
THE FAITH
AND
THE FLOCK

1917

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A Text For All The Days.

“Kept by the power of God.”—I Peter i. 5.

“Kept by the power of God”—restraining power—

Like that which holds the mighty sea in check,
When rushing onward its high billows tower

Grim ancient giants, man's strong bounds to wreck.
Check me my God, and keep me in the place
Thou hast appointed in Thy sovereign grace.

“Kept by the power of God”—providing power,

That feeds the fishes in the boundless sea,
The wild birds of the rock-heights and the bower,
And beasts that roam the forests wide and free.

Keep me, a soul dependent on Thy care:
And Thy providing bounty let me share.

“Kept by the power of God”—upholding power:

Upholding the blue star-bespangled sky:
The floating clouds that drop a gentle shower,
From their high chambers, on the meadows dry.
Uphold me, Lord, as yonder radiant sun;
That I, like him, my daily race may run.

“Kept by the power of God”—the power of love—

A father's love, that keeps a wayward boy.
A husband's love—love that will stronger prove
Than bonds and bands that self-will might destroy.
Keep me with love that draws me to Thy side,
And holds me there, the love that lived and died.

“Kept by the power of God”—the power divine,

Restraining, holding, and upholding me:
Providing, loving—that great power of Thine,
That keepeth all things: kept, yet ever free.
So keep me, Lord—or waking or asleep.
He must be kept whom God is pleased to keep.

WILLIAM LUFF.

The Faith and The Flock

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“I Will Come Again.”

“If I go and prepare a place for you, I WILL COME AGAIN, and receive you unto Myself: that where I am, there ye may be also.”—John xiv. 3.

The other day, in a religious weekly, appeared the following statement from the pen of a preacher of the gospel:—

“Millions of Christians believe in the Personal Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, while at the same time they hold, for want of definite instruction, the vaguest notions as to what He will do when He comes; why He should come; what will precede and follow His coming. . . . Yet it is studiously avoided by leading Christian bodies.”

Such a statement certainly caused us surprise, but we can only believe it to be true. There are evidently hundreds of pulpits in Christendom silent upon the all important theme of the Second Advent. Not that, as a general truth, it is denied or disbelieved, but it is not understood. The subject, in many quarters, is regarded with a good deal of suspicion; in others, it is considered unpractical and unnecessary—a topic about which very little can be known; and upon which there has been a good deal of wild and unprofitable speculation; and therefore a topic which, while embracing a truth, had better be left alone, or referred to only at particular seasons, and in the most remote way.

Is it possible to say anything to disabuse the minds of preachers and teachers of misconceptions, on the one hand; and convince them of the overwhelming practical importance of the subject, on the other? If the exponents of Christianity are not convinced on the subject, and therefore remain silent, how can it be expected that those who occupy the place of hearers

and learners should ever become acquainted with it? Thus one of the most prominent truths of the Bible remains a dead letter.

The treatment accorded the truth of our Lord's return is often very unspiritual as well as extremely irrational. All true Christians believe in His first coming; why should it be thought incredible that He should come again? In the first instance it was Personal; why not in the second? For four thousand years the world awaited His first appearing; with the knowledge that He would come; and in full possession of many details as to it: why should a similar condition of things be impossible in view of another Coming?

Nor does the hope of the Second Coming rest upon one or two isolated passages, or upon texts wrenched from their context. The New Testament is literally full of the subject.

Our Lord Himself spoke of it repeatedly.

Every inspired writer in the New Testament, without exception, refers to it—St Paul in at least eight, if not nine, of his epistles.

The Apostle Peter's addresses, as recorded in the early part of the Acts, mention the fact, and he dwells upon it again and again in his two epistles.

In the Apostolic Church not only was the doctrine of the Second Advent held, but it produced a distinct attitude of soul—"like unto men that wait for their Lord."

Thus there can be no doubt as to the teaching of Scripture, or the belief of Christians in the first century. But in order to remove all misconception on this point further evidence shall be adduced. Let us refer to a number of prominent and well-known texts.

Heb. ix. 28—"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for HIM shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Notice, first, the second coming is as definite and personal as the first. "Christ was once offered"—"unto them that look for HIM shall HE appear." Second. The object of His coming is equally definite in both cases. He came to be offered on account of sins on the first occasion. When He appears again it will be to bring in salvation—the full result of His work on the Cross. If He came

personally to die, why should He not come personally to bring deliverance?—to creation from its thralldom—to Israel, that God's promises may be fulfilled—to us that we may have the redemption of our bodies.

Acts i. 10, 11.—“*And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He (Christ) went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen Him go into heaven.*” The importance of this testimony cannot be exaggerated. At the very moment of Christ's departure the minds of the disciples are directed to the fact that He is coming back. What was to take place in the meantime? How was the interval to be filled up? Verse 8 of this same chapter, supplies the answer. “*Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*” This gives one character of the Christian dispensation. Christ gives them their commission, and then leaves them; but not without the promise of the Holy Spirit. And all in view, be it noted—not of the victory of the Church over the world, nor of the conversion of the world by preaching the gospel, but of His own personal return. Personal, unquestionably, for the declaration is—“*Shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.*”

I. Thess. iv. 14-18.—We will ask the reader to turn to this passage for himself. We refer to it now merely in proof of our general contention, and not to expound it in detail. This we may do on another occasion. In verse 14 we have the distinct announcement that God purposes to bring believers with Jesus when He comes. God intends to bring Him back again into this world. This cannot refer to Christ's first coming. Then He came as a babe, and He came unattended, as far as believers were concerned. Besides, the passage points to the future. The Apostle then intimates that by a direct revelation from the Lord he is able to explain how this will be. Verse 15 shows that he is speaking of the coming of the Lord, and the next verse leaves no doubt that it is the Lord in Person we are to expect—“*The Lord HIMSELF shall descend from heaven*”—and He comes for all His own,

whether dead or living, in order that later on He may come with them.

Acts iii. 18-21.—In this passage—verse 18—the Apostle Peter declares that the sufferings of Christ were in fulfilment of that which God before had shewed by the mouth of all His prophets. But he goes on to shew that God had equally predicted other things concerning Christ “by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began,” and that He must come back to fulfil these likewise. (verse 21). Peter calls upon Israel to repent,—“That your sins may be blotted out . . . and He shall *send Jesus Christ*, which before was preached unto you.” Here, again, we see the absolute necessity of a “second coming,” and that it must be a Personal one.

John xiv. 1-3.—Here we have our Lord’s own testimony. Could anything be more personal and to the point? He is going away, and His disciples are troubled at being left. He says to them, “Let not your heart be troubled,” and then explains why He is going, and where. He goes to prepare a place, that where He is there they may be also. But there is an additional truth. He adds, “*I will come again and receive you unto Myself.*” Are not the “I” and “Myself” equally personal? Do we expect to see *Him* in the Father’s House? If so, how can we be so fanciful and unreasonable as to suppose that when He says, “I will come again,” He does not really mean “I,” but death or an angel or anything but HIMSELF?

Here, then, we have these five outstanding Scriptures, all pointing in one direction—to the return of our Lord: all emphasising this fact—it will be a personal return: and all showing that the most stupendous happenings, affecting both believers and the world, hang upon this event. Can we afford to shelve such a subject? Are we justified in leaving it out of sight, and allowing it no place in our message? Shall we be blameless if we allow others to remain ignorant of this vital truth?

The Necessity for Christ’s return.

There is an absolute necessity for the return of Christ. Everything is incomplete; and without it, the first coming of Christ is hardly intelligible. ‘Certain events cannot happen until He returns. Many predictions in the Old Testament can

be fulfilled only by another "Coming." The Bible at present is but a half fulfilled book.

In proof of the absolute necessity of Christ's return, will the reader carefully note the following:—

1. The present state of mankind and of the nations demands some intervention on God's part, and when we turn to the Word of God we find such an expectation is raised. It speaks to us of a Second Coming of Christ which exactly meets the need. This dispensation has broken down through man's unfaithfulness, and the witness of the Church has failed. We behold Christendom a vast camp, and the very nations, where Christianity has made its home, in deadly strife—war and bloodshed—not peace, which Christ came to proclaim—are the order of the day. The significance of this must not be overlooked—it is the breakdown of the dispensation.

All this is foretold in the various writings of the New Testament; though we sadly fail to take account of the fact. Does nothing then remain? Yes. The Bible everywhere foretells the establishment of a visible kingdom in power, and with Christ as King. There are many predictions of this; and nothing has ever yet appeared on earth which satisfies the expectations Scripture raises. See such passages as Dan. ii. 44; vii. 13, 14; John i. 51; I. Cor. xv. 23-25. These we shall hope to consider fully in another article.

2. It is a necessity for Christ to come again personally *in order that a large part of the Old and New Testaments may not remain a dead letter.* We have more than hinted at this already, and we have space to give a few examples only. Read such passages as Isaiah ii. 1-5; ix. 6, 7; xi. 1-9; xxv. 6-8; and ask if these have ever been fulfilled. They are often spiritualised, and made to refer to this gospel age. But no results achieved by the preaching of the gospel answer these descriptions; and this gospel age is closing in war instead of universal peace.

3. *Many of God's promises remain unfulfilled.* There is a promise to Abraham, in Gen. xii. 3 which still stands, and must be made good. "*In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*" There is a further promise as to the land of Caanan in chap. xvii. 8. "*And I will give unto thee, and to thy*

seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Caanan FOR AN EVERLASTING POSSESSION." And all these, and more, are confirmed by the divine pronouncement in chap. xxii. 16-18.

We have also the two-fold promise, three times repeated in Ps. 89, concerning David's seed and David's throne. (See verses 4, 29, 36). And God has sworn that He will not lie unto David. (verse 35) His seed and his throne are to endure for ever. And so when the birth of Christ is announced to Mary, the angel includes this in his declaration: "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David." While the Apostle Peter in his address on the Day of Pentecost, referring to David, says, "knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, *He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.*" Has Christ ever yet sat on David's throne?

All these promises to Abraham and David, and incidentally to Israel, have not been made good; but the hope that they will be is kept alive, and insisted on, in passages without numbers all through the prophets. While the New Testament bears the same witness.

Prophecy demands a Second Coming.

4. There are certain prophecies in the Old Testament which have had a partial fulfilment. Can one half be fulfilled and the other left? And if the first part was made good by Christ's First Appearing, is it not reasonable to expect the remainder awaits His Second Appearing? The earliest promise is in Gen. iii. 15; "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*" Christ's heel was bruised when He suffered on the Cross. And to a certain extent Satan's head was bruised in Christ's resurrection; but not absolutely and finally. But that surely, is implied in the promise; and the words will find their complete fulfilment in connection with Christ's Coming and Kingdom.

Take again, Gen. xii. 2, 3.—Verse 2 has been fulfilled. Not so the latter part of verse 3.

The first part of Ps. 2 had a partial fulfilment, at all events, when our Lord was here in the days of His flesh. It is referred to in Acts iv. 25. The latter part of the Psalm contains just as clear a prediction, but of a very different state of things; and this awaits the Second Coming of Christ for its fulfilment.

Zech. ix. 9 was fulfilled when Christ entered Jerusalem. What about verse 10? Would it not considerably shake our faith in the record to think that this verse has no meaning, and might just as well not be there? But to know that the one shall have its fulfilment, just as certainly as the other produces a very different effect. Yet nothing in Christ's first advent answers to it, nor anything since. He must therefore come again.

How necessary, then, is the Personal return of Christ? The state of the world demands it. The failure of the Church demands it. The predictions of the Old and New Testament demand it. The unconditional promises to Abraham, David and Israel must be kept. Lastly, the Bible would remain a mere patchwork of fulfilled and unfulfilled prophecy if Christ did not personally return to make good all that has been spoken.

Someone may say: "But why did He not accomplish everything at His first Coming? Why the postponement of so much? and why this interval?"

The answer can only be brief. There are two main subjects of the Bible—"the *sufferings* of Christ and the *glory* that should follow."—See Luke xxiv. 26 and I. Peter i. 11. The sufferings necessarily came first. The great, the all-prevalent question of sin—the question which overshadowed all others—cannot be evaded, and so in many a glowing passage in the Psalms and Isaiah we find the sufferings and the glory side by side. But the latter could not be without the former. Sin demanded atonement—man needed a Saviour. God must be fully declared, for no one understood the depths of His heart. Sin had put man at a distance and turned him into an enemy. And so we have the Cross. There sin was judged. There the love of God to the sinner was spoken, as nowhere else. All that God could do to reconcile man to Himself was there done. Grace and truth were fully manifested. God can now be just and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. It is through

faith we come into all the blessed results of Christ's work. *Christ must needs have suffered.*

But more is needed to answer the questions fully. Christ goes to the right hand of God. There is a Man in highest glory, and God's purpose is that redeemed sinners from amongst men should share that glory with Him—(See Eph. i. 17-23; Col. iii. 3, 4; I. Cor. ii. 7, 8). The Holy Ghost has come to earth to gather men into the true church, destined to share Christ's heavenly glory. But our Lord has a double glory—earthly as well as heavenly. Israel is connected with the former, and the saved sinners of this dispensation with the latter. There is a third company (for God has many families) which will be in heaven though not sharing all the nearness of the church. God then had many purposes to fulfil; and one reason why Christ did not remain on earth and fulfil at once all the Old Testament predictions was because the eternal purposes of God, which have reference to a heavenly people—and not to Israel—had to be fulfilled. They are being fulfilled in this present Church dispensation.

What will Christ do when He returns?

We can only briefly summarise here the events connected with our Lord's Second Coming.

First, as to the BELIEVER. The dead will be raised—the living changed.—I. Thess. iv. 16, 17.

They will receive their glorified bodies, and be fully conformed to Christ's image.—Phil. iii. 21; I. Cor. xv. 51, 53; I. John iii. 2.

Christ will receive them to Himself and they will be introduced into the Father's House.—John xiv. 2, 3; I. Thess. iv. 17.

After the marriage of the Lamb and the Judgment Seat of Christ, (a Judgment of awards, not penal), they will come forth with Him.—Rev. xix. 11-14. I. Thess. iv. 14. Col. iii. 4.

They will reign with Christ.—Rev. xx. 4; II. Tim. ii. 12. And enter upon their inheritance as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. This includes "all things."—Rom. viii. 17; I. Cor. iii. 21-23; Eph. i. 10, 11; Rev. xxi. 7.

Second, as regards the WORLD. Christ's first appearing to the world will be in Judgment.—Matt. xxiv. 30; Acts x. 42; I Thess. v. 3; II. Thess. i. 7-9; ii. 8; II. Tim. iv. 1; Rev. i. 7; xix. 15.

He then takes the Kingdom.—I. Cor. xv. 24, 25; Matt. xxv. 31; Rev. xi. 15. The prayer, "Thy Kingdom Come," will then be answered. He reigns over Israel's twelve tribes as their Messiah. Ps. ii. 6; Isa. ix. 6, 7; Luke i. 33; John i. 49, &c., &c. While as Son of Man His Kingdom will be wider still—extending over the whole earth.—Dan. vii. 13, 14; Ps. ii. 8; John i. 51; Heb. ii. 6-9; Eph. i. 9, 10

"Then cometh the end"—the Mediatorial Kingdom will be delivered up—the devil will be cast into the lake of fire; as also the wicked dead who appear before the Great White Throne. There will be a new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; and God will be all in all.—I. Cor. xv. 26-28; Rev. xx. 10 to xxi. 8

R. E.

(We hope to deal with various aspects of the Second Coming and enter more fully into detail in future articles. An extra number of this issue has been printed. Will our readers order additional copies for friends and so help to increase circulation?)

The Vision and its Afterglow.

By W. TAYLOR.

Luke ix. 28-56.

There may be moments when in spirit we are raised, like the privileged disciples, to the Mount of Transfiguration, but the greater part of our lives is spent in the valley, surrounded by difficulties and discomforts.

Peter asked to remain on the hill, "not knowing what he said." It is so natural to consider our own enjoyment, but a more excellent way is shown on the Mount. The subject considered there is the way of blessing for others. "*They spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.*" Sleep prevented the disciples from seeing the vision clearly, even as self-indulgence unfitted them for conflict afterwards. But later in life Peter recalled his experience on the Holy Mount, and the

thought of it inspired him to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. He rejoiced to share the sufferings of Christ, and the Spirit of Glory rested upon him.

Paul had exalted moments when he was caught up to the third heaven ; a joyful experience, followed by many years of suffering, but the memory of Paradise brightened his vale of tears. Indeed, his whole life was changed by the sight of the glory of Christ, which he first beheld on the Damascus Road. Have *we* thus seen the glory of the Lord, and are we transformed; as Paul was, into the same image? Does the vision's afterglow remain with us, and are the common things of life "transfigured in remembered light"? Or, are we more affected by a legal spirit which says to our neighbour, "It is not lawful"? Do we interfere with our fellow-Christians who are engaged in work we cannot do, and like John forbid them? Or, does the religious zeal of Elijah affect us, who called down fire from heaven to slay the prophets of Baal?

Neither legality nor Elijah's zeal agrees with the Spirit of Christ, and both must disappear. "Jesus only" abides, who supersedes the Lawgiver and the Prophet. He is the One approved of God, inasmuch as He expresses God to men. The Law did not reveal God, although it bore witness to Christ; and its glory is obscured by the glory which excels. That which condemned the sinner is eclipsed by the Gospel which saves him.

Have we yet learned the lesson of the Glory Hill? Or, are we so enamoured of our blessings as to ignore the need around us; or so delicately nurtured that we cannot touch the seamy side of life? How unlike the Master who descended to the underworld of suffering and need, and who touched the defiled and the afflicted with His healing hand!

At the outset of another year let us seek to follow Him who regarded not His own things but sacrificed Himself for the salvation of the world. Counting our blessings, as the miser counts his gold, is of little use. If we are thus engaged, our sight is defective; we have not seen the vision clearly, and the afterglow is dim. Let us wake up to see the glory of the Lord, and follow the pattern shown us on the Mount.

Elisha, the Prophet.

By W. W. FEREDAV.

XVII.—THE FOUR LEPERS.

It is most remarkable, the persons who first experienced the goodness of God to the starving people of Samaria—four lepers! These poor creatures were sitting at the entering in of the gate in the last stage of exhaustion and misery. They felt (indeed, they said as much, one to another) that if they pressed their way into the city, it was but to die of famine; if they remained where they were, death was certain; but one course seemed open to them, to cast themselves upon the mercy of the Syrians. "If they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die" (II. Kings vii. 3-4). It was the counsel of despair. As regards those within, they were outcasts; and as regards those without, they were enemies. Yet these were the men to whom first of all Jehovah showed His salvation.

We are reminded of I. Cor. i. 26-30. In this Gospel day, it is not the wise, the mighty, and the noble who are called, but God has chosen the foolish, the weak, the base and despised, yea, and the things which are not, in order that no flesh may glory in His presence. In His grace He loves to show mercy to the helpless and hopeless, to the lost and undone. By so doing He makes it abundantly plain that His salvation is altogether of grace alone.

Behold the poor Samaritan lepers venturing forth in the twilight in the direction of the Syrian camp! Hope and fear alternated in their breasts when they reached the enemy's tents; to their utter astonishment, they found no man there. Their dread foes were gone! Who had scattered them? Men? No. It was God. The victory was absolutely His. He had caused the Syrians to hear a great noise, as of the rushing of chariots and horsemen. Both from the north and the south the noise came. Panic-stricken, they concluded that the King of Israel had hired against them the Hittites and the Egyptians. Caught as they supposed, between two armies, they fled by the only

road that seemed open to them—eastward across the Jordan. When the matter was investigated, the road to the river was found strewn with garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast from them in their flight. But Jordan rolled between Israel and their foes!

Jordan is to us a type of the death of Christ. By His death all our foes have been vanquished forever. Sin has been expiated, and the power of Satan and of death has been shattered. The death of Christ, like Jordan of old, stands between us and all that was against us. Our God loves to say to those who have no might: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" (Ex. xiv. 13).

It only remained for the poor lepers to enjoy the fruits of Jehovah's great victory. Even so it is with us, both now and evermore. The lepers "*went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver and gold and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it.*" Their deep need was thus fully met. First, they "did eat and drink." Every poor sinner who comes to God comes famished, like the prodigal of Luke xv., for a Christless world is a hungry place for all who have to do with it. But the call of grace runs thus: "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. lv. 1). The fatted calf is not too good, in God's account, wherewith to feast the sinner who believes.

The lepers found raiment also. Likely enough they were in rags. Our very righteousnesses are likened in Scripture to "filthy rags" (Isa. lxiv. 6); what then are our sins? But with joy we hear the Father's voice, saying: "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him" (Luke xv. 22). The best robe is Christ. In Him the believer stands, justified forever. The Apostle, who knew by experience the difference between the righteousness that is wrought by human effort, and that which is of God by faith, spurned the one because of the surpassing excellence of the other (Phil. iii. 9).

But the lepers also gathered gold and silver. Not only was their present urgent need met, but their future was thus made sure. Never again would they be paupers, dependent upon the charity of their fellows. If the raiment speaks to us of "the gift of righteousness," the gold and silver suggests "the abundance of grace" that accompanies it for us (Rom. v. 17). God enriches for eternity those whom He receives. It is not the manner of men to enrich either transgressors whom they may pardon, or beggars whom they may relieve, but such is the amazing grace of God. With all the blessing of Christ He endows His own forever. No wonder the Apostle exclaimed: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. i. 3).

Being now filled and satisfied, the four men began to think of others. They said one to another: "We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace." Accordingly they arose, and reported the matter to the porter of the city, and presently the news reached the king himself. Those whom God has blessed have a deep responsibility resting upon them. Do we realize that the world is perishing for lack of the knowledge that we possess? The four lepers felt they dare not settle down to the enjoyment of their abundance, and leave others to their fate. How do we feel about this? Sometimes it happens that the saints who are the best fed are the poorest workers. They would prefer endless Bible Readings to a vigorous Gospel campaign. Is this right? Peter and John were so profoundly convinced of the importance of the facts of the Gospel that when they were told to proclaim them no more, they replied: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts iv. 20). As well bid the sun to cease its shining and the river its flowing as tell such men to be quiet. In II. Cor., iv. 13, Paul and Timothy give as their reason for preaching: "We believe, and therefore speak." Paul was possessed of a special divine commission, as we know, but he does not mention it in the passage quoted. Every Christian should be able to say the same words. Brethren, do we really believe? Are the mighty facts of Christianity just articles of a creed with us, or

have they indeed taken possession of our souls? Do we believe that "Christ died for the ungodly"? Do we believe that "God raised Him from the dead"? Do we believe that "through this man is now proclaimed the forgiveness of sins"? If so, let us not "hold our peace." This day is a day of good tidings?

The king was sceptical when the news was brought to him; he suspected a stratagem on the part of the enemy in order to gain possession of the city. Though Elisha had distinctly stated in his hearing that "to-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria," he yet hesitated to believe it when it came about. It seemed really too good to be true. This character of unbelief, however regrettable, is pardonable, else where would any of us stand? In how many things do we hesitate to accredit the word of our God! How frequently we fail to plant the foot of faith firmly upon that which He has spoken! Much of Scripture is treated by us as almost too good to be true. This is exactly where the two disciples stood who poured out their tale of disappointment on the way to Emmaus (Luke xxiv.) They did not openly reject the story of the women that the Lord was alive, but their faith faltered in the acceptance of it.

Far different was the unbelief of the nobleman upon whose hand the king leaned when Elisha uttered his prophecy of grace. Though it was prefaced by "thus saith Jehovah," the man said to the prophet, "Behold, if Jehovah would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" This was positive contempt. He absolutely flouted the word of Jehovah. The doom of the scorner is certain in all ages. Accordingly Elisha pronounced sentence upon him thus: "*Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.*" Alas! so it happened. Within twenty-four hours, as the prophet foretold, plenty prevailed in Samaria once more "according to the word of Jehovah" (II. Kings vii. 16). But the solemn part of his prophecy was also as punctually fulfilled. So great was the rush for the food, that it was necessary to appoint someone to supervise the administration of it. This office was allotted to the scornful lord, who was simply trampled to death by the hungry people.

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. x. 31). His judgments are as sure as His favours. No word of His can ever fall. The scornful lord found Elisha’s words literally true: “Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.” Very similarly did the Lord Jesus warn the unbelieving men of His own time: “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out” Luke xiii. 28). Awful thought! They see others blessed, and themselves outside of it for eternity.

It is the fashion in our day to speak with contempt of the judgment of God. The Judgment Throne and the lake of fire have been practically eliminated from the text-books of Christendom. But let all sceptics beware, whether religious or irreligious, God’s word stands true, spite of all their unbelief.

(To be continued).

Isaiah.

The Second Introduction.

Chapters II. to V.

The second vision, which is again an introduction, for it gives a synopsis of the whole book, is divided into two parts: first, chapter ii. to iv., “the Day of the Lord,” characterised by the seven-fold recurrence of the words “in that day”; and, secondly, chapter v.: “The song of the vineyard of wild grapes,” having, we may perhaps say, for its characteristic, a six-fold “woe.”

The first has again three subdivisions:

- I. Chap. ii., verses 1 to 4—Israel’s blessedness foreseen.
- II. Chap. ii., verses 5 to iv., 1—Intervening sin and sorrow.
- III. Chap. iv., verses 2 to 6—By Whom the blessedness is accomplished.

Thus the vision begins with an outlook far beyond all human sin and suffering, in which “Judah and Jerusalem” are not only restored, but shine with a far more exceeding and eternal weight

of glory than ever of old, giving out the light of God to all the earth.

Chap. ii. verses 1 to 4—“*The word that Isaiah saw,*” i.e., Jehovah spoke the word, and Isaiah saw the scene that that word spread out before him, even although it was very far off. We too may “see that Word” if it be mixed with faith in us who hear, and it will surely refresh our weary spirits, although the time of its fulfilment still lies in “the last days.”

This is a technical term which, in the Old Testament, always refers to the closing days of Israel’s history, prior to and including her exaltation under her divine Messiah. The vision then primarily concerns Israel, but have *we* no care for, or interest in, His exaltation? Are we not, by His great grace, one with Him? Surely then it behoves us to meditate on this scene with deepest interest; so doing, it may become to us a very Mount of Transfiguration, giving a picture of the “power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” such as was seen, in more detail, on that holy mount.

“*And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord’s house, shall be established in the top of the mountains.*” A figurative way of picturing the supremacy of that beloved nation of Israel when fully restored in her Lord and Christ, to the favour of Jehovah. Jerusalem shall then be the centre, politically, as she is physically, of all the earth. She shall have no rival in any of the capitals that now so far surpass her. All the other “mountains,” or States, or their governments (for a mountain, in prophetic symbolism, is an excellent figure of a government—each being dominant over its surroundings—and the government in its turn, represents the whole State over which it governs, c.f., Rev. xvii. 10, 11), shall then willingly confess the supremacy of Zion, whose government is *perfect*—being divine. For this is the time whereof our own apostle writes, wherein “all things are headed up” in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; and wherein “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” As now, He being in heaven, is “head over all things to the church”; so then, will He identify Himself with penitent Israel, and be Head over all

the nations of the earth to that beloved people. Up then to the very head of the nations goes down-trodden Jerusalem; up, nevermore to lose that place of supremacy, for she is established there "in Christ;" the "times of the Gentiles" are over; the day of man is ended upon the earth, and the day of the Lord has begun.

But the Gentiles themselves are now no longer rebellious. Humbled and penitent, they too recognise that the Lord Jesus being there, Jerusalem presents a holy and blessed attraction, that after the storms of six thousand years, intensified to a hurricane at the end, by Satan's wrath, makes them flow, as naturally, willingly and peacefully as rivers to the sea, to that centre of light where the Lord reigneth.

Even the casting away of Israel has been the reconciling of the world; for since they have, for the time, rejected our "mercy" (Rom. xi.) or the Gospel of His grace, God sends out His ambassadors beseeching men at large to be reconciled; but this being ended, that mercy returns to Israel and their reception shall be "life from the dead." Indeed it shall, for that time of our vision is what our Lord calls "the regeneration"—not of individuals as now (Titus iii. 5) but of the whole earth or race (Matt. xix.28); Israel being, amid the nations the one holy "seed of God," as is the spirit, renewed by the Holy Spirit, in one now regenerate or born of God.**

This is the day whereof the disciples asked: "Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" *That*—not Great Britain, nor Germany, nor France, nor any of the present "great Powers"—shall be the dominant—the royal nation on the earth, for, as it is written, He will make it "high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name and in honour" (Deut. xxvi. 19); that now being fulfilled to them, *in Christ*, which they failed to attain on the principle of law. These are, I judge those "*kings of the rising again of the sun*," as Rev. xvi. 12 (when quite literally rendered) calls them, and when *their Sun shall arise* (Mal. iv. 2), the whole earth shall be flooded

* See Hosea ii. 21-23, *Jezreel*, meaning "the seed of God."

with its beams, and to that light all nations shall gravitate. It shines from Jerusalem.

Verse 3 gives details of the proceeding: "*Many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*" Thus they take counsel, and it is good counsel at last; very different from that in the day of Babel (Gen. xi. 4), and in the day of the second Psalm, for they encourage one another to go to that centre of light and there to learn. Oh, what evidence of divine intervention such an attitude presents! Think of the enlightened nations of Christendom confessing that they have anything to learn from the Jew or Jerusalem! Well, it speaks a very different state of affairs from that ruling to-day; even among certain of His beloved people there is not too great a willingness to take the lowly place of "*learner*," and have we not largely forgotten the word that speaketh unto us as unto "*brethren, be not many teachers*" (James iii. 1); but there is no warning against being many *learners*.

But the outcome is universal and everlasting peace; sweet and precious contrast to the ever-recurring wars and rumours of wars that have characterised the whole of the present time. But in the day of our vision, earth's true King has returned, and having with a strong hand put down all opposition, becomes in very deed the "*Prince of Peace*," for all the implements of war—all the horrible inventions of human ingenuity to destroy life, included in the "*sword and spear*" that figured them all, are turned into instruments for the peaceful service of man, and banished forever.

It is refreshing, then; thus to see beyond the dark present in vision; and, himself entranced with it, the prophet turns to his own people and cries: "*Does not that attract you? O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.*"

But he sees before him the actual present condition of his people so different from the "*word that he had seen*"; and, turning again to Jehovah, mourns (verse 6) "*For thou hast forsaken thy people, the house of Jacob*"; but not before they had

forsaken Thee "because they are replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they go hand in hand with the children of foreigners." East and West have both contributed to draw them from Thee, wealth has come from the East (verse 7) and brought with it that independence of God that ever accompanies trust in it; whilst the opposite evil (verse 8) has come from the opposite quarter; soothsaying and idolatry, and thy people have friendship with all these.

What then does the opened eye of the prophet see under all the outward prosperity of his day? This—that

Judgment is as certain as if it were already inflicted.

"Brought low the poor man, and humbled the rich; nor is there forgiveness for either."

There is no possible escape from that judgment which, like a cloud, impends over all.

When that cloud discharges its terrors, all these—great and small:

"Creep to the rock, and hide in the dust

'Fore the *Face of Jah's Terror—His Majesty's splendor—
When He rises to make the earth quiver with fear."

Verse 11. Then, like a solemn chant, rising amid the awful scene, sounds out the refrain:

"Lowered the lofty looks of man—
Brought down the haughtiness of men—
Exalted is Jehovah alone.

In that day."

What day is meant? Verses 12 to 16 give the answer: Jehovah of Hosts has a day of judgment on every form of *human* pride, summed up in four pairs:

"Cedars and oaks," noblest of trees, apt figures of *men* highest in the *political* and *social* scales.

"Mountains and hills," *i.e.*, all organized *governments* and States.

* The word "face" is expressed in the original, in all these verses, and is added for the link it gives with Rev. vi. 16.

“Tower and wall,” everything of *military* preparedness.

“Ships and pleasant pictures,” all forms of *commerce* and
art,

finishing again with the chant, only slightly varied,

“Brought down the loftiness of man—

Lowered the haughtiness of men—

Exalted is Jehovah alone

In that day.”

Verses 18-19. The prophet turns to the root evil of all: idolatry. Jehovah has been forsaken, idols have replaced Him. “In a short verse of only three words, (*i.e.*, in Hebrew) their future is declared as with a lightning-flash” (Delitsch), as if with terrible terseness he said: “Nothings to nothingness.” Vanities as they are, to utter vanity they go. What then can those who put their confidence in them do? And again in answer we get the solemn chant:

“They creep to the rock-caves; to earth-pits they go—
'Fore the Face of Jah's Terror—His Majesty's splendor
When He rises to make the earth quiver with fear.”*

We might also give verse 20 somewhat of the rhythm of the original by a paraphrase:

“Away go the idols of silver and gold;
The work of the hands of their own devotees,
To their kindred companions, the moles and the bats—

In that day.”

Then once again as to their worshippers,—

“They creep into rock-clefts; in rock-fissures they go;
'Fore the Face of Jah's Terror—His Majesty's splendor,
When He rises to make the earth quiver with fear.”

F. C. J.

(To be continued).

* Here there is an untransferable paranomasia—the sound of the words giving the sense they would convey—but anyone can catch it, for the words “la-aretz ha-aretz” give in their sound the idea of a trembling of terror.

The Book of Psalms.

By WALTER SCOTT.

PSALM 6. The spiritual application of the Psalms must be distinguished from their historical interpretation. This latter is the most important of the two, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit's primary meaning in Scripture must overshadow every other consideration. All Scripture is *for* us, but all Scripture is not *about* us. Our practical profit is the intended aim in all revealed in the written word. Distinct portions of the Bible apply severally to the Jews, to the Gentiles, and to the Church of God—the three classes into which the human family is divided. The spiritual application of the Psalter to individual and national life and circumstances is a universally acknowledged fact. The interpretation is quite another matter.

What are the prophetic circumstances in the latter day which give rise to this series of afflictive Psalms 3-7?

The National Restoration of Judah to Palestine, and subsequently that of Ephraim, is an event fraught with the gravest consequences to the world. Political policy dictates the measure.—(Isaiah xviii.) Palestine and her renowned capital will soon become the centre of absorbing interest. Prophecy circles round the Jews. When restored, the "scornful" rulers of Jerusalem make a seven years' compact with the head of the Latin Empire, then revived in a ten kingdom form.—(Dan. ix. 27). The two main articles in this political covenant are (1) to preserve the Jewish national religion, and (2) to guarantee protection from attack from the Assyrian, or geographically, the King of the North.—(Isa. x; Dan. xi.) The Assyrian is the head of the northern army (Joel ii.) and is the bitter and determined enemy of the Jewish people, with the avowed purpose of cutting off the nation, and memory of Israel from the earth.—(Psalm lxxxiii. 4.) It is the wicked rulers of Judah in that day who openly proclaim that their treaty with the Beast is really with *death* and *hell*.—(Isa. xxviii. 14, 15). Their profanity and iniquity is awful. The treaty is broken by the chief contracting party—for political faith and honesty then, as now, must be sacrificed where and when expediency demands.

The Beast stops the national worship, enters Jerusalem, and murders the witnesses for God in the city and temple, blasphemes God and those in the heavens, and forces idolatry upon the nation. In all this unholy work the personal Antichrist plays an important part, not so much in the political sphere of operation, but more markedly in the religious scene. The unseen actor is Satan, whose chief dupes are the Beast and the Antichrist, through whom he works in turning the once "Holy Land" into a cesspool of iniquity. God, Faith, Goodness, and Righteousness, vital factors in national life, are in the coming crisis banished from the land. Wickedness is rampant. The blood of the Messiah—wantonly shed 1900 years ago, and the subsequent career of guilty Judah call aloud for judgment, and God—the righteous Judge—hears the cry. The prophetic portions of the Bible are based on the *sinful condition of the Jews*.

The godly in Judea are the great sufferers under the Beast and the Antichrist; of this the Great Tribulation is the witness: see Mark xiii. 19; Matt. xxiv. 15-28. But in the national chastisement God employs the northern army under its redoubtable chief, the Assyrian. The ample commission conferred upon this great political hater of Judah, yea, of the nation as a whole, is the subject of Isaiah x. 5, 6, 23.

The utter destruction of the Assyrian is foretold in Isaiah xxx. 30-33: that of the Beast and the Antichrist in Rev. xix. 20.

To amplify and fill up the picture, we may remark that Ephraim, or the ten tribes, were not as a nation directly involved in that crowning deed of infamy—the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. Ephraim escapes the severity of punishment meted out to her more guilty sister—Judah. We have a full account of Jehovah's purpose to restore the ten tribes, and also of their moral condition on the eve of the return in Ezek. xx. 30-34. Probably the departure of both Judah and Ephraim from the countries of their lengthened exile will commence about the same time. Judah, however, is at once led into the *land* through the human instrumentality of a maritime power (probably Great Britain) and in unbelief, and simply as a matter of political expediency on the part of the delivering nation. We gather that the ten tribes as a whole will flock to Assyria (north)

and to Egypt (south), and from thence be driven into the *wilderness*. There Jehovah deals with the rebels and transgressors, cutting them off by judgment just as He did with Israel of old.—(Zech. x. 10; Ezek. xx. 35-38). The spared are then led into the land to rejoin their brethren of Judah.—(Isa. xlix. 18-21). The national restoration of Judah and subsequently the spiritual regeneration of a "third part."—(Zech. xiii. 8, 9)—precedes that of Ephraim differing in time, circumstances, and manner of accomplishment.

The King of the north in his devastating career and march through Palestine, down to Egypt, and Ethiopia is disturbed by tidings out of the east and from the north.—(Dan. xi. 44). What those "tidings" are we are not informed, but as they are evidently connected with Israel, we suggest that the disturbing news to the autocrat of the north is the arrival in Palestine of the ten tribes. The united nation then takes her part in these closing conflicts.—(Isa. xi. 12-14; Zech. ix. 13, 14). One can readily understand how the arrival in the land of a vast number of hated Israel would rouse the ire of the infuriated monarch and fire his determination to return and wreck his utmost vengeance on the Jewish people. His aim is their utter extermination.—(Psalm lxxxiii. 4.) But "he shall come to his end and none shall help him."

"The ships of Tarshish first"—(Isa. lx. 9)—a western maritime power—is chiefly used in conveying the long lost tribes with their wealth to the land. Afterwards individuals of both houses of Israel are restored so as to complete the whole nation. It is important to bear in mind that the national and individual restoration of Ephraim is brought about, not before, but *when* Jerusalem is established in glory.—(Isa. lx.).

The leading Scriptures bearing upon the restoration of Ephraim, i.e., the ten tribes, are Ezek. xx. 33-38; xxxiv. 11-13; Isa. lx. 1-9; Jer. xxxi. 6-9; Isa. xlix. 19-23; Zeph. iii. 10; Zech. x. 7-10; Isa. xi. 12-14; xxvii. 12, 13; lxvi. 19, 20; Matt. xxiv. 31. In some of the foregoing texts Judah is included with Ephraim hence the restoration applies to both. We may add, that, both the land and the spiritual blessing of the whole gathered nation are secured for all time, guaranteed by Jehovah Himself: see Ezek. xxxvii. 25-27; Isa. lix. 20, 21; Jer. xxxi. 31-36.

This rough outline of the prophetic political future may assist some of our readers to a correct understanding of the position in which godly Jews will find themselves, and of the sentiments produced in them as expressed in the Psalter. The *earthly* blessing of the Jew and the heavenly blessing of the Christian really account for much, otherwise inexplicable.

In the national chastisement inflicted by the Assyrian, godly Jews, as part of the nation, take their full share, besides enduring special persecution because of their adherence to Jehovah and expressed confidence in Him. The godly own the general national guilt, and the justly deserved chastisement, while deprecating these judicial dealings and Jehovah's anger. "O, Jehovah, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure."—(verse 1). Hence, in our Psalm, the godly Jew spreads his sorrowful case in detail before Jehovah. He is oppressed in spirit—(verse 4); sick in body—(verse 2); dreading death—(verse 5); weeping, groaning and weary—(verse 6); a grief beyond expression—(verse 7). The appeals to Jehovah for help and mercy are very touching.

In applying the truths of the Psalm to believers of this dispensation, we would refer to I. Peter iv. 14-19. God's government over His people is exercised, and their sins visited, now and here: see I. Cor. xi.; I. John v. 16, 17. There is more than is generally supposed of Divine governmental dealings with saints. Confession of sin may, to some extent, remove the heavy hand of God from the offender, but discipline is most sure, for God is light in the exposure of sin and righteous in dealing with it. Through it all God is love, and in that our souls rejoice.

DIVISIONS.

1. The appeal to Jehovah, verses 1-7.
2. Call to the wicked to depart, verse 8.
3. Jehovah has heard me, verse 9.
4. Let my enemies be ashamed and depart, verse 10.

"*Seek* those things which are above" and "set your mind on things above.—(Col. iii. 1-2.) Intensity of purpose is needed and must be maintained till the end if we are to grow in heavenly-mindedness.

The Faith and The Flock

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“I Will Come Again.”

(SECOND PAPER).

The Condition of Mankind when Christ Returns.

When Christ came first, He was, with wicked hands, crucified and slain. Rejected by earth, He now sits at the right hand of God in heaven “till His enemies be made His footstool.”—Ps. cx. 1; Matt. xxii. 44; Heb. x. 13. This statement, found in the Psalms and repeated again and again in the New Testament, gives us an unmistakable intimation that the world and God remain irreconciled during the period of Christ's absence; and with this agree many other Scriptures. It would be very nice to think that the Gospel, or some other agency, would convert all men to God, and that sin would at length cease to control men's hearts, and that the Saviour would come back to a scene already regenerated, as a result of His earlier mission. But Scripture does not permit us to entertain any such idea. Nor does the state of the world afford the least promise of it. Experience absolutely corroborates the Biblical forecast.

Our Lord declares (Luke xvii. 26) that, “*As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man.*” The same engrossment with the things of this life, the same indifference to impending judgment. And then He describes the condition of Sodom, and adds: “*Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.*”—(verse 30.) With the utmost emphasis and clearness He insists that He is coming again (revealed)—speaking of the event as “His day”—and that the world will be unprepared.

Referring to the same period, we read in I. Thess. v. 2, 3.—“*The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For*

when they shall say 'Peace and safety,' then sudden destruction cometh upon them . . . and they shall not escape."

Rev. i. 7, bears the same testimony: "*Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.*"

In Matt. xxiv. 20, we are told practically the same thing: "*And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*"

Such passages from God's word all proclaim with one voice man's unpreparedness. As at the first coming "Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him," (Matt. ii. 3): so it will be again. The world does not want Christ. His coming would be inconvenient. Its pleasures and pursuits would be interfered with.

What will be the condition of the *Church* when the Lord returns? The parable of the ten virgins indicates that there will be a general state of unpreparedness. Alongside with the true there will be an unreal profession which Christ will disown.

There will be a condition in the Church corresponding to the meal with leaven and the mustard tree, of Matt. xiii. False teaching and the glorification of man will have inflated the Church beyond recognition. There will be the wheat, but there will also be the chaff. There will be that represented by the "treasure" and the "pearl," but corruption and fleshly display will predominate.

Perhaps the saddest and darkest picture of the Church as a professing body is given us in II. Tim. iv. and II. Thess. ii.—"For the time will come," we read in the former passage, "when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables." While in the latter we are warned as follows:—"Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day (the day of the Lord) shall not come except there come a falling away first" (an apostacy). "Because they received not the love of the truth, God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie." With all this Rev. iii, 26, coincides—"Be-

cause thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

All these passages drawn from different parts of the New Testament, tell only too plainly a tale of that "down-grade" movement which ends, finally, in apostacy and ruin. There is a false church, as well as a true: there is Babylon as well as the Bride. Well might the apostle Peter write: "For the time is come that judgment must begin *at the house of God.*"—(I. Peter iv. 17).

Paul bears his own testimony to the same sad facts, as we have seen. But in case any should think the quotation from II. Thess ii. but an isolated statement, let us notice what he says in his two epistles to Timothy. "*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving head to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.*" (I. Timothy iv. 1.)

That is what would characterise the "latter times." Far from there being any hope of improvement, in his second epistle he draws an even darker picture, looking beyond the "latter times" to the "last days." *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.* And then he names the characteristics of men in those last days, and what is so striking, of men "*having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.*"

Is not this last a peculiar feature of these days? Men not ashamed to mention God, and even Christ, and yet responsible for the violation of every known law, human and divine.

How true all this is to what Paul predicted in his farewell address to the elders of Ephesus. "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."—(Acts xx. 29, 30).

If all this will happen in the professing Church, what about the world? May we expect that legislation, or philanthropy, or all that comes under the head of civilisation, will produce an era of peace and contentment, characterised by love to God and man? On the contrary, we are told that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" And

that all will culminate in the "man of sin" who exalts himself and opposes God.—(II. Tim. iii. 13 ; II. Thess. ii. 3, 4.)

When our Lord was on earth, He was asked by His disciples on one occasion, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age." (Matt. xxiv. 3). "*Thy coming!*" Did Christ reply, "I am never coming again?" Far otherwise. He accepted the question as perfectly in order, and gave a most detailed reply to it.

And what does He tell us will be the sign of His coming, and of the end of the age? Notice, first, that the two are connected—Christ's coming again—and nothing else—will put an end to the present age. Does Christ prognosticate an era of prosperity and peace, with the gradual transformation of human character, and the world brought to His feet by the preaching of the gospel? He speaks of "wars and rumours of wars," of "sorrows," of "betrayal" and "deception"; "iniquity shall abound," "the love of many shall wax cold," there shall be an idol in the Temple of God ; and "tribulation," such as never was before and never will be again, and a mere "carcase" left of all that once stood for God here, with government and authority overthrown. Such is the picture presented in Matt. xxiv. It is drawn by our Lord Himself and bears the stamp of His authority. He says, "*Behold, I have told you before.*" "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away."

What do we make of these utterances? What of all this testimony drawn from Scripture? With such solemn statements—couched in the plainest language, repeated under every form of expression—staring us in the face, how can people who profess to believe the Bible talk as they do? Let us be consistent, and either reject the Bible altogether, refusing to credit its assertions, or if we accept it, let us believe it whole-heartedly and unreservedly, and not try to make it square with our preconceived notions.

It is a dark picture, truly. And if we had nothing else we might well despair. But the coming of the Lord lights up the background and

"Heavenly light makes all things bright
Seen in that blissful gaze."

The world rejected and crucified its only Saviour, and will have to learn its need of Him yet. His coming is the only hope of creation, and of the nations; as it is of the Church. To the unbeliever, and to all that opposes and exalts itself against God, His advent will mean judgment, but beyond that—salvation, with all that that word conveys—

“ Joyful now the new creation
Rests in undisturbed repose;
Blessed in Jesus' full salvation,
Sorrow now, nor thralldom knows.”

Objections.

In the minds of many believers there are various objections to the idea of a Personal and pre-Millennial return of our Lord. Let us consider some of these:—

1. “ Would not such a return as you have been describing ” (see January issue), someone may ask, “ interfere too much with the order and continuity of the world ? ” If it did, it would not be the first occasion. Nothing could well interfere more effectually or abruptly with the existing order than the flood in Noah's day, or the confusion of tongues, later on. Indeed, Christ's first coming, and His claims, were felt to be a great interference, and this was one reason why He was put to death—(read Matt. ii. 2-3, John xi. 47-48).

2. “ Does not Christ come in some great event, and is He not thus continually coming ? ”

No event that has yet happened answers in any way to the description of what will take place at the Second Advent. No event has removed sin and death from the scene or seriously curtailed Satan's power. It is certain that at the Second Coming an entirely new era will be established, and that with tremendous suddenness. All the events of history put together do not satisfy the predictions we have already had before us. Much less would any event in itself, however glorious, satisfy the believer's heart. Did an “ event ” die for me? Christ's Personal return alone can meet the longings awakened by His first Appearing.

3. "Is it not the gospel? Does not Christ come in every fresh revival? And will not the Millennium be gradually and silently introduced in this way?"

Never once in Scripture are we told that the gospel is to convert the world. Moreover, the action of the gospel and the action of the Second Coming are entirely opposed. The former is the day of God's grace to the world; the latter is the Day of the Lord, and is a time of Judgment. One is called the Acceptable year; the other, the Day of Vengeance (Isa. lxi. 2). The victory of the gospel has been slow and partial. The victory when Christ appears again will be instant and world-wide. Now, God beseeches men—it is appeal and entreaty. Then, it will be irresistible power overthrowing all opposition—(Isa. ii. 10-22, Rev. xix).

4. "But is it not death? Does not Christ come for us when we die?"

I. Thess. iv. 15-17 makes it perfectly evident that such is not the case. This passage tells us plainly that far from death being the answer, at our Lord's coming *the dead in Christ are raised*. It speaks of others who are living; MANY will be actually alive and never die (John xi. 26). How can the Second Advent, then, mean death? Rather, death itself will be destroyed (I. Cor. xv. 26). At death, soul and body are separated. At Christ's coming they are united. At death, only one at a time goes to be with the Lord. When the other event takes place, all believers go simultaneously.

5. "But has there not been too long an interval to expect Christ now?"

The world waited at least 4000 years for His first advent. We have waited barely 2000 for His second.

6. "Is not the Second Advent at the end of the world, and in connection with the Judgment Day and the general Resurrection?"

The greatest confusion has been caused by mixing up all these events indiscriminately together. *Christ is coming first for His own before any Judgment Day whatever*. Read carefully John v. 24, 28-9; I. Thess. iv. 14-17; Rev. xx. 5-6. Three

facts stand out clearly from these Scriptures. First, that there is no judgment (in any penal sense) for the believer, Christ having made us fit for His presence by what He did the first time He came. Second, that the unsaved dead will not be raised at the same time as those who are Christ's; and thirdly, there is a Resurrection of life, and a Resurrection of judgment, and at least 1000 years between the two. Observe, there is no judgment scene in I. Thess. iv., 14-17, the reference being only to the dead in Christ, and the saved living.

7. "Did not St Paul look for Christ to come in his lifetime, and was he not mistaken?"

The hope of the Lord's return is the hope of the Church, and it is never placed beyond the lifetime of the existing generation. Thus our Lord spoke of His coming again to those about Him, and commanded everyone to watch. It was not only the apostle who cherished the hope, but every devoted disciple of his day, however humble. This is why, in writing to the Thessalonians, he places himself amongst the living, and says, "*we* which are alive." Had anyone put the direct question to him, "Are you *certain*, Paul, that *you* will be alive when Christ comes?" his reply would have been, doubtless, "That is not the question, but I am looking for His coming."

8. Finally, someone may ask: "Has not Christ already come? Did He not say, 'This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.'"*

Christ cannot have come, for His Second Advent is to be public and unmistakable (Matt. xxiv., 27.) Moreover, the Apostle John, who lived considerably beyond a generation of thirty years after Christ, and probably outlived most of his contemporaries, speaks of Christ's coming as still future.

But there is really no difficulty about this passage beyond what people import into it. The word for "generation" means, not merely a period of thirty years, but age, nation, time, and is associated with another word meaning kindred, offspring, stock. It is difficult to believe that our Lord, in speaking of such

* Some think He came at the destruction of Jerusalem; others, again, that His coming was in 1874.

stupendous happenings, which would affect all mankind, was confining His outlook to a brief period of some thirty or forty years. Rather, He contemplated the whole generation of Abraham. *That* should not pass till all His words were fulfilled.

This also bears upon another objection, which one often hears, as to fixing dates. Have not dates often been fixed and proved false? That is so. And thus discredit has been cast upon the "blessed hope." But surely every candid reader will admit that an event, which God declares everywhere throughout His Word shall surely come to pass, is in no way affected by the folly which would attach a date to it!

R. E.

(To be continued).

THE article on "Elisha" is held over until next month for want of space.

Bible Booklets.—We wish to call the attention of our readers to these booklets which contain passages from God's Word only, and so arranged as to bring the collective teaching of Scripture upon certain most important themes before the mind in a most concise and impressive way. They contain nothing except the pure Word of God; they are small and inexpensive. The series includes "*The Word of the Cross*," setting forth the way of Salvation; "*The Word of the Kingdom*," which refers to the Second Coming; and "*The Word of Prophecy*." Prices, 100 for 1/3; 500, 5/6; 1000, 10/-, post free. To be obtained of H. Musgrave Reade, 5 Bingham Road, Bournemouth.

WE would call particular attention to "*The Faith and the Flock*" yearly volume for 1916 as being specially suitable to give away. Price, 2/3 net, postage extra. S. W. Partridge & Co.

The Epistle to the Colossians.

By W. W. FEREDAY.

Introductory.

Our God never experiences defeat. Whatever the appearance of things at any given moment, the victory is always with Him. To the outward eye, the position was solemn enough after the Cross of Calvary. The Son of God slain, and His body sealed up in a tomb, carefully guarded by the military! It seemed as if every divine purpose had been frustrated, and the Creator unable to maintain a footing for Himself in His own world! Yet what did the third day prove?

In like manner, the imprisonment of such a labourer as Paul the Apostle seemed a grave calamity for the Church and its testimony. Phil. i. 14 implies that the hearts of some of the brethren fainted within them when it first took place. Yet in how many ways did his bonds fall out rather to the furtherance of the gospel! We owe most of the epistles to his seclusion in gaol. Prevented from exercising his gifts orally, yet not debarred from books and parchments (II. Tim. iv. 13), his great heart, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, gave forth of its fullness in a written form, not only for the blessing of the Church in his day, but also for the good of the Church until the end!

The epistles of Paul vary in character according to the diverse needs of those to whom they were originally addressed, the foundation being laid in Romans, and the topstone reached in the unfolding of the saints' heavenly association with Christ in Ephesians.

It is scarcely possible to read the Epistle to the Colossians without glancing back at that to the Ephesians, written at the same time, and apparently despatched by the hand of the same messenger (Eph. vi. 21; Col. iv. 7.) There is much in common between these two inspired productions, and yet the points of difference are many and important. Both speak of the body

and its Head, and both give towards the end detailed exhortations concerning the earthly relationships of the saints. But Colossians dwells upon the glories of the Head, while Ephesians enlarges upon the blessings and endowments of the body, as the fruit of the victory of the Head, now enthroned on high. Colossians, again, regards the saints as dead and risen with Christ; Ephesians contemplates them as sitting together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Further, Ephesians speaks largely of the Spirit and his operations (every chapter naming Him); in Colossians there is a marked omission of the Spirit, chapter i. 8 being the only direct mention of Him. Christ our life, Christ all and in all, is made prominent instead.

Chapter I.

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (vs. 1-2). Association in labour is exceedingly blessed. Many a drooping heart has been uplifted by the timely cheer ministered by another (Eccles. iv. 9-10). Timothy was very dear to Paul; “my true child in faith” is his description of him in the Revised Version of I. Timothy i. 2. But in his address to the Colossians he carefully distinguishes between his coadjutor and himself. Paul was an “apostle,” and Timothy was simply a “brother.” The rights of Christ and the good of the Church demanded that his unique place should be notified and maintained. “The will of God” was the spring of all. In the midst of a revolted world, in which the lawlessness of man is ever rising higher and higher, until it finds its culmination in the Man of Sin, the Church has been placed to be the practical exhibition of the will of God. How feebly this has been understood, the present condition of the Church only too sadly testifies.

“Grace and peace” are never wanting in the Apostle’s greetings. The repetition is striking. It is no mere formality as too often with the “*dear sir*” and “*yours faithfully*” in the correspondence of to-day; the heart of the writer longed that

the hearts of his readers should be in the sweet daily enjoyment of these divine realities. There could be no greater moral safeguards for God's saints in the midst of an evil world.

Now the Apostle bursts forth into thanksgiving and prayer:—

“ We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit and increasing, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard it, and knew the grace of God in truth: even as ye learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit” (vs. 3-8).

The Gospel had thus reached the Colossians (once benighted heathen), and faith and love had sprung up in their souls in consequence. Hope is to be specially noted. The Gospel of Christ has not only come to us *from* heaven: it also directs our hearts *to* heaven. The earth is the scene of Christ's present rejection; accordingly His own have no place or standing therein. The Gospel is not designed merely to make men better living people, as some imagine; its object is to call men away from earth, not only to share Christ's glory eternally, but to live in heart and mind where Christ is to-day.

What fruit is this! Men, who otherwise would cling tenaciously to the visible and temporal, enabled by infinite grace to bid farewell to it all, even while living and walking here below.

The law never brought forth fruit. It could not. It demanded something from flesh, and flesh being incurably evil, it only resented the demand, and stoned and slew the representatives thereof. “The word of the truth of the Gospel,” on the contrary, makes known to us a Person, and Him as “the Giver of all good.” To Him the renewed heart responds, and thus fruit is borne. “Bringeth forth fruit *and increasing*” is what the apostle wrote. A living faith is necessarily a growing faith. No saint is expected to know everything at the beginning. In under-

standing, babes are necessarily below young men and fathers. Affectation of knowledge is nauseous. Fine phraseology picked up from others is hypocrisy. God wants reality. But there should be spiritual increase. Indeed, a stationary Christian is an impossibility: one is either going forward or backward—gaining ground or losing ground. How is it with us?

