

WORDS OF HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH

Edited by
W. G. TURNER

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TO OUR READERS,

Another year of *WORDS OF HELP* constrains us to render thanks to the LORD for help in this branch of His happy service. A sincere echo arises in our hearts as we write, and the more so as the years pass, of the words of the Psalmist, "the GOD of my mercy."

Our readers still send encouraging letters with assurances that *WORDS OF HELP* continues to live up to its title. Very gratefully we again make our acknowledgments to those who give valued help by their contributions to our pages, thereby serving the LORD and His people.

To our Printer and Publisher for their very practical assistance in the production and circulation of the Magazine many thanks, and to those who distribute it at home and abroad also.

The prayers of our Christian readers are still needed and valued by your friend

THE EDITOR.

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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That Blessed Hope

(Titus ii. 13)

If I were told that CHRIST would come tomorrow,
That the next sun
Which sinks would bear us past all fear and sorrow,
Care and pain,
All the fight fought, and all the journey through;
What should I do?
I do not think that I would shrink or falter,
But just go on,
Doing my work, nor change, nor seek to alter
Aught that is gone;
But rise, and move, and love, and smile, and pray
For one more day.
And lying down at night for a last sleeping,
Say in that Ear
Which hearkens ever, "LORD, within Thy keeping
How should I fear?
And when tomorrow brings Thee nearer still,
Do Thou Thy will."
I might not sleep for awe: but peaceful, tender,
My soul would lie
All night long: and when the morning splendour
Flashed o'er the sky,
I think that I could smile, could calmly say,
"It is HIS day!"

• ANON.

FOR THE NEW YEAR

HITHERTO — HENCEFORTH

(1 Samuel vii. 12; St. John i. 51)

“Looking *back*, we can but bless Thee,
 Looking *forward*, but adore;
 For Thy *present* favour give Thee
 Children’s praises evermore.”

THE writer of these choice lines was one who found in Experience and Hope a quiet contentment in a long life full of incident and adventure at home and abroad.

In early life her attention was drawn to the miserable conditions under which poor Italian organ-grinders with their monkeys, and the roast chestnut sellers, were living in the then lowest slum of Deptford (long since condemned, cleared and covered by blocks of modern dwellings). Here, in a quiet way, she began a ministry of love among them for CHRIST’s sake, her fluent knowledge of Italian paving the way. These poor unwanted foreigners were charmed by her kindly interest in them and gladly listened as she read the Scriptures in their poor hovels.

When the slum clearance order came into effect the scattering of the people to other districts brought her work there to an end, and became a part of the “hitherto” in her life the result of which only the Day of CHRIST will reveal.

Scorning the comforts which her station in life commonly desired her thoughts turned to the foreign Missionary field, and the way opened for her to go to China, then as now a *real* Missionary field. A meeting with a Chinese Missionary and his wife who were shortly returning afforded just the opportunity she desired. They had originally gone out under the auspices of the China Inland Mission, but had been led to see that all Christian service is rightly rendered under direct responsibility to the LORD, and in dependence therefore upon His guidance for the supply of all needs spiritual and temporal. Being in this of the same mind she accompanied them upon their return journey to China. After some years of happy fellowship and fruitful service this was suddenly interrupted and a short sea-

son of almost complete isolation followed. During this time she continued her work alone among the women and children. The loneliness of this period led to a deepened confidence in the LORD, the One Who never leaves nor forsakes His people in any circumstances whatsoever. Faith and patience so exercised were rewarded after a while by the arrival of a small band of like-minded workers to cheer and comfort her, and for several years this happy fellowship continued. Then extreme age necessitated retirement from her long service in China, and returning to the homeland, for the rest of her pilgrimage Miss C. Helena von Poseck still served the LORD as opportunity afforded.

Among a dozen or so of choice devotional hymns in which she reviewed the "hitherto" and anticipated the "henceforth" those at the head of this paper occur, and may well serve to quicken our grateful reflection, standing as through mercy we do as Frances Ridley Havergal sang "*at the portal of the opening year.*"

For ourselves, too, this opening of another year reminds us that the road of the "hitherto" by which we have arrived at the present is one lined with abundant blessings. The stages of the road "hitherto," namely, *infancy, childhood, youth, maturity, age* and perhaps in some cases *old age* were marked by the patience, perseverance and loving kindness of Him Who "crownest the year with Thy goodness" (Ps. lxxv. 11).

We do well also at this time to reflect upon the follies, waywardness, wilfulness and oft forgetfulness of GOD Who in spite of all has still borne with us and endured us. Of Israel it was said, "they vexed His HOLY SPIRIT" while He suffered their manners in the wilderness. Alas, alas, confesses the truly contrite believer, *how true of myself!*

One who seriously reflected upon this side of the "hitherto" exclaimed,

"That Thou canst think so well of us,
Yet be the GOD Thou art;
Is darkness to my intellect,
But sunshine to my heart."

For such, though enjoying the forgiveness of sins and the

knowledge that "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," yet being truly contrite can never forgive themselves. Thus one is safeguarded from drifting into the sad condition in practical Christian life of the short-sightedness of which the warning is given in 2 Peter i. 8, 9. "Who hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." It is indeed with a humble and contrite spirit which in the sight of the LORD is of great price such gratefully confess, "*Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.*"

That "hitherto" is the promise of "henceforth" our LORD assured Nathanael upon his great avowal, "*Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.*" JESUS answered and said unto him, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou?" This was the "hitherto" of Nathanael, now follows the great "henceforth." "Thou shalt see greater things than these... verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter (*henceforth* R.V.) ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of GOD ascending and descending upon the SON of MAN."

The lines with which these meditations started on "Hitherto" may well be followed by others from the same pen on the "Henceforth."

"Stretched before us lies a future
Filled with bliss no tongue can tell—
Thine own house of many mansions,
Where we shall for ever dwell."

W.G.T.



ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD AND THE GLORY OF THEM.

(*St. Matthew iv. 8.*)

THE kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, regarded as one united whole, has been the coveted ambition of man from time immemorial, and how many men have been allowed in self-will to prove the impossibility of men ever attaining such an object.

The devil claims "All this power," since man in general has been ready to listen to and submit to him rather than to GOD,

and he dangles it before men's eyes as an incentive to do homage to him. With the impudence of a usurper, he offered it to its real Owner, when he was allowed by divine over-ruling to do so, saying, "For that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." As the embodiment of all that GOD intended man to be, JESUS CHRIST, Who is shown to us as "GOD, manifest in the flesh," resisted the devil's appeal with what is written for man's guidance by divine inspiration. "Thou shalt worship the LORD thy GOD, and Him only shalt thou serve." (Deut. vi. 13; Luke iv. 6, 8.)

In Matthew xii. 29 this sphere of power is referred to by the LORD JESUS as "The strong man's house," to be "spoiled only" by first "binding the strong man," while in Luke x. 18, the LORD JESUS anticipates, as if it were an accomplished fact, the fall of Satan as lightning from heaven, and, having given power to His emissaries over all the power of the enemy, He admonishes them to rejoice that their names are written in heaven rather than in the fact that the spirits were subject to them. Then again He refers to the enemy as "The prince of this world" and expresses the certainty of the judgment of his sphere of activity, and of his being himself cast out. When the climax of His career as a man approached, He says "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30).

From a merely human standpoint, it looked as if the devil was making good his claim, when he brought an apparently united world against the rightful Heir and killed Him, and was it not evidently a great stumbling block to His followers to see Him meekly submitting to the worst that the enemy could do? Where is the Kingdom of GOD to be found? "Except a man be born again" he cannot even see it (John iii. 3), and "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit" he cannot enter into it. New birth, and the guidance of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT alone can make it plain.

The "strong man" who is even now to faith a conquered foe has yet to be bound, but before being bound, divine prophecy shows plainly that the sphere of his activity is going to be confined to the earthly kingdoms, when in the person of the beast

and with the help of the false prophet, he makes the whole world do homage to him. Death will be the penalty for all who won't acknowledge his supremacy.

So, before the Kingdom of GOD can be established on earth, the strong man's kingdom, the kingdom of the prince of this world referred to in Daniel ix. 36, as the "prince that shall come" has yet to be set up, and destroyed by divine intervention. Proud man, who has always preferred the devil to GOD, will no doubt find him and his kingdom as popular as that of the true King has been unpopular. The anti-christ will be as readily received as the true CHRIST has been rejected (John v. 43).

Recently a learned doctor, addressing a Methodist Conference, advised his hearers to take part in politics, in order to help in preparing the course of this world for the Kingdom of JESUS CHRIST. Alas! the idea of men preparing the world for CHRIST belongs to the realm of men's imaginations. Simple faith knows that GOD alone can do this, and when He begins to act, it will be a very drastic and effective proceeding. Orthodoxy unfortunately prefers to rely on historical traditional interpretation of prophecy, and to pretend to believe that most if not all prophecy has had a literal historical accomplishment. It explains away the truth of the 10 Kingdoms, "that give their power to the beast" that was and is not and yet shall be. This has never yet had any sort of fulfilment, in accordance with facts, and the image of Daniel, which portrays the course of Gentile authority to the end, when "a stone cut out of the mountain without hands falls on the feet of the image" and smashes it all up. When this takes place, the image is complete in all its parts, but the ten toes are not yet clearly developed. The idealistic dreams of men find it hard to accept the revival of the empire responsible for the condemnation of the King of the Jews, or of the Jewish kingdom that betrayed Him to that empire, compelling it to act unjustly.

Human sentiment dislikes the thought of a hell, and torment for ever and ever, and so it makes the thought of both heaven and hell merely figurative, and denies the existence of devils. It turns the gospel into mere philanthropy, and makes out that the soul remains unconscious till the resurrection, which is re-

garded as general and taking the form of a sort of re-incarnation, deliberately setting aside all that the Word of GOD reveals. Let us beware of all the delusions to which unbelief is going to be given up, and cling whole-heartedly to revealed truth!

G. S. PURNELL



THOUGHTS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES

BY THE EDITOR

(*Judges iv. 5*)

IN those days there was no king in Israel and every man did that which was right in his own eyes." And the picture presented after twenty years of this is one of incredible failure and feebleness on the part of the people of Israel.

Spiritually, GOD was increasingly being forgotten as "they chose new gods" and sunk into idolatry.

Socially, everything gradually disintegrated; "the highways were deserted"; trade languished as the caravans ceased to use the roads; venturesome travellers resorted to byeways, or (as the marginal reading suggests) used crooked ways and devious routes as likely to afford more shelter from ambushed archers lurking near the wells and fountains to which necessity of course forced people. Many of the villages were destroyed, or at any rate ceased to be occupied, as, in the confusion and panic produced by the prevailing lawlessness, families herded together in such towns as afforded more protection.

Nationally, the condition was such that after submitting to twenty years of galling and disgraceful servitude to a heathen despot who boasted of his nine hundred iron chariots (tanks as we should say today), "mightily oppressed them." Then at long last, they remembered that "GOD is our refuge; a present help in trouble" and turned to Him for deliverance. The prevailing state of things had become so bad that any hope of testimony to the Name of GOD of Israel faded out. Yet the very land they occupied had been taken possession of by their fathers in His

Name. Then Deborah arose, a prophetess and a mother in Israel, there not being a single man to whom they could turn in their present need. What a confirmation of their low spiritual and moral condition and what a rebuke to the men of Israel implied thereby.

On the moral and spiritual plane Deborah becomes the voice of the living GOD speaking to the conscience of a recreant people who had forgotten Him and cast His laws behind them, since "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Sending for the only man likely to heed the message from GOD, Deborah sent and called Barak with the word of the LORD GOD of Israel's command and promise of His active intervention in this hour of national disaster and distress. Barak certainly is a man, but what a man! He recognises the command and promise of GOD, but lacks faith to obey it fully. Instead of exercising personal faith in the living GOD and answering to his own responsibility, he leans on the faith of another. Undoubtedly he was the best man available, but what of his unmanly reply as he says to Deborah, "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go." And she said, "I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."

Poor Barak!! In leaning on the faith of another he only anticipated numbers in later times, some as in the days of the prophet who testified in the word of the LORD, "they have removed their heart from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men" (Isa. xxix. 13). How many there still are in this condition, whose spiritual affairs are transacted secondhand instead of by direct contact with GOD.

Deborah, Barak, and the people of Israel are presented in the *Book of Judges* as persons from whose conduct we ourselves may learn salutary lessons. St. Paul says of the things that happened to these ancient people "they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

GOD's purpose, of course, abides, although His thought of deliverance seemed then only to be grasped by one woman; and

the stern discipline of war with its attendant horrors was needed to awake His people to a right sense of their condition. But the prophetess knew the mind of GOD and stirred up the people to prepare for His gracious intervention on their behalf, and styles herself a mother in Israel.

As a result of Deborah's maternal interest in Israel a move was made in the right direction. "Where there's a will there's a way," runs the proverb, and especially if there is a woman like Deborah behind the will. So we read that some who could handle the pen came; other who could better handle the sword; some wholeheartedly jeopardized their lives in brilliant exploits, these may remind us of those valiant ones recorded in Acts xv. 26, "Men that have hazarded their lives for the Name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST." Of some it is written, "They willingly offered themselves," and, since one willing volunteer is worth ten pressed men, these counted for much in the conflict. But in spite of the hearty response on the part of many, there were defaulters, *who professed to be greatly exercised by the state of things, but did nothing about it.* "Each tribe is passed in review by Deborah in her song. The easternmost and the westernmost, who had alike been wanting: the sailors of Dan and Asher, who had tarried in their fishing-craft, or in the creeks along their coasts; the chiefs of Reuben, whose prolonged debates on the banks of their mountain torrents only ended in their remaining among the sheep-troughs to listen to some shepherd's melody in the hour of danger."

Talking, debating, discussions ending in talk—how modern in many a Christian assembly—and how futile. Some sulked and failed in the hour of opportunity. Or did they really despair of GOD and of the future for His people, since things seemed so hopelessly bad? Did it not seem that Deborah was calling them to a forlorn hope, since there were now no great leaders; no really gifted men now like Moses and Joshua? Did they forget that the Captain of the LORD's host never dies; but still lives to lead on to the accomplishment of all GOD's purposes? We cannot say, but may well ponder some questions suggested by this piece of ancient history. For example, as the professing people of GOD we may ask ourselves:

1. Are the highways of practical holiness deserted by us now?
2. Do the byways of crooked compromise afford us common paths in things spiritual or secular—crooked ways?
3. The friendly villages of simplicity, sincerity and brotherly kindness—have they ceased in the Israel of GOD?
4. Are we still exposed to the sharp arrows of unkind criticism, slander, evil speaking and contempt at our meeting places for drawing water?

Then we must cry to GOD, while *at the same time we must co-operate with His present workings in grace*; and ask ourselves such questions as: Do we enjoy our portion in CHRIST? Have we grasped His purpose in our salvation? Do we really care for the testimony to CHRIST in these difficult days, and realise our place in it as His witnesses?

(To be continued D. V.)



ON THE WORD OF GOD

AT all times it has been good for the LORD's people to cultivate a holy reverence for the Word of GOD; specially so in these perilous times of the last days.

The Apostle Paul, in view of the terrible evils which would come in after his departure, says, "*And now I commit you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all the sanctified.*" (Acts xx. 32.)*

That "grievous wolves" *have come in*, and that "evil teachers" from within *have risen up*, is now patent to any true lover of the LORD and His Word. In John viii. the LORD says to the Jews who believed Him, "If ye abide in my Word, ye are truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." Many, alas! despise that word and such will be held accountable (Prov. xiii. 13). Many professed servants of GOD, professing themselves to be wise, have become fools, and sit in judgment on that Word by which they will be judged (John

* Quotations are from New Translation.

xii. 48). Others, at will, take from it or add to it, having no regard to the solemn warnings as to this, both in the Old and New Testaments (Deut. iv.; Prov. xxx. 5, 6; Rev. xxii. 18).

Satan's malice and man's efforts to get rid of GOD's Word are alike powerless, for it still remains. "For ever, O JEHOVAH, Thy Word is settled in the heavens" (Ps. cxix. 8, 9). It is a lamp to the feet so that we may not stumble into the pitfalls of the enemy; and a light to the path, pointing on to where the pathway of faith ends (Heb. xii.). It is truly the chart and compass of the believer over the sea of life here, as also his comfort and consolation in trials and afflictions. The SPIRIT of GOD ministering CHRIST to us through it, leads us to sit at His feet to learn of Him, and thus to find rest in this world of unrest. Thereby hopes have arisen in our hearts which will never find full satisfaction until we see Him Whose love has kindled them.

By His Word "we have known and have believed the love which GOD has to us" (1 John iv. 16, 17), and that JESUS the SON of GOD loved us and gave Himself for us, and hath washed us from our sins in His own Blood. Therein, too, we learn that He is soon coming to receive us to Himself. Whilst we await His coming, He would have us keep the Word of His patience; and (whilst He waits in patience at GOD's right hand for His day) to have our hearts apart from earth's joys, honours, pleasures, aims and pursuits, as those who through grace deliberately cast in our lot with the REJECTED ONE; having learnt from the Word that "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the FATHER, but is of the world; and the world is passing, and its lust, but he that does the will of GOD abides for eternity" (1 John ii. 16, 17).

In that Word is spread before us the wondrous pathway of our blessed LORD—the subject, dependent, obedient One, Whose every look, word, step and work, went up to His GOD and FATHER as frankincense of a sweet odour, and upon Whom the FATHER could look with ineffable delight. "*Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I have found my delight*" (Mark i. 11; Luke iii. 22).

Having come to GOD by the way of the cross through faith in CHRIST and His finished work, redeemed to GOD by His Blood, we, as belonging to the priestly family, have our portion of this Oblation given to us of GOD's offering by fire. Infinitely blessed! Wondrous grace! The FATHER gives us to share in His thoughts and joys in that Blessed One whose every step was as music to His ear as He walked about doing the will of His FATHER.

What a treasure-house and mine of wealth is the precious Word of GOD. May we each value it more than life, remembering the words of the LORD JESUS, "If any man love Me, he will keep My words, and My FATHER will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him" (John xiv. 23).

R. Goss



THREE GOSPEL SIGNS

("And this shall be a sign unto you," St. Luke ii. 12.)

A BEAUTIFUL sign, the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. All heaven is occupied with this wonderful sign, and a multitude of the heavenly host praise GOD. Herod and all Jerusalem, however, are troubled at the news. The wise men from the east come to worship Him Who is born King of the Jews. Shepherds hasten to see this thing which is come to pass at Bethlehem. Mary ponders these things in her heart. After an interval of forty days the aged Simeon takes the Holy Babe up in his arms and blesses GOD. Neither man nor angel had ever seen such a sign before. EMMANUEL had come in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, GOD was manifest in flesh. All whose hearts had been touched by GOD join in worship and praise because of the wonderful sign which He had given. *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given."*

The display of GOD's marvellous wisdom and grace at the Incarnation bows us before Him to worship and adore. Entirely outside the understanding of the wise and prudent of this world, we see in the lowly Babe of Bethlehem, the CHRIST the sent One of GOD. This divine mystery should claim our con-

tinued attention, that we may ever bow before Him in adoration. St. John says, "we have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of Life."

("The sign of the prophet Jonas.")

In answer to the enquiry of the scribes and Pharisees our LORD replies, "as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish so shall the SON of MAN be three days and nights in the heart of the earth." This was another wonderful sign; the SON of MAN would enter into death, being three days in the grave. Only by His death could deliverance be procured for man in his irretrievably lost condition, whether Jew or Gentile. The Cross is the only righteous answer to every claim of GOD's holiness, thereby providing a way by which GOD can justify the ungodly sinner who believes in JESUS (Romans iii. 26). The Cross is a sign, unappreciated by the wise and prudent, wherein is manifested the fullness of divine love, and the immeasurable perfection of our LORD's obedience and faithfulness in completing the work He came to do.

