said of Satan that he *stood not* in the truth (John viii. 44), and of the ungodly that they shall *not stand* in the judgment (Psalm i. 5). In contrast with them the believer has a permanent standing; not only “an everlasting foundation,” but strength given from God to maintain his foothold. Our acceptance is in the Risen Christ, and can

never be reversed, because His condition can never change, and His suretyship can never cease or fail.

3. *Our hope.* We "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." We have much already; but what we possess precious as it is in itself, is still an earnest of more to follow. He who has given grace will give glory, and for that glory His people wait. A standing in grace means nothing less than a renunciation of the glory of man as worthless, and a turning of the back on all his fairest display. But it means a turning of the face to God, and a bright anticipation of what He will soon unfold to all who now seek their portion in Him. It is interesting to note that the first sentence in the description of the heavenly city is the statement that it has "the glory of God," intimating that therein those who now hope for that glory will find full satisfaction. For "the glory of God" exists not apart from the blessed God Himself, but is the necessary display of Himself to those who are brought into His wondrous presence. That glory will be fully manifested in His new creation, in which His pilgrims will find their eternal rest in fellowship with Himself.

4. *Our confidence.* One Greek word is represented in this chapter by three English words, *rejoice* (v. 2), *glory* (v. 3), and *joy* (v. 11), and is elsewhere often rendered *boast*. The R.V. renders "rejoice" in each of the three places, but that is hardly strong enough. The word means to *glory*, *boast*, or *triumph*, and is expressive of strong confidence. All natural confidence, with consequent boasting in ourselves or our doings, is brought to an end in the cross of Christ, and we are taught to glory in Him alone. The "poor man" learns to make his "boast in the Lord." (Psalm xxxiv. 2, 6.) Such confidence have we in the fulfilment of all that God has promised, that, as heirs of His glory, we can exult in the hope thereof.

“And not only so, but we *glory in tribulations* also,” which is a yet greater expression of our confidence in Him who is working His will in us by means of them. Mr. Code’s note on this verse may well be quoted: “We not only rejoice in this hope, but we also rejoice in tribulations—the very evils which sin has introduced, and which also may come upon us from wicked enemies of the gospel. If we did not know the effects produced, through the grace of God, by tribulations, we could not glory in them; for they are not in themselves joyous, but grievous; but as chastening *worketh* the peaceable fruit of righteousness in them that are exercised thereby,’ so ‘tribulation *worketh* patience.’ God alone is patient, the God of patience, and needeth not that anything should produce it in Him. Not so with us. It is not in us by nature; no, nor by new birth. Adverse circumstances, troubles and sorrows, which we cannot extricate ourselves from, but *must* bear, grace enables us to bear in the spirit of obedience, and not, like the world, in the spirit of rebellion and murmuring, or of desperation. Then patience *worketh* experience; we become *proved* vessels; not reprobate silver, but that which stands the fiery trial. ‘Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [or trial]; for when he is *proved* [see Greek] he shall receive the crown of life.’ And then, when experience has been wrought, it produceth hope experimentally; everything that happens contributes to increase the value and desirableness of what God hath promised. ‘And hope maketh not ashamed;’ it does not disappoint, it cannot fail or be in vain as to its fruition, because it is secured on the best and surest foundation—God’s love towards us, which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.”

Without attempting any remarks on the grand truths of the intervening verses, we may just note that in *v.* 11 the

apostle reaches the climax, "Not only so, but we also *joy* in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." The consideration of what God *has done* for us, and of what shall surely be ours, because Christ lives for us, leads up, "through our Lord Jesus Christ," to a glorying in God Himself, and He is thus known by His people as their own God, their Rock, and their eternal Portion; in whose blessedness they shall ever be blessed, and whose name they shall ever magnify.

W. H. B.

GOD'S CENTRE:

THE ONE NAME AND THE ONE PLACE.

III. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

WE have now come to "the Feast of Tabernacles," or, as it is called in Ex. xxxiv. 22, "the Feast of Ingathering." The year rolls on, and the closing feast arrives. So God's dispensations roll on, one following another, until, in figure, we reach the final stage—the glory of the kingdom, and the feast of heavenly joy at the marriage of the Lamb. Then, with hallowed memories of the past, we shall sit down under the bridal canopy of the blessings of the eternal covenant, and prove that nothing has failed of all that God has spoken, and indeed that the half had not been told.