(To be continued).

Heavenly Investments.

"Give of such things as ye have."—Luke xi. 41.

Give what thou hast, whatever that may be,
Give cheerfully what God has given to thee.

Hast thou a purse? Then stint not of its store,
Thy God, who gave thee that, can give thee more.

Hast thou a gracious tongue, a courage wise?
Then seek out such as need thy sympathies.

Hast thou the tender touch, the spirit calm?
Then let the sick and suffering know thy balm.

Or art thou strong to work, or bright to cheer?
Let weakness bless thee, dry the mourner's tear.

And, best of all, does love thy bosom bless?
Give freely, for that wealth will ne'er be less.

E. STACY-WATSON.

HERE is a brief summary of work during a year at Miss Weston's Royal Sailor's Rest, Portsmouth:—Parcels sent to Fleet and Army, 366,509; circulation A. & A., 859,373 copies; circulation "My Monthly Letter," 570,000; War Literature distributed—89,585 booklets, Gospels, and Testaments. Attendances at meetings, 450,354. Men's letters written and posted on Institute, 72,413. Miss Weston's correspondence has been with 99,055 men, widows and mothers, &c. Such a work demands our prayers and sympathy.

“These Three Men;”

Or, KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD.

Ezek. xiv. 14-16-18-20.

The three mightiest forces of evil arrayed against the child of God are, the world, the flesh, and the devil—the roots from which spring every temptation to which the believer is subject. Each in turn, as we know, proved too strong for certain individuals, but scripture gives the reason, and it was not failure on God's part.

It is a scriptural dictum “What God hath joined, let no man put asunder.” When, therefore, as in Ezek. xiv. we find three names connected, and a four-fold reference to them within a few verses, it calls for special attention. Chronology places them—Noah, Job, Daniel, but the Lord says “Noah, Daniel, Job,” and we take them in the order given, to find practical help, as we note the special characteristic of each in relation to the world, the flesh, and the devil. No doubt the primary connection between these three men and God's dealings with His people at a time of national declension has a deeper meaning, but the following thoughts may prove helpful, especially to young believers who are much exercised by the peculiar and unexpected experience of soul-conflict.

Power over the World.

NOAH stood for God against the world. There is a dangerous precedent often suggested to the Christian amongst worldlings—“In Rome do as Rome does.” Noah might have reasoned on the same lines. With all the rest of the world against God, was it worth while to make a stand. When one is in the minority, the pleasant path is to go with the crowd. It saves many awkward situations and so much adverse criticism, and those who should know better, frequently say—“Really you do more harm than good by being SO PECULIAR; make yourself agreeable and one with them, and you might possibly win some to your way of thinking.” Here usually the “all things to all men” argument is misapplied with great emphasis (apart from the context of course) and Paul is claimed as authorising “evil that

good may come." Why is it such sophistic reasoners never recall the sorrowful testimony of the Apostle . . . "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" or the strong indictment of James . . . "whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God?" And why do Christians listen so readily to their specious reasonings rather than to the voice of the Lord? In John xv. He plainly shows what should be our attitude towards the world. 1st.—As those chosen out of it. (verse 19). 2nd.—As witnesses to God's righteousness.—(verse 27)—"Ye shall be witnesses, because ye have been with Me; and 3rd.—As those whose works condemned the world. (verse 24 and xiv. 12).

Noah reveals these characteristics in a very marked way.—Genesis vi. As one chosen out of the world "He walked with God." (verse 9). In such company there was no room for a third party. As a faithful servant he "Worked for God" (verse 22) and was too busy to give the world a chance of an idle moment; besides his work was always before them in the nature of a standing rebuke which was unpalatable.—(Heb. xi. 7). As a preacher of righteousness he "witnessed for God." (II. Peter ii. 5). A clear testimony meant a clearly defined line of separation. When life and lip go together the world gets an uncomfortable time, and victory is assured.

Power over the Flesh.

DANIEL stood for God, against the lusts of the flesh. The peculiar situation in which Daniel was placed was one that in every way laid him open to this special temptation. In the Royal circle, high in Court favour, as the revealer of secrets, feared and therefore favoured, surrounded by luxurious living of the most wanton kind, privileged by reason of his exalted position, not a wish needed to go ungratified. Further, he was in a strange land amongst strangers, debarred from the public religious exercises incumbent upon a Jew, and not even the restraining influence of those regular visits to the Temple in the far-distant home land. How easy therefore (as many, even on holiday, have found to their cost) to fall into lax habits regarding the things of God, and give rein to the lusts of the flesh. Lusts, not necessarily of a debased character but desires in a wrong

direction, i.e., as opposed to God, things carnal. The circumstances and environment were thus all against Daniel, which makes his triumph all the more encouraging for such as find the flesh "so easily besets."

His integrity before men was unimpeachable, and consequently to such he was a "man of delight" (tender love.)—(Dan. i. 9.) In relation to God, he was a man of dependence, his life being one continual prayer. But the reason of his being an overcomer, seems to be given in the three-fold heavenly testimony. (Ch. ix. 23, x. 11-19—margin). He was a "man of desires." His whole being Divinely controlled, and all his energies and affections directed into right channels (i.e. Godward). It was love (desire) rightly directed, as contrasted with perverted love (desire), thus Daniel, the Old Testament saint illustrates the conditional promise of the New. "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall in nowise fulfil the lusts of the flesh." His prayer, "Cause Thy face to shine . . . incline Thine ear . . . open Thine eyes . . ." was the keynote of his life-purpose, radiating from one centre, his heart in harmony with the infinite. Consciously enjoying the sunshine of God's presence, with God's ear ever open to his conversation, and God's eye always upon his way, he was proof against the lusts of the flesh.

Power over the Devil.

JOB stood for God, against the wiles of the Devil. Whether it be the "first man" of Eden (Gen. iii.), the "man of Uz" (Job i.), the "man after God's own heart" (Chron. xxi. 1), the "Second Man, the Lord from heaven" (Matt. iv.), or any who through grace are identified with Him, such an one is at all times the object of Satan's hatred and malice. This is seen by the question of the Lord in Job i. 8 (margin). "Hast thou set thine heart on My servant Job"? Yes, apparently he had often longed and tried to get through the defences of Job without success, judging by his plaint, until it became the intense desire of his heart to accomplish the downfall of this honoured servant of God.

Such, however, is the confidence of the Lord that the challenge upon which so much depended is accepted, and the opportunity afforded for the great test.

After being "hedged around" and specially protected, we should imagine that Job would have proved an easy prey, seeing the hedge was allowed to be broken for the purpose of testing. The extraordinary series of events that so rapidly changed his circumstances from prosperity to adversity, and health to sickness, might well have effected the desired end of Satan. The particular trials and tests to which Job was subjected by the enemy are common to all. Loss of loved ones, loss of property, and loss of health, but when Satan takes up human agents, the more subtle attacks,—through loss of prestige, being misunderstood, misrepresented, charged with hypocrisy, ignorance, and even sin—are waged with relentless energy, and although friends are the unwitting means, it is the same master-strategist of evil pressing home every advantage.

Is it not wonderful to follow the conflict between the apparently forsaken saint and his terrible foe? Again and again when bruised, beaten, shaken and seemingly overwhelmed by those terrific assaults he emerges triumphant and unhesitatingly expresses his absolute confidence in God. And finally, when in love the Lord shows Himself, in order to reveal Job's true condition, his very confession tinged with such sincerity and humility is the crowning triumph that exalts the One who had thus taught him "God is He that blesseth."

Before he receives this revelation he is twice enjoined to "gird up his loins" which is significant in light of Eph. vi. where one of the conditions of successful conflict is having the "loins girt with truth." Undoubtedly, "it is written" will prove the best weapon of offence and defence.

As we look therefore, at the example of "these three men," those of like nature and passions as ourselves, in the same scene of sin and temptation who respectively stood for God against the world, the flesh, and the devil may we not remember "If God be for us who can be against us" and take courage. Doubtless, if we could ask Noah, Daniel and Job how it was they were able to stand in face of such odds, they would with one voice reply in the language of I. Peter i. 5.—

Kept by the Power of God.

Isaiah.

The Day of the Lord—*Continued.*

Chap. ii. 22 ; iii. 13.

Let us now ask, Who is this King of Glory thus coming with terror-striking face? The Psalm answers: "The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of glory." But we venture to further ask, "Who is this Lord of Hosts, the King of Glory?" And may we not "see the word" or hear the answer of all New Testament prophecy: It is a "*Lamb as it had been slain*"; it is Jesus of Nazareth; and His rejectors are but fulfilling His own words in calling to the mountains: "*Fall on us, and to the hills cover us*" (Luke xxiii. 30); "*and the kings of the earth, and the great men and the rich men, and the chief captains and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the Face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*" (Rev. vi. 15, 16). It is the Lord, who thus "*consumes the wicked one with the breath of His mouth, and destroys with the splendour of His coming.*" (II. Thess. ii. 8).

Surely both New and Old Testaments lift up their voices in unison to proclaim our Lord Jesus to be Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, the King of Glory. Are we then quite uninterested?

Verse 22. Impossible, for that day of terror still impends, and we see it by every portent swiftly approaching. Nothing in the past satisfies the prophecy at all. Man's boasting is still to be heard on all sides; it is still man's day. Well, then, may we hear and heed the Spirit's gracious counsel "*Cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?*"

Estimate man at his true worth as a reliance. He is, with all his boasting, with all his ingenuity, his marvellous inventions, but a poor, vain creature; his breath, which is his life, is at the very door of his being, ready to step out at any moment.

It is not such an one that *we* need; but One whose breath is *not* in His nostrils, for He is Himself "*a quickening Spirit*" (I. Cor. xv. 45), and who is "*able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for them*" (Heb. vii. 23 to 25); then may we justly have "*no confidence in the flesh,*" at all—in ourselves least of all—but "*joy, rejoice, boast in Christ Jesus, for He is worthy.*" Amen.

There ever comes a time when God intervenes in the politics of men. History repeats itself, and in what occurs here in "Judah and Jerusalem" we may see divinely given forecasts of what shall occur in that present witness for God upon the earth: CHRISTENDOM; for it has walked in the same steps. Filled with His mercies, yet "Judah and Jerusalem" forgot Him; they continued not in His goodness, and are cut off.

So here He comes upon the scene under His names of warlike dignity, "ADON JEHOVAH TZEBAOTH," The Lord Jehovah of Hosts; and the first sign of that intervention is not desolation and captivity, but the taking away all that the body-politic has depended upon for support, likened here to those simplest necessities for the natural body, "bread and water." That these are not literally meant seems to be evidenced by what follows, a list of those who are depended upon as the supports, "the stay and staff" of a nation; the valiant and wise, the skilful in work and word. But these are but men whose "breath is in their nostrils," and not themselves dependent on Jehovah, but rather the reverse, for among them we get "the diviner" and "skilful enchanter."* But whatever they are, they are taken away, and who takes their place? "Boys" and "infants" again; not literally infants, but men who, as far as their qualifications for government go, are no better; as Solomon speaks of himself in lowly self-depreciation as a "little child" (I. Kings iii. 7). The result of weak government is always oppression, anarchy and the subversion of all natural order. The oppression, however, in this case, is not from autocratic tyranny *above*, but from democratic tyranny *below*: the child opposes the elder; the

* Rendered in A. V. "prudent" and "eloquent orator."

base opposes the honourable. Is there *no* such tyranny to-day? Is there *no* oppression in those "unions" that were organised to resist it? Nay, further, is not this the inevitable result, *reasonably* to be expected from such a condition. We enter not into earth's politics: we are submissive to the powers that be, whatever form they may take: we are quite willing to concede that the form of government under which we live may be the best under all the circumstances; but where the true Source of all authority is ignored, and the government derives its authority from the governed—where the votes of the mass confer the government, surely the governed are, in a sense, *above* the government, as he who confers authority must be above him who only receives it. Only by the sincere (not merely formal) recognition of God, from whom all authority legitimately proceeds, is true government maintained, and all is in order. Apart from this, the more conditions are levelled by the education of the mass, the quicker are the steps toward that anarchy foretold here. It is the end to which democracy has been ever tending, and which it shall at last reach, when, with a mighty upheaval, in the day of the fourth trumpet, all executors of authority in the Roman world from the emperor down shall be overturned (Rev. viii. 12). It certainly illustrates the blessing of an enlightened, a strong, and at the same time, a beneficent government, and the miseries resulting from weakness and incapacity of rule.

The wretchedness in Judah and Jerusalem comes to such a pass that the highest office goes begging, till a comparatively respectable coat is considered qualification enough for installing its wearer over what they now own is a ruin. He, on the other hand, is as anxious to avoid the once coveted office as they to press it on him, and he cries out in great excitement, "No, no, I will not attempt to heal this distracted State, for, if you only knew, in my house there is neither food nor clothing—you shall not, I protest, make me ruler over this people."

Verses 8 and 9. Ay, "*Jerusalem is ruined, Judah is fallen*"; but what has caused it? Both in word and work they have been "*against Jehovah*," "*to defy the eyes of his glory*"; a striking expression that brings before the mind all the infinite excellen-

cies of God focussed, as it were, in His Eye: infinities of holiness burning as a flame of fire (cf. Rev. i. 14), and His people have cared nothing how their words and works have appeared in *those* Eyes—they have defied them! Indeed, so lost are they, not only to all reverence, but even to all self-respect, that they make no effort at concealment; but are like the Sodomites, who proclaimed shamelessly their shame. The maintenance of external decency is at least some evidence of a conscience not altogether seared, while the flaunting of impurity in public, say, in the theatre, in the novel, in the moving-picture resorts, is a symptom of very deep degradation.

Verses 10 and 11. But nowhere to-day does this earth afford evidence of the righteous government of God; on the contrary, the wicked get their good things and the righteous their evil things in this life. Well, that is the very reason for proclaiming a day in which all shall be made right; when, by an exact retribution, it shall be seen that men have worked out their own penalties, and are reaping only what they have sown, "*The righteous shall eat the fruit of their own doings: to the wicked shall be given the reward of his hands*": then cheer the afflicted penitent with this hope; warn the prosperous impenitent with this fear.

Verse 12. And now, Jehovah, deeply moved with sorrow at the inevitable judgment impending, cries, "*My people!*" a cry of tender affection—"children oppress them and women rule over them! *My people! thy leaders are misleaders who obliterate the very paths along which they should lead thee.*" Thus most tenderly the Lord speaks, and oh, cannot we recognize that voice? Do we not know our Shepherd's voice? Is it not the same exactly that cried in the same tender tone, over the same city, as He foresaw its fast-coming desolation, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.*" It is thus the identity of Jehovah and Jesus is proclaimed in the Scriptures, not only by isolated texts, that the agents of the enemy may tamper with, but in the very warp and

woof of those Scriptures where none who profess to believe them can touch it.

May not that same Blessed One be equally sorrowing, too, for *Christendom* on the verge of Judgment? Both in the civil and ecclesiastical sphere all is a sad failure: in the former there is weakness where there should be strength: in the latter darkness where there should be light; the very pulpits sending out, as we may say, a flood of error; and this ever wider-spreading war, ever involving more of the Christian nations, may well be the last and most complete evidence of our history repeating Israel's, in the failure of both. Well may we, too, then, "*cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils.*"

Verse 13. Thus ever, in every case of human trial, things always come to so hopeless a pass that Jehovah must "stand up"—*i.e.*, intervene and judge all the nations of the earth, and this ever begins at His own house. "*What mean ye that ye crush my people and grind the faces of the poor.*" And again we recognize the Voice of the same Speaker Who said, "*Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,*" who "*bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not touch them with one of their fingers.*" These are "*the deeds of the Nicolaitanes*" that He ever "hates," wherever they are.

F. C. J.

(*To be continued.*)

Looking unto Jesus.

"It is not LOOKING BACKWARD through the list of years
To see our failures, sins, temptations, follies, fears

And tears.

Nor is it LOOKING ON, with hope all bright and fair,
To meet, so often, bitter disappointment there;

And care.

No, it is LOOKING UP, a living Christ to see,
And leaning calmly, Lord, and oh so trustingly.

On Thee."

S. TREVOR FRANCIS.

Grain from Joseph's Granary.

By WILLIAM LUFF,

Author of "Battles in Air and Sea" Leaflets.

Fifth Sackful.

HE GOES WITH US. — So wrote an Army Scripture Reader, but if he could not accompany the men, there was One who could. "And He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them" (Luke xxiv. 28-29.) "Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest" (Gen. xxviii. 15.)

"When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!"

THEY DO LISTEN SO KEENLY.—Once to-day I looked up and noticed a chaplain and a reader engaged likewise with small crowds clustered round them. Can you picture a group of lads gathered round a reader listening to the Old, Old Story—then, after a pause, "Do you always stay here, sir?" Nothing would please me better than to be able to say, No, laddie, we go with you all the way.

WANTED, A PRAYER.—A Zeppelin was dropping bombs near where a number of women were at work in a factory when one of them—not by any means a religious woman—called out, "Isn't there among us anyone who can pray?" The Christians, if there at another time, would have been despised, and perhaps ridiculed, but now a Christian was wanted, and a prayer valued. "Prayer changes things," and so do bombs. It is best to learn how to pray for ourselves before the Zeppelin comes.

"SEEK ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" (Isa. lv. 6.) "Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt" (Isa. xiii. 6-7; Rev. vi. 16-17.)

REST.

A Rest given to all who come (Matt. xi. 28).

A Rest found by all who submit (Matt. xi. 29).

A Rest entered by all who believe (Hebrews iv. 3).

A Rest enjoyed by those who sleep (Rev. xiv. 13).

SALVATION.

Security in Christ.

Assurance from Christ.

Life with Christ.

Victory through Christ.

Acceptance for the sake of Christ.

Taught to wait the coming of Christ.

Interceded for by Christ.

On the foundation of Christ.

Nothing without Christ.

GOD'S SCRIPTURES.

The word of God (I. Thes. ii. 13).

The word of truth (Ps. cxix. 43).

The word of righteousness (Ps. cxix. 123).

The word of the oath (Heb. vii. 28).

The word of reconciliation (II. Cor. v. 19).

The word of life (Phil. ii. 16).

The word of faith (Rom. x. 8).

The word of His grace (Acts xx. 32).

LABOUR IN VAIN.—The second gardener had gone to the war; so the old gentleman thought he would help, and spent two hours cutting down thistles. When the old gardener came along, instead of praising the labour, he said, "You have not done a bit of good, sir, you have left the roots and strengthened them." We thought of "The thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit" (Mark iv. 7). And it is no use chopping them down; such are the efforts of education and culture: God deals with the roots.

AN OLD SAINT'S TRUST.—The Zepps. were in the neighbourhood, and the guns were after them. "I looked up from my window, and I saw the stars shining beautifully, and I said, 'God is in the heavens.'" She felt the stars were angel guardians on sentry duty guarding her. Then beyond the church steeple she discovered a Zeppelin, and in her quaint way addressed it,

“This is the widow’s border, you must not come here” (Pro. xv. 25). She added, “I went to sleep, and forgot I was alone.” “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety” (Ps. iv. 8). “He is their strength in the time of trouble” (Ps. xxxvii. 39). “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him” (Nahum i. 7). “When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet” (Pro. iii. 24).

OUR FATHER LIVES.—In a daily paper we read:—“As an officer, carrying his arm in a sling, was about to get off the car a young woman, dressed in deep mourning, and with a baby in her arms, stepped on the platform. The child cried “Daddy!” with embarrassing enthusiasm on seeing the officer. Some foolish persons smiled; but a tear was seen by the more observant in the eyes of the young widow. In an instant the tragedy of war was revealed to everybody. The wounded officer drew himself stiffly to attention and gravely saluted the baby. This tribute to the dead father froze the laughter in the car. Child of God, thou needest not stretch out thy hand to a stranger: thy Father can never die.” “One is your Father, which is in heaven.” (Matt. xxiii. 9). “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” (John i. 12). “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” (I. John iii. 1).

TO OBEY IS BETTER.—A young soldier of the R.A.M.C. wandered into a wood, where he discovered six Germans hiding. Being on the medical staff, he was unarmed, and at first feared the odds; but putting on a bold front, the whole party surrendered, and as he marched his prisoners back to camp, he felt he had done a great and wonderful deed—leading to dreams of nothing less than a V.C. Alas! he found himself under arrest for being absent from his unit. It reminded us of II. Timothy ii. 5:—“And if a man also strive for masteries, *yet* he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully.” In the King’s Army we must obey orders, and not attempt private exploits,

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“I Will Come Again.”

[THIRD PAPER.]

The character and effect of the Apostle Paul's preaching—What conversion means—Converted to serve and to wait for God's Son from heaven—The double aspect of waiting—The Rapture.

In the two previous articles we have taken a general survey of the subject. We have seen that the Scriptures foretell the Lord's coming again, and that the necessity of the case demands it. In passages without number, the Bible holds out the hope of a personal and pre-millennial advent. The fulfilment of prophesy, and of promise; the hope of the church; the restoration of Israel, and the blessing of the nations are all bound up with the return of our Lord.

The two epistles to the Thessalonians leave no doubt as to the place given to this subject in the Apostle Paul's ministry. In them it has not only place but prominence. And lest any should think that this is true only of his earlier ministry we would call attention to the fact that in almost the last of his writings—his second epistle to Timothy—he *twice* refers to the subject in the closing chapter.

To the Thessalonians Paul writes:—

“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”—(I. Thess. i. 9, 10).

What a full-orbed Christianity we have here! These Thessalonian believers were not only converted, but they were so with

a definite end in view—they were saved to *serve*, and also to *wait*. These three features are complements one of another, and they cannot be separated without serious loss.

Let these three facts—saved, serve, wait,—engage our attention for a moment.

How real was the conversion of these once heathen idolaters! Paul can speak of their *work of faith*, and *labour of love*, and *patience of hope*. Faith that is idle is not faith. The moment we believe we are in touch with a God of ceaseless activity—“My Father *worketh* hitherto and I work,” said our Lord. But on the other hand, it must be a work of *faith*. That is, a work which God has committed to us, which is in harmony with His will, which He enables us to perform; and which always has Himself in view—“*In the sight of God and our Father.*”

The work of faith must also be a labour of love. How delightful is such service! What true liberty! No compunction, no burden, nothing servile. When our activities spring from love, all is easy. This is the happiness of God—love is the motive power of His every act. And He wishes all we do to spring from the same motive as His own.

“*Patience of hope.*” We may not always be permitted to see results, or we may have to wait long for the fruit of our labours. But if done as in God’s sight, the labour brings its own reward. And love’s labour is never lost. If the reward does not come now, it will come by and by.

Thus we see that faith, hope and love characterised these early Christians, who a few weeks before had been in gross heathen darkness.

Moreover, the Apostle can affirm—“*Ye became followers of us and of the Lord. . . So that ye were ensamples to all that believe . . . for from you sounded out the word of the Lord. . . in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak anything.*” Such were the Christians who included the hope of the Lord’s return as part of their faith, and who waited for God’s Son from heaven.

What kind of preaching was it produced such Christians? We have it described, first hand, by the preacher himself—“*For*

our gospel came not unto you in word only," he writes, "*but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.*" Four things characterised it—power; the Holy Ghost; much assurance; backed up by life. Alas! how much preaching there is to-day which is in word only; and sometimes hardly that; for there are pulpits where the gospel is disfigured, distorted and shorn of its glory. The message in its fulness and simplicity is not proclaimed. And even where there is no tampering with the truth, there is often a lack of power. The one outstanding reason why, to-day, there is such indifference, and people stand aloof, is this absence of power. To nothing are men and women more susceptible than power. They recognise its presence; they soon become conscious of its absence.

Secondly, Paul's preaching was *in the Holy Ghost*. Oh, for the recovery of a sense of the absolute necessity of this—the place and function of the Holy Spirit in preaching! No amount of training—no amount of education or preparation will do instead. Let each preacher ask himself, how large a place he gives to the Holy Spirit in his ministry. Paul's preaching was in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was with the Apostle. As another inspired writer puts it—"Them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" Great as Paul was—great in character, in learning, in intellect—had he delivered his own message, in his own power, and without the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, such results as were seen in Thessalonica would never have been witnessed.

Thirdly, *his message came with much assurance*. There was the ring of certainty about it. He was absolutely convinced of the truth of what He was called to proclaim. Doubt is infectious, and so is conviction. If there is hesitancy and misgiving in the pulpit, it soon spreads to the pew.

Last, but not least, *the Apostle's life spoke, and commended his testimony*. What He gave out by word of mouth had first of all affected himself. What he was, corroborated and enforced all he said. And, consequently, his converts could safely become his followers.

Such was the preaching and the living which so profoundly affected these dwellers in Thessalonica. True conversion—conversion brought about by the kind of preaching we have described—and it must be remembered that conversion takes its character from both the messenger and the message—true conversion will ever produce similar results. There will be a work of faith, which will be a labour of love, performed in patience of hope. There will be a definite discipleship—"followers of the Lord." Possibly there may be affliction—but certainly, "joy of the Holy Ghost."

What Conversion Means.

In one word the Apostle describes what conversion means. *It is a turning to God.* Through the sufferings and sin-bearing of our Lord Jesus Christ—because He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification—the way is open for all to turn to God, and in doing so to discover that His face is already toward them—His arms extended to welcome them; His heart ready to forgive. So the Apostle Paul declared "that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew *light* unto the people, and to the Gentiles." It is the responsibility of all who hear the gospel message to *turn themselves from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins.*" All this the Thessalonian believers discovered when they turned to God.

It is of the utmost importance to notice the two things which accompanied conversion in the case of these Thessalonians—they were converted to *serve* God and to *wait* for His Son from heaven. Conversion which does not lead to *service of some kind* is marked by a serious defect. God never converted a single individual for his or her own sake merely. Everything He does has not only an immediate, but an ulterior, object. Service should not be left to a particular class, as is so largely the case. *Everyone is converted to serve.*

But, if this idea of service always accompanying conversion has been overlooked, still more so has the thought that

we are converted to wait for God's Son from heaven. If that statement means anything, it must mean that Christ is coming back again to earth. And every true child of God is waiting for that event. Could anything be more important? God's Son coming *from* heaven must be of more consequence than the fact of a believer going *to* heaven. What had the Apostle Paul in his mind, and what did the Thessalonians understand him to mean? Acts xvii., where we have an account of Paul's preaching at Thessalonica, will shew us. We find that the charge brought against the Apostle was that he preached "*that there is another king, one Jesus.*" The message then, evidently, was, Christ coming back again to reign; and in the second epistle to the Thessalonians we read of their being counted worthy of the Kingdom of God for which they suffered. Our Lord, even before His death, indicated by a parable the position of His people during His absence, and until His return. "*A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a KINGDOM, and to return.*" And the instructions to the servants are: "*Occupy till I come.*" It was for this kingdom the Thessalonian believers were to wait. Christ has received the kingdom, but He has not yet returned. Christians occupy in view—not of death, but of that return. What harmony between the words of our Lord and the teaching of His Apostle!

So these Thessalonians waited. In the meanwhile some of their number passed off the scene. The question arose as to the position of those who had thus died before Christ's return. Would they lose their place in the kingdom? This leads to a new revelation concerning details of the Second Coming which, while in nowise altering the truth of what the Apostle had already taught, somewhat changed the perspective.

In chapter iv. 13, 14, he writes:—

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

From this we learn that those who had died, far from perishing, were not even to miss the kingdom. Their preserva-

tion and inclusion were secured by nothing less than that which is the very foundation of all our hopes—"Jesus died and rose again." And we learn, further, that God would bring them with Jesus. Here, again, we see that God purposes to bring Christ back, and also, that when He comes He will be accompanied by His saints. How will that be brought about? The revelation specially given to the Apostle Paul, and which he now discloses, answers that question.

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (vs. 15-17).

Surely we may thank God for such a revelation. For it is that, or the wildest vapourings of an unbalanced and distorted imagination, justifying the dictum of Festus: "Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad." But, as of every other, so regarding this statement of revealed truth, may we not take refuge in Paul's reply, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." If we are to reject Paul's teaching on the Second Coming, where are we to stop? If it is too great a tax upon our faith to accept literally, as it stands, "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout"; and that all believers, whether dead or living, are to be caught up to meet Him in the air, on what logical grounds can we believe the words, "Jesus died and rose again." Indeed, this seems to be the Apostle's own argument. "If," he says, "we believe that Jesus died and rose again"—then, believe this also:—we say it "unto you *by the word of the Lord*"—it is His word, not ours—that the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven; and this event, stupendous in its consequences for believers, and for the world (directly and indirectly), will be accompanied by a shout as of a commander, with the voice of the highest created being, and with that which calls attention to an event of utmost magnitude.

Truly, it is so, for even the dead respond—they rise first; the living too are affected; they form one company, and leave the earth together, caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and to be for ever with Him.

It is for this, fellow believer, we wait. It is the next event in the ways of God,—the next movement on the part of Christ. No hour is mentioned—no other event need intervene. The believer may look for his Lord at any moment. One second on earth amid toil and struggle, hope and fear, care and suffering—the next, meeting the Lord face to face to be forever with Him. The Lord waits for it, too. Think of what it will mean for Him! Once He cried with a loud voice and gave up the Ghost. Here, death will hear His shout and be amazed. Once He appeared to suffer defeat. Now, He will reap the first fruits of victory. He will have around Him a redeemed company—those *for* whom He suffered—and *from* whom every trace of sin, of earth, of the grave, and of fallen humanity will be removed. He will see His own image upon them, and His love will be satisfied.

The waiting aspect of the believer thus has a double character. He waits on earth for Christ to come and establish His kingdom here. Before that actually transpires he will be caught up to meet his Lord, and return with Him to take possession. Just as when the king of this country intends to visit a town for some special ceremony, certain individuals might affirm that they were waiting for him to come to the place and yet that they were coming with him, because on the morning of his arrival they would go outside the town and meet him, and form his escort; so believers, to-day, are waiting for the Lord to return to earth, yet, first of all they will meet Him in the air in order to come with Him.

Can anything exceed in importance this hope which the believer is entitled to possess? How bright for him; yet, alas, how dark for the world. To wait for God's Son, is for the child of God an anticipation without one element of fear or foreboding. For the world it is full of both. The Apostle speaks of coming wrath. In the one case, Christ's returning will mean unmingled happiness; in the other case, a doom from

which there is no escape. The coming of Christ will fix the destiny of all who have heard the gospel. Everybody then will find his true place and be stamped with his real character. Then there will be a separation between the wheat and the chaff, between those who possess and those who only profess. The wise and foolish virgins will part company for ever. From the account we have been considering, there stands out with perfect clearness this fact, that the initial stage of our Lord's second coming separates His own from the world; for it concerns them only; and Christendom is left for judgment. When our Lord comes "with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" only the *dead in Christ* are raised, and only the saved living are changed. The passage in I. Thess. iv. 13-17 refers only to such. For the time being no others are directly affected. There will be graves undisturbed—the occupants left to sleep for another thousand years at least. There will be those amongst the living caught up to meet their Lord, and others left. Nor need this surprise us. For was not Christ Himself raised *out from among* the dead? and was not Enoch taken from amongst the living?—"he walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." And the New Testament declares: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death." So will it be again.

And the reason is given why the believer need have no fear. The One he waits for is even Jesus, Whom God raised from the dead, and who has delivered him from the wrath to come. All those who have accepted in simple faith God's testimony concerning His beloved Son and the work He accomplished—who have accepted the facts of their own ruin and sinfulness, because God declares it, and their own experience confirms it, and have cast themselves as undeserving and hell-deserving sinners on their Substitute provided by God—know that Christ in infinite grace bore all they deserved, and that they are free. They shall not come into judgment, but have passed from death unto life. God's word assures them they are delivered from coming wrath. They owe this, not to themselves, nor to any ordinances, or human intervention or good works, but to Him Who was "delivered for their offences and

raised again for their justification." Their sins are in consequence cast behind God's back, and they know God's love.

How solemn to think that the coming of Christ will spell the doom of some and bliss of others. And that coming, in the aspect in which we have here presented it, *may take place at any moment*. Could anything be a louder call to the impenitent, the indifferent, and the mere professor. Thank God it is only necessary to turn to Him, in order to be delivered from the ranks of the unsaved and the unprepared. He can receive and forgive because Christ has died. Receive His word as the Thessalonians did of old, and then wait with glad expectancy for His Son from heaven.

R. E.

The two articles—"I WILL COME AGAIN"—which appeared in January and February are now reprinted as a separate pamphlet, and can be obtained from the Author, 73 Durham Road, Wimbledon, London, S.W. Price 2d each, or 1/3 per dozen—Post Free. He would appreciate the cooperation of all readers of the Magazine in assisting to spread this testimony to the Lord's Return. And he thanks those who have already written to him about these articles.

Elisha, the Prophet.

By W. W. FEREDAY.

XVIII.—THE RETURNED SHUNAMMITE.

Let us adopt the revised rendering of II. Kings viii. 1, for it will help us in the understanding of the passage. "Now, Elisha *had spoken* unto the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn, for Jehovah hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years." The incident was thus earlier in time than the doings recorded in chapter vii. Whenever it was, the departure of the Shunammite from the land of Israel took place by divine command, through the instrumentality of Elisha. A time of trouble was approaching, "and surely the Lord God will do nothing but He revealeth His secret unto his servants, the prophets" (Amos iii. 7). Such

was Jehovah's care for the pious Shunammite that He sent her away beforehand. Is it not good to have to do with God?

The emigration of this family was thus on an altogether different principle from that of Elimelech and Naomi (Ruth i.) Their move was just a matter of human expediency, and great sorrow was the result. The true line for us all is indicated in our Lord's words in Matthew iv., 4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Behold the hungry One in the wilderness, possessed of power to supply His need, yet refusing to act without a word from God! If we could but wait in times of perplexity our God may be trusted not to fail us, and He will give the suited words of guidance in His own time. Saul lost his kingdom through a little impatience in an emergency (I. Sam. xiii. 11-14.)

Observe that the trouble was limited — "seven years." He who sits upon the throne will never suffer the reins of government to be seized by the enemy. His controlling hand measures everything that must needs fall upon His own, and the enemy is powerless to exceed that measure. Thus the sufferings of the elect during the great tribulation are for 1260 days (Rev. xii. 6), and Satan could not make it 1261 were he ever so desirous. When he sought the ruin of Job, he was only allowed to afflict him step by step as prescribed by God. "Times and laws" may be given into his hand, but not God's people (Dan vii. 25.)

When the Shunammite returned from her seven years exile, she appealed to the king for the restoration of her house and land, and she obtained it really through the instrumentality of her son, the story of whose restoration to life so deeply interested the king. She is thus a picture of Israel, away from the land during the present dearth, but yet to possess all things again in virtue of the dead and risen Christ. In that happy day they will say: "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 Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. ix. 6). It will be to them as life from the dead.

Gehazi happened to be by at the moment of the Shunamite's appeal to the king. The hand of God was in this. The man was actually relating her own story. Jehoram was just then in the humour to be entertained; thus he said to Gehazi, "Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done" (II. Kings viii. 4.) He was not seeking divine instruction from this one-time servant of Jehovah, but (as we have said) entertainment. In like manner, many in Christendom to-day, who would refuse a plain talk about the realities of eternity, would have no objection to discuss preachers and their doings. If Jehoram had sought such talk from John the Baptist, or Paul the Apostle, he would have heard such words concerning "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" as would have made him quiver in his shoes (Acts xxiv. 25.) But Gehazi was useless for such work now. He had been associated with the testimony of God committed to Elisha, but he was, alas! out of it, and could only dwell upon the past. For him the present was a spiritual blank. Oh, the sorrow of it, and the danger that his case suggests for us all! Our God have mercy upon us!

Money was his ruin. How very solemnly does the Apostle warn us concerning this peril in I. Tim. vi. He distinguishes between those who desire to be rich (vs. 9-11), and those who are rich (vs. 17-19). Those who desire to be rich expose themselves to fearful danger, and those who are already rich have a great responsibility resting upon them in view of the coming day.

Scripture presents to us a number of spiritual wrecks. Amongst them are the old prophet of I. Kings xiii., and Demas. We need not raise questions as to the salvation of such persons, for it is not the point before the mind of the Spirit. The point is that, through paltering with the world, they lost their testimony for God in this world. Any of us may do the same. In that case, how solemn will be our manifestation before the judgment seat of Christ! The Lord keep us all walking in humility before Him.

(To be continued).

Isaiah.

Chap. iii. 16 ; iv.

Verses 16 to iv. 1.—And now Jehovah, Creator of all things visible and invisible, turns to—woman's dress! Such points as these have been taken as so unworthy of a divine revelation as to refute the claim of the Bible to being such. The triviality is only in the shallow reasoning of miscalled Rationalism, and such criticism tells—not the limitation of God's mind, but—the narrowness of the critic's. For His perfection must surely be marked equally on *all* His works; therefore there must be interest in, and care of, the least as of the greatest. Let the telescope reveal mighty worlds far beyond the range of the eye, and compared to which our earth is but as a grain of sand—each travelling its well-beaten path, without swerving a hair's breadth; then let the microscope reveal identically the same perfections in every part of the diatom, quite invisible as its whole body is to the unaided vision, and see if this does not equally proclaim the “power and Godhead” of Him who can imprint such perfections on such minute creatures. Then listen to these little critics, with their arbitrary line, above which they may perhaps own to a God of some kind, but below it—No: *that* would not be consistent with Deity! Is it not pitifully shallow? But the Author of the *work* is the Author of the *word*: and it would be strange indeed if this did not show the same “mark of His unrivalled pencil.” Thus it is a harmony, not a discord, that amid thought too high for the unaided human mind to grasp, He takes notice of a sparrow's fall,* a schoolboy finding a bird's nest,† or a woman's dress, when that woman is one of His people; or as our New Testament speaks “professing godliness” (I. Tim. ii.) In that sphere of professed faith in His dear Son *nothing* is too high, *nothing* too low for His keenest interest. So, as here, every detail whereby the women of Jerusalem sought to attract attention is noted, the same keen notice may be taken in the present trend of our day in the women pressing themselves forward, not

* Luke, xii. 6. † Deut. xxii. 6.

merely into prominence, but into *rule*. As surely as HE lives He is not indifferent.

Verse 24 looks forward to the Day of the Lord's Hand on all, and then :

instead of a scent, a stench ; †
 instead of a sash, a rope ;
 instead of braided hair, a baldness ;
 instead of a mantle, a smock of sackcloth ;
 a brand (as of a slave) instead of beauty.

Chap. iv. 1.—But further misery awaits, for women's happiness is closely bound up in home-life, and now in that Day instead of that striking provision of God's goodness, "male and female created he them"—a numerical equality of sexes being maintained—desolating war has so done its work, that there is but one man left to seven women ; who, all feminine modesty extinguished, beg to be taken into his household, engaging to be no expense to him. To die childless was to the Hebrew the acme of misery, for when God was directly governing the land, as in Israel, His promises and threats, while pregnant with *suggestions* of a scene beyond this life, were, in their *direct* expression, confined to this life ; so that to pass out of it leaving no children, was a most suggestive figure of that eternal reprobation fully revealed only in the New Testament. A Hebrew woman's desolation could go no further.

Verses 2-6.—But all this is but a black cloud to serve as a foil to the beauty and glory of our Lord ; for now again we hear the same refrain, only no longer in the minor key of a solemn dirge, but a joyous song begins with—

" IN THAT DAY

2. The Sprout of the Lord shall be beauty and glory,
 The Fruit of the land shall be pleasant and fair,
 For His redeeméd Israel.

† In Hebrew, a short, expressive word : *maq.*

3. And holy shall he be remaining in Zion,
Yea, all in Jerusalem written alive—
4. When Jehovah hath washed the filth of her daughters,
And atonement is made for the Blood she has shed.
By the spirit of judgment—the spirit of burning.
5. Then Jehovah creates on the dwellings of Zion,
And on all her assemblies, a cloud and a smoke ;
These shall provide a shade in the daytime
That turns to a fire bright-shining by night ;
For high over all shall hover the glory.
6. A booth it shall be from the heat of the day,
A refuge, a covert from storm and from rain.

Is not that a most refreshing change? However uninteresting we may have found the third chapter, woe to us if we are indifferent to *this*. For who is this "Branch" or rather "Sprout" * of Jehovah? Even the old Jewish Targum saw their Messiah in this beautiful figure, and shall *we* be more blind to Him? Nay, here we see "Jesus only"; alone in His glorious divinity—the "*Only* begotten Son" of God.

But He has another title, "Fruit of the land," and in this we see Him in His spotless humanity, sprouting forth, amid all the death and desolation of Adam's race, a "a root out of a dry ground," as we may see Him later: the *First*-begotten Son."

Amid all the ruin, here is one single star of promise, hope and blessing, filled with the irresistible energy of a new life; and thrusting that life forth, in lovely contrasts of beauty; and all is for His redeemed, His Israel and wonder of wonders, for you and me, dear reader!

For there shall be a remnant of Israel left after the burning judgments of Jehovah have passed over her, and everyone of this remnant shall be written in the book of life; not only be

* There are eighteen words in Hebrew rendered "branch" in A.V. Here it is *tsemach*, the prime root meaning "to sprout forth," and gives the idea of the energy of life, and this would be conveyed by "sprout" rather than by "branch."

born again, but *glorified*, although on earth. Over every family dwelling, over the totality of the nation, shall be the same visible evidence of His love and care, as in the day of the deliverance from Egypt. Thus overshadowed, no heat shall strike, no storm nor tempest invade that happy spot.

But where is our dwelling—the heavenly Jerusalem—in all this? May we not see a suggestion of it in that “glory” hovering over the earthly city? And is not this in harmony with what is truly “Revelation,” there the heavenly city holds the centre of the stage, and the earthly city takes the inferior place of its “wall great and high”?* It would appear that in one spot there is a perfect new creation, both heavenly and earthly, and these are closely identified: the former being the city, the latter its “wall,” as coming *between* the city and the saved nations.

F. C. J.

* I must refer to my notes on the N. T. prophecy of Rev. for a more detailed discussion of this point; only I might now add that Delitsch writes on this chapter: “Is this the Jerusalem of final glory awaiting the people of God in this life” (he means, I take it, the millennial city on earth) “or the Jerusalem of the new heavens? The true answer is: Both in one—the glorified Jerusalem of earth and the glorified Jerusalem of heaven appear as if fused into one.” This is very nearly what I had already been compelled to adopt in considering Rev. xxi.

Paul's Seven Epistles.

These present a complete compendium of Truth for the Church of God on earth. Their order, as edited by the Holy Spirit, is *moral*, not chronological—commencing with justification and ending with glorification.—

1. Romans: *Justification*—through Christ.
2. Corinthians: *Edification*—by Christ.
3. Galatians: *Separation*—unto Christ.
4. Ephesians: *Exaltation*—in Christ.
5. Philippians: *Occupation*—for Christ.
6. Colossians: *Union*—with Christ.
7. Thessalonians: *Expectation*—of Christ.

His epistles to Philemon, Timothy and Titus, are of course, personal and pastoral.

T. R.

The Observatory.

Prayers for the Dead.—One cannot help being struck by the prominence now being given to all matters relating to the dead. Under various forms and in a variety of ways the subject is constantly being forced upon our attention. Sometimes, prayers for the dead is the topic. At others, whether or not there can be any communication between the living and their departed friends. Or, again, do the dead influence us? and, what is their condition?—are the questions raised. *The cause of all this speculation and mental agitation is undoubtedly the war.* There is no doubt that the superstition so natural to us, accentuated by the harassed feelings of people, due to the loss of those dear to them, is being preyed upon. The occasion lends itself to all sorts of vain hopes and desires, and excursions into the unknown, and Satan is not slow to take advantage of his opportunity. The shrines which are being erected tend to foster the desire for the practice of prayers for the dead. The other day an entire column in one of our newspapers was filled with a description of these memorials in a certain town, in which there are said to be shrines in every street. The writer of the article says:—"The rector told me that there was a shrine in every street of ———. He showed me the shrine in the church; this was somewhat more elaborate. There were the crucifix, the flowers, the flags of all the Allies, and above the names of the dead was a picture of what our forefathers called a 'Majesty.' The Ancient of Days holds up the crucifix, the Dove hovers above the cross. Before this imagery a modern British soldier kneels in the picture, and beneath it is written: 'Of your charity, pray for the souls of the gallant dead.' 'A shrine in every street.' Going through these streets of ——— one might almost believe that England was becoming a Christian country."

"England Becoming a Christian Country!"—We are at a loss to know in what way shrines are an evidence of Christianity. We are reminded of the late William Haslam. When he was a High Churchman, before he was converted, he built a church in a remote part of Cornwall and placed over the chancel the words: "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Billy Bray happened to visit the church, and knowing the history of it, and of the clergyman, he remarked, as he read the words: "I reckon this place is a long way from the gate of heaven." We are equally inclined to reckon that shrines and prayers for the dead are a long way from Christianity,

and savour much more of Popish idolatry and darkness; and if these are the only indications England gives of becoming a Christian country, she is a long way off yet, and it is a poor look out.

By what authority do people pray for the dead, and what is the meaning of it? Certainly the Bible gives no suggestion of it even, much less sanction. Many false ideas are grounded upon isolated texts, torn from their context, or upon texts misconstrued, but we are not aware of even the smallest fragment of a text which favours the practice of prayers for the dead. Abraham prayed for Sodom before its destruction, but there is no mention that he prayed for any of its inhabitants after they were destroyed; though he had once rendered a signal service to the King of Sodom. Surely, if prayers for the dead availed, no one needed them more than they. David prayed for his child while it was yet alive, but not after it was deceased. In the prayer our Lord taught His disciples there is not the slightest reference to prayers for the dead. Nor do we read of any one of the apostles ever performing this act, or that they ever exhorted others to do so. The fact is, it finds no place whatever in the teaching of the Scriptures, and was unknown to Christianity until the latter became corrupted. If prayers for the dead are so necessary, and if in some way they are affected by them, it is passing strange that while the epistles are full of exhortations to pray for the living, they are absolutely silent about the matter with reference to the departed.

In Luke xvi. there is some light thrown upon the condition of souls in the other world. We read that the rich man besought Abraham that Lazarus might be sent to his five brethren to warn them, "lest they also come into this place of torment." Why, if prayers for the dead were in vogue, and availing, did he not request that Lazarus might also be sent to some good man on earth to pray that he might be released from the torment he was in? Not a word. Prayers for the dead were either not in fashion, or else, when people reach the other side, they cease to believe in them. But did *Lazarus* need the prayers of anyone on earth? He was in Abraham's bosom—he was comforted. There is not a mention that any of his former acquaintances prayed for him. What need had he of their supplications? And are not those who depart in the faith of Christ as well off as he? Can any language depict the bliss and satisfaction and well-being of the departed more fully and emphatically than the words used to describe their state? "*Absent from the body, present with the Lord.*" "*To depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.*" Stephen looked up and saw the glory of God and Jesus, and said, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*" There is

something ludicrous in the thought of poor, toiling, struggling, unemancipated dwellers in these mortal bodies in a scene of want and woe, and with imperfect spiritual vision and experience, *praying* for those who are infinitely better off than themselves. It is something akin to a beggar meeting a millionaire, and saying to him, I am asking God that you may not die in the workhouse! The fact is, this unwarrantable practice proceeds, on the one hand, from ignorance of the Gospel and of the grace of God, and on the other, from superstition exploited by priestcraft. Prayer avails neither saved nor unsaved when once they have departed this life. The former are where there is no need and no imperfection—they are “with Christ”—how could they be better off? The latter are equally beyond all *human* reach. Each one will have to “give account of himself to God.”

The Book of Psalms.

By WALTER SCOTT.

PSALM 7. The historical circumstances which gave rise to this Psalm are sufficiently indicated in the inspired heading. David had been grossly slandered by “Cush, the Benjamite” (I. Sam. xxiv. 9.) No person of that name appears in the history. But evidently this Cush was the chief calumniator of David to King Saul. Others helped the Benjamite in pouring slanderous charges into the ears of Saul (I. Sam. xxvi. 19.) David solemnly and earnestly protested his innocence, and appealed to Jehovah in proof of his uprightness (I. Sam. xxiv. 11-15.) Such, then, is the historical background on which this prophetic Psalm (yet future) is cast.

The anger of Jehovah to the pious Israelite is rightly deprecated (Psalm vi. 1), and surely, too, by every godly person in all ages. But in our Psalm that same anger is invoked against his enemies (6-11). This is right and proper in the coming vengeance of our God (Isa. lxiii. 4.) Dispensationally right then. Dispensationally wrong now.

The leading thought in the Psalm is the expressed consciousness of personal integrity; of governmental righteousness, in light of slanderous charges. In the previous Psalm the

Divine name, "Jehovah," only occurs. Here, in addition to Jehovah, the Creatorial name, "God"—expressing *Omnipotent Power*—is found six times in keeping with the character of the Psalm. The sufferer appeals to "Jehovah, my God" (verses 1-3.) In verses 6-8, Jehovah is witnessed in the midst of the peoples, or nations, having set up His governmental Throne in their midst: read "peoples" in verses 7-8. "For their sakes, therefore, return Thou on high"; that is after the Judgment of the nations Jehovah is entreated to "return" to His throne in heaven. The sufferer looks to be vindicated by unsparing judgment on his enemies. This is not a Christian sentiment, but it is a right and proper one in its season. Compare the cry of Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts vii. 60) with that of the first Jewish martyrs in the coming crisis (Rev. vi. 10.) The difference in the Dispensation accounts for the *apparent* contradiction in the respective cries.

DIVISIONS.

1. A solemn appeal to Jehovah-God in view of slanderous charges, verses 1-5.
2. Jehovah judges in the midst of the nations, verses 6-8.
3. The wicked and slanderers judged, and the righteous break out in praise and song, verses 9-17.

PSALM 8. We have heard the voice of the godly part of Judah in prayer; we have listened to the plaint of sorrow in the preceding five afflictive Psalms. But, again and again, their holy songs of triumph, and of assured confidence in Jehovah, have gladdened our spirits. Now our Psalm is Jehovah's answer to the cries and tears of His sorrowing people. It is the *same* holy band of weepers in the coming crisis (vi. 6) who grandly utter, "O Jehovah, *our* Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! Who hast set Thy glory above the heavens" (verse 1.) The night of sorrow is past, but not the gladness of relief. The millennial triumph of Jehovah is here celebrated. Our Psalm is a sublime poem.

The rejection of God's King by the Jewish nation, and of Divine authority by the Gentiles, only paved the way and cleared the ground for the display of a wider sweep of glory than that unfolded in Psalm ii.

Psalm viii. opens and closes with the joyous exclamation, "Jehovah, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!" In the name LORD, or Jehovah, is wrapped up the ineffable glory of independent and eternal existence. Every Divine attribute, and every moral quality, are centred in the name Jehovah. In the millennial reign contemplated in our Psalm, God Himself becomes the rest and gladness of the redeemed creation. Compare with that other millennial Psalm, lxxii. 17-19.

"Who hast set Thy glory above the heavens." The world could not contain the books that should be written of Jesus and His princely deeds and ways (John xxi. 25); no more could a universe of heavens—great and resplendent—hold the glory of Jehovah. The majesty of the Divine Being is "set above the heavens." But surely gleams and rays of the exceeding glory will break out in the grand millennial, and yet grander eternal, future. God, all in all, is a thought never yet fathomed (I. Cor. xv. 28.)

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou obtained strength (or praise) because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." When the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah fills the earth (Hab. ii. 14), floods clap their hands (Ps. xcvi. 8), trees also (Isa. lv. 12), all nature rejoices (Ps. xcvi. 10-12.) Boys and girls play in the streets (Zech. viii. 5.) The exuberant joy reaches out to the infants, and they lisp the praise of Him who died and reigns in glory. Thus God rebukes His enemies. The Messiah, the King, lets us into the secret, quoting our very Psalm in proof (Matt. xxi. 15-16.)

"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained (or established), what is man . . . and the son of man?" This is evidently a night meditation, hence the omission of the sun which hides

itself in the darkness and silence of night. What is man compared to the vast and magnificent celestial system! What *grandeur* on the one hand, what *littleness* on the other! As we think of the celestial universe, of its vastness, its greatness, its grandeur, its multiplicity of suns and stars, and the marvellous mechanism and skill displayed, we at once attribute the whole scene to OMNIPOTENT POWER. But the heavens, "the work of *Thy fingers*," disclose another order of thought. The skill, the delicacy, the tracings, the embroidery, so to speak, leave the soul entranced. "Could we transport ourselves above the moon, could we reach the highest star above our head, we should instantly discover new skies, new suns, new stars, new systems, and perhaps more magnificently adorned. But even there, the vast dominions of our great Creator would not terminate; we should then find to our astonishment that we had only arrived at the borders of the work of God." We cite yet another witness to the grandeur of the solar system. "The Psalmist takes a yet loftier flight. He leaves the world, and lifts his imagination to that mighty expanse which spreads above it and around it. He wings his way through space and wanders in thought over its immeasurable regions. Instead of a dark and unpeopled solitude he sees it crowded with splendour, and filled with the energy of the Divine presence. Creation rises in its immensity before him, and the world, with all which it inherits, shrinks into littleness at a contemplation so vast and so overpowering. He wonders that he is not overlooked amid the grandeur and the variety which are on every side of him; and passing upward from the majesty of nature to the majesty of nature's Architect, he exclaims, 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou shouldest deign to visit him?'"

We have to distinguish between *man and the Son of Man*. The former refers to the race—sinful and guilty. The latter directly refers to Christ. What He created as God the Son, He inherits as Son of Man. In this character, Universal Dominion is conferred upon Him (verse 6). It is a title, moreover, which presents Him as the sum, centre, and head of all that is morally excellent and good.

What is man? Isaiah answers *grass* (xl. 6-7)—withering grass, that is all. What is man? The Psalmist says, a *lie* (lxii. 9). But manhood in Christ; yea, we in Him, tells a very different story. This world, or rather earth, was made for the first man Adam, but the world to come is to be arranged and beautified for Christ, the Second Man, and *last* Adam; for there will be no perfection, and no progress after Him. You must have a New Man for the new world. But who is the "Son of Man" of our Psalm? By what name is He known? JESUS is the answer; *now* crowned with glory and honour (Heb. ii. 9). But He has yet to be crowned on and over the earth; but when? In resurrection, saith the Apostle—in the Resurrection state our Psalm has its complete fulfilment (I. Cor. xv. 27, 28). God alone will be the exception to Christ's glorious and Universal Dominion. The same Apostle reveals a secret hid from men and angels in past ages—the saints of this Dispensation are united to Him in the glory and dignity of Universal Dominion (Eph. i. 22 23), but of this the Psalmist knew nothing, so not a trace of it appears in the Psalm itself. Jewish faith soared high, as this Psalm shows, but into the mystery of Christ and the Church in *one* common glory it never entered. Those three New Testament references throw quite a flood of light upon our Psalm.

DIVISIONS.

1. The Excellence of Jehovah's Name, verses 1 and 9.
2. The Glory of the Divine Being, verse 1 (second clause).
3. The very babes utter His Praise, verse 2.
4. Greatness of Creation and the Littleness of Man, verses 3-4.
5. Christ as Man in Universal Dominion, verses 5-8.

"However dark and profitless, however weary and painful existence may have become, however any man like Elijah may be tempted to cast himself beneath the juniper tree and say, 'It is enough; now, O, Lord'—life is not done, and our Christian character is not won, so long as God has anything left for us to suffer, or anything left for us to do."

The Epistle to the Colossians.

Chapter I.

This epistle was written in view of certain dangers to which the Colossian brethren were exposed, the gravity of which they did not perceive. These the apostle points out in chapter ii., but first he states plainly the burden of his prayer on their behalf.

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it (*i.e.*, of your faith and love), do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so as to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in (or, growing by) the knowledge of God : strengthened with all might according to the might of His glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (vs. 9-11).

Thus, to “know the grace of God in truth,” as in v. 6 is not enough ; there is still “the knowledge of His will,” with which we should long to be “filled.” Do we know a little thereof? Let us desire to know the whole, and this not merely intellectually, but “in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Thus shall we know how to use the knowledge acquired. In the apostle’s way of putting things here we mark the difference between the obedience of the Christian, and that of the man under law. To servants and minors it is not usual to reveal one’s mind. Commands are given with no reasons assigned. This is where the heirs were before Christ came (Gal. iv. 1-2). In contrast to this, how wonderful is the position of the Christian! All the mind of God has been told out to us, and we are divinely capacitated (as those brought into the full position of sons) to take it in. This with a view to a worthy walk. In I. Thess. ii. 12 we are exhorted to walk worthy of God, who has called us unto His own kingdom and glory ; in Eph. iv. 1 the apostle beseeches us to walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called ; here we are to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Oh, the sweet simplicity of such a path!

“From various cares my heart retires,
 Though deep and boundless its desires,
 I’ve now to please but One!
 Him, before whom each knee must bow,
 With Him is all my business now,
 And those that are His own.”