("What sign shewest thou unto us?")

The raising of the body of our LORD was a third sign which bore witness to His divine power as having life in Himself, and also, as being the resurrection and the life; it was a sign that witnessed to the truth that He was the SON of GOD (Romans i. 4). The resurrection was an essential part of the display of the divine power whereby our LORD having entered into death, rises again triumphantly after three days. The disciples themselves at first could hardly believe that JESUS was risen from the dead (St. Luke xxiv. 11). Now He is known to us as the living ONE Who became dead, alive for evermore, having the keys of death and of hades.

These three scripture signs form a threefold cord which cannot be broken, testifying of His Incarnation, Death and Resurrection; truths upon which every believer rests by faith, the basis of all blessing for the Church, the Jews, the nations and, indeed all creation (Romans viii. 21, 22).

L. HOWSON

Thoughts on the Book of Judges

By THE EDITOR

(continued from page 9)

WHEN Gideon appears on the page in chapter vi he is a middle-aged man with a grown-up son, and Joash, his father, still living. His story is a veritable masterpiece of inspired history, filled with encouragement and warning for the reader. His career falls into two parts, in one of which he is a brilliant success, entitling him to a place among the heroes of faith in Hebrews xi; in the other, alas, as a sad failure.

Of the twofold character of these Old Testament stories the Apostle Paul reminds us, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"; and "all these things happened unto them for ensamples and are written for our admonition . . . wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (Rom. xv. 4; 1 Cor. x. 11, 12.)

In Gideon's day things had again come to a very bad pass, the inevitable *relapse* having followed the *revival* under Deborah. The knowledge and worship of the true GOD had nearly vanished in a welter of superstition; altars to Baal, the god of lust and evil blood passions, being now again erected all over the countryside. The people under the very heel of their heathen neighbours, living in dens and caves, despoiled of home and livelihood, cried out in their misery. and GOD, Whose "soul was grieved for the misery of Israel," sent a prophet to arouse them to the cause of their distress.

But the national conscience was fast asleep, and Gideon alone appears to have been awakened by the prophet's message though addressed to all the people. He at once experiences much personal exercise as to the prevailing condition as verses 7-10 show; and is rewarded by a clearer view of what the occasion demands by the visit of an angel with a message from GOD to himself personally. Here was one whose subsequent career proved to be willing to do the will of GOD,

and the ever true principle that such should know, was stamped by the authority of our LORD centuries later, "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know."

There is a suggestive sequence in this story with a message for ourselves in our own times. In the case of Gideon it was fourfold:

1. Personal exercise as to the prevailing conditions.
2. Private exercise before God.
3. Public service before men.
4. Powerful results from all this.

Note first, this *personal* exercise as to the general conditions leads Gideon to take a very depressing and discouraging view of things. As a man of faith, and such he certainly was, he felt something should be done for GOD'S honour. But what? When? How? By whom? The answer comes while occupied in his daily work. He is busy beating out a few ears of corn in a secret wine-press instead of in the threshing-floor lest the Midianitish marauders should discover the household supply of wheat. His heart is rising to heaven about the oppression of his people, but what can be done about it, when, and by whom?

"The LORD is with thee thou mighty man of valour . . . go in this thy might and thou shalt save Israel . . . surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." This is the startling answer which breaks in upon his solitary musings.

2. *Private exercise* before GOD now follows. Is he dreaming? It all sounds so unreal, as though his exercised heart is being mocked by the angel. At last he stammers out in a kind of hopeful wonder, "*Show me a sign that thou talkest to me.*" How very true to life in these unusual circumstances; but GOD never mocks a truly exercised heart. He is about to act upon a secret principle afterwards disclosed (in 1 Cor, i. 28). "Things which are despised, hath GOD chosen, yea, *and things which are not*, to bring to nought things that are." Gideon himself is very conscious of his personal insignificance and feeling like a thing which is not of any account. "Oh my Lord," he exclaims in utter sincerity, "*Wherewith*

shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." It is of such characters that GOD says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word." Hence the, what to us may appear at first sight, extravagant form of address by the angel, becomes in reality a simple statement of the divine plan of deliverance of Israel by Gideon.

3. *Public service* before man is here introduced as in the case of Moses by first putting domestic things right; the idolatrous altar in the house must be thrown down and the grove destroyed. Gideon with ten servants breaks down the altar and cuts down the grove surrounding his father's house. He tears down the emblem of Baal worship and sets up again the outward signs of the worship of JEHOVAH the GOD of Israel. The way to deliverance, peace and prosperity for Israel lay through that levelled grove and over that prostrate altar. *It still does when the modern equivalent of Baal worship, money-loving, pleasure-loving, self-indulgence and love of ease block the road to spiritual blessing and Christian activity.* Well may we pray:

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne
And worship only Thee."

For Gideon it was like taking his life in his hands, but it had its effect, and the sleeping conscience of the nation is at last awakened. One man has stood for GOD, things now begin to happen, and thirty thousand men are stirred up to take part in delivering their country from the oppressors.

The thirty thousand are not an army—but a mob. Two-thirds of them lack courage, glad to be out of the dangerous enterprise and allowed to return home. Of the remainder the majority are not too keen on the job, and a simple test reveals that only a bare handful in comparison, some three hundred, are really wholehearted in this business. To win the war, to beat the foe, to save the nation was the main thing in their

minds, and it was by the gallant three hundred that the victory was won. Some plain lessons on the page for ourselves are that quality, not quantity, is what counts in the service of GOD; that the men He can use are wholehearted even at the cost of personal comfort. Personal faith strengthens for service, while occupation with personal comforts and convenience disqualifies.

The symbolism of the empty pitchers, lamps and trumpets in the story may well direct our thoughts along profitable lines in this connection. We have the treasure in earthen vessels, the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST, and the trumpet of testimony to "hold forth the word of life."

"Do you know why it is that Christianity makes so little progress?" said a Chinaman to an Englishman. "It is because so few of you are like JESUS CHRIST."

(To be continued, D.V.)



The Abiding Love of the Lord in Resurrection

(John xx)

WHEN JESUS knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the FATHER, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John xiii. 1). His love is clearly exemplified many times after His resurrection in both John xx and xxi. That the LORD'S love also still continues now He is in heaven is clear from Rom. viii. 35, Eph. v. 28-30, and many other Scriptures. But there is much to learn from the instances given in the end of John's gospel, which the "disciple whom JESUS loved" was inspired by the HOLY GHOST to record for our instruction and blessing.

Confining ourselves therefore to the gospel of John in order that we may not confuse the lessons peculiar to that gospel,

we find that the LORD had implied His resurrection in much that He had said to His disciples. For example, He told them He had power to lay down His life, and had power to take it again (John x. 18). Again, He had told them a corn of wheat must die in order to bring forth fruit, but He had also told them that if He went away He would come again (ch. xii. 24; xiv. 3). There are also many other instances in this gospel. Yet the disciples had not understood or grasped the truth of His resurrection. Consequently Mary of Magdala, when she saw the stone taken away, jumped to the conclusion that the body of JESUS had been stolen. Simon Peter and John went home believing the same thing, although they had been into the sepulchre. They had seen the grave-clothes there. If the body had been stolen, would the thieves have spent the time in the tomb removing the wrappings? And *if* they had, would they not have taken off the napkin that was about His head simultaneously, leaving it with the rest? The RISEN LORD in His love had left the clothes there, and the napkin wrapped together in a place by itself, evidence of His resurrection, power and triumph for them to see. Like them, alas! we are often blind to His loving way of meeting our ignorance.

Devoted, broken-hearted Mary could not leave the tomb. The LORD in His tender love provided two angels in white, adequate testimony of heavenly solicitude, to ask her in gracious sympathy, "Woman, why weepest thou?" But even then Mary failed to grasp the point, and her reply is a repetition in substance of the false conclusion to which she had jumped when she first saw the stone had been taken away. The RISEN LORD does not give her up for her denseness. This is never His way, or where should we ourselves be? His love for her (which led Him to the cross and to the grave) has brought Him to the vicinity of the tomb and He Himself repeats the angels' question. She supposes Him to be the gardener, for in her ignorance and blindness nothing was further from her thoughts than His resurrection, and in her request to Him she still adheres to her false assumption. Then she hears her own name, spoken by Him in such loving grace.

That one word broke down all the barriers of ignorance and blindness of her heart. *The perseverance of His love is overcoming our denseness is wonderful, and when we are enlightened we are moved (as we judge Mary was) to an act of worship.*

The LORD further shows His love by honouring Mary with a message to His disciples, thus rewarding her devotion to Himself which had kept her near the tomb. There is not a word of reproach for her ignorance, but how different was the message He gave her from what she had told Peter and John on her own initiative! How essential it is that our endeavour to speak (or write) of the LORD to others should be commissioned (as it were) by the LORD Himself.

When we consider the message He gave her we find still more evidence of the love of the RISEN LORD for His own. He calls His disciples His brethren. First they were His *followers*; then His *disciples*, learning of Him; His *servants* to do His will; His *friends*, to whom He made known His purposes—now His *brethren*, brought into the family circle of the FATHER'S love and His. He emphasises that in this new relationship they are very closely allied with Himself—“My FATHER and your FATHER, My GOD and your GOD.” The character of the whole message challenges them to respond to such love by rejoicing that their RISEN LORD was about to ascend to the FATHER.

There are doubtless many other lessons to be learnt from these first seventeen verses of John xx., but consideration on the foregoing lines draws out our hearts' affections to the RISEN LORD who could deal so lovingly and patiently with one who was really devoted to Him, though ignorant and slow to learn. *He has dealt, and does deal, with us in the same way, blessed be His Name.* May we be as devoted to Him as Mary was!

The next incident in the chapter gives evidences of the RISEN LORD'S love for His gathered ones. He Who had triumphed over death spoke, “*Peace unto you*” to those who were gathered in *fear*. He had promised “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you” (ch. xiv. 27); and at the

end of His discourse on His way to the garden He had said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace." Now in resurrection He confirms this as He stands in their midst. He shows them in His own Person the evidence of His triumph over death and the grave, the very foundation of our peace, and again says "Peace unto you." We cannot fail to see the love that was displayed in this—love that allayed their fears, and assured them of His enduring love for them in resurrection; love too that commissioned them, empowered them, and gave them authority.

But Thomas the twin (*your twin?*) was not there. No reason is given and we have no right to invent one. When the other disciples told him they had seen the LORD, he said he would not believe without material proof. The love of the RISEN LORD for Thomas was such that even his unbelief of the concerted testimony of the other disciples was lovingly met on the following "first day" (for both first and last days of a period were counted so that "after eight days" is equivalent to what we should mean by "after seven days"). The LORD confirms by His Presence their coming together on the first day of the week. Again He announces "Peace," for again the doors were shut. Then in His fathomless love He meets all Thomas's doubts. We cannot wonder that Thomas's response is to own Him both LORD and GOD. Surely in verses 19-29 of this chapter we have a foreshadowing of the way the LORD manifests His love to us when we gather on the first day of the week to remember Him in "the breaking of bread." Peace fills our souls as we realise something more of His love. By faith we see His hands and His side as we consider the meaning of the bread which we break and the cup of which we drink. His very Person occupies our every thought. Our hearts worship Him, our LORD and our GOD.

"Our theme of praise art Thou alone,
 Thy cross, Thy work, Thy word.
 Oh, who can fathom all Thy love,
 Thou living, blessed LORD!"

J. C. KELL.

One Flock and One Shepherd

(*St. John x. 15, R.V.*)

MY sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me," said the One Who truly claimed to be the Good Shepherd, Who gave His life for the sheep. Some of the Good Shepherd's sheep were in the Jewish fold, and He was calling them out, saying that He had other sheep which were not of the Jewish fold, and them also He would bring and there would be one flock and one Shepherd (John x. 16).

This One Shepherd mentioned that it was a special source of His FATHER'S love to Him that He gave His life for the sheep, in order that He might take it again. "No man taketh it from Me, I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My FATHER," were His very definite words in connection with the great sacrifice that He was making.

Those responsible for His crucifixion could not touch Him until His hour was come, and even then He might have calmly walked away as He had done before His hour was come, when they went away backward and fell to the ground, but He delivered Himself up to their will, saying: "If ye seek me let these go their way." And though they crucified Him, they could not kill Him, like they did the two malefactors by breaking their legs, but He astonished some of those present by crying with a loud voice: "It is finished. FATHER, into Thy hands I commit my spirit," He said as He laid down His life. Pilate marvelled if He was dead when the question was raised about His burial, but the soldiers sent to see found that He was "dead already." It was a very remarkable death, even from a physical standpoint: three hours of darkness, an earthquake, and the veil of the temple rent in twain from the top to the bottom (not man's rude hand from the bottom to the top!), besides the loud shout of triumph, that seemed to be miraculous coming from one in the terribly weakened state that a mere man would be in after receiving the cruel and heartless treatment that had been meted out.

His body was taken down from the cross, and put in a new tomb wherein no body had been laid, and the tomb was closed with a huge stone, sealed and made as secure as human effort could make it. Then an angel rolled away the stone to let it be seen that the body was no longer there, and some who were looking for the body were asked the question: "Why seek ye the living amongst the dead? He is not here but risen." The prophecy that was used by false witnesses against Him had been literally fulfilled: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The temple was His Body, and the One Shepherd had given His life for the one flock, and the deed was sealed with the Shepherd's own blood, and nothing could alter it.

Unbelief asks: "Where is the one flock now, among all those that men call 'their flocks'?" Simple faith recognises in the Shepherd the omniscience of GOD, and believes that where two or three are gathered unto His Name, there the Divine Shepherd Who gave His life for the sheep is in the midst, invisible to the natural eye, but made manifest to faith by the HOLY SPIRIT, Who alone can gather in this way.

Do you know what it is to be thus "Gathered to His Name" by the HOLY SPIRIT, Who is here to glorify the One Who sought not His own glory, but the glory of the One Who sent Him?

G. S. PURNELL.



Abram

(*Genesis xii., xiii.*)

By W. KELLY

WHAT we see in the word of GOD before this remarkable account of the call of Abram, though profitable surely for us, is also humbling; and none the less the more we think of it and see what GOD has told us of man's sin and ruin, not merely as bringing on the flood, but as following it. What was to be done now? For GOD had hung out a sign in the very heavens that He would no longer visit the iniquity of the race as He had done in the deluge. There had been a

secret principle of grace with GOD that He always acted on; but now this principle was to be brought out manifestly. What had made the difference in the case of Abel, of Enoch, or even Noah? It was grace that had flowed to them and wrought in them whatever was good and holy and true. But there is a new thing that comes out in the history now before us. It was to be no longer the favour of GOD in its hidden dealings.

Promise was to be thenceforth a public ground of action on the part of GOD. Is not this a most weighty and instructive change? GOD was no longer content that He should act after a secret sort. If He had Himself called souls without any one knowing it outside, *now* He would make the call distinct and plain, drawing to it the attention of friends and enemies: and this so definitely that it has been the invariable starting-point with GOD from that day to this. It was the call of GOD, no more secret but evident to all.

So we are told in this place: "Now JEHOVAH had said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto a land that I will shew thee." We are apt to pass over such a statement of the ways of GOD because of the tendency to confound what is a secret of grace with what is manifest. But Abram was called by GOD to a place of separation, so as to be manifest. This is the express point with which the chapter opens, and the great principle that GOD would have us now to weigh with all seriousness, as we read His word.

By Israel at Sinai the ground of *law* was taken. Yet GOD had called His people by *grace* out of Egypt; but they were, as most know, put (or put themselves) under the law. The consequence was that, however divine the principle was, it fell through in the case of the chosen nation. So again, GOD has now applied the self-same principle to the call of the church. There it is not (one need not say) a body put under *law*, but the very contrary, dealt with in sovereign *grace*. It is not merely mercy towards the soul, for this has always been true; but GOD has a body publicly called in this world, composed of such as are meant to be witnesses of His grace in

CHRIST on high, just as much as Israel ought to have represented the law graven on stones and manifested it before the whole earth.

This will shew, then, how early and wide the principle is. But the **LORD** begins, as you can easily understand, first of all with an individual; and there was great wisdom and much force in this. Long centuries after, it was the resource of the prophet Isaiah, impressed upon his heart by **GOD** when Israel was passing into a desperately low condition, and with the prophecy of still greater ruin at hand. How does he seek to comfort the people? With the fact that **GOD** called Abraham *alone*. He falls back upon what was the salient principle of **GOD'S** dealing at this very time. It was as good as saying, "Be things as they may, count on the **LORD**. Impossible to be lower than that with which Israel began; for when **GOD** called and blessed at first, it was Abraham *alone*."

To what end was this? Not only that he himself should be blessed, but *to be* a blessing: and this not only to his own seed, but to others far and wide. "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

In the earth and with men, as they are, such is the sole possible way of blessing. In the line of His call **GOD** brings out His promises, and there it is that His blessing is found and maintained. Man may, no doubt (not to say that he must, when put on the ground of law), end in more manifest ruin than ever; but the principle of His call is not only sound but invariably true. If there is to be blessing at all in a world that is ruined, it must be on the ground of one who comes out obedient to the call of **GOD**, not staying where he is, nor attempting to reform the evil in the midst of which he may be. **GOD** made it particularly manifest at this time; for it was now that the world for the first time had seen nations and families and tongues, all arranged in the elements of that which is in our day approaching its finally developed form. The world was no more as it had been before the flood; it was separated into its distinct nationalities. Government also had now been instituted. This was of course an outward mercy for the world. Wickedness was not to go on unpun-

ished, iniquity must be restrained by the judge. GOD had accordingly given responsible charge on the earth to man who was thenceforth to curb evil in the world. He had authority for it from GOD (Gen. ix.).

But now that idolatry had entered (Joshua xxiv, 2), separation to GOD, the true GOD, comes in as the recognised place. Instead of having souls to walk individually with Him, although seeking to please Him by faith, GOD, from that day to this, takes up what was then a wholly new thing for man, that, if He is to be pleased or magnified, if His will is really to govern, it must be as separate to Himself, and not merely by our looking to Him individually where we are, and in the midst of all our national associations. GOD looks for more now; He *calls out*. Hence the force of the word here, "Get thee out," etc.

It is not simply "believe"; this was not at all the question put. The great object of faith was not brought out, though we find a type of the way of faith in chapter xv. where Abram's faith is seen exercised on the word of promise that GOD gave him; but still it is not a question here of the gospel being sent out, nor of CHRIST being presented personally. It is GOD who separates to Himself, at His own word, a man who was in the midst of all that is evil—his own family worshipping false gods like the rest. For although GOD had already marked off a certain part of the sons of Noah as preserved for blessing, and Shem particularly so—that it might be proved it was in no way an after-thought, but GOD's purpose in all steadfastness and not depending on a certain part of mankind as in themselves better than others (though in fact pity was there); yet here too was the solemn fact that the family of Shem had gone into idolatry no less than others. In spite of the predicted purpose of GOD, Shem's sons had proved faithless. What next could be done? Was there no way of securing GOD's honour? This was the way: the call of GOD goes out in sovereign grace, separating to Himself a man no better than his fellows but avowedly involved in the idolatries of his fathers. "Get thee out of thy country . . . unto a land that I will shew thee." (*To be continued, D.V.*)

Sparkling Gems

How the wolf would howl over one sheep branded with the SAVIOUR'S name were that one to fall a prey to his teeth! They are all numbered and each one in particular is known to the GOOD SHEPHERD.