At this last feast all Israel were to assemble; and *we* are called to gather in the precious hope of the coming glory, and even now by faith to enter into it, though in fact it is still future. Thus we have presented to us the *third* truth connected with the one Name and the one place, namely, the glory to be revealed when the Lord shall come and receive us unto Himself. The light of the second advent is made to shine out upon our daily path, and we learn

what it is to be "saved in hope," a hope sure and certain because it enters into that within the veil, for a risen Christ at the right hand of God is the pledge to us of a coming Christ, who will gather His people into the place He has gone to prepare. In connection with this feast, as with Pentecost, comes the command, "Thou shalt rejoice;" and as if to make this command doubly strong, it is repeated, "Thou shalt *surely* rejoice," or "Thou shalt be *altogether* joyful." (R.V.)

Let us now turn to Neh. viii., which may prove a word in season to some in whose experience the joy of the future is clouded and overshadowed by the trials of the present.

In the days in which Nehemiah lived and laboured, the children of Israel were in weakness, oppression, and sorrow. Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, and others were doing their worst, while half-hearted Israelites and treacherous nobles greatly added to the perplexities, the difficulties and sorrows of that time; but this chapter brings us to the feast of the seventh month, and it will be well for us to ponder the blessed record of it.

The law of God had been read, and where conscience was alive there could but be mourning and tears, hence we read that "all the people wept when they heard the words of the law." But note God's word to them through His servant Nehemiah (whose name means "The consolation of Jehovah"): "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions for them for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (v. 10).

In these, tender loving words, from the very heart of our God, the lesson He would teach us is, that while it is well for eyes to weep, and for hearts to be sad at the failure which His word, if read with understanding, must reveal, it is essential for His glory, and for our blessing, that we

should never allow our failures to eclipse in our souls the sense of the sure accomplishment of the eternal purposes of God, and the joy that springs from the assurance of their final realization. *The victory is His*, even though the Sanballats and Tobiahs of this day, the half-hearted fellow-Christians, the treacherous rulers and nobles, the false prophets, and lying prophetesses, all combine against the cause of God, His truth and His word. Let us keep this ever in mind, and because the victory is His, it is also ours, and we can sing through our many sorrows,

“The victory is ours ;

For us in might came forth the Mighty One ;

For us He fought the fight, the triumph won ;

The victory is ours.”

Surely there is fatness to be eaten and sweetness to be drunk by all who truly know what our feast of love is ! “Consolation in Christ,” “comfort of love,” “fellowship of the Spirit,” and “bowels and mercies,” may still be enjoyed by those whose “citizenship is in heaven ;” and to this we would direct all hearts, that they may find “the joy of the Lord” to be their “strength” and their sufficiency for all present need.

Here then is *our* third great gathering truth, which tells us at the Lord’s table that we show forth His death “*till He come.*” “Till He come” we are down here, and when He comes we shall be up yonder.*

In conclusion, we would reiterate some points connected with the command in Deut. xvi. 16, 17 : “Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose.” Earnestly would we press upon our fellow-believers this point—that if we would know our calling in Christ Jesus and walk worthy of it, if we would attain the full stature of man-

* We would again refer to remarks on John xvii. 22-24, in *Golden Lamp*, page 176.

hood in Christ, our faith must lay hold of (1) the Passover truth of the redeeming power of the blood of Christ, (2) the Pentecostal truth of the resurrection power of the Holy Ghost, and (3) the truth set forth in the feast of Tabernacles concerning the future glory and triumph of the Son of God. While, however, all these truths are essential to him who desires to be "an Israelite indeed," "a man in Christ," a distinction has to be drawn as to the necessity of their being equally apprehended. While the command of Deut. xvi. 16, 17 includes the *three* feasts, there is an *imperativeness* connected with the Passover which does not extend to the other two feasts, and in our zeal for the truth this must not be lost sight of. Of the Passover it is said that "the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbearth to keep the Passover, even the same soul *shall be cut off* from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in its appointed season, that man shall bear his sin." (Num. ix. 13.) Thus, while every Israelite was commanded to come to all three feasts, it was only absence from the Passover that would sever him from the people of God.