Note the comprehensiveness of the words in v. 10—“*all* pleasing”; “*every* good work.” It is not sufficient to seek to please the Lord in some things; we must seek to please Him in all the circumstances of life. Thus we might have the details of our Sunday worship right, and the details of our daily business all wrong. This will not do for our Lord.

Observe also that true spiritual increase is “in the knowledge of God.” The Book that we study leads our hearts to the Person from whom it has come. If our meditations upon the letter of Scripture do not produce this holy result, our methods are wrong. Let us beware of this danger, for it is ever present with us.

The Apostle would have his readers divinely strengthened; not for “exploits,” like the faithful of old (Dan. xi. 32), but for endurance. The true path of the Christian is characterised by trial and loss, for we traverse a world that has rejected our Lord. “The power of His glory” (not “His glorious power,” which is meaningless) strengthens us for this. It is occupation with Christ in glory. All that of which v. 11 speaks, the Apostle first saw exemplified in the martyr Stephen. Endurance, long-suffering, and joyfulness were all most precious exhibited in the man who, in the hour of his deepest woe, prayed for his enemies, his face meanwhile shining like the face of an angel.

That the Colossians might be wise, fruitful, and strong, was thus the burden of the Apostle’s prayer.

W. W. FEREDAY.

(To be continued).

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"I Will Come Again."

[FOURTH ARTICLE.]

An interval between the Rapture and the Appearing—The fulfilment of John xiv. 1-3—The Marriage of the Lamb—The Judgment Seat of Christ.

The teaching of Scripture separates the coming of the Lord into two parts; and these have been distinguished by the terms *Rapture* and *Appearing*. The former, is derived from the expression "caught up" (or "wrapt away") found in Thessalonians iv. 17. The latter, is the word used in connection with our Lord's manifestation to the world. We must also distinguish between the Rapture and "The Day of the Lord." For the truth of the Rapture was quite a new revelation; whereas the Day of the Lord is repeatedly referred to in the Old Testament. The former, concerns the saints, primarily; but the latter, the world. In the previous article we saw that these two events are distinct. The Thessalonians were waiting for God's Son from heaven, *i.e.*, to claim His rights on earth and establish His kingdom. But the apostle affirms that they were not only waiting *for*, but would come *with*, Christ; and a special revelation was vouchsafed to him to show how this would be. The Lord Himself would descend from heaven—the dead in Christ would be raised and the living changed, and in a moment all would be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

As the distinction which has been made above is disputed by some, certain facts need to be noticed. First, at the Rapture the Lord is not said to come to earth at all. Simply, He descends from heaven. Secondly, this action does not concern the world, directly, only believers—the dead *in Christ*,

and the saved living, alone are mentioned. Thirdly, they are caught up to meet the Lord *in the air*.

Nor are we confined to this Scripture for proofs of what we have asserted. Though surely if it speaks of God bringing us with Christ, He must come for us first, and this in itself is conclusive proof of what is here affirmed, that the Rapture and the Appearing are to be distinguished. But there are other statements which not only harmonise with such a view but confirm it. In his second epistle to these same believers the Apostle, in order to allay their fears as to the day of the Lord having actually come, says:—

“ Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled . . . as that the Day of the Lord is now present.”

Their “gathering together unto Him”—in other words, being “caught up,” as in I. Thess. iv. 17—was to take place first, before “the Day of the Lord,” and as that had not taken place, it was certain the Day of the Lord was not present. Our being gathered to Christ takes place first, and is a separate event; and in further proof of this, the writer adds, “For that day (*i.e.*, the Day of the Lord, not the Rapture) shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” Three things therefore must occur before the Day of the Lord. One of these is the Rapture, and the other two, the apostacy and the revelation of the Antichrist. The Rapture does not wait for the other two, but those two wait for the Rapture. For only after the true Church is removed will unrestrained evil and lawlessness exhibit themselves.

Moreover, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb takes place in heaven before Christ comes forth to destroy Antichrist—Rev. xix. makes this abundantly clear. How can the Church—the Bride of the Lamb—be on earth amidst developing evil and the great tribulation, and be in heaven at the same time in the holy festivity of the marriage celebration? Again and again the New Testament holds out to the believer the hope of salvation

from coming wrath, and of being with the Lord. "*For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ; Who died for us that whether we watch or sleep, WE SHOULD LIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM.*"*

Let us see now what this living together with Him involves, by learning from Scripture what will take place at the Rapture and previous to the Appearing.

At the Last Supper, when our Lord was impressing upon His disciples the imminence of His departure, and when sorrow filled their hearts at the thought that they were to lose Him, He uttered these memorable words:—

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's House are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself: that where I am, there ye may be also."

Three facts stand out from this utterance: (1) Christ was going to prepare a place for His own in the Father's House; (2) they are to be with Him where He is; and (3) that His coming would bring about this happy consummation.

Yet the first effect upon the disciples was to perplex them. "The Father's House" had a new and strange sound. They had never heard of it before. No prophet or other inspired speaker had ever referred to such a place. The mention of it, at first, seemed to yield them little or no comfort. Thomas only voiced the feelings and misgivings of the rest when, in his reasoning way, he blurted out: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Where was the Father's House, and what interest had it for them? The very idea seemed alien to all their hopes and desires. But Thomas' remark only raises a difficulty, it does not solve it. Philip comes nearer the mark (for the heart is ever a safer and surer guide than the head in these matters) when he exclaimed: "Lord show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

*Wrath here, and in Chap. i. 10, means wrath on earth—not the Judgment of the Great White Throne, but the Great Tribulation and contemporary judgments. How, then, can the Church pass through these judgments when there is this distinct declaration that God has not appointed us to wrath?

Yes, that would suffice—to know the One to Whose House they were being invited. It seemed to them, for the moment, as if their Lord and Master were unintentionally mocking them—as if He were leaving them altogether behind in speaking of the Father and the Father's House. As if He Who had been so close to them and so much to them was putting Himself at a distance from them. Yet, had He not said, "I go to prepare a place for you," as much as to assure them—"there is room there for you as well as for Me?"

With what simplicity and effectiveness does Christ now solve all their difficulties and set their minds at rest. "*Have I been so long time with you,*" He says in answer to Philip's appeal, *and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*" as if to emphasise what He had said already, "If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him." Christ was the revelation of the Father. He was not different in either character or desire. All that they had known Christ to be—His love; His pity for their weakness, and forbearance with their ignorance and failures—had been but the Father revealed in Him. In that sense, as in every other, it was true, as He had said—"I and My Father are One."

That being so, to have a place prepared in the Father's house, where Christ would be to them all that He had ever been and the Father the same; to find out all that lay within the meaning of those words—"that where I am, there ye may be also," would surely be the consummation of their bliss. If being with Christ had meant so much to them on earth, what would it not mean to be in His company in heaven?

Christ would have them with Himself—such was His love. For Him to be in His Father's house, away from this poor, desolate, cold world, where He was so little appreciated, how much that meant. He would have all His own share the same joy. He would enter that bright and blessed scene first; and His presence there would be the preparation for their advent also. He would make it a Home for them.

How and when would that consummation of their

bliss and His, be brought about? By, and at, His coming. "I will come *again*, and receive you unto Myself." It has been said, and said truly, that many of Christ's utterances form headings to a larger and fuller unfolding of the truth in the epistles. These words recorded in John xiv. furnish an example—"I will come again, and receive you unto Myself," says our Lord. And in I. Thess. iv. 13-17, we are told how this will be. Do not the statements "Receive you unto Myself," and "Meet the Lord in the air": and again, "That where I am there ye may be also," and "so shall we ever be with the Lord," answer each other? And from all this, do we not see that our Lord, in His discourse in the Upper Room, and His servant Paul afterwards in his letter to the Thessalonians, are both referring to the same event? And therefore, not only shall we meet the Lord in the air, but we shall be introduced immediately to the Father's House—"so shall we ever be with the Lord."

The Marriage of the Lamb.

The fulfilment of 1st Thess. iv. and John xiv., will be followed by the Marriage of the Lamb. In Rev. xix., just before heaven is opened and there issues forth the rider on the white horse (which must not be confused with Rev. vi.—they are two totally different personages—the description of each is sufficient to tell us that), accompanied by the armies in heaven, the announcement is made: "*The Marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.*" Is it not fitting that before Christ puts down His enemies, and before He comes as Judge, He should taste some of the joy to which His work on the Cross entitles Him? And equally fitting that His Church—His Body and His Bride—should be gathered out of this world before the dark clouds of judgment settle upon it. Ah, yes; Christ loves His own too much, and knows too well what is due to Himself, not to separate those who are His and in such close relationship to Him from a world lying in the wicked one and subject to God's wrath.

Certain events will have transpired on earth, subsequent to the saints being "caught up," before the public union of Christ and the Church takes place. We are first informed that "the

great whore"—the false church—has been judged. Heaven rejoices over that solemn event with an exultation that is but the prelude of a still louder burst of praise, which leads to the announcement: "*The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.*" The moment has arrived when Christ will present His Bride to Himself—"a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." It is also granted to her to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; and we are told, "the fine linen is the righteousnesses of saints." Doubtless this is a fulfilment of Eph. ii. 10. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." The one is the outcome of the other. The fine linen refers to the practical life of righteousness, but this, too, is the result of God's purpose and grace. There is our responsibility, and there will be our reward for faithfulness; yet we have to confess in the language of Isa. xxvi. 12, "*For Thou also hast wrought all our works in (or "for") us.*" There is nothing to mar the joy of heaven, or of Christ, or of her He thus takes into union with Himself. The Wife is "ready," and the language is, "*Let us be glad and rejoice.*"

The Judgment Seat of Christ.

And now there comes before us another incident antecedent to the Appearing which may seem at first sight out of keeping with all the grace we have just been contemplating. But really it is not so. Possibly the Judgment Seat, as spoken of in II. Cor. v., precedes the Marriage of the Lamb. We are not told in so many words, whether it precedes or follows; but there can be little doubt that it forms one of at least three events which will take place between the Rapture and the Appearing: We enter the Father's House; there is the Marriage of the Lamb: and we are manifested before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Yet there are certain words, (without building too much upon them) which seem, at least, to suggest that the manifestation may come second in the above order. We have already

noticed the words, "And to her was *granted* that she should be arrayed in fine linen." How precious to think of that as the result of the manifestation before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Why *granted*? And further, does not the word "righteousnesses" suggest a thought in keeping with the object of the Judgment Seat? Of that we read:

For we must all appear (be manifested) before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (II. Cor. v. 10).

The result of this manifestation is, that God's work in the saints is seen and their righteous acts in consequence. And the Bride will be able to array herself in fine linen, clean and white. Whatever has been displeasing to God in our lives and contrary to His holy will, will be burnt up, and the reward to that extent forfeited.

How important to maintain the balance between God's sovereignty and our responsibility, and between His work and ours. On the one hand, it is said we are "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." While on the other, we have the statement of the Apostle: "Wherefore we labour (or endeavour) that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of (well pleasing to) Him." (II. Cor. v. 9.) If God has fore-ordained our good works they will certainly be accomplished, if only we form the same resolution as the Apostle, and act up to it. How blessed to realise that God has a present purpose in our conversion—some good work—and that in communion with Him we shall not fail of its accomplishment. But there *is* our responsibility, and though God will never fail us, we may fail Him. This is a solemn thought, and one that may well make us careful and diligent, that we may be found of Him in peace without spot and blameless.

But it cannot be too strongly insisted upon that the Judgment Seat of Christ, in so far as it relates to the believer, has nothing penal about it.* Awards, and not penalties, are in question there. Perhaps no other occasion will so clearly

* They are liable to suffer loss, but there is no punishment, in a judicial sense

manifest the grace of God. Our whole lives will be in retrospect; and the grace that saved and kept and helped us will become to us more dear and wonderful than ever. Yet that very grace will make us feel only the more ashamed, if we have failed and come short. We shall see not only what we are, but what we might have been. But that shame will not be produced by any threats or the imposition of penalties, but by a sense of how ill we have requited that love which has so blessed us.

And now having reached our eternal home; having seen the glory of Christ and become like Him; the union between Christ and His Church having been publicly celebrated; and our manifestation before the Judgment Seat having taken place and our position in the Kingdom doubtless assigned us—we are ready to come forth with the One Who is King of kings and Lord of lords and to reign with Him.

R. E.

(To be continued.)

I AM.

Jo. xviii. 3-6.

Lanterns and torches go to efface the Sun,
Led by a gleam from hell.

The Sun sends out
A single ray, and lo, the rabble rout
Falls backward, earth to earth, confused, undone.
Then does the Sun reveil Himself that they,
Earth's lawless flares, may do their will, and smite,
Malignant fires across His sacred Light—
The Maker, and the Monarch of the Day.

And still the bearers of the lantern say
We make the daylight, all elsewhere is gloom.
Still do they strive the Real Light to entomb,
And seal it safe, and go their own blind way,
Unknowing that the Sun has risen in might,
And floods the heavens and earth with His Eternal Light.

E. STACY-WATSON.

Isaiah.

Chap. v.

Song Turned to Sorrow.

“The fugitive rhythm, the musical euphony, the charming assonances in this appeal it is impossible to reproduce; they are perfectly inimitable.”* So writes the Hebrew scholar Delitsch of verses 1 and 2 of this chapter; and he continues: “The prophet commenced the first address in chap. i. as another Moses; the second with the text of an earlier prophecy; and now he commences the third as a musician—

1. Now will I sing to my dearly beloved,
A song of my dearest concerning his vines;
For a vineyard belongs to my dearly beloved,
On the side of a hill, most fertile of soil.†

2. He fenced it, he dug it, he cleared it of stones;
And planted within it the noblest of vines;
Then for its guarding, he builded a tower,
And hewed from the rock a winepress within,
Then waited expectant of sweet luscious fruit,
And lo, when he came, the grapes were—a stench!‡

Now the Lord invites those to whom the parable applies to pass judgment between Himself and his vineyard: and in so doing they will be condemned out of their own mouth. This is profoundly significant, and characteristic of God's ways with men; I beg my reader to compare II. Sam. xii. 1, 7; Matt. xxi. 33-41, and he will again see, and by the way, in so doing, rejoice to see, that Jehovah and Jesus are One.”

* Perhaps, however, even our ear can catch a hint of the “lark-like trilling” in the Hebrew of v. 1:

ashirah nah lididi
shirath doodi le-karmo
kerem hayah lididi
beqeren ben-shahmen.

† Literally: On the horn of a son of fatness.

‡ Our word “wild-grape,” hardly conveys the repulsive idea that is in this word that comes as an anti-climax at the end: in Hebrew it is *bushim*, from a root “to have a bad smell.” The same word is in chap. xxxiv. 3, rendered “stench.”

Has any care been omitted? The judges are silent; every mouth is stopped; then Jehovah pronounces sentence:

No more will I trim it; no more will I dig it;
 The briars and thistles about it shall grow—
 Never a cloud shall drop blessing upon it—
 Fruitful alone in its shame and its woe;
 The beasts of the field shall tread in the mire
 The vineyard I loved, my "plant of desire."

Then comes the interpretation of the parable: The vineyard is the house of Israel, his pleasant plant the men of Judah; from these He expected good fruit "but behold instead of *mishpaht* He found *uispach*; instead of *tzedahqah* He found *tzeahqah*. The poet here closely depicts by the word-likeness, which yet conceals a totally different meaning, the deceptive appearance in the conduct of the Israelites, which at first looked like good vines and then developed a wild vine: this may be imitated in English thus: He waited for *equity*, and lo, *iniquity*: for *right*, and lo, *riot*."*

This is followed with a cry of "Woe," six times repeated, foretelling thus by doleful forecasts the execution of judgment. But looking closer we discern that whilst the woes are six, the penalties are three; first in verses 9 and 10; second in verses 13 to 17; third in verses 24 to 30. We may again note the divine finger-print in the impression of the number "three" and its multiple "six" on this section.

But before going to it, I cannot refrain from further noting this profound and deeply interesting truth: Israel is but a little stage on which has been acted out, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as we may say, a drama that reveals to us what is occurring in a far larger one in the race of mankind as a whole. Exactly what is in our chapter, predicted of Israel and Judah, His "plant of delight" (as it very literally is) has occurred with man as a race; also His "plant of delight," for He sang a song of love and joy over him too at his creation: Gen. i. 27 being really a three-lined song:

So Elohim created the man in His image—
 In Elohim's image created He him—
 Male and female created He them.

*From the American translators of Lange's Comm.

Alas, that song has also been turned to sorrow, for after four "days" of testing, it may be said of him too that "he stinketh for he hath been dead four days." So much for poor Adam the first; God may well be praised then for the last Adam, "*the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.*" The song over *Him* never ceases, and (oh wonder of wonders) we, in *Him* have a part in it, and abiding in *Him* who is the true Vine, we (even you and I, dear reader) may bring forth such good fruit as shall be to the glory of the Father, and give *Him* joy.

Verses 8 to 10. The first woe is directed against the lust of the eye: the coveting of house or land: the people are never satisfied. Having acquired one house, or field, that has been long coveted, that coveting is only diverted to the adjoining, and this would go on till there is nothing left on earth that they do not own, and then—what? Will the earth satisfy that ever-hungry heart? Indeed not. Yet, hungering ever, here is a curse on the very hungering! Nor is this coveting recognised at all as "sin," till the law comes with "*thou shalt not covet.*" Alas, might not the injunction as well be "*thou shalt not breathe,*" for who does *not* covet! Nor can the whole earth fill this little hungry heart of man; it will hunger *for ever*, apart from One who alone can fill it.

But Jehovah has spoken into the ears of the prophet—*i.e.* so clearly as to preclude the possibility of any misunderstanding—the penalty that shall correspond to the offence; there shall be many beautiful dwellings, but no dwellers in them: as to the fields, so barren shall they become that a vineyard covering 10 acres shall yield only a few gallons; and if one sows about 30 pecks of seed, he shall get back about 3!

Again let us turn to our "Last Adam" and sing:

"Satisfied with Thee Lord Jesus,
I am blest."

In *Him*, too, we are not forbidden to covet, but indeed are urged to "*covet earnestly the best gifts,*" that is, those that shall make the *least* of ourselves, and shall most edify our brethren.

Verses 11 to 17. The second woe is directed against the

lusts of the flesh; against those who from break of day till the cool of the evening pursue after strong intoxicants, till wine pursues *them*, gets hold of them, inflames them. This is combined with the more refined form of sensual pleasure, music; which from the day of Jubal, has been one of the chief delights of the children of Cain. These—wine and music—are their feasts: body and soul are thus provided for, but what of the spirit that can never be satisfied with aught but God?

Alas it is dead, for

“The work of Jehovah they do not regard—
The work of His hands they do not consider.”

What is the consequence? Judgment would overtake them in this blind, dull, animal condition.

Comparatively little interest would this have for us, were not the history so closely repeating itself. Substitute Christendom for Judah, and again we see the mass “*lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,*”* and these pleasures have so deadened all their spiritual faculties that they discern not that the Judge is at the door. Read the newspapers, the magazines, the political pamphlets; listen to the platform, and the pulpit, and how often do you hear a voice raised to press home that this present unprecedented war is nothing else than the judgment of God on just those nations which have assumed the Name of His Beloved Son, and is but the foreshadowing and precursor of still more severe intervention of God in the final judgment of the nations?—(Matt. xxv.)

* 2 Tim. iii.

“Faith has no merit, it is simply the hand of a beggar held out to receive a gift. It is a guilty sinner *accepting a free pardon* at the hands of a gracious God.”

“The way not only to *secure* peace, but also to *retain* peace and joy, is to keep our eye always fixed on Christ, to ever behold the Lamb of God as bearing away my sins in His own body on the tree. Ever be looking to Jesus Who is the author and finisher of our faith.—(Heb. xii. 2).

Elisha, the Prophet.

By W. W. FEREDAY.

XIX.—MINISTERS OF WRATH.

When Elijah made his complaint against Israel at Horeb, three persons were named to him by Jehovah as the executors of His will upon the guilty nations—Hazeal, Jehu, and Elisha (I. Kings xix. 15-17.) Of these, Elisha was brought forward first with his wonderful ministry of grace. This is so like our God. Had Israel possessed eyes to perceive it, Elisha's service amongst them was the divine interlude between the sentence and the judgment. It was for Israel to say whether the sentence should take effect or not; for Jehovah is ever willing to turn aside the threatened stroke when men really humble themselves before Him. This is His declared principle of action in Jer. xviii. 7-8, and we get an illustration of it in Jehovah's dealings with Nineveh in the time of Jonah.

Elisha's ministry of grace was practically fruitless. Israel sinned more and more. The time had come therefore for the sword to be unsheathed. Accordingly we have the ministers of wrath appointed—Hazeal in II. Kings viii. 7-15, and Jehu in II. Kings ix. 1-10.

When Elisha visited Damascus, King Benhadad, who was sick, sent Hazeal to him to inquire if he should recover of his disease. Possibly the merciful deeds described in chapters v. and vi., 22-23, had given the prophet favour in the eyes of the Syrian monarch, if only for a season. Like Naaman, he was prepared to pay largely for any benefit he might receive, and so he sent the man of God "a present of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden." That God is not a trader, but a giver (and a very generous giver) seems a fact exceedingly difficult for men's minds to grasp. In every dispensation men are disposed to barter with God—so much money or labour for so much blessing.

When Hazeal came before him with his message, Elisha realized that a fateful moment had arrived for Israel. Hence, after he had informed his visitor that though there was no real

reason why the sick man should not recover, but as a matter of fact he would not do so because Hazael was destined to be king over Syria, he wept. All the barbarities attendant upon war rose up before his mind, and though he knew Israel richly deserved the chastening rod, he loved the people, and mourned over their impending desolation.

When the weeping prophet told Hazael what he would do to the children of Israel in burning their strongholds, slaying their young men with the sword, and massacring their women and children, the Syrian exclaimed in amazement: "What, is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" Hazael is not the only person apparently incapable of realizing all the evil of which flesh can be guilty. It is likely that he had never hitherto perpetrated such enormities, and so he recoiled from the terrible suggestions. But the result proves that when he found himself in the place of power, he committed all the ferocious deeds of which Elisha warned him. It has been truly said that many of us are harmless only because our position in society does not permit us to be otherwise.

Perhaps some of our readers have not yet learned the hopeless evil of flesh—their own flesh. To such it may be staggering to find the offensive things mentioned in Col. iii. 5 described as "*your* members." Or again, it may be painful to ponder the horrible list of the works of the flesh as given in Gal. v. 19-21. The poor, shocked heart is apt to exclaim: "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?"

Let us note it well, there is no evil of which flesh is not capable. It met its end in judgment before God in the cross of Christ, and they that are Christ's have, by their acceptance of the divine sentence, crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts (Gal. v. 24.) Henceforward for us confidence in flesh is impossible. Christ is all.

However startled Hazael might be by the prophet's announcement, in the sequel he did everything that was predicted of him. First, on his return to Damascus, he murdered his master in his bed, and usurped his throne; then, during many years he waged pitiless war with both Israel and Judah, inflicting frightful suffering upon the people. The following

passages chronicle Hazael's destructive work:—II. Kings viii. 28-29; x. 32-33; xii., 17-18; xiii., 3-7, 22-24. But all the anguish and ruin might have been averted had God's rebellious people humbled themselves before Him.

(To be continued).

The Book of Psalms.

By WALTER SCOTT.

PSALM 9. Psalms ix. and x. should be read and studied together. Both refer to the circumstances of the last days of Israel's sorrowful history. The heading over our Psalm applies equally to Psalm x. In the Septuagint, the two Psalms are arranged as one. It may be remarked, however, that in the lxx.—the most venerable of versions—Psalm cxlvii., is divided into two separate compositions, and thus the complete number of Psalms—in all, 150—is common to Hebrew, Greek, and English Bibles.

Psalms i. and ii. not only form an introduction to the Psalter as a whole, but they serve as a necessary preface to the *five* sorrowing Psalms, iii.-vii.—the eighth being Jehovah's answer to the cries and afflictions of His people. A similar arrangement holds good in the section now before us, which, commencing with Psalm ix., closes with Psalm xviii. . Psalms ix. and x. form a preface to the *five* afflictive Psalms which follow, Nos. 11-15. In these five are depicted the sorrows, trials, and prayers of the godly Jew under the circumstances disclosed in our two prefatory Psalms, ix. and x. The remaining ones of the section, Nos. 16, 17, and 18, have a character peculiar to themselves, and which we hope to consider in due course.

Before remarking on the subjects of our Psalm, note that "heathen" in verses 5, 15, 19 should read *nations*. "People" in verses 8, 11 reads *peoples*. "The wicked" in verses 5, 16 is in the singular, while in verse 17 it is plural.

Gentile governmental rule, known as "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke xxi. 24) was established on the ruin of the Jewish Monarchy (Dan. ii.) It has now existed for about

twenty-five centuries. The closing stage of Gentile supremacy is characterised by cruel oppression of the Jew, and the destruction of the Hebrew Commonwealth, set up in unbelief on the return from the world-wide dispersion. Our Psalm contemplates that solemn crisis in the world's history, when Jew and Gentile meet before the throne of Jehovah set up on earth (verses 4-8)—the godly Israelite for vindication ; the wicked (Jew and Gentile) for unsparing judgment. The sorely-tried and suffering Jewish saints, whose afflictions and exercises in the midst of grossest wickedness occupy such a large place in the Psalter, are then amply vindicated. "Thou *hast* maintained my right and my cause: Thou satest in the Throne judging right" (verse 4.) How changed the situation! The faithful Jew, amidst scorn and contempt (Psalms xliv. 13 ; lxxix. 4), yet clung in faith to Jehovah and His Word, and is now publicly and from the Throne justified from the cruel and heartless aspersions of the enemy. But there is another needful action of the Throne. Unsparing Judgment upon the enemies of Jehovah and of His earthly people, "Thou has rebuked the nations, Thou hast destroyed the wicked [one], Thou has put out their name for ever and ever. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end" (verses 5, 6). Then the Throne is prepared for the righteous administration of the world for one thousand years (verse 8 ; see also Heb. ii. 5 ; Acts xvii. 31). Here the millennial world is in question.

The righteousness of God in delivering His people from Gentile oppression, and in the punishment of their oppressors is the characteristic feature of the Psalm. The praises of the delivered people are specifically referred to in verses 1, 2, 11, 14. The same stroke of judgment on the wicked inside and outside the land of Judea, delivers the godly. Once again the Red Sea divides, and Israel chastened through sorrow is now emancipated. Her centuries of national degradation have been an educative process fitting her in Jehovah's appointed time to take her decreed place of Headship over the nations. Jehovah is known on earth by Judgment (verse 16). It is important to distinguish between the Throne in Heaven and the Throne on Earth. This latter is for governmental action. A key to the under-

standing of the Psalter, and of the Prophetic portions of the Bible, is to carefully distinguish between a righteousness for Heaven and a righteousness for earth. The Cross is the ground of the former; the Throne on Zion is the basis of the latter.

The two Divine names in our Psalm are "Jehovah" and "Most High." Jehovah—the expression of Israel's *covenant relationship* with God occurs in the first book of Psalms, Nos. 1-41, about 270 times. *Most High* is God's millennial title: See Gen. xiv. 18-22, and Psalm lxxxiii. 18. In our Psalm God is worshipped under those two titles (verses 1-2). No human hand is needed to punish the enemies of the godly. Jehovah's presence is enough: (verse 3, compare with John xviii. 6.) In beautiful contrast to the utter and final doom of the wicked and their great cities, we read, "But *Jehovah shall endure for ever*" (verse 7). Jehovah is not only a Judge but a Refuge in trouble (verse 9), and the object of trust by all who know His name: (verse 10).

DIVISIONS.

1. The Praise of the godly and delivered People, verses 1, 2.
2. Jehovah on the Throne Judging Righteously, verses 3-19.
3. The Lesson: The Nations but *men*, verse 20.

Love is of *God*. This love, true love, Divine love, is very wonderful. Nothing but good can ever come from it. It is of God, not of ourselves. *God is love*. This in itself shows how wonderful love must be. And have not we already known what this love means? Have we not been near enough to God to know? Do we not know how pure and perfect it is? and may we not expect this love so to fill us that we may be guided and blessed in all things. We are brought to the very source of it all. We cannot know God without knowing love, and it is also true that he who *truly loves* knows God and has God dwelling in Him. To-day may we be so near to Him that this love may be ours, filling our hearts from the very heart of God Himself. This may be ours *now*—the love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him."

The True Servant.

BY WM. BOUSFIELD.

Mark I., Verses 1 to 37.

MARK IS THE SERVANT GOSPEL.—Here we find the Lord in the full activity of his blessed service, quickly passing from one scene of activity to another, going about doing good. The words which characterise prompt and willing service are very prominent in Mark. "Immediately," "forthwith," "straightway," etc., often occur in this first chapter—the whole of the instances recorded giving a full range of Christian service, and equipment for that service.

It is evidence of the grace and wisdom of our God that He allows Mark, the one-time unfaithful servant, to be the channel of the record of the faithful service of God's Son.

When Christ was here He was God's representative man. Now He has gone back to Heaven, Christian men and women are called to the high dignity of being God's representatives on earth, His witnesses, epistles of Christ, known and read of all men. But to be this we need equipment—divine power—that we should follow in His steps. And in this wonderful panoramic chapter we see marked for us the path we shall need to walk, and the spiritual condition needed for that path.

Christ and the Spirit.

POWER (verse 10).—The early disciples were commanded to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they were endued with *power* from on high. When they got that power, on the day the Holy Ghost came down, it transformed their lives. Instead of hiding in an upper room for fear of the Jews they became bold and fearless witnesses, and their utterances were marked by such an evidence of power as commanded the attention of all who heard. The only power for service to-day is the unhindered power of God's Holy Spirit.

Christ with Satan.

CONFLICT AND VICTORY (verse 12).—This evidence of the Holy Ghost in power will at once bring the Christian, as it did the Master, into conflict with the powers of evil; and we shall

have spiritual conflict, as he had, and it is only in divine power that we can meet those forces, and not become submerged, but live that life of overcoming and victory to which we are called. Praise God, greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world, and through Holy Ghost power working in us we shall be able to stand in the evil day.

Christ's Call.

THE CALL TO SERVICE (verse 17).—There is not only conflict, that we may know victory, but there is the call to service—the call to become soul-winners, fishers of men. But only as we are followers of Him, as we are His true disciples—“I will make you to become”—He, the true servant, will teach us the true secret of this high service. “Fishers of men”—“catching men alive”—but only in the spirit of the Master, only as we get the spirit of that wondrous love that led Him from the heights of glory to the depths of Calvary, that He might seek and save that which was lost.

Christ in the Synagogue.

MINISTRY AND WORSHIP (verse 21).—From the seaside He went to the synagogue, and as He read from the sacred roll the words of the living God, there was an immediate recognition that “this man” was not as the scribes. He spake with authority, not the letter only, but the spirit of the word, and from that word, in the power of God's Holy Spirit, He was able to minister to the spiritually poor and needy the bread of God, the words of life. This was demonstration and power. Truly a pattern for those called to this service.

Christ and the Sick Room.

RESTLESSNESS AND REST (verse 30).—“*Lay sick of a fever,*” suggests the restlessness which it is to be feared marks so many Christian homes; but let Christ come into our homes, our lives; let His hand of infinite power, tenderness, and love, clasp in a close embrace our fevered hand of restlessness, and lo! a blessed calm, a power for ministry, a rest in the soul, having a transforming power in our lives, so that we can forget ourselves in a blessed personal ministrations to Him, Who is so worthy of all our heart's affection.

Christ in the Street.

BLESSING FOR OTHERS (verse 32).—But this blessed period of rest, satisfaction, communion, and spiritual contentment must needs be broken in upon by the insistent demands of the needy multitude gathered together in the street—poor, lame, and blind, all crying for help. Never let us allow the enjoyment of our own individual blessings to dull our apprehension of the needs of this poor sin-stricken world. Yea, rather let it intensify that feeling. Praise God, the Gospel we know, and have believed, can meet the need of all, and is still “the power of God unto salvation” to all who believe.

Christ in Solitude.

PRAYER AND COMMUNION (verse 35).—After the activities of service we need the recuperating power of communion in prayer. So the Lord retired to a *solitary* place to pray. We need to water the freshly sown seed with our tears. All men who have been used in winning souls for God, in carrying the precious Gospel to the poor and needy, have been men of prayer. I fear we know but little of this agony of prayer, this intense laying hold of God, for the blessing of the lost and perishing.

Christ Sought For.

ATTRACTION OF THE GOSPEL (verse 37).—Politically, socially, and ecclesiastically our Lord was rejected by the leaders of the people, but the common people heard him gladly. Surely His was an attractive personality, and He ever drew the needy and distressed to Himself, as the great deliverer and healer. So, I think, every Christian's home should be a centre of blessing to those in our own sphere of service, and those in distress should know where to turn for relief of either mind or body; and whilst it is especially to “the household of faith,” yet we should seek to do good unto all. There should be an attractive power in the Christian, and in the Gospel he brings, which will draw souls within its circle. And this will be manifest wherever Christian men and women live up to their privileges, and so discharge to the full all their great and wonderful responsibilities.

More Testaments Wanted.

MR R. E. BRIDER, of 6 Stirling Road, Bath Road, Bristol, writes:—"There is still a great demand for Testaments and magazines, many appeals reaching me from Chaplains and others." He will be glad to receive these from any who are able to send them.

A Chaplain to the Forces writes:—

Just to mention one case of a man with his nerves shattered by shell shock. A comrade to whom I gave one of your Testaments told me of him. He had been so terribly depressed that nothing said to him or done for him seemed to have any effect. The doctor had taken him in hand as a special case, and had tried every means of rousing him and cheering him, but he remained the victim of all kinds of morbid imaginings. His friends had also done their best for him, for there is often a very fine spirit of helpfulness in some of the roughest men. I took him aside and had a long talk with him, listening to all his woes and troubles. Then I told him of how simple trust in Jesus would calm and steady his mind. I produced one of your Testaments, and took him with me over the last verses of the 6th of St Matthew's Gospel, and the first verses of the 4th of Philippians. I spoke of the quiet confidence, faith in God, and constant prayer to God would give, and he listened to me with the greatest attention. I am certain that in his case your Testament will prove the best medicine a man could have.

Another Chaplain writes:—

We shall be glad to receive a large parcel of Gospel books if you can favour us. We have increased and increasing opportunities, and the Lord is blessing our labours. We are seeing conversions, and the believers are being aroused to the importance and solemnity of the times.

Another Chaplain writes:—

My stock of Testaments is quite gone. I shall be very thankful for some more. I do not know how to thank you enough for all your grand help.

"Christ wears privileges which He bought with blood, and lives to give what He died to get."

"Let the adverse breath of criticism be to you only what the blast of the storm-wind is to the eagle—a force against him that lifts him higher"

Condition of the World at the Time of our Lord's Birth.

“Augustus was at this period Emperor. From the Atlantic to the Euphrates, from where the legions were arrested by the snows of Sarmatia northward, and the sands of Libya southward, the world was a Roman farm, and with all its lovely islands and fruitful shores the Mediterranean was a Roman lake. Mauritania, Numidia, Egypt, Palestine, Syria—the countries now known as Turkey, Spain, France, Belgium, Holland, Britain,—all received their laws from the Italian capital, and all sent it their tribute. With its hundred and twenty million of subjects, this region included the whole of the old world's intelligence and nearly all its wealth; and though many of the conquered nations were fierce and strong, they had been effectually subdued, and were now overawed by an army of three hundred thousand men. With its beak of brass and its talons of steel the great eagle had grappled and overcome the human race, and the whole earth trembled when from his seven-hilled eyrie he flapped his wings of thunder.

“There was nearly universal peace. By the courage and consummate generalship of Julius Cæsar, the most formidable nations had already been vanquished; and since the death of Pompey and the conclusion of the civil war, the empire, undivided and undisputed, was swayed by a single autocrat.

“The Pagan culture had culminated. The exquisite temples of Greece had begun to go to ruin, and in that land of sages there arose no new Pythagoras—no second Socrates. But the genius of Rome had scarcely passed its zenith. Seneca was born in the same year with John Baptist. Thousands still lived in whose ears the musical wisdom of Cicero lingered, and who had read, when newly published, the sublime speculations of Lucretius. It was but the other day that the sweet voice of Virgil had fallen mute, and only eight years since the tomb of Mæcenas had opened to admit the urn to Horace. Under its sumptuous ruler, Rome was rapidly becoming a mountain pile of marble palaces—baths, temples, theatres—the proudest on which sunbeams ever sparkled; and with his enormous wealth and all commanding absolut-

ism, the Roman citizen was the lordliest mortal whom luxury ever pampered—the most supercilious demigod who ever exacted the adulation of his fellows.

“Yet, amidst all this civilization, it was a time of fearful depravity. In regions so remote as Britain and Germany, it was scarcely surprising that dark superstitions should prevail, and that hecatombs of little children should be immolated by the fiends of the forest. But in Rome itself, under all the outward refinement coarse tastes and fierce passions reigned; and the same patrician who at a false note in music would writhe in graceful agony, could preside unperturbed over the tortures of a slave or a prisoner; and to see him overnight shedding tears at one of Ovid’s epistles, you would not guess that he had all the morning been gloating over the convulsions of dying gladiators. Busts of cats adorned the vestibule, but brutality and excess ran riot through the halls; and it was hard to say which was the most abandoned—the multitude who still adored divinities, the patrons of every crime, or the scholars who laughed at superstition and perpetrated crimes worthy of a Mars or Jupiter.

“This was the time which the Most High selected for the greatest event of human history. On the one hand it was a time of tranquillity. The wars of long centuries had ceased. Men’s minds were not absorbed in the contests of dynasties, nor agitated by the burning of their capitals and the desolation of their homes. And a lull like this was favourable for the commencement of a moral movement which concerned the whole of Adam’s family. On the other hand the world was old enough. For 4000 years the great experiment had been going on, and man had been doing his best to retrieve the ruin of the fall. It seemed, however, as if every struggle were only a deeper plunge and betwixt the exploded nostrums of philosophy, and the corruption of the times, the world was grown weary of itself. A dry rot had got into the ancient faith, and idolatry and hero-worship tottered on their crumbling pillars. Satiety or disgust was the prevailing mood of the wealthy; revenge and despair gnawed the heart of the down-trampled millions. For tribes which had lost their nationality, and for citizens who had sold their hereditary freedom, there was no spell in the past; and amongst a people who had lost faith in one another, there re-

mained nothing which could inspire the fervour of patriotism. It was felt that if extrication ever came it must come from above; and even in heathen lands, hints gathered from the Hebrew Scriptures, or prophetic particles floated down on the muddy tide of pagan mythology, began to be carefully collected and exhibited in settings of the richest poetry, till the bard of Mantua sang of a virgin, and an unprecedented offspring descended from high heaven, who would efface the traces of our crimes, and free from its perpetual fears the world—in whose days the lion would be no terror to the ox, and the deadly serpent should die. Betwixt the general peace which prevailed, the hopeless wickedness, and the general wearying for a change, ‘the road was ready, and the path made straight.’ ‘The fulness of the time was come, and God sent forth His Son.’”

(EXTRACT.)

“They Looked unto Him and were Lightened.”—

They looked! How much there is in the Bible about looking—Behold! is a word we constantly meet. It is one of the keywords of Christianity. Twice in John I. we have, “Behold the Lamb of God!” We are changed in this way. We reflect what we behold. It means we are looking away from ourselves and our surroundings: We forget all that in contemplation of another. “They looked unto Him.” That is the point of observation—“unto Him”—a Person. He is the attraction. We look at what attracts us. In Christianity, all truth, all help, all that we can ever know of God, or need to know, is found in a Person. And the effect of the looking—“were lightened.” “Beholding the glory of the Lord are changed.”

From his own experience someone tells of a Yorkshire factory girl who had given herself to Christ. “As she was walking up and down the platform of a railway station, waiting for a train, her face became transfigured with the new joy. In a first-class carriage sat a lady of title, wealth and culture. She saw the girl pass several times in front of the train, called to her and asked, ‘What makes you look so happy?’ The girl told her simple story, and the result of the brief conversation was that this lady was led to the same Christ. I knew both women, and can testify to the truth of the incident.”

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“I Will Come Again.”

[FIFTH ARTICLE.]

DEVELOPMENTS ON EARTH BEFORE CHRIST APPEARS.

The Apostacy: Civil and Ecclesiastical—The Beast and the Antichrist—The
Restoration of the Jews, &c.

In our last article we reached the stage when Christ is about to appear. He had come for His saints; He was about to appear with them. They are seen in heaven before this takes place—I. Thess. iv., 13-17—having been fulfilled. The dead in Christ have been raised, and these, together with the living, have been “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air. And this, first of all, in order that they may be *with* Him; according to I. Thess. iv., 17; John xiv., 2-3; and Rev. xix., 7. We then come forth with Christ, as depicted in the last-named Scripture, with which agrees Col. iii., 4—“When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” Let us now go back to see how events will develop on earth ere this takes place.

Before doing so, we would point out for the sake of some, that the second coming of Christ is totally different in character from His first coming. He will be the same Person, but both His appearance and His mission will be completely altered. He came in lowliness and grace, and as the servant of man, on the first occasion: He will come in power and glory, and as Lord of all, on the second. The former witnessed His works of mercy and His death for sin: the latter will witness the destruction of His enemies by His mighty power. In the one case, He

proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord: in the other, He will inaugurate the "day of vengeance of our God." He came to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin the first time: He will come to claim His rights when he returns. Once He came to suffer: the second time He will come to reign. A careful comparison of Luke ii., 10-14, and iv., 16-22, with Rev. xix., 11-16, will make this difference abundantly evident. See also Ps. ii., 8-9; xlv, 3-7; cx. Why this complete change of aspect? The day of grace is over, the long-suffering of God has terminated, and "the day of vengeance is in His heart" (Isa. lxiii., 4), and His vesture dipped in *blood*. His foes now, whether willing or not, are to be made his footstool. (Compare Isa. lxiii., 2-3, with Rev. xix., 13.)

But there will be a marked development of evil before this takes place. A threefold hindrance to this exists so long as the present dispensation continues, and the Church is on earth. For the sake of His children God maintains a more or less ordered and settled state of Government. (This is true of Christendom specially.) The powers that be are ordained of God, and though evil works beneath the surface it is restrained. Then, in addition, there is the effect of the presence of God's people and of the Holy Spirit. At the Rapture these restraining influences will be withdrawn—wickedness will be unbridled—and all the evil tendencies of the human heart will be manifested, producing the utmost lawlessness and opposition to God.

There will be both a Civil and Ecclesiastical Apostacy.

I. The head of the civil apostacy will be the first beast of Rev. xiii. We read of him, "*And the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority*" (v. 2.) Now, the powers that be are ordained of God; *then*, this supreme power will be ordained of Satan. Satan having been cast out into the earth, and the Holy Spirit having departed, the former will for a brief period seem to have it all his own way. God will be unrecognised—an image of this beast being the centre and symbol of the religion of humanity which will be enforced everywhere. "He will make war with the saints and overcome them." "Power was given him over all kindreds and tongues

and nations." He will control commerce. The mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name, will be the only passports to wealth and influence. With him are associated ten kings, who give him their strength and power. Through this man Satan seeks to gain possession of the earth, and to drive God and His people out of it.

All this is in deadly opposition to the will of God, and provokes His unsparing judgment. "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." And the reason of this is plain. Satan is leading men to accept his own nominee to the world's supremacy, and to throw off all allegiance to the Christ of God. Rev. xvi. discloses the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet joining hands for this purpose. They gather the kings of the earth to the battle of that great day of God Almighty (v. 14.) And with regard to the confederacy of the beast and the ten kings, we are informed "These shall make war with the Lamb" (ch. xvii., 14.)

Accompanying all that has been stated above, and strictly co-ordinated with it, will be a false worship—a religious apostacy. The apostacy of Christendom will be complete. II. Thess. ii., 3, refers to this falling away. Rev. xiii., as we have seen, speaks of the beast and his image becoming objects of worship. It may be asked, How will it be possible for men to be so utterly deceived? Two factors operate to bring that about. First, because men received not *the love of the truth* that they might be saved, and believed not *the truth* when they had the opportunity, God shall send them strong delusion. Secondly, this false worship will be inaugurated by Antichrist, "Whose coming," we are told, "is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." This man, called in II. Thess. ii., "the man of sin"—"the lawless one"—is the second beast of Rev. xiii., where we are told "He doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles." Is it any wonder then that poor, frail humanity should give itself up to abominable

idolatry when, forsaken of God, and under the spell of "strong delusion," it witnesses such evident signs of superhuman power?

The Church of Rome, too, is to play a large part in all that we have been describing. Nor need we wonder that she finds it easy to accommodate herself to such worship. Has she not in the past incorporated within her system heathen rites and ceremonies, and festivals held in honour of false gods? And does she not, also, directly encourage idolatry in the worship of the host, of images, and of the Virgin Mary? Babylon and the Beast are seen closely identified in Rev. xvii. There is every indication therefore that Rome will play a leading part in the developments after the Rapture; but as she never consents to take any subordinate place it is probable that eventually a conflict for supremacy will ensue between herself and the beast, leading to her final destruction at the hands of the ten kings. For we read that they "agree and give their kingdom unto the beast." Rome, probably, will seek to ally them with herself, but, instead, they will hate her and burn her with fire (Rev. xvii., 16.)

The Ancient Roman Empire will be Revived in some form.

2. This will be in close connection with what has already come before us. The first beast of Rev. xiii. is the head of this resuscitated power. As to this, the facts from which prophetic students draw their conclusions are as follows:—In the Book of Daniel we have the four kingdoms—Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman—twice referred to. Once in connection with Nebuchadnezzar's image, and again in Dan. vii. under the symbol of four beasts. In the first case, the stone cut out without hands—representing the kingdom which God will establish on earth—strikes "the image upon its feet." In other words, that which represents Rome. In Dan. vii. attention is concentrated again upon this same kingdom, which once more eventually gives place to the kingdom of the Son of Man. Therefore the Roman Empire must be in existence in some form when Christ comes.

It is possible also to show some identification between this fourth beast and the first beast of Rev. xiii. The former is said

to have ten horns, and so is the latter. That is, the beast of Revelation combines in himself all the power of these other kings. And he is in fact the little horn of Dan. vii., 8. All this power will be concentrated in a man. "Behold, in this horn were the eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. . . . And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High." Compare with this Rev. xiii., 5-7. In both references he is said to continue for the same period, viz., forty and two months. The seven heads are also another mark of identification. It is clear, therefore, that a revived Roman Empire in some form is destined to play a very important part in the future.

Restoration of the Jews.

3. Another event of supreme importance will be the restoration of the twelve tribes to the land of Palestine. The land has been given to them for an everlasting possession. (Gen. xvii.) Some measure of restoration may take place even before the Church is removed. We are for the moment fixing attention more upon the occurrences which will happen after that event: That Israel is to be restored to their own land is *implied* by the promises to Abraham and David, and such predictions as are contained in Isa. ii. 1-5; ix. 6-7; xi. 1-9; xxv. 6-8, yet unfulfilled, and *directly foretold* in Isa. xi. 10-16; xii.; xiv. 1; xxxv. 10; Jer. xvi. 14-16; xxix. 13-14; xxxi. 10-12, 31-40, &c., &c.

But they will return in unbelief. Anti-Christ will be their King—Dan. ix. 27; xi. 36-39; John v. 43. An idol will be set up in the temple at Jerusalem (Matt. xxiv. 15; II. Thess. ii.)

This will also be the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. xxx. 6-9; Matt. xxiv. 21; Dan. xii. 1.)

The Gospel of the Kingdom.

4. During this period *the Gospel of the Kingdom*, mentioned in Matt. xxiv. 14, "shall be preached in all the world as a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." That there may be preaching of the gospel in almost every part of the world to-day does not affect, in any way, what our Lord

affirms. What He alludes to here is a special preaching—the gospel of the Kingdom. Its extent—“in all the world.” Its object—“a witness unto all nations.” Its climax—“then shall the end come.” It is never prognosticated in Scripture that the present preaching of the gospel will bring the end.

The time that will elapse between the Coming of Christ *for* His saints, and His return with them, will be of a very chequered character for the inhabitants of earth. There will be persecution and tribulation, revolution and anarchy at one period, and “peace and safety” at another. The former is indicated in Matt. xxiv. 21 and 29; Rev. vi. 12-17; and xiii. 1; the latter in I. Thess. v. 3, and Rev. xiii. 11.

R. E.

(To be continued.)

Abiding in Him.

Lord Jesus keep us ever near Thy side,
 Still deeper grows the darkness, more intense;
 Steadfast in Thee, oh, may our souls abide,
 Till Thou, our light, appear to take us hence.

Lord Jesus keep us looking unto Thee,
 As day by day our pilgrim path we tread;
 Free from the world, from its allurements free,
 Until conforméd to our risen Head.

Lord Jesus, keep us living 'neath Thy smile,
 While Thou art gone our mansions to prepare;
 Spending in service blest, the “little while,”
 E'er we ascend Thy Home of bliss to share.

Soon Thou wilt come Lord, we shall see Thy face,
 And seeing Thee shall know as we are known;
 Free, free at last from every earthly trace,
 In Thy blest presence when our rest is won.

E. L. W.

Biblical Notes.

By WALTER SCOTT.

There are four great facts which characterise Christianity :—

1. THE INCARNATION OF OUR LORD.
2. THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.
3. THE DESCENT AND PRESENCE OF THE HOLY GHOST.
4. THE SECOND COMING OF OUR LORD.

The incarnation of our Lord, or God manifest in flesh, did not make Him a Person. He was *that* before He came into the world. It was a Divine Person who became incarnate.



Mary was blamed by her sister (Luke x. 40) and by the Disciples (Matt. xxvi. 8). She was silent. In both instances the Lord vindicated her. The Lord was *with* her and *for* her. What a lesson to us! Self vindication or the Lord's vindication—*which?*



In every case of real conversion to God the *conscience* is cleared by the precious BLOOD, and the *heart* won by the equally precious LOVE.



The might of *God's* compassionate love was shewn to the world in the gift of His Son (John iii. 16.) The strength and tenderness of *Christ's* love was displayed to the Church—He gave Himself for it (Eph. v. 25). Scripture does not speak of God's love to the Church, nor Christ's love to the world. It is perfect as God has written it. Suffering saints can surely count upon the tender love of Christ enabling them to triumph over all life's trials and circumstances (Rom. viii. 35-37) as also upon the might of God's love as opposed to all and every creature-power (verses 38, 39).

Dan is omitted in the sealing of the tribes for millennial blessing (Rev. vii.), but is first named in the millennial divisions of the land (Ezek. xlvi.) Judgment in the former, grace in the latter.



The *death* of Christ in sacrifice for sin is witnessed in Psalm xxii. The *resurrection* of our Lord is taught in Psalm xvi. The *exaltation* of our Lord is the subject of Psalm cx. The *reign* of our Lord is the grand theme of Psalm lxxii. The *universal worship* of our Lord is surely the grand truth of Psalm cl.



The world's first recorded battle is noted in Genesis xiv. It was a struggle between the west and the east, in which the Jews (typically) were involved. The great features of that conflict are in evidence to-day. The Jew is *the* factor in the world of politics and conflicts.



Worship is giving to God. Ministry is giving to man. The sphere of worship is the holiest. The sphere of ministry is the world. Jewish worship was to a large extent mechanical. Christian worship is spiritual. Jewish ministry was inside, and to Jews alone. Christian ministry is outside, and to Gentiles and Jews at large.



“Take time to be holy.” A little done in the power of the Spirit, and in happy, unrestrained communion with God, is of infinitely more value than the greatest laboured service. Quality in service is of greater worth than quantity.



Judaism was, the millennial system is to come. Between the passing away of the one and the introduction of the other, Christianity fills the gap with Christ's sacrifice and love, and our return in service and love. The atmosphere in which we live and breathe is *love*—DIVINE LOVE.

I Remember. I Meditate. I Muse.

(Ps. 143., 5.)

By J. HARRAD.

Evidently, from his lamentation in the previous chapter, "No man cared for my soul," the Psalmist had, as so many others have done in a like situation, turned to man for help in his extremity and found him to fail, with the usual effect in such cases; he gets lower and lower until the enemy seizes the opportunity for a final thrust and effort to bring about disaster. "The enemy hath persecuted my soul . . . smitten my life to the ground . . . made me to dwell in darkness . . . my spirit is overwhelmed and my heart desolate." A more doleful picture you will hardly find anywhere within the covers of the Bible.

However, at the critical moment, when apparently about to acknowledge defeat, he does what he should have done in the first instance—turns to the consideration of what God had been, and therefore could be in the crisis through which he was passing.

"I remember the days of old." Had God ever failed? "I meditate on all Thy works. . . ." These reveal infinite wisdom. Can God make a mistake? "I muse on the work of Thy hand." The measured waters . . . the stretched out heavens . . . the starry host—all created and maintained by that hand! Is His power not sufficient for one of His creatures?

Dwelling on the faithfulness, wisdom, and power of God, he soon realises the resources at his disposal, and then how quickly the scene changes—just like a little child, unable to talk, whose tiny world, so to speak, has tumbled about its ears in the great trouble of an unexpected fall. The cries of distress speedily bring the mother to the spot. Scarcely able to see through its tears, and unable to speak, the little one simply and eloquently holds out its hands to the one who understands. So here the Psalmist in his trouble, as a little child, takes up the same position. "I stretch out my hands to Thee . . ."

Almost at once the way out is seen in the pathway outlined in his subsequent prayer :—

- v. 7—Hear me... ..Grace.
- v. 9—Deliver me... ..Salvation
- v. 9—Hide me.....Security.
- v. 10—Teach me.....Wisdom.
- v. 10—Lead me.....Guidance.
- v. 11—Quicken me.. ...Life more abundantly.
(make me alive.)

Where God begins in grace, blessed be His name, it will end in glory. Having, like the Psalmist, proved how vain is the help of man, may we like him also prove the sufficiency of God.



You ask, "Why should God have given up His Son to die for us? and the purpose and reason of it all." Our sins demanded it, for by no other means was it possible to remove them. He knew that. He alone could judge of what was required to satisfy His own justice and holiness. We were no judges, for one guilty of sin cannot form an estimate of what sin deserves. And, moreover, we are only finite creatures, and of very limited capacity. Then, again, God's love is so great that only a stupendous sacrifice of that kind could give us any idea of it. So that in thinking of a reason for Christ dying, two things have to be borne in mind :—(1) The stupendous nature of sin ; and (2) the wonderful love of God. As to the first, sin had to be dealt with not only according to our need but His nature. For if *God* is to forgive, He must have a righteous basis for doing so—it must meet every requirement of Divine justice. And as to the second, no angel could adequately express the love of God. It must be that which cost God something—the Son Himself Who is in the bosom of the Father, He alone could declare God. Do you see? It is only as we look at sin in relation to God, and as it affects Him that we can understand the greatness of the Cross.

God Sought and Found.

The Book of Job deals with the problem of suffering. Many side issues are raised, but the main fact is established that God uses affliction for man's good. In the early chapters, Job, in distress, is seeking after God. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him," he says. Man's intelligence and limitations perplex him. "Man sets an end to darkness"; with mining tool and lamp he explores "the path which the vulture's eye hath not seen"; he brings to light the treasures of the earth, silver, gold, and "every precious thing." Cannot he with such power of research encompass the Almighty? Impossible. Zophar says:—"God is longer than the earth and wider than the sea." Yet man must acquaint himself with God ere his soul can rest; estranged from his Maker, he is like a wandering sheep on the hills. Hence Job feels that he cannot remain in ignorance. Surely (he thinks) if man had wisdom he could gain access to God. Alas! wisdom is a rare quality; it is not inherent in man, neither can it be bought with gold; its price is above rubies. Where then shall wisdom be found? "God knows the place thereof," and He only can reveal it. The man who learns the secret is marked by the fear of the Lord. Elihu suggests that the great obstacle is man's will. *God is seeking man*, but like the silly sheep, man runs away from Him. He speaks once, yea twice, yet man perceives it not. With infinite patience He speaks to man in dreams and visions of the night, in affliction, in pain upon his bed, to withdraw man from his purpose. "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man to bring back his soul from the pit, so that he might see God's face with joy." Hence what is hid from the explorer and the man of science is revealed to some poor soul in the furnace of affliction. God, infinite in power and majesty, makes Himself known to the lowly in heart, and He is pleased to dwell with the man whose spirit has been made contrite through suffering. This lesson Job learned in the school of adversity. At the end of the Book, he exclaims: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

With the help of the New Testament, we may see how these aspirations are realised in Christ. He is Wisdom personified, and the Revealer of God to man. The times of ignorance are past; God has been manifested in flesh; His attributes and His nature have been declared in the sorrows of Calvary. He has come to light in the Only Begotten Son, who bore the judgment of sin, and effected Redemption for man. If we see Him not, the defect is in ourselves; the veil of unbelief and pride is on our hearts. Should sorrow overtake us, we may regard it as a means whereby God intends to remove the veil, and to create desires after Himself. If, in our distress, we seek the Lord we shall find Him, and we shall behold His face WITH JOY.