* * * * *

If you and I, beloved, walk with GOD and GOD be with us, our godliness will show itself in the pity we feel and the kindness we show to the feeble and the faulty.

* * * * *

As a creature you are frail; as an inhabitant of the world you are exposed to casualties; as a man there is an appointed time for you on earth. You must pass off with the tide, you must be swept away with the generation. "*The time is short.*"

* * * * *

Let your lips be a fountain from which all streams that flow shall savour of grace and goodness.

* * * * *

As we travel home to our Father's house the distance diminishes and we begin to sight the city of the blessed, till we think of "*the home over there.*"

* * * * *

In GOD'S flock there are always some lame sheep . . . lame sheep will commonly be found even in the tiniest flock. It will be necessary, then, to be tender of their infirmity.

* * * * *

I do not consider we sing enough to GOD. . . . For my part I like to hear sacred songs in all sorts of places. The maid-servant can sing at her work and the carter as he drives his team. The occupations are few which could not be enlivened by repeating the words and running over the tune of a hymn. If it were only a faint whisper, the habit might be cultivated.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond.)

WORDS^{OF} HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

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Book Review

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians, translated from a correct text, and expounded by William Kelly. (C. A. Hammond, 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1. 8s. 6d. net.)

We heartily commend the re-issue of this valuable work by the late William Kelly. That combination of exact scholarship, devout piety and crystal-clear exposition characterising all his works is very marked in this present volume.

Apart from a couple of learned dissertations in the body of the book (pages 110-113 and 152-158 and a score of scholarly references mercifully relegated to footnotes for students) the volume as a whole affords abundant spiritual food for the believer simple or learned.

The blessed hope and the glorious appearing are clearly set forth. Here in the context in which the SPIRIT led the Apostle to present it, and expounded by a confessedly gifted teacher, the important truth shines brightly. The freshness and beauty of this earliest of New Testament writings expounded by one free of all ecclesiastical and denominational bias will be appreciated by the reader. Clearly printed, well bound, and produced at the low figure (as book prices go today) of 8s. 6d. net, we pray it may be welcomed and valued by many of our readers.

ED.

Thoughts on the Book of Judges

BY THE EDITOR

(continued from page 16)

GIDEON'S position as leader, deliverer and judge was now recognised by the people. The victory, coupled with the statesmanlike way of dealing with the tribal difficulties, jealousies and differences which followed, so impressed the people that they would gladly have accepted him as a King. "Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, "Rule thou over us, both thou and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian."

But Gideon knew that GOD was their King, and that it was He who had given deliverance to them, and that he had simply been the instrument used by Him. The people, like many today, in the hour of their distress had cried unto GOD, but in the day of deliverance forgot Him. At once he loyally replies, "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you."

A smaller man lured by the temptation of power and popularity might easily have been entrapped in this snare spread by GOD'S enemy for the feet of this faithful and successful servant. Not so, Gideon, and had his history ended here what a blameless record of a consistent life of faith, humility and service to GOD, would have been for ever associated with the name of Gideon the son of Joash.

But since "the best of men are only men at the best" he who resisted "the pride of life" succumbed to "the lust of the eyes," to one like Gideon obviously a more subtle form of temptation.

"And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the ear-rings of his prey — (they were golden ear-rings, because they were Ishmaelites." To this the people willingly agreed, adding ornaments, sweet jewels (margin), purple raiment and other costly chains of gold. Carefully let us note what soon followed, and

heed the Apostolic warning why such things are left on the record in the Old Testament narratives, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (I Cor. x. 11, 12).

So we read, and "Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah; and all Israel went thither a-whoring after it: which thing became a snare ["ruin" margin] unto Gideon, and to his house." This was not merely a great mistake, but a sin against both GOD and the people, for through it the people relapsed again into their old idolatry, and finally into a worse servitude than that from which Gideon had been used to deliver them.

For all this time the Ark of GOD abode at Shiloh, with altar, ephod, priest and sacrifices for sin as appointed and established there by Joshua by divine direction for the true worship of JEHOVAH.

Yet Gideon, who had broken down the idolatrous altar at Ophrah and destroyed the grove with its unholy associations of Baal worship, now proceeds to build again things, which earlier, he had destroyed. He is older, has had more experience of God's grace and help, more light therefore on the way acceptable to Him, yet he makes a sham ephod, erects a sham altar, and in his own city led the people to make Baal-berith their God, and as the record reveals "went after Baalim." So the story of Gideon becomes one of spiritual deterioration followed by that lack of Godly self-control and domestic concord revealed by the "many wives" and "the seventy-one sons" one of whom became the curse of the land after his father's death.

And the drift, decline and disaster of the later years dated from those golden ear-rings coveted by a *successful servant* of GOD and so grossly misused by him. These things "are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x. 11, 12). Gideon, Solomon, Demas — all were men of singular spiritual advantages whose sense of responsibility was not commensurate with that of their privileges. A Christian poet reminds us:

“The gray hair’d saint may fail at last,
The surest guide a wanderer prove.”

Another, equally awake to the danger prays:

“O guard my soul LORD JESUS
Abiding still in Thee;
And if I wander teach me
Soon back to Thee to flee.”



The Bright and Morning Star

AT the end of the Revelation, the last book of the Bible, CHRIST is revealed as the Morning Star, a unique title that is outside the realm of prophecy. He is the Root and the Offspring of David, the origin and heir of the temporal promises made to Israel, but more than that, He is the brilliant Star of the Morning. He has not yet taken His place as the Sun of Righteousness in a world plunged in darkness, but for faith the daybreak is ahead, and faith’s assembly in the darkness that covers the world, sees Him as the bright and morning Star. This assembly, according to His Word is watching for Him, and waiting as knowing Him in His radiant and heavenly character, a character which is not revealed to a sleeping world, but which is the happiness and joy of those who are watching, and the reward of him who holds fast to the end. (Rev. iii. 28).

When He rises up as the Sun of Righteousness, He will no longer be known as we now have the privilege of knowing Him under the character of the Morning Star. In the glory of that day the world can know nothing of this character of the Morning Star. As long as CHRIST has this place, the SPIRIT dwells in the assembly here below, which is looked upon as in its own relation, unique, as the spouse of CHRIST, and as having a corresponding desire towards Him.

So the SPIRIT Who dwells in the assembly, and the assembly itself say: “Come,” and this expression of longing desire is not for one who is a judge or a rewarder, but it is for the revelation of Himself, Who is awakening the desire of the

spouse towards Him according to the relationship in which grace has placed her. It is not a question of mere sentimental desire, but the SPIRIT Who dwells in the assembly suggests and controls its conception. Then the SPIRIT, and with Him the hearts of those who find joy in their relationship, turn towards others outside and say: "Let him who hears say: 'Come!'" Let him who hears the voice of the SPIRIT in the assembly join in the cry and say: "Come!" This expresses a common hope, and ought to be our common desire, and the consciousness of what is coming on the earth, and the ruin of the things that are; these ought to be a powerful motive for evoking this cry from all hearts.

Dear fellow-believer, although we are still here below, have we not another place? Are not our desires raising us up towards GOD and our heavenly Spouse? Ought we not to reflect the character of GOD Whom we know as HAVING His nature and His SPIRIT manifested in the love of CHRIST, and being in possession of the water of life, though as yet without the Spouse? Do we not turn to those around and invite them with the words: "Let him that is athirst come, whosoever will, and partake freely of the water of life? Is not our whole position, as conscious of the place of assembly, developed here from the desire for the coming of CHRIST to the call addressed to whosoever will to come.

CHRIST encourages our hearts, as true believers, with the assurance that He is coming quickly, and our hearts answer with a desire both ardent and sincere: "Amen! come LORD JESUS!" This wonderful Book closes with the salutation of grace, leaving in our hearts the promise and the desire as the last words of our LORD and SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST!

G. S. PURNELL



The Need for Today

THERE could be no more apt illustration of the formation and operation of the Church of GOD than the HOLY SPIRIT'S choice of the human body. A composite thing of many members yet a complete whole; a thing in which there

is much duplication of members yet but one head; which can function more or less if some members are injured or missing, but completely useless without the head. So we being many are one body in CHRIST. (Rom. xi. 5).

Chapter xii. of 1 Corinthians, tells us a good deal about this spiritual body. First as to its formation; by one SPIRIT are we all baptised into one body (v. 13). Verse 3, gives the same thing in another way — “no man can say that JESUS is the LORD, but by the HOLY GHOST.” What a man thinks of CHRIST is the touch stone, and makes the difference between being in the Body and not in the Body.

Verse 18, says, “GOD hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.” He is the builder and organiser of all, and determines, as in the natural body, how many hands, feet, etc., are needed for the purpose He has in view. In both cases, too, most of the essential duties are provided for in duplicate, so that near-normal operation can be continued though some members be removed.

An essential consideration is the nature of gift. “GOD hath set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him.” We are exhorted to covet earnestly the best gifts, and in certain circumstances one may give assistance in a sphere not normally his, but usually the gifts are distinct, and our wisdom will be to acknowledge the distribution as of GOD. He knows the future, and can prepare His church for it with the gifts He sends.

Verses 21 to 23, need quoting to stress the importance of the point to be made; particularly verse 22. “The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary; and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour.” The point to be noted is interdependence; our need for one another — a vital pressing *need*. Not just tolerance, but *need*. A hand without an eye to guide it, is

sadly limited. Blind persons can be trained to use their hands marvellously, but the normal thing is for the eye to guide the hand. An evangelist *can* do without a man of prayer behind him, but how much encouraged he feels when he knows prayer is being offered for him by others.

The point here stressed however, seems to go beyond what we might call obvious dependence; the members spoken of are, "those which seem to be more feeble," v. 22; "which we *think* to be less honourable;" v. 25, and the surprising statement about them is that they "are necessary." How exactly opposite to the human mind which would gather together the strong and exclude the weak. Here we are told GOD sets the members *as it pleases Him*, and the feeble members *are necessary*. Set beside this Ephesians iv, 16, which tells us that the body is nourished by what *every* joint supplies, and we get a complete picture of things. The first need of the body is nourishment, and that is supplied, bit by bit, by every member according to their gift and capacity. Does not this stress the importance of *every* member for the well-being of the whole; the *necessity* of the feeble member even? How often do we find one who seems to us useless, always in trouble or lagging behind or in some other ways causing distress to his brethren. And how often as we look back over the past, do we find such an one gradually pushed out and the door closed behind him with a sigh of relief? Relief it may be for the moment, but just think what it means. One for whom CHRIST died, outside the sphere of the practical expression of the Body. A member whom it has pleased GOD to set in the Body; one of the joints who ministers to the nourishment of it. It may be said he was a weak member, a cause of weakness. GOD says the feeble member is necessary. How can we be strengthened in patience and grace if neither is called into exercise? The sad part of such a case is that, in the final result, the Body lacks the vital contribution of the individual; whether exercised in the world or in the church makes no difference; the deficiency is there and the expression of the unity and strength of the Body suffers from the loss.

Let us therefore be particularly careful with such. In a similar connection in the Epistle to the Romans we have the following statements; firstly, "GOD hath received him;" secondly, "he shall be holden up;" and thirdly, "GOD is able to make him stand." (Rom. xiv, 3-4). GOD speaks of such as being necessary to the Body, and how blessed for that to be recognised, but if not, beware, "GOD is able to make him stand." What a joy to follow the Apostle into the final development of his line of thought in writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xiii), where love abides and surmounts all. Is the weak member holding back the gifted one? Does he seem a trial to the ambitious? Or is he for ever causing pain and sorrow to his brethren? Love can cover a multitude of things, and by the display of it the world knows that we are CHRIST'S disciples. The Apostle evidently would have us to realise that its exercise is of paramount importance, and there is no doubt that if it is exercised, it will be a check upon the outflow of the unworthy sentiments that are the fruit of the flesh and which cause dishonour to CHRIST.

Sometimes, alas, there is a need for the exercise of discipline in the assembly, a need which dare not be overlooked; and as a result a member may be removed, but how different might be the approach, and possibly the result, if the above points were kept in mind; 1, every believer is a member by the same grace; 2, every member is set there as it pleases GOD; 3, every member, however feeble, is a necessity; that is why GOD put him there; 4, the growth of the Body is by what every member furnishes. Let us, therefore, beloved brethren, see that our dealings with one another are governed by the remembrance of these things. The more we think over them the more convinced we shall be that the loss of one member, even the weakest, is a calamity. The mark of the good Shepherd is that he seeks the one sheep that wanders away, and if we would imitate Him no member of the Body can be regarded as valueless and not worth saving. Carried out in this way, discipline, when needed, cannot be entered into lightly, and cannot be with any other motive than recovery, lest there should be done permanent damage to the testimony before the world.

The exercise of discipline must be a cause of great sorrow to those who are called upon to do it, and of humbling before GOD that, with the HOLY SPIRIT in the midst, it has been impossible to combat the action of the flesh and gain the victory without individual loss. Furthermore, it must be understood by those who act, that a great responsibility rests upon them in connection with the member removed from their midst, lest complete shipwreck of faith should befall him. Though sundered from his brethren practically, he is still a member of the only Body known to Scripture; still dear to God though of necessity chastened; and still a potential source of supply of that which "every joint" supplies for the needs of the Body. His absence should bring a sense of a lack that only his return can remove. It is also a fact that one who has had to be put out, cannot be in such a spiritual frame of mind as to be closely in touch with GOD as either to desire or actively to seek return to the place of privilege. It is, therefore, incumbent upon those who have had to act for GOD in the matter not to leave it half done, but to proceed according to the injunction given in Galatians vi, 1; "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." This cannot be done without deep and real exercise before GOD, but a very blessed exercise which brings us in a very vital way into the current of the divine mind toward man. It is grace, divine grace alone, by which any of us can say we stand; and which acted for us to make us realise that we had a need, when we were yet sinners. That same grace is still available for keeping us on the road and if we can say we still stand, it is only on this same account. If another has fallen by the way, for whatever reason it matters not, how like the Master shall we be if we concern ourselves about them, and how ready will He be to answer a petition so absolutely in accord with His own thought, if we go to Him about them. We *need* the erring one to complete the testimony of the united Body; and he *needs* his brethren to intercede for him when momentarily overtaken in a fault.

If, now, we allow our minds to run further afield, we see many who are really the LORD'S by faith, walking in paths of man's making. What should be our attitude toward them? It is still true that GOD has set them in the Body and that He planned that they should minister to its needs in some way. We rejoice that GOD is able to over-rule man's mistakes and blindness, to accomplish His purposes, but that does not warrant us to look for some special manifestation outside of the simple instructions of Scripture.

In the beginning all believers were together with one accord in one place (Acts ii, 1), expressing the unity of the Body. Only the imposition of man's will made anything else the rule, but this became so insistent as completely to nullify the plain scriptural testimony in subsequent years. Only through the great grace of GOD in recent times has there been a revival with a measure of pristine fervour, but very circumscribed scope, which, alas, is already subsiding into lukewarmness. But the very fact of there having been a revival at all should give us confidence to go to the GOD of all grace about it. We have no strength to stand by ourselves, and follow in the wake of those who collectively had no strength or desire to recover themselves, but GOD for His own purposes came in and granted a little reviving. Let us honour Him by leaning hard upon Him, not in walking in any show of strength, for those who walk in pride He is able to abase; and let us be continually before him in prayer for those who, though members of the Body, walk in man-made paths. Let us confess before Him our need, individually, for strength and faith to walk in the path of His ordering; and collectively, to confess our brokenness, and the dire need we have of the ministrations of those gifts to the Body of which we are denied the benefit through the present confusion. Let us ask in faith, nothing wavering (James i, 6), remembering that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James v, 16). On the other hand it is recorded, "ye have not because ye ask not; ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." (James iv, 2-3). To ask for

the sake of pride in numbers would be disastrous; but to ask because our blessed LORD did the same (John xvii, 20-21), and that it will therefore be for His glory, is a vastly different thing and cannot fail to receive an answer. May we be increasingly conscious of our *need* of one another, and of the necessity of invoking divine aid to enable us to walk together to glorify GOD.

A. A. TUNLEY

The Abiding Love of the Lord in Resurrection

(John xxi)

SEVEN of the LORD'S disciples go fishing together, the lawful occupation to which most of them were brought up, if not all. (Incidentally, here it is interesting to notice that what these disciples had already learnt of the LORD'S love was reflected in their association with one another. To take extreme cases, the disciple whom JESUS loved, who lay on His breast at the supper, had not refused to be associated with Peter who had denied the LORD, or with doubting Thomas). This affords another occasion for the manifestation of the *abiding love of the Risen Lord*. He is there, standing on the shore, and intervenes, asking them the simple question whether they have anything to eat, and on their replying "No" gives them instructions which they obey with immediate overwhelming success. Thus, in His abiding love He teaches us His care for us in our daily occupations, and more — that we are dependent on Him, not on ourselves, and that blessing depends on obedience even in our ordinary vocations and in the provision of our daily food. We may work to the best of our ability on our own initiative to no profit. For success in mundane matters as much as in any form of "work for the LORD" we are dependent on His love and subjection to His word. This is peculiarly true for all who are His disciples. Further, He demonstrates that His love for them is such that He will provide for them apart altogether from their efforts, though graciously combining the fruit of their obedience to His word with His own sovereign bounty. As a secondary lesson from this passage

by introducing from Matthew His promise that He would make Peter and Andrew fishers of men (Matt. iv. 19), we learn that gospel efforts undertaken in our own way on our own initiative are fruitless. We need to be so assured of His love that we await His time and His instructions. Then we find gospel work is crowned with success. Is not this one of the explanations of the "lack of result" so often deplored? How lovingly the LORD teaches us these things! In these first thirteen verses His love for His own is displayed in that He was on the shore. He drew from them the acknowledgment of failure, He directed their efforts to success, He showed them He could and would provide for them apart from their own efforts, He brought the result of their work into use, He appreciated and met their physical needs, and withal presided as the giver of all.

Having thus manifested His love in so many ways since His resurrection as related in Chap. xx and the first thirteen verses of Chap. xxi, the LORD now dealt in love with Peter. Peter might naturally have expected blame and reproach for having denied three times that he was a disciple of JESUS. But the LORD'S love was too great to take this way. He gently prompts Peter to search his own heart. To what extent could Simon say he reciprocated such love as the LORD had shown, and was still showing to him? To a greater extent than the other disciples? How humble is Peter's reply! He makes no comparison with others, He does not even use the same word for loving as the LORD uses, but answers "Yea, LORD, Thou knowest that I am attached to Thee," using the Greek word for love that expresses the natural affection between friends. What a contrast there is here with Peter's self-confidence expressed at the end of John xiii! The RISEN LORD in His love expresses no reproach to Peter, but on the contrary commits a trust to him "Feed My Lambs." Is not this a characteristic of the LORD'S love? The LORD repeats the question, and again Peter answers in the same words. This time the LORD commissions him to shepherd (or "tend") His sheep. But the third time the LORD questions Simon He condescends in love to use Peter's word for loving — "Simon, son of

Jonas, art thou attached to me?" This loving grace deeply touched Peter's heart, and in His response he not only acknowledged the LORD'S omniscience, but in particular that He knew Simon himself through and through. The LORD then commissions Peter to feed His sheep; and goes on to tell him in veiled language how he would glorify GOD in his death, a wonderful loving antithesis to Peter's previous confident boast "I will lay down my life for Thy sake" (xiii, 37). The LORD further crowns the whole incident beautifully and gloriously by saying to Peter "Follow Me" — the RISEN LORD Who had so recently sent the message by Mary "I ascend to My FATHER and your FATHER; and to My GOD and your GOD." These verses 15 to 19 inclusive teach us *the love of the RISEN LORD* in dealing with failure through self-confidence, and how, in His love, He fits His own for service to His flock and gives them their commission. There are deep lessons here for all who seek to feed or shepherd the lambs or the sheep of His flock, but perhaps the greatest lesson is to perceive the abiding character of His love.