We are living in days when advanced truths are being applied as *necessary* to the fellowship of the Israel of God, but while we would yield to none in maintaining the absolute claim God has on our obedience, and our responsibility to have one mind and one mouth concerning the hallowed truths indicated in the feasts before us, yet we are bound to add that we have no authority to separate from our fellowship children of God who, so to speak, neglect to come to the feasts of Pentecost and Tabernacles; though they thereby disobey God and wrong their own souls by this neglect of His truth. It was God and God only who had power to say who should, and who should not, be within the camp of His people; and now it is

Christ, and Christ only, who has the power to exclude from His assemblies, and He who "hates putting away," and would have us regard it as the cutting off of our own right hand or the plucking out of our right eye, will not justify a discipline He has not enjoined, or the excision of disobedient believers whom He has not commanded us to exclude. To his own Master each believer stands or falls, and in such matters, if he will not heed our counsel from God's word, we must leave him to be dealt with by Christ at His judgment seat, and see to it that we set him an example of obedience, of lowliness, and of love.

There are moral and spiritual apostasies for which we have to exclude even a brother; and there are other unseemly matters for which we have to withhold the intimacy of private fellowship, as in 2 Thess. iii. 12-14, but in reference to which we can go no further. The sons of Levi took too much upon them in more ways than one, but as surely as they did so, judgment followed. We have seen the judgment of God fall upon false systems of discipline—false because not appointed of God; and may God give to us His servants, lowlier hearts, and enable us to walk with gentler footsteps in His church and to think more of obedience in ourselves than of disobedience in others.

Another point touched on here is, "They shall not appear before the Lord empty: every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee." We would remind our fellow-believers of the claim the Lord has on us, both in spiritual and in temporal things. Let us give as He has given. Let the precious stream of spiritual and temporal good flow on.

"Let the tide of blessing roll
Far and wide, from pole to pole—
Blessing deep, exhaustless, free,
Bringing glory, Lord, to Thee."

To let it stagnate in our souls or in our coffers is to turn God's blessings into curses. Alas for the stagnant truth, the stagnant grace, the stagnant strength, the stagnant money to be found in the church of God! May it roll on, so that each blessed one may be made a blessing in his turn.

The Lord bless this chapter, and the reflections it suggests, to us all in Christ Jesus, according to the need of each one.

H. G.

A FEAST FOR CHRIST.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.

IN one family at Bethany the Lord Jesus was always a welcome guest. But after His mighty work in raising Lazarus from the dead, how much more deep and fervent must have been their love! And they find an opportunity of manifesting it.

"*There they made Him a supper.*" (John xii.) The feast was spread especially *for Him*, and great, we are sure, was the joy in preparing it. Let us look for a little moment at the three members of that family; they form a lovely group, such as would be beyond the artist's skill to depict.

"*And Martha served.*" We have seen her serving before; but what a marked change has come over her! Her face then showed signs of care and dissatisfaction, and her lips were used to complain of her sister. But she has learned the deep lesson given by the Lord in that gentle rebuke—"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful." Now Mary may do as seems well to her; Martha no longer seeks to interfere. She is still a server, but she goes on quietly and happily, for she is now satisfied *to please her*

Lord. What a blessed thing it is to learn this all-needed lesson! Have *we* learned it?

“*But Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him.*” We are not told what passed between our Lord and Lazarus; indeed no words are recorded as falling from either Lazarus or his sisters at this feast; but they were all occupied with Christ Himself, all giving joy to Him, and they are *themselves* “living epistles.” In Lazarus we see a type of the risen saints, and through him we are taught to enter into those words subsequently indited by the Holy Ghost—“But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together *with Christ* (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” And our hearts are drawn onward to the time when we shall sit down with Christ at the heavenly feast.