W. TAYLOR.

"I will Fear no Evil for Thou art with Me."

God will take care of us, why should we fear?
 True to His promise, the Saviour is near.
 If 'neath His sheltering wings we abide,
 Heavenly protection, He'll surely provide.

Chorus:

*God will take care of us, God will take care of us,
 God will take care of us, true is His word.*

God will take care of us, though the earth quake
 We have a refuge that nothing can shake
 Conflicts may thicken, but God's over all
 When we're in trouble, on Him we may call.

Chorus:

God will take care of us, only believe,
 He, who hath promised, will never deceive.
 He'll not forsake us, His love cannot die,
 Soon He will take us to mansions on high.

M. E. R.

May be sung to the tune of "Christian walk carefully."

The Observatory.

THE POWERS BEHIND THE POWERS.*

Angels Interested in Men.—It is an undoubted fact, for those who accredit God's word, that the mighty beings, whose habitat is in the heavenly places, are deeply interested, both for good and for ill, in the things which take place amongst men on the earth. I. Peter i. 12 tells us that the angels desire to look into the things which pertain to our salvation; Eph. iii. 10 teaches us that the principalities and powers in the heavenlies learn the many-sided wisdom of God through his ways of grace towards the Church. . . . All these passages have reference to those spiritual powers that are still loyal to their Creator. But there are also vast hosts of spiritual powers that are in high revolt against their Creator, following the lead of the arch-rebel Satan. These watch with malevolent interest the course of human affairs, and they ceaselessly endeavour to influence them for evil and destruction. Activity in the Spirit world is a principal explanation of activity in this lower world. . .

The Case of Job.—The book of Job is instructive in this connection. . . . Before anything happened down here, something took place in the heavenlies. An audience day is described in the courts above, when Satan came before Jehovah amongst the Sons of God (*i.e.*, the angels). Challenged as to whether he had considered Job and his piety, it appears that Satan had his eye upon him malignantly. . . . The earthly happenings were known to Job, and they afflicted him sorely, but what did he know of the movements in the heavenlies which brought them about? Absolutely nothing.

Ahab's Campaign.—An exceedingly solemn instance of Spirit activity in connection with Israel is revealed in I. Kings xxii. 19-22. Ahab was bent upon going to war with Syria, spite of the faithful warning of Micaiah the prophet. Seeing that his words were fruitless, the prophet was divinely permitted to draw aside the veil which separates the visible from the invisible (the only occasion of such a thing being done as warning to anyone, so far as we remember), and the king was shown the Spirit influence that was at work, causing his host of mercen-

* To be obtained of the author in full, W. W. Fereday, "Glenside," Clifton Road, Matlock Bath. Price One Penny.

ary prophets to predict victory with united voice. He said: "Hear thou therefore the word of Jehovah; I saw Jehovah sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left. And Jehovah said, who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a Spirit, and stood before Jehovah and said, I will persuade him. And Jehovah said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying Spirit in the mouths of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also; go forth, and do so." The war which ended so disastrously for Ahab was thus engineered in the heavenlies. Jehovah's long suffering with this wicked king being exhausted, He permitted an evil spirit to allure him on to his destruction. It is a deeply interesting, if mournful, episode.

The Revelation to Daniel.—But the last (and longest) of the divine revelations to Daniel is by far the most suggestive Scripture in connection with our subject. We find "the man greatly beloved" in prayer for three weeks concerning his people. At the end of that period, an angel brought him Jehovah's reply. "But," said he, "the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes came to help me." (Dan. x. 13). And further on: "Now I will return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come" (verse 20). No one can read such passages with care, and imagine earthly sovereigns to be intended. How could any such persons hinder an angel coming from heaven with an answer to the prophet's prayer? Would the ruler of Persia even be likely to know that Daniel had prayed at all? Spirits are meant; Spirits that concerned themselves, either for mischief or for blessing, with the powers named. This is confirmed by the intervention of Michael, whose special charge is Israel (Dan. xii. 1). Moreover, the angel who thus spoke to Daniel adds in Dan. xi. 1: "Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and strengthen him." Daniel was thus let into the secret of conflicts in the heavenly places, which found their reflection in the movements of nations upon earth. The vision of the various coloured horses in Zech. i. 7-12, and that of the chariots and horses in Zech. vi. 1-8, with the angel-interpreter, afford us another gleam of light upon this mysterious subject. The four chariots, and the four different coloured horses naturally suggest the Empires of Dan. vii. which have held supremacy in the earth since God overthrew the throne of David. Yet it is not the

Empires themselves that are shown to us in Zechariah's visions, but those who represented them, and who influenced them from the heavenly places. "There are the four Spirits of the heavens which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth." The passages we have considered prove conclusively that events here are controlled by higher movements above. Men are just pawns in the hands of beings mightier than themselves, though they perceive it not . . .

The Great Combat in Heaven.—Thank God, this condition of things will not be suffered to continue for ever. The divine forbearance will ere long be exhausted. Then the day of the Lord will be ushered in, with all its tremendous consequences both for the heavens and for the earth. "It shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth" (Isa. xxiv 21). Here we have the judgment of rebels above and rebels below at the same epoch. John was shown, amongst the visions of the Apocalypse, the expulsion of Satan and his hosts from the heavenly places (Rev. xii. 7-9). "There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." This is the crisis of which the angel spoke to Daniel (ch. xii. 1): "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people." The hour for the final deliverance of Israel having struck (and their deliverance involves the blessing of all the nations (Gen. xxii. 18), Michael rises up in all his might, and the overthrow of every antagonist begins. First the heavens are cleared, and then the earth.

Armageddon.—One more Scripture remains to be noticed—Rev. xvi. 13-16. Here we have the final gathering together of the kings and their armies to Armageddon. That point in the world's history has not yet been reached, newspaper talk notwithstanding. But the fact to which we would call attention is that the hosts are gathered by Spirit influence. "I saw three unclean Spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are Spirits of demons, which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather

them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. . . . And he gathered them together into the place called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon." Having been expelled from the heavens by the might of the Archangel, evil Spirits are then no longer able to seduce men from thence; but their diabolical influence over men continues to their utter ruin. The last dread conflict, like all previous ones, is thus engineered in the Spirit realm. The due understanding of these things should serve to give point and urgency to our prayers at this crisis. Men who know not God may fail to see anything beyond contending earthly powers; the redeemed are capacitated to see further, and take notice of the powers behind the powers. . . . P. S.—The prominence given to the East in the present world-struggle is deeply instructive to the student of prophetic Scripture. The "Near East" is the pivot upon which all national arrangements have ever turned, and ever will turn, for there is located God's land, and His "Holy Hill" of Zion. Though God's land has been scarcely mentioned during the conflict, we suspect that behind the scenes it has a great deal to do with the struggle. If it be so that the time has about come for the land to be released from the grip of the Turk, need we wonder that Satan should earnestly endeavour to maintain the Turk in his place, using German ambition in the direction of Bagdad to that end? If we knew all the hidden springs of action, this may have more to do with the great war than Western jealousies and grievances.

However you may account for the existence of the heavens and the earth with their teeming types of life, order, utility, and beauty, you *must* admit miracle in their *origin* and *sustainment*. The Bible demands faith. Unbelief, which shuts out God, demands unreasoning credulity. There is no finality in science. The science of yesterday may not be the science of to-day. But the Bible record of creation, penned 3500 years ago, is unchanged, and the best results in modern science and discovery add their *amen* to that record. It is the only one which holds the field.

* * *

Each of the ten virgins had lamps, but only five had oil (Matt. xxv.) The oil was the essential thing. The wise virgins were *possessors* of eternal life, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Book of Psalms.

By WALTER SCOTT.

PSALM 10. The connection of Psalms ix. and x. seems evident. The public destruction of the wicked—whether Jews or Gentiles, or as concentrated in one person—as also the heathen or nations who in the last days have invaded “His land” (x. 16), *i.e.*, Palestine, is declared in both Psalms (ix. 17; x. 15, 16.) Then one other connecting link. “He forgetteth not the cry of the humble” (or afflicted, ix. 12) corresponds to the prayer of x. 12, “Forget not the humble” (or afflicted.) Yet there are characteristic differences. There is more of praise in the previous Psalm, while more of sorrow and prayer in the latter. The heathen or nations are specifically referred to five times in Psalm ix., and only once in Psalm x., in the announcement of irremediable judgment (verse 16.) But the “wicked” (singular) with its personal pronouns, occurs about twenty-five times in Psalm x. The “I will praise” (Psalm ix.) and the “He hath said in his heart” (Psalm x.) each represent a company, and not an individual merely.

Luther—the illustrious Reformer to whom Europe is for ever indebted—regarded this Psalm as unequalled in describing the character and ways of the ungodly or wicked. He wrote, “There is not, in my judgment, a Psalm which describes the mind, the manners, the works, the words, the feelings, and the fate of the ungodly with so much propriety, fulness, and light as this Psalm. . . . We may here find a perfect image and representation of iniquity.”

We are satisfied that the concentrated wickedness here set forth is witnessed in *one* person—The Antichrist. He heads up every form of iniquity—pre-eminently “*the* man of sin.” From the fourth century this has been the sober and considered judgment of many. In our Psalm the Antichrist is characteristically described—not named. His end is metaphorically announced in our Psalm, verse 15, also in Zech. xi. 17. He perishes under his Jewish character, “the false prophet” (Rev.

xix. 20.) No doubt he is the King, of Isaiah xxx. 33, who is consigned to Tophet with the Assyrian, read "for the King *also* it is prepared."

In our Psalm, verse 4 (margin), "all his thoughts are, There is no God." Here we have the atheistic fool—the biggest fool in the universe (Psalm xiv. 1; liii. 1.) Atheism—the absolute denial of God—leaves untouched the craving of man after a Being superior to himself. The coming and personal Antichrist will in his thoughts and actions throw off God entirely. Yet even he cannot do without *a* God, so he makes one to his own liking (Daniel xi. 38.)

While the Psalm depicts in general the state of things in the last days, and sketches an awful career of wickedness, having its centre in Palestine, while stretching out to the Gentiles far and near, *Yet* God triumphs in the end. "Jehovah is King for ever and ever." Thus the millennial reign is anticipated and divinely assured, for God hath spoken, and faith says *It is done*.

DIVISIONS.

1. An earnest, urgent appeal to Jehovah, verse 1.
2. The wickedness and Atheism of the wicked, verses 2-11.
3. An appeal to Jehovah and God, verses 12-15.
4. The grand and all-sufficient answer, verses 16-18.

A Cornish Preacher.—A local preacher of the real Billy Bray type—taking as his text "Search the Scriptures," began by saying that preachers were not always like Apollos, "mighty in the Scriptures." He then proceeded: "Now, my friends, I've lately been reading a book called 'The Gospel in Ezekiel,' wrote by Thomas Guthrie, who was once a fine preacher in Edinburgh and a Doctor o' Divinity too, and in the eighteenth chapter of his book this great man, in grand words which read like poetry, shures us that before young Rebekah promised to go with old Eliezer and marry Isaac she paid a last visit to a mother's grave. Dear people, if he had read the fifty-third and fifty-fifth verses of the twenty-fourth of Genesis he would have known that her mother weren't dead, let alone buried."

The Epistle to the Colossians.

By W. W. FEREDAY.

Chapter I., 12, 14.

Having prayed for his readers, the Apostle next gives thanks on their behalf. There are things which are proper subjects for prayer, and there are others where not prayer but praise is suitable. Christendom has scarcely learned to discriminate in this. So feeble is the general apprehension of the grace of God that with many the blessings for which the Apostle proceeds to give thanks are only matters of hope and desire.

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love: in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (verses 12-14.)

Meetness is thus, not something to be desired, and which may possibly be attained at the end, but, that with which every Christian commences his spiritual career. Let us not confound meetness with title. The latter is right, and the former is capacity to enjoy the right. A man might have fitness for a Court, having been bred in its atmosphere, but he might lack title to appear there. On the other hand, a man possessing the king's invitation might have title to show himself at Court, but might altogether lack fitness for such surroundings. Our *title* is found in the blood of Christ. This gives us an unchallengeable right to a place and portion in the Father's presence. Our *meetness* consists in our participation in the divine life and nature. Having both title and meetness our souls will find themselves perfectly at home even in the light, where all things are seen as they really are.

God is love, as well as light. While He would fit us for the light, He would also have us know and enjoy His love. Accordingly the Apostle speaks of the One under whose authority we have been placed as the Son of His (i.e., the Father's) love. From an awful bondage, more wretched far than anything experienced by Israel in Egypt, the Father has delivered

us. That bondage was characterized by darkness—ignorance of God. But with God souls are not delivered in order that they may do as they list. Israel was delivered from Pharaoh's thralldom, and placed under the gracious authority of Jehovah, with the responsibility and privilege of hearing His voice and doing His will. In like manner we have been placed in the kingdom of the loved one of the Father. As the title employed by the Apostle suggests, it is a rule of love. He under whose sway we have been set is the very expression to us, as well as the exponent, of the Father's love. How can we ever be restive under a rule so unspeakably precious?

Accompanying the great deliverance is the forgiveness of sins, for our sins were the chains by means of which Satan enslaved our souls. "Through His blood" should be omitted in verse 9., having perhaps crept into the text from Eph. i. 7, where the words rightly occur.

We may well compare verses 12-14 with Acts xxvi. 18. In the course of his address before king Agrippa, the Apostle declared the nature of his commission towards the Gentiles thus:—"To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." Here we have exactly the same blessings as in Col. i. 12-14—deliverance and forgiveness, with the inheritance in prospect. But the blessings are not stated in the same order. In Paul's commission we trace the various upward steps in the Spirit's work in the soul—opened eyes, deliverance from the power of Satan, forgiveness of sins, and the inheritance. In Col. i. 12-14, the Apostle begins with the climax of divine grace—meetness for the inheritance, and then glances downward at what we have been rescued from in order to have part in so wonderful a portion. Though he personally had never set foot in Colosse, there were men and women in that city who were in the good of the marvellous things which he was commissioned to proclaim to Gentiles everywhere. No wonder his affections were drawn out towards them!

(To be continued).

St Luke's Accuracy

With regard to the disputed passage—Luke ii. 1-3—“There are in it four statements about the action of the Roman Imperial Government which the critics of the New Testament pronounced to be incredible and false A number of the German critics, followed by many outside of Germany, used until recently to say, without hesitation, that Augustus never issued any decree ordering a census, that there never was under the Empire any regular system of census, that when any casual census was held the presence of the wife was not required but only of the husband, and that his presence was never required at his original home. Here are four distinct and separate points, in regard to each of which Luke was confidently and triumphantly declared to fail. Certainly he flatly contradicts the assertions of the modern critics; but, as we shall see, he is right and they are wrong.

“The reason for the feeling of triumph on the part of many critics lay, of course, in the desire to discredit the superhuman element in the history. Their hostility to Luke arose out of their refusal to admit the superhuman element in the government of the world.

“Luke has already been proved in the process of discovery to be correct in almost every detail of his statement. Nowhere in the whole range of historical study has there ever been such a complete revolution of opinion, and of established knowledge, as in respect of this statement, which brings into its sweep so much of the general principles of bureaucratic government and so many details of administration. The story is now established; and the plea now is that Luke's story is legend because it is true to facts. (!)

“Luke gives us a very striking picture of a splendid piece of governmental work. He tells of a bold law for the whole Empire, instituting a series of enrolments, a regular census system. . . . Anyone who has a true feeling for history must be thankful to the great historian who has sketched for us in such brief and masterly fashion by a few pregnant words such a skilful picture. He has lit up the obscurity of this dark period, and given us a specimen of Imperial administrative method. The

historians of the century that follows the age of Augustus were so occupied with the 'great events of history' ['battles and sieges and dynastic facts'], that they would not mention such humble matters as enrolment and its methods; and Luke was left to tell the tale alone. . . .

"Most recent writers on the New Testament, however, had stood placidly and contentedly apart from the modern development of Roman Imperial history, and had evolved the theory that Luke had invented this incident 'all out of his own head' (in the children's phrase), to explain how Jesus was born at Bethlehem of parents who lived in Nazareth. Then to give dignity to the whole series of inventions, Luke, according to critics' theory, added that the census was universal for the Roman world.

"This theory is an astonishing example of modern European capacity for making false judgments. From Strauss to Schmiedel, what a series of distinguished and famous scholars have blindly assumed that their inability to estimate historical evidence correctly was the final and sure criterion of truth. This we can now say freely, because the whole matter, so far as the census is concerned, has passed out of the sphere of speculation into the region of definite historical truth." (Extract.)

Four Dangers

Of the Spiritually-Minded Believer.

He is liable to DEPRESSION. The very ideals of holiness which he cherishes make him all the more ready to groan in the valley of despondency as he realises how far short he comes of what he should be. His sensitiveness to sin makes him liable to exaggerate shortcomings into shameful failures and blind him to the victories which the grace of God has wrought in him. His very piety makes him the special object of Satan's most malicious attacks. "I will discourage his soul," says the enemy, and he often succeeds in this way, when all other methods of causing the saint to fall have failed.

But the pendulum swings to the opposite extreme, and the

spiritual believer is in danger of falling into the snare of PRIDE. There have been Spirit-filled men who have conceived that they had reached an altitude where study and learning could be dispensed with, where the judgment was next to infallible, and where watchfulness was no longer needed; and great has been their fall. There is in our fallen human nature the *craving to feel that we are superior to others*. In the worldling, it is superiority in dress, or social standing, or wealth, or intellect, or nationality that is longed after. In the spiritually-minded believer it is superiority in personal holiness or ecclesiastical position that is the great snare—a snare which the saintly Murray M'Cheyne realised and watched against.

Akin to spiritual pride there is SECTARIANISM of spirit, an evil to which those who glory in their "church position" are especially prone. Accustomed to one "line of things" they have no patience with any ministry that sounds unusual to them. Those who are not exactly of their way of thinking are "not true." Their narrowness, which they think is their glory, is really their shame; for narrow-mindedness, when persevered in in the teeth of remonstrance becomes a sin. "Be ye enlarged" is the apostolic precept. The great cure for this unhappy state of mind is the readiness to receive *all* truth from *whatever* quarter it may come, and through *whatever* channel it may reach us.

Lastly, there is FANATICISM. Those who honour the Third Person of the Trinity are sometimes in danger of falling into the "cult of the Spirit," and seeking after all kinds of extraordinary experiences which neither commend the gospel to the world nor edify believers. Pity that these good people should glory in what are really excrescences and morbid tumours. "Let all things be done unto edification" is a golden rule which, if observed, would solve most of the problems that harass assemblies of believers.

E. D.

"The throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. xxii. 1-3) signifies that the strength, stability, and majesty of the throne will be administered by the Lamb. He will add His grace to it all.

Mercy, Grace, Love, and Kindness.

Ephesians ii. 1-8.

How much these words mean. There are no other words which can compare with them. First, mercy. The chapter shews our need of it, for we were dead in trespasses and sins. All connected with us called for God's just displeasure and judgment. "Dead" means there was *nothing* in our lives for God. Even that which seemed right in other people's eyes was not done to please Him. But God had mercy. He spared us. Grace goes beyond mercy. It was mercy in the shepherd to go after the one sheep that was lost until he found it. It was grace to place it on his shoulders. It would have been mercy to have sent the prodigal into the kitchen and given him a good meal,—grace gave the ring and the shoes, and the *best* robe. But there could be neither grace nor mercy without love. It was love at the back of all. Love always gives the best. Love never counts the cost. Love never thinks of the trouble. Love expends itself upon its object. And God's love is a *great* love. He has put us in association with Christ, there is perfect union between us and Him. We who were *dead* in sins are made the companions of Christ—quickened together with Him. Could God have done more? As to God's kindness, how kind He was to Jacob.—(Gen. xxviii.) Not a word about his failure, only promises of help, of being with him, and of bringing him back to the land he was leaving. And God wants us all to know what His kindness means, even here; while "in the ages to come He will shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Verse 4 speaks of God as "rich in mercy," but of His grace it says, "the *exceeding riches* of His grace."

May we daily know more of the mercy that spared us, the grace that enriches us, the love that has united us with the well-beloved and the kindness which begins on earth and will never cease.

R. E.

The Holy, the True—such is Christ essentially. We should be the reflex of what He is (Rev. iii. 7.)

The Faith and The Flock

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An Explosion and its Consequences.

A STRIKING INCIDENT.

The following remarkable story was told by an officer recently returned to England:—

An explosion occurred on board a Transport as it was leaving Gallipoli. The officer was thrown into the water and he and a seaman were soon clinging to a raft. As they held on for dear life the seaman, who was an earnest Christian, began to speak to the other about eternal concerns. Presently, they were joined by a third. It was soon perceived, however, that the raft was unable to support all three. The seaman, recognising this, said to the others, "I am ready for death; I will let go." He did so, and was drowned. The other two were saved. The officer, who has since reached England, relates how he was saved in a double sense. He was delivered from a watery grave; and the few words spoken by his companion, while clinging to the raft, proved the means, in God's hands, of leading him to Christ.

The above touching incident seems to suggest three points of universal application. In the first place, there was the *danger* to which all were exposed: next, there was the *sacrifice* of one for the sake of others: lastly, this sacrifice was the means of salvation.

I.—THE DANGER. Life on board ship is, in miniature, very much what life is in the wider sphere. The vessel under its commander is a small world of its own and represents our larger one. Duty, business, and pleasure make up the life of the voyagers. The passengers are composed of all ranks of society, and all are being conveyed to an appointed destination. The occupants of the ship are exposed to all kinds of danger. Ordinary life, too, has its dangers, and they are of many sorts and degrees. But we are concerned for the moment only with those of a moral and spiritual character. The supreme danger of life arises from SIN. And in three ways:—

(a) Sin has introduced disorder into the universe. The

effects of disorder are manifold, and tremendous. The disorder due to sin results from rebellion against God and disobedience to His will. That is what constitutes its enormity and seriousness. Sin is doing the thing He hates, and which He has forbidden. It substitutes the creature's will for the Creator's. It is self instead of God. The creature sets up a law of his own, and acts counter to the law of the universe.

The fearful effects of disobedience can be easily seen in relation to an army. The whole fabric of an army rests upon *obedience*. So clearly is this recognised that there is one law for the civilian and another for the soldier, because discipline must be maintained at all costs. Without it, the army would fall to pieces and become a mere mob, only infinitely more dangerous. Such is the effect of sin in the world at large. It has put man out of accord with his Maker, and all disorders that afflict mankind are due to it. The confusion, the distress, the calamities, the sorrows, the tragedies to which flesh is heir can all be traced to this one evil principle—sin.

Is this not a danger? This present war reveals what danger the human race is in from sin. Civilisation, commercial prosperity, even life itself are all imperilled by it. We had more or less unconsciously been living over a volcano, and at length the eruption took place. But the whole machinery of the universe is disorganised through sin, and the foregoing is only one example, albeit a most striking one. But look where we will, whether across the surface of human life or down into its depths—whether we investigate our relation to God or to our fellowmen—whether our enquiry be into national life, public life or private life—everywhere we find the same testimony to the danger of sin. Am I contributing to this disorder? I am in proportion as I am living in disobedience to God.

(b) We have considered the matter as it affects mankind as a whole. Sin is also a danger to the individual. Each one is responsible for his own sin. This responsibility cannot be transferred; and it thus becomes an intensely personal matter.

Further, our acts react upon ourselves. Everything we do has a reflex influence. As someone has put it: Acts form habits; and habits produce character; and character tends to

permanence. Is it not a fearful thought that all we do is, so to speak, keeping its own record, and exerting an influence that may never be obliterated or pass away? Each man, each woman, each boy and girl, is moulding and fashioning himself or herself, and building for eternity. Our deeds do not pass with their performance, though they are often so lightly committed that one might almost suppose they did, but they leave something behind until character becomes deformed, and each succeeding sin easier to commit. And this is true even where a life of open sin is not being lived. A man may be living outwardly a most respectable life, honoured and loved by all who know him, and yet he may so overlook the spiritual side of his nature, so neglect the "great salvation" God offers him, so refuse to recognise God's claims, and every appeal made to his higher self, that at length he suffers from complete spiritual atrophy, and becomes less and less able and disposed to respond to God's claims. What terrible danger we are in from sin in this respect.

(c) But the supreme danger is that sin jeopardises a man's entire future. "God shall bring every work into judgment, *with every secret thing*, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Eccles. xii. 14). There is a coming Judgment Day. "*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment.*" (Heb. ix. 27). "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ."—(Rom. ii. 16). "We shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ."—(Rom. xiv. 10). "So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God." Here, in language too plain to be mistaken, and oft repeated, we are assured that sin is to be taken account of. If there is one thing more certain than another it is that men and women cannot sin with impunity. Not only will overt acts be brought to judgment, but "secret things"—thoughts, desires, motives, intentions. Nothing will escape the scrutiny of that day—and the day is as certain and inevitable as death itself. For man, as such, death and judgment go together. The one follows upon the other. We may deny the very existence of God; we may disregard both His warnings and appeals; we may set at nought His claims; but in the end we *must* give account to Him; and

each one for himself and herself. The day is appointed and so is the Judge. That One who is now presented as Saviour, and in Whom every blessing is freely offered, will at the appointed hour occupy the place of Judge.

Such, then, is the fearful danger from sin. It is universal, for it threatens the existence of every divine institution and throws everything into disorder; it impairs and disorganises the whole social fabric: it affects the character and well-being of each individual; while its final effects are eternal and irrevocable.

II. SACRIFICE.

Who then can meet this fearful question of sin so as to avert the danger? It confronts us everywhere; it presses us on all sides; it enters into our most secret thoughts; it colors our actions and our lives. Nor can we by any possibility, of ourselves, escape from its consequences. What power can deal with the sins which have been committed, or that may be committed?

In connection with the pathetic story related above there was sacrifice. Nothing short of this would have met the need. Had all continued clinging to that raft, all would have sunk. Only by a heroic act of sacrifice could this be averted. That was done.

There has been a sacrifice also to meet the need of the danger arising from our sin—the sacrifice of the Son of God. He gave Himself. To believe on the One Who made this sacrifice—to accept the work He did—means, not only that the danger of sin is averted, but complete emancipation from its power, and, one day, from its presence.

What a stupendous and glorious fact is the sacrifice offered by the Son of God, the Saviour of the world! We believe in the fact of sin, it is everywhere present to us, we cannot deny it. Let us also believe in this other fact. God in His infinite goodness has provided that which meets the question of our sin. He alone could do it. He must make the sacrifice which is to save the sinner.

We can try to imagine the thoughts and feelings of that brave sailor as he contemplated sacrificing himself for the sake of those other two. Had he a wife and children? Had he a

mother? If so, it meant that, possibly, he would never see home or kindred again. And supposing it had been possible to have consulted his nearest and dearest, what would they have said? We can imagine their feelings. Was there nothing of this on the part of Christ with regard to His infinitely greater sacrifice? We are permitted to know something of what took place between the Father and the Son. The history of Abraham and Isaac, of old, gives us some clue to it. "They went both of them together." Christ knew what sin demanded; and God knew what He must give up. And so we read, on the one hand, "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God": and on the other, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Christ was "foreordained before the foundation of the world." Who shall tell what man's sin has cost God? Or who shall tell the love of God, that He should seek to save him at such infinite cost to Himself? If He was to save man, He must forsake Christ. One only was competent to suffer for the sinner, because one only was worthy enough, and that was the One nearest and dearest to God.

His Son, His delight, His loved One He gave
The curse to endure, by suffering to save."

And this One entered into all our sorrows and our sin. He has felt it all. He has borne it all. He sacrificed Himself in every way. Let us consider three ways in which He did so.—

1.—He became poor. "*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.*" (II. Cor. viii. 9.) Christ was rich, but even His riches could not make us rich; to do that, He must become poor. He accepted poverty purely for the sake of others. This was His sacrifice. He sacrificed ease, wealth, and station for the sake of others. And all sprang from what was inherent in Himself—His own inherent love and goodness; His kindness and pity. This was grace indeed, for we had no desert and no claim. We know what a difference there often is between wealth and poverty, even in this life, Between having abund-

ance and suffering want. But the distance between the riches of Christ and how poor He became is immeasurable.

2.—He sacrificed Himself by the life He lived. He was a “man of sorrows.” He did not live apart. His was not a life of ease. Far from seeking to exclude the sorrows of others, He made Himself acquainted with them—He shared them. He is said to have “borne” them. This alone entitles Him to our confidence and our trust. But He did more.

3. He died for all. He gave Himself a ransom for all. Through His death, righteousness is offered to all. Without this, His poverty and His sympathy with the woes and griefs of mankind, perfect as they were, would not have availed for sin. The danger from sin would have remained. But, “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him: He hath put Him to grief.” Yes, “His soul made an offering for sin.” And what that meant to Him no one but Himself and God know. We can imagine a good deal of what passed through the soul of that seaman as he relinquished his hold of the raft and faced the prospect of a watery grave. But all that pales into insignificance beside what the Son of God endured. What the mere prospect was the agony of Gethsemane tells us. The reality on the Cross is shrouded in darkness. In His own soul He felt the judgment of sin, though Himself sinless. All that the sinner must feel who dies away from God He felt. It speaks of the “*travail* of His soul.” Of His being “*tormented* for our transgressions.” Every word that can convey the thought of suffering—intense and unmitigated—is used in connection with His sacrifice. And His own cry on the Cross tells us the same:—“*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*”

What a sacrifice! And it was not in vain. The one who believes, no matter what his or her sins, can say, “*By His stripes I am healed.*” “Who, His own self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” Is it difficult to believe on HIM? “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” *Suffered!* There is the secret of it all. He Who had never sinned suffered the consequences of our sin. And what for? That we might have eternal life.

III. SALVATION.

These are the words He uttered on the morning of His resurrection, when all had been endured that sin deserved, when death had been vanquished, and God's love declared:—"Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Here is the salvation which accrues from His sacrifice the moment we believe. It is nice to think that through the heroism and sacrifice of that sailor the officer lived to reach England. It is better still to think that through Christ's sufferings myriads are saved for eternity. And one such is the officer himself. For through that one offering up on Calvary he heard a message in that moment of peril which saved his soul.

And what is the salvation which is thus brought to every one of us, and brought to us in our danger—for we are in terrible danger—danger of God's wrath and damnation, whether we realise it or not unless this salvation is already ours?

I. *Repentance.* The sacrifice of Christ gives us an opportunity to change our minds—to alter our views—about God, about sin, ourselves, and our destiny. And it is this reconsideration of these most essential matters which is the first thing requisite. For, if God gave up His own Son to die for us, to suffer in our stead, He must love us, and consequently, to think any other thoughts about God must be sinful. How calculated then are the sufferings of Christ on our behalf to change our minds as to God. Behold that Cross then until you realise God's love to you, and you begin to love Him in return. The sufferings of Christ are the very strongest proofs that He wishes you well, and of how much He is ready and willing to do for you. What so calculated to remove all misconceptions about God from your mind as the fact that Christ should suffer? Are you asking for some proof that God does care for you? Such proof is found in the Cross. And what a view the Cross gives us of sin, of the punishment due to it, and of the only way of salvation from it! In the light of what Christ suffered, can anyone sin carelessly? "Christ once suffered for sins." Can

anyone then escape, except as sheltered in Christ? The sufferings of Christ open the door to a perfect salvation through Him, but close it upon every other way.

We need a change of mind as to *ourselves*. Can we think any good of ourselves in the presence of all that Christ endured? Had we been good enough otherwise, would He have died? The sufferings of Christ teach us to loathe ourselves, and to think everything of Him.

And as to our destiny, the fact that Christ suffered gives us another outlook altogether on the future. Why did He suffer, if there is no heaven and no hell? Such suffering must have been to save us from some tremendous consequences of evil, as well as bring within our reach some unspeakable good.

II.—Our Lord couples with repentance remission of sins. If we repent we feel our need of that forgiveness, and we begin to see the possibility of it. The proclamation includes these two things. We have only to believe that proclamation to become possessed of them. Christ suffered that we might be forgiven, and to assure us that God is willing to forgive. What a message! It speaks of God's love and power—the love which made the supreme sacrifice and the power by which Christ rose again from the dead. And all is proclaimed in Christ's Name so that the message comes backed with absolute authority. Are any excluded? No. The message is not to any particular class or party or nation. Christ's sufferings then have reference to everyone. Repentance and remission of sins are possible to all. Is no one too bad? Not one. "Begin at Jerusalem," said our Saviour. "Begin where they hated me most and did their worst. I can never suffer anywhere else as I did in Jerusalem. Even for the guiltiest sinner in the guiltiest city there is pardon through My blood."

That officer will never forget the words spoken to him, or the sacrifice made on his behalf. The words and the sacrifice of Christ are for each one, and they are of infinitely more value. They have a message for you.

R. E.

The article on "The Second Coming of Christ" will (D.V.) be continued next month.

Elisha, the Prophet.

By W. W. FEREDAY.

XX.—THE LESSON OF THE ARROWS.

It is remarkable perhaps, that so evil a person as Joash, King of Israel, should visit Elisha upon his death bed, yet so it was.—(II. Kings xiii. 14-19.) He seems to have had some respect for the man of God, as Herod at a later date respected John the Baptist, though quite unwilling to conform his ways to his teaching. The sight of the stricken prophet brought tears to the eyes of the king, and he exclaimed: "Oh my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." A truly wonderful thing for a sovereign to say of a humble subject, possessed neither of wealth nor power. But the king rightly felt (and wicked though he was, he could not but acknowledge it) that the presence and prayers of such a man as Elisha was a valuable asset to his nation. The king was right, and the same principle applies to-day. Who can estimate the priceless value to the British nation of the presence and prayers of God's saints at this tremendous crisis? When the history of earth is fully known, it will be found that Britain owes much to the Christians in her midst. But men of time and sense cannot be expected to understand this; with them men, money, and munitions are all in all.

The dying prophet sought to turn the king's mind towards Jehovah as the only true Deliverer of his people. Israel was being sorely harassed at that time by the depredations of Hazael, king of Syria. Elisha bade Joash take bow and arrows. He would teach him by a parable. The prophet put his hands upon the hands of the king. The prophet's hands are suggestive of the power of God, without which, all human efforts are in vain. Both John in Patmos (Rev. i. 17), and Daniel at the river Hiddekel (Dan. x. 18) were strengthened when the Lord's right hand was laid upon them.

"Open the window eastward," said Elisha. If the shut door of II. Kings iv. 4 speaks of the soul's seclusion with God, the opened window of II. Kings xiii. 17 speaks of the soul's

expectation from God. Oh, that we all knew more experimentally of these things! Daniel opened his window when he prayed daily towards Jerusalem.—(Dan. vi. 10).

“Shoot,” said the prophet, and the king shot. The interpretation was then given: “The arrow of Jehovah’s deliverance, and the deliverance from Syria; for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them.” Joash had reached a critical moment in his history and in the history of his kingdom, had he been able to perceive it. The very suggestion that blessing and deliverance from his dreaded foes was signified in the arrows should have prepared him to act worthily at the next stage. Alas, for him, and for man everywhere and always! God always so willing to bless, and man always so blind to his true advantage!

Elisha next bade the king take up the arrows, and smite upon the ground. “And he smote thrice and stayed.” Oh, the pity of it! Need we wonder that the man of God was wroth with Joash? “Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.” (verse 19.) The man by his slackness had limited the deliverance of his people. God gave him as much as he had faith for, but no more. “And Joash, the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Bahadad the son of Hazael the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. *Three times* did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel.”—(v. 25).

What a lesson is here for us all! We have to do with a God who is boundless in resources, and who delights to bless His people, yet so poor are our thoughts and expectations that we limit Him continually. So little satisfies us. So slow are we, so lacking in spiritual energy, to go in boldly, and “possess our possession.” Would that there were among us more of that holy yearning which filled the soul of the Apostle when he wrote, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfected, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I

do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—(Phil. iii. 12-14).

Elisha might well be angry with Joash, as Nehemiah with the faulty Jews of his day.—(Neh. xiii. 25). Lack of faith in the one case, and unholy alliances in the other, dishonoured God, and hindered the blessing of His people. Similar holy indignation (though not perhaps so vigorously expressed as by Nehemiah) is not unsuitable for our time also.

(To be concluded),

Himself.

"He offered up **Himself**"—His all!

To ransom sinners from the fall;

Himself He freely gave,

Our souls from hell to save;

His was the wormwood and the gall.

"**Himself** He could not save," we read:

He thought of you, of your deep need.

"Set like a flint" His face,

Matchless His love and grace!

Jesus, the Worthy One indeed!

Himself our theme now day by day—

Make Christ our aim; for this we pray.

His words, His thoughts, His ways,

Our hearts full of His praise.

Himself (not man) to please away!

Himself! "He gave **Himself** for me"—

That thought will prove indeed the key,

Which shall unlock each door,

Helping me more and more;

Him first, **Himself** alone to see.

"The Lord **Himself**," the promise true,

Shall soon descend for me, for you;

To meet His waiting Bride,

To have her by His side—

Himself—no other one would do!

Himself alone from first to last,

Himself when sky is overcast;

"Not I, but Christ," our aim,

In joy, or grief, the same;

Till all this pilgrim path be past.

H. A. WOOLLEY.

The Book of Psalms.

By WALTER SCOTT.

PSALM II. We have had some of the historical solemnities of the last days brought before us in the two previous Psalms. The ninth shows Jehovah's vindication of, and interest in, His injured and sorrowing Jewish saints, and the public judgment of the nations. These are the two great subjects of the Psalm. The tenth Psalm unfolds in great detail the character and doings of the wicked (one). The land is cleared of the Gentile oppressors and Jehovah reigns as king for ever—(verse 16)—such is the happy anticipative conclusion of Jewish sorrow.

How do the godly Jewish saints feel in the appalling circumstances revealed in those two Psalms? And what are their resources under the almost unbearable pressure and sorrows of those last days in which the power of the enemy is put forth to crush every godly feeling, and destroy the faithful who refuse to deny Jehovah? The five Psalms—xi, xv.—answer our questions.

In the first of the series (xi.) the pious Jew opens his meditation with a fixed resolve. "In Jehovah put I my trust." In the last days of national unbelief and open apostacy, the only resource of the faithful will be an unswerving trust in Jehovah. The wicked in the land seek by violence and craft to destroy the truly righteous.—(verse 2).

Then the question is asked, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" He is not concerned about the superstructure, for were that destroyed, it might be rebuilt. But if the *foundations* be overthrown, if the immutable principles of right and wrong are falsified, and all that hitherto has been regarded as stable and enduring founded on Divine authority is dissolved, and a general collapse ensue: "What can the righteous do?" Have they then no human resources—no mountain of safety—(verse 1)? *None*, absolutely NONE. In the period contemplated in our Psalm, we witness a state

of things much worse than even a combination of political and social troubles. In a later Psalm (xlvi. 1-3) the convulsions of nature necessarily exceed in horror anything hitherto experienced. Then the firm faith of the godly outside the land (Ps. xlii. 6) lays hold of the Creator God* as their "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

What grand occasions to endure as *seeing* HIM who is invisible—a strange yet true paradox! But while the godly in the coming hour of sorrow have no human aid or refuge, they are not destitute of Divine resources. What are these? (1) Jehovah Himself in the glory of His Person ever remains. (2) Jehovah is in His holy temple. Calm, rest, and sanctity are thus assured. (3) Jehovah's throne is in heaven from thence He governs and oversees the children of men. How ample the resources then, in presence of hostile power and amidst the most desperate circumstance! But then, as now, evil is allowed to run its full course. "Jehovah trieth the righteous."—(verse 5). The dross is removed that the gold may shine all the brighter. Jehovah hates the wicked (verse 5) which has its application in the last days. "Upon the wicked He shall rain snares"—*a tangled mass of perplexities and troubles*: then overwhelming judgment from which there is no escape: compare verse 6 with Gen. xix. 24-28. This deeply interesting but brief Davidic composition closes with a declaration that Jehovah loves righteousness, and He delights in the upright. Happy conclusion, say we.

DIVISIONS.

- 1.—Trust in Jehovah spite of the wicked and crumbling foundations.—verses 1-3.
- 2.—Jehovah in government in His Temple and Throne.—verses 4-7.

*The pious Israelite in the land clings to Jehovah the memorial name of **Covenant Relationship** (Psalm cxxxv, 13). But when driven out of the land—over the Jordan—then the Creatorial name of Power becomes the strength of the godly.

Isaiah.

Chapter V. (*Concluded.*)

But we must finish this "Woe," etc., seeking to preserve something of the rhythm we might render:

- 15: Brought low then shall the peasant be,
And humbled be the noble;
The eyes of all the proud
Shall then be truly humbled.
- 16: But Jehovah Tzebaoth, exalted in judgment,
And God the all-holy in righteousness hallowed.
- 17: For lambs shall be grazing as on their own pasture,
And nomads be eating the wastes of the fat ones.

Over ancient Canaan, once so prosperous, nomad-shepherds even to this very day, pasture their flocks: the lambs graze as if the place had never been intended for anything else than to afford them pasturage; while wandering shepherds feed their flocks on lands, once fertile—now waste; and that belonged to men of mark, of property, "fat ones," now as impoverished as their lands. But in all this severity of judgment the Lord is indeed sanctified: as He shall be in eternity by that infinitely more severe penalty, "sorer punishment," the "lake of fire."

While "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and, in this sense, "there is no difference," the seeds of all evils lying within every heart, yet those seeds do not germinate equally in all; the form in which the evil expresses itself in action, or externally, differs; for instance, all men are not, in external action, equally "*swift to shed blood*," so in these six woes there are six different forms of that expression recognised. The third reads:

Woe to the drawers of sin, by the strong traces of lying,
And as with the ropes of a wagon, they haul their sin along.
Who say "let Him speed His work, let Him hasten that we may see it;
Let the counsel of Israel's Holy One come closer and come to pass,
That we may know it indeed."

This then is clearly directed against those who, boasting of liberty, are really but yoked beasts of burden; and the wagon they are drawing is their own sin. To ease it in its

going they make use of words of falsehood: for instance, the evil in which they particularly delight may be the love of money, which is, as we know, a root of many. This the Word of God calls, or rather includes in the term, "covetousness which is idolatry" (Col. iii, 5). But to call it covetousness would never do for a "trace," they therefore call it being "*diligent in business*,"* and this, being actually in the Bible, eases the strain greatly, for, under the guise of obedience to the Bible, they can turn with added zest to their covetousness. Error would make slow progress were it labeled truthfully, so they give it some attractive name. Call unbelief of what God has said "infidelity" and the "wagon" would drag as heavily as Egypt's chariots, but under the name of "free thought," or "the religion of reason," it makes far better progress. But these are "*lying words*," and the goal to which they are progressing is greater *judgment*. Well, as to this, they are boldly defiant, and challenge Jehovah to carry out what He has so long threatened; "let it come," they cry, let this long-predicted judgment take place for that alone would convince us of its reality.

It is a long-lived generation. I am not sure that the Cainite Lamech did not father it; for his song seems to be one of defiance, it certainly includes those in the prophet's day, the Sadducees of the Lord's day, the scoffers of II. Peter iii. 3 and 4, and the rationalists of our day, who take up the same cry of "where is the promise of His coming." We might paraphrase thus:

Woe to those whose wickedness is helped by words of lying,
 Who in their pride and unbelief—the wrath of God defying—
 Cry "let Him speed and haste His work, and then we may receive it;
 Until that wrath, long-threatened, comes, we cannot quite believe it."

Now follow three woes in quick succession, with no intervening comment, like to the cry of that angel that John heard

*Which is a very unfortunate rendering of Romans xii, 11. It very literally is "in diligence not slothful," as the R. V., and its true force will be found in the light of what follows, "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord", In everything—no matter what it is—do it heartily but not for your own advantage, not to accumulate wealth, but "as unto the Lord"; so the true meaning is exactly the reverse of that popularly attributed to it.

as he flew through mid-heaven: "Woe, woe, woe." We may render the fourth, freely thus:

Woe to those who quite ignore the standards God has given:
 Who call the evil very good, true good they term the evil:
 They claim their darkness to be light, true light they term the darkness:
 The bitter they pronounce the sweet, and call the sweet the bitter.

We must not suppose, however, that men ever call murder, or drunkenness, or stealing good. Oh no, quite the reverse, they will rather take credit for their sharp condemnation of what the natural conscience revolts against. But there is a sphere in which we are dependent on God Himself for a standard of right and wrong, where His Word alone pronounces as to this, and it is in *this* sphere that these servants of that same subtle one who in Eden assured our mother Eve that it was not "evil" but "good" to eat of that forbidden tree, again deny the truth of the Word of God as an absolute and final standard. The formation of natural character is, they say, *good* as the true basis of salvation; while Scripture says, "*All our righteousness is as filthy rags.*" Thus they call evil good. The doctrine of substitution is evil, says a popular teacher, for "it is an evil thing to punish the innocent for the guilty." "*Christ died for our sins*" says the Scripture and thus they call good, evil. We are living in a day when everyone must indeed be fully persuaded in his own mind, for the lines are very sharply drawn.

The fifth woe is the necessary consequence of the fourth:

Woe to those who're very wise in their own estimation—
 And (woe to those) who prudent are in their own sight.

It is greatly to be feared that there are few, if any, who adopt the principles of the modern school of infidelity called "higher criticism," but will come under this woe. They are wiser than all who preceded them, and are thus the forerunners of that apostate of the last days addressed with stinging irony under the cognomen of "*Prince of Tyre.*" "*Behold thou art wiser than Daniel*" (Ezek. xxviii. 3.) Each considers himself quite competent to bow (for it is done with educated politeness) God out of His world, His works, and His word.

The sixth is in the same line:—

Woe to those who heroes are—to drink the wine.
 (Woe) to those who valiant are—to mix strong drink.
 Acquitting guilty criminals—won over by a bribe ;
 While from the truly righteous they take the right.

This is not a repetition of the second woe, for these heavy drinkers are on the judgment-seat, and shew their incompetency for the place they have assumed by reversing all justice ; acquitting the guilty, and condemning the innocent.

But now, in verses 24 to 30, the penalty is announced, and this the more terrible from the graphic poetical form in which it is clothed :

- 24: Therefore as eateth the stubble the tongue of the fire,*
 and the hay is shrivelled in flame,
 so their root shall be as rottenness,
 and their blossom fly up as the dust.
 For they loathed the law of Jehovah Tzebaoth,
 and the word of Israel's Holy One
 they have scornfully rejected.
- 25: Therefore doth Jehovah's wrath burn against His people
 and far extended over them His Hand.
 He smites them (yea, He smites them) till the very mountains quiver,
 and their corpses have become as the sweepings of the land. †
 (But for all this His anger is not diverted
 and His Hand is still swinging to-and-fro.)
- 26: He lifts up a standard to nations afar,
 and hisses to them from the ends of the earth,
 and see, they come with speed swiftly!
- 27: Not one is a laggard,
 None stumbles among them,
 Not one is drowsy or sleeps,
 Never a girdle is loosed from their loins,
 Never a shoe-string is broken ;
- 28: Their arrows are sharp,
 Their bows are all bent,
 The hoofs of their horses are flint-like,
 And their chariots drive as a whirlwind.

All this needs no comment ; it is obviously a graphic description in poetical terms of an ideal army, with no weaknesses at

*In the multiplication of sibilants: quash leshon esh, we hear the "crackling sparks and sputtering flames."—Delitsch.

†Literally "streets."

all; and the prophet seems to see it advancing from afar. In verse 26 God calls it, and at once the seer is struck with the swift motion as it sweeps along, like the shadows of clouds over the landscape in a high wind; then, as it approaches nearer, he is able to distinguish the perfect equipment; "never a girdle loosed, never a shoe-string broken"; weapons all in readiness for action, "arrows sharpened, bows bent." Then he actually hears the ring of the hardened hoofs of the cavalry, and the whirlwindlike roar of the rushing chariots. The very words—short, sharp, quick—give the idea of the scene they depict.

But this brings up another figure of terror: "for thus far the prophet's description has moved along as if by forced marches, in clauses of from two to four words each, now it changes into a heavy stealthy pace; and then, in a few clauses, springs as a lion on its prey."*

(slowly) Its roar is as a lioness

they growl as do the young lions—

(Quickly) Yea, they roar as they seize their prey

and carry it off unhindered.

Their roarings rumble over them (i.e., over Judah, the "prey")

as the roaring of the sea,

in that day.

And toward they look

Lo, darkness and anguish;

for their light is (now) darkened

in the sky-overclouded.

Note the words "in that day" linking this with the previous chapters, and justifying our connecting them together. In utter misery poor Judah, in the lion's mouth, looks about for help—to the earth—but there, there is nothing but hopeless anguish. Upwards—there are occasional gleams of hope, but these only add to the distress by the deep disappointment that is caused by these gleams so soon becoming darkened. Most of us know the deepening of distress by the failure of hopes that lift up only to let fall again. The picture ends with gloom—thick, impenetrable—hanging over all!

(To be continued).

Remarks on Greece.

The following remarks, penned nearly fifty years ago, by the late William Kelly will be read with interest at the present moment when the affairs of Greece occupy so much attention.

The prophecy most plainly renews the time of the judgment when Jehovah is seen cutting off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse and the battle bow from Jerusalem. At that very time He will undertake for the Jew. "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee; when I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man." This is the more remarkable, because Greece was then coming forward, and soon going to overthrow the Persian master of Israel; but the day comes when the sons of Zion shall surely overthrow Greece. If this has never yet been, it remains to be, "And Jehovah shall be seen over them." This clearly marks when the accomplishment must be, even when the glory of Jehovah shall be manifested in this world. "And Jehovah shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and Jehovah God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south." It is really no small absurdity to apply all this to anything that has been since here below. We see that Greece does not merge in the beast when it rises from the abyss according to the energetic symbolical language of the Revelation. We must leave scope for all the actors in the final crisis, for the eastern as well as the western powers, and others of less moment who move rather independently. The last resuscitated empire will represent the previous universal empires as to the principles,—that is Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece,—but will not have their dominions. The principle is one thing, their territorial possessions another. It seems plain from Daniel ii. that there will be a representative of all in that day when the blow falls on the feet of iron-clay and breaks them to pieces. Then we find the gold and silver and the brass and iron not all changed into iron, but each with a representative, not excepting even Babylon, although the Roman only retain among them imperial power. Thus there will be a representative of Persia, and so it exists now. There will be a representative of Greece, as we know it has begun to be represented afresh, but it will assume, I suppose, a more definite form and greater importance. Assyria, as we have frequently seen, will be represented by the King of the north where the Ottoman Porte is now—I do not say properly or formally Russian, but certainly a power in league with Russia, subservient to its policy and maintained by its influence. The remoter power will be its suzerain, which seems to me implied in Daniel's description (chap. viii., 24). It will be an energetic power, which is far from being true now any more than of Greece. As we know, neither can keep head against external foes or maintain order in their own dominions: such is their state of prostration or disorganisation. But there will be a vast

development, and with it may be great rapidity. It would appear that much of it will be brought about by Russian power, no doubt to further their aggressive policy. I believe that this lies before Greece; but, coming into collision later with Judah, its total overthrow is shown here in a general way. "Jehovah of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. And Jehovah their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people." Thus we see the union of future power and glory on earth with the statement that He shall come having salvation. "For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty"! The general beneficence of His reign follows.

At the Feet of Jesus is :

- (1) The place where Saints should be. Deut. xxxiii. 3.
- (2) The place of Peace and Pardon. Luke vii. The woman who wiped His feet, &c.
- (3) The place of Power. Luke viii. The Gadarene.
- (4) The place of Prayer. Luke viii. Jairus.
- (5) The place of Instruction. Luke x. Mary at His feet.
- (6) The place of Praise. Luke xvii. Samaritan Leper.
- (7) The place of Worship. Matt. xxviii.
- (8) The place where Saints will be in Heaven—casting their crowns before Him.



How precious that promise is in Psalm xxxii.—"Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him." Unto whom? Unto the one who is described in the first and second verse of the psalm "whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." Such a one has a confidence in God which nothing can break, for God Himself is its author. What can harm the one who has "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ?" Floods and waves of affliction may roll around him, but they cannot hurt him for he has the assurance that "all things work together for good to them that love God." Whatever his difficulties may be, he is *secure, everlastingly secure*, for God in Christ is his hiding place, as this same sweet psalm says, "Thou art my hiding place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

The Revelation.

Chapter IV.

John is now transported to heaven (v. 1). We have reached the third section of the book, and are now to be occupied with future events. So v. 1, "I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." John's attention is first called to a *throne*. The throne is the symbol of rule, authority and power. On earth, at this time, there will be lawlessness, and disorder, the powers that be will be shaken, but God is about to take the reins of government into His own hands, and so John sees a *throne*. And, blessed be God, the throne is not a vacant one. We are told "One sat on the throne." There *is* one on the throne of the universe—there is a *Supreme* Ruler, for His throne is set in *Heaven*. It is characterised by perfect excellence and perfect purity; "like a jasper and sardine stone." And there is a rainbow—reminding us of God's covenant with the earth in connection with the flood, and that in the midst of wrath He will remember mercy. For it is the time of judgment.

But John sees another sight. Round about the throne there are four-and-twenty thrones (seats), and these are occupied, too, with four-and-twenty elders, clothed and crowned. They represent *redeemed* ones. They are in a wonderful place of nearness and privilege—made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

Then notice the aspect of the throne. "Lightnings and thunderings and voices proceeded out of it"—its aspect is one of judgment, and these judgments are intended to speak to men. God for 2000 years has been speaking in grace: now He is going to speak in judgment. Notice, also, the aspect of the Holy Spirit. He is not here the Comforter indwelling believers, and reminding them of their relationship to God, but a Spirit of Judgment, for God's testimonies concerning His righteous judgments are about to be fulfilled. The sea of glass represents the fixed, unalterable character of all God's ways—all is perfect purity. He will be as righteous in judgment as He has been in grace. "Grace reigns" now "through righteousness," then it

will be His righteous judgment. Notice how all is in relation to the throne. The elders are *round about* the throne, the seven lamps are *before* the throne, and so is the sea of glass, and, further, in the midst of the throne and round about it there are "four beasts" (or living creatures). They are intended to represent God's attributes. They answer, too, in a striking way to the different characters of the four Gospels. The lion is Matthew—he presents Christ as King. Mark presents Him as to His service—the calf. Luke as a man; and John as Son of God—the flying eagle soaring above all. All this reminds us of Isaiah's vision. (Isa. vi.) The seraphim had six wings, and they cried, as the living creatures do here, "Holy, holy, holy." In both cases God is represented as the One whose glory will fill the earth. How blessed that the Almighty is also the Holy One.

God is the centre of heaven's worship. All do Him honour.

There is not a discordant note. The living creatures represent creation, and the elders redemption.

What a *solemn*, as well as *sublime*, scene it is. The Lord God Almighty upon His throne, ever existent—"which *was* and which is and is to come," and Who "liveth for ever and ever"—about to intervene in the world's affairs, and to assert His right to judge, because the world is hostile to Him. Heaven and earth are totally at variance. On earth men are forgetting God, trying to do without Him altogether, occupied solely with their own projects; in heaven they proclaim God as worthy. "Thou art worthy," exclaim the elders, and the four living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to Him, recognising that He has created all things, and that they were made for His pleasure.

According to the English punctuation of Col. iii. 16, you teach and admonish in psalms, hymns, and songs. This is simply absurd. Read the passage anew:—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another; in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Grain from Joseph's Granary.

By WILLIAM LUFF,

Author of "Is the God of all Comfort your God?"

SIXTH SACKFUL.

HELP FROM ABOVE.—A correspondent tells how our airman aided cavalry in the advance of patrols towards High Wood (the Bois des Foureaux). At the moment that the cavalry were debouching a pilot saw a group of Germans and their machine gun hidden in the corn. His only method of telling the cavalry of the lurking danger was to descend and immediately open fire. His manœuvre was absolutely successful. The machine gun in the corn was turned upon him, and the cavalry galloped up almost with impunity. It is a fine example of the selflessness, the impersonal heroism of this war that the cavalry do not yet know the name of their partner in this dashing little affair. Aviators are called "the eyes of the army:" and in spiritual warfare, how frequently we are aided from above. We owe much to angelic supervision and help. God sent His angel and shut the mouths of the lions. (Dan. vi. 22)—"He shall send from heaven, and save me *from* the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth." (Psalm lvii., 3)—One above sees all. Christ saw Satan's ambush for Peter, and interposed (Luke xxii, 31). "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa. lix., 19).

* * *

A SIXTH SENSE.—The "Times" published, "The case of a woman who can detect the presence of a spider in any room she happens to be in. Though she has not seen the insect she at once shows signs of distressing illness, becoming pale with a feeble pulse and rapid breathing. All this passes when the spider is caught and removed." What a blessing to have such a sixth sense in regard to the presence of sin: a sense as rare as the case referred to, "a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter, iii, 21; 1 Tim. iv, 2).