Even then Peter took his eye off the LORD, turned round, saw another disciple, and became occupied with him. Maybe it was natural affection for John that prompted the question "LORD, and what shall this man do?", but the LORD gently reproves Peter and emphasises the individual appeal "Follow *thou Me*". Yet once again the love of the LORD is manifested, for with the rebuke He associates a reference to His coming again.

From John xx we saw in a previous article how the RISEN LORD dealt in love with the ignorance and denseness, the fear of man, and the materialistic doubts of His disciples. He met their condition in patient persevering love, and used each occasion not only to meet their shortcomings but to reveal His love in even fuller measure. Such is His love for His own individually still, for we, too, are often ignorant, slow of understanding, timid, and hard to convince. He is never impatient with us, never gives up, but uses even our faults to teach us more of the depths of His love. We also saw that He confirmed by His presence the gathering together of his disciples on the first day of the week.

Throughout the two chapters the *abiding love of the RISEN LORD* stands out supremely. As we meditate on this, and realise how true it all is in the circumstances of today, our hearts are filled with worship and, each in our measure, the love of our hearts is drawn out to Him. But so great is His love for His own that He desires more even than this — “*that ye love one another as I have loved you.*” Let us examine our own hearts and ask ourselves whether we really do so — in cases of ignorance and denseness, timidity and doubts; towards those active in ill-directed gospel work and those who have broken down altogether in their testimony for the LORD. Let us show the same patience and tenderness, the same gracious encouragement towards all who are His, as characterised the love displayed by our LORD in these two chapters.

In this connection there is a very touching expression in I Peter i, 8. We have seen how Peter failed to use the LORD’S word for “love.” That word is used of GOD Himself (John iii, 16; I John iv, 7, 8, 16) and there is none of higher significance. Peter humbly used an inferior word. Yet writing to the scattered Israelite Christians he wrote “Whom having not seen ye love”, attributing to them that highest “love” which he had not dared to use in his reply to the LORD. What a beautiful example of the effect on Peter’s outlook! The RISEN LORD’S love characterised Peter’s attitude towards the saints in this remarkable practical answer to the LORD’S question “Lovest thou Me more than these?” May the LORD use the meditation on these two chapters to teach us more of the depths of His love, that our heart’s affections may be drawn out more to Him in worship, our walk and ways be more controlled by His abiding love, and that His love may be reflected in our whole attitude towards all who are His.

J. C. KELL



It has been said, “Self is the centre of every irritated heart.”
There there will be no more self!

* * * * *

“Lead me” and “hold me” is the language of faith.

Sparkling Gems

The spirit of observing GOD in all things was prevalent amongst our Puritan ancestors. They saw GOD in every single drop of rain and in every ray of sunlight. They were wont to talk about the commonest changes of the atmosphere as coming from the hand of GOD, to speak of incidents which we might account trivial, as connected with the decrees of Him Who ordereth all things after the counsel of His own will. Oh, that we too amidst the various mazes of life could thus learn to track the course "of boundless wisdom and of boundless love!"

* * * * *

"Talk ye of all His wondrous works," such conversation, brethren, would be very ennobling . . . GOD'S wondrous works, GOD'S works in creation, GOD'S works in grace.

* * * * *

The true experience of the Christian life is occupation with CHRIST — and His things; and *not with ourselves, or evil.*

* * * * *

He tells *us* not to make much of sorrows and afflictions here. But *He* makes much of them. "All our tears are in His bottle." He knows more about our sorrows than we do!

* * * * *

One cause of so much head-knowledge is that there is so little meditation; and Divine things float through the mind and become intellectual, whereas they *were meant for our joy.*

As to effects and as to results, we need never be anxious; they are not ours to produce.

* * * * *

The effect of the Truth is not merely to bring us into *separation from* the world, but into *fellowship with* one another. *Occupation with our Lord* unites us.

* * * * *

"My soul shall make her boast in the LORD; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad." If you want to cheer and encourage souls, boast of the LORD, and not of self, or attainments.

* * * * *

To say we don't know, is often the road to learn.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond).

WORDS^{OF} HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

APRIL, 1954

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RISEN CHRIST, our souls adore Thee:
Thou hast left the silent grave;
Death and Hades quail before Thee,
Thou art mighty now to save:

RISEN LORD, Thou now art seated
On the FATHER'S throne on high:
GOD the place supreme has meted
To the One Who came to die:
All completed, hell defeated,
Glory, glory, LORD, we cry.

RISEN SAVIOUR, past for ever
Is thine hour of untold woe:
We rejoicing in Thy favour
Share Thy blissful triumph now:
Risen Saviour, now and ever
At Thy glorious feet we bow.

C. HELENA VON POSECK.

Thoughts on the Book of Judges

BY THE EDITOR

(continued from page 27)

JEPHTHAH, the seventh judge, was probably the most ill-used man in the Old Testament. Of despised birth, badly treated at home, disowned by his brethren, misunderstood and misrepresented in life and after death, he yet proved himself to be "a brother born for adversity." In their distress it was to Jephthah they promptly turned for help, and they were not disappointed. He had by then become the captain of a "band of vain men," and this is sometimes considered as being to his discredit. How about David then, with *his* band of bankrupts, discontented, bitter-spirited outlaws a couple of centuries later? Indeed it is not difficult to trace a parallel between the circumstances of these two great men. Each, in his measure also, may serve as a type of our LORD, since CHRIST is found in all the Scripture. Jephthah, like David, was destined to become first the deliverer and then the judge of the people. In the New Testament he is named as a man of faith, one of those "who through faith subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness." He ranks with Gideon, Barak, David and Samuel: a man of faith therefore, from whose history we may learn needed lessons and glean encouragement today.

The most significant thing in the story of Jephthah is his regard for the NAME of the LORD. When the deputation of Israelitish elders came cringingly to seek the aid of their previously despised, but now sorely desired, brother, the NAME of JEHOVAH THE LORD immediately receives great prominence in the narrative. From the commencement of the interview, "If ye bring me home again," to the exclamation after the great victory, "I have opened my mouth unto the LORD," the controlling factor is "the NAME of the LORD." This reveals the character of the man then, as another has well said, "If the NAME and PRESENCE of the LORD is the supreme distinction in any man's life and history, Old Testament or New, prosperity or adversity, then he that runs might surely have read in that Jephthah's character and Jephthah's standing in the true Israel".

The phrase "Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD" does not convey the thought that he *said* his prayers, or *read* his prayers, but rather out of the *aloneness* of his heart and the conscious *nearness* of GOD he uttered all his words. The past with all its experiences, the present with its opportunities, the future with all its hopes and fears, all alike uttered to the LORD to Whom past, present and future lay like an open book. As in the touching interview with his noble daughter later he confessed, "I have opened my mouth unto the LORD and I cannot go back," so she, her father's true daughter (and sharing his reverence for the LORD) recognizes the obligation. "My father," says she, in effect, to her heart-broken parent (for she was his only child), "if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD that settles the matter."

Six more years the broken-hearted man lived exercising one of the shortest Israelitish judgeships on record. But his great word, "I have opened my mouth unto the LORD and I cannot go back" still strikes a chord in the heart of all who once made *their sincere confession* of CHRIST as SAVIOUR and LORD.

O JESUS, I have promised
 To serve Thee to the end;
 Be Thou for ever near me,
 My MASTER and my FRIEND;
 I shall not fear the battle
 If Thou art by my side,
 Nor wander from the pathway
 If Thou wilt be my GUIDE.

For, I have opened my mouth unto the LORD and I cannot go back; nor would I if I could.

(To be continued D.V.)

At My Right Hand

("Sit on My right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool"
 —Heb. i. 13.)

IN Genesis (xxxv. 18) Benoni, "son of my sorrow" to his mother Rachel, is Benjamin "son of the right hand" to Jacob his father. Jacob's own name had been changed by

GOD to Israel "a prince with GOD," and he in giving the new name to his son showed faith worthy of this.

Benjamin, as a type of CHRIST in some respects, was the only one of Jacob's sons born in the land of Canaan in Ephratah—Bethlehem. Jacob himself typifies the returning remnant of Israel of a later day, who, after passing through sorrow and travail (like Rachel) will find their comfort in Him (*the Son of sorrow yet the Man of the right hand of the FATHER*) Who will come forth to rule; "Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting (Micah v. 2, 3).

At that time of restoration, preceded by a time of trouble such as never was known before, Israel will display Benjamin-like qualities in the treading down of their enemies (*cf.* Gen. xlix. 27; Micah v. 8; Dan. xi. 32). Meanwhile the one-time MAN of sorrows is saluted as the MAN of GOD'S right hand, the place of exaltation (*cf.* Psalm lxxx. 17; St. Mark xvi. 19; Hebrews i. 13). It is the place of honour (Hebrews ii. 9; x. 12) into which no created being could intrude, where JESUS now sits "crowned with glory and honour, having by the grace of GOD tasted death for every man." The scriptural description given is "far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named." To Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess Him as LORD.

This present position of the LORD JESUS CHRIST is a spring of joy to the Christian believer, for He now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high as having found eternal redemption. He has been perfected by death, burial, resurrection, ascension and glorification as MAN, the MAN of GOD'S right hand. His contrasting glories against the background of His humiliation in the days of His flesh cause the affections of His redeemed people to rise in adoring worship.

For now we see Thee risen
 Who once for us hast died,
 Seated above the highest heaven,
 The FATHER'S GLORIFIED.
 Soon wilt Thou take Thy throne,
 Thy foes Thy footstool made,
 And take us with Thee for Thine own—
 In glory love displayed.

For this our LORD waits, and His people wait with Him; looking for that blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of the great GOD and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works.

L. HOWSON.



A Habitation of God

DAVID found favour before GOD, and desired to find a tabernacle for the GOD of Jacob. But Solomon built Him an house. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as saith the prophet (Isaiah lxvi. 12): Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me saith the LORD: or what is the place of My rest? Hath not My hand made all these things?" (Acts vii. 46-50).

Stephen, with his face "as it had been the face of an angel" and himself full of the HOLY GHOST, gave utterance to these words when he was falsely charged with having said that "JESUS of Nazareth shall destroy this place (Jerusalem and its temple) and change the customs which Moses delivered" (Acts vii. 1-53).

He was speaking to a hostile audience that "gnashed on him with their teeth," and when he said: "Behold I see the heavens opened, and the SON of MAN standing on the right hand of GOD," cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran upon him, casting him out of the city and stoning him to death.

The apostle Paul, standing in the midst of Mars Hill at Athens, proclaimed to the Athenians: "GOD that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is LORD of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts xvii. 24, 25).

His audience was not as desperate as Stephen's, when he went on to say that "GOD had appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that MAN Whom He hath ordained: whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead."

They contented themselves with mocking at the thought of the resurrection, and some even proposed hearing him again on this matter.

The dwelling-place of GOD has always been a highly controversial subject among mere men, and the thought that GOD is not very far from every one of us, to be felt after and found by those willing to seek Him, as One in Whom we live and move and have our being, is not easily accepted by those who prefer to keep Him at a distance. Even professing believers hardly like the thought that we cannot draw a breath or move a muscle without His sanction, and *that we ought to be momentarily conscious of His nearness to us.*

When GOD was manifest in the flesh in the person of JESUS of Nazareth, John the Baptist stood with two of his disciples, and looking upon Him as He walked, said: "Behold the LAMB of GOD!" His two disciples, when they heard it, followed JESUS, Who turned and asked them what they were seeking. Their answer was: "Master, where dwellest Thou?" His reply was: "Come and see." They accepted the invitation, saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day.

At the present day is not a believer placed in a wonderful position? He is told that his very body is a temple of GOD in the PERSON of the HOLY GHOST, Who came down into this scene at the request of GOD'S only begotten SON to find a habitation in those who believe in Him, and to guide such in doing honour to the ONE Who sought not His own glory, but the glory of the FATHER Who had sent Him. The HOLY SPIRIT deigns to find a dwelling-place in the body of a simple and humble believer, and also to take His place in an assembly consisting of even two or three gathered by Himself to the Name of the ONE Whom He is here to honour. Amongst all the wonders of the present day, what is more wonderful than this, and what more needful of care lest His honoured presence be grieved or quenched by what is not worthy of Him?

“Behold I stand at the door and knock,” says the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself, in the power of the HOLY SPIRIT: “if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me” — one last opportunity of having the last meal of the day with the ONE in Whom we live and move and have our being (Rev. iii. 20).

G. S. PURNELL

In Holy Contemplation

INCARNATION

THAT WHICH WE CONTEMPLATED CONCERNING THE
WORD OF LIFE.

THE WORD (not a spoken word or message merely), but a Person, Whom the Apostle John with his fellow Apostles had contemplated as they companied with Him in the days of His flesh. So he puts on record both Who He was, and is, Whose glory it was they beheld and the kind of glory it was. “In HIM was life, not an imparted life such as creatures enjoy, but life itself inherent, with fullness of understanding of the divine purposes and power both to express and bring to fruition. Thus He the effulgence of GOD’S glory, and the expression of His substance, became flesh and dwelt among us revealing GOD as LIGHT and LOVE, Himself full of grace and truth, the Only-begotten of the FATHER.

Let us now in holy contemplation go with the shepherds to Bethlehem to see the thing that has come to pass; the Babe lying in the manger; the promised Seed of the woman Who is destined to bruise the serpent’s head; and to adore Him in the meekness and majesty of His true humility. He Who is creation’s Head, “the WORD, by Whom the world was made,” has entered His own creation in real humanity, and as with the shepherds and the wise men now we contemplate Him we also would worship and adore.

Listen now to the aged Simeon in the temple as, holding the Holy CHILD in his arms, he says, “LORD, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy

salvation." To Jordan's bank now let us make our way in holy contemplation in the company of those whom He describes as "the excellent of the earth in whom is all My delight" (Psalm xvi.), and listen in spirit to the VOICE from the open heavens: "This is MY beloved SON in Whom I have found MY delight" (St. Matthew iii. 17 (New Trans.)).

Let us still follow His blessed footsteps and ponder His gracious words recorded in the holy gospels written that ye might believe that JESUS is the CHRIST the Son of GOD; and that believing ye might have life through His name. For the WORD was made Flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory—"that which we contemplated," says the beloved Apostle.

ATONEMENT AND SUBSTITUTION

"For He hath made Him to be sin for us," and it was Him Who knew no sin Who was made sin; that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in Him. As we contemplate this precious scripture wonder and worship from our inmost souls is the response which surely rises. The depths we cannot plumb; the physical, mental and spiritual sufferings endured by the sinless Sufferer on the cross no mind of man can possibly conceive. Made sin for us, He Who knew no sin; the LAMB of GOD Who was manifested to take away our sins and in Whom is no sin (1 John iii. 5). The "sin offering" (Lev. vi.) is "most holy" or could not prevail or be accepted.

The precious blood of JESUS prevailed in the heavenly sanctuary itself, *while Jesus suffered without the gate of Jerusalem* (Heb. xiii. 11, 12). The HOLY SPIRIT guards against the unholy thoughts and evil suggestions of those around the cross, for the Victim was the Holy One of GOD however low He stooped in grace for GOD'S glory and in his suffering to death for man's salvation.

"Oh! come my soul and gaze
On that great grief, that crown of thorn!
See there, in deep amaze,
Thy sentence borne."

MADE UNTO US

CHRIST JESUS Who is from GOD made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. i. 30). Yes, *made unto us*, poor sinners, sometimes foolish, disobedient, and deceived (Titus iii. 3). CHRIST is made to us the *wisdom* of GOD. The LIFE was the LIGHT of men revealing the darkness while bringing and unfolding the answer to all man's need—GOD'S plan, purpose and remedy. HE is the way, and the truth, and the life.

Made unto us *righteousness*—as the best robe only suited the Father's house on the prodigal's return (Luke xv.), so it is with us as CHRIST is made to us the LORD our righteousness, and we are "accepted in the BELOVED" (Eph. i. 6).

Made unto us *sanctification*, and the erstwhile wanderer becomes a pilgrim, and a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem; one of a holy people, cleansed, and sanctified or set apart to GOD by the blood of CHRIST (Heb. x. 10).

Made unto us *redemption*, covering all our needs, honouring every claim, setting captives free, filling the mouth with singing (Ps. cxxvi. 2, 3) since we have redemption through His blood the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.

In holy contemplation,
We sweetly thus pursue
The theme of GOD'S salvation,
And find it ever new.

C. MOSS



Abram

By W. KELLY

(continued from page 24)

Now the first thing I would press is that faith is shewn, not so much by following what others have received before, but in believing what GOD brings home now to one's own soul

and for one's own path. For GOD has a will about each successive stage in all the varying phases of life, as evil itself grows and works in the world. Satan does not limit himself to the same snares of falsehood and sin, but becomes more and more subtle and determined in his plans. GOD looks for faith in His word accordingly. So in this case (I refer now to Shem's line) the very family that had whatever there was to hope for were fatally involved in his meshes just like other men. But GOD has a way, a blessed and worthy way, of vindicating Himself; and this is a way which, giving all the glory to Himself, faith at once feels is just what it ought to be. The call comes without the slightest ground for it in Abram himself. This we see to be perfectly consistent with the dealings of GOD. He meant the blessing to be in that line; He meant to take up this man and make him the father of the faithful; but he was evidently a child of the unfaithful, and no doubt an unfaithful child himself. The calling was, accordingly, of grace: GOD Himself called; and GOD, at the same time, was fitting this man for the place of blessing; and GOD had, before Abram was fitted for it, pronounced what it was in His heart to give him, so that it might be, not of Abram who deserved it, but of GOD that called him. It was grace. "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great."

The whole principle of the blessing as flowing out of the call of GOD had been manifested in a man distinctly separated to Him, and (I would add) called out without disturbing the arrangements of the world. There was no setting him up with a mightier sword in his hand to put down the workers of iniquity. The world was left, after having been arranged under the providence of GOD in separate families, nations, and tongues, but not till government by man was sanctioned by GOD. But there GOD's honour being completely set aside, and false gods worshipped, He separates under His promise of blessing the man who comes out at His call to the land He would shew him.

This then is GOD's own blessed way—one most effectual, as it is also peculiar to Himself; and on it in fact GOD has acted in our own call whether to Himself or into the church.

It is on my heart to dwell a little on the general truth of the call of Abram, so as to illustrate the way in which GOD connects the principle of the call with the promises and with the whole place of faith here below. It was much for GOD to say, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great." But there was another word, and this was especially dear to the heart of one so blessed himself. "Thou shalt be a blessing." This was to make him not only the object of grace, but the instrument of it. It was to give him communion with GOD Himself in the activity of His own goodness. "Thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (of course, on the earthly side); "and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Abram then acts on the word of the LORD. "He departed, as JEHOVAH had spoken unto him." But there was more than one drawback. Lot his nephew went with him and we shall see the consequence of that. Further, Abram not only took Lot, "his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran," but in the chapter before we have a remarkable intimation not brought before us here. It was not that Abram took Terah, but that "Terah took Abram." This was not merely a hindrance, it was a false position as long as it lasted. It acted as an interference with the call of GOD; for although the call might seem to nature harsh, and that which no doubt man would have been quick to condemn, the word of GOD was plain—"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house." Abram does get out of his country, though hardly from his kindred; but instead of getting "out of his father's house," *his father takes him*. There was clearly an influence at work that was inconsistent with the call of GOD. It was not merely that Terah was with him; the SPIRIT of GOD has not put it so, and of course it was incompatible with due relationship that a man should or could be said to *take his father*. It was "Terah took Abram."