“*Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly.*” She troubles not about the cost; it is for *Him* whom her soul loves. Elsewhere we read that she broke the hard alabaster box which contained the ointment, and she pours it all forth on her Lord in adoring gratitude—a lesson, surely for our hearts. “*And the house was filled with the odour of the ointment;*” her act always reminding us of Solomon’s words, “While the King sitteth at His table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.” Let us ask ourselves, Are *we* showing forth our love to Christ? Are our houses filled with the odour of our love to Him? We are familiar with His commendation of Mary’s act—“Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her”—and let our hearts rejoice that it is written, “God is not

unrighteous to forget *your* work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

In dark contrast Judas now comes before us, as with hypocritical care for the poor he condemns the waste of such costly ointment. And this teaches us to be careful how we receive plausible objections to some deed of love. But there was One there who knew the purpose of Judas' deceitful and desperately wicked heart, and that he only coveted a share of the ten pounds at which he valued the ointment. Our Lord looks on to His betrayal for the thirty pieces of silver by that same Judas, and to the cross and the grave; and as the tide of disapproval now turns against Mary, and the other disciples thoughtlessly and hastily side with Judas, He defends her, for her love had solaced Him as the hour of His deep sorrow came before Him. "*Let her alone*: against the day of my burying hath she kept this: for the poor always ye have with you, but Me ye have not always."

As the report of the feast at Bethany spreads, others are attracted. Many come, "not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead." And this stirs up the enmity of priests and Pharisees, and "they consulted that they might put Lazarus *also* to death." But why Lazarus? We do not read that he began to take any active part or to speak for the Lord. No, but his *risen life* condemned them.

In Martha we see the diligent, uncomplaining servant; in Mary the adoring worshipper; and Lazarus shows us the power and testimony of resurrection life; and *this* the world cannot bear. The Lord has need now of those like Martha and those like Mary; but if we live in the power of His resurrection we shall bear an especial testimony for Him, and surely share the fellowship of His sufferings.

THE LIGHT OF THE SANCTUARY.

NOTES OF A BIBLE-READING ON PSALM LXXIII.

THIS psalm suits all time, present or future, and all persons, Gentiles or Israel. It reveals a mighty change, not in the psalmist's outward circumstances, but in the state of his heart. Asaph's wisdom disappears before the wisdom of God; self-will yields to "Thy will be done;" and murmuring is exchanged for contentment and thankfulness.

Asaph's vexation was not caused by his giving way to any unrighteousness; he does not say, "I have put forth my hands to *iniquity*," for he had been careful to maintain an upright walk—"I have cleansed my heart," "I have washed my hands in *innocency*." What, then, was the cause of his discontent? He had his *back* to the sanctuary; he was looking upon the *outward* condition of men, and judging wrongly, because he had not God to guide and instruct him. In reality he was judging God's ways and God's wisdom; and this is *our* case when we compare ourselves with others and are dissatisfied with our lot.

Let us ever remember that the great inward change which is needed under these circumstances can only be brought about by going into the sanctuary. There are two altars to meet our need—the brazen altar with its sacrifice, and the golden altar with its incense, and its horns also touched with blood. If I behold the precious blood of Christ and turn to Him as my living Advocate, I shall fall in with God's wisdom and God's ways, *whatever He may do with me*. "Thou shalt guide me by Thy counsel," I shall say, and *Thy* thoughts shall be *my* thoughts.

Then let us remain within the veil. "Abide with Me," is God's voice and Christ's voice to us; so shall we be without anxious care or forebodings, and wisdom will be given us for all earthly matters.

In Matt. xiii. our Lord quotes Isaiah's words regarding Israel: "Their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed;" they had turned altogether away from God; and in this deaf and blind state Asaph was for a time. But of the disciples who were abiding with Him, Christ could say, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." If we live between the two altars, we shall be sure to live to God, and our members, yielded to Him, will be rightly used; seeing we shall perceive, and hearing we shall understand. But if our eyes are on the things of earth, if we are occupied, either with the cares of poverty or the deceitfulness of riches, everything will be misunderstood, and the word of God will find no place in our hearts.