" Quick as the apple of the eye,
O God, my conscience make.
Awake my heart when sin is nigh,
And keep it still awake."

DIVINE LOVE.—"God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8). The Love of God is:—

Long suffering, even unto death.
 Overflowing, even unto sinners.
 Victorious, even over mortal enmity.
 Everlasting, even through eternity.

* * *

ROYAL PRAYING.—"If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John xiv, 14). In prayer always remember:—

Thou art coming to a King—
 As Esther to Ahasuerus (Est. vii, 2).
 Large petitions with thee bring—
 As Paul at the throne of grace (Eph. iii, 14-21).
 For His grace and power are such—
 As was Joseph's in Egypt (Gen. xli, 36).
 None can ever ask too much—
 As the queen of Sheba of Solomon (1 Kings x, 13).

* * *

GOD'S UPWARD SALVATION.—Every Believer is:—

Brought up from the pit (Ps. xl, 2).
 Set up upon a Rock (Ps. xxvii, 5).
 Built up in Him (Col. ii, 7).
 Held up by the divine hand (Ps. lxxiii, 8).
 Raised up together with Christ (Eph. ii, 6).
 Mounts up with wings as eagles (Isa. xl, 31).
 To be caught up for ever with the Lord (1 Thess. iv, 17).
 And so look up, knowing the time is near (Luke xxi, 28).

* * *

NEED PROPPING UP.—A friend speaking of the religion of many said it was like clothes on a clothes line, always needed propping up: clothes worn on a living person did not need propping up. May our profession cover a life: and Christianity is a life, or nothing. There are religions many; but all need propping up: Christ gives a life, that walks, and works, and wears its profession as living men wear their garments. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1 John v. 11).

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“I Will Come Again.”

REASONS FOR THE RAPTURE.

Those who believe in the pre-millennial advent of Christ are divided into two camps. On the one side, it is maintained that Christ comes for His own at the same time as He appears to the world. On the other, that He comes for His own first, and certain events transpire, both in heaven and earth, before His Second Coming is completed by His actual return to earth. In other words, the Second Coming is in two sections, with an interval between. At first sight, the difference may not appear to be very great. But on closer inspection it will be found that fundamental principles are involved. For if Christ's coming for His own and His coming to the world in judgment are one and the same event, then the Church must go through The Great Tribulation and be on earth during the reign of Antichrist, for the two are contemporaneous, and the latter is destroyed by the Lord Himself when He appears. So that the Church is hardly to be distinguished from the Jew on the one hand and from the world on the other. What reasons can be given for the Rapture and for believing that there will be an interval between it and Christ's Manifestation to the world?

I. In the first place, Scripture clearly teaches that when Christ appears to the world His saints appear *with* Him. In I. Thessalonians, iv., 14, we read—“*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.*” By a special revelation granted to the Apostle Paul he is able to show how this will be, and he does so in the verses which follow. The Lord Himself descends from heaven, the dead in Christ are raised, the living changed, and together, as one company, they are caught up to meet the

Lord in the air. That this is with a view to their coming with Him is not only clearly stated in verse 14, as we have seen, but explicitly affirmed in other passages of Scripture. In Col. iii., 4, we read—"When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, *then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.*" If words mean anything this must mean Christ's future appearing, and also that we appear at the same time. But Rev. xix. affords even stronger confirmation of this view. There Christ is seen coming out of heaven with his saints. Previous to this, the marriage of the Lamb has taken place (verses 7-8). Three facts stand out here. (1) The saints are in heaven, not on earth; and they are in heaven before Christ *appears*. How did they come there except in accordance with I. Thess., iv.? (2) The Marriage is celebrated, which surely demands some interval between their entry into heaven and coming forth again. (3) When Christ comes out of heaven there are armies accompanying Him, and the same description is given of those composing these armies as of the Wife of the Lamb. Both are arrayed in fine linen, clean and white—thus the two companies are identical.

II. In I. Thess., iv., 15-18, we have a description of the Lord's coming which refers *only* to believers, while in chapter v. the description is of how "the Day of the Lord" will affect the world. With respect to the latter the Apostle uses the term, "the Day of the Lord," which he does not use in the former part. The Day of the Lord is connected with Old Testament prophecy, and has to do with times and seasons, and God's judgment on the nations. Being "caught up," or, The Rapture, is a New Testament revelation, and was unknown until communicated to Paul. In relation to this, the term used is "the coming of the Lord." Again, to the world the Lord is said to come as a thief in the night. This is not said in the earlier passage, where believers only are in view. All this seems to indicate that the Second Coming is in two distinct stages.

III. The Great Tribulation, along with the other judgments described in the Book of the Revelation, all of which happen *before* Christ appears, are part of God's wrath that is to come on the world. Over and over again it is expressly stated that be-

lievers are delivered from this wrath. "Which delivered us from coming wrath" (I. Thess. i., 10.) "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (chap. v., 9.) Does not all this agree with what we have already said, that Christ will come to take His own out of the world at the Rapture, and between the Rapture and the Appearing this wrath will be manifested in connection with the full and final development of evil, which is not possible while the true Church is on earth?

IV. As we have already noticed, "times and seasons" are mentioned in connection with the Day of the Lord. And in accordance with this the Apostle Paul asserts in II. Thess., ii., "that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed." Here are certain events which must happen before "the Day of the Lord." Nothing need happen before the coming of the Lord for His own. On the contrary, the Apostle asserts that this very event itself must happen before Christ returns to earth. He speaks of "our gathering together unto Him" as taking place first (II. Thess., ii., 1.) In this connection, again, it is not a little remarkable that he uses the term "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," but in the next verse, when he is speaking of that coming as it will affect the earth, he changes the term and speaks of "the Day of the Lord." He asserts that the Day of the Lord could not be then present, for our gathering together unto Christ had not taken place. Believers are to be "caught up," but Christendom and the world will be left for judgment.

V. Then, again, is it appropriate or seemly that Christ should come for His own at the same moment that He comes to the world in the aspect of Judge? Would that meet either His desires or ours? How little distinction would be made between the Church and the world? What little opportunity to enjoy the presence of Christ? Surely the other view is far more in accord with every spiritual aspiration and hope.

VI. "But of the times and seasons, brethren, *ye have no need that I write unto you,*" says the Apostle. But he had need to write unto them with reference to one particular aspect of the Lord's coming, viz., how that coming would affect believers.

How then can it be all one event? The Apostle insists that the children of God are as distinct from the world as day is distinct from night, and light from darkness.

VII. But one fact remains to be stated, which, if properly considered, must convince all but the most prejudiced that the distinction we maintain is the true one. Christ is spoken of both as the Morning Star and as the Sun of Righteousness, and both terms are connected with His Second Coming. The one will be found in the last chapter of the Old Testament, the other in the closing verses of the New. Is there no distinction between the Morning Star and the Sun? Do they both appear at the same time? or does the one appear some time before the other? Is there no interval between the moment when the Morning Star is first seen and the rising of the Sun? But where is room left for these distinctions and differences in the system of teaching to which we have referred? The very figures Scripture uses make that teaching impossible and untrue, whereas they explain and enforce what is here set forth as to the distinction between the Rapture and the Appearing. What we assert is that Christ will come as the Morning Star for His own, and that precisely as there is an interval between the literal morning star and the appearance of the sun, so there will be an interval between the first stage of Christ's coming and the second. As the Morning Star He comes *for* His own; He comes *with* them, when, as the Sun of Righteousness, He will rise with healing in His wings. Surely the lesson intended by these well-known figures is unmistakeable. No one would dream of confusing them in nature, and why some Christians should confuse them in their application to Christ and His coming it is difficult to see.

For such confusion involves two errors. It necessitates the Church passing through the Great Tribulation, and being on earth during the reign of Antichrist; whereas both of these events are in Scripture invariably connected with Israel, and never with the Church. To be waiting for either of these events to transpire before the Lord comes deprives us of the Blessed Hope as a momentary expectation, and consequently we are really waiting for events, and only for the Lord in a secondary sense.

The Epistle to the Colossians.

Chapter i. 15-18.

By W. W. FEREDAY.

The mention of the Father's Beloved caused the Apostle to dwell awhile upon His glories, both personal and acquired.

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation: for 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: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (v. 15-17).

Here we must carefully distinguish between "image" and "likeness," terms used in Gen. i, 26, of man in relation to God. As a general proposition it may be said that "image" represents, and "likeness" resembles. It could not be said of Christ that He is the "likeness" of God, for He does not merely resemble God, *He is God*. None but God could reveal God. He who walked here in human flesh was the personal manifestation of God before all eyes—angels and men alike. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i, 18).

It was marvellous grace that brought the eternal Son into manhood. But having stooped thus, no other place than that of head or chief would suit Him. This is the force of the expression "firstborn of all creation." Dignity, not priority of birth, is what is meant. On the same principle, the rights of the first-born amongst Jacob's sons were given to Joseph, not Reuben, although Joseph was eleventh in order of time, and Reuben first (1 Chron. v, 1). The Church is described in Heb. xii, 23 as "The Church of the firstborn ones," meaning that the Church, although it came into being late in the dispensations of God, has nevertheless the first and highest place in His wonderful ways of grace.

He who is Heir of all things is also the Creator of them. Not only does Col. i, 16 affirm this, but John i, 3, and Heb. i, 2, insist upon it also. The vast range of His creative work is in-

icated in the terms "visible" and "invisible." But little is known of the visible; what then of the invisible? Whatever exists in the universe, things, angels, and men, they came into being in virtue of the Son. Moreover, since He is the Heir, all things were created for Him. What perfect rest of heart it is to know this! Let men and Satan do and say what they may, let creature arrogance and self-will rise to an even more fearful height than at the present hour, everything is destined to fall into the hands of the Son, for everything was created for His pleasure, and for His glory.

What wonders are here unfolded to us concerning our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! He is the Revealer of God, Creator and Sustainer of all things, and universal Heir. These glories are attached to His person. They are His because of *who He is*. Other glories now come before us, which are rather the fruit of what *He has done*. He is not the Church's Head because He is the eternal Son, but because He has triumphed over the power of death. Nor is He the Reconciler of all things in virtue of His personal dignity but in virtue of the shedding of His blood. "*And He is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the Beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence*" (v. 18).

Here is a headship which never could have been His had He not died. The Church as the true Eve is the direct fruit of the deep sleep which fell upon her Husband and Head. The Church dates, not from the beginning of God's work of grace in this world, nor even from the beginning of the manhood of the Lord Jesus, but from Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down from the triumphant Christ in glory to form it. It is noteworthy that no sooner had the Lord spoken to Peter of the Church than He began ("from that time forth") to speak of His death as inevitable (Matt. xvi, 21).

The special place and portion of the Church, as distinct from all other circles which owe their blessing to the Lord Jesus, and the fact that it is an altogether new departure in the ways of God, are not always perceived. Union with Him was impossible until He reached His present seat on high. Blessing *under Him* will be known in the millennial kingdom, but union *with Him* is some-

thing more wonderful by far. The risen Christ is thus "the beginning" of a new order, into which all His members are brought by sovereign grace. We share His victory as triumphant over death. The enemy which even the faithful once regarded as "the king of terrors" (Job. xviii, 14) we no longer dread. Our hope and expectation is the return of the Lord from heaven, and if it be His will that any of us should pass hence ere He comes, death is but a messenger sent to call us to repose—as the Apostle teaches us elsewhere, and death is ours (1 Cor. iii, 22).

God has taken care to secure "the pre-eminence" of Christ in every sphere and position in which He is pleased to move. Christ is His one grand thought and object. All His counsels centre in Him. To the acknowledgement of His supremacy every created being must yet be brought. Happy indeed are they who in this day of His forbearance enter into the divine thoughts concerning the Son, honoring Him as they honor the Father (John v, 23), and giving Him the pre-eminent place in their lives and in their affections.

"I am Black."

(THE SONG OF SOLOMON.)

'The soul's shame at its own unworthiness of the embraces of God is the blush upon the rose of love.'—COVENTRY PATMORE in "The Rod, the Root and the Flower."—p. 47.

O Lord! what canst Thou see in me to love?
 Neither in soul nor conduct worth Thy thought!
 Yet by Thy grace, into such union brought
 With Thee, as Angels never knew above.
 Alas! my God! I chose from Thee to rove,
 But Thou hast in Thy Love the wand'rer sought,
 And for me died, and in me marvels wrought
 Of soft'ning grace, my hardness to remove.
 Yet, while Thy gracious Spirit with me strove,
 I still rebelled, and (shame upon me!) fought
 Against Thee, making myself worthy naught
 But ill: unwearied, Thou didst press Thy Love
 (I blush to own it!) until it has taught
 Me love for that with which Thine Heart was fraught.

WILLIAM OLNEY.

Isaiah.

Chapter VI.

The Third Vision. Isaiah Beholds his Glory.

We now come to a portion of our prophecy greatly hallowed to us by the words of the Holy Spirit in the gospel of John, chapter xii, 36 to 41.

“These things spake Jesus and departed and did hide himself from them. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake: Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart, and be converted and I should heal them. These things said Esaias when he saw his glory, and spake of him.”

Well may we approach with reverence, and with earnest desire that our eyes may be anointed with eye salve, and so peradventure may we too see His glory, and, in our limited way, “Speak of Him.” Thus far, Isaiah has received no formal commission; we have it here.

But where is His glory to be seen to-day? Does it enter into rivalry with royal pageants and outshine the courts of kings? Surely not. The psalmist will tell us of another place in which we may find it:

“To see thy power and thy glory so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.” Again: *“They have seen thy goings, O God, in the sanctuary.”*

And just as Leviticus takes us into the Sanctuary, where the beauty of Christ passes before us in offering and type, so in our book we are now coming into the Sanctuary that we may there “Behold His glory.”

The scene, then, is laid in the Sanctuary “the holiest of all,” but while the temple on earth may supply the figures, it would not suffice, in its physical limitations, to exhaust the grandeur

of this scene ; for indeed He dwelleth not in temples made with hands.

The chapter is again marked by three divisions thus :

1 : Verses 1 to 4. The glory ; a, the throne ; b, the Sera-
phim ; c, their cry.

2 : Verses 5 to 7. The vessel to honor, prepared by—a, con-
fession ; b, provision ; c, remission.

3 : Verses 8 to 13. The commission, a, its terms ; b, its
limitation ; c, the restoration.

The time of the vision is "the year that King Uzziah died," a significant epoch. For fifty-two years has this king reigned, and the nation has been blessed with every token of divine favor. Philistines, Arabians, Ammonites, have all been brought into subjection (2 Chron. xxvi) and now Uzziah is to die—and to die a *leper!* "The national glory of Israel died out, too, with King Uzziah, and has never recovered to this day," and thus we may say that its king's death figured that of the nation ; for the nation, too, has died—a leper. There is, thus, a sad harmony between the time of the vision and its burden.

Nor may we pass over the very name of this king as being without value. Uzziah means "*the power of Jehovah.*" The power of Jehovah to approve, bless, save the nation under the covenant of law has been evidenced as abortive, as the vision shall shew ; in this sense too, then, Uzziah passes away, and many centuries must run their course before we hear one, who had seen sweeter vision, joyfully crying "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the POWER OF GOD ("Uzziah"—for Jehovah is God) unto salvation to every one that believeth,*" nor then confined to the Jew, for He is also the God of the Gentile, and by that power every one, spiritual leper though he may be, is healed and given a deathless life.

1 : But in this chapter the prophet drops all that is in the least artificial ; now we hear no poetry, no rhythmic chant. The occasion is too solemn for any other than the simplest form of speech—all is simply prose.

He, like John in Patmos, becomes "in the Spirit," and sees Adonai (the Name of God as the supreme Lord of all ; or, as in Rom. ix, 5 : "*Christ, who is over all, God, blessed forever*") with every accompaniment of majestic splendor, sitting on a Throne,

which is itself "high and exalted," for "*His Throne ruleth over all;*" yet, while sitting on this lofty Throne, the hem of His raiment fills that glorious temple.

Seraphim hover on one pair of outstretched wings, while with another they cover their face, as not able to see that dazzling glory, and with the third they cover their feet, as not desiring to be seen.

Incidentally we may note for our comfort, that there are never any introductions in heaven, or the sanctuary. In that light of God Isaiah knows the Seraphim at once, in so far as to give them that name, as long after this Peter knew Moses and Elias, in the same light, and also without any introduction. So, I gather, we shall need no introduction to those whom we have never known here, *how much less to those whom we have*. That clear and holy Light reveals everyone and they are well known: "Not one shall seem a stranger, though never seen before."

We are not told the number of the Seraphim—it is not of importance; nor does the word Seraphim, *so applied*, appear elsewhere in Scripture; but its force is quite clear from the frequent occurrence of the root—*saraph*, "to burn," but not to burn as incense not as sweet savour, not as expressive of acceptance and delight—the word for that is *kahtar*: but to consume, as in holy judgment. *Saraph* is never used for the offerings of sweet-savor, always of the offerings that speak of sin put away in judgment. Burnt offering, Peace-offering, Meat-offering are *kahtared*, or burnt-as-sweet-savor; but as soon as we come to the sin-offering, it is *sahraphed*, or consumed without the camp. This will give us the significance of these Seraphim as far as profit for us goes: they express the active, searching, burning holiness of God, and the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews tells out the truth that the Seraphim express when he says "*Our God also* (as well as Israel's) *is a consuming fire.*"

We have another order similar, yet somewhat distinct (for I assume that a difference in name speaks a difference in order) "Cherubim." These are expressive, in living forms, of the various perfections of the *righteousness of God's government*, ever protecting His Throne; for over it they bend with wing protecting (Exodus xxv, 20); forbidding the approach, or acceptance of any sinner unrighteously. It was the Cherubim that kept the

way of the tree of life, that sinful man might not return, and eating of that tree, live in sorrow and separation from God, the Source of all blessedness, forever.

The Seraph searches, the Cherub protects: the Seraph speaks of burning holiness, the Cherub of inflexible righteousness; the Seraph the more active, the Cherub the more passive; yet we find, both in Ezekiel and Revelation, living creatures that combine the characteristics of both Seraph and Cherub. One is therefore inclined to believe that we get the intent of the Holy Spirit when we see in both rather personifications of divine qualities than actual personalities; but I cannot speak dogmatically on such a point.

Verse 3. *And one cried to the other, and said, Holy, holy, holy Jehovah Tzebaoth: the whole earth is full of his glory.*

Thus may we learn that in that scene heart responds to heart. There is no discordant discussion—no difference—“all the mind in heaven is one.” Nor are any of them occupied with each other’s beauty, far less with their own; for “in His temple doth everyone speak of His glory” (Psalm xxix), oh, that we could learn that language here, for it is to be our mother tongue.

In this three-fold ascription we may again see “God manifested;” and as we remember the still clearer revelation of Matt. xviii, 19, we hear in this antiphonal cry, not a mere repetition for emphasis, but the recognition of a trinity of divine Persons, each of whom is hymned as Holy; and at the same time in view of John xii, we must remember that it is on Jesus’ glory on which Isaiah looks, and this three-fold ascription only says, “*in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*” (Col. ii, 9).

Further, let us note, and I trust not without some delight, that the atmosphere of heaven is very clear. As in our earth we sometimes say “how near, in this clear light, those far-off hills appear, that yesterday, in the mist, we could not see at all;” so, in the Sanctuary, so clear is the atmosphere, so bright the light, that the happy dwellers there see afar; and though weary ages may intervene, and we poor short-sighted creatures, who still live in the murky atmosphere of this sinful world, may not be able to see that coming scene of glory at all; or very dimly—“as through a glass darkly”—to these Sanctuary-dwel-

lers, all intervening ages are as though they were not, and to them the "glory" ever fills the earth, as it eventually shall.

Let us at least learn that when God has purposed anything, so sure is its accomplishment that those who hear and believe speak of it as though it were already accomplished, for so these Seraphim cry "*the whole earth is full of His glory.*"

But not yet—no, not yet. The horrid sounds of war, the groans of suffering, the tears of the bereaved, the wails of the oppressed, the quivers of anxiety—these now fill the earth; but these do *not* tell *His* glory; far, far from it. But the present terrible conditions do not *end* His ways. That end shall see the earth, in every remote part, witnessing to the perfections of its true King. "*He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor,*" then shall "the whole earth be full of His glory."

Verse 4: *And shook the foundations of the thresholds at the voice of them that cried and the house became full of smoke.*

Everything was moved. for, *in contrast with this earth*, nothing is insensate to the Lord's glory in *that* scene. To the prophet's awe-struck sight, the very foundations swayed in responsive awe, as it were, to His glory. This was *their* antiphon to the uttered ascription of the intelligences of Heaven. So praise ever spreads; it is beautifully contagious, as that later Seer heard the ever-widening circles, till "*every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*" And, again I say, O that we were quicker students to learn and to communicate *that* language—our mother tongue

(*To be continued.*)

When they asked the dying Faraday—"What are your speculations?" He replied that he was not "Pillowing his head on any speculations." Said he, "I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."

The Book of Psalms.

By WALTER SCOTT.

Psalms XII-XIV.

PSALM 12. "Help, Jehovah," is the cry of the godly (verse 1). "Now will I arise saith Jehovah," is the answer (verse 5). The cry comes from an oppressed heart. The sense of loneliness, of isolation, is deeply felt. "The faithful fail from among the children of men." There is a scarcity of good (Psalm iv, 6), of faith (Luke xviii, 8), and of godly men (Psalm xii, 1). The number of truly great and good men is rapidly decreasing. This is generally admitted. Abounding iniquity instead of bracing up the soul to increased devotedness, is as a rule, leading to growing departure from love, truth, and Christ. When present checks and governmental restraints are removed, the final outburst of evil will swamp the nominal faith and love then existing—the love of many should wax cold. The godly are in a feeble minority; hence the appeal to Jehovah to "help." He alone can.

From verses 2-4 we witness the arrogance and pride of the scoffer as foretold by Peter—2 Epistle, ch. iii. The poor and needy—oppressed and sorrowful—find a keeper in Jehovah. Their deliverance is effected through judgment upon their enemies. The stroke that finds them out, delivers the oppressed. We as Christians look for complete and final salvation at, and by, the Coming of our Lord. Deliverance from present trouble *may* be granted, for God is good. But our hope lies outside the scene of present trial. Our rest is in heaven. The godly Jew, on the other hand, has his hope fixed on Canaan, and on the reign of the Messiah. Hence judgment must clear the land of enemies, ere the deliverance of Israel can be effected.

The words of Jehovah are set in sharp contrast to the words of the scorner; see verse 6, then read verses 3 and 4. "This generation" (verse 7) is employed in a *moral* sense as in Deut. xxxii, 5, and Matt. xxiv, 34. The wicked and their rulers are alike in their sinful path. We leave them "hand in hand" till judgment overtakes them (verse 8). That is the generation referred to in verse 7, from which the godly through grace are preserved.

DIVISIONS.

1. Help Jehovah because of state of things, verses 1, 2.
2. Judgment upon the Scoffers and Boasters, verses, 3, 4.
3. Jehovah undertakes the cause of the Poor and Needy, verse 5.
4. The Words of Jehovah are pure and tried words, verse 6.
5. The godly kept, and preserved from the wicked, verses 7, 8.

PSALM 13. This brief Psalm opens with a cry of distress and closes with a note of triumph. It is composed of six verses four of which breathe the spirit of extreme trouble. Four times we hear the urgent cry "How long"?—not however, the cry of despair or unbelief. This touching exclamation is the bursting-heart relieving itself, as it suffers from the long delayed and ardently desired deliverance. It is one of faith and one of deep pathos. In the two last verses of the Psalm we have a changed situation. The night is gone, and the sun shines. Confidence is assured, and the soul delivered from its fears, sings. Patience had been sorely tried. In our Psalm the godly give expression to the distressing thought that Jehovah had nigh forgotten them. The appeal to Jehovah is based on two grounds: (1) lest I perish; (2) lest my enemies triumph. The cry is heard: see verses 5, 6.

"How long, O Lord?" were amongst the dying words of the illustrious John Calvin. The Psalm fathoms almost the lowest depth of distress.

DIVISIONS.

1. The mournful appeal to Jehovah, verses 1, 2.
2. The Prayer and grounds for the hoped Deliverance, verses 3, 4.
3. Faith triumphs and sings, verses 5, 6.

PSALM 14. The scene here laid is in the land of Israel. There are two classes in our Psalm—the Righteous and the Wicked. The one characterising feature of the righteous is Jehovah known and confided in as a refuge (verse 6). There are three gross features of the wicked (1) Atheism—pure and simple, (2) Corruption of mind and heart, (3) Works, ways, and deeds of an abominable character. It is an awful charge to bring against the Covenant People of Jehovah to whom were committed the law, the oracles of God, and the truth. But in the last days their

wickedness is of such a character that by means of the Jew "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles." Judah as a whole becomes atheistic. The first verse while spoken of in the singular, yet represents a company, really the mass of the nation. *One* representing *many* is a marked feature of the Psalter.

If Rome gave to the world law and administration; Greece philosophy and art; Egypt the highest civilization; Judea gave Religion and a true conception of God. But under Satan's guidance Judah's degradation is complete. There cannot be a condition worse than that so graphically described in Matt. xii, 43-45. The nation there has sounded the depths of iniquity.

This Psalm primarily applies to the Jews, as the Apostolic quotation in Rom. iii, 10-12, 19 demonstrates. It refers to those "who are under the law;" this the Gentiles never were. It has been idly said that Psalm liii, is merely a reproduction of Psalm xiv. In matter they are substantially the same, but in some respects they differ. In the earlier Psalm the righteous as a company are *in* the land; in the later Psalm the same company are viewed as driven *out* of the land: see Psalm xlii, 6. Again, in each Psalm the Divine name occurs seven times. In Psalm xiv GOD the Creatorial name expressive of *Omnipotent Power* is written three times, and *Jehovah* signifying *Covenant Relationship* four times. But in Psalm liii, it is God only, occurring seven times. Hence in this latter Psalm the sphere of wickedness embraces in its range the Prophetic Gentile World, and not Judea only.

"The fool hath said in his heart, *no God.*" There are many fools (Luke xii, 20; 1 Cor. xv, 36; Rom. i, 22; etc.), but the atheistic fool of our Psalm is the worst of all. "No God," involves no heaven, no future, no hope. The Atheists' creed is negative "*No God.*" The Christian creed is founded on *God is.*

The absurdity of Atheism is on the face of it. The vast universe is an *effect*, but it has no producing and sustaining *cause!* The thing framed is before our very eyes, but nothing framed it! There is a circle, but no centre! There is time, but no eternity! The atheistic proposition, "No God," has only to be stated, when its foolishness is apparent. The mutterings of

the fool is in his heart, in the centre of his moral being, for it is there he says "no God," a veritable cesspool, a sink of iniquity (Matt. xv, 19). Our language is not too strong when we say, the atheist is worse than the demons, his creed worse than their's. Demons believe and tremble. They own God, Christ, and coming judgment, the atheist does not.

The workers of iniquity vent their malice on the godly (verse 4); yet they have their times and seasons of fear because of the presence of God amongst His people (verse 5). Yet another shameful work, they pour contempt on the counsel of the poor, who will cleave to Jehovah as a refuge (verse 6). When Jehovah brings back the captivity of His people, then deliverance complete and absolute—and we may say, everlasting, comes out of Zion. Jehovah has been true to His every promise.

DIVISIONS.

1. The Fool Described in heart and life, verse 1.
2. Jehovah's estimate of the ungodly Jews, verses 2-4.
3. Fear because of the Presence of God, verse 5.
4. Jehovah the Refuge of the Poor, verse 6.
5. Jehovah effects the Deliverance of the Nation, verse 7.

A Convert to Rome.—The following is a description one gave of his experiences after joining the Church of Rome:—"You ask me about my own sensations now. What I *know* is this—that I could have done nothing else; that everything pointed steadily to the event; that the Church of England 'was a schoolmaster' . . . and, therefore, that I have a great gratitude and tenderness still, and, please God, always shall have, for her. But that now I have arrived. Right down below there is all this fundamental knowledge and certitude that the See of Peter is the one and only centre of unity. But as for actual feelings, I may frankly say that I have none at all yet, of any sort—scarcely even of 'dryness.' For the last three months my soul seems to have been completely numbed—no distress and no joy—at least in the spiritual realm—though plenty of *physical* depression and exaltation." What a poverty-stricken experience after reaching the *true* church!!

The Observatory.

RUSSIA.—This country has bulked largely in the eyes of the world for many weeks past with reference to its change of government. The Revolution seems by no means over, and there may yet be serious difficulties to face as well as strange developments. No one knows what may happen next. All along Russia has been the uncertain factor in the war, and it is so still. She has a part to play in the future which is more than hinted at in the prophetic Scriptures. Eventually she will be opposed to the Latin Confederation of ten kingdoms, and she will be the last great enemy of Israel. All that is said both of the King of the North, and the Assyrian with regard to the latter days indicates the part that will be played by Russia, though other nations or powers may be allied with her. We must not think that because Assyria is mentioned that this is to be taken literally. In Scripture certain names become identified with certain doings and conditions, and these names are retained all through, although the places or persons or people for which they originally stood have long since ceased to be. Babylon is an instance of this. The Babylon referred to in Revelation is not the ancient Babylon, but stands for certain principles opposed to God and the purpose He has in hand. The Gog of Revelation xx is not necessarily the same Gog as that of Ezekiel xxxviii. And this is equally true of Assyria. We need not expect the Assyrian power to be resuscitated in order that prophecy may be fulfilled, any more than we need expect to see the original Babylon rebuilt on the banks of the Tigris. Though a city may be built there, but it is not necessary. Russia is destined to play the part assigned to Assyria. This will help to explain a verse in Ezek. xxxviii, which has sometimes presented a difficulty. With reference to Gog it is said: "Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by My servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them" (v. 17). It would be difficult to find such prophecies with reference to Gog, but there are many such with regard to the Assyrian. Yet it is clear that Gog, and not the Assyrian, is in question in Ezek. xxxviii. Gog is destined to come into "the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel" (v. 8). "And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou and many people with thee . . . and thou shalt come up against My people Israel, as a cloud to cover the land: it shall be in the latter days" (vs. 15-16). Their destruction will be at the hands of God.

* * * *

"REPRISALS."—It is with extreme regret we have noticed that the Government has entered upon a policy of reprisals. And what has astonished us even more has been to find Christians ready to defend it. The plea has been, it is the only way to stop Germany sinking hospital ships and doing other unlawful and inhuman acts. In other words, it is the old argument, that the end justifies the means. Whatever a Government may

do, surely no Christian can either adopt or defend the principle, "Let us do evil that good may come!" Are we to follow Germany to the lowest depths of depravity in order to defeat her infamy? If so, the victory will be too expensive. If she acts like a beast are we to imitate her? If she torpedoes hospital ships are we to do the same? Because she can stoop to every dirty and ignoble trick are we to sink to the same level, with only the poor consolation that she was dirty and ignoble first?

If any feel in doubt upon this point, we would like to challenge them as to the difference in their feelings as they read the accounts of two very different transactions in their newspapers on almost successive days a few weeks ago. On one morning we read of a few innocent women and children being killed by British bombs in an unfortified town, in a "reprisal" raid. On the other, we were told of the heroism of some British sailors who, when a Red Cross ship had been sunk by a German torpedo, risked their own lives to save some German wounded who happened to be on board. Did not the one account cause a sting of conscience and a sense of shame, and the other produce a thrill of admiration and gratitude? If we look at the one in the light of the other we shall surely be able to form a proper estimate of both! There is as much contrast as between darkness and light.

It has been said that in a manual of military methods reprisals are recognised as a form of operations which are justified by certain conditions. If the reprisals contemplated are identical with those recently carried out then we can only say we have not a high opinion of the manual or of those who compiled or endorsed it. If such a path is entered upon where are we to stop? There is no stopping place anywhere! And, moreover, it is patent that the question of "reprisals" would soon be lost sight of altogether, and both parties would sink to one level, and deeds of inhumanity and darkness become the order of the day. No doubt the recent air raid on London claiming innocent victims was a "reprisal" for that on the German town a few days before.* Thus the war is in danger of lapsing into sheer brutality. "Reprisals" cannot fail to leave their stamp upon the Government and the army, as well as upon the nation which acquiesces in them. While as a military man, writing to the papers, has recently pointed out, reprisals only tend to harden the enemy and stiffen his back; and the past record of such tactics is not encouraging even from a purely military point of view. We seem moving on a deplorably low level. No high note is sounded. A religious weekly commenting recently upon a speech by the Prime Minister, after speaking in eulogistic terms of it, remarked, "But some of us waited to hear a word about the drink, and we waited in vain." In the same way we wait in vain for a lead of the right kind in a spiritual direction. The word that would draw the nation upward is never spoken. The spiritual is either smothered by the material or beclouded by a false optimism. Such statements as the following are all we are treated to:

"The road to victory, the guarantee of victory, the absolute assurance of victory, is to be found in one word, ships, in a second word, ships, and a third word, ships."

*And may not the same be said of the more terrible one on Folkestone since?

And this was said without the slightest recognition of a higher power. On the other hand, the same speaker went on: "That conference (meaning after the war) will settle the destiny of nations, the course of human life, for God knows how many ages . . . I can see a peace . . . a real peace as the world, the old world, has never had . . . To-day we are waging the most devastating war that the world has ever seen. To-morrow . . . war may be abolished for ever from the category of human crimes."

The speaker was nearer the mark—perhaps nearer than he thought—when he added: "Strange things have happened in this war, and there are stranger things to come, and coming rapidly." Yes, that is true. The dispensation of God's grace is nearly run out. Judgment is about to intervene, and the Son of Man is soon to have His day." The day of peace will never dawn for this world until Christ inaugurates it. After the war the world will seek its own ends as before. "Reconstruction" is the word on all lips. The real issues will be ignored; God's controversy with the world forgotten. The sin question and the rejection and murder of Christ are the issues before God, and they will yet be raised, and while the world is fighting for democratic principles and settling its form of government the pent up flood of divine wrath may burst upon it. "When they shall say peace and safety then sudden destruction shall come upon them." When the world appears to have reached its goal the crash will come.

In view of this, how solemn it is to think of the condition of many in this country. If peace came to-morrow it seems as if the nation would soon revert to its former habits, or become even more degraded and settle into a deeper slumber. The other day we read the following: "A man named Jim Smith, a young coster, fell mortally wounded in France. Ere he died he asked a comrade to carry his last message to another man in London who had been his best friend from childhood, and the message was, 'Tell him not to trouble about me, and say that I died for England with a good heart.' The man who had to bring the message was passing at midnight through London a month or so later and saw such scenes that he paused, and looking round, exclaimed, 'Is this the England poor Jim Smith died for with such a good heart?'" Such scenes, thank God, do not represent the whole of England, but they are significant enough, seeing they are possible at such a time as this. But from east to west, and from north to south there is need of repentance and recovery.

Give strength, give thought, give deeds, give self;
Give love, give tears, and give thyself.

Give, give, be always giving;

Who gives not is not living;

The more we give

The more we live.

—Selected.

Jehoshaphat: or the Path of Trial and Faith and God's Deliverance.

Fear and trembling in a servant of Christ indicates the absence of that self confidence which is the great bane of service and testimony in this world for Christ.

The lack of self confidence indicates self distrust, and is the evidence of fasting, which ever shuts out man and leaves room for the power of God in service.

The human element is always a hindrance in Divine things, and Satan uses it to hinder and corrupt God's work in the souls of men. For all those who revert to this human element the Words of our Lord are most solemn, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things which be of God, *but those that be of men.*" It is a solemn consideration, that such language should be used to one who had shortly before received a distinct revelation of the glory of the Son from the Father.

The history of Jehoshaphat is very interesting in this connection; more especially after his remarkable deliverance and restoration when he had joined affinity with Ahab, the idolatrous King of Israel.

In chapter xvii of 2nd Chronicles, we get his ascension to the throne, and in chapter xviii, his prosperity, and his downfall, are described in the same chapter. In chapter xix, we have his complete restoration to God's favour, and the good results flowing from it. *When God restores, He restores completely, and trusts the restored one in His blessed service again. So unlike man who rarely trusts again one who has failed.* Jehoshaphat, to use the language of Psalm 51, builds up again the walls of Zion.

In chapter xx we get the test or trial of his faith, in the face of a huge company coming up against him. This great test only brings out his faith in God, and the sense of his own weakness to meet the difficulty.

He fears, and sets himself to seek the Lord. He proclaims a fast. He gathers the people together with the little ones to wait on God in prayer. It is a most beautiful sight, and the

whole scene is the evidence of the deepest humility and absence of self confidence.

What is the result? God sends a prophet to him to encourage him, and allay his fears. This sets his soul at rest even though the foe was at the very gate. The human element is altogether discarded. *God alone is sought, and waited upon to defend his own inheritance.*

"*They be come to cast us out of Thy possession*"—must have been most touching in the ear of the God who had with His own arm broken the power of Egypt, opened up the Red Sea, and bid the Jordan stand back that His people might pass over into the land which was God's inheritance dry shod.

How significant the words. "And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord sent ambushments against the people." *To stand still is a proof of our moral strength.* To sit still requires a very great sense of Divine support, and it is only confidence in the power of the Lord being for us, that will enable us to do it. "Their strength is to sit still" (Isa. xxx, 15). "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. xxx, 15).

The prophet said to Jehoshaphat, "Ye shall not need to fight this battle." It seemed silly to say so. But then the whole history of God's chosen people had been a distinct proof that it was a miraculous history, and this should in every time of difficulty have led them to put their whole confidence in God alone.

What must it have been to their fathers to have seen the Red Sea and the Jordan open up to let the hosts of Israel pass over dry shod? What must it have been to have seen the walls of Jericho fall down flat and to do nothing except wait upon God? What must it have been to see the fiery pillar by night and the cloudy one by day? What must it have been to see each morning, whether they murmured or not, the manna at their tent doors? What must it have been to find water in the desert, and to see their very clothes upon them wax not old nor their feet swell during the forty years of their desert pilgrimage?

That history was well known to every child. It was handed down from father to son, to encourage faith in God's almighty power and love for them. But alas, when a fresh trial

comes our memories seem to be very short and we forget God's past goodness, unless we are kept very near to Him.

Faith implies confidence and absolute trust in God under all circumstances. Confidence involves the intimate knowledge of the One we trust. The more intimate our knowledge is of Him, the more we are able to confide and trust in Him in the darkest hour. *God often allows the darkest hour to come upon us before He brings deliverance. That serves to make His invisible power all the more real and visible to faith. In that way He gives us joyful surprises that He may deepen confidence in His love to us. Every deliverance is like a milestone that marks our history which we may recall before Him thankfully, and may even remind Him of when we seek for further deliverance.*

The singing and praise that issued forth from them shewed how much they were in the spirit of victors even before victory was given, and the much spoil was taken.

As a rule, this is the way God ever works, He fills us with such a sense of His love, when we humble ourselves truly before Him, that we are lifted up with spiritual joy under the greatest pressure, so that His Word is verified in our experience, "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

When Paul and Silas prayed to God in prison, they were also led to praise Him e'er the sound of the earthquake which was to affect deliverance for them was heard. Their souls were brought into the peace of God in their trial, and thus they were able to glorify God in the midst of their shameful persecution.

Had Paul asserted his free born Roman citizenship at the beginning, he had no need to have suffered at the hands of the magistrates. But look what he would have missed by so doing? He would certainly have escaped suffering for Christ's Name's sake, but he would have missed the joy which more than recompensed him in his suffering. He would not have had the spoil of the conqueror. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" 2 Cor. i, 5.

How much spoil we all miss in the way of increased light from God, and present spiritual joy. We all lose by self assertion and self vindication, which is the opposite to the lowly

path of Christ, who had all the gentleness of the dove and the meekness of the lamb. He never resisted evil. He prayed to His Father, and He committed His cause to Him that judges righteously, and passed on keeping the even tenor of His way until God would vindicate Him. He has been vindicated in heaven, and He will yet be vindicated on earth.

Every trial is the trying of us. But it is a fresh occasion to express the humility and patience of Christ, and it is a fresh occasion to turn to God, and prove the unbounded sufficiency of His mercy to deliver us, and His grace to sustain us until that deliverance comes.

“My soul wait thou only upon God.” In waiting we *gain great moral strength.* *Waiting on God to act for us, and by us, perfects the Christian graces which He desires to see in us.* Another has said that there is more to be done *in* us than *by* us. His work in us involves making nothing of us that Christ might be seen and magnified in us. His work by us might (and has more than once or twice even in the most gifted), make so much of us that ultimately it may bring spiritual ruin, if pride is unjudged.

What treacherous hearts we have, and what poor things the best of God's servants are. This is true whether we look at a Samson, a David, a Peter, or Jehoshaphat, or even Hezekiah, or a good man like Josiah.

The flesh profiteth nothing. This we all learn in a great many ways, but this only serves to bring the moral beauties of Christ into greater relief before our eyes, and thereby the Holy Spirit exalts Him, and makes every act and look and word of His more precious to us.

P. W-L-S.

Savonarola visited Lorenzo Medici on his death-bed. “Three things,” said the Friar, “are needed for absolution: First, a great and living faith in God's mercy.” “I have the fullest faith in it,” was the response. “Secondly, you must restore all your wrongly-acquired wealth, or charge your sons to restore it.” Making a nod of assent, he grudgingly agreed. “And, thirdly, you must restore liberty to the people of Florence.” At this Lorenzo angrily turned his back upon him and died unrepentant, yet torn with remorse.

Resting and Waiting.

"With Christ, which is very far better.—(Phil. i. 23 R.V.)

Resting with the Saviour,
 Desert toils are done;
 Faith's great conflict ended,
 Now the victory's won.
 Safely they are landed,
 Life's rough voyage past,
 Anchored in the haven—
 Home is reached at last.

Resting there with Jesus,
 In communion sweet.
 Till He comes in glory,
 All His own to meet.
 Waiting till the morning
 Breaks with glad surprise,
 Till with shout of triumph,
 All His saints shall rise.

Oh! the bliss of greeting
 Pilgrim friends of yore,
 There together meeting,
 Parting never more.
 With the Lord for ever
 Gazing on His face
 Like Himself for ever—
 Glory crowning grace.

They are *resting*, waiting,
 While we *toil* and wait;
 One bright hope possessing,
 Different though our state.
 Hasten Lord Thy coming,
 Take Thy people home,
 All Thy saints are waiting—
 Come, Lord Jesus, come.

The Faith and The Flock

Vol. IX—No 8.

AUGUST, 1917

Price 1d

“I Will Come Again.”

Christ Coming Out of Heaven—His Actual Appearing—The Character of His Coming—its Object—The Final Conflict.

We have now reached a point where we are face to face with our Lord's actual appearing. We have seen that His coming is in two stages, and that He comes for His own first. Between this and the moment at which we have actually arrived there is an interval of at least seven years—for the last week of Daniel has still to run its course. At what precise moment this will commence we have no means of knowing; and Scripture is equally silent as to when the hour will strike for the times of the Gentiles to end. The times and the seasons are not revealed to us; the Father having kept these in His own power. God has entrusted us with the knowledge of certain facts—we have had committed to us a broad outline of future events—with this we should be content.

In Rev. xix, we are granted a most wonderful vision. We are permitted to see Christ coming out of heaven attended by His armies. It is important to notice the character in which He comes; so different from that of His first coming. Then He appeared as a babe; He came in weakness; His mission was one of grace. Here He is seen as a warrior at the head of His hosts, His aspect is that of a conqueror, and His whole mien calculated to strike terror into the hearts of all who oppose. Nor should such an attitude on the part of Christ cause us any surprise. Many an Old Testament passage would lead us to expect it, in addition to what is stated in the New. In Psalm ii, 9, just after the promise that He should possess the earth, we read, “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” In Psalm xlv we read again, “Gird Thy

sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty." Again, "The Lord at Thy right hand shall strike through Kings in the day of His wrath" (Psalm cx, 5), and in Isa. lxiii, 3, it is Christ speaking (not concerning salvation as some have supposed, but with reference to a day of vengeance): "I have trodden the winepress" (always a figure of judgment) "alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in My fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all my raiment, for the day of vengeance is in my heart." Compare all this with Revelation xix—the passage we are considering—and the resemblance cannot escape us. It is evident, therefore, that when Christ comes to the world He comes in judgment—the day of grace will be over.

The world, too, is always represented as in fear and trembling at His coming. Read Matt. xxiv, 30; Rev. i, 7; vi, 15-17, Nor is it any wonder, for Christ's return means for them "sudden destruction" (1 Thess. v, 3), with the loss of all that the world values, and everything that has ministered to its short-lived pleasure. Christ's own solemn words will then be fulfilled, "Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Luke xx, 18). The first clause of this passage refers to the rejection of Christ now; the second, to what will happen to His enemies when He comes.

The White Horse and its Rider.

Let us now consider some of the details of the Appearing as set before us in our chapter. The first thing mentioned is "a white horse." This is the symbol of victory, and doubtless, too, of purity. For it is said, "In righteousness He doth judge and make war." There have been many unrighteous wars in the world, but the one Christ will wage will be to put down evil, to claim His rights, and bring war to an end.

Then follows the description of the rider. "Faithful and True." These two qualities are combined in Christ. A man may be faithful to one who employs him in a matter that does not bear the stamp of truth. But here all Christ does will be in accordance with truth. He will be faithful to God's interests, but

all those interests are in harmony with truth. He will not spare where sin is to be judged. There will be no compromise with evil. The fact that He is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood speaks in no equivocal way of the mission on which He comes. If we compare it with the passage already quoted from Isa. lxiii, we shall see its significance. He Who once died for sinners will now inflict death upon all who have rejected God and His grace.

"*His eyes are as a flame of fire.*" How different all this from the meek and lowly One presented to us in the gospels. He will be as perfect in the one character as He was in the other. They imply a searching discernment that will detect and expose and judge everything that is false, and obnoxious to God. Nothing impure or evil can stand before that penetrating, consuming gaze.

"*And on His head were many crowns.*" He is above all, for He possesses all. To Him all rights belong. The crowns and kingdoms of earth are His, and He has many titles and many glories.

This is seen by the names He bears. Thrice are these names referred to. *First*, "*He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself.*" He knows about Himself, and God knows, too, something we can never know. People talk about Him as if they knew all that is to be known. The "Jesus" of Christendom is often a mere production of the human imagination; there is no mystery about Him, and very little majesty. Here we have both—"A name written that no man knew, but He Himself." We should never contemplate Him without awe as well as love.

Next we have another name—"His Name is called the Word of God." John i, makes us familiar with this title, and explains to us its meaning. He is the One in Whom God is expressed. "The Only Begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father He hath declared Him." There it is in grace—"full of grace and truth." Here He is again spoken of as the Word, but in a very different aspect. As He had once declared God's love to sinners, so here He is about to declare God's hatred of sin, and to judge those who refused to be saved from it. He is to "judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom" (2 Tim. iv, 1). In whatever way God is expressed, whether in grace or judgment, Christ is the One who expresses Him. He is the Word of God.

Lastly, "*He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a Name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.*" This Name seems more immediately connected with His manifestation, and its object. We seem to have, first, the innermost name, known only to Himself; next, a name that denotes that He is about to express the mind of God in judgment. He is *called* the Word of God. But lastly we have the special character of His mission portrayed in the Name emblazoned on His vesture and on His thigh. These details are not mentioned in connection with the other names, but the title King of kings and Lord of lords is placed where everybody can see it. It explains the purport of His coming—He comes to be supreme.

Nor is he alone. "*The armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*" We cannot make a mistake as to the persons composing these armies. Their clothing and their character denote who they are, and identify them with those referred to earlier in the chapter who are spoken of as the wife of the Lamb (c.f. v. 8). They are worthy to accompany Christ, for they are also on white horses, and they will share in His victory, as they once shared in His humiliation and rejection. "Do ye not know," says the apostle Paul, "that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. vi, 2). And here we see them coming forth from heaven for that very purpose. It is well to notice from whence they come. They are described as "the armies which were in heaven." How did they come to be there? The first resurrection had already taken place in connection with the preliminary stage of Christ's Second Coming, and according to 1 Thess. iv, the dead and living saints had been "caught up." They now come forth with Christ.

And now we have the special character of this coming described. "And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword." What a contrast to Luke iv, where we read that they "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." This "sharp sword" is to *smite* the nations. Christ has only to speak, and every enemy will fall prostrate before Him, just as they did in the days of His flesh in the Garden of Gethsemane, when they came to take Him. When He said "I am," we read, "they went backward, and fell to the ground." "He shall smite the earth

with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked" (Isa. xi, 4; cf. also Rev. xix, v. 21; and 2 Thess. ii, 8). He will "*rule them with a rod of iron.*" All insubjection and rebellion will be sternly repressed, nor will any lawlessness be permitted. "*And He treadeth the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*" How little men imagine what that day will be like, or anticipate the terror which will seize them. He Who once manifested the gentleness and mercy of God, Who touched the leper, and gave sight to the blind, and fed the hungry, He will give effect now to the full extent of God's wrath.

The Opposing Forces.

But there is another side to this picture. Evidently some decisive conflict is about to take place, for armies are seen gathered together on earth, as well as issuing out of heaven, and the sequel discloses that they are in deadly opposition. And there is a summons to all the fowls of the air to gather and feed upon the slain. It is the last dread conflict, compared with which all others will appear as nothing. It is to decide who shall possess the earth. The forces of good and evil are marshalled, and the legions of Satan are pitted against those of the Lamb in one last struggle for supremacy.

Who are the leaders on either side? We have already taken note of the One Who leads the armies of heaven. Those opposed to Him are the Beast and the false Prophet, while allied with them are the Kings of the earth. It is distinctly stated that they are "*gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army.*" It is war between heaven and earth—between Christ and Satan. The Beast for a brief period has had universal sway. We read of him in Rev. xiii that "the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority," and that power was given him "over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (vs. 2 and 7). He is the devil's viceroy. But his career has been short. It was limited from the commencement. For we read, "power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." With him has been associated the false prophet, the Antichrist. The one represents the civil and the other the ecclesiastical power, and between them they control the earth. It

is Satan's last attempt to defeat God's purpose (if we except the brief final outbreak after the millennium). That purpose is fully declared in the prophetic Scriptures. God's purpose has always been that man should have dominion, but it is to be the man of His choice and not the Adversary's. All rule and all authority and power are given to Christ. This Satan is prepared to dispute to the last, as all along he has attempted to defeat God's plans. In Rev. xii we see him under the form of a dragon standing before the woman to devour her child as soon as it was born. "And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." He does not succeed in this, and the child is caught up unto God, and to His throne. But he will adopt other plans. The chapter passes on to the future, and we see Satan cast out of heaven, and attempting to stamp out all testimony for God on the earth. Then he raises up a man of his own, and sets him upon the throne of the earth, and the dragon and the beast become objects of worship.

For the moment Satan seems to have gained his object. But the conflict that is to decide the fate of all concerned in this gigantic conspiracy is impending. And so we read:—

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon." (Rev. xvi, 13-14, 16.)

Further on we read, "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for He is Lord of lords and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Ch. xvii, 14). These last words link all on with the passage we are considering, in which we see the actual conflict taking place.

The issue is not in doubt for a moment. There is no protracted trench warfare here. The two leaders of the insurrection—the Beast and his coadjutor the false Prophet—are immediately taken, and are cast straightway into the lake of fire while still

alive. Wicked as men may have been there never have existed two sinners such as these before—men so directly energised by Satan or so definitely opposed to God—and for them is reserved this unique punishment. Of the rest we read, “And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh” (v. 21).

So ends the battle of Armageddon, and the sovereignty of the world is at last in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(To be continued).

Stephen Grellet.

His meeting with the Pope was an interesting one, and perhaps the only audience ever held of a like nature. Pius Seventh was closing the days of his rule when Grellet reached Rome. Bringing letters of introduction to a certain cardinal, he began his work among the jails and other public institutions, and soon began to attract general attention. This resulted in an appointment with the pontiff. He says of this visit, As I was entering the door, some one behind me gently but quickly took off my hat, and before I could look for it the door was quietly closed. He told the Pope of the sufferings in some of the asylums, of the priestly abuses he had seen in Greece, and of the burning of Bibles in various places. He spoke of Christ as the only Saviour, and then feeling the love of Christ flowing in his heart exhorted him to recognize Jesus Christ as the only head of the Church, to whom alone every knee must bow.—(*Extract.*)

“Not till the loom is silent,
 And the shuttles cease to fly,
 Shall God unroll the canvas,
 And explain the reason why?
 The dark threads are as needful
 In the weaver’s skilful hand,
 As the threads of gold and silver,
 In the pattern He has planned.”

The Epistle to the Colossians.

Chap. i. 19-22.

By W. W. FEREDAY.

Verse 19 of our chapter is most unfortunately rendered in the Authorised Version. The Revisers have not improved upon it as far as the text is concerned, though they suggest a preferable rendering in the margin. As the passage stands, the Son is represented as being what He was (and is) by the pleasure of another, i.e., the Father. Russellism and other evil cults may indeed entertain such degrading thoughts concerning the Saviour, but the pious men who translated the Scriptures for us in 1611 can safely be acquitted of any wish to dishonour Him. We may well believe that they loved Him.

The passage is best rendered thus:—"For in Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell." The fulness of the Godhead is, as it were, personified here, and that fulness dwelt in the man Christ Jesus. In this place the Apostle speaks of the day of His humiliation; in chapter ii, 9, he speaks of His present glory. All that can ever be seen or known of God has been manifested in Him. To the inquiring Philip He could say: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father?" (John xiv, 9). Not a single divine quality or attribute did He surrender in becoming human. Faith loves to sing to the once lowly Galilean cottager:—

In Thee most perfectly expressed
The Father's Self doth shine;
Fulness of Godhead, too: the blest—
Eternally divine.
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow.

The world's Creator thus tabernacled awhile amongst us in flesh and blood. But Bethlehem and Nazareth led up to Calvary, where the Creator became the Reconciler.

"And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime

alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight" (v. 20-22).

His making peace corresponds to the blood on the mercy-seat in Lev. xvi, 11. That was for the eye of Jehovah alone, and it formed the basis of all His dealings with Israel in that age. The results in blessing of the peace-making blood of Jesus are comprehensively stated:—There is the reconciliation of things, and there is also the reconciliation of persons. This is a most important distinction which should be carefully noted. Christ's twofold reconciliation corresponds to His two headships. As head of all creation He reconciles all things to Himself, that everything may be rendered suitable to Him and for His pleasure; as Head of the body, the Church, He reconciles to Himself all the persons of whom the body is composed.

But "all things" does not mean "all persons." Universal restoration of all created beings (a notion fondly entertained by many) is nowhere taught in Holy Scripture. All persons will be *subjected* to the lordship of Jesus. Even Satan himself will yet be constrained to confess Him Lord (Phil. ii, 9-11), but subjection is not reconciliation.

The reconciliation of *things* is typified in the Old Testament, and plainly taught in the New. On the great day of Atonement in Israel Aaron went out unto the altar which was before Jehovah, and he sprinkled of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat upon the horns of the altar round about. Also he made "an atonement for the holy place because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of all their transgressions in all their sins" (Lev. xvi, 16-19). The Holy Spirit commenting upon this in Hebrews ix, 21-22, says: "He sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are according to the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Then He shows the relation of the type to the antitype:—

"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

Thus heaven as well as earth needs to be reconciled if God is again to have pleasure in the works of His hands, and if the Heir of all things is to have an inheritance suited to Him. There is revolt in the heavens as well as in the earth. Presently—when the patience of God with His foes is exhausted—the efficacy of the blood of Jesus will be applied, first to the heavens, and then to the earth, and all evil will be expelled from both. The complete result will not be seen until the new heavens and the new earth appear. In that fair scene everything will answer perfectly to the divine nature. In the millennial kingdom evil (as far as the earth is concerned) is subjugated; in the new creation it is banished utterly.

The reconciliation of things, however, is not yet; but the reconciliation of persons is now. Thus the Apostle gives it a present application to his readers. "You, that were once alienated . . . yet *now* hath He reconciled." In the case of persons (in contrast with things) an inward moral work was necessary. Things might be unclean, by reason of their contact with sinful men, but enmity towards God is impossible to them. But this, alas, was our terrible condition once. We loved our sins, and we hated the God who abhorred them. Between us and Him there was no affinity. The death of Christ alone could bridge the awful gulf which separated us from God. The incarnation of Christ, whatever its benefits to men, could not suffice for this. But His death has not only cleared away our sins, it has also ended our history as men in the flesh. Everything that was offensive to God has thus been completely removed, that we might be before Him for His pleasure, both now and through eternity. God had given to the apostles "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. v, 18-21), and its tender appeal had reached the hearts of sinners in Colosse, as it has ours also, through grace.

The future of the reconciled is most blessedly stated. They are to be presented to God holy and unblameable and unprovable (or unimpeachable) in His sight. No flaw in them, and no charge against them. Oh, the grace which sets before us such a consummation, and which brings us into the sweetness of it by the Spirit's power, here and now!