Here then was that which positively hindered the accomplishment of the will of GOD as long as Terah lived. The call

of GOD should be paramount; but the honour due to a father who was not in it must oppose. "Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees." The simple fact is stated in chapter xi.; and one can see that the reason why it is stated there is this. It was purely a question of Abram acting from his own judgment, from *himself*, and not from the call of GOD, who therefore does not make it a part of chapter xii. No doubt, the move was after the call of GOD spoken of in chapter xii, but inasmuch as it was not the accomplishment of His will, GOD puts it in *the chapter of nature and providence* (that is, chapter xi) and not in *that of grace and promise, chapter xii*. We have in chapter xi simply a list of fathers and sons from the flood, and among the rest Abram and Nahor. Sarai is seen there with no child. This was nature; and had it simply been a question of nature, so it would always have been—Sarai always barren. When grace begins to act, we find the dawning of hope in the heart of Abram (at any rate what *we* can now well understand to point in that direction); finally GOD gives the distinct word that Sarah shall have a child. But this was after grace begins to be developed. At first there is nothing of the sort, and it is here therefore we have the account of Terah taking his son Abram and coming as far as Haran, and dwelling there. Accordingly there also we have the days of Terah shewn us, and Terah's death.

But now there is another side so distinct that, although the same facts are alluded to, GOD begins an entirely new unfolding of His mind. In chapter xii He is not speaking of the family as viewed in nature, but of His call. Although Abram believed in GOD, yet nature was at work and had its way. Accordingly GOD takes no notice of it here. Thus we see that what looks a great difficulty in the two chapters—a thing which people have often put one against another—is perfectly solved the moment we come to see that the *one chapter is the story of the family in nature*, the other is *the secret of grace now made manifest*

“Now JEHOVAH had said to Abram, Get thee out.” Note that so He “said to Abram,” not to Terah. As long as Terah was there he was the acting person, as indeed he had the claim of father; and if (not GOD but) you bring a father on to the ground of faith, what is the effect? If he is not in the call of GOD and you are, what must result from allowing your father’s authority to have its way there? It swamps you. It is not that you raise him into the higher regions of faith, but that he drags you down into the quagmire of nature. This is what we may see in these two chapters; so that, spite of the blessed call of GOD, we have the fact brought before us that Abram remains at Haran and fails to reach Canaan.

At length, however, “Terah died in Haran”; and what follows? We are told next (verse 5) that “Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.” Now what a different tale! Not that everything was according to GOD, for there is no perfection save in One; but still Abram could now act and not before. Lot was his nephew only, and did not bar the way as his father had done. While he was alive along with him, Abram must needs be subject, but henceforth he was free. Lot might act selfishly and be an encumbrance; but his father, if there at all, must have a father’s authority; and so it was. He found himself in a sort of half-way ground, and this was what compromise leads to. It is certainly no longer Ur of the Chaldees, but yet only Haran, and not Canaan. The fact brought before us in the previous chapter explains how it is he can get no farther. Terah, who was not in the call of GOD, was nevertheless the one who “took Abram” thus far, and Terah acted so positively as a hindrance that, as long as he lived, Abram could never get on; but the moment that Terah is taken away, as we read, Abram took Sarai, etc., “and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.”

There is no failure, so far, in the accomplishment of the purpose of GOD.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Sparkling Gems

“Before the world was.” What perfections shine in every word of the Son. The world is the arena where sin dishonoured GOD, and where, according to purpose, the glory of GOD will eventually be displayed with even greater brilliance than at the creation.

* * * * *

The greatest of all faults is to be conscious of none.

* * * * *

If we are to understand GOD'S purposes we must not neglect any part of His word.

* * * * *

The early morning is the beginning of the day's work *and the eventide* sees its completion or failure.

* * * * *

The first time that *love* is mentioned in the Bible is: “Isaac whom thou lovest.” It is the love of the father to the son and it typifies for us the first and greatest of all loves, and the source from which all true love has flowed, the love of GOD the FATHER for His SON.

* * * * *

What a change it makes in a Christian's outlook when he discovers the fact that he is precious and desirable in His sight.

* * * * *

GOD'S love will be the dominant thing and, what goes along with that, love to Him in response to it.

* * * * *

He gains our love by disclosing His own; He gains His desire to have us for Himself by showing Himself to us, as brighter and better than the brightest and best that would be a rival to His claim.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond.)

WORDS OF HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

MAY, 1954

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The Gem

By SIR EDWARD DENNY

GEM of the deep, within its rugged shell,
Spotless and pure, and exquisitely white,
Lurks the rich pearl:—Thus love, O LORD, will dwell,
Love to Thy Name! where our defective sight
No beauty finds, while Thou through all canst see,
And prize the jewel that belongs to Thee.

LORD! Thou art love—and shall we dare contemn
The feeblest soul where Thou art pleased to dwell?
Where love divine, that pure and perfect gem,
Dim and unpolish'd now, shall far excel
Yon orient sun, when sorrow's night is past,
In its full lustre unobscured at last.

What brought the SON, O blessed FATHER, down
To dwell, to suffer, die at last on earth,
But love divine? In Thine eternal crown
What gem of nameless all-excelling worth,
Most brightly shines—irradiates all above
With its pure beams? What jewel, LORD, but love?

Thoughts on the Book of Judges

By THE EDITOR

(continued from page 38)

TO some of the Judges great prominence is given, to others little more than a bare mention of name and length of service with addition of some domestic details. We are thereby reminded that even then there were obscure servants of GOD, with limited opportunities, and handicaps, lacking the kind of recognition afforded to some others. But these obscure Judges "whom the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge" (chapter ii. 18) were equally chosen, called and faithful, and so were included in the list of servants of GOD.

Gideon, Jephthah and Samson among the judges may possibly rank with Peter, James and John among the apostles. If so, then Tola, Jair and Ibzan may occupy in the *Book of Judges* positions similar to James the less, Simon Zelotes and Bartholomew in the Gospels. Yet each and all are judges or apostles respectively since then as now:—

"All service counts the same with GOD."

Whether in the Old Testament or the New they were all faithful men who did their work, serving their own generation by the will of GOD, as St. Paul said of David (Acts xiii. 36). And it is both interesting and encouraging to note that the obscure servants of GOD always greatly outnumber those more prominent in the eyes of their contemporaries. The significance of this fact we, the more obscure, may leave, but the comfort and cheer we can take to heart and find in it an incentive to be more diligent to fulfil what is allotted to ourselves; "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit serving the LORD, knowing that of the LORD ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the LORD CHRIST" (Rom. xii. 11; Col. iii. 24).

In the Day of CHRIST such faithful though obscure servants will discover that "they have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain," although during the earthly course it may often have appeared far otherwise. Limited opportunities, handicaps and lack of recognition by their more prominent fellow-servants will, in the retrospect, be seen to have been not so important if the

“well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the LORD” is spoken to them by their LORD.

It is well also to reflect that the perils of obscurity are not so great as those of popularity. Great leaders, eloquent speakers and gifted writers receive an apparently disproportionate share of religious limelight here from their brethren, but the true value of this will be seen in the Day of CHRIST when He reckons with His servants as to the use of gifts according to ability.

One thing marks the record of each of these obscure Judges namely, the accomplishing of the task they were raised up to do.

Tola the first named of these we have considered in a fairly recent article. He arose to defend Israel and did it satisfactorily for twenty-three years—not a bad record for the first of these obscure Judges.

Jair who followed him also delivered Israel from oppression and guided public affairs in such a way that at least suggests his judgeship to have been a time of peace and prosperity.

Ibzan, who followed in the wake of the much more prominent Jephthah, was like Elon and Abdon one whose sphere of service was very restricted. The opportunities of these three judges were curtailed to seven, ten and eight years of activity, but as all are included in the inspired record among the Judges they obviously did good and useful work in their day. So we, too, in our humble, possibly secluded positions, may take courage since this was written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Rom. xv. 4).

However limited may be our sphere of service the consideration of these faithful obscure servants of GOD should stir us up to serve faithfully and diligently remembering “Whose we are and Whom we serve.” The days are evil, the difficulties many, the opportunities may be few; but, says the Apostle, “See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil (Ephes. v. 15, 16). *Redeeming the time*, literally, “buying up the opportunity” (R.V.).

(To be continued D.V.)

“The wants, weaknesses and difficulties of the assembly are only opportunities to CHRIST for the exercise of His Love.”

J.N.D.

Abram

By W. KELLY

(continued from page 48)

"THE Canaanite was then in the land." (Genesis xii. 6). Things were not yet according to GOD. It was not only that Abram's faith shews the weakness of man, but further, the state of Canaan was altogether opposed to that which befits the nature and proper purpose of GOD. It was not only that the world already left behind by the man of faith was still pursuing its idolatries; but if there were men on earth peculiarly under the curse of GOD, it was the very race that Satan planted in Canaan. "Cursed is Canaan." What a solemn thing, the meeting of the blessed one, about to be a blessing, with the cursed ones, that GOD would surely deal with in the day that was coming (and so accordingly we find)! Satan's object by it was no doubt to thwart the purpose of GOD: but it only gave Him the opportunity of carrying it more thoroughly and gloriously to the enemy's shame and everlasting contempt.

We never understand the importance of our walk here below, unless these two things are distinctly and stedfastly before us, not merely that we are objects of GOD's tender mercy and personal interest, but that we are called out to Himself, as well as to "the better country" that He has shewn us. But He has told us too who has meanwhile usurped possession of it. The heavens are now opened, and we see by the HOLY GHOST sent down thence Him who is on the throne of GOD interceding for us as cleansed by His blood, and gone to prepare a place for us. The heavens were opened not merely for Him to enter as the victorious SAVIOUR, but they are open still where He is exalted. This is the way in which He is now revealed to us. They will be open until the LORD has brought us there. I do not say that they will be closed after that, but that judgments will fall thence. In grace they are open for us to look now into. He whose blood opened them for us is the One on whom they opened, not for judgment, as we read once in Ezekiel i., but, as in the very beginning of the New Testament (Matt. iii. 16), that GOD might express His delight in Him, His SON, the perfect Man withal here below.

Let us remember then that we too are identified with God's great starting-point for Abram; we are called out, and blessed, to inherit and to be a blessing. Does the grace of it (and it is not the richest part of our blessing) fill our hearts at all times? Take for instance our ways as members of CHRIST's body, the church, etc. It is not merely that we come together to acknowledge His mercy to us, which of course we do. Thankfulness should be the first thought of the heart that has been opened by the grace of GOD. Who are we that now speak to GOD, looking up and singing praises? Sinners brought out from guiltier evil than that out of which Abram was called. I can understand those who never had sin celebrating His praise, where sense of personal delivering grace is not the special character of their thank-offering before GOD. But who can understand a soul that is redeemed presuming to begin with anything but hearty thanksgiving for the mercy that has plucked him from destruction, and put him so that he can look up to GOD and magnify his SAVIOUR? But whatever we begin with should not be the end for us. It is very right that we should feel evermore what it is to be the object of the tender mercy of GOD, in awakening our hearts and lips to thank Him; but *we should go on to praise Him* for what He is as well as own all He has done. For now we see how worthy He is, and can delight in what He is even apart from ourselves. The heart can thus go out in *adoration* of another and a higher character, in praise and blessing as well as thanksgiving.

It is not only that we are blessed, and that the spring of thanksgiving is touched, and that praise flows forth from those that are blessed; but there is more than this, an activity of love that looks around according to the goodness we have learnt in Him, as well as love breaking out in praises as we look on high and see Him who in our midst praised and taught us to praise before He went there. So we see here: "Thou shalt be a blessing," and "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Take the occupation of the LORD's day. That which calls forth our hearts, is it only when we gather round the LORD at His Supper? Has not such grace and truth as His furnished special occupation all through the day? I should say that its entire course has its calls and place no less than the assemblage at His Table, and I say it the more because there is a danger of a little reaction. Time was

when men used to think the chief thing worth hearing was a gospel sermon, and when they used often to bear a great deal that tried them to get what was not even a good sermon, longing to hear something that might help, comfort and strengthen their souls. There are many Christians in that state still. Are we in the enjoyment of better blessings from GOD? Have we the sense of what His grace has done for us in heavenly places? But do we, as well, keep up the activity of His love in our souls? or are we settling down, content simply to give thanks for the blessing that we possess as children of GOD?

Do you suppose that a person can be at the spring of blessing without also knowing more or less of joy in the power of its active going forth? Depend upon it that this is of great importance to the Christian as such and to the assembly; for it will always be found true, that if we are not going forth in the power of blessing, the world in its power of evil steals in upon us. There will be a withering influence that will shew itself under perhaps fair forms. Do you say, why should I go and listen to the gospel? What have I to do with the message to the unconverted? *You have, you ought to have, a great deal to do with it.* You may not be a preacher; but is there no such thing as fellow-working? or even loving interest if not positive help? Are there no hearts that go forth with every word that is said by the evangelist, none to pray with him for every soul that listens, and especially for those awakened by the SPIRIT? I do say that we are called on, *not* to be as we once were, with our heads down and our eyes anxiously looking out, if haply we might get something to satisfy our starving souls. By grace we now know GOD to be no hard master, and we can in our measure see and enjoy the rich provision of His glory. We of all men then should not appear like the bold beggar that having got his morsel goes off therewith content. Can it be that this is what it has come to with any of us? Or that any soul would sanction such selfishness? Take care that we never seem to come short in this respect. Let us look to it that we put far from us every semblance of heeding only our own things but the things of JESUS CHRIST as to sinners as well as saints. If we value the things of our LORD in the Church, so also let us not be slack in the gospel. Let us have this simply and fully before our hearts, to remember that we too

have Abram's portion, not only as objects but as instruments and channels of blessings. For indeed it is meant that we should draw from the very spring of grace that is ever flowing, whether for the help of those who are already CHRIST's, or for those in that darkness out of which we have been delivered by infinite mercy.

There is a fresh point I should point out. "JEHOVAH appeared unto Abram"—He not only spoke but "appeared," language to me not casual, but intentional. "JEHOVAH appeared to Abram and said." How it was done, we do not know; but we do know what is written. All that we read the first time is that "JEHOVAH had said," but now we find "JEHOVAH appeared to Abram and said, 'Unto thy seed will I give this land.'" There is nothing vague any longer, but precise. It is not "a land that I will shew thee," but "unto thy seed will I give this land." What is the consequence? There "he builded an altar unto JEHOVAH," and not this merely, but "unto JEHOVAH *who appeared unto him.*" It is quite evident therefore to my mind that in this was the needful preliminary to worship, which necessarily awaits the manifestation of the LORD. Worship follows, when He has appeared, and the heart knows Him as He has made Himself known.

(To be continued D.V.)



The Word of Truth

(Truth both Objective and Subjective)

OBJECTIVE truth tends to raise the soul of the Christian to a higher spiritual sphere, lifting us out of ourselves and occupying the heart and mind with what GOD is to, and has, for us. I suppose the highest form of objective truth is that which presents the Person of CHRIST to our souls in all His moral beauty and loveliness, Who is now glorified and set apart as the blessed Object for our poor hearts. As they become engaged with Him the sentiments of the bride in the *Song of Songs* are appreciated and become our own. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for Thy love is better than wine. . . . Thy name is as ointment poured forth." And, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet unto my

taste." Then it is we "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS our LORD"—raising our excelsior banner, with the Apostle we "Forget those things which are behind (good or bad) and reach forth unto the things which are before, we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS." "Beholding . . . the glory of the LORD we are changed into the same image from glory to glory . . ."

Subjective truth tends to subject our hearts to the ways of GOD when inclined to depart from those ways, at least in their hidden recesses. As an example take Ephes iv. 25, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." Again, verse 29, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Then in Ephes. v. 1, 2, "Be ye therefore followers of GOD as dear children; and walk in love . . ."

Perhaps the most extreme example (if one might so speak) of subjective truth is the decalogue. Now just as it was impossible for the ten commands with their, "Thou shalt not," to correct the evils of the heart of old, so even now in those who have the new life subjective truth by itself will not suffice. It will but turn the sincere, conscientious soul in upon itself and bring it to the border of despair as in Rom. vii. "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." While the superficial soul by subjective truth alone becomes legal and self-righteous.

But in the holy Scriptures we find both objective and subjective truth, and, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD and is profitable . . ." So we need both. But in ministering to the saints if a balance is not kept the result will incline to either theoretical Christianity or Christianity with a big I. The neglect of subjective truth results in practical Christianity losing ground and we are inclined to become too theoretical, full of high truths, sure perhaps of our eternal portion, but *careless as to our walk down here*. We need subjective truth to balance us, that our practical walk may be in keeping with the high truths we hold. But on the other hand, when objective truth is given not sufficient prominence and subjective truth is pressed too heavily it tends to

occupy us with ourselves, our blessings, our spiritual attainments or lack of them. The good which the new nature must have for its proper growth and development, under this moral pressure is looked for within, and as a result the honest, conscientious soul is disappointed, lacks joy and liberty, while those who are sufficed by mere outward form and Christian activity become self-complacent and self-satisfied.

There is the root of sin in each one of us—the flesh; we cannot eradicate it, we cannot improve it. In order that it may not be active we must judge it, but to judge it does not mean to wrestle with it, if we do it will throw us every time. But we must make a true appraisal of it, realize and acknowledge that “In me, that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.” So that I must turn away from all that I am in myself and be occupied with the good. When GOD saves us He takes us out of our old standing in Adam and puts us in CHRIST, this is a Divine and sovereign act of grace not dependent upon our spiritual qualifications; if we have acknowledged our sinnership and accepted the sinner’s SAVIOUR we have a new place before GOD, we are “in CHRIST,” if we fail we do not go back to the old, it is done with forever. Wonderful grace! The HOLY SPIRIT has taken up His abode within my heart, not to enable me to fix up and improve the old man, but to occupy me with a blessed Object outside of myself, CHRIST! “Who is made unto us (all that we need) wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.” That is, the HOLY SPIRIT has not come into our hearts to help or enable us to produce a holy I, a reconditioned self, a lovely thing which we can esteem and admire, but to take of the things of CHRIST and show them unto us. To occupy us with that which is above; to reveal to us the things which GOD has prepared for those that love Him. To open up to our hearts and minds the purposes and counsels of GOD as far as it has pleased Him to make them known in His blessed Word. And above all, to fill our hearts with the ONE who is the centre of all those purposes and counsels and who is all the FATHER’S delight, and He wants Him to be the centre of our thoughts and the delight of our hearts.

So a balance of truth is essential, subjective truth to instruct us as to our behaviour down here and to check and correct loose thoughts and careless ways; objective truth to occupy us with

the good, to feed us upon the Manna, the Bread come down from Heaven, CHRIST in His humiliation. To lead our spirits into the garden, there to witness the agonies of Gethsemane as the shadow of the Cross passed across His soul. From there to follow to the brink of Golgotha, to peer, as it were, into its fathomless depths! To hear that anguished cry of abandonment! To instruct us as to the "Why" of that forsaking. To reveal to our wondering hearts the empty tomb and to lift our souls into the Heavenly sphere where ONE sits enthroned at the right hand of GOD, whose thorn-marked brow is now radiant with a crown of glory! Whose nail-pierced feet will soon tread down his enemies, and the hand into which in mockery they placed the reed will wield a sceptre of iron over a world which still defiantly rejects Him or else, like His former religious enemies, would strip the Divine ONE of His Deity.