When the psalmist sees things in God's light, he learns to pity those whom once he envied. In communion with God we see the *issue* of present things, and we are perfectly satisfied with whatever He does, whether to His children or to His enemies. Men are now saying, "Our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?" and we know what their end will be.

When David was away from God, Nathan was sent to him with the message, "Thou art the man;" but no Nathan comes to wake up Asaph. He takes the right course himself, and goes into the sanctuary; he hears the still small voice, and not only are his thoughts changed as to others, but especially as to his own condition—"so foolish and ignorant was I: I was as a beast before Thee."

We must take part fully with God against ourselves and others, because His judgment is perfect. We are in

danger of losing sight of the *righteousness* of God, and of thinking only of His *mercy*. In the cross the righteousness of God is fully met for us, and availing ourselves of the wonderful provision that God has therein made, we shall enjoy peace and rest.

Even if we press toward the mark for the prize, to obtain the Lord's "Well done," *self* will not be exalted; it will not be to *our* praise that we so run, but to the praise of God's grace in us.

Faith in God will make us steadfast. If in the smallest point we truly obey, whatever the loss of gain or gold, the end will be, that God will take up our matters Himself. It is in small matters rather than in great ones that He puts us to the test. Mordecai was enabled to risk his own life by not bowing the neck to Haman because his neck had been pliant to God.

The prophet Habbakuk teaches the same lesson as Psalm lxxiii. The "embosomed one," as his name signifies, the man in the bosom of God, learns how to look rightly on things around him. In the light of Hab. i. we are taught to look upon bad trade as a correction from God, and to be patient under our trials. We must bow meekly and thankfully, for God is caring for us.

God was caring for Asaph, caring with foresight for the issue when he knew it not. Asaph had set up his own self-will, which was the fruit of his own wisdom, and judged according to the present, but God, according to the future. God will praise Asaph for his self-judgment; and it is in this we need to exercise ourselves.

We have to judge the flesh in all its forms, whether like the bear in its ungainliness, or like the leopard in its beauty and elegance. Different forms of worldliness also need to be judged, whether like Egypt's savoury but offensive garlic, or its pleasant and fragrant melons; to

throw away the leeks, garlic and onions, is not the most difficult thing.

The things of the old creation, from man down to the tiniest flower or insect, are worthy of God; but the old creation cannot reveal the deep things of God. "The WORD was made flesh," and it is He who reveals the Father to us. No creature can reveal God, but "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

The greatest things of the natural creation we might compare with *copper*; divine things, which are found in the mine of God's word, are as *gold* in comparison.

"The heavens declare the glory of God," but not *Himself*. Creation may suggest things to the soul, but there is no *voice*. By His word God first converts a man, and *then* makes him wise. (Ps. xix.)

But Asaph now goes on to say, "Nevertheless, I am continually with Thee." The contrast between man as he is by nature and as he is by grace, becomes more wide. *Self* is the object of man's life naturally. The new man says, "Not I, but Thou"—"whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

But remember that a small thing may mar communion. A very small blade will sever a branch from a vine, and our communion may be cut off by a small sin as easily as by a great one.

Christ must be everything to us, and then we shall be satisfied. This was the spring of Paul's contentment, whatever might be his outward state. To be content with Christ is to have a competency in this life.

"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." The thought of Christ's coming should ever energise our souls.

A CONTRAST.

THE OLD MAN AND THE NEW.

“Ye were sometimes DARKNESS, but now are ye LIGHT in the Lord : walk as children of light.”

ROM. i. 29-32.	ROM. xii. 1-3 ; 9-21.
Unrighteousness ...	1 A Living Sacrifice.
Fornication ...	2 Holy.
Wickedness ...	3 Well-pleasing to God.
Covetousness ...	4 Not conformed to this world.
Maliciousness ...	5 Transformed by renewing of mind.
Full of Envy ...	6 Not thinking more highly than we ought, but soberly.
Full of Murder ...	7 Love without dissimulation.
Full of Debate ...	8 Abhorring evil.
Full of Deceit ...	9 Cleaving to what is good.
Full of Malignity ...	10 Kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.
Whisperers ...	11 In honour preferring one another.
Backbiters ...	12 Not slothful in business.
Haters of God ...	13 Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.
Despiteful ...	14 Rejoicing in hope.
Proud ...	15 Patient in tribulation.
Boasters ...	16 Continuing instant in prayer.
Inventors of evil things	17 Distributing to necessities of saints, given to hospitality.
Disobedient to parents	18 Bless them that persecute, bless and curse not.
Without understanding	19 Rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep.
Covenant breakers ...	20 Be of the same mind one towards another.
Without natural affection	21 Condescend to men of low estate; mind not high things.
Implacable ...	22 Recompense to no man evil for evil.
Unmerciful ...	23 Live peaceably with all men.
Having pleasure in such	24 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

“BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM.”

E. K. G.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS OF THE LATE
DR. J. B. MULOCK.

“WE shall often have to deny ourselves, even of the love of the saints, if we serve the Lord faithfully in this evil day. Paul had to say ‘though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved.’ ‘For my love they are my adversaries’ (Ps. cix. 4), was the word of the Lord Himself. Nothing humbles one more than dwelling on such truth, gazing upon such light as that wondrous Life manifests; and yet, by gazing and being humbled, we become in our nature assimilated and conformed to it.

“I had a nice conversation with ———. He seems desirous to serve the Lord *in his house*. The influence of ‘the Church’ has been, I fear, very injurious to his children. I impressed upon him the great influence of *home life*—in fact, it is the first and most important witness now before the young. How faithful God ever is to those Christian parents who are obedient to Eph. vi. 4, and how boldly and assuredly they can claim the promise of salvation for their household! As Mr. C—— said, when asked to pray for unsaved children, ‘I will rather pray that the entire house may be as a well-watered garden of the Lord, where the parents have grace to tend the young plants from early youth *for Him*.’

“The Lord keep you and ourselves walking in His presence and fear—holy fear which fears nothing so much as offending Him, and loves nothing so much as pleasing Him—till His love and ours is gratified and satisfied to the full and for ever.

“Please still remember those dear to us. Oh, that we saw one gleam of hope! We have little personal influence with them, but the way to their hearts, round by heaven, is never closed. This keeps *our* heart from failing on their account.”

“There is ‘a time to keep silence,’ and that time with me has evidently been the last two months. The Lord’s hand has been heavily upon me—His hand, and not His rod—and all

is well. If I have learned more and more what a vain place the world is, what a sweet place heaven—where Jesus is—must be and where we shall be like Him within and without, the Lord alone be praised!

“I may as well tell you *all* at once—I was going to say ‘the worst;’ but God’s will cannot be ‘the worst’ but the very best. ‘This is the will of God, *even your sanctification.*’ Why should I fear then to say ‘Thy will be done?’ . . . Trouble may be the *way*; the *end*—peace here and bliss above.

“Whether this is the Lord’s messenger to bring me home, or only a ‘thorn in the flesh’ to keep me low, or a break in the vessel to let the light through—all is well; yea, all is for the best in time and eternity.”

“My sickness, as you could understand, beloved, if you ever suffered as I do, acts upon both mind and body, so as to make life like an April day—sunshine and shower alternately. Oh, for the ‘clear shining after rain’—the eternal joy, after the night of weeping, of that ‘morning without clouds’—the fair millennial morning which David saw and of which Rutherford spake—when the whole earth shall be filled with His glory, and everything that hath breath shall praise the Lord, as He reigns (and we with Him too) over this ransomed world below.

“In this land of the curse, where the children of Ishmael (poor Arabs), and the children of Ham (Nubians, Abyssinians and Egyptians) all groan and suffer and die without God or hope, all is a rule of cruelty, oppression and force*. One feels how awful is the retributive justice of God’s curse, from generation to generation so heavy; and yet, worse still, neither felt, acknowledged, nor understood by its unfortunate victims. And then the cry, the half-suppressed groan, ascends from one’s heart, ‘Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!’ I have never *groaned it out* so much as in the streets of Cairo, and never so much felt the unspeakably blessed reality of being a Christian, and the wonderful marvel of grace that should have made *us* to differ, and delivered us from their lot.”

J. B. M.

* Written during his visit to Egypt for health’s sake in 1878.