The Spirit of the Age.*

To-day, people are repeating the question that has doubtless been asked ever and anon during past centuries, "Why does God allow the war?"

Why does God allow a man who takes prussic acid to be poisoned? The man is aware of what he is doing. No one thinks of blaming God in this matter.

Why does God allow tares to grow instead of wheat when the farmer deliberately sows tares? No one is so foolish to ask such a puerile question.

Why does God allow the war? We answer: The nations have been sowing the wind, and now are reaping the whirlwind. Why should God interfere with the law of cause and effect? The majority of those who ask, "Why does God allow the war?" are men and women who emphatically don't want God in their own lives. He would be an intrusion. They are careful to close their hearts to the Gospel, and mean to make the best of things apart from Christ. They are living illustrations of that word in the old Book, "The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against *the Lord*."

Now, a man need be neither a scientist nor a philosopher to be able to detect the chief features of "science" of to-day. Any layman who reads and observes realises that it has gained a very high authority in the world. In fact, "Thus saith science" is with many an end of all controversy; and a man has only to say that "science" declares such and such a thing to be the case, and vast numbers accept the statement without hesitation. Having discarded the Bible, people pin their faith with touching confidence to what has come to be regarded as a counter authority to the Word of God. Even Edison said, "There are more frauds in modern science than anywhere else." And the believer will remember that he is expressly warned against "science falsely so called." The saved man refuses to say to science and speculation, "These be thy gods, O Israel!"

"Modern science" is often godless, and is really another name

*The above is an extract from a booklet to be obtained free.—Address, E. Adams, 88 Lady Margaret Road, London, N.

for unbelief. "Natural laws" take the place of God, and the Creator is virtually ruled out of His own universe. Seeing that the heart of the unregenerate man is enmity against God, there is little wonder that the world is so ready to welcome any philosophy which, by rejecting all accountability to a personal, almighty, holy God, makes man responsible to no one but himself.

"Nobody is afraid of God now," said Dr Dale, of Birmingham, some years ago, in a tone of dismay. A holy, filial fear of God is the spring of all true liberty, but where the fear of the Lord has decayed, the power of man and his governments and organisations becomes increasingly despotic. On the principle that the strong can do no wrong, it has become increasingly easy for those in power to make wrong-doing legal and compulsory. The cuckoo-cry to-day is, "Organisation is the thing." The individual man counts for nothing: the "thing" is all that matters. Many have been made to feel the despotic tyranny of the trades unions over the conscience of the individual, and cannot but see that this modern craze for putting the organisation before the man is antagonistic to vital Christianity; for Christianity always insists upon the eternal salvation of the individual soul before the material prosperity of the community. It is refreshing to call to mind the sturdy words of Bishop Hooper: "Christ's kingdom is a spiritual one. In that neither king nor pope may govern. Christ alone is the Governor of His Church, and the only Lawgiver."

In Germany it would appear that this excessive, God-dishonouring regard for the state has become a veritable idolatry. Falsehood, slaughter, and outrage seem to be considered virtues if committed in the interests of the state-idol. And everywhere conscience towards God has become increasingly unpopular, while conscience towards the state under whose authority the accident of birth has placed men, has grown in the public esteem. The result is that what might be termed "National Sectarianism" has reached its zenith during the war, and has become a veritable religion with multitudes.

Lord Hugh Cecil, in writing to *The Church Times* on April 1, 1916, said:

"The spiritual source of the war is to be found in a spirit of idolatry. Mankind has suffered the prodigious miseries that the

war has brought upon us mainly because human beings in general, and especially Germans, have come to love their countries more than they ought to do—more than they love God and His laws. This is the great spiritual evil of our time, and immoderate patriotism which has set itself in the place of religion, and gives to the state an authority which ought only to be given to God.”

Such “national spirit” tends to make men see everything through a distorted medium, and is a great enemy to a healthy conscience towards God. (Conscience *towards God* is the only conscience that is acceptable to Christ.) National sectarianism is responsible for the sentimental blasphemy that death in battle saves the soul! That things are no worse is largely due to God’s despised people, who are engaged in “prayer warfare,” and who are thus rendering an incalculable though unrecognised service to the world.

The World’s Hope.

There are some who say that this war will end war. What a pathetic delusion! As if Satan would cast out Satan! War is a game from which all parties rise the losers. Life will continue dearer, and the unrest and discontent that marked the years previous to the great outbreak will probably be increased.

In recent years it was the fashion to boast in “the onward march of the human spirit.” The world had its hope, and any who were bold enough to try to prick the bubble were scoried as fools and pessimists. That hope was that the world was getting better, that man was improving, that by a process of evolution the human race was surely rising to a higher plane where the brotherhood of man would be universally acknowledged. But now this vain hope has been dashed to the ground. And yet the world never learns by experience along this line, and is busy building other hopes which must in turn be crushed. And although writhing in its miseries, it is still, wherever possible, whirling in its godless pleasures. It is blind to the fact that the godless “human spirit” which was its boast and confidence is the very cause of the European tragedy. And it is worthy of notice that the nation which above all gloried in its scientific knowledge, its culture, and its organised civilisation is the very nation which has given

the most appalling display of the worst passions of the human heart. No amount of civilisation, science, or culture, can change the human heart, and "the heart unchanged can never rise to happiness and God."

"Jesus Christ or Despair." Such was the testimony of Lavater, the great Swiss physiognomist. "On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand," is the confession of every true believer.

The Person of Christ is unique. He is "God manifest in flesh;" "the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" "the Light of the world." He promises rest of mind and conscience and heart to all who come to Him. He robs death of its sting. To those who love Him the future is no longer a dismal gulf into which they fear to fall, and which they strive to forget, but is bright with hopes of home and glory. He is the sinner's Friend; the only way back to God; the meeting-place between God and the soul. He is everything to the believer. His name is a strain of heavenly music. His titles spell perfection. In Him mercy and truth meet together. In Him are blended perfect truth and perfect grace; spotless holiness and tenderest compassion; absolute righteousness and boundless love; almighty power and infinite gentleness. Reader, is He not worthy of your confidence?

A young woman, whose brother was home on leave from the Front, was heard lately to say, "I am not enjoying having him home at all, and I hope he will soon go back, he *cares for nothing but religion now*." After a young Christian soldier's first leave-home, his fiancée said tremulously to a friend, "*He had gone on with God, but I had gone back; he is always reading his khaki St John, and is now learning it by heart. See, he has given me one, and I am learning it too.*"

Surely, the above true instances, which might be multiplied, speak for themselves.

Shall not *we* also, for the sake of Him who died for us, and for the sake of those who are meeting us on life's pathway in these days of fiery trial and testing, *face afresh* the realities and failures of our Christian walk and service? Let us search our hearts with the humble cry to God on our lips. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults" (Ps. xix, 14).

—Extract.

Isaiah.

Chapter VI.—Continued.

Now we turn to the second section in which we shall see the Lord preparing a vessel unto honor for His use; and, as I believe it to be a pattern case, it will be well to mark the steps.

Verse 5: *Then, said I, Woe to me, for I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I am dwelling among a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah Tzebaoth.*

The first step, then, is that he is brought into that holy light in which he sees everything clearly, exactly *as it is*; and at once he cries out in dread alarm, "*I am lost!*" "O unhappy man!" do you say? No, for that is the path in which every one is led whom God intends to use. The light that He causes to shine ever reveals, in us all, only that all is "waste and desolate," yet that light is always good. So it was with Job (chapter xlii.) so with Daniel (chapter x), so with Saul of Tarsus (Acts ix), so with John in Patmos (Rev. i), and so with Isaiah. Saint, sinner, Jew, Gentile; king, peasant—all humbled to the same level of the dust in that light. Isaiah instantly recognizes that it is his own lips that are unclean—not merely those of his neighbours. He is of the same "clay lump" as all the rest (Rom. ix); in the light of that glory there is "no difference, for all have sinned and come short of it." He is no better, any more than Peter was better than his hearers in Acts iii, 14, for had he not, too. "denied the Holy One and the Just?" Or than one thief on Calvary was better than the other—He was no less a thief. The publican in the temple was not "better" than the Pharisee: the only difference was that all these *confessed* that there *was no* difference. But that is of so vast a difference as to bring a blessing instead of a curse, a kiss instead of a blow, heaven instead of hell. This is invariably, in greater or less degree, the necessary precursor to all blessing or usefulness.

Verse 6: *And one of the Seraphim flew to me, and in his hand a glowing coal, taken with tongs from off the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said, Behold, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin expiated.*

Here, if I err not, we may, indeed, see "His glory," even in this "glowing coal;" for look a little more carefully at it, as that Seraph or "burning one" brings it. It is also burning; the fire from which it was taken is active in it still. It is, we may say, still suffering the judgment of the fire. Let this touch the unclean lips ever so lightly, and at once all iniquity is taken away, only we must bear in mind that the very word used for "touched" forbids the thought of its being a casual, inoperative contact. The word conveys the same significance exactly as its Greek equivalent in Luke viii, 45, when the Lord felt that light finger-tip and asked "Who touched me?" In that touch there is always a communication of virtue.

The "glowing coal," then, is our Lord Jesus Christ; but not now on the "Throne high and lifted up," but rather lifted up upon the cross. Here we see, in one complete scene, what historically took place in two actions, on and after the final entry into Jerusalem, in Luke xix. Then, too, He came to sit upon His Throne. "*Behold thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass;*" but His people were not ready for Him as their king, but sorely needed Him in other guise. His love must meet this need. So He steps, as it were, from off the throne, and laying Himself on the altar, becomes the paschal Lamb and the "glowing coal."

It is not at all necessary to look upon the prophet Isaiah here as taking the place of an unforgiven sinner: far from it; he was surely a saint, before this. It is not his regeneration that is here figured, but his being made meet for the Master's use, in accord with the context that follows. Just as it is not an unregenerate sinner that we hear in Romans vii also crying "*Woe is me,*" or "*Wretched man that I am,*" but a saint learning a deeper lesson. Nor does it mean that you and I are unregenerate because we too are learning the same painful humbling, yet wholesome lesson of holiness, in the utter corruption of all that is "in us that is in our flesh;" for it is thus that we too turn to Jesus our Lord, learn of His infinite grace, in being made the "glowing coal," and are made meet for the Master's use in the way of making that grace known.

(To be continued).

Against Reprisals.

By R. E.

We do not write for the sake of contention but because we feel compelled. We have found even Christians ready to advocate reprisals; and we have the profound conviction that if Britain enters upon such a course it will not only be a terrible mistake, but the harvest she will ultimately reap will be of the same nature as the seed she sows. The nation is on the edge of an abyss, and if any word can be said which would save it from taking the final plunge, that word ought to be spoken.

We feel quite sure that the Christians who are ready to justify reprisals have never attempted to analyse their feelings and thoughts, or to enquire what is involved in such a policy. Reprisals mean that we pay the enemy back in his own coin—brutality for brutality, murder for murder. If he kills women and children, we do the same. When laid bare, the word stands for all that is inhuman and revolting—every law of God and man will be outraged. Are Christians prepared to support that, and to justify it? It would appear from an article by Mr Hall Caine, the protagonist of reprisals, as if many English people are prepared to do so, for he tells us of a multitude of English mothers who have sent him letters, saying, "God bless you." In this connection it would, perhaps, not be out of place to enquire, *What* God?

We cannot enter upon *reprisals* in kid gloves. We shall wallow in a slough of iniquity and an ocean of blood. There is no half-way house in reprisals, if that policy becomes once recognised and acted upon. Nor is there any stopping place, for *necessity* which "knows no law" will govern everything, and morality and right feeling will have no say in the matter at all. If the Germans, as reprisals to us, murder all their prisoners we shall have to do the same. If they decide not to take any more prisoners but kill all who fall into their hands on the battlefield, we shall follow suit. Are Christians, we ask again, prepared to justify such a course? Nay, will anyone, with a spark of human feeling left, justify it?

This is not an exaggerated picture, as we can prove. A lead-

ing paper, arguing in favour of reprisals, based all upon *necessity*. It did not hesitate to declare that morals may cease to have any place. Again, we ask, can any sane man after analysing what this means accept it?

What does it mean? It means that we are going to place necessity above God's law and above every proper human instinct. It will mean saying to ourselves, God tells me to do this, but *necessity* compels me to disregard what God says, and to do the opposite. Necessity will become enthroned, and bowing the knee we shall say, "Necessity, be thou my God." Do we realise that nearly all the outrages, the brutalities, the butcheries, that have stained the page of human history, and from which the human spirit in all ages has recoiled with instinctive horror, have been done in the name of NECESSITY? Few, very few, will commit wickedness purely for its own sake—every ruthless conqueror, every desperate Nihilist, every despairing anarchist, every blind devotee of a false religion has committed his dark and dreadful crimes under the plea of necessity. There was no other way of gaining his point, and he convinced himself it was necessary, and thus salved his conscience. It was necessity that led men to put the Saviour of the world to death. "If we let this man alone the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."* Now, is this principle to

*Those who advocate reprisals would do well to read Lord Macaulay's remarks upon the massacre of Glencoe. He is trying to account for the fact that the Master of Stair, a statesman, a fine scholar, with polished manners, should have been guilty of one of the foulest crimes known to history. He says, "The most probable conjecture is that he was actuated by an inordinate, an unscrupulous, a remorseless zeal for what seemed to him to be the interest of the state. This explanation may startle those who have not considered how large a proportion of the blackest crimes recorded in history is to be ascribed to ill regulated public spirit. We daily see men do for their party, for their sect, for their country, for their favourite scheme of political and social reform what they would not do to enrich or to avenge themselves A man silences the remonstrances of conscience, and hardens his heart against the most touching spectacles of misery, by repeating to himself that his intentions are pure . . . that he is doing a little evil for the sake of a great good. By degrees he comes altogether to forget the turpitude of the means in the excellence of the end, and at length perpetrates without one internal twinge, acts which would shock a buccaneer."

govern the policy of this great nation? If so, what hypocrites we shall be. In adopting reprisals we profess we are doing so only under necessity—military necessity. This was the reasoning of a daily paper in a leading article recently. But this is exactly the ground that the Germans took at the beginning of the war, and which we condemned with righteous indignation. Germany invaded Belgium because of military necessity. What an outcry was raised against her on that account. According to all the leading politicians, it became the very justification of our taking up arms. And now are we prepared to adopt exactly the same policy as Germany?

But it will be said, Belgium had given no offence and was innocent. That does not really affect the point, for necessity takes no account of innocence. But if it does, are not the women and children innocent whom we propose to slaughter? Everyone knows that in the unfortified towns of Germany, at the present moment, the mass of the population must be women and children. How can we hope to bomb these towns with any certainty that the women and children will escape? The certainty rather is that they will be killed or severely injured. We are aware that Mr Hall Caine avers that the women of Germany are all guilty, and he deliberately suggests reprisals upon them. This is not the only instance of the wild and unbalanced statements employed by the advocates of this policy. Can anyone believe that one twentieth part of the women of Germany know that London is an unfortified city? The German papers invariably speak of London and other places as fortified. Why is this done, unless it is to deceive, amongst others, the women folk? Are these poor deluded people to be held responsible for the acts of the military authorities? And what about the children? Are they to be considered guilty, too? It would almost seem so, judging by the outbursts to which the country has been treated by certain public speakers. Here is a specimen: "I have long felt that the bludgeon is the only weapon with which to speak to so debased a type of criminal as the German. I mean the kind of punishment which we administer to a brute beast." This advice might, or might not, be all very well if it could be guaranteed that the punishment fell upon the criminal. But it will fall upon

the children, and this is what some do not hesitate to suggest should really happen. And it *must* happen if reprisals are adopted. But where lies the relevancy in talking of what the criminals deserve and then executing vengeance upon the innocent?

We have said that if reprisals are once really entered upon there will be no stopping place. This is not a mere assumption, but is being already demonstrated. When the Germans first used gas the Government hesitated, and seriously considered whether or not it should follow suit. It decided to do so! Whether rightly or wrongly we do not now enquire. There is, however, one consequence which needs to be considered, that is we are now ready to go a step further. But supposing, for the sake of argument, the Government had steadily and firmly set their face against all methods that transgressed the unwritten laws of civilised warfare, we should not now be considering whether or not we should take a further step in contravention of the ordinary principles of humanity. Having decided at the outset we could not, the question would no longer have been left open. But matters being as they are, does it not follow that it is easier for the Government now to adopt a definite policy of reprisals, and that if it does we shall rapidly descend the inclined plane upon which we have ventured, and it will become quite impossible to discriminate as to the kind of atrocity that will, or will not, be committed? For it is absolutely certain—following an inevitable law—that each outrage committed makes the next one easier, and less repulsive. How far are the Government and the nation prepared to go? For half-hearted reprisals would be worse than anything.*

The plea is made use of that reprisals are the only argument Germany will listen to, and are the only way to stop her bombing our unfortified towns. It seems taken for granted in some quarters that reprisals will succeed. This is pure assumption. We have not seen suggested one single reason why Germany, be-

*There is, of course, one considerable difference between the introduction of gas and what is now being demanded. Gas is confined to the actual combatants. What is now proposed is the infliction of death or injuries upon helpless civilians.

ing what she is, should be cowed by such a course and made to alter her tactics. On the contrary, it seems to us more than likely to have the very opposite effect. Is the German military party going to revise its methods because women and children are killed by our bombs? Is not the effect more likely to be this, that the other women and children of Germany will be driven more into the arms of the military caste, and become instilled with an even deeper hatred of England, which will continue to enflame them after the war is over?

While no one can decide *absolutely* what the effect will be, we *can* decide as to the right or wrong of the matter. The other rests upon mere probability, and the probabilities seem to point in the direction of non-success. We have recently bombed at least one unfortified German town, killing women and children, and have inflicted great damage on several fortified bases. Has this stopped Germany? On the contrary, her answer has been the recent disastrous raids on London and Folkestone.

To sum up the reasons against reprisals.

1. In the main it will be the *innocent* who will always suffer. Women and children will be killed or injured on both sides. Mr Hall Caine likens the killing of German children to the law killing the murderer, thus inflicting suffering on his dependants. As if there could be any analogy between inflicting punishment on the actual perpetrator of a crime, which may entail suffering on others, and inflicting direct punishment on children because their parents have sinned—the parents the meanwhile escaping. We are amazed at the weakness of such reasoning, and if nothing better can be said, then the case for reprisals is a very poor one.

2. It gives Germany a free hand, henceforth, to commit any outrage she pleases under the plea of reprisals. Thus she will have, what she has never had before, a good excuse for her outrages. We have killed innocent women and children in Germany with our bombs, therefore they can now come here and kill women and children with theirs.

3. In taking the weapon of reprisals into our hands are we not by that very act depriving ourselves of one of our biggest assets in the war? We believe that we entered it with clean hands

and for a righteous purpose. If we fail to come out of it with hands just as clean and a purpose just as pure we shall be tremendous losers. We shall have gravitated more or less to Germany's level, and after the war that moral elevation we might otherwise have had, and which would have meant so much, will be lost to us.

4. The influence of such a policy on victory has to be considered. Can any special Divine assistance be expected if we are pursuing the same evil practices as our enemies? We may, of course, win in any case, but we shall not *deserve* to win if we copy German methods.

5. *Reprisals can have only a brutalising effect.* For us to give our consent as a nation to such a course would be fatal in its consequences upon ourselves. That acts re-act upon those who commit them is as true nationally as it is individually. Supposing Germany decided to murder all prisoners, and not to take any more, but kill the wounded on the battlefield, and we decided to do the same, could we possibly escape the brutalising effect of such barbarity? Mr Hall Caine has tried to make out that war and reprisals are one and the same thing. There is as much difference between the two as there is between a clean stand-up fight—say between Tom Brown and "Slogger" Williams—and the dagger of an assassin. Moreover, if they be the same, how is it we were at war more than two and a half years before the policy of reprisals became a topic for discussion?

6. *But apart from the moral character of reprisals are they not utterly futile?* They have been tried in the internal conflicts of our own country. During the Stuart period each party which got the upper hand persecuted the other which was down. Reprisals became the order of the day. Did either party stop the cruelty of the other in this way? Instead, bitterness only became more bitter, and rage more outrageous still. Reprisals never put an end to reprisals.*

7. The last reason against reprisals is that it *is too great a price to pay even for victory.* Let us keep our own souls. Let

*This becomes additionally clear as we study the history of the Highland clans.

there be some things we will not stoop to do, whatever may be the seeming advantages on the one side, or the evil consequences on the other. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart." Better even to be conquered by Germany than conquered by evil, for Germany can only enslave the body, or at the most kill it, and after that she has no more that she can do. If we enter upon a policy of reprisals we shall be depriving ourselves of a vantage ground that can never be ours again.

The other week, on almost consecutive mornings the newspapers contained accounts of two very different incidents. One was of a "reprisal" raid and the killing of women and children by British airmen in an unfortified German town; the other, of a British hospital ship torpedoed by a German submarine. On board were some German wounded, and these were rescued from a watery grave by British tars at the risk of their own lives. In our inmost hearts which account do we like best? Which appeals to our truest instincts? The answer will really be our verdict upon reprisals, and, be it added, upon ourselves.

The worst thing that could happen to us, worse a thousand times than being bombed, would be to become like Germany. May we be delivered at all costs from this. Let us "ascend into the hill of the Lord."

The gain *after the war* will be immense if we refrain now from reprisals. The restraint the nation puts upon itself will tell immensely in its favour, and will act like a moral tonic upon the whole world. And if anything is calculated to remove bitterness and cement friendship between the peoples of the two countries when hostilities are ended—and surely that has to be thought of—it would be the discovery by the mass of the German people that while their government pursued a policy of frightfulness Britain did not retaliate.

We cannot believe that this country is ready to bid defiance to the law of God and the law of humanity, and make Necessity its only rule and guide. But the danger threatens, and this it is which constitutes a real peril. It confronts us as an awful possibility. To allow Necessity to govern our actions would be the blindest atheism and be a return to Paganism pure and simple.

But this would be *German* through and through, and the very thing that has been denounced by us on a hundred platforms. It is the very principle which led to the war, and has governed it, as far as Germany is concerned, ever since. And now shall this country adopt it? If so, then Britain will have suffered a defeat more disastrous than could be inflicted on the field of battle, and more lasting in its effects.

If the nation would give itself to repentance instead of reprisals there would be some hope. If not, an even greater calamity than this war threatens it.

Only a Sea-Gull's Feather.

By WILLIAM LUFF, *Author of "Sea Scenes" Series.*

'Tis only a sea-gull's feather, as white as the whitest snow :
 So light it is gently wafted by the softest winds that blow.
 A trifle amid the shadows, where the old cliffs interlock ;
 But the God of the sea-gull's feather, is the God of the arching rock.

I gazed at that tiny feather, so perfect, so frail, and fair :
 So delicate in its beauty, and marked with such matchless care.
 Short lived, it had floated downward from one of yon white-winged flock,
 But the God of the sea-gull's feather, is the God of the arching rock.

Then I said, I am only a feather ! short lived by the sea of life,
 How fickle, and light, and worthless ! borne on by the winds stern strife.
 And yet there are proofs that tell me, whoever may dare to mock,
 The God of my life's light feather, is the God of the arching rock.

There are trifles that float around us, mere feathers they sometimes seem ;
 Yet fashioned to meet their purpose, with the skill that our wisest dream.
 God's hand may be seen in feathers, as well as the earthquake's shock ;
 For the God of the sea-gull's feather, is the God of the arching rock.

The Faith and The Flock

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Price 1d

“I will Come Again.”

The Personal and Millennial Reign of Christ.

Rev. xx. 1-6 ; xxi. 22—xxii. 5.

In chapter xix of the Book of the Revelation we see Christ coming out of heaven accompanied by His saints ; and the immediate object of that coming is indicated by the words, “ He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.” It is evident the time has arrived, long anticipated in many a prophetic utterance, for Him to take to Himself His great power and reign.

As a preliminary to this, we find that Satan, the arch-enemy of God and man—the great disturber of the peace—is bound, and shut up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years. His power ceases the moment God chooses to intervene. “ Thus far shalt thou come and no further ” can be said of Satan, as well as of the waves of the sea. It may be asked, Why was he not stopped at the beginning ? Why has he been permitted to do so much mischief ? To answer these interrogations fully would be to raise the whole question of good and evil. Nor is all the material at hand to enable us to come to a precise and satisfactory conclusion on the matter. The whole subject is, from one point of view, shrouded in mystery, and has its roots far back in the past, ante-dating the creation and fall of man. This we do know, Satan has been the tempter, the deceiver, and the adversary from the beginning ; from the beginning he has been a liar and a murderer. He abode not in the truth. What induced him to revolt against the authority of God and take up such a position of antagonism is only dimly hinted at.

This also must be said, that if God was to have creatures who delighted in His service and rendered Him willing obedience,

they must be free, and must possess the fatal power to choose whether they would do so or not. And God having bestowed upon His creatures, whether angels or men, this responsibility and privilege, He ever treats them accordingly. He will not *force* men to be good; He will not *force* men to love Him, though He will do everything to induce them to be and to do both the one and the other.

These factors have to be taken into consideration. While they do not solve the question of good and evil, or explain altogether why there should be such a being as Satan, they help us to expect a solution of these problems and enable us to wait in patience for God to work out His plans and purposes. What a presage of good lies in the fact that Satan is at last bound, and prevented for a thousand years from doing any further mischief! What a proof that antagonism to God and good does not pay, and also that evil will at last be arrested! If we could not look beyond the present we might well despair, and we may be thankful for a book which tells us that Satan will one day be bound. It shows there is a power capable of restraining evil. It reminds us that good will triumph, and that there is One stronger than the adversary. God will give man every opportunity to prove the blessedness of the beneficent reign of Christ, and of submission to His will. But after a thousand years of Divine Government under the hand of Christ, Satan will be loosed for a little season, in order that man may be tested once more, and reveal himself. Alas, Satan is only too successful, and he gathers the nations together for the final conflict.

But let us look at a happier side of the picture. As we see Christ coming forth to reign, we may well exclaim:—

“Hail to the Lord’s anointed,
Great David’s greater Son,
Hail to the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun.
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free;
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.”

We have a very distinct foreshadowing of Christ’s Kingdom in the last prophecy of Balaam (Numbers xxiv).

“I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.”

This passage contains the promise of a King, and the royal line is afterwards established in David, according to the words: “*And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee, thy throne shall be established for ever.*” (2 Sam. vii, 16). This is confirmed in Psalm 89: “I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David, My servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations” (v. 3 and 4, see also vv. 29, 35, 36). Again in Psalm 132, v. 11, we read, “*The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.*” Accordingly, when the birth of Jesus is predicted by the angel Gabriel he does so in the following terms: “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him *the throne of His father David*: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end.” Consequently, when Christ is born, the question is, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” And a passage is quoted from the prophet Micah in proof of such an expectation being a legitimate one. In this connection, it is important to notice the words with which Matthew’s gospel commences: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Thus Christ inherited all the promises made both to Abraham and David. For to Abraham God said, “And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, *and kings shall come out of thee.*” To shew how the thought of Christ reigning on earth is continually kept in view, we might quote Acts ii, 30. Peter referring to David, in his address on the Day of Pentecost, says, “Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would *raise up Christ to sit on his throne*; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ.”

All this shows that Christ’s reign on earth is the theme of Scripture from beginning to end; and this fact should be kept continually before our minds.

The intimation that Satan is bound merely, and that for a specified period, seems to indicate that the Millennium, glorious as are the descriptions given of it, will not be a permanent condition or one of absolute perfection. Sin will be suppressed rather than extirpated. Yet, for all that, we must not underestimate the blessedness of that dispensation, of which prophets have sung and spoken. What are some of its characteristics?

1. *“Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit”* (Isaiah xxvii. 6). Christ’s reign and the restoration of Israel are bound together. The blessing promised to Abraham, that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed, will be fulfilled. Jerusalem will be the city of the great King, the seat of His earthly administration, the centre of blessing for the whole world. “For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa. ii, 3).

Then the prediction of Isa. ix, 6-7, will be accomplished. “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 Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace 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 justice from henceforth even for ever.”

2. *War will cease, and there will be universal peace.* “And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa. ii, 4). Instead, we read, that “many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.” This will be the result of the Spirit being poured upon all flesh.

3. *The face of nature and the instincts of the animal creation will be changed.* “The lion shall eat straw like the ox.” All that is savage will disappear, and even the serpent will cease to be deadly. “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. xi, 1-9).

4. *It will be a time of plenty.* "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." And it is written of Him Who will then have universal sway, that His sceptre will be a sceptre of righteousness. "*He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.*"

5. There will no longer be any dark places of the earth, or habitations of cruelty, or idolatry, or ignorance, for it is written, "He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations." God's glory will not only arise upon Israel, but will radiate from them over the entire earth.

6. At that time, too, death is said to be swallowed up in victory, though perhaps not finally destroyed until the end. "*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*" In Isaiah xxv. 8, we read, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it."

Thus we see that the Millennial reign of Christ will be characterised by universal peace—war between nations will cease, and the savage beast will be tamed. All creation will smile beneath the benign sway of its Lord and Sovereign. The phrase, "A little child shall lead them," seems to tell us of the perfect subjection of everything for the time being to Christ, and that the domination of sin has been set aside. Want and ignorance will disappear; sorrow and tears will be banished. All these things, including even death, will, during that glorious epoch, be the *exception* instead of the rule. And it is interesting to note that, so far, all this beneficent change is in direct relation to, and the outcome of, the restoration of Israel. In every passage quoted reference is made to God's holy mountain, where His earthly dwelling place will be established.

7. But the Bible also informs us as to the position of the Church in its relation to the earth during the Millennial reign of Christ. In Revelation xxi, we are permitted to see the holy city, New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. In this

city we behold the answer to the faith and expectations of patriarchs, prophets, and men of God all down the centuries, though it far exceeds their anticipations. It is the heavenly Metropolis, the dwelling place of God, and lightened by His glory. Yet it is in intimate relation to the earth. "The nations of them which are saved," we are told, "shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it." Not only so, but this heavenly city ministers refreshment and healing to the nations.

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

This river proceeds from the *throne* of God and of the Lamb. In chapter iv. of the same book we read that "*out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices.*" There the aspect is one of judgment. Why the difference? It will be noticed there is no reference to the Lamb in chapter iv.—it is the throne of God as Creator and as sovereign Ruler and Judge. But when we reach chapter xxii, the judgments, for the time being, are over, and the throne becomes the throne of God *and of the Lamb.*" That gives another character to it altogether. Not only do the words "and of the Lamb" associate Christ with all the authority and supremacy of the throne of God, but that throne can now become the source of blessing to all mankind on the ground of what He Who is the Lamb once endured. What a change has passed over the face of everything! The water of life, the tree of life, the leaves for the healing of the nations are the product of the agonies of Calvary, and represent the blessing which will flow to a regenerated earth through Christ and the Church, and be freely dispensed. We can well afford to take a low and unnoticed place now in view of that coming day.

It has been thought by some that because the narrative proceeds to say, "there shall be no more curse" this cannot be a Millennial scene which is described. Does not another passage, speaking of the same period, say, "The sinner being a hundred years old *shall be accursed?*" But we must distinguish between

what is *characteristic* and what is merely *accidental*; between what is the *rule* and what is only the *exception*. The fact that "nations" are mentioned, and time, "every month;" also "healing," seem to prove that here we have not yet reached the eternal state. And beside, the words "no more curse," may have a future reference; just as God said after the flood "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake."

The Church is the seat of heavenly administration during the Millennium. "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." The people of God are being prepared for this exalted station now. Their trials, their sufferings, their conflicts and temptations are fitting them to be heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, and to occupy a supreme place in the administration of the universe. Christ's death, of course, is the ground of all, but we need a moral preparation as well.

If the City is the Church, why, it may be asked, do the names of the twelve tribes of Israel appear on the gates? Gates are the means of communication and of access and egress, and the very fact that it is on the gates that the names do appear suggests that Israel will be the means of communication between the Church and the nations. Thus there seem to be four circles. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple within the City. They are the centre and source of all. The Church occupies the nearest place. Next, we have Israel; and the outermost circle, the nations.

Lastly, it would seem that in the Millennium the physical universe will undergo a remarkable change. This is indicated even in the Old Testament. In Isa. xxx, 26, we are told, "Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold . . . in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people." And, again, in Isa. lx, 19, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day: neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." The same feature characterises the *heavenly city*."

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

This is repeated in chapter xxii, 5, "And there shall be no night

there ; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun ; for the Lord God giveth them light : and they shall reign for ever and ever." He Who at the beginning, before ever the sun was formed, said, let there be light, will Himself be the light of the heavenly Metropolis, and the presence of Him Who is light will banish all darkness. And not only so, but the Church will reflect that light to all the world. This resplendent city will become a luminary far surpassing anything before known. " Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." How can it be otherwise when it will be the vessel to display the glory of Him of Whom it is said, even in the days of His humiliation, when transfigured, "*His face did shine as the sun and His raiment was white as the light.*" All darkness will thus be banished and all evil with it, and we shall reign for ever and ever.

Such is the future kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, both on its heavenly and earthly sides, for it comprehends both—He Who will be Son of Man and King of Israel is the eternal Son, and will be the centre of the universe. " And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth ; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine and the oil : and they shall hear Jezreel " (Hos. ii, 21-22). " Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His Ancients gloriously " (Isa. xxiv, 23).

" 'Tis Thy heavenly bride and Spirit,
 Jesus, Lord, that bid Thee come ;
 All the glory to inherit,
 And to take Thy people home.
 All creation
 Travails, groans, till Thou shalt come.
 Yea, amen, let all adore Thee,
 High on Thine exalted throne ;
 Saviour, take the power and glory ;
 Claim the kingdoms for Thine own.
 Come, Lord Jesus !
 Hallelujah ! come, Lord, come ! "

(*To be continued.*)

The Holy Spirit:

For Gathering, Ministry, Worship and Consecration.*

By WM. BOUSFIELD.

READ NEHEMIAH, CHAPTER 8.

Verse 1.—And *all* the people *gathered* themselves together as one man into the street that was before the *Water Gate*.

Verse 3.—And he read therein before the street that was before the *Water Gate*.

Verse 16.—So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the *Water Gate*. Chapter 12, verse 37—And at the *fountain gate*, which was over against them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, even unto the *Water Gate* eastward.

In chapter 3 of this wonderful book we get the record of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and the restoration of the gates thereof. Ezra had been used of God in this very blessed revival, and now Nehemiah is brought in to bring it to a successful issue.

It would be a most fascinating study to follow the story of this work of restoration. The *names*, the *occupations*, the *relationships*, and the *groupings* of the various workers are all intensely interesting, both in the rebuilding of the wall and the restoration of the gates; also to notice the portions of the wall which each worker laboured at; but that, for the moment, is not our object.

After the rebuilding of the wall and the repairing of the gates, the spiritual life of the city became more normal and pleasing to God. A little glimpse of which we see in the verses we have read.

*Since the above was written the author has passed away to be with his Lord whom he served for many years with gladness and singleness of heart. The memory of the just is blessed; and he will be much missed. Many servants have recently been called home. May we, who are left, serve more faithfully a Master who richly deserves all we can do for Him and His.

I believe God intends the heart of every one of his children to be like a walled city, where he can dwell and be at home, and that the many gates or avenues to our hearts should be in good repair, and duly provided with "bolts and bars," so that every gate may be put to its own proper and distinctive use.

Alas, and alas! how often is the wall of separation and protection broken down and the "gates burnt with fire," so that the many avenues of the heart are unprotected and a prey to the enemy.

You will have noticed that when the people "gathered themselves together as one man," it was before the "Water Gate" (verse 1).

For *reading* and *ministry* of the word (verse 3), it was "before the Water Gate."

For *worship* and *thanksgiving* at the feast of tabernacles (verse 16), it was in the street of the "*Water Gate*."

And again at the *dedication* of the walls and gates, as recorded in the 12th chapter, it was "even unto the *Water Gate*," only, in this instance, the Water Gate is linked with the *fountain gate*, for a reason we shall see presently.

As each name of these 10 gates suggests a spiritual meaning, we shall, I think, be quite safe in saying that both the "Fountain Gate" and the "Water Gate" refer to the Holy Spirit and his operations in and through us.

Probably the "fountain gate" refers to the inflowing, "be ye filled (filling R.V.) with the Spirit," and the "water gate" the outflowing. "Out of his belly (inwards) shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii, 37).

The divine comment on this is that "This spake He of the Spirit." So we see, for the *gathering* together as *one* of the people of God (verse 1), it must be by the Spirit, who only gathers to Christ. For the *ministry* of the word (verse 3), the power of the same Spirit is needed; also for true acceptable *worship*, "They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

It is interesting to notice at the *dedication* of the walls and gates, the "fountain gate" and the "water gate" are mentioned together. We cannot minister in the Spirit, unless we are "filling" with the Spirit. There is so little outflow to God and to

others because there is so little inflow. If we are "channels only," we must be open at both ends, one for receiving and the other for outflowing. This is a tremendous truth and demands our most serious consideration. To say, we are gathered (implying a gatherer) to the name of the Lord. To say, we own only the guidance of God's Holy Spirit. To say, we worship only in the Spirit. To say, our lives are consecrated to Him, and that we live wholly in the Spirit, is not enough. To boast in an ecclesiastical position, when the power has gone, and only the shell left, is worse than useless, and does more harm than the "systems" we condemn.

These things can be demonstrated to all who have eyes to see. Yea, even the unbeliever coming under the spell and witnessing the Spirit's power in *gathering, ministry, worship*, and in our *consecrated* lives, will be compelled to say, "God is indeed among you of a truth."

Brethren, do not let us allow the blessed liberty of the Spirit to become the licence of the flesh, for that way lies disaster and death. The power of the Spirit is a living, real power, not a dead outward form, and we need it to-day as we have never needed it before. With spiritual armour alone can we meet the spiritual forces arrayed against us, only so can we be kept from becoming submerged, only so can we live the life of the over-comer.

Unsaved friend: Where will you find safety in this present world? A well-known business man of this city was recently riding in his motor car in the evening, when suddenly as he came to a sharp curve his eyes were blinded by the bright light of another car, so that he became confused, missed his course, and was hurried over an embankment to his death. Thus the very brightness of an earthly light proved the means of his destruction.

How many such lights are to be found to-day along the pathway of life; lights, which shine upon men only to blind their eyes and turn them to eternal ruin! O friend, may God open your eyes to behold our Lord and Saviour, who is "The true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," and who alone can forgive your sins and bring you home to heaven.—*Extract.*

Imprecatory Psalms :

Are they Christlike ?

By W. W. FEREDAY.

Both the Upper and Lower Houses of Convocation (Anglican) appear to be of the opinion that the Book of Psalms needs careful editing by modern divines. We are forced to this conclusion by their recent discussions. The question of reprisals against Germany occasioned the discussions. Ps. lviii. was particularly objected to by some because of its stern imprecatory language. Such language was declared to be "un-Christlike in character." To this it was objected that to "omit a righteous call for vengeance was not only to misrepresent Christianity, but to get out of touch with the moral feeling of the country." What the latter has to do with the wording of the Scriptures was not explained. It is surely conceivable that the moral feeling of any country might at any time be quite contrary to the whole tenor of Holy Scripture !

Such discussions raise a very serious question for us all. Who is the real author of the Psalms—David, Asaph, or GOD ? If the Psalms are merely human productions, then possibly the superior learning of this time might improve them considerably ; but if indeed they are divine productions, let men beware how they lay their unholy hands upon them. The Lord Jesus once declared, "David himself said *by the Holy Ghost*" (Mark xii, 36). Peter, speaking after the Lord's departure concerning the treachery of Judas, said, "Brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, *which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake* (Acts i, 16). There is no mistaking the purport of these utterances. Clearly, both our Lord and His apostle regarded the Holy Spirit as the real Author of David's writings. Do the recently assembled prelates and clergy believe this ? If they do, how dare they tamper with the inspired words ? But if, on the other hand, they do not believe in the divine authorship of Holy Scripture, their position as the professed leaders and teachers of

the people is a truly solemn one, and our hearts may well tremble for those who give heed to them.

The question is not only as to the imprecatory Psalms ; all Scripture is involved. The same claims are made for the Psalter as for every other book of the Bible. If the one is discredited, all are discredited ; if the one must fall, all must fall. Truly we are living in critical times when all that has been given to us as a resting-place for faith should thus be jeopardised !

It is urged that such language as " the righteous shall rejoice when he seeth vengeance ; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked " is un-Christlike in character. If it were meant that the language does not suit the attitude of Christ during this dispensation, it would be true ; but if we are intended to understand that it never could, under any circumstances, suit Him, the prelates stand convicted of the profoundest spiritual ignorance.

What does Rev. xix, 11-21, tell us of our Lord's attitude in the day of His public appearing, now so very near ? The language is highly symbolical, we admit, but no one can well mistake the significance of the symbols employed. He comes forth riding upon a white horse. This is suggestive of victorious power. Lowliness (as expressed in the ass and its colt) has been exchanged for warrior-might. His eyes flash fire, He is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, out of His mouth goes a sharp two-edged sword, and He treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. Isaiah lxiii, 1-6, strikingly agrees with Rev. xix, and there the Lord is heard saying, " The day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come . . . I will tread down the people in Mine anger, and make them drunk in My fury."

This language is remarkably like that of Psalm lviii, and it is predicted of Christ Himself ! What then becomes of the statement that imprecatory sentiments are " un-Christlike in character ?" Manifestly the day will come when the same gracious lips which once said, " Come unto Me and I will give you rest " will denounce in the sternest tones the enemies of Himself and His people.

The key to the seeming inconsistency lies in the different character of various dispensations. The Psalms were written in an age characterised by judicial righteousness. In that age God could use Israel as His scavengers for the land of Canaan, the inhabitants of which had become so unspeakably foul that the divine long suffering could tolerate them no longer (Gen. xv, 16 ; Lev. xviii, 24-30). The people must be exterminated root and branch. Israel's own safety demanded that the moral ulcer be cut right out.

But God is upon no such line in this age. The Only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, having come into the world, all the goodness and grace of the divine heart are now told out. Grace to men of every nation is now proclaimed, with wonderful forbearance exercised towards every manner of iniquity. This attitude of divine forbearance will ere long be abandoned, and wrath will burst forth from heaven. The Spirit's present counsel is, " Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish in the way, for His wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that take refuge in Him " (Psalm ii, 12, N.T.).

The Psalms not only speak of what was suitable for the age of judicial righteousness in which David lived ; they are also prophetic in their character, looking on to the great day of divine intervention in power, of which Rev. xix, and Isa. lxiii (quoted above) speak so plainly. Psalms ii, xlv, 1, lxxii, should suffice to prove this to the most cursory reader.

If the Prelates have no light as to the dispensational actings of God, it would be humility on their part to say so, and much blessing might result, to their own souls and to the souls of others. But the pride that mutilates and rejects what it cannot understand leads only to ruin.

Never was there such urgent need for those who fear God and reverence His word to be on their watch-towers as to-day. Under cover of the excitement caused by the present unhappy war, every form of destructive heresy is being industriously promulgated, new and old superstitions are being fostered, and much that is good and holy is being ruthlessly trampled in the mire. The Lord preserve the feet of His own !

Isaiah.

Chapter VI.—*Continued.*

Thus the vessel to honor is prepared for the Master's use ; now follows the commision, every step in which is filled with interest and profit.

Verse 8. *And I heard the voice of the Lord (Adonai) saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us. Then I said, Here am I, send me.*

The question is not addressed to the hosts of unfallen creatures of heaven, or would there not have been a chorus of volunteers from among those angelic ranks crying, "Send me, send me!" But no, they are silent. No Seraph now responds, no Cherub offers himself, since there is now a man who is not only "a vessel to honour," but who, being "purged," has been thus "sanctified" and is "meet for the Master's use." None of the

"Ministers who did His will,
Spirits of pure and living fire,
Who stood with outstretched pinions still
To execute His least desire"

could now be sent on this mission to sinful men: a man whose lips have been unclean alone can go to a people of unclean lips—may that be why *you* are left here, my dear reader?

Verse 9. *And he said, Go say to this people, Hearing, hear but understand not. Seeing, see, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and their eyes plaster over, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and they be converted and be healed.*

It is a strange, and indeed terrible errand on which the prophet is sent: To blind, to deafen and to harden; yet we may safely say at once that God never hardens hearts that would otherwise be soft, and that owe their hardness to His interposition. He does not blind eyes of those that would fain see, and apart from His interposition, would see; it is but the foolish blasphemy of men in their enmity to God that thus argues. Let us seek for illustrations both from nature and from Scripture that shall help us.

Have none of my readers ever carried a bright light into a dark barn on a dark night ; at once all the unclean creatures of darkness—the rats and the mice to whom darkness is alone congenial, scatter to their kindred darkness ; but the little birds, the creatures that are of the light, and of the day, fly *to* the light. The lantern comes into the darkness for judgment, and exposes the true state of all—what they really are, and what must be their natural place according to that nature. But the light of the lantern did not alter any of the creatures, only revealed them ; it did not turn what was otherwise clean into unclean.

Again, it is the same genial beam of the sun that *hardens the clay, that melts the wax.*

So it is, not wrath now, but “ *the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering,* ” that would fain lead to repentance ; which, being despised by the hard heart, results in increased “ *wrath in the day of wrath* ” (Rom. ii, 4, 5).

So, wherever Christ is proclaimed as filling all the need of sinful men, there is a sweet savour unto God ; but not only in those who receive it—it cannot be without effect on any who hear, for to those who reject, the savor of Christ is as “ of death unto death : ” it hardens.

So, it is Jesus Who is the full display of all God's glory—the *glory of an only begotten with a father ; full of* — what ? wrath ? Nay, “ *full of—grace and truth ;* ” it is He Who coming—the Very Light—into this dark world, simply manifests everything and everyone ; but by what means ? By strokes of active judgment ? “ Was it *thus* He made blind those who did see ” in John ix, 39 ? Far from it, it was by manifesting the works of God in mercy, “ going about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil,” and finally being lifted up on the cross of shame. When all such love is rejected, what *can* He do ? He “ hides Himself from them ” (John xii, 36). He, Adonai, Lord of all, rejects the nation that has rejected Him ; yet, even then, leaves it with a cry to every weary one to come to Him and He will give rest ; nor will He by any means cast out one single one who comes.

The poor nation of Israel has been blinded as a nation now for “ many days ” (Hosea iii). “ Jesus has hidden Himself from

them." They read Moses, but a "veil is over their heart unto this day." Nor until it shall turn to the Lord shall that veil be taken away.

But are we better than they? Does the present professing church, occupying the place of God's witness on the earth, claim any advantage over the Jew? It would be a vain claim, for He says to that very witness, this very day "thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." How dreadful the condition, to be all this and not know it: to be really poor and yet live under the delusion that we are rich; to be in God's sight "naked" and yet to be conscious of no shame; to be blind and not know it. Blind, and yet to say "We see," as those poor Pharisees in John ix, for they saw Him not at all, while he who had been blind could see in Him One without rival—the Son of God. Then test and see: if this world's glory attracts me, I am verily blind; if I see not such beauty in Jesus as to dim all earth's glitter I am altogether blind: if I am self-satisfied, it is the surest proof that my heart is hardened—oh, well for us if we hear His voice, and buy from Him the needed eye-salve that we may see; oh! do we not greatly need it.

But what has now hardened the nations of Christendom? Twenty centuries of longsuffering, and the music of the gospel sounding through those centuries. It is this grace despised, this love rejected that has brought the hardened Gentile very near to the same place of utter rejection as the hardened Jew—both are hardened by the very warmth of the goodness they have despised; it is a very fearful thing to trifle with love.

Verses 11-12: *Then I said, O Adonai, how long? And He said: Until cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses are without a man (in them), and the ground be utterly wasted, and Jehovah shall put men far away, and great shall be the solitude in the midst of the land.*

Here then is the future of Israel revealed to the prophet in answer to his submissive yet mournful inquiry: "How long?" An inquiry that, in itself, speaks eloquently of faith, for it recognizes that there must be a limit to Jehovah's judgments on a people who have still promises unfilled. To leave them thus would be quite impossible; Jehovah hath spoken; the only ques-

tion then is "how long," before His word is made good? We too may learn of the Prophet, for we, too, have a promise still unfulfilled, "*I will come again and receive you unto myself*" . . . "Lord, how long?"

But that limit will only be reached by that beloved elect nation, after its towns are in ruins, and utter desolation reigns in that land once called for its beauty "the glory of all lands" (Ezek. xx, 6).

So has Palestine lain for many days, but Jehovah, the covenant-keeping God, could never allow such an end as that. To leave what He once made fair thus "without form and void"—*that* were impossible, whether it be the original material creation of Genesis i, 1, or Palestine, or this earth as it is to-day, or these bodies of our humiliation—oh no, all must, at the end, be "full of His glory," and none of these do, as yet, witness to that glory in their present conditions. Lazarus, *in the sepulchre*, did not witness to the glory of God; but Lazarus raised therefrom did do so very clearly, and so shall all these when He has made them new.

Verse 13. *And yet in it shall be a tenth; and this shall return—this also again is given up to destruction; as the terebinth and as the oak, which, when they are felled, the rooted-stump remains thus the holy seed is the rooted-stump.*

So as to "Judah and Jerusalem" a tenth part shall return; not, of course, an exact literal tenth, but a tithe, expressive of the claim that Jehovah still makes on the nation: Jehovah shall have His tithe, which shall come back from their burial among the nations, and thus be a nation raised from the dead, "some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. x, 2).

These chapters give a beautiful foreview of Israel's course: in chapter v, the people, "alienated and enemies by wicked works," which are specified, are given up to the Gentiles. In chapter vi. it is the appearing of the glory of Jehovah—that is, Christ—that results in the same rejection. For the people are not in a state to take in that glory, and its display at His coming, as of the only-begotten of the Father, "proved that, not only by *works*—by what they had *done*, but by *nature*—what they *were*—

they were at enmity with God." Yet grace will still linger over them, and send a message which they still, as a nation, reject, and, rejecting, are confirmed in hardening, till the return from their scattering to their desolate land, where again they shall suffer, yet, through all, there shall be divine life, preserved in the holy seed, which becomes the new nation, nevermore to be separated from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Messiah.

F. C. J.

(To be concluded),

Reality.

"The first thing for us all is to be real."

"THE DIVINE ORDER," by THOMAS JONES—p. 308.

O Spirit! make me real!
 That, when I bow me at the feet of Christ,
 It may be with true penitence, unpriced
 In the all-searching Eyes:
 And when my faith in Jesus is confessed,
 My heart may truly rest
 In the great sacrifice!
 Lest I be vainly striving to conceal
 My hardness beneath words! Lord, make me real!

O Spirit! make me real!
 So when I stand to preach the Grace of Christ,
 That, at His Cross, souls may with Him keep tryst,
 My heart pleads with my words;
 Lest they conceal my soul's indifference
 That Mansoul, which by purchase is my Lord's,
 Be stol'n away;
 And I make but pretence
 To zeal: may my heart go with what I say!

WILLIAM OLNEY.

"Thy Hidden Ones."—PSALM lxxxiii. 3.

Saved from Death.—Coloss. iii, 3.

Secure from Danger.—Psalm cxliii, 9.

Solace in Distress.—Psalm xxvii, 5.

Strength in Difficulties.—Psalm xxxiii, 20.

Song in Darkness.—Psalm xxxii, 7.

Satisfied in Destiny.—Psalm xvii, 15.

J. M.

A Scripture Study.

The Second Beast of Rev. xiii.—Who is he?

A correspondent sends us the following query:—

“One point . . . I never can see is that the second Beast of Rev. xiii is the ‘Man of Sin’ of 2 Thess. ii. The latter man seems to me to be the King, or ‘little horn’ of the fourth kingdom who takes away the daily sacrifice and magnifies himself and sets up ‘the idol that astonisheth,’ according to our Lord’s prediction, Matt. xxiv, and Dan. xi, 31. The second Beast is the false Prophet, a subordinate person. The first Beast is the supreme one who claims worship as God. Would the Jews acknowledge an inferior one as their Messiah? I know there is a trinity in the mystery of iniquity—Dragon, Beast, and False Prophet . . . and this trinity of lawlessness is Antichrist.”

The “little horn” of Dan. vii. is to be identified with the first Beast of Rev. xiii, but not with the “man of sin” of 2 Thess. ii. This little horn represents the last head of the revived Roman Empire, for in Dan. vii, he is closely identified with the fourth kingdom. The question to be discussed is, the identity of the second Beast of Rev. xiii, and is he the same person as the individual referred to in 2 Thess. ii? We believe it can be shown that “the King” of Dan. xi, 36, the *second* Beast of Rev. xiii, and the “man of sin” in 2 Thess. ii, are one and the same person.

“The King” of Dan. xi, 36, is not to be confounded with the “little horn” of Dan. vii. The four beasts of this latter chapter are not in view in the former passage, where, clearly, it is the land of Palestine that is in view. Verse 31 confirms this. Who then is “the King?” Is he not a Jew, seeing it is stated of him, “he will not regard the God of his fathers?” Then, further, let us notice that the description of his doings accords with what is said of the “man of sin” in 2 Thess. ii. In Daniel it states, “He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods . . . he shall magnify himself above all.” The one outstanding feature of this King is that he exalts himself above God, and what is implied is that he makes himself God. Now, is not that exactly what is said of the “man of sin” in 2 Thess. ii? “*Who*

opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." The parallel could hardly be more exact. And if anything is wanting to complete the likeness, the words we have just quoted furnish it. This man sits in the temple of God as an object of worship. Where is the temple of God but in that very land—the land of Palestine—where the scene of the activities of Dan. xi. is laid?

One thing, then, is already clear, there exists a striking resemblance between the King of Dan. xi, 36, and the "man of sin" of 2 Thess. ii, and this personage, whoever he is, is not the "little horn" of Dan. vii, and, therefore, cannot be the first Beast of Rev. xiii. Then who is he? Let us see if he can be identified with the *second* Beast of that chapter. Our correspondent affirms that the *first* Beast "claims worship as God." We do not, however, see that stated either in Dan. vii, or Rev. xiii. Rather, it is said of the *second* Beast that he "causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first Beast." Now this gives the second Beast a religious character which is wanting to the first Beast, but is most pronounced with regard to "the King" of Dan. xi, and the "man of sin" of 2 Thess. ii. The first Beast truly speaks *against* God and persecutes the saints, as does "the little horn" of Dan. vii, but it nowhere says, in so many words, that he makes himself an object of worship. This seems reserved to be the work of the false prophet, who has all through a distinctly religious bearing.

But let us look further. Of this *Second* Beast it says, "*He doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do.*" And it is he who directs that an image shall be made to the first beast; he it is who gives life to it, and persecutes those who refuse to worship it. Further, we are distinctly told that his number is the number of a *man*. Now, is not all this in exact accordance with what is stated in 2 Thess. ii, when it says: "Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all *power*, and *signs*, and *lying wonders*, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." Do not the two

descriptions apply to one and the same person? Of both it is said they work miracles, and of both that they *deceive*. Moreover, their end is the same. The wicked one of 2 Thess. ii, is destroyed by the coming of the Lord, and so is the false prophet of Rev. xiii (see Rev. xix). Who can doubt, then, that the *man* of Rev. xiii, who sets aside God, who works miracles, who deceives all but the elect, is the "*man of sin*" who works miracles, sets aside God and deceives everybody according to 2 Thess. ii? There seems a probability then amounting almost to certainty that the second Beast who has "two horns like a lamb," the "*man of sin*" who sits in the temple of God, and "the King" who does "according to his will," and magnifies himself "above every god," are all one and the same person—the Antichrist.

If any further confirmation were needed that the "*man of sin*" in 2 Thess. ii, and the *second* Beast of Rev. xiii, are the same, is it not found in the fact of the "two horns like a lamb?" Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to who or what the Antichrist may be, scarcely any doubt that he is depicted in the former passage, and if so, how can we avoid the conclusion that the "*second beast*" of Rev. xiii, is the same person, when we are confronted with these two horns belonging to him, which signify kingly and priestly power? With such symbols, how can he be other than Antichrist? And what is the deception of Rev. xiii, 14, but the "*strong delusion*" of 2 Thess. ii, 11?

Far from being "a subordinate person" and "inferior" to the *first* Beast, as our correspondent seems to suppose, we are told "he exerciseth all the power of the *first* Beast before him." And although he may appear to be an adjunct of the Imperial power his influence and operations will be more subtle and far reaching than those of the last head of the revived Roman Empire.

We see from all three passages what a tremendous power Antichrist will yield in the last days, just before Christ appears. In some respects he may not be so prominent as the *first* Beast, but in reality he will have even greater power. There will be a fearful league between Satan and his two emissaries or coadjutors. The outstanding features of their short-lived supremacy will be, that the true worship of God will be superseded by an

utterly false and idolatrous religion, the mark of the Beast will be the only means of gaining recognition, and all who refuse it will be persecuted. Is it any wonder that Scripture should fix our attention upon the man who will be the agent of all this wickedness, by giving us a three-fold picture of him?