What an Object for your hearts! And what can subject them in their tendency to wander like the Cross of CHRIST ministered in the power of the SPIRIT of GOD?

E. O. HEWLETT



On Conversation

A DICTIONARY definition of conversation is intercourse, talk and familiar discourse, but in the Bible the word is used also for conduct, and even for citizenship, as in Phil. iii. 20.

It is surely a very interesting and profitable study to look into all the divinely inspired records of conversation in the Bible, the first being that of GOD with His creature man, before and after he had been in conversation with GOD's great enemy and had listened to his lying propaganda, which implied that GOD was deliberately withholding from him something that would be for his good.

This is soon followed by the conversation between Adam and Eve on the birth of their children in the light of GOD's promise in connection with the Seed of the woman.

Then GOD Himself converses with Cain after he had slain his brother, and shows His character as merciful and gracious, even to His impudently hard-hearted creature Cain. Those conversations in which GOD Himself takes part are specially interesting.

GOD treated Abraham as His friend, and said: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" And what a remarkable conversation takes place over Sodom and the possibility of its escape from the doom pronounced against it! (Gen. xviii. 17-33).

The conversations between GOD and Moses are supremely important and show those who look into them what the GOD with Whom we have to do is like. He is the same and changes not. Moses was specially chosen to be the law-giver, but grace and truth came by JESUS CHRIST (John i: 17). The conversation that GOD had with Satan about Job, unknown to Job himself, in which He refers to him as being a pattern among the sons of men, not another man like him in his fear of GOD and hatred of evil, shows us how our conduct ought to be such that GOD can use it for a testimony before the enemy, even without our knowledge. When Job is challenged by GOD and given an opportunity of conversing with Him, he realises what a fool he has been hitherto and he has nothing further to say after all his fine speeches, but an acknowledgement of an abhorrence of himself in GOD's presence.

GOD conversed with the little boy Samuel, before he was old enough to call upon Him as LORD, and then again, when He had to rebuke him, in his old age, for his persistent mourning for the one whom He had rejected from the royal office into which he had been received.

GOD evidently conversed with Enoch, before He brought the flood on the "World of the Ungodly" and revealed to him His future dealing in judgment. This is mentioned in Jude's epistle (vv. 14, 15). In the Epistle to the Hebrews Enoch's translation is mentioned, and his testimony that he pleased GOD. (Heb. xi. 5). He walked with GOD before his translation, and was not, for GOD took him (Gen. v. 24). What GOD revealed to him has not yet taken place, when He shall come with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment on the world of the ungodly.

What a comprehensive expression "The world of the ungodly" is! It includes the whole world, which in 1 John v. 19 is said to lie in wickedness, or in the wicked one. (R.V.) Proud man, satisfied with the grandeur of his own accomplishments, and carried away by his own heart's thoughts of himself, does not like to

think of judgment to come, and when he is brought face to face with even the providential judgments of GOD, he is taken by surprise, and curses GOD Who has power over such things (Rev. xvi. 9).

The judgments of GOD are universally to be acknowledged as not only just but inevitable, and in them there is an element of surprise for many who ought to have known better. What a revelation it was when the risen LORD appeared in the midst of those who, knowing that He was the CHRIST of GOD, had forsaken Him and fled when He submitted to the judgment of a righteous and holy GOD against Whom they as well as we had sinned. "Ought not CHRIST to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" and "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. And ye are witnesses of these things" (St. Luke xxiv. 46 - 48). It was not until the "Promise of the FATHER" came upon them that they were able to comprehend.

In Psalm 1. 23, we read: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of GOD." And we are instructed to let our conversation be as it becometh the gospel of CHRIST; and are reminded that our conversation, or citizenship, is in heaven (Phil. iii. 27, 30).

G. S. PURNELL.

A Letter to a Friend on Personal and Private Communion with God

By the late DR. E. B. BROOKS

IN reply to your enquiries, I may say, that ever since I was brought to the LORD, which is more than fifty years ago, I have always been impressed with the value and importance of prayer; secret, and, as far as could be, continued prayer, that is, lengthened seasons of prayer. In my early Christian days I used to find opportunities for this, and those times were most enjoyable and helpful, and I am thankful to say that it is the same still, although I don't feel able to give the same length of time to it. In those early days secret prayer was a most delightful

exercise, and I am sure I owe much, very much, to the habit of prayer then acquired. As the duties and responsibilities of life increased, of course, time could not be found for long seasons of prayer, but all through my Christian life I have felt unhappy and condemned if I neglected prayer, and more than that, I felt the serious loss and injury to my own spiritual welfare and happiness. I thank GOD, that now I have more quiet time, I try, but brokenly, to keep up this excellent habit. I used to rise early for prayer, but that is now too much for my physical powers. Now I find the quiet of evening the most favourable time. I go into a quiet room, often in the dark, and sit down for a time endeavouring to realise the LORD's presence. I speak to the LORD and ask Him to let me find Him speaking with me. I use short, broken petitions, and, if I may so say, I find myself quietly and reverently talking with Him. After a time, I kneel down and pray more definitely and specifically, not only for myself but for all who are laid on my heart, *e.g.*, relatives, friends, saints, mentioning them by name, servants of the LORD, etc., etc. I recognise that persons are differently constituted in many ways, physically and mentally, and we do not all, and cannot all, act alike, but, for myself, I must say that spiritual declension inevitably results from the neglect of private prayer and secret communion with GOD.

I attach the greatest importance to what I used as a boy to hear my dear father speak of as "ejaculatory" prayer, and I could not live without it. But it will not act as a perfect substitute—for me, at least—for set times of prayer. When I was young, I used to read a good deal of the biography of godly men, such as Baxter, Doddridge, Howe, etc., and those were men of prayer; and I also read their books, *e.g.*, Baxter's "Saint's Rest." That was one of the first books I read, and I read it with intense interest. I owe more than I can say to that book, and thank GOD He ever led me to read it. The impressions then made will never be effaced.



"With bowed heads and open hearts may we offer ourselves. We can do no more, and we dare do no less."—*Bp. Westcott.*

* * * * *

We need the *daily* renewal of faith, fidelity and self-denial.

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One great evidence of my abiding in CHRIST is quietness.

* * * * *

Love likes to be a servant and selfishness likes to be served.

* * * * *

He has purchased us too dearly to give us up.

* * * * *

Walk then in love . . . and you will walk in power and in the glory of GOD.

* * * * *

“Love to all the saints” is an element of the blessing spoken of by the Apostle, and even as to intelligence—“able to comprehend with all saints”; because they are in CHRIST’s heart, and if not in ours, *He* has not His place, and self has so far excluded Him.

* * * * *

The blessed LORD never fails in sympathy and kindness for the inevitable sorrows of the way.

* * * * *

Is the thought of the LORD’s coming our daily delight? does it influence us in the ten thousand details of our life?

* * * * *

Communion with GOD always gives confidence in His power.

* * * * *

Simplicity is a great trait of walking in the presence of GOD.

* * * * *

In these days when the word of GOD is so called in question, it is blessed to think how a single verse of Scripture was sufficient for CHRIST for authority, and sufficient for the devil, who had not a word to say.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond)

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If GOD dismissed unfaithful servants, there would have been no preachers on the Day of Pentecost. If GOD dismissed His unfaithful servants now, most of us would be permanently out of work. But He does not. I used to wonder at GOD's patience with the sinner. Now I wonder a great deal more at GOD's patience with the saint. The grace that stoops to forgive a guilty sinner is wonderful; but the grace that stoops to use a servant who deserves dismissal is more wonderful still.

Thoughts on the Book of Judges

BY THE EDITOR

(continued from page 50)

IN the days when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes," it is not surprising that strange things occurred, even among those who were called the people of GOD. Two ancient characters, with whose modern counterparts, alas, the Church is familiar, are recorded in chapters xvii, xviii. They appeared very early in the story of the days when the Judges ruled, but form part of the appendix, almost at the end of the Book.

Micah the Ephraimite and Jonathan the Levite, respectively, present the reader with a very precious pair of plausible religionists. The former, a middle-aged man with grown-up sons, is introduced to us in the act of confessing himself to be a mean thief who has robbed his own mother of eleven hundred shekels of silver. He has been discussing the robbery with her, but when she breaks out in curses upon the unknown thief, his cowardly superstitious fears were awakened; hence the confession. He falters out, "Behold the silver is with me; I took it."

The old mother, every whit as superstitious as her son, at once attempts to nullify the curse which she cannot recall by invoking a blessing upon the culprit. "Blessed be thou of JEHOVAH, my son," she exclaims, as he shamefacedly restores the silver to her. "I had wholly dedicated it unto JEHOVAH from my hand for my son," she continues, "to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee." But Micah, still fearing the awful curse, would not take it. His mother then, heedless of the commandment "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," sends two hundred shekels of silver to a founder to make a graven image. Micah and his mother are thus seen to be both religious and superstitious, as in their conversation they both carefully use the sacred Name of JEHOVAH. They are fearful lest the curse should really fall, and yet juggle with the money so as to keep back over four-fifths of the dedicated sum. What a story of greed, theft, cursing, idolatry, superstition and self-deception this of Micah and his mother records for our learning. "For the love of money is the root of all evil:

which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Tim. vi. 10). Much dishonour to the LORD, and many sorrows to themselves, might be averted by taking heed to that word which is "a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm cxix. 105).

As one downward step inevitably leads to another, we are not surprised to learn that "the man Micah soon had a house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest." But the scheme somehow did not work satisfactorily for Micah. At their very best man-made gods and man-appointed priests are mere useless absurdities. Micah and his priestly son knew too much of each other for mutual religious comfort, and the need for something in his religion, higher, nobler and more real was increasingly felt to be necessary.

It is just here, as in the nick of time, that Jonathan the Levite appears on the scene. He is outwardly very religious, very respectable, of very good family, and very plausible personally. Indeed his "holy orders" are unquestionable, being the son of Gershom, and thus a grandson of the Lawgiver Moses, which confirms the early date of these happenings.

To Micah's enquiry, "Whence comest thou?" he readily replies: "I am a Levite of Bethlehem-judah; at present looking for a post."

"Dwell with me," says Micah, "and be unto me a father and a priest. I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, a suit of apparel and thy victuals." Inwardly no doubt reflecting how providential and very opportune the young Levite's call was. At last he would now be able to put his spiritual affairs on a really sound religious footing.

Meanwhile Jonathan shrewdly feels this offer of Micah is too good to be missed, and the bargain is struck on the spot, to their mutual satisfaction. How great this is on Micah's part is revealed as he joyfully exclaims: "Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite for my priest." He has forthwith entered that spiritual fools' paradise of religion by proxy, where my priest, my clergyman, my minister, my spiritual director is regarded by me as in sole charge of my spiritual affairs, forgetting that every one must give an account of himself to GOD.

A fools' paradise is described as " a state of happiness based upon false hopes or expectations, imaginary, unreal, with no sound foundation," and says Scripture, " the hypocrite's hope shall perish."

From this point in the story Micah becomes a mere pawn in the game at which earlier he had played the chief part ; and Jonathan the Levite, a plausible religious adventurer, a man with no fear of GOD and no regard for human obligations, fills the picture in the exciting events which quickly follow.

A party of spies, known to him, come on the scene one day, and with them he discusses his affairs. They inspect and admire the valuable furniture in Micah's house of gods, the statues, the ephod and teraphim, and report what they have seen to their leader. Later they return accompanied by a band of armed men who promptly strip the place, and with little persuasion entice Jonathan to join them.

" Go with us," they say, " and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? " And the priest's heart was glad—any comment would only spoil this!

Alas, poor Micah, with gods that could be stolen, and a priest who could be enticed by love of money and position from his solemn charge. The lament of the disillusioned man revealed the emptiness of the spiritual fools' paradise in which he had been dwelling.

" Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest which I consecrated: what have I more? " Here are sounded the sad notes of disillusionment, despair and hopelessness by one who had felt quite safe and satisfied with religion by proxy, when he uttered the words " now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite for my priest."

Some salutary reflections suggested by the story are: that conscience makes cowards of us all; that man's own religious schemes and efforts are useless; and that religion by proxy is utterly unavailing in having to do with a LIVING GOD. Against having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof, we are warned to turn away (I Tim. iii. 5). A consideration of these things enables us to see why this extraordinary story is found in the canon of Holy Scripture given by inspiration of GOD.

Abram — the Altar Builder

(continued from page 54)

SO Abram, when JEHOVAH has not merely spoken but also *appeared*, builds an altar to Him.

Do we know how blessedly true this is in our LORD JESUS CHRIST? This is precisely what He was shewing, but what the disciples were so dull to take in. You remember Philip saying, "LORD, shew us the FATHER," when the LORD JESUS had been shewing them the FATHER in His own self all the while here below. It is what the HOLY GHOST soon after made real, not when JESUS was there, but after He had gone, that it might be completely a matter of faith, and that we who never saw but believe might have the joy no less. Need I say, that what the word of GOD gives us of our LORD JESUS CHRIST is incomparably more to us than if we had but seen Him ever so long with our bodily eyes? I hope we all really understand this; for it is of no slight moment. We can easily imagine what a wonderful thing it was to have looked on Him and to have heard Him; but no intelligent believer need hesitate to say that we have far more of Himself in and by the word than if we had seen and heard Him all through His life and ministry on earth without that word. Do we not appreciate this? If we believe it, let us give GOD thanks now as we shall for ever.

I will explain why this is so. Are your eyes and your ears as good as those of GOD? The word is not merely Peter's or Matthew's or John's impressions of the LORD, but GOD's truth, though no doubt He employed them to write it. Then think of the advantage we possess in having it not only perfectly but permanently, not left to the shifting sands of memory under the ebbs and flows of the heart, still less to anything before the eye for a passing moment. Here we have GOD's mind about JESUS faultlessly, completely, and imperishably, in the word of GOD.

And now is sent down the SPIRIT that we might see the FATHER in One who alone could make known the FATHER. What is the consequence? Wherever the heart surrenders itself to GOD as He manifests Himself, there is an altar built. This is by grace the way and the effect. It is not therefore the fact, observe, that we had the worship all at once. Not the least trace

of it appears till now. Possibly Abram may have built altars on his pathway from Ur of the Chaldees to and in Haran; but this I do say that, if so, GOD makes nothing of it at all. The only altar up to this He mentions is now in Canaan after He had *appeared* to Abram. It may well be, in point of fact, the first altar that he ever erected; but of this we must be sure, that it was the first that GOD thought worth naming to us. What a lesson for our souls!

Abram was now in what answered to the heavenly land, and there the LORD gave a fresh manifestation of Himself. It is when the soul has reached this in faith, when (not merely His word and His work, but) the LORD Himself is personally known to us brought nigh to Him (for this is the point that it sets before us as a principle), *that one truly worships*. If He has brought me near Him and shewn Himself to me in CHRIST, what can I do but use the altar built for His worship? For "we have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle"—they who prefer Jewish forms and shadows to CHRIST, now that He is come and has wrought redemption and placed us as children before His GOD and FATHER.

But there is more than this. Abram "removed from thence"; but if he pitches his tent elsewhere, he none the less worships. Move or not, Abram has his altar, wherever he finds himself in the land of Canaan. "There he builded an altar to JEHOVAH, and called upon the name of JEHOVAH."

Alas! a new scene opens to us. "There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there." Did he ask JEHOVAH before going there? Did he spread the circumstances of the land before Him? Not a word is said implying it; and I think there is the strongest reason to gather from the silence of scripture that he did not. For its silence, if we are familiar with it, speaks to us no less than what it utters. GOD brings before us now the sad slip into Egypt of the man who, once called out in the face of difficulty and spite of hindrances which his own unbelief had brought in or allowed, had at last found himself in the place of blessing with GOD; but, there getting into trial, he goes unbidden into the place of the world's plenty. "There was famine in the land." Why did he not then

lay all before JEHOVAH? Undoubtedly Canaan was not yet as it should be according to GOD; but had He not called him there, and could not He keep him there? Abram goes down to Egypt to sojourn in it without a word of guidance from JEHOVAH. It was the direction of common sense, "for the famine was grievous in the land." GOD states the fact without reserve; He never withholds the truth, albeit to the shame of those He loves.

"And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know thou art a fair woman to look upon; therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife; and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister." How solemn it is when a saint takes and perseveres in the downward path! It is not only now that he departs from the land that JEHOVAH had shewn him, and given to his seed; that he is distressed just like a Gentile by the famine, and bound for a country (Egypt, figure of the world, as Canaan of heaven) where there was abundance without a word from GOD; but now, further, having put himself into these circumstances of nature, he falls even from its proprieties.

Indeed, I may ask, do you ever find a child of GOD taking the ground of nature without going below it? When the Christian deserts CHRIST to stand on character, wonder not if his character utterly fails. Is GOD with him in it? A Christian is called to be a witness not merely of justice and right, but of CHRIST. Do you look for no more than honesty in a Christian? Where then is his testimony to the grace and truth of CHRIST? He is content to give up CHRIST if he is content to be *only* an honest man. "*He does not want to be always praying and singing, preaching and bringing in his religion.*" To slight CHRIST thus is a solemn thing. I did not ask for his religion, but that he should manifest CHRIST. Is he ashamed of Him? Is his conduct such, his bearing such, that it would not do for CHRIST to be named by him? Is it not to be feared so? He does not like to name CHRIST, lest persons should ask, Who is this that talks so about CHRIST? He who by faith behaves in a way which becomes that excellent name does not shrink from speaking of Him. But the unfaithful Christian is content to be known among his own class as an honest man. Will this last since GOD

is not with him? GOD upholds those who humbly confess CHRIST. To speak of CHRIST is to sound the silver trumpet of the LORD, who thereon will own and be with you; but you who do not sound His name, have you the LORD to protect you? Assuredly you will fail.

So it was with Abram at this time. He goes down without JEHOVAH directing his way, as he seems not to have called on His name: and in Egypt, sad to say, the father of the faithful is guilty of equivocation, with no purpose higher than that of protecting himself at the expense of his wife: not a noble place for a husband, nor a worthy use to make of his wife. But so it is, when one who ought to have been walking in faith falls back on the slippery paths of his own fears and the world's favours.

(To be continued, D.V.)

W. KELLY.



Faint Not

(St. Luke xviii. 1 ; 2 Cor. iv. 1 ; Heb. xii. 5)

THE exhortation is needed, for we are all liable at times to lose heart. The Christian race is long and difficult, and we never get beyond the reach of temptation, in some form or other. Backsliding is often the result of discouragement. Savonarola had as his motto the three phrases, "Hold on; hold fast; hold out."

There are many causes of depression, including constitutional weakness and pessimism, bodily ill-health, monotony of occupation and surroundings, the dark side of the Christian revelation, and the assaults of Satan. We will look briefly at three matters in connection with which we are liable to faint.

I. FAINTING IN PRAYER.

In Luke xviii our LORD exhorts us to unceasing persistence in prayer by drawing a contrast between the selfish and unrighteous judge and our loving heavenly FATHER. "If that bad man will, for his own interests respond to the appeal of the widow, surely

a good GOD will be far more ready to listen to the cry of His own children."

Every Christian has asked, "Why are not my prayers answered?" The basic reason why our request is not granted is that it is not within the will of GOD. Why, we do not always know. But we can see that GOD will not grant a request that is not for our good, or not for our good now, or will work harm for somebody else. The second great reason for unanswered prayer is that the conditions are not met on our side. Are we living holy lives? Do we ask in faith? Do we abide in CHRIST and plead the authority of His Name?

We may fail to see that prayer has been answered because *means* have been used to answer it. Again, in answer to believing prayer, GOD changes things *in us*, and for this reason, too, we may not perceive that prayer has been answered. Further, GOD may meet the *real need* rather than answer our petition which may not correctly interpret that need.

The prayer of faith is offered when we pass from the attitude of asking to that of taking; when faith rises to the level of assurance; when we know that the blessing is ours in the Divine intention, and will surely reach us in due time.

George Müller, that expert in prayer, emphasised the importance of not fainting, not giving up, not ceasing to expect GOD to answer prayer, but continuing until the prayer was answered—or stopped.

II. FAINTING UNDER AFFLICTION.

Trouble is one great cause of loss of faith and of backsliding. Hence in Hebrews xii we are urged not to faint under affliction. The mind may be perplexed and the heart wounded, but let us see that the faith is not injured. Let us insist that GOD knows, and loves, and cares, in spite of the things that would make us doubt Him. By contemplating GOD'S love and receiving the spiritual and natural good things that come to us as gifts of His love, and by communing with Him constantly, we shall be keeping ourselves in the love of GOD. And being exercised by the "chastening" or "child-training" of the LORD, it will yield "the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

III. FAINTING IN CHRISTIAN WORK.

Every Christian worker—except perhaps the big evangelist—knows the meaning of disappointment. There seems so little fruit!

What is our motive for doing Christian work? Is Christian service with us first of all the service of CHRIST? Do we view it as His work in our hands? Has He chosen it, called us to it, does He enable us in it? Is our aim to be useful to those to whom we minister? Are we in the will of GOD? For *it is possible for self-will to operate in such a good thing as Christian service.*

In a meeting where nothing seems to happen, the power may be the same as when there are visible results. A large stone is being struck with a hammer. Nothing seems to happen after each of the first five blows has descended, but the stone breaks in pieces at the sixth blow. The power in each of the six blows was the same, and the first five were as needed as the sixth, by “softening up” the fibre of the stone, breaking down its resistance, and so making possible its shattering at the sixth blow. To lead a soul towards CHRIST is as really soul-winning work as to lead him *to* CHRIST. Many sow; some reap. The chief factors in the conversion of the unsaved are a godly home and a spiritually prosperous local Church, with its Sunday school and Bible classes.

Every believer has been sent into the world for a definite purpose, and the Sender is our LORD JESUS CHRIST. If this thought grips our hearts it will give us peace, confidence and hope, and in some measure the force of unity will mark both life and service. In view of all this, let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we *faint not.*

E. ADAMS



On the Epistle of Fellowship

“YOUR fellowship in the gospel from the first until now” might well be used to describe the atmosphere into which the reader is introduced by the Epistle to the Philippians. Says Luther as he meditates upon it: “This nightingale among

Epistles," for the song issues from the Roman prison in which at that time the Apostle was incarcerated.

"This most characteristic and cheering of Paul's epistles," says William Kelly in his exposition of this Philippian letter. It is the least dogmatic of Paul's epistles and yet presents the essential substance of Christian doctrine and practice. It gives the sources of real Christian activities, suggests the lines upon which they run, at the same time providing real food for thought, matter for devotional meditation, and inspiration for action. The life of CHRIST, and the life of the Christian in CHRIST are both portrayed graphically as in a word picture drawn by a master artist.

Joy is the keyword, just as joy is the dominant note of New Testament Christianity. Joy rising above all circumstances; joy persisting throughout all circumstances; joy independent of all circumstances is the keynote of the music of this epistle. Neither broken hopes, weary delays, bodily dangers, nor anything else can stifle the note of joy in this sweet and fragrant epistle of fellowship.

Joy, says a modern Christian scholar, has an eternal quality, as distinguished from "pleasure"; joy is the triumph of life; joy is the result of acquisition or expectation of cherished good. "Joy," to quote W.K. once more, "is the truest safeguard against the religious snares of the enemy."

When the same blessed Apostle in another epistle is led to describe the ascending scale of experience of those who believe in Him who raised JESUS from the dead, he crowns the whole as he exultantly exclaims, Not only so but we also joy in GOD through our LORD JESUS CHRIST by whom we have received the reconciliation. Yes, indeed, Christianity understood is a joyous thing, for our hearts are filled with peace and joy in believing.

Here in Philippians the joy is of a four-fold character:

- (1) The joy of fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.
- (2) the joy of witnessing spiritual growth and fruitfulness.
- (3) The joy of happy service to the LORD and to his own.
- (4) The joy independent of all circumstances which Paul and

Silas knew in Philippi before there was any assembly there. The prisoners heard them singing praises at midnight, and only happy souls burst into song at such times under such circumstances.

No final analysis of such an epistle can ever be made, no more than of the music of the babbling brook or the soaring lark. But some suggestions are offered in the hope that they may be helpful to a firmer grasp, clearer understanding, and fuller enjoyment of the truth here. It is, of course, of especial interest to us that this epistle was sent to the first Christian assembly in Europe. About the year 52-3 A.D. the gospel came to Europe (Acts xvi) on the well-known visit of Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy to Philippi, resulting in the conversion of Lydia the seller of purple and her household, of the Philippian jailer and his household, and of probably a few others. At any rate two Christian households were set up in Europe. Then five years later, in the spring of 57-8 A.D., the Apostle re-visited them, finding increasing numbers and much happy fellowship, and after a further period of five years, having received communications from them by Epaphroditus, he sends this very letter which it is our privilege to consider. The absence of the Apostle in prison on account of CHRIST'S cause; and the consequent activity of the enemy Judaising, persecuting, seeking always to sow discord and dissension wherever possible among the saints of GOD; and the mutual affection of the Philippians and the Apostle constituted the circumstances in which this letter was written.

The character of the epistle is seen in its development, argument and sequence to be joyous, peaceful, hopeful and practical. There is an overflow of love and gratitude on the part of writer and recipients, and this is no mere passing emotional experience but of a more permanent nature, leaving deep impressions on the whole assembly. Polycarp and Ignatius a century later both mention the joyful, generous, peaceful character of the Philippian church in their day.

The challenge of the epistle is to character developed by experience; to confidence deepened by experience; to conflict and endeavour inspired by experience; all of which we expect in such an epistle of Christian experience.

A brief summary or outline of its contents might take this form:

- Chapter i. Conflict on account of the enemy.
- „ ii. Courage because of example of CHRIST, and of GOD working in them to will and do of His own good pleasure.
- „ iii. Consummation of blessedness of being with CHRIST in the same glorious condition as Himself.
- „ iv. Comfort from experience of GOD'S peace, presence and power.

Another suggestion as to the character and content of the epistle equally close to the Apostle's writing may be given as an epistle of joy because of:

- Chapter i. GOD'S perseverance *with* his Saints.
- „ ii. GOD'S presence *in* His Saints—subjectively.
- „ iii. GOD'S prize *for* His Saints—objectively.
- „ iv. GOD'S peace *among* and *around* His Saints—experimentally.

In the history of the Philippian assembly is illustrated the great maxim of Christianity, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, but all one in CHRIST JESUS." Lydia, the Jailer, Slave Girl, Euodia, Syntyche, Epaphroditus, and Clement all are there. Three distinct classes, nationally, socially, religiously are represented by Asiatic, Greek, Roman; Commercial, Official, Common people; Jewish, Mystical Pagan, and Political Pagan, but the bond of fellowship which subsists merges all into "My dearly beloved and longed for," for whom "I thank my GOD upon my whole remembrance of you." Such is the Christianity of the Epistle to the Philippians, a fellowship which includes at least, and expresses, companionship, communion, comradeship, partnership, association and sociability. Would there were more of this visible in our better-instructed circles today! For we possess not only the epistle they had but the whole revealed mind of GOD in the Scripture now in our hands.

A century later Ignatius, on his way to Rome to be martyred, was kindly entertained and escorted on his journey by members of the assembly at Philippi.

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The closer the acquaintance with the LORD JESUS and the stronger the assurance of divine forgiveness, the more softly and lowly will the spirit walk with GOD.

* * * * *

Humility is the *feeling* of dependence; prayer is its *language*.

* * * * *

As the Christian grows in grace he grows also in humility.

* * * * *

Many preserve themselves by humbling themselves; the bullet flies over him that stoops.

* * * * *

The iron anchor of the seaman is cast downward into the deep of the sea; but the hope anchor of the Christian is thrown upward into the deep of heaven, and passing through the super-celestial waters, finds its ground and fast-holding there.

* * * * *

Heaven is to be our eternal home. Death will never knock at the door of that mansion . . . Home! no sorrow, no crying, no death . . . but home, sweet home, glorious home, everlasting home! Home with each other, with angels, with GOD!

* * * * *

A blood-bought man should be holy; an heir of glory should be holy; he who walks with angel-guards and is soon to pass into heaven should be holy; he who is called to holiness and pledges himself to be holy and prays for a holy life, should be holy. Are these feet to tread the holy streets? Are these eyes to see the HOLY GOD? Am I to dwell in the holy city, with the spirits of just men made perfect? Then shall the thirst of my soul and the endeavour of my life be to "follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the LORD."

* * * * *

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* * * * *

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(Selected by C. A. Hammond)

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QUERY AND ANSWER

As to changing one's circle of assembly fellowship—what do you think right?

If in the providence of GOD one finds oneself in fellowship with a company of believers confessedly free from evil in doctrine, practice and general associations, it is a very grave responsibility, and an act of self-will on the part of any, to sever such a connection. For one has at least *some inside knowledge* of the company with which one has been for years, but except by hearsay, or controversial propaganda, can have *no real knowledge* of any other. So by leaving it, one definitely condemns *what one knows to be right* (waiving those incidental failures common to all) and joins that *of which one really knows nothing*. Is it therefore strange that it is often assumed that "a wider path for service," or "easier financial circumstances" (in the case of one out wholly on the LORD'S work), or "social amenities," play a part, perhaps more or less unconsciously, in desiring to take such a drastic step. As none of these, to my knowledge, influence me I have not—"left" to "join"—although feeling every whit as strongly as you do the present anomalous condition of things, mentioned by you in your query.

If any or all of these assumed reasons will stand the test of the Judgment Seat then they may be lawful, and even expedient; but otherwise the risk is too great.

W.G.T.

SOME THOUGHTS ON JOHN III

BY THE EDITOR

THIS familiar chapter with its background of the Baptist's preaching, baptising and personal witness to the Coming One of Whom he was the Forerunner, always richly repays the attention of the Christian reader, however often it may have been meditated upon.

In structure and style it is somewhat unusual, narrative, exposition, and explanatory comment being mingled without clear distinction of speakers. Sometimes it is the LORD Himself Who speaks, then the Evangelist, and again the Baptist, but right throughout the chapter there is the stately march of divine truth as to man's universal need, GOD's universal provision, man's universal responsibility, and CHRIST's universal supremacy.

Written evidently by one living in the days when Gnosticism and Doceticism were subtly beginning to undermine Christian thought, the insistence on "belief" as against mere knowledge, and the reality of "the WORD made flesh," the "only-begotten SON," "the SON," "JESUS CHRIST come in flesh," characterise the writings of John in the Gospel and Epistles.

Our chapter opens with a characteristic feature by presenting the first of a series of intimate individual interviews given by our LORD in this gospel. "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in His Name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But JESUS did not commit Himself unto them because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man. But there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews." Here is given his class, his name and position. "*A man of the Pharisees,*" one of the class which had specially interviewed John the Baptist as to his credentials; "*named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews,*" and therefore an authorised teacher and a member of the Sanhedrim, the supreme ecclesiastical and judicial tribunal of the nation.

"*The same came to JESUS by night and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from GOD.*" But his greeting, "Rabbi," i.e. Teacher, does not go well with what follows, for "*we know*" is hardly the way to address "a teacher

come from GOD" by one ostensibly seeking instruction.

"*We know,*" however, is seen throughout this gospel to be the current, characteristic and proverbial formula of the Pharisees, the pre-eminently wise in Israel. (Cf. vii. 49; ix. 24, 29.)

"*Thou art a teacher come from GOD.*" By this unintelligent and unworthy mode of address Nicodemus proves himself to be quite unaware of the real dignity of the One he addresses.

"*To come from GOD*" was a form of words which he must have known was exclusively dedicated in prophetic scripture to the One Who was to come—Messiah. The sole exception to this rule is its use once only when prophetically referring to the Forerunner of Messiah, he being the only other *coming one* concerning whom prophets had spoken.

Now since one *had* come and announced himself the forerunner of the CHRIST; if this second One "came from GOD," as Nicodemus affirmed, Who could He be but Messiah Himself? Moreover, Nicodemus confessed how the Messianic signs during the feast had deeply convinced him that this second One was a teacher "come from GOD" for, said he, "no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except GOD be with him."

No doubt like the other ready disciples at the end of chapter ii., he, having been awakened by the testimony of the Baptist, was deeply impressed by the signs recorded as happening at the recent Passover. He had, however, failed to realise man's natural incapacity even on the earthly side to enter into the Kingdom of GOD, which the Baptist had proclaimed as being at hand.

What a contrast, too, is seen by comparing the greeting of Nathaniel in chapter i. with that of Nicodemus in chapter iii. "Rabbi, Thou art the SON of GOD, Thou art the King of Israel." "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from GOD." One is the greeting of an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile, the other that of a man of position and some personal importance impressed by certain recent religious happenings, who has a long way to go and a lot to learn, ruler of the Jews though he is. So to his spiritually ignorant mind startling words are spoken. "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a man be born again (anew) he cannot see the Kingdom of GOD." He has to learn that what is born of the flesh is flesh, and cannot inherit the Kingdom of GOD. That while nominally every Jew by natural

descent was a child of the Kingdom, yet *actually* every such one needed a new birth to enjoy the fulfilment of GOD's promised blessing in the land. A son of Abraham, a daughter of Abraham, was only really true of such as shared the faith of father Abraham. In the cases in the gospel narrative where CHRIST addresses any in this way there is faith to receive Him and to obey His word; Zaccheus and the crooked woman are illustrations of this which readily occur to the mind. Throughout their national history this had always been true, for among the many Israelites by natural generation and descent, there had been both the godly and the wicked, the new birth making and marking the difference between such.

Nicodemus also has to learn that capacity to enter into the things of the SPIRIT must be created by the SPIRIT, and to his stammering inquiry the LORD replies, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Amazing that one so learned should be so ignorant of such vital truth!

As "a teacher of Israel"—the position taken by himself and recognised by others—Nicodemus should have known that the expected Kingdom on the earthly side was to be a Kingdom with a visible King; ushering in a new social order; to be confirmed by divine miracles and gifts of the SPIRIT accompanying that reign of righteousness, according to all the prophets had foretold.

The LORD then tells him of the general necessity of a new birth, of regeneration for entrance into the Kingdom of GOD, giving it a *particular application* and declaring it a *universal rule* for everyone, Jew and Gentile alike.

By the reference to the Brazen Serpent, He says in effect, Life comes through My being lifted up to die; the love of GOD comes through the giving of the only begotten SON; the light of life through My coming into the world. The universal need of mankind, the universal provision made by the love of GOD to meet that need, and the universal responsibility of men to come to the light, believe the love and accept the provision, is then and thus taught by our LORD.

The "only begotten SON" in verse 16 is a title of affection, while "the SON" in verses 35, 36 is one of dignity and equality with the FATHER.

The Baptist's witness to the personal glory of the LORD JESUS, the supremacy of His person, and the perfection of His testimony, is followed by the Evangelist's summary in verses 35, 36 that all things for possession, disposal and administration are given to the SON; and that His Person is the touchstone alike of faith and human destiny.

The initial truths of the New Birth, and the crowning truths of Eternal Life, Eternal Light, and Eternal Love all meet here.

But as these truths are enunciated in the ears of the ruler of the Jews, how sublime, lucid, forceful they appear. Not "a teacher come from GOD" is the great need of mankind, but a SAVIOUR Who by His atoning sacrifice discloses the love of GOD for the world of mankind.

Not merely One Whose miracles show that GOD "was with Him," as Nicodemus admits, but the Only-begotten SON, the SON of His love Himself is here shedding the light, and speaking of life eternal for once perishing sinners through believing in Him. Here is indeed the river that maketh glad the city of GOD, a river of water of life.



ABRAM IN EGYPT

(continued from page 67)

Everything now flourishes outwardly. Abram had never been so rich. Had he ever prospered before as now? But how was it all gained? Oh, if Abram had but placed himself before Him that appeared to him, not a single acquisition but would have been a wound in his heart, and the keener too as it was through the denial of his wife.

The LORD nevertheless dealt in His own marvellous way; for He did not smite Abram, or even Abram's servants to thin them down, but "he plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues." How striking are the ways of the LORD, and how full of instruction for us! The righteous government of GOD was at work: for Pharaoh knew well enough that he had no right to take the woman, even if she were Abram's sister. He was taking

advantage of his position to claim what did not belong to him. The issue is that, struck by the evident hand of GOD, Pharaoh calls Abram and finds out the truth. Now it was Abram's turn to feel. If Pharaoh was plagued, Abram was put to the blush: what a humiliation for him! The very world reproaches Abram. And what can he say? He came without GOD and he went without honour.

Abram quits Egypt. Pharaoh had learnt somewhat of GOD's righteous ways: what could he think of Abram? Were his riches to his credit? He had gravely compromised himself, and been rebuked by a heathen; but at least he is on the right road again. "He went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south," and afterwards goes to Bethel "unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first, and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah" (chap. xiii. 4).

Yet surely, brethren, that passage in Abram's life had not been in vain. Did not grace then as now cause all things to work for good to those who love GOD? No slight work was that which went on in Abram's soul. He had been compelled to review his conduct, and we see clearly that it was the LORD who brought him back to the point whence he ought never to have departed. Repenting before His sight he returns, and in due time and place is found again a worshipper. But it is in Canaan, not in Egypt, where scripture hints not a word at either tent or altar.

Lot now comes before us. If I do not dwell more on him now, let me remark at this juncture how nobly Abram comes out. There was a strife among their respective herdmen; and what does Abram do? Lot was the nephew, he the uncle. To Abram, not to Lot, all had been promised; nevertheless, when dispute arises, he stands up for no rights of his. He had learned too well his wrongs. He had been before the LORD, and is as far as possible from taking a high place, even with one who ought to have been subject.

But mark the blessedness of bowing before the LORD and of refusing to fight for our rights, however natural to the heart. The moment that Abram gives up to Lot, Jehovah appears again; and never was a gift in such distinct and large terms to man as that which He now gives to Abram. Lot "lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan," and chose the best

of it. Now Jehovah says to Abram "after that Lot was separated from him, (that is, after he had taken possession of his ill-gotten gains,) Lift up now thine eyes"—how blessed are the words of the LORD!—"Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever."

How sweet for Abram to have trusted in the LORD, leaving all the question, though apparently with Lot, really with Jehovah! When shall we learn to be thus simple and confiding? Assuredly we shall also learn at the same time that there never is a giving up of self that is not answered by the LORD, in His grace and in the sweet assurance of it to our souls, by a better gift still through JESUS CHRIST our LORD!

(To be continued D.V.)



SERVANT — BONDMAN

THE word 'servant in the New Testament it is generally known usually means 'slave' or 'bondman'. It is remarkable that among the many types of CHRIST in which kings, priests, prophets and other important men appear, a most precious type of our LORD JESUS CHRIST should be given by GOD in the story of the Hebrew servant in Exodus xxi. 2 - 6. How wonderful that by means of such a type GOD should have given some foreshadowing of His beloved SON, and of the love shining out in His blessed character as man here below.