A Vision.

By HERBERT R. FRANCIS.

“Do you believe in visions?” said a man to a friend, “I do and no one will convince me that visions from the unseen are impossible.” The man who said this was a working gardener, a poor man as far as this world is concerned, but rich in faith. He was always about his Master’s business at the same time as about his own, and often spoke words in season, and, as some of his neighbours thought, out of season, too. While doing this and selling his garden produce, he went his way very often discouraged and depressed, for few seemed to care for eternal things, indeed were, as the world is, eager for the things that perish in the using. So our market gardener became depressed, and was tempted to give up his faithful ministry. When out on his rounds one day he thought particularly of one man as he passed his door; then he began to reason, “What was the use, they had often rejected his testimony,” and he decided certainly to pass on for this time. When eventually he did call at that house he was told that the man had died the day after he had had that inward prompting to go and speak to him about his soul.

On another occasion, it was laid upon him that he ought to go and speak to an old body; but it was a wet day and people might wonder, so he passed her door and went on—to have shortly afterwards a like experience in hearing that she too had passed away.

Now comes the story of the Vision. He thought his work on earth was done; his joy was great, for having known the Saviour for some time heaven was sure to him on the ground of faith. In his vision he had reached that glorious region. An angel came to meet him, and they passed on into this new sphere and suddenly

stopped at a magnificent mansion. Calling his attention to it the angel said to him "that is yours." With astonishment the man looked at it; it was indeed surpassingly lovely. But when, led by the angel, he entered the mansion, he noticed with much surprise that in the most magnificent room of all there were two great holes in the walls opposite each other, and he asked his guide what this meant, for it seemed to him very much to spoil all the rest of the gift. The angel answered, "Do you remember when you had an inward prompting that you ought to call and see a poor man, but you delayed a few days, and when you did go you found that he had died meanwhile. Some time afterwards you know that the same thing happened in regard to a poor old woman. Those two great holes in the walls must remain as memorials of lost opportunities."

Though only a vision this story has its lessons for saint and sinner. If children of God, how many solemn and direct opportunities have we failed to embrace? To those without Christ it affords a solemn warning that the time of decision may be put off until it is too late. This is the lesson of the vision—lost opportunities. With this good man it has been effectual, he has ever since been working in season and out of season for the glory of Christ's name.

"The loss of wealth is much;
The loss of health is more;
But the loss of Christ is such a loss
As no man can restore."

"Come unto Me and I will give you Rest."

"How great is this message to sorrowing, toiling humanity—great because of the immeasurable character of the need it proposes to meet, and greater still because of the greatness of Him Who utters it. Oh, to think there is One—the Highest and the Best—Who offers a haven to the surge-tossed, storm-smitten sons of men, a haven of perfect rest and perfect peace, the haven within His own sheltering arms and loving heart! In what other book than the Bible, or from what other person than Christ, does there come such an invitation to the weary and heavy laden?"

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“Why are ye Troubled?”*

By R. E.

“*Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?*” (Luke xxiv. 29.)

This question was addressed to a few men and women assembled under very peculiar circumstances, and in the midst of a great crisis. It was no new question even then, for trouble had troubled people long before, and the question might have been asked all down the ages, as it can be to-day. But it gathers new significance from the Questioner. The fact that it is Christ Who asks, “Why are ye troubled?” lends an additional importance to this ever present and ever pressing question.

Why are ye *troubled*? Might not that question be addressed to everyone at some time or other? is it not of universal application? It is not an irrelevant question to any one of us? The other day a revolution occurred in Russia which overthrew the existing *régime*, and deprived the Tsar of his power and position. When he was informed of what had happened, he is said to have thanked God. And why? It is reported that a little more than a month before when one of his ministers commiserated him on his tired appearance he exclaimed, “Yes, I have long been *sick and tired of everything.*”

“Sick and tired of everything!” and yet perhaps the wealthiest and most absolute monarch in the world, possessing so many estates that some of the houses he owns he has never slept in, and with stables full of horses he has never used!

Nor is the Tsar alone in his weariness. There are many others to-day who, possessing all that this world can give, are sick and tired. The world cannot give peace; it cannot save us from being troubled; nor can our own hearts.

But let us change the emphasis. “Why are ye troubled? What particular form does it take in your case? Trouble assumes some terrible forms to-day, and there are sufferers who

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think there is no relief. A mother wrote to us the other day with respect to the loss of her *only* son, a fine, promising young man, killed at the front: "Many thanks for your kind letters of sympathy and books. We have received a most terrible blow in the loss of our darling boy and life will never be the same for us again. I suppose time will heal our wounds, but nothing anyone can say seems to bring any comfort, because it cannot bring dear —— back to us."

Now, Christ does not say to *such*, "Why are ye troubled," as though he did not expect them to feel their loss. Those to whom He originally addressed His question, as a matter of fact, had no need to be troubled, but He knows equally well that many have abundant cause to feel almost crushed by the weight of their sorrow. Trials are of various kinds, and some go very deep. We cannot deal with all of them like those British tars, who were saved from the "Laurentic" some time ago, did with theirs. She was sunk by a mine during last winter, in extremely cold weather, and the sailors lost all their belongings, besides being exposed to extreme hardship. A relief expedition was organised, and the men were brought to a large hall. "A piano was in the room when the men arrived, and although dripping wet, hungry, and cold, one of the sailors went over to the instrument and commenced to play 'Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag, and smile, smile, smile.'" Now this is the world's way, and it is *one* way, of meeting certain troubles: to make the least of them and to smile. There is a danger sometimes of magnifying our trials through self-consciousness and self-absorption. But as we have said, there are trials which go deep and which no earthly music can charm, and no smiles can scatter. They seem fixed, tied like a heavy weight to the heart. And yet we ought, if we are believers in Christ, to be able to smile *in* them, and in spite of them, and not be like that English King of whom it is said that when the news came of his son having been drowned at sea, he never smiled again. That mother, from whose letter we have quoted, may indeed never find life the same again, but the reason she did not find any comfort is explained in her own words: "Nothing anyone can say can bring dear —— back to us." She was occupied only with the loss, instead of looking to

God to bring gain out of the loss. There may be others who regard their losses or bereavements from that standpoint. Things can never be what they once were, and therefore they refuse to be comforted. Is not this to look at things too exclusively from one point of view? Is a life-long feud to be kept up between us and God? Is what He has permitted, to be allowed to darken our whole life, and sever us from the only source of real help? Are we thus to miss the lesson which sorrow is designed to teach, and be deprived of the blessing which grief, even of such a poignant nature, can yield?

The following sweet story comes from the trenches:—"A boy who had seen his brother's body broken before his eyes," wrote a chaplain at the front in the summer of 1915, after his brigade had been through an absolute inferno, "crept back into his dugout and fixed a little drawing on its wall. He drew a cross and a sunrise, and wrote the simple inscription, 'God is love.'" A cross and a sunrise! The cross, the symbol of love, and the sunrise behind it telling us there is no darkness to the soul that trusts, and that all will yet be well. If only we entered more into the meaning of these words: "He that spared not His *own* Son, but delivered Him up for us all," we should see that the greatest sacrifice we are called on to make is small in comparison with the one He has made, and the thought that God's heart has sorrowed and bled for us would stop the bleeding of our own, and heal the wounds, however deep.

Someone has finely said:—

"It is one of the great secrets in life, to make friends of our infirmities.

If we fight them they are very masterful. If we accept them they have a strange way of leading us to surprises of compensation which the Lord has hid in His marvellous mines. I wonder how much of the later and richer revelations in the letters of the apostle Paul might be traced to his acceptance of the thorn, and to his making friends with his sore infirmity.

"And as it is with infirmity, so it is with all the forms of commonplace suffering. If we fight our sorrows they add a cubit to their stature. Our antagonism feeds them. They suck their vigour from our resentment. And as they grow bigger in our eyes they tend to make us bitter, and bitterness has very deadly issues. Sorrow, which is resented, assumes command of everything. On the other hand, accepted sorrow sweetens everything, for the surrendered will becomes the channel of grace.

“But the acceptance must not be an act of despair, a surrender to the hands of cold and indifferent Fate. It must be an act of faith, a surrender to the gracious hands of the living God. We must accept our sorrow at His hands, and when the acceptance is made the sorrow is transfigured. ‘If this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.’ . . . ‘And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.’”

But there are other forms of trouble. Someone may feel outcast and alone; or the sense of having been wronged may be eating like a canker into the life. God’s Word gives us such a picture in Hagar, long ago. She was sent away, and deprived of all place and interest in Abraham’s household. She wanders off, and at length the water is spent in the bottle, and “she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she said, let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice and wept.” What a dreary prospect! She might well have said, life will never be the same to me again. She was ready to think that all was over, and to give herself up to despair.

But what happens? “And the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar?” The same voice was speaking to her that afterwards spoke to the disciples and said, Why are ye troubled? And so it would now speak to everyone in like circumstances. Did not the very question addressed to Hagar come as a reminder that there was One Who knew all about her, and felt an interest in her? Yes, there is One Who knows us, and knows all about us, however little we may know Him. And mark how He comforts: “Arise, lift up the lad, and *hold him in thine hand.*” As much as to say, See, he is yours still though you thought you were to lose him. It was an act of faith, and God always requires an act of faith before He blesses; and do not the words, “Hold him in thine hand,” carry our minds on again to that scene in the Upper Room? We hear the same voice and the same language there. “Handle Me and see” are the words with which the Lord comforts the downcast hearts of His disciples.

“Hold him in thine hand:” “Handle Me and see.” Is there

not a lesson here? We are afraid often to look at our troubles, and they hover like spectres around and over us. If we would only grasp them and look at them intently, not only might they appear less ominous, but we should see another form behind them, and we should hear a voice speaking out of the cloud, "Handle Me and see." As those disciples did so, their trouble ceased, and their joy knew no bounds—it was CHRIST! They had recovered all. Why has God allowed your grief, your loneliness, your loss? That you may find Christ. That out of the gloomy shadow He may arise as a bright Reality. If you are afraid of your grief, you will be its slave, and live in fear of it all your days. Grasp it, look at it, and you will find God in it, and it will yield you a blessing of which you had never dreamed.

So it was with Hagar. "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; *for I will make him a great nation,*" God says to her. Look at him, he is not going to die and disappear, as you supposed, but instead, not only shall he live, but from him shall come a multitude of others. "Hold him in thine hands." What a message to every troubled heart those words contain! Already to Hagar her child was as good as dead—she saw only the spectre of death. As she held him in her hands, and gazed with all a mother's love upon him, how changed the spectacle; instead of the child upon whom her heart doted dying under a shrub she sees a great nation.

"Ah," you say, "that can never happen to me, my boy is dead. He is gone from me, and will never come back." Ask, then, that God will do for you what He did for that outcast, forlorn woman of whom we are thinking—"And God *opened her eyes,* and she saw *a well of water.*" All you need are "opened eyes." He Who can make even the desert yield the means of refreshment and happiness can turn to account even your great grief and make it an eternal gain.

"From vintages of sorrow are deepest joys distilled,
 And the cup outstretched for healing is oft at Marah filled:
 God leads to joy through weeping; to quietness through strife;
 Through yielding unto conquest; through death to endless life.
 Be still! He hath enrolled thee for the kingdom and the crown;
 Be silent! let Him mould thee, Who calleth thee His own."

“ Be silent to God and let Him *mould* thee ” (Ps. xxxvii. 7). Herein lies the great secret of suffering—it has a purpose. God has a work to do in His people—He is moulding them. And suffering is the furnace to purify, and the sharp edge of the chisel and blow of the hammer which are producing the fair outline which God is seeking.

“ The story is told of a young and struggling sculptor in Paris, who, fired with some inward vision of beauty, set forth to embody the same in clay. By the time the beautiful figure stood complete, his resources were gone, and mid winter was upon him. The nights grew colder and colder, and his attic in the roof was little better than the open air. What would happen if the frost struck in, and penetrated the plaster, and split into pieces all his patient labour? A new night came on, bitterer than any before: but he had no fire, and could not afford one. What was he to do? It had become a choice between him and his art. Taking off his poor coat, he wrapped it closely around the ‘ sole heir of his invention,’ and so laid down on the floor by its side. Next day they found him stiff and dead. But the warmth he had for-gone had saved his statue, whose life he had put before his own.”

When we see how much a man is ready to endure in order that the image he is creating may be preserved, shall we not be ready to suffer in order that God may perfect His image in us? Supposing that young sculptor, instead of acting as he did, had in a despairing or petulant mood taken a hammer and smashed his work to pieces. Yet is not this what many in their thoughtlessness are attempting to do with God’s work? “ It is God which worketh *in* you,” we read, “ to will and to do of His good pleasure; ” and we rebel against His will, or think it all a mistake, and will look at nothing but the loss and the blank, instead of trying to discover the blessing. Sorrow enhances the sweetness of life and deepens its peace:—

“ The half of music, I have heard men say,
Is to have grieved.”

We heard, the other day, of one who had to endure the pain and loss of having his leg amputated. He told someone, after it was all over, he had given to him such a vision of the Lord that he was almost ready, in order to have such an experience again,

to go through the ordeal once more. It has been well said that "Whoso suffers most has most to give." If only we would recognise what sorrow can do for ourselves, and enable us to do for others, we should rather be ready to welcome it than repine.

"Measure thy life by loss and not by gain,
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured out;
For love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice,
And whoso suffers most has most to give."

Do not persist in looking at your trouble as a dark spectre. "Hold it in thine hand," "handle it and see," and you will discover it is not a spectre but a friend.

Why are ye troubled? Are you waiting for some deliverance, some help, which does not come? This, too, has its lesson. God's blessings are so good that they take time to prepare. "It is *good* that a man should both hope and *quietly wait* for the salvation of the Lord." Help did not come to Hagar until the last moment. The water was spent in the bottle, the child appeared about to die, and no prospect of deliverance seemed at hand; but all this was but the preparation of the ground before God could act. He must make room for Himself or we should not see Him. We are deprived of everything in order to see that the deliverance which comes is really His work, and thus He makes Himself seen and known.

"God the strong, God the beneficent,
God ever mindful in all strife and strait,
Who, for our own good, makes the need extreme,
Till at the last He puts forth might and saves."

"*Why are ye troubled?*" Is it the strife of tongues? Have friends turned into foes? Have the nearest forsaken? What comfort may be derived from some of the Psalms in these situations! What a promise is contained in Ps. xxxi. 20. "*Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man: Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*" Again, in Ps. xxvii., the Psalmist refers to enemies coming upon him, to a host encamping against him, and to war, but his confidence is unshaken, and he says, "My heart shall not fear." And the reason is because he is continually living in the

presence of God, and desires only one thing, to behold the beauty of the Lord and dwell in His house. "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall he hide me." Yes, in "all strife and strait" we may trust God for help. But we must seek it not in things, but, in Himself. We may even have to feel the deepest distress of all: "When my father and my mother forsake me." Will God fail us then? No. "Then the Lord will take me up" (v. 10).

Are you troubled because people have failed you, or turned out differently from what you expected? Christ says, "Handle Me and see." He will never give way beneath your touch. He will never fail you. The more you handle Him the more you will discover His worth.

Or is it the dark spectre of doubt which troubles you? Have you doubts as to God? Do you sometimes question His goodness, and wonder if He cares? Are you inclined at times to abandon yourself to the passing current and live only for the present? Does not Christ's question meet that, too? "Why are ye troubled? and why do *thoughts arise in your hearts?*" Those thoughts! how they trouble you, and what a dark shadow they cast across your life! But Christ has a remedy for all this. "Handle Me and see," He says. "I am not insubstantial or unreal. I am flesh and bones. Handle Me. I am not afraid for you to touch Me or come near to Me. I became flesh that you might know Me, and in knowing Me might know all truth." If only you would take firm hold of Christ, all would be well. It is because our grasp is feeble, as if all were unreal, that we find no satisfaction. Hold your doubts in your hand and look at them closely, and you will see how foolish they are. And then lay hold of Christ, and you will find how real He is, and that His Cross, towering amidst the gloom, makes all darkness light and solves all questions. Doubt is like the nettle, it stings only when you touch it lightly; grasp it firmly, and look at it in the presence of Christ, and its sting is unfelt.

The one cure for sorrow of every kind is a vision of Christ. "Handle Me and see." Only let your sorrow drive you to Him, and all will be well. He will "shine through the gloom." For

He Who says to you, Why are ye troubled? had once Himself to say, " My soul is *exceeding sorrowful even unto death.*"

Those words of old John Newton may well become a prayer upon many a lip to-day :—

" Quiet, Lord, my froward heart;
 Make me teachable and mild,
 Upright, simple, free from art;
 Make me as a little child—
 From distrust and envy free,
 Pleased with all that pleases Thee.

What Thou shalt to-day provide,
 Let me as a child receive,
 What to-morrow may betide,
 Calmly to Thy wisdom leave;
 'Tis enough that Thou wilt care—
 Why should I the burden bear ?

As a little child relies,
 On a care beyond his own,
 Knows he's neither strong nor wise,
 Fears to stir a step alone—
 Let me thus with Thee abide,
 As my Father, Guard, and Guide."

Influence.

· In a gun factory a great bar of steel weighing 500 lbs., 8 feet long, was suspended vertically by a very delicate chain. Near by, a common bottle cork suspended by a silk thread. The purpose was to show that the cork could set the steel bar in motion. It seemed impossible. The cork was swung gently against the steel bar, and the steel remained motionless. It was done again and again for ten minutes, and so at the end of that time the bar gave evidence of feeling uncomfortable, a sort of nervous chill ran over it. Ten minutes later the chill was followed by a vibration. At the end of half an hour the great bar was swinging like the pendulum of a clock. And yet ~~there~~ are people who dare assert that they exert no influence in the world.

If the Psalms are not of God, what then?

By W. W. FEREDAY.

We have seen that both Houses of Convocation regard the Psalter as capable of being improved by modern ecclesiastical hands, and we have already pointed out that if the Psalter may rightly be so treated, every other book of Scripture may well be treated in the same way. This means that in the eyes of these religious leaders *God has not spoken*. The writings of David and others are simply human productions, undoubtedly containing much that is of spiritual value, but open to revision and correction at any time to meet the needs (or fancies) of later generations. Indeed, it has become the fashion in recent years to speak of Shakespeare, Homer, and others as equally inspired with Moses, Isaiah, and Paul. One writer has even put the matter as strongly as this: "The Mosaic legislation had something of a barbaric character, and assuredly they are graceless zealots who quote Moses against the expounders of a wisdom which Moses desired in vain; because it was reserved for a far later generation, for these modern men to whom we may with accurate truth apply Christ's words, and say that the least among them is greater than Moses." We are thus "graceless zealots" if we prefer Moses to the Higher Critics!

The question we would now discuss briefly is this: What must be the effect of this kind of teaching upon the people of Great Britain (or of any other country) if it became generally accepted by them? Nay, we will go further. We are passing through a period of unparalleled wickedness and sorrow; and, in view of the fact that the degrading teaching to which we refer has been freely disseminated in Germany, Great Britain, and other countries for many years, we are constrained to inquire whether it has had anything to do with producing the terrible calamities which have fallen upon us.

A remarkable book lies open before me as I write. Its title is "Ithuriel's Spear; or, Is this Christianity?" Its writer was an Anglican clergyman, and its date is 1867—exactly 50 years ago. At that time the "Essays and Reviews," written by Temple

(afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury) and others, were prominently before the public, with other works of a like character. "Ithuriel's Spear" is a review of one of them ("Ecce Homo"), with various references to the "Essays and Reviews," etc.

Our author rightly says, "If the Scriptures are trustworthy at all, they deliver to us the commandments of God: and thereupon demand our implicit and reverential obedience. But if they are *not* trustworthy, they are manifestly the work of impostors—since they *profess* to speak with divine authority. The Scriptures, therefore, ought either to be implicitly believed and obeyed as the Word of God, or to be denounced and condemned as a wicked imposture." To such reasonable words we need add nothing but our hearty "Amen."

Now, clearly, if the Scriptures do not come to us with all the impressiveness and moral grandeur of divine authority, we are left absolutely without divine light and instruction at all. Every man thus becomes a law unto himself; the result, sooner or later, will be lawlessness and anarchy everywhere.

Our author plainly foresaw where religious infidelity would lead. We quote again, "Let the people of England, and the rising generation more especially, beware how they lend an ear to principles which, however decked out with meretricious and seductive attractions of seeming benevolence, clever writing, ingenious argument, and elegant language, are *essentially the principles of Voltaire*—and which, always and everywhere, in proportion as they are received and acted upon, will infallibly produce the same frightful consequences of infidelity, irreligion, immorality, and revolution.

Alison, in his history of Modern Europe, thus describes Voltaire: "He was no Atheist; had he been so, the mischief he produced would have been less considerable. No man who openly denies the existence of a Supreme Being will ever acquire a general influence over mankind . . . For popular rights he had no anxiety; it was *the fetters, as he deemed them, of religion*, which he sought to strike off the human soul." Is not this what the religious leaders of Britain are now doing (perhaps unconsciously) by their sorry work of dragging down the Scriptures to the level of an antiquated human production,

which we are all entitled to accept or reject, as our minds may dispose us?

We quote again from the author of "Ithuriel's Spear," "The truth is, that the work which Voltaire did in France a hundred years ago, is being done over again in England now. And the men who are doing it are the authors of 'Essays and Reviews,' and of 'Ecce Homo'—and Colenso, and Maurice, and Kingsley, and Dean Stanley—and the whole school of Freethinkers and Broad Church writers, in the Established Church as well as out of it. *They are shaking the very foundations of religious belief in the minds of the people of England.* For the foundation of all true religious belief is the Bible—and the Bible is the one great object against which the attacks of these men are directed. The pretence they put forward is 'the free handling of Scripture in a becoming spirit;' and under this pretence they carry on a series of attacks upon the historical truth, authenticity, and inspiration of the Scripture, the effect of which, on minds unable to repel the attack, must be to overthrow belief in the Bible altogether.

"And what must follow of necessity? The Bible is the only solid foundation of *morality*: when the authority of the Bible is overthrown, therefore, morality must fall with it. The result—the inevitable result—must be general corruption, the destruction of all sense of moral responsibility to God, and a breaking loose from all the ties of moral obligations which bind man to man, and hold society together.

"Next, there will never be wanting Rousseaus to follow up these demoralising principles, and apply them to social life. Then will follow the upheavings of the masses; and those who have been the suicidal authors of the movement will see the effects of their endeavours in the convulsions of all the elements of society, and in an earthquake which will shake into ruins the whole fabric of the empire. The Throne, the Church, the laws, the whole constitution of the British Government and British liberty, rest upon the principles which, in their turn, are based upon the Bible. Once let Britain forsake the Bible, and the hour of righteous retribution, by the very nature of moral causes and effects, will not be far off. These are not exaggerated fears or

visionary fancies : they are results *certain* to follow, if principles such as those of ' Ecce Homo ' shall ever be generally embraced in England. The tendency of principles is as invariable as the attractions of the magnet to the pole. History, therefore, continually repeats itself—what happened in France in the eighteenth century would happen again in any country in which the same principles should have obtained the same predominance."

Fifty years have passed since these words were penned, and the truth of them must be apparent to the dullest mind. A fearful responsibility rests upon those who have destroyed the fear of God in the minds of the people. Recovery need not be expected ; we are too far down the dispensation for that. The final apostacy comes on apace, with the stroke of God to follow. But may God mercifully preserve both reader and writer from the deadly principles which are leading on to this. We may well find comfort in the words of the apostle in 11 John 2. The truth " abideth in us, *and shall be with us for ever.*" " The words of Jehovah are pure words : as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Jehovah, *thou shalt preserve them* from this generation for ever " (Psalm xii. 6-7).

In view of the foregoing article, and of what it relates to, the following, from the pen of the late J. G. Bellett of Dublin, author of *The Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ*, will be read with interest :—

" Passages of the Old Testament cited, as they are, in all parts of the New, with many and many a glance, or tacit, unexpressed reference, link all the parts of the volume together, and give it a character of unity and completeness.

" This would tell us, that it is all the breathing of one and the same Spirit. Scripture itself announces the same. And again, the contents themselves speak also in this case. ' Their self-evidencing light and power,' the moral glories in which they so brightly, so abundantly, and so variously shine, witness that God is their source. And thus the Divine original of the Book, as well as its unity and consistency, is established. And we hold to these truths in the face of all the insult which is put upon them by unreasonable and wicked men—oppositions of criticism,

falsely so called, only spend themselves in vain, like angry waves upon the sea-shore. God himself has set the bounds; and these things only return upon themselves, foaming out their own shame.

“ In the progress of the New Testament Scriptures, the Lord and the Holy Ghost, in their several way and season, use the Scriptures of the Old. This is a sealing of them if they needed that. But it is so. It is God putting His seal on them *after they came forth*, as it was He who breathed them *before they came forth*.

“ Thus the Lord honours the Scriptures. What a sight! What a precious fact! How blessed to see Him in such relationships to the Word of God, that Word which is the ground and witness of all the confidence and liberty and peace we know before God.

“ If we have quotations in the New Testament of passages in the Old, so have we in both the Old and New, references to the eternity that is past. Scripture passes beyond its borders, as I may say, and is in the scenes and glories of the coming eternity—Scripture also retires behind its borders, and is in the secrets and counsels of the eternity that is past, unsealing “ the volume of the book,” and disclosing predestinations which were formed and settled in Christ ere worlds were.

“ Surely it is marvellous! But the Spirit of Him who knows the end from the beginning, accounts to us for it—but nothing less can. And the Book, as has been said, is a greater miracle than any which it records.

“ And blessed for us to know and to prove, that it prepares us for everything, for all that which surrounds us at this moment. Confusion and corruption may be infinite, but we have it all anticipated in and by the Book, to which we listen as the witness of everything to us in the name and truth of God. We need not be afraid with any amazement, since we have it. We may (if that be a holy action of the soul) ‘ deride,’ and not ‘ dread,’ the insolent infidelity of the day; and if we have grace, pray for those wicked men, that God would give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

“ And we may say of the Scriptures from beginning to end, one part of them cannot be touched without all being affected.

To use inspired language, 'whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it,' God has so tempered all of it together. And I may go further in the same analogy, and say, the uncomely parts have been given more abundant honour—as for instance, in the Book of Proverbs we get as rich and blessed a witness of the Christ of God in His mysterious glories, as we find anywhere.

"Yea, and I will take on me to add, if all other parts, like the members of the one body, resent trespass and wrong done to any part, so the Spirit will say of God and Scripture, as He does of God and His saints, 'He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.' I am sure of it. God will make the quarrel of Scripture His own quarrel. 'He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words,' says the Lord Jesus, 'hath one that judgeth him.' ('The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day'—John xii. 48.)"

The Book of Psalms.

By WALTER SCOTT.

PSALM 15. There are seven Psalms of five verses each, our Psalm being the first of the seven. The briefest in the Psalter is No. 117 consisting of but two verses; then there are three others of three verses each.

The Psalm now before us fitly closes the series (xi.-xv.) in which the heart exercises of the godly are developed flowing from the historical condition of things in the last days, stated in Psalms ix. and x. In the five Psalms (xi.-xv.) we witness two things: (1) an ever increasing career of wickedness—from bad to worse—culminating in Jewish national atheism and apostacy (xiv). But (2) such evil has had its divinely designed effect, and the godly Jews, few in number, in the midst of Gentile oppression, the machinations of Antichrist, and the open apostacy of the nation under direct satanic influence, with no human support, help, or refuge, yet these faithful ones cleave in intensity of purpose to Jehovah alone. What a needful lesson to us—a company under the most appalling circumstances cast only and alone upon the living God!

Further, the hope of deliverance from earthly sorrow by the godly Jew is bound up in the restoration of the whole nation to spiritual and temporal blessing (xiv, 7). This salvation for the two houses of Israel—Judah and Ephraim—comes out of Zion, for there Jehovah will set up His tabernacle and throne (Psalm cxxxii. 13-17; Jer. iii. 17).

Now comes the double question in the opening words of our Psalm, "Jehovah, who shall abide (sojourn) in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?" Who will share in the blessedness of Jehovah's holy presence, and security under His government? The remaining verses of the Psalm give the answer. It is a description of the practical righteousness of the godly under the law. The title to enter the kingdom is not raised in the Psalm. As another has said, "It is not *title* but *Character*," not the *ground* of admission to the kingdom, but *conduct* befitting it." The sermon on the mount (Matt. v.-vii.) is of a similar character, only more fully amplified as the kingdom in its widest extent is in view.

The very question supposes the land cleared of the Gentile foes which had caused such distress to the godly, as also the judgment of the ungodly nation. First of all, "*Jehovah* looked down from heaven." His omniscient eye searches Judea and every heart in it (xiv, 2). "*God* looked down from heaven" and searched Gentile lands to find "any"—not many—who sought after Him (liiii, 2). "God saw" and "God looked" upon the old world ere judgment was executed. Ere God poured out wrath upon the guilty cities of the plain. He not only looked, but heard the cry of wickedness, and came down personally to see, and execute judgment (Gen. xviii, xix).

DIVISIONS.

1. The Divine Question—verse 1.
2. The Human Answer—verses 2-5.

'FAITH AND SIGHT.' By H. D. Woolley, 16 Earls Hall Road, Eltham. Price One Penny: or 1/- per Doz., Post Free.

This pamphlet deals in an able way with a very important subject, and is calculated to help any who are troubled with doubts.

"I Will Come Again."

"The Holy Mount." (Matt. xvi. 28—xvii. 8.)

Christ transfigured—a representation of the Kingdom—Moses and Elias—the voice from the excellent glory—"Until the day dawn and the Day Star arise."

In previous articles we have been occupied with Christ depicted coming out of heaven as Conqueror, and with a description of His subsequent reign on earth. The Transfiguration, which is now to engage our attention, presents to us the glory and unique personality of the King Himself, with, so to speak, the inner and heavenly side of the kingdom. Before the kingdom is actually established we are permitted to witness a revelation of the majesty and supremacy of Him Who presently will wield all power in heaven and earth, and along with it, there is pictured for us our own part in the blessedness of that time.

That the scene on the Holy Mount was intended as a miniature representation of the coming kingdom, cannot be doubted. In every instance where the incident is recorded it follows immediately upon a distinct reference to the kingdom. The last verse of Matt. xvi. reads thus: "*Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom*" (cf. Mark ix. 1, Luke ix. 27). While one of the eye witnesses, recording the event long after, speaks of it as "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter i. 16).

Why does our Lord, in referring to what was about to happen, say "some . . . shall not taste of death?" Is He not contrasting His kingdom with death's dominion? Sin has reigned unto death. Every crowned head is lowered, every sceptred hand is palsied when the hour of death arrives. None can dispute his sway, or disobey his summons. But here is One Who can bid defiance to him. He can say of some of His own that they shall not taste of death until His pleasure. He would show them His kingdom first, in which death's sovereignty will be superseded. The characteristic of that Kingdom will be life, not death. Then will be fulfilled the saying that is written, "There

the Lord commanded the blessing, *even life for evermore.*" Death will be swallowed up in victory. We shall reign in life.

That word "some," too, has its significance. There will be those alive when the Lord comes who will never die. Death shall not touch them, nor the grave hold their mortal remains. They will be of that company referred to as "we which are alive and remain." The kingdom of the Son of Man, then, will completely change the present order. Instead of death, it will be life.

The Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Transfiguration was a brief exhibition—a brilliant, but passing, display—of "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is to come in *power*. His first coming, no doubt, was marked in this manner. He exercised the power of God in alleviating every distress and disease to which man is a prey. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with *power*." But at His second coming that power will be exercised in quite a different way. His enemies will be made His footstool, and evil will be suppressed. It will be power displayed in judgment and sovereignty. He Who, in the days of His flesh, retired before the refusal of the Samaritans to afford Him hospitality, and declined to press His claim, and would not accede to His disciples' wish to call down fire from heaven, will in the day of His power assert Himself and claim His rights. Let us not forget that the scene in the Holy Mount was a visible manifestation of His power and coming—i. e., a coming characterised by power—a power before which his enemies will quail, and to which everything will yield.

But the Apostle Peter further interprets the scene as a revelation of Christ's *majesty*. He was transfigured before them. This is the only recorded occasion, as far as we remember, when the usual outward appearance of Christ was altered. This fact alone makes it an occasion of great importance. Beneath that lowly form, the outward guise of which did not appear to differentiate Him from others, there lay a personal glory which was only veiled, and could on occasion manifest itself. On that Holy Mount, for a brief period, the veil was pierced, and a transcendent glory suffused everything. "*His face did shine as the*

sun, and His raiment was white as the light," thus displaying supreme majesty on the one hand and unsullied purity on the other. Behold, then, the King—the One Who is yet to reign as earth's Sovereign and Lord! As the sun rules the day, and sheds its beneficent influence everywhere, imparting life and health, and banishing darkness, so will Christ one day enlighten this scene of desolation and death, and illuminate all things.

"All taint of sin will be removed,
All evil done away."

Pure as the light, His kingdom will never know corruption or be tainted with injustice. Of Him it is spoken—"A King shall reign in righteousness." He will be the enemy of all evil, the friend of the poor, and the benefactor of the oppressed. How seldom, even in a small degree, have these two qualities been combined in any earthly potentate. Those who have possessed power have often abused it; while others who sought, perhaps, to do right, have not always had the power to give effect to their wishes. In Christ, for the first time, power and purity will be combined in unlimited measure, and there will be perfect equipoise. In Psalm xlv. it is written of this same one, "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O *most mighty*, with Thy glory and Thy *majesty*. And in Thy *majesty* ride prosperously because of *truth* and *meekness* and *righteousness*. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness." What a King! and what a kingdom! And all this was borne witness to on the Mount of Transfiguration. How blessed to know such a Person is, and that He possesses unlimited powers!

Moses and Elias.

Moreover, the two outstanding figures of the Old Testament are there to do Him honour. This display of the coming kingdom was nothing adventitious. It confirmed and fulfilled "the law and the prophets," of which Moses and Elias were the representatives. The "law and the prophets" were until John. In such language our Lord summarised the whole of the preceding dispensation, and both law and prophets spoke of Christ. Thus in connection with this glorious scene we have those who had passed off the scene, and others who remained, as represent-

ing those who should not taste of death. Christ's rule will extend where no other power has ever exercised sway, and even the empire of death will be overthrown. Here we have the witness that His authority and administration reach even to the unseen world, as He himself declared to John in view of taking to Himself His great power, "*I have the keys of death and the grave.*" Even Moses and Elias, departed saints, are summoned from the realms of the unseen world to attend the King in this display of His royal splendour.

No wonder Peter could say we "were eye witnesses of His majesty." But not only is Christ's own glory effulgent, but a voice from the excellent glory breaks the silence, bearing its own testimony to the glory and worth of Him, Whose kingdom in a future age is here foreshadowed. There is the vision of transcendent brightness, and there are Moses and Elias, death for the time being is set aside, and then to give finish to all, and to crown all, there is the Father's voice declaring its own delight in Him who had become man. The delight and love of the Divine bosom are made known. This lends a character to the scene nothing else could. "*He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory. This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.*" And Peter adds, "*And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the Holy Mount.*"

Is there anything wanting to complete the glory of the scene? A kingdom in which death can have no place, for Christ's words have come true, "*There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.*" There are departed saints there witnessing to the same power; there is the majesty and holiness of Him Who is the centre of the scene, and in Whose honour all is done; and, lastly, there is the expression of the Divine satisfaction in it all—a direct, divine testimony to Jesus—thus all is connected with, and receives sanction from, the excellent glory. From that glory, too bright even for the eyes of saints, One is heard speaking, and the testimony given is to the Jesus that we know, the very One Who died for us.

The Word of Prophecy made more sure.

And it is the light of this scene which is to fill our hearts *now*. "We have also the word of prophecy made more sure," says the Apostle Peter, in his comment upon the scene, "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." The momentary display on the Mount of Transfiguration of the kingdom in power was a confirmation of the prophetic word. What distinction is added to that word, and how important it becomes, in that light. Such a display was at once the foretaste and pledge of coming glories, and these very glories had been the subject of prophecy.

And yet even prophecy was distanced. For prophecy relates mainly, if not exclusively, to earth, and the scene on the "holy mount," on the other hand, is mainly the heavenly side, though of course including the other, as the greater includes the less. Earth was not cognisant of what was taking place, nor, in one sense, was earth even the scene of it. Morally it was outside of earth altogether, for all spoke of heaven. The company was heavenly, the atmosphere and the glory were heavenly. As we have seen, the company present represented the departed and living saints, raised and changed, there was the cloud of glory—there was the Divine presence and the Father's voice. Surely all speaks of the Father's kingdom, or, as it is termed elsewhere, "the kingdom of the Son of His love." The disciples were made conscious of the pre-eminence of the Son, and of the Father's love which rested upon Him. The fact that the Father speaks, and declares His delight, expressing what is in His heart toward that Beloved One, gives an infinite touch to the whole proceedings. We may well ask, how far have we entered into the scene, and into that expression of delight? It is the sum of all things.

In order to have no narrow views of the kingdom, as here displayed, we might remind ourselves of the way in which Mark and Luke refer to it. In Mark it is "the kingdom of God come with power." In Luke simply, "the kingdom of God." If we put all three together, we have, the Kingdom of the Son of Man, the Kingdom of God, and the kingdom in power. When we are touching upon kingdom truth, the thought of *power* is always

prominent, for no kingdom can exist without power, nor without the exercise of it. In this kingdom power will not only be supreme, but it will break in pieces and destroy all other kingdoms. Its force will be felt everywhere. And we do well to remember that it is the kingdom of God, as well as the kingdom of the Son of Man. The one is as wide as the other. It may safely be said, God has no kingdom where the Son of Man is not supreme (subject, of course, to God Himself). The kingdom of the Son of Man includes all things, for Man, in Him, is destined to have *universal* dominion. And this is why the kingdom of the Father may be said to be included in the kingdom of the Son of Man. *It is the heavenly side of it*, and is connected with Christ's own place as Man before the Father. He "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." He is supreme in every sphere. Such is God's wonderful thought for Man—all to be made good in the Man Christ Jesus.

On the Mount of Transfiguration—the holy mount—we see something of what the kingdom of the Father involves. Christ's face did shine as the sun. It is written, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Of the heavenly city it is said, "the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb" (N.T.). As if through His medium all the light of that scene will shine forth.

"God and the Lamb shall there
The light and temple be;
And radiant hosts forever share,
The unveiled mystery."

Further, Moses and Elias retire. They do not enjoy the nearest place, great and pre-eminent as they are in their own sphere. The disciples alone are found in company with Christ at last. Here we have a revelation of the ways of God in grace. Moses and Elias will have their allotted place (we have no thought of banishing them from the kingdom) but God has assigned to the Church a nearer one, and the "holy mount" seems to bear witness to these differences. We share the Son's blest place. And so, we "give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in

light. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into *the kingdom of the Son of His love.*" The Father would have us realise the meaning and intent of those words He Himself utters, until our souls have fully absorbed them, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." This was spoken of One Who was there in the midst of His disciples. And, further, such words tell us how near we are brought and how much we are loved, in the Son of His love, in whose Kingdom we have our special place. Thus the Holy Mount bears witness to the true nature of the Father's kingdom, and to the kingdom of the Son of His love, as well as to the kingdom of the Son of Man, in one aspect of it.

May the light of prophecy, and the light that shines from the "holy mount"—imparting a fuller, clearer, and more certain glow—and may the voice reaching us from the "excellent glory"—so cheer, and captivate, and illuminate our hearts, that already within them the day star may have arisen and the day dawned.

What a day will HE not bring to this earth Who was once greeted from the "excellent glory," which seemed, if only for a brief moment, to bring heaven and earth together? And what joys will be ours when we see that face in its own proper splendour—yet the same—and share His glories, and the Father's delight in Him for ever, in the kingdom of the Son of *His love.*

"I would rather be a servant of Christ writing to you about the grace of God than a Napoleon writing to Josephine. He was of this world—though one of the greatest—and it all came to an end—a sad end: God's grace brings life, peace, refreshment; like some glorious river it gladdens where it goes and fertilizes everything. Think what it means that God undertakes to be everything to a poor sinner who looks to Him for pardon through His Son. Grace is all that God freely gives through, and because of, Christ. The reason for it all is not in ourselves but in God. Christ is the reason of my pardon, my peace, my acceptance, the favour in which I stand, and every hope I have for time and eternity."—*Extract,*

Review.

THE MAN OF SORROWS. Price 1/3 net; 1/6 Post Free.

Messrs Pickering & Inglis have published, as a new volume of their series Every Christian's Library, the late J. N. Darby's valuable exposition of the Gospel of Luke. J. N. D. was perhaps the greatest exponent of Scripture that ever lived. He did the next thing to write it—he unfolded and explained it. In this particular line he was unrivalled. Others may have excelled him in style, in detail, and in their unfolding of particular subjects, but in his grasp of the whole scope of Scripture truth, and insight into its meaning, no one, except, perhaps, the late W. Kelly, approached him. He had not a popular style, and therefore the many have neglected him, but a rich reward awaits any who will carefully study his writings. It is impossible to say more for them than this, that the more anyone understands the Bible, the better understood and appreciated is this prince of expositors. Messrs Pickering & Inglis have been well advised in bringing out in a cheap but attractive form this simple yet comprehensive exposition.

The Gospel of Luke has a charm all its own. Nowhere in any part of the Scriptures does Christ seem nearer to us. All the attendant circumstances of His birth are given with more detail than are to be found in any of the other Evangelists. We are drawn at the very outset to look upon the Man Christ Jesus as a babe, and thus, irresistibly attracted by all that such a scene, so graphically portrayed, conveys to us, we are held until the final stage in that wondrous history is reached, and we see the same One Who had filled the manger at Bethlehem, with hands uplifted in blessing on the disciples He was leaving, ascending to fill the vacant place at the right hand of God. And, from the manger to the throne, what a story of grace this particular gospel unfolds. How can we forget the grace to sinners manifested and expressed all along the public path of the Son of Man as presented in chapters vii., x., and xv., all of which records are peculiar to Luke.

We heartily commend this volume to the attention of our readers. Here are one or two sentences taken at random:—

“My desire is to be acquainted with this, that I am one with Christ in heaven, an everlasting portion, that the Holy Ghost seals upon my soul, and would have me enjoy more and more.”

“Slighting God's grace fills up the measure of man's sin.”

“That lasts which feels that we are nothing and that God is everything.”

“The passions of the flesh will not harass us if we are walking with God. What trials we get when not walking with God, and thinking only of self! There is no such deliverance as that of having no importance in one's own eyes. Then one may be happy indeed before God,”

The Faith and The Flock

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Price 1d

Christ at the Grave; or, A Message to Mourners.

JOHN XI.

By R. E.

"She goeth unto the grave to weep there." John xi. 31.

"The Mourners go about the streets." Ecc. xii. 5.

To-day, how many possess a grave where they go to weep; or one which they can visit only in thought, for it lies far away in some foreign field. The mourners, too, go about the streets. A terrible catastrophe has befallen the human race. This has been intensified by the war, but it was always there. Sin has entered, and death by sin. And so we have these two mysterious facts—sin and death—confronting us, and many a one is bewildered and baffled; or tries to be indifferent, and to forget. To such, the grave with its mystery remains unsolved and unsolvable. It keeps its dark secret—"man goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the streets."

Yet the grave has witnessed one of the brightest and most glorious scenes ever thrown upon the canvas of human history. It has been the occasion of a revelation—a revelation of God—which should make us wonder and adore. Out of the eater has come forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness, for the shadows of death have been illuminated. Sorrow has been turned into joy, and defeat into triumph.

The record of this is found in the Gospel according to John, chapter xi., and is connected with the raising of Lazarus. The chapter begins, "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha." In that town of Bethany there lived this family of three, and into its circle

Jesus had often been welcomed. There, if anywhere, He had found a home, and for this reason, we might have looked upon it, perhaps, as a charmed circle; and yet it is into this very enclosure death is allowed to enter, and claim a victim, snatching away the only and beloved brother. Not only is sickness permitted—death even is permitted. Why did not Christ intervene? Why did He not come? The sisters had sent to Him, and He had received their message. Yet He tarries, and purposely stays away.

Was He indifferent? No. We read, "*Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*" Yet, He did not come. What an appeal had been made to Him—"Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." "He whom thou lovest." Yet He tarries two days, and during those two days Lazarus dies. How strange are some of the ways of Divine love! Things happen which seem to argue that there is no Divine love at all—only a blind, unfeeling force at the back of things. The heart seems to be crushed and broken, or turned into stone, beneath the seemingly ruthless blows which are allowed to fall. But let this be said at once, for the comfort of any whose hearts are bleeding, that Jesus must have given evidence of His love, for the message sent is, "He whom Thou lovest is sick." Christ, then, does love; and how much meaning lies within this fact. Whatever shadows might now have fallen upon that home in Bethany, it had been brightened in the past by the presence of the Saviour, and its inmates had felt that He loved them. Nor was it only Lazarus that He loved; all three, different as they were in temperament, had shared the same friendship. Proofs, then, were not wanting that He had loved them. Nor are they wanting in your own case. Can you not look back to the time when the love of Jesus was a reality? When it seemed to be manifested in so many ways—in your conversion and in all the blessing which followed. Can you forget when you first saw the Cross?

Yes, it was true, these sisters and their brother were the objects of His love—His words, His looks, His deeds, had made them feel that they were something to Him, and He was about to give them a greater proof of it than ever. And this is why He stayed away, and this is why the shadow of death was allowed

to cross the threshold of that home, contradictory as, at first sight, it may all seem. He was about to prove it in a way they had never dreamed, and in a way which would leave them infinite gainers, for they were to see and know Him, as they had never seen and known Him before.

But there may be some reading these lines who cannot say that they know Christ, or know anything about His love. To them God and Christ are but names which come up periodically at certain functions, but are nothing more than names with which to decorate certain occasions; they mean nothing to them personally. What are you to do in your sorrow, and where are you to turn? Oh, that you only knew that there is Christ for you as much as for others! Would that it were possible to speak the word that should reveal Him! God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself—revealing Himself in Him in order that man might know Him—and nowhere is that revelation more appealing, more commanding, or more arresting than in the incident before us. May we beg your careful attention while we seek to unfold its teaching.

Let us look at this history of the family of Bethany from three points of view; and we shall see in it, (1) THE LOVE THAT PERMITS SORROW; (2) THE SYMPATHY THAT SHARES THE SORROW, and (3) THE POWER THAT INTERVENES TO DELIVER FROM IT.

I.

1. *The love that permits sorrow.* Sin, suffering, and death were all permitted for a purpose. They are not evils over which God has no control, and of which He can make no use. They are not simply destroyers of happiness—they *serve a purpose*. This is what we are so slow to realise. As soon as Lazarus was sick, the sisters sent at once to the Lord tidings of the circumstance, their one thought being for the sufferer, whom they wished to be healed. This is natural, and from one point of view it is legitimate. What we need to remember is that the *getting rid* of the supposed evil is only one aspect of the case. Christ takes a wider view of the matter, and He would have us do the same.

When the message reaches the Lord, His immediate reply is—not, “I will come, he must be healed without delay, he must

not suffer another moment"—but, "*This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*" Are not these words worth pondering? "Not unto death"—"for the glory of God"—"that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." If Mary and Martha had heard such words, and understood them, would they, later on, have expostulated with the Lord on His tardy arrival? Where they saw only death, Christ saw an opportunity to reveal Himself, and in so doing manifest the very glory of God, and achieve their highest blessing.

Does not this utterance of Christ show us the use God can make of a simple circumstance? and also shew us that the more terrible the circumstance the brighter the glory with which God can invest it? "Said I not unto thee," were the words of the Lord to Martha at the grave, "that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God." How little those bereaved sisters dreamed that a special manifestation of the glory of God would be forever connected with their family history. And yet this could never have been had not Jesus tarried those two days.

And so we read, "When Jesus had heard therefore that he was sick, *He abode two days still in the same place where He was.*" How well He knew what He would do! He was completely master of the situation. And how well God knows the meaning, and the possible outcome, of every circumstance of our lives! Yet appearances were all against Christ. Why this inexplicable delay, if Lazarus was sick, and Jesus loved him and had power to do him good? Why abide two days still in the same place after receiving such tidings, and from such a quarter? Why should those anxious sisters, watching by the bedside of their dying brother, be kept waiting? Yet, there it is! Christ moves not one step in the direction of Bethany, nor does He send even a message! Oh, these Divine pauses, these Divine silences, how can we explain them?

Yet there is an explanation—but God alone can give it, and in His own time and way He always will. How little any of us understand His ways! The sisters could not understand why Christ *delayed* coming; and when He did go, the *disciples* expressed their wonder that He went. "The Jews of late sought

to stone Thee," they exclaim, "and goest Thou thither again." Christ was misunderstood from both sides, but until the right time, not even love on His side, or need on theirs, would draw Him from His place. When the time to move had come, no stones will keep him back!

"God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

Those "two days still in the same place"—can we understand them? They *seem* to argue that He does not care. He does not come, nor does He send. Can we not imagine what passed in the minds of those two waiting, watching ones at Bethany. Surely it is not difficult to interpret their thoughts by what our own have been under conditions perhaps not unlike theirs. Have we not known these two days? We have prayed, and there has been no response. We may be still in "the same place"—the same place of difficulty or danger. Or worse still, during the waiting the blow we feared may have fallen, and we seemed left to face it and bear it all alone. At such times, how we are tempted to reproach God; to think Him hard, and say to ourselves, He might have done better for me.

Was there no lingering reproach in those words with which Christ was greeted when He at last reached Bethany, however politely phrased: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died?" But if we do not permit ourselves to think that, there is at least the suggestion that they embody the highest conception of what had been expected. Yet, had the Lord come sooner, and had He done just what they wished, how much they would have missed! His glory would never have been seen, as now they were about to see it; nor would they have seen His tears. Those words, "Jesus wept," might never have been written, for succeeding generations to draw comfort from; and that unique exhibition of His power would not have been witnessed; nor would those words have dropped from His lips, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Yes, there is a love which permits sorrow, and Christ made no mistake when He abode two days still in the same place. Did the delay indicate want of love? Rather, it was in the highest interests, not only of those immediately con-

cerned, but of all mankind. And does not the remembrance of this help us amidst all that disturbs our minds and lacerates our hearts, and bows our heads in agonizing grief, that it is love permits all? May these dealings of God with that family at Bethany strengthen our faith and help us to believe that there is blessing at the back of the sorrow that has come to us, and to expect that it will be an avenue along which shall reach us a fuller revelation of God. Someone may reply, But God brought the lost one back in their case, but my loss can never be made good. No, but God has other ways of blessing and comforting. The great point even with Martha and Mary was not in having their brother back. The supreme lesson, the supreme gain, was that the bringing of him back became the means of a fuller revelation of Christ and of God. Death sooner or later came to that home in Bethany again; and took one or other away, but death could never take away that vision of the Son of God. And it is just in that way God would make up to you for your loss. Your heart bleeds, is broken, ties the most endearing have been riven, but God waits to make real to you those words of Christ, "This sickness is not unto *death*, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Do you say, How? The answer is, by faith in Him—by expecting Him to reveal Himself to you. And if you see Christ, as He is to be seen, and know Him, as He is to be known, you will, presently, even *thank God*, that your sorrow was permitted. "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

II.

2. But there is not only the love that permits sorrow, there is also *the sympathy that shares it*. Christ does not leave us alone in our sorrow. The Son of God is glorified by the sympathy He manifests. He has allowed the sorrow in order that He may share it with you. And this sympathy in sorrow makes even sorrow sweet. If love kept Him waiting in the same place for two days in order that Martha and Mary might have the fullest revelation of His glory, part of that glory would be in manifesting a love that would make Him partner in their grief. Ah, here is the reason why sorrow is allowed,

it brings Christ's sympathy, and His sympathy brings Him near and makes Him known. There is no call for His sympathy, unless we have been stricken. The Jews sitting with Mary in the house when she rose up hastily and went out, said, "*She goeth unto the grave to weep there.*" Little did they think that *Jesus* was going to the grave to weep there! He Who had just spoken of Himself as the "Resurrection and the Life," and had said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die," and Whose voice was about to wake the dead, He would mingle His tears with the mourners at the graveside. "Jesus wept." Those tears were the inlets to His heart, and the outlets of His glory, and revealed a fountain of sympathy just such as mourners need—a fountain which has its rise in the heart of God Himself. And those tears elicited from the standers by the comment, "Behold how He *loved* him!" Yes, there was no doubt about it now—He loved him. And they were about to witness all that that love would do.

The Jews were mistaken. Mary had not gone to the grave to weep there, she had gone to fall at the feet of Christ. And it makes all the difference whether we look at death in the light of His presence or not, whether we visit the grave alone, or in company with Him who shares our grief, and at the same time declares Himself to be the Resurrection and the Life." Death looked at in His presence changes its aspect altogether.

Bereaved one, do you know Jesus as the sharer of your sorrow? He permitted death to come to that home in Bethany, that we might see Him and know Him as otherwise would have been impossible. What gain is ours, and what glory is His, as He stands before us revealed in those tears. Can He be nearer than when He mingles His tears with ours, and shares our inmost grief?

With some, sorrow puts Christ at a distance. The other day, in one of our London parks, we overheard a lady unburdening her heart to a friend. Her conversation, which was in such loud tones as to compel others to hear (no doubt the result of her strong emotion) revealed the fact that the One Who saves and sympathises was unknown. She was relating how her husband had come back from the trenches shattered in health and a physical wreck—and then she declared in excited tones she would

take poison, and with an oath upon her lips she swore she did not care what happened. What a difference it makes whether we know the Son of God, as revealed in the chapter before us, or whether we do not! The one great overshadowing loss—the tragedy of all tragedies in human life—is for Him to remain unknown—the One Who loves with a love that is for all—a love that can sympathise—a love that has all power at its command, and is willing and eager to exercise it, if only we will believe.

III.

3. And this brings us to our third point, *the Love that delivers.*

The state of the dead is, owing to the war, engaging the attention of men and women more than ever before. If some were only as much occupied with what can be known, and ought to be known, because revealed, as they are with speculating upon what never can be known in this life, because unrevealed, their spiritual prosperity and peace of mind would be greatly promoted.

This chapter which tells us so much, and leaves nothing to be desired, as a revelation of Christ and of God, and in close relation, too, with the very mystery of death, tells us nothing of the experiences of Lazarus as a departed spirit. Now, if we believe the records of this chapter at all, giving us as they do a revelation of wisdom, love and power beyond all human thought, are we not forced to the conclusion that had it been for our good, something would have been told us respecting the state of the departed? Here was just the occasion for such a revelation to be made. Surely, the One Who could call Lazarus back to life, and unite spirit, soul and body once more, knew what was beyond the veil, and could have communicated it if He would. Yet He maintains absolute silence. Has He left it to twentieth century quacks to make good His omission? Are they doing what He might have done, but neglected to do, or are they attempting to discover what He of set purpose abstained from disclosing? May God's people allow the love of Christ, and the impressive silence of Christ, to teach them that nothing which is good for us to know, here and now, has been hidden from us. And therefore these unhallowed and unlawful attempts to pry into unrevealed

secrets of the spiritual world are mischievous and deceptive to the last degree.

The narrative centres, not on Lazarus, but on Christ; and it invites us, not to speculate upon the experiences of Lazarus during those four days of disembodiment, but to be engaged with the glory of the One Who is revealed to us as the Son of God. As He passes before us, we see divine love in every step of that wondrous progress. Love kept Him those two days still in the same place where He was; love made Him a mourner amongst mourners; and now the same love will lead Him to put forth His power to deliver.

There were those who said, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died." Yes, He could have prevented it, but He will do something even greater and more glorious. How ready we are to say with those Jews, *Could not God do this or that.* Yes, God *could* do many things, but we may be always sure that what He chooses to do is most for our blessing and for His own glory.

Before the final word is spoken, which shall call Lazarus back to life, another glory of the Son of God is revealed—we are permitted to see Him in perfect communion with His Father. And here, again, He thinks of us, for He speaks in order that we may believe. In fact, all that is done here is that our faith may apprehend Him, for that is our blessing. To hear Him speak to God, is to learn Who He is. "Father, I thank Thee Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always, but because of the people which stand by I said it, *that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.*" And then having spoken to His Father, He speaks to Lazarus. He is in touch with, and master of, the whole spiritual domain. There is perfect communion Godward, and perfect power manward. "And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." These grave clothes are not without significance, for they prove it was the same Lazarus, for the spirit had returned to the same body. And

let us never forget that this resurrection of Lazarus is a pledge and proof of the coming resurrection of all Christ's own.

What a combination of glories belong to the one here presented to our faith. And to discover Him is to find all the comfort we need, even if an open grave is beside us. Love, pity, and power are all combined. He declared Himself to be the Resurrection and the Life; yet He loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. He could call their brother from the grave; yet before doing so He would mingle His tears with theirs. He could say, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," and thus make Himself one with His disciples, and with the sisters at Bethany; yet He can equally say, "Father, Thou hast heard Me."

Again, we say, What a combination of glories, glories which tell us that He was indeed the Son of God. And as we see the love that permits sorrow, the love that made Him participate in it, and the love that led Him to put forth His power to deliver one of His own from the grasp of death, we may surely exclaim with Browning,

"To perceive Him, has gained an abyss
where a dew drop was asked."

To "perceive Him!" that is why this wondrous record has been given us. To perceive Him, and not to pry into mysteries that have been hidden from us. And how we can thank God that we perceive Him just where we most of all need to perceive Him—at the graveside and in the presence of death. There where our weakness and blindness are most felt, and the power of sin and Satan are most seen, we meet the Son of God. If He had failed us there, He would practically have failed us everywhere. But it is just here He wins His most complete triumph. And in place of the corruption and darkness of the tomb we are permitted to see the very glory of God.

And what is the glory of God? What meaning do these words, "thou shalt see the glory of God," convey to our minds? God's glory is what God is. God's glory is His goodness. When Moses said, "I beseech Thee show me Thy glory;" God said, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee." It is that goodness we see displayed in the scene before us. And what do we behold? We see love illuminating the very valley of the shadow

of death ; we see the mourner comforted, and we see death annulled. We see God taking His part in all that most afflicts the human family. God was indeed glorified, for He was displayed in every act of Christ. The love of Jesus for that family was the very love of God ; the sympathy of Jesus, when He mingled His tears with those of the bereaved, was an expression of the very heart of God ; and the power put forth was the very power of God, acting on behalf of man and reaching to man's deepest need.

Only let the mourner behold Him—only let the glory of Christ be seen instead of the gloom of the grave, and the heart will find true comfort.

The writer would take his place with the reader in the presence of that One at the grave in Bethany, and as we stand there together, may we perceive Him, and realise in Whose presence we are found. And as we do "perceive Him"—to use the words again already quoted—we shall realise the truth that once there stood by the side of mourners—and in the midst of a sorrowing and helpless throng of men and women—no less a person than the Son of God. One Who had all power, yet could enter into our sorrow. And as we see love, and pity, and power combined in Him as nowhere else, and all for our use and benefit, shall we not exclaim with all our hearts and with full and entire belief, " We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God, and eternal life?" And as Christ challenges everyone of us, as He challenged Martha, Believest thou this? may we respond as she did, " Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

" My God shall supply all your need." How good to be reminded that all we receive, and all God has to give is " by Christ Jesus." Our need is not the measure, nor ourselves the reason. But the reason is Christ and what He has done, and the measure—" God's riches in glory." Christ has enriched God by His obedience and sacrifice, and God enriches us.

Elisha, the Prophet.

By W. W. FEREDAY.

XXI.—LIFE OUT OF DEATH.

We have now reached the end of the gracious ministry of Elisha, with all its instructive lessons for the men of his own day, and for us also. "And Elisha died, and they buried him." But a remarkable thing happened a little later. "The bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the Sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet" (2 King's xiii, 20-21).

How wonderful are the ways of God! Contact with the dead prophet restored life to the dead. Even so will it be with Israel at the end. In one of His many characters the Lord Jesus is the Prophet like unto Moses, unto whom Israel should have hearkened when He came amongst them in grace (Deut. xviii, 18-19). Both Peter in Acts iii, 22-23, and Stephen in Acts vii, 37, urged this upon the people after His departure. National scattering and death have come upon them as the fruit of their rejection of Him. But Israel will yet come into contact with the Prophet like unto Moses. In the tremendous crisis which seems near at hand, compared with which the Moabite invasion was a trivial matter, Israel will be led into touch with the Christ who died. National revival will be the result, likened over and over again in Scripture to life from the dead (Ezek. xxxvii, 1-14; Dan. xii, 1-2; Hosea vi, 1-2; Rom. xi, 15).

Upon the same principle has God dealt with us who now believe in the Saviour. Contact with Him as the One who was slain has brought life to us who once were dead in trespasses and sins. It is labour in vain to proclaim Him to the spiritually dead as the pattern man, and the model Preacher, whose teaching all should follow. Nothing of this will meet the sinners' need. Expiation is wrought by blood alone, and life—eternal life—can only be our portion as the fruit of death. This is what the Lord taught in the synagogue in Capernaum, and which many, even of His disciples, declared was "a hard saying" (John vi, 60). The saying is no less hard for

carnal religionists of the twentieth century; but the true believer delights to say, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii, 20).

But we may carry the lesson still further. If Christ has through death become fruitful in life to others; in the same way may Christians become fruitful also. So the Lord Himself tells us in John xii, 24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The language here is purposely abstract. In its first application, the reference is to the Lord Himself, but in its more general application it refers to Christians also. We are all grains of wheat, and if God's garner is to be filled at the end, every grain must be fruitful and multiply. After the pattern of the parent plant, each grain must fall into the ground and die. He leads the way in the path that all should follow.

It is the practical application of death to ourselves. In God's account we have all died with Christ, and our life is hid with Christ in God (Col. iii, 3). This has to be practically applied daily, if we would be fruitful for God. We see this exemplified in the devoted Apostle. Hear him in 2 Cor. iv, 11: "We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." The result for others comes out in the following verse: "So then death worketh in us, but life in you." In so far as the man Paul was put out of sight and Christ manifested in his words and ways, blessing followed for those to whom he spoke. How is it with us? Are we spiritually fruitful? Are other grains of wheat being produced as the result of our presence in the world? Alas! how many heads must be bowed in shame when such questions are raised! Personal obtrusiveness in preaching, and fleshly indulgence in living, renders so much of our testimony null and void. God ever has had use, and still has use, for those who are willing to hide themselves in death that Christ may be magnified. Life out of death is the great lesson of the ages taught everywhere in the Word of God. May both reader and writer learn the lesson well.

(Conclusion)

Isaiah.

Second Subdivision of the Book: Chapters vii. to xii.

Main Subject: IMMANUEL.

First Section: Chapters vii. to ix, 7.

The Signs and the SIGN.

We shall now see the prophet carrying out that commission by which the nation of Israel was to be judicially hardened, and yet it is effected in such a way as to give the sweetest consolation to penitent faith, wherever it may be found in any individual. For here is the echo of that promise first heard in darkened Eden: the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head: since here we shall find the seed of the woman in the promise of the virgin's Son. Nor is it too much to say that on the fulfilment of this prophecy all Christianity rests, as a building on its foundation; destroy *that*, and the whole structure falls; a ruin. No marvel is it that to this very day it is the object of the most venomous attacks of unbelief; can we consider it too carefully?

We may divide thus, in two series of three sections each:

1. Chapter vii., verses 1-2; The historical setting.
2. Chapter vii., verses 3-9; The confederacy against David's house.
3. Chapter vii., verses 10-25; The Sign, and the consequences of rejecting.
 1. Chapter viii., verses 1-4; The sign of the child Maher-shalal-hash-baz.
 2. Chapter viii., verses 5-8; Immanuel and the Assyrian.
 3. Chapter viii., verses 9-ix: 7; The remnant sees the sign of the child "Wonderful."

1. *The historical setting.* The vision of the last chapter was given in the year that king Uzziah died, and therefore the year in which his son Jotham ascended the throne of Judah. This opens with Jotham's son Ahaz on that throne. Thus Jotham's reign of 16 years is passed over in absolute silence, for it was a time of comparative calm. Some one has well said, "happy is the people that has no history," and this was certainly true in this case, for the calm was due to Jotham doing "that which was right in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings xvi. 2). But with Ahaz,

history has much to record. Storms again begin to lower, for he "did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord as David his father" (2 Kings xviii. 2) whom he now represents.

When our chapter opens, two enemies, who have hitherto been acting independently against Judah, and with much success (2 Kings xvi. 6, and 2 Chron. xxviii.), unite their forces, and are advancing against Jerusalem. Tidings of this, have been brought—not exactly to Ahaz, but to "the house of David." Nor is this distinction valueless in the subsequent interpretation, for when "the house of David" is touched, Messiah (by whom "the sure mercies of David" are secured) is touched; and this always necessitates divine intervention, as we find here.

Nor is this an intervention induced by the piety or faith of the present representative of "the House of David," for he bears little likeness to the founder of that House, David himself, who sang, in a day of threatening trouble: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. xlvi.). Here, "like prince like people." All hearts are terror-stricken, tremble, flutter and sway "as the trees of the forest are moved by the wind," "looking after those things that were coming on the land."

That was surely a sad condition, but it has its sweetness for us too, since it sets forth the more prominently the rich sovereign grace that could intervene in such a faithless state; for the history in 2 Kings xvi., as well as the context here, makes it abundantly plain that Ahaz has his mind set on another deliverance altogether. In heart he is even now crying to Assyria for help; he believes an Assyrian army would be of far more practical value than any "pious," but theoretical dependence on "Providence," which is always, apparently, on the side of the strongest battalions, as a modern conqueror expressed it.

Isaiah is now told to go forth to meet Ahaz, taking with him Shear-Jashub, his son: and, with such detailed precision does Jehovah tell him *where* to take up his stand, that no thoughtful person can doubt the deep significance there must be in that place, as well as in his being accompanied there by his son who, we are distinctly told in chapter viii. 18, was a "sign."

But, as the lad neither did nor said anything, the whole

significance of his presence must lie in his strange name. Shear-Jashub means "a remnant shall return,"* and is clearly a link with the last works of the previous chapter; "yet in it shall be a tenth" (there is the remnant: "Shear") "and it shall return" ("Jashub"). So this son of the prophet is a sign of the fulfilment of Jehovah's word to the prophet, 16 years before.

By what "divers manners" did God speak in times past unto the fathers through the prophets! Not only "plainly," but by names that should at one and the same time make the ears of the careless heavy that they should not hear, and yet speak most clearly to the penitent and those longing to hear. Thus many an Old Testament saint may have had clearer glimpses of the Lamb of God, and of the destiny of his nation, in some (to us) unintelligible names, than we have any idea of.† Here let the pious Hebrew—let the impious king Ahaz, ponder and consider why this lad is standing there. His name cries aloud "a remnant only out of all Israel shall be saved." Thus the two words composing the name would each tell out a deeply interesting prophetic truth: *Shear*, "a remnant" only, a threat; *Jashub*, "shall return," a promise.

But does not this encourage us to look carefully at the place to which Isaiah was to go, and examine each word?

It was surely a place of good omen for faith, for it was exactly at the same spot, thirty years later, that the Assyrian stood when he threatened Jerusalem, and Jehovah answered him by 185,000 of his men being slain in one night.

The description divides into two parts: Isaiah is to go

1. to the end of the conduit of the upper pool;
2. to the highway of the fuller's field,

and what at once strikes us as most remarkable is that almost every word is capable of a double meaning, or significance. Let us consider them.

"To the end of the conduit of the upper pool." Isaiah is to go to the very end of the aqueduct: to where it pours its waters into Jerusalem, bringing them down from the upper pool to quench the thirst of the needy. Let us consider the words in their reverse order.

*Or, as Delitsch: "the remnant is converted."

†As we may see cases.

The word for "pool" is *berekah*, and is familiar to many Christian ears as having also the meaning of "blessing." This is really the *first* meaning of the root, but as *water* has ever been recognised as of the first necessity, its abundance, when it becomes a "pool," is a "blessing." The very word rendered "pools" in Psalm lxxxiv, 6—"the rain also filleth the pools"—is exactly the same as is everywhere else rendered "blessing;" so that we are not straining at all in hearing the alternative meaning of "blessing" in the word "pool."

But it is the "*upper*" pool, and the word *upper*, too, has a wonderfully significant alternative meaning. It is the exact word rendered over thirty times in the Scriptures by "Most High," as, for instance, its first occurrence, Gen. xiv. 18, "He was the priest of the *Most High* God." Surely, then, any pious Hebrew, hearing the words, would discern a double meaning in them, the popular one that required no hearing ear, *no faith in the goodness of Jehovah*—"the upper pool"; and the hidden one for faith to discern; "*the blessing of the Most High.*"

There remains the word rendered "conduit;" this is simply the aqueduct that conducted the water from the pool to Jerusalem, or the *channel* whereby the blessing of the Most High comes to those who know their deep need of it.

We know well that, through all dispensations, Christ the Lord, and faith in Him, is alone the *channel* whereby the blessing of God, whether under the name of Jehovah, Most High, Almighty, or Father, can come to poor, sinful man. He was the "conduit" at Sychar's well, and the waters of life flowed freely to that thirsting one, who, after drinking of this living water, thirsted, as once she did, nevermore. There is added "*to the highway of the fuller's field,*" and this we must also consider.

"The highway" is a path clearly defined by being raised up above the surrounding land, as this same prophet speaks: *lift up, lift up the "highway"* (*Ch. lxii. 10), and not only was it raised up, but characteristically it led upward, for in 1 Chron. xxvi. 16, it is called "*the highway of the ascent.*" Thus, if the "conduit" is the way by which the waters of blessing came *down*, the "high-

*Hebrew: *sollu, sollu ha-mesillah*. This shows again Isaiah's characteristic use of words.

way." is the path leading *up* to the blessing. "*A highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for these, the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein,*" chap. xxxv. 8.

Thus to the open ear of faith, the very word "highway" would have spoken then, and should speak now of that one only path in which God can meet with His people in blessing (see 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18), and well may we take up the words of the Psalmist, and say, "*blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the highways.*"*

But, further, this is the highway "*of the fuller's field,*" i.e., the field of him who washes garments†—who makes defiled garments white and clean.

Let there be the slightest touch of defilement; there could be no restoration to communion apart from washing the garments: "If he wash them not, he shall bear his iniquity," (Lev. xvii. 16).

We need only ask: What are the garments? We have one word that gives both the figure and the thing figured: "*habits.*" Just as we take these up day by day, so day by day we are making those garments that shall manifest us before God (see 2 Cor. v. 10).

These "garments" then bear close relationship to the "feet," that, in their walk through this defiling scene, need the work of Him who, taking the place of the fuller of the Old Testament, and in a love that could go no further—for He loved to the end—washed the feet of His dear people, saying to Peter—as the text quoted said to the Israelites—"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." He Himself is the true Fuller; and His "field" is the world, in which defiling scene His beloved still are, and because they are there in this "field," they need the "Fuller."

Now, no one questions there having been a literal pool, a

*Same word, Ps. lxxxiv. 5.

†This is strictly justified by the Hebrew word used. Out of four which are rendered "wash," that is here selected that refers to the cleansing of garments from ceremonial defilement, as Lev. xiii. 6, etc.

literal highway, and all the other details specified, *that* is not the question; but was it the final intent of the Holy Spirit simply to tell us *that*? Have we not, in the alternative meanings of these words a significance—clear and unstrained, and yet that has been quite overlooked: a significance that indeed shows this Scripture to be, as all others, “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”—may it prove so for us all.

F. C. J.

(To be concluded),

The Christian and Sorrow.

Romans viii. 18-39.

A very great portion of Scripture has been written in view of suffering, which may explain why the Bible means so much more to us in the day of trouble than at other times.

Sufferings contemplated in the viiiith chapter of Romans are the common sorrows of humanity. These the Lord Jesus Himself shared, although He possessed the power to heal. Here in the midst of a groaning creation the sorrows of the world affected His spirit, and He also groaned in sympathy. (John xi, 33-38.)

In chapter vii of this same epistle, the would-be follower of Christ suffers on his own account; in bondage to sin, he cries for deliverance, and ultimately finds salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. When at leisure from himself, and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ, he shares with his Master the sorrows of this poor world; he weeps with those who weep. (c.f. Romans xii, 15. James i, 27.)

There are phases of suffering which baffle our intelligence and test our faith. To trust God when circumstances are favourable is easy, but to do so when they seem to give a reason for distrusting Him is much more difficult. This is possible only when we know the love of God, which is expressed to us by the gift of His Eternal Son. Events speak with uncertain voice, but the vision of God in Jesus sets our souls at rest. His cross reveals the Heart which throbs at the centre of the universe, and we are persuaded that God is love, whichever way the wind blows.

The inspired writer also refers to *martyr* sufferings, which the early Christians shared with their Lord. The world may persecute the followers of Christ, but nothing, we are assured, can separate us from His love. "Nay, in all things, we are more than conquerors, through Him that loves us." (Verse 37.)

Suffering is a crucible in which character is refined; dross is removed thereby, and the Christian graces are brought to light. Faith grows in adversity, sustained and cheered by Hope, and Love is called into exercise. The moral gain outweighs the discomfort; "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us." And what is glory? Is it not the effulgence of God? Philip's request: "Show us the Father and we shall be satisfied," articulates the desire of every quickened soul—a request which is granted through the sufferings of Christ. God makes Himself known in the sorrows of Calvary, but our knowledge of Him is mainly objective, until we learn in the school of experience.

"In the desert God shall teach thee
What the God that thou hast found
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy—
All His grace shall there abound."

Thus circumstances, distressing and painful in themselves, subserve the will of God, and furnish occasions for the display of His love. And we are pleased to find that the world's misery does not hinder His purpose; that, where distress abounds, His mercy abounds also. Against the dark background of suffering He displays His bright designs, and when they are complete "He will bid the whole creation smile and hush its groan."

This viiiith chapter of Romans voices "the hope that springs eternal in the human breast," and gives it the language of intelligence. The earnest expectation of the creature awaits the manifestation of the sons of God, when creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption (vers. 19-21).

Meanwhile the unfolding of God's purpose to the Christian makes him strong to suffer. He is strengthened "unto all long-suffering with joyfulness." Abounding in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost, he triumphs even in sorrow.

Earth's Testimony to Prophecy.

It is many years ago that I heard Captain H——, long since with the Lord, say in reference to Zech. xiv. :—

“ When I was in the East on work connected with my position as Government Inspector of Fortifications, I took the opportunity of visiting Palestine, particularly those spots dear to our hearts because of some special connection with our blessed Lord in His earthly pathway.

“ I well remember going up the Mount of Olives with my Christian dragoman, as with bared head and glowing heart I recalled the wondrous fact that we were probably treading the very road along which the Lord travelled with His disciples on that last journey before He was taken up from them, and moreover the very spot upon which His blessed feet would again stand when, in accordance with His own promise, He returns. Together we (my dragoman and I) read the scriptures in Luke xxiv., Acts i. and Zech. xiv. and had happy fellowship together whilst speaking of Him, our absent Lord.

“ Naturally my thoughts dwelt much on the prophecy in Zech. xiv. and as I contemplated the scene my ‘ official instinct ’ led me to consider the probable difference in the contour of the country when that valley would cleave. Having an intimate acquaintance with geology, I carefully examined the surrounding district, and was deeply interested to find there was a narrow, deep vein of strata of a peculiar character stretching in the direction of the Dead Sea. Following this up I took the trouble to ascertain that it continued in the same form the whole distance to the sea, so that it would need only the slightest tremor of the earth to bring about the cleavage of that great valley to the sea, thus making a channel for the living waters to flow in accordance with the prophetic word.

“ I knew that were it ironstone all the way, the power of God could just as easily cleave it, but as I traced that vein of strata the whole distance, and realised that here before mine eyes was a present testimony to the readiness even of the very soil, waiting for that gentle shake when the purpose of God would be fulfilled, I can hardly express the deep emotion that filled my soul.

It was as though the Lord said, 'You see, My child, everything is quite ready for that day,' and I, oh, I shall never forget it, with tears rolling down my cheeks for very joy replied, 'Yes Lord, and through Thy grace, I, too, am ready.' "

In regard to the foregoing it might be added, faith rests in God's word and does not ask for material confirmation; but when, as in this case, it is given on the evidence of a spiritually-minded believer—one whose expert knowledge eminently fitted him for such an investigation, and entitled him to speak with authority—we just praise Him whose work like His word is perfect.

J. H.

Law and Grace.

Matt. xxi. 33-8; Col. i. 6; Rom. vi. 13-44—19-22.

"The word fruit occurs in each passage. God looks for productiveness. Everything in nature yields some return. Fallen man is the only unproductive part of God's creation, as far as God Himself is concerned. Yet He looks for fruit. The householder looked for the fruit of the vineyard, but he did not find it. God never got fruit from man under law. Col. i. is in contrast with this. Here the Apostle emphatically asserts there is fruit. And he tells us the secret of it. It is the productive power of *grace*. Law, was God seeking fruit from man as man, but man was unable to produce any. Grace is what God does, and is, to man, and there is fruit. As sure as ever we know the grace of God *in truth* there will be this blessed result. The heart responds to the love of God in free, glad service and obedience. For grace leads us to yield ourselves to God. We should never yield to anyone we did not know or trust. When we know God in grace we feel we can trust Him, and in response we give *ourselves* to Him. The grace which found a way to justify us, when we might have been condemned, the grace which led Christ to bear our condemnation so that God could maintain His righteousness and yet exercise His grace, and the grace which gives us a place of unmerited favour as the result of Christ's work—this grace tells us what God really is, not hard and exacting as He appears to be under law, but longsuffering and merciful and full of love, yet without abating one jot of His holiness."

Grain from Joseph's Granary.

By WILLIAM LUFF,

Author of "Is the God of all Comfort your God?"

SEVENTH SACKFUL.

CARD PLAYING V. BOMBS.—For playing cards instead of making bombs three youths were fined 30s each by Lincoln munitions tribunal. Card playing is bad when there is nothing else to do; but what shall be said of professing workers for God in the war against evil, playing, trifling, and entertaining dying men and women. Amusing them with trifles, when they should be handling God's bombs of warning and judgment. God's warning is—"Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord" (Hag. i. 4 & 9). "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand (Ezek. iii, 18).

* * *

A UNIFORM IN COURT.—If men will sin, let them not sin under a cloak of religion. "I regret to see prisoners in the dock wearing his Majesty's uniform," said Judge Atherley Jones at the Central Criminal Court. "I understand that when a policeman is brought before the Court the rule is that he must appear in plain clothes. I think the War Office authorities should take care that the uniform which is winning so much lustre elsewhere should not be degraded by being worn in the dock." We knew one man who was a thief and a robber, who wore a clergyman's suit. A professing Christian who does evil, disgraces the whole body of professors. Yet, let us learn to distinguish, and not refuse all mutton, because we see one black sheep. Even in uniforms there are good men and true. Between July and September three chaplains were killed, and fifteen wounded, ministering to the men. Let us not blame the genuine, because some unfaithful men disgrace themselves and the cause.

* * *

3,000,000 SHELLS FIRED.—An engineering expert thus estimates the number of shells fired in a bombardment of German trenches. If we take as the standard of comparison the French offensive in the autumn of 1915, in which, in the course of 72 hours, about 900,000 shells of all calibres were fired against the German positions, we shall not

over-estimate the amount of the munition expended this time (168 hours) by the enemy if we put it at more than 3,000,000 shells. Three million fired preparatory to one advance! Many sermons, tracts, portions, and Bibles, are being fired at Satan's trenches, and all should be as a preparation for a great advance. Wasted? Certainly not. Worth it. Certainly, "Yes." All that the Bible Societies, Scripture Gift Mission, Pocket Testament League, and others are sending forth, cannot, must not be in vain.

* * *

THINGS THAT CAN BE SHAKEN.—Among some new artists appearing in England for the first time one is described as the most wonderful balancer in the world, and his turn consists of a series of amazing feats, culminating in his poising himself on one leg of a chair while mounted on a forty feet high structure made up of small tables and chairs precariously founded on four liqueur bottles, a very thrilling turn loudly applauded by a somewhat gasping audience, every member of which had been forgetting to breathe while he remained balanced on his quivering pedestal. How many a life and hope is balanced as precariously, on things that can be shaken: on human opinions, works, feelings, etc. Let all such remember God has said, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. xii, 27, 28).

My hope is built on nothing less
 'Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
 I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
 But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
 On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
 All other ground is sinking sand.

Matthew xviii. 20.

" Where.....	In the Divine Place.
" two or three.....	Divine Testimony.
" are gathered.....	Divine Separation.
" together.....	Divine Fellowship.
" in My Name.....	Divine Authority.
" there am I.....	The Divine Centre
" in the midst of them.".....	Divine Presence.

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The Evils of Novel Reading.

One of the greatest hindrances to spiritual growth is the habit of reading light literature. This habit has prevailed to an enormous extent for many a day now, but it seems still on the increase. By "light literature" we mean what is ordinarily termed the novel, and we wish to warn every Christian, but our young readers especially, against the pernicious practice of novel reading, and to point out some of its evils.

It is our firm conviction that few things have contributed more to the present feebleness of the Church and the low spiritual standards and attainments of professing Christians* than the habit of reading such books. For to what do they appeal? The great mass of them do not rise above the flesh and the things of the flesh, and, consequently, they can appeal only to the flesh. It may truly be said of them, "They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them."

We are far from classifying all books, outside lesson books and the Bible, as coming under one head. We do not place even all so-called novels in one category. There are books which deal with matters of everyday life and our associations with others in a helpful way, though it may be in a somewhat light vein. A book of this description, recently read aloud in our hearing, was full of humour of the best and brightest description, besides being fragrant of country life. But there are a multitude of books passing current amongst Christians of a very different character, which never lift the soul God-ward, but cause it to grovel amidst the carnal and sensual.

The mere waste of time in spending hours over such books

*We use this term in its most comprehensive sense as including all who call themselves Christians.

is a most serious consideration, leaving out of sight, for a moment, the *positive* evil they may do. How many Christians neglect their Bible for the novel! If they read the sacred writings at all, it is only for five or ten minutes a day, while they can afford at least an hour for their newspaper or romance. Can anything but evil result from such a course? We are what we feed upon. How can we live for Christ here, and work and witness for Him, if we starve our souls? The majority of Christians to-day are spiritual paupers and starvelings; and the novel largely accounts for this.

1. First of all the novel tends inevitably to *dull the edge of our spiritual life*, and this renders so many Christians ineffective. They are like a razor that has lost its edge. It may look a good razor, and appear bright and clean, but it is of no use for the purpose for which it is intended. It is so with many Christians. They are of little or no use as *workers* and *witnesses*. They may teach in the Sunday School and seek to fulfil other good offices and help good causes, but there is an unmistakable absence of power and point about their lives and their service. We may not doubt their amiability and kindness, and desire to serve, but we do fail to discover the walk and witness which should characterise every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are razors—or in other words, Christians, so-called—but they are razors without an edge. And as from the point of view of a razor it is useless without an edge, so, from the Bible point of view, a Christian is equally useless if his work is perfunctory, and his witness a dead letter. Nothing so takes the edge off a Christian's life as does dabbling in certain kinds of literature, if he does it for his own amusement.

We are here to be *witnesses*. Christ said to His disciples, "When the Comforter is come . . . He shall *testify* of Me, and ye also shall bear witness." As the Holy Ghost is here for that special purpose, so must we be. (John xv. 26-27.) If we are not prepared for this, we are not fulfilling the function of a Christian. And if we are not willing to do what the Holy Spirit is here to do, how can we have His support and the sense of His presence? And without these we are utterly weak. But *witness* we never shall if we are under the influence of the novel. For the

simple reason, that, the novel is full of this world and of its spirit, and if we imbibe its spirit and come under its influence, how can we bear witness to the Christ it rejects?

Nor will the novel reader be a true *worker*. For the novel appeals almost solely to the imagination, and people are invited to live in an unreal world. For the novel does not present things as they actually are, viewed from the standpoint of absolute truth, and therefore seldom or never reaches the *conscience* in a divine way, or treats man as the Bible treats him. In the novels of the present day for the most part sin and death are treated from an altogether defective and unreal standpoint. How can it be otherwise when they are written almost exclusively to *please* men, and appeal to their *natural* taste and inclinations, instead of bringing the truth to bear upon the conscience?

2. Further, novel reading inspires a craving for the *sensational*, and makes people discontented with the *sober realities* of life. One conspicuous mark of the present day is the continual pursuit of new forms of pleasure and excitement. The novel only tends to aggravate this malady.

3. It vitiates the appetite, and leaves little zest for Bible study. It creates a false taste, erects false standards, and inspires false aims, and presents false views of life.

4. The habitual reader of novels lives in a polluted moral atmosphere. He may not realise the influence this has upon him, but the effect is certain, nevertheless, and leads to the most baneful results. It is as certain as the effect of a polluted atmosphere upon the body. A man may not have any particular disease, but his whole constitution becomes vitiated by the air he breathes, and which he drinks in unconsciously at every pore. Why do the men in training for the army look so healthy? They have been living in healthy surroundings, taking physical exercise in the open air, and drinking it in with every breath, as it blew upon them from the hillside or open plain.

In many novels God's name is often taken in vain, and the various characters are frequently made to employ bad language, and also give expression to doubtful sentiments. People cannot come into mental touch with all this without being contaminated. Very subtly, but very really, they come to think less of God

and His truth. Very gradually, but very surely, their taste and ideas become perverted, and their conscience blunted. It is as true in the moral sphere as in the physical, nay, more true, the atmosphere we breathe affects us. Both in one and the other we are daily being made (or unmade) by the air we breathe. For remember, if we live in a polluted atmosphere, we not only suffer from the effect of bad air, but lose health and strength for want of the good.

Someone may say, but the thoughts expressed in novels, and the words used, are only what we come in contact with in everyday life. Yes, but there is all the difference between being *compelled* to listen, because we cannot escape, and voluntarily seeking such an atmosphere of our own accord. Others think it advisable to become acquainted with human life in all its forms, and that there is no harm so long as you abstain from evil yourself. Which is like saying, it does not matter about living our physical life in a bad atmosphere, so long as we do not catch any actual disease or pollute it more.

Young people need specially to be on their guard, because they will often be asked, Have you read such and such a book? and they may feel a little "out of it" if they have to reply "no." Remember, first of all, that people who read bad books for their pleasure are not fit companions for a Christian. That a man or woman is known by the books he or she reads, is as true as that other aphorism—a man is known by the company he keeps. Books become as much our companions as real, living persons. Cultivate your friendships on this principle, and do not court the society of any who delight in, or are accustomed to read, pernicious literature.

Next, if you have had a book recommended to you, and after commencing it you find unlawful expressions, wrong actions condoned, or a slur cast upon what is holy and true, close it at once, and refuse to read another line. To go on, after that, is to go on with a bad conscience, and leads to your becoming accustomed to what is evil, until, at last you will cease to think it is evil. In the ceremonial law the Israelites were warned that if they *touched* anything unclean they would be "cut off" and unable to partake of the sacrifice in communion with God (Lev.

vii. 19-21). All this has an important lesson for us regarding what we touch. Not that we are now under the ceremonial law, but the importance of keeping in touch with God is as great as ever. And we cannot keep in touch with Him, if we are in contact with what defiles. Nothing is more sensitive than the soul's communion, and very little may interrupt it. Refuse everything that puts you out of touch with God. Nothing will do it more easily than books of a certain kind, and questionable companionships. Shun both at any price. Rather walk alone than have your walk with God interfered with.

Books may be divided into three classes, *good*, *bad*, and *doubtful*. Well for us if we are satisfied with the first—books which store the mind with useful information, or that inculcate lofty principles of conduct, whether abstractly or as set forth in the lives of others, or which appeal directly to the spiritual life. The test of the last is, do they exalt Christ and conform in every way to the teaching of Scripture. We must distinguish, of course, between what may be inadequate or imperfect, and what is obviously erroneous.

It is not easy to depict in clear outline what is, or is not, a *doubtful book*. They shade off sometimes into what is partly good, or, conversely, into that which is bad. But we think there are such books, and we, perhaps, have to determine our attitude towards them by reasons outside themselves; partly, by our own temperament, and the influence they are likely to have upon us, and partly, as to whether we are so situated as to have time to spare for such reading. There are certain books of a lighter kind which do good in their way, if taken in small doses, and there is the requisite leisure.

Bad books are those which present evil in a covert and subtle way, which cast a cloak over sin, or worse still, throw a glamour around it, and these should be dreaded and shunned like poison. The same treatment should be meted out to those which handle sacred subjects in a frivolous style, and present false views of death and eternity. There are hundreds of such books abroad to-day (and our free libraries make it easy for people to procure them) in which unclean hands are laid upon the most sacred themes, and upon the solemn issues of life and

death. The so-called religious novel comes under this heading. By this we do not mean stories in which some vital and spiritual truth is presented in narrative form, and handled with becoming reverence, but what is commonly known as the "religious novel." In nine cases out of ten, the authors know nothing of the Christianity of Christ and His apostles. Such books never awaken the conscience or create a hunger after God, they only appeal to a morbid religious sentimentality. One test of their character is that frequently they find their way to the stage.

In conclusion, we believe the present state of the churches, and of the religious world, is largely the fruit of novel reading. People are living in an atmosphere entirely uncongenial to spiritual growth and development, and their minds are imbued with false ideas regarding God, themselves, sin, death, and eternity. Is it any wonder that missions fail, and special efforts after spiritual revival are abortive? People are living in a world of the imagination which is utterly false, and they have no ear or taste for *the truth*. Instead, it becomes more and more unpalatable. Many read novels because they are clever, and genius is made an excuse for evil. The Devil is cleverer than any. It is to be hoped we are not therefore going to seek his company or accept his teaching. God has given us a standard by which to test everything, viz., His truth, and the question a Christian has to ask is not, is it clever? but, is it true?



May we have Himself, not His truth merely! For there *is* a difference, and there *may be* a distance between these, as experience tells us. May we reach Himself, through reading, or ministry, or prayer, or communion! We need more *affection* and *attention*, that we may have Him *personally*.

J. G. B.

The soul is the dwelling place of the truth of God. The ear and the mind are but the gate and avenue; the soul is its home or dwelling place. The *beauty* and the *joy* of the truth may have unduly occupied the outposts, filled the avenues, and crowded the gates—but it is only in the soul that its *reality* can be known. And it is by *meditation* that the truth takes its journey from the gate along the avenue to its proper dwelling place.

J. G. B.

Isaiah.

Chapter vii., vv. 4-9 (*Continued*).

The prophet, with his son (both of whom are "signs"), are standing before the king at this significant spot, and "moved by the Holy Ghost," he thus speaks and again in rhythm:

"Take heed and be calm, yea, fear not;
 Nor let thine heart be faint;
 For these two smoking torch-ends:
 For the wrath of Rezin and Aram—
 For the wrath of Ben-Remaliah.
 Since Aram hath counselled against thee:
 With Ephraim: Ben-Remaliah:
 'We will march against Judah—
 Shake it with terror; smash through it:
 Break it and take it, and make it:
 Set a King over it: the son of Tabeal.'

Thus saith Adonai Jehovah: NO!
 It shall not be done—it shall not be!
 For the head of Aram: Damascus,
 And the head of Damascus: Rezin—
 Three score and five years shall pass, and then
 'Tis Ephraim that shall be broken
 From (even) being a people.
 Ephraim's head: Samaria:
 Samaria's: Ben-Remaliah—
 If ye (too) be not confiding,
 Ye (too) shall not be abiding."*

This short portion begins with a warning against fear, and ends with a warning against unbelief. The fear then is that which is also seen in Rev. xxi. 8, as having the same bad relation, and as coming to a still worse end: "*But the fearful and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers—shall be cast into the lake of fire.*" Danger threatens, the terror it inspires is in exact proportion to the lack of fear of God (Matt. x. 28), the lack of

*The Hebrew shows the play on these words:

im lo taaminu

ki lo teamenu.

Delitsch paraphrases: "If Judah did not hold fast to God: it would lose its fast hold of the land."

confidence in His beloved Son. Is there One to whom all power is given? Has He loved me and given Himself for me? All power! All love! All for me! Is that indeed true? Look at the menace—my heart sinks. Look at the Cross where He hung for me—the Throne where He sits high, with all power—my spirit revives.

It was this test that confronted Ahaz—that possibly may, this very day, confront us and show where our hearts really are. Even false profession may pass as genuine faith in the sunshine of prosperity, but let everything seem to be against us—where are we then? The calm, or fear, that fill us, give the answer; and, if one may speak for others, well do we know in what sad revelations of our feeble state do these tests but too often result.

Ahaz sees two victorious armies advancing, Jehovah says, "No, they are really only two torches that are on the point of being extinguished altogether, they are only just smoking, there is no flame left." Will his eyes be opened by these words, or be the more fast-closed in unbelief? Will he see with Jehovah's far-sightedness? If so, he will need only to look forward 65 years, and one of his enemies will cease to be a people at all. "I know," says Jehovah, "I know their devices, they would put on the throne of David their own king: the son of Tabeal."

Now this name, as given in Ezra iv. 7, "Tabeel" means "the good God," but the very slight alteration not even of a letter, but only of one point, turns it into "Tabeal," which means "the good-for-nothing;" so He speaks of any who would rival the Son of David. Oh, what good names religious pretensions always assume—it is always the same, for so spoke the same spirit long after this, "*One is our father, even God,*" that is, we are the "sons of the good God." "No," is again the answer, "*Ye are of your father the devil,*" ye are sons "of the good-for-nothing."*

*Nor is it at all unusual for these names to tell out, even in themselves, the double story of creature-pretension, and the divine accounting of that pretension. Thus "Jezebel" means both "the chaste one," and "the dung-heap." "Babel" means both the "gate of God" and "Confusion": both words throwing their light on the religious pretension of our own day, headed up in "Rome," and the divine estimate of that pretension.

Will Jehovah allow the House of David, the Son of David, to us the true *Tableel*—the Son of God, to be set aside for the “son of a good-for-nothing?” The answer is a mighty *No!*

The next verses are admittedly difficult, but to “open ears” they might speak something like this: “You fear the confederacy; you consider it the source of strength; you are meditating in heart a counter-confederacy; well, then, look and learn its end. See the confederates in their heads; the head sums up all that they are. Thus Syria is focussed-headed up in its capital city, Damascus; and *that* may be seen in *its* head Rezin. When, then, you see Rezin, you really see all Syria. He is in league with Ephraim, shall he—*can* he—save his ally? Nay, for in 65 years Ephraim shall be smashed to pieces. So much for the value of this confederacy.

“But exactly so, when you see this base man, unworthy even of a name—Remaliah’s son—you see all Ephraim. Thy brother Ephraim: the ten tribes, children of the same father Abraham as thyself; yet, since he has accepted this man for his ‘head,’ nothing can save him from being carried away by Assyria (2 Kings xvii.), that is the end of the path he is walking; if ye, too, walk that same path—leaning on an arm of flesh—then ye, too, will come to the same end and be scattered.”

May *we* not learn the infinite importance of being found in the right Head (Rom. v. 12 to 21; Eph. i. 22).

(*To be continued.*)

“What the knowledge of God as Father, and the knowledge that He sent Christ means of blessedness and peace and joy—no pen can describe. It is a living in the eternal enjoyment of the love of God. And this eternal life—with all that it means—rests upon the work of Christ and the glory brought to God thereby. ‘I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.’”

We hope to continue the articles on the Lord’s Coming during 1918.

The Meaning and Message of the War.

"God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness."

—Prov. xxi. 12.

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

—Luke xiii. 3.

Germany will undoubtedly be beaten. There can be no question as to that. She has written her own doom, and sealed her fate, by the innocent blood she has spilt, by the outrages she has committed, by her defiance of right, by her cruelty, and by her crimes of every sort and degree. She has loved iniquity and hated righteousness; so that heaven is arrayed against her as well as the Allies. She will yet have to learn that there is One Who sitteth on the throne judging right. He cannot, and will not, allow such principles and practices, as she has adopted, to triumph. All we hope is that in her humiliation and defeat she will "come to herself," and turn once again to the God and the Christ she has forsaken. May she learn—may her people learn—even though the lesson be bitter, that there is something a great deal better than world-power; something to be preferred even to "Germany over all." There is that lesson for her to learn, which stands yet, in spite of the pride that disdains it, that to be greatest we must be least; to be chief we must serve. May she learn that contentment alone produces happiness; and that apart from peace there can be no true prosperity. If German aims at world aggression are thwarted; if her pride is laid in the dust; her redemption is still possible, if she seeks it at the feet of Christ. She may arise purified through the fires. In Luther's day she was valiant for the truth and led the van in the war with error and darkness. May it be so again.

Whether that result will be achieved in any sense nationally, or no, there yet remains the possibility of it for individuals. Many of God's children are to be found within the German nation, and our thoughts go out to them at the present time. We pray that light and healing may come to them. Perhaps some in bitterness of spirit may have to find their way back to the teaching of Christ and to the faith of their youth. Others, who have clung

to that, may become conscious of the grave departure from the truth throughout their country, and of the false ideas everywhere current, and, while confessing this, may be led to stand more firmly and uncompromisingly for the doctrines of the New Testament. Is it too much to hope that thousands upon thousands may come to see that Germany's philosophy and theology have been Germany's undoing, and that these are the two stems upon which have grown the bitter and evil fruit so prolific in this war?

We have said that Germany will be defeated. Yes, but what about the victors? Will they take heed to their ways? Will they learn *their* lesson? Flushed with victory, and, it may be, in consequence, swollen with pride, this may be harder for them than for their beaten enemy. Will they with smug satisfaction and selfrighteousness lay the flattering unction to their soul that theirs has been a righteous cause; that the war was thrust upon them, and they have no responsibility? And will they settle down once more to their business, their pleasures, their pursuits, and *their forgetfulness of God*? Is this to be?

What is the meaning of the war? On the *surface*, there are Germany's continued and secret preparation for war; her world aims; her violation of Belgian neutrality. But these are not the *real* causes of the war, for there was something else beneath them and behind them, which gave birth to such preparations and ideas and outrages, and made them possible. God had to be forgotten and His truth forsaken before all fair dealing and every right principle and proper human instinct could be trodden under foot. Material advantage—world empire—the lust of conquest—riches, power, the gratification of human passions—these had to be enthroned, before such a war, with such deeds, could be perpetrated. And all this could not be until Germany herself had become changed, by Christianity being dethroned, and its place usurped by a false philosophy and a mere human conception of God and of duty.

The Gospel Rejected.

What, then, is the meaning of the war, but that the GOSPEL has been despised and forgotten, and its message considered no longer of any account? It is that, and nothing less than that.

Had the gospel retained its hold of Germany this war would have been impossible. But is Germany the only land where the gospel has become known? or is it the only land where it is being forsaken? The strange and tragic sight we are called upon to witness is that all the countries involved in this conflict are the countries where the gospel has been preached, and where it has most of all made its home, at some period during nearly two thousand years. These nations are not only at war, but they are at war with *one another!* Could this have been if the gospel, with its message of peace and goodwill, of love and reconciliation, had permeated the hearts and minds of the inhabitants of these lands, and been cherished by them? All of these lands, particularly Germany, France, Italy, and England have been at some time or other deeply affected by the gospel, and it has been largely embraced by their various peoples. What then has happened? An increasing number in each country has grown up unaffected by its teaching, and, indeed, disaffected towards it. Do we realise the meaning of this? The Gospel is God's power unto salvation. It is GOD'S gospel—a message of peace and goodwill. His love, His mercy, His grace, His willingness to save, the sacrifice of His Son, His call to repentance and to faith, form the substance of its appeal. It cost Him the utmost to provide it. For the first time in the history of the world God is fully revealed; and this revelation has become a public testimony to all mankind. In such words as: "The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him:" and, "Who is the visible representation of the invisible God:" we are made aware of the character of the Christian revelation. And the words, "God our Saviour, Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," disclose the special character in which God is made known. He would have all men turn to Him; He is willing to save them. For this He gave His Son. It is this gospel men are refusing. To refuse such an overture, to decline to come to terms with God, to reject His offer, is not only to remain in a state of alienation, but to insult the One Who invites us to accept His proffered love and mercy. Need one wonder it is written, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

And yet men are neglecting all this—turning a deaf ear to it

—disregarding it, for the sake of pleasure and worldly advantage, and because of absolute indifference. The fact that God has loved them and that Christ died to save them is treated as if it were positively of no concern to them. Need we wonder at this war?

By others the message is corrupted or diluted. German theology has played havoc with the faith of multitudes. The Person of Christ and the facts of Christianity have been assailed by those who pose as friends; and the authority and teaching of the Bible have been undermined by its professed exponents. Is God indifferent to all this? If He has sent the gospel into the world—if it represents the high water mark of all He offers to mankind; if it concerns His beloved Son, and only became possible at the cost of His sacrifice: if it tells of a salvation which can be obtained through no other means, is He indifferent as to its reception? Is *He* going to be as indifferent as man about it? Verily, no. This war is one indication that He is not! If men will not have peace with Him, they shall have war with one another! If His love and goodwill are not allowed an entrance into the heart, something else, quite opposite, shall find a place there. If *the* truth is not received in the love of it, men shall be deceived by *the* lie. Do men realise, not only the inestimable privilege of having the gospel brought to their doors, and printed in their language, *but that the responsibility is equally great*, and that the judgment of neglect will be correspondingly severe? Revival after revival has been granted to this land of ours, but this will not continue for ever. Even God's longsuffering has a limit.

The *meaning* of the war, then, is, in tones of thunder to call the attention of every so-called Christian land to this neglect of God's gospel—its contents unheeded, its precepts not followed, and its salvation unsought—and the *message* of it is this:—The war which is now devastating Christendom—the lands that have enjoyed the greatest gospel light—draining its resources, desolating its homes, and bringing it within measurable distance of famine and ruin, is just a warning of what is *yet to come*, if Christendom still neglects to hear the divine call. One is perplexed and appalled by the little concern evinced, and the little heed that is

given to the warning. Such a spectacle of cruelty and inhumanity, of such widespread suffering, with such a fearful waste of life and destruction of property, ought to cause some reflection and produce a change. Why are not the churches thronged? Why are not people repenting in dust and ashes? Outwardly, the war seems to have produced very little difference. The doors of places of amusement are literally besieged, the drinking houses are full, dens of infamy ply their nefarious trade. And if the end of the war came to-morrow it does not seem as if the nation would be very different from what it was before the war was entered upon.

If after the war, men become again engrossed with business and pleasure, to the total neglect of higher concerns: if God is forgotten, and His gospel unheeded; this war, with all its calamities and horrors will scarcely be remembered in the terrible overthrow which will yet visit the cities and countries of Europe.

“Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. . . . The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. . . . The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. . . . And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the Kings of the earth upon the earth. . . . For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.” (Read Isa. xxiv, and xxvi, 20-21.)

It will not be Germany alone that will be visited, but all the other countries of Christendom; for all are alike guilty of rejecting God's Son—and the final conflict—and the supreme one—the real Armageddon—is not between the nations of the earth, but between earth and heaven—and the issue, not which nation shall be uppermost, but to whom shall the kingdoms of the earth belong—to Satan's representative or to God's? Do not let anyone be deluded by the talk of lasting peace, and a final end of war, there can be no such consummation under the existing *régime*. Only when the Son of Man is acknowledged as “rightful Heir and Lord of all,” and the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, will universal and abiding peace be possible.

A Million and a Quarter of Charms.

It is painful to see how little any leading public men, whether in the religious or political sphere, realise what is involved in this present war. Their sole aim and idea seems to be, how to win it, and then to start afresh. Which means, start afresh, with new enterprises, perhaps, and fresh determination, but with the same underlying evils as produced the existing catastrophe. "Except ye repent," are our Lord's words, "ye shall all likewise perish." They had told Him of certain Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Such is His answer; and it contains a warning that is needed at the present day. As an eminent writer has recently put it, in a book which deserves the most serious attention,* "We are faced with the universal bankruptcy of an age which had good reason to consider itself, on the most accepted views of life, the wealthiest, humanest, and most enlightened, and most secure of all ages." He proceeds to mention a fact which may be considered trivial by some, but which only too plainly reveals the bankruptcy of which he speaks. "As far back as August, 1915," he says, "the inventor of a 'special charm for soldiers' informed 'The Times' that he had sold one million and a quarter of these since the war broke out, and gave the public the benefit of this letter received with five signatures from the front. 'We have been out here for five months fighting in the trenches, and have not had a scratch. We put our great good fortune down to your lucky charm which we treasure highly.'" Try and explain this as we will, granted that many of these charms may have been given away in utter thoughtlessness, the fact remains. And that it should be possible that a million and a quarter of these futile things are in use (that was two years ago, there may be many more now) proves how little any serious thought of the reality of things has taken possession of the wearers' minds.

The Religious Condition after the War.

We were asked the other day, what will be the religious condition of the country after the war? It is a question very difficult to answer. That hundreds of thousands of men out at the front, without being definitely converted, have yet been impressed,

*"The Valley of Decision," by Prof. E. A. Burroughs, Longman's Green & Co. Price, 5s net.

and led to think about unseen things as they have never thought before, cannot be doubted. The one question seems to be—and it is the question earnest men everywhere are asking—Will the Church be able to help them on their return? *They* are ready for it. Is *she* prepared to offer the assistance they crave? If so, there is a prospect of widespread blessing. If not, they will simply lapse into their former indifference, or perhaps worse—for an awakening never comes to men and leaves them as it found them—with an added hostility to the Church that was so impotent in the hour of their need. It is a crucial moment both for the Church and the world. We sincerely hope for the best, and there are doubtless many individuals who will do their best, but if a general revival of genuine Christianity is to take place the Church at large—we use here the term Church in its widest sense—will need herself to be revived first of all, and then to alter her methods. We do not mean by this what is so frequently meant, that services are to be made more attractive. That is after all only an appeal to the natural man, as if the Church's first business was to please and amuse him. The insistence upon this in some quarters is curiously pathetic—and would be amusing if it were not so pathetic. It seems to represent the Church standing cap in hand before the crowd and saying, "If only you will do us the favour of attending some of our services we will make them as pleasing to you as we possibly can. We only wish you to sing a few bright hymns and listen for ten minutes to something which appeals to your higher nature." In one form or another this kind of thing is repeated in the press and on the platform *ad nauseum*. Shorter and brighter services, is the cry everywhere. Not thus did the Apostles appeal, nor does the New Testament. In the early days there was a power in and with the Church that irresistibly drew men. One has only to read a chapter like Acts v to realise that the Church carried everything before it. In measure, this has been the case in every revival since. At the present moment, however, this power is absent; for when worldly methods and unbelief enter, it takes its flight. Whether it will ever return depends upon the Church herself. She may have sinned it away for the last time. In any case, the only way of recovery is to repent and do the first works. Prayer and the preaching of the Cross, as someone has said, are the two things needed most of all to-day.

The Book of Psalms.

By WALTER SCOTT.

PSALM 16. In this exquisitely beautiful Psalm there is not a flaw—no disturbance without, and no conflict within. The Psalm depicts a perfect human life. Its strength and moral beauty are derived from a state of absolute dependence upon Jehovah. "Preserve me O God: for in Thee do I put my trust." This precious sentence is the key to the understanding of the Psalm. It also contains the sum of moral human excellence. It is a wonderful Psalm. It reveals an actual life lived amongst men, a life of trust, of confidence, of resurrection, and on and up till the presence of Jehovah is reached where is fulness of joy and pleasures evermore (verse 11). Jehovah's right hand is the goal. Further progress is impossible: see Heb. xii. 2.

The Christian life is one, more or less, of struggle, of conflict, of broken resolves, of imperfectly fulfilled desires. But our Psalm sheds its light on one, and only *One*, who trod every step of life's rugged path; of One whose every thought, word, and act ascended to Jehovah as incense, filling the heavens with its fragrance. It is not the Son in the bosom of the Father, nor the eternal Son of God in personal greatness, which our Psalm reveals, but the man Christ Jesus in fullest human excellence—the model and pattern of what we should be to God. A perfect human life of trust and dependence upon God is the beautiful picture here witnessed.

There are two ways in which the earthly life and ministry of our Lord may be viewed in the Gospel records. (1) God manifest in flesh exhibiting Divine goodness in a scene of contrariety. (2) Christ, as man, in human perfection—the highest developed type of life towards God. It is this latter which the Psalm unfolds, and in which Christ is our pattern and example (1 John ii. 6; 1 Peter ii. 21; Phil. ii. 5).

In verses 2 and 3, Christ addresses Jehovah. He was, and is, God; but that is not the position He takes in this Psalm. He does not, as elsewhere, assert equality with the Father. Here He owns Jehovah as His Lord, thus taking the place of perfect man and perfect servant (verse 2). Still as man addressing Jehovah,

He says, "My goodness extendeth not to thee." The "but" in verse 3 tends to obscure the sense. The simple meaning of the passage is that the Lord says to Jehovah, the saints on earth are my delight. He finds His joy and pleasure amongst them. He terms them "excellent," not as morally distinguishing some from others. All His people are "excellent" in His eyes. It is love's appreciation. Prophetically, Jewish saints are in the first instance considered, but Gentile saints are also embraced in the appellation. Such is the largeness of Divine grace. Jehovah is the object of trust; the saints the objects of delight.

The godly of Israel, and in principle *all* saints, are contemplated in verse 3. While the apostate and idolatrous nation is specially in view in verse 4: see Matt. xii. 45. Gentile idolatry, if not primarily referred to, is also included in verse 4. Idolatry carries with it manifold and multiplying sorrow. The Messiah would not defile His lips in the mention of the many gods of the heathen world—whose number is countless.

Jehovah is His inheritance—the steady and established portion of His soul—as also His cup of joy (verse 5). The places He treads are "pleasant," for Jehovah is with Him, and He is for Jehovah (verse 6).

Jehovah is His Instructor in the night, in the holy calm and stillness of a communion unbroken by an otherwise noisy world. What thoughts these night seasons witnessed no tongue can tell (verse 7).

The Messiah *alone* of all His companions or fellows could truthfully utter the words of verse 8. If He had set Jehovah ever at "His right hand," when here treading the path of life, *now* Jehovah has set Him in present glory at *His* right hand (Ps. cx. 1). Both Mark (xvi. 19) and Luke (xxiv. 51) record the fact of the ascension of our Lord. As servant (Mark) and as man (Luke), also as High Priest (Heb. viii.), He sits at God's right hand in the heavens.

"I shall not be moved," declares the Messiah. The stability of His perfect human life was founded upon His absolute confidence in Jehovah. He had set Jehovah "always before Him." How then could *that* rock of trust and faith ever be overthrown?

The last three verses of the Psalm form a triumphant declaration of the happy and certain faith of the Messiah—a faith

which pierced through death, anticipates resurrection, and only rests when the right hand of God is reached, where fulness of joy and pleasures evermore abound : see Acts ii. 27 ; xiii. 35.

May it be the great and absorbing aim of each reader thus to follow in the steps and faith of our renowned Leader (Heb. xii. 1, 2)!

DIVISIONS.

1. The Path of absolute trust in Jehovah, verses 1-8.
2. The Victory of Faith, verses 9-11.

Changed in a Moment.

One moment here, the next with Thee in bliss,
 Oh, what glorious prospect Lord is this;
 Changed in a moment, from the flesh set free,
 Caught up forever with Thyself to be.

One moment here, where sin and grief abound,
 The next, uprising at the trumpet sound;
 With all Thy saints, to meet Thee in the air,
 Thy face to see, and Thine own image bear.

One moment here, amid the toil and strife,
 The next, rejoicing in the perfect life;
 Oh, what is sorrow, suffering, conflict, woe,
 Compared with all the bliss we then shall know,

One moment here, in weakness and in pain,
 The next, uniting in the joyful strain
 Of praise and blessing to the Lamb once slain,
 To Thee who worthy art o'er all to reign.

One moment here, perhaps in loneliness,
 The next, with Thee in perfect blessedness.
 Yes, blessed Saviour, evermore with Thee,
 Where we shall love and praise Thee perfectly.

Grain from Joseph's Granary.

By WILLIAM LUFF,

Author of "God's Gospel in War-Time" Series.

EIGHTH SACKFUL.

I AM COMING MYSELF.—A Balkan paper, speaking of the kindness of the British troops to the native population, tells of a poor woman near her confinement who was attended by two of our surgeons ; but finding it a case for operation, and not having proper instruments, they telephoned to Salonica, saying, if something could not be done in two hours the woman would be dead. The surgeon then telephoned back, " I am coming myself," and in an hour he arrived by aeroplane. The operation was successfully performed ; but the news of his kindness had so spread, that when he returned to his machine, the whole population of Kilkis was there to give him a grateful send off. " I am coming myself," was what the greatest of all physicians said when He undertook His mission of life and healing. He did not send an angel ; but said, " Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do Thy will, O God " (Heb. x. 7, Mark x. 44-45, Ps. xviii. 10). " I am coming Myself," has a still future fulfilment.

" And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

LOOKING UNTO JESUS.—The troops were passing a wayside cross, on which was a representation of the Christ. " Eyes right ! " commanded the officer, and every face was turned toward the figure. Then came the order, " Eyes front ! " and all looked forward, and marched with new vigour. That act savoured of superstition and idolatry ; but when the soldiers of the Lord turn their eyes to a real crucified Lord, and see Him dying in their stead, they gain true inspiration, and go on their way rejoicing. A vision of the Lord prepares for all other visions (Isa. vi. 1-4. " Eyes right ! " then, " Eyes front ! ")

" Look away to Jesus, soldier in the fight ;
 When the battle thickens, keep thine armour bright.
 Though thy foes be many, though thy strength be small,
 Look away to Jesus : He will conquer all."