The servant's fourfold declaration, "I love my master." "I love my wife." "I love my children." "I will not go out free," typically express the love of JESUS. As He went forward to the Cross, we hear Him say, "That the world may know that I love the FATHER; and as the FATHER gave me commandment, even so I do" (St. John xiv. 31). We also read "CHRIST loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. v. 25); while the Apostle Paul as an individual says "the SON of GOD loved me, and gave

Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). And surely in these instances the Anti-type of the Hebrew servant (Ex. xxi.) is plainly to be seen.

When he had thus declared his love for Master, Wife and Children it was confirmed as he was brought before the judges, taken to the door (through which he otherwise might have gone out free) and there received in his own person the token of his servitude for ever. How strikingly true all this of the great Anti-type, Who in resurrection life showed His disciples the marks of the suffering into which His love to GOD and themselves had led Him. "He showed unto them His hands and his side" (St. John xx. 20).

The foregoing may well lead us to meditate upon the place given to His servants, bondmen in the word of GOD a subject both deep and wide. For example in the 2nd chapter of St. John's gospel at Cana of Galilee it is stated that though the ruler of the feast knew not whence the wine was made," the servants which drew the water knew." The least and lowest were in the secret of the LORD.

The prophet Amos (in chapter iii. 7) says, "He revealeth His secret unto His servants," and much more could be written as to the honour He puts on His servants and their service. Himself the great Exemplar to His own says, "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" (St. Luke xxii. 26, 27). Then how pleased the Apostle Paul was to call himself "a bondman of JESUS CHRIST." And when setting forth the responsibilities of the various relationships of life what a comparatively large place he gives to servants, really slaves, in his exhortations. He exhorts them to "singleness of eye as unto CHRIST"; and speaks of their service being to the LORD Who will reward good for good done by them (Eph. vi; Col. iii. 22-25). Again one whole epistle (Philemon) is devoted to what concerned a runaway slave when converted, in his relations with his master, and discloses depths of Christian feeling and affection in this incident which refreshes the believing reader's heart. The great word (in 1 Cor. vii. 21, 22) addressed to bondmen also, is worthy of remark lifting the whole subject of bondmen and freemen up to the highest level for Christian life and service to the LORD.

Peter, James, John and Jude all in their turn style themselves the bondmen of GOD or of CHRIST. What a blessed thing it is to be called by GOD's grace to this happy servitude as we hear our LORD say, "Blessed are those bondmen whom the LORD on coming shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He will gird Himself and make them recline at table, and coming up will serve them" (St. Luke xii. 37 New Tr.).

T. WILSON

✠

COMMUNION

WHAT does communion in its simplest form mean? Intimate intercourse can be called communion, and so can fellowship. To introduce mystery into its meaning, and to make a fetish of it, robs it of its simplicity. To have communion with anyone, I must enter into the thoughts and feelings of the one with whom I have it, and this involves an intimacy that includes a simple understanding.

To start with a wrong notion makes real communion impossible. The whole tenor of Scripture makes it quite plain that GOD desires His creature man to have communion with Himself, and the highest and simplest expression of this is to be found in the words of the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself in John xvii.:—"This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST whom thou hast sent."

To know GOD, I must believe the revelation that He has made of Himself, and humble myself in His presence, acknowledging that what He says of me is true. I need a SAVIOUR, such as GOD alone can provide, to rescue me and make me fit for communion with Him. This is what He has already provided in the person of His only begotten SON, Whom He has sent for the express purpose of bringing life eternal to those already dead in trespasses and sins. This life eternal is made available to whosoever will, and the only thing that prevents those upon whom the wrath of GOD rests from being rescued is perseverance in the wrong notion that they are already fit for the presence of GOD Whose very nature is holiness. A religious fanatic like Nicodemus, as long as he persists in his own accepted notion of GOD and of himself, can only say helplessly "How can these things be?" when confronted with the most elementary truth, and can-

not be communed with on heavenly things because of unbelief.

In 1 Cor: x. 16, we read:—"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of CHRIST? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of CHRIST? For we being many are one bread one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." If I don't acknowledge the significance of the blood of CHRIST or, on the other hand what the body of CHRIST means, how can I pretend to a communion that belongs exclusively to these, without making a mockery of them? What a significant challenge we have in 2 Cor: vi. 14-18, which begins with the injunction not to be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers." If I pretend to recognise a merit in the mere partaking of the cup of blessing, and the broken bread, apart from their simple significance, I make a mockery of the whole thing. Making it a mere ceremony that all can partake of, whether believers or unbelievers, makes it no more than a Pagan ritual. 2 Cor: xiii. 14 links together "the grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST." Are not these three things essential to acceptance with GOD? They are exclusively the common ground of true fellowship.

In Matt: xxvi. 26, 27; Mark xiv. 22-24 and Luke xxii. 19, 20, we are given the institution of what is commonly called the LORD'S SUPPER, but here it is introduced exclusively to Jewish believers, who had kept company with the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself, but in 1 Cor: xi. 23-27, where the apostle Paul, specially appointed for Gentile believers, writing to the church of GOD at Corinth, to those sanctified in CHRIST JESUS, called saints, and to all that in every place call on the name of JESUS CHRIST our LORD, both theirs and ours, declared that he had received of the LORD that which he delivered unto them—the general introduction of the LORD'S SUPPER for all true believers. Here there is a warning against the introducing of anything unworthy of the occasion and a *recommendation to self-examination* with a view to participating in it. My presence at the LORD'S TABLE is a matter between me and the LORD Himself. Neglect of the things about which we are warned is definitely stated to be a cause of weakness, sickness, and even sleep, among the negligent. In Acts ii. a continuance in the apostles' doctrine and

fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers are linked together. In Acts xx. 7-12 is recounted the coming together of the disciples to break bread at Troas on the first day of the week, this day being specially chosen out of the seven days stay there.

1 Cor: i. 9, speaks of being called unto the fellowship of His SON, JESUS CHRIST, our LORD, GOD Who is faithful, and this is followed by an appeal for unanimity, all speaking the same thing, with no divisions, and all perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment. Here a very fruitful source of division is mentioned as being the result of choosing mere human beings as leaders, even including CHRIST as if He was a mere human being among men.

1 Cor: xii. 27 points out that believers are members in particular of the body of CHRIST, and that there ought not to be any schisms in the body, each member performing its appointed functions, and 1 Cor: iv. 11 gives us something to strive after that the life of JESUS might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

What an occasion of fellowship is mentioned in Phil: iii. 10: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." This chapter ends up with the thought of our citizenship being already in heaven we should treat the fact of the calling on high by GOD in CHRIST JESUS as a prize to be striven after, although it is in principle an accomplished fact. It is the SAVIOUR, the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself that we look for, and the glorious change that His appearance will accomplish (v 20, 21). Then again in Phil: ii, fellowship of the SPIRIT is linked up with consolation in CHRIST, comfort of love, and bowels of mercies, together with like-mindedness, possession of the same love and unanimity in purpose and mind, with no strife or vain-glory, but with lowliness, taking CHRIST JESUS as our pattern.

The secret of happy fellowship is contained in Acts ii. 42:—"They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers."

All fellowship with evil is strictly forbidden:—(1 Cor: x. 20, 21; 2 Cor: vi. 14-18; Eph: v. 11).

UNITY IS STRENGTH

IT seems so obvious that it is taken for granted, that unity is strength in every walk of life. At least in theory it is so; alas in practice it is not always put into effect. Concerning the prosperity of those who believed in Him, the LORD JESUS prayed to His FATHER that they all might be one, "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me" (Jn. xvii. 21). "While I was with them," He said, "I kept them in Thy name;" and again, "HOLY FATHER, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as we are."

The second chapter of Acts is a striking commentary on this early unity. Verse 1, says, "they were *all with one accord in one place.*" Verse 4, says of them whilst so gathered, "they were all filled with the HOLY GHOST." The result of this in the world is shown in verse 47; "the LORD *added to the church daily* such as should be saved." It could not be otherwise.

GOD's purpose is to gather together in one *all things* in CHRIST; not only the church, but all things. He is to be supreme in heaven and earth, but if those who profess to be subject to Him cannot agree to walk together, finding more reasons why they should not, than why they should, can we be surprised that the world holds us up to ridicule and GOD does not publicly own us by the addition of large numbers to our ranks? It is still true that GOD wills not the death of one sinner, and that GOD calls whom He will to Himself, but how much better if we who belong to Him could show that unity which should testify to the world that the FATHER sent the SON, that He might be graciously pleased to add those whom He adds to the church, to our ranks.

Today the church is broken into fragments so that the unbelieving world looks and laughs. The unity that was to have been the strength of the gospel testimony is gone, and to whose ranks can those be added whom grace is pleased to save?

GOD is ever gracious and His ear is ever open to our cry. Brethren, let us not cease to pray earnestly for spiritual perception and divine guidance that we at least, may never be lacking as to our part in this unity. Who knows? He may yet be entreated, and grant us a little recovery before the LORD comes.

A. A. TUNLEY

FRESH AND FRUITFUL ALL THE TIME

DOES not this epitomise the First Psalm? At all events it characterises the godly life. What a holy ambition is here presented to us! Fresh and fruitful all the time.

The Second Epistle of Peter ends with an exhortation to grow in grace and in the knowledge of CHRIST. And it does *not* add: "This is written for the young in years." Christian progress should be lifelong. Stagnation is not piety. And it is not only the *old* who may be mummified in mind and heart and spirit.

What is the remedy for this deplorable condition whether in young or old? Well, many answers could be given, all equally Scriptural. We will select one: "Walk in the SPIRIT."

The Church loses through paying insufficient attention to the ministry of the SPIRIT. A company of religious people without the SPIRIT is organised weakness.

Every Christian is born of the SPIRIT, sealed by the SPIRIT, and has the SPIRIT dwelling in him. As Advocate and "Comforter" He pleads our cause and strengthens us by His company. He is the Author of all victory over sin, of every Christian grace, of every effectual prayer, of all power for witness, of all fruitful service.

The Divine command, "Be filled with the SPIRIT," implies a continuous process or movement, and may suggest a full pond on the hillside, with both inlet and outlet. It is always *full* because it has an inlet; it is always *fresh* because it has an outlet.

The SPIRIT-filled life is constantly receiving from CHRIST, on the one hand; on the other hand, it is constantly giving out in loving service to others.

It is the SPIRIT of the living GOD Who gives the enduement of power both for holy living and for effective service. It may come, in our experience, suddenly or gradually. Centrally, and apart from all accompaniments and however varied its outcome in life and ministry, the fulness of the SPIRIT means that the life is under the control of the SPIRIT of CHRIST. Are we walking habitually under the SPIRIT's stimulating direction, in invigorating abundance of spiritual life? May GOD in His mercy save us from becoming mummified in mind and palsied in heart, living but torpid specimens of arrested development.

E. ADAMS

Sparkling Gems

If the King of wild beasts is first named (Job 38), it is not without purpose that the raven follows. The contrast is marked; but JEHOVAH careth for both. He is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works.

* * * * *

The LORD looks for activity of love among His own.

* * * * *

Since we are objects of a love which can never fail, He would have us to be instruments or channels of it one toward another.

* * * * *

The thief in whom grace wrought on the cross, blessed as was the new-born desire of his heart, got help on three points, each of exceeding interest. He asked (1) to be remembered by the LORD (2) at His coming (3) in His Kingdom. The LORD surpassed each feature of his request, for He promised (1) that he should be with Him (2) that day (3) in Paradise! This affords the fullest Scripture teaching as to the blessedness of those who put off this tabernacle . . . and that "to die is gain", clearly establishes that the emancipated spirit enjoys (1) the blessedness of being "with CHRIST", which is far better than any blessing enjoyed here below, (2) that such blessing is immediate and (3) it is in the elysium of His own presence, a locality otherwise defined.

* * * * *

Two things go together for us as saints; the certainty of the LORD's coming and the uncertainty whether or not we shall fall asleep before He comes.

* * * * *

The real value of the glad tidings of GOD can only be rightly estimated by the consideration of the alarming fact that "the wrath of GOD is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness", which shews that GOD's terrible judgment against all that is contrary to Himself is coming upon men from heaven. It is not a local or partial intervention of GOD's anger, but "against all ungodliness".

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“ B Y M Y S P I R I T ”

(*Zechariah iv. 6*)

THY SPIRIT is above our methods and our ways,
He like a mighty wind drives earth-born clouds away;
Whene'er it pleases Him He sends the brightest rays,
And doubt's dark night He changeth into peaceful day.
What we would fain combine by our short-sighted skill,
He scatters east and west, He gives to south and north;
What we would fain subject to our control and will,
Free as the mountain air His sovereign hand sends forth.
What men deem much or all is nothing in Thy sight,
What nothing is to man, thou lovest dearly, LORD;
The pow'r of human speech brings neither peace nor light,
The heart is drawn alone by Thine own mighty word.
Thou kindlest in my soul the light of truth divine;
The hidden treasure now is seen, and it is mine.

(*From the German of Gottfried Arnold.*)

THOUGHTS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES

BY THE EDITOR

(The Tragedy of Samson)

FROM the special circumstances of his birth Samson, as a Nazarite, should have been a living witness to Israel's position among the nations as a separated people. The unshorn locks remained nearly to the end; but the inward departure from a dedicated life is seen early in the story. Chosen companions from the Philistine enemy were cherished by him and soon turned his steps to a path of unfaithfulness to his high calling, which path as always became easier to tread as time passed. The early promise remained unfulfilled as the physically strong proved to be the morally weak, until the saddest sentence in the record runs, "And he wist not that the LORD had departed from him" (xvi. 20).

Another has written of his pre-natal advantages thus, "What more could GOD or man or angel of GOD have done that was not done for Samson? Every man must work out his own salvation with his own hands, or not at all; but short of doing for Samson what neither GOD nor man could do, what more could GOD or man have done that was not done? From his birth, and for long before his birth, the gifts of GOD were simply showered on Samson. He had a father and a mother of the very best."

The greatest spiritual advantages do not ensure conduct consistent with such privilege. They are no safeguard against fleshly desires which war against the soul. They may be carelessly frittered away becoming atrophied from lack of use. And the story of Samson's parents as given in the *Book of Judges* affords more spiritual profit to the reader than that of their famous son told at much greater length.

His dedication and separation to GOD as a Nazarite was made more easy for him by that of his mother. In the angel's message however an ominous note was sounded as he says, "He shall *begin* to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." *Begin* to deliver!

Actually he judged Israel for twenty of the forty years of the Philistine oppression. He was thus a "saviour" as all the Judges are styled, but not a perfect one, as he could only begin to deliver them.

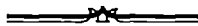
In his appointed office, as a "saviour" raised up of GOD for the people of Israel, he was in this respect a type of the LORD JESUS CHRIST the SAVIOUR perfectly of all His people. Save for this official resemblance the less said the better, however much some preachers and teachers appear to suspend New Testament truths on texts here and there from the life of Samson which the story rightly understood will not bear.

With all his patent failings, however, Samson was a man of faith as Hebrews xi. 32 informs the reader. For in spite of much that would appear to contradict, or throw doubt upon this, and although his faith at times seems sadly lacking in discernment, and at best of a fitful character, yet it was really present and evidenced as when he one time sought an occasion against the Philistines the record is "it was of the LORD," yet apparently in that secondary sense of permission, not of appointment, as the sequel would suggest.

GOD graciously gives credit to his failing servants for every bit of faith in exercise, even though in His governmental dealings He has to deal with the failures, of which, alas, we each have more than we are probably aware.

In the case of Samson who began to save Israel from the Philistines in spite of his acting upon sudden impulses, by fits and starts so to say, when we read, "The SPIRIT of the LORD began to move him" (xiii. 24): "came mightily upon him" (xiv. 16); "came upon him" (xiv. 19); and "came mightily upon him" (xv. 14); the general atmosphere pervading his career is that of a low level of spiritual enlightenment and moral purity. The chief secret of the weakness and ruin of Samson the *strong* man (as in the case of Solomon the *wise* man later) was what is known as uxoriousness. The daughters of the Philistines were his undoing, until at long last the symbol of the Nazarite vow of consecration is formally broken. The source of his strength lay in his dedication to GOD as he confessed when he said, "Then shall I be weak, and be as another man" (xvi. 7).

In King Solomon's case we read "he loved many strange women . . . his wives turned away his heart" (1 Kings xi. 1-3). All of which is placed on record for our instruction and warning. Otherwise the stories of the *weakness* of Samson and the *folly* of Solomon would have found no place in the Scripture record of such greatly gifted men.



ABRAM AND MELCHIZEDEK

(*Genesis xiv*)

WHEN our LORD JESUS appears as Melchizedek by-and-by, then will be the day for our glory with Him; and the various traits here prefigured will coalesce in Him, not merely the sole dignity of the priest but the exercise of the priesthood in its character of blessing. Then will be the answer to Abram's putting down of the victorious powers of the world, the deliverance of the poor though faulty people of the LORD (shewn by Lot), and finally the bringing out the symbol of what GOD gives not only for the sustenance of His people but for their joy—the bread and the wine of that day. So it is that the LORD will then act; for this will be one of the wonderful differences between the LORD JESUS as the priest on His throne and all others that have ever governed in this world. It is the sorrowful necessity of those that govern now that they must take the means of maintaining their dignity and grandeur from the people whom they govern; that even the poorest contribute to that which the world owns as greatness and majesty. It must be so; it is the necessity of earthly glory which never can rise above its source; for the haughtiest monarchy of the world is after all founded, whatever the sovereign gift and ordinance of GOD, on the least contributions of the least people on earth. But when creation is arranged according to the mind of GOD, and when His kingdom comes in its proper power and majesty, how different! It will be His prerogative to supply all. The instinctive sense of this was what made the people wish the LORD JESUS to be king when He was here below. When He miraculously fed the multitudes with bread, they as it were said, This is the kind of king we want—a king that will give us plenty of food without our working for it.

And doubtless the day is coming when the kingdom will be so ordered. That which the corrupt heart of man would like very well now, to avoid toiling in the sweat of his face, the LORD will give, according to His own goodness, when man is bowed down as well as broken and the riches of GOD's grace are no longer made the cloak of man's selfishness to His dishonour. This is one of the great distinctive features of that future kingdom, and Melchizedek shews it here. It is not only that there is food for the hungry, but he brings out bread and wine for the conquerors. That is, it is not merely the meeting of the necessities of man, but GOD acting after the victory is won according to His bounty and as is due to His own glory. And so it is that in the great day of the coming kingdom GOD will do these wonderful things on man for the earth. But mark His wise and righteous way—not before the cross, that is, the mighty work of the SON, is a fact; *not* before the SPIRIT of GOD has wrought to bring the souls of those very men into the acknowledgment of Him that wrought it, and into the appreciation of the value of that atonement which was accomplished on the cross. GOD will have wrought this work in the remnant of His people whom He will make a strong nation, when the day arrives for the LORD JESUS to manifest Himself in the exercise of His Melchizedek priesthood—not merely to *be* the anti-typical Melchizedek, for this He is now.

At present He is not yet bestowing His Melchizedek favours; but when that day comes, it will be, I repeat, for the *exercise* of the priesthood, and not merely the glory of that one sole priest. The need of man too will be secured in that day. The people will be prepared for blessing. If there will be power and glory, it will be the portion of a people poor in spirit, confessedly contrite and broken down, sensible of the mercy that GOD had shewn their souls, and made honest enough by grace to confess their sins, a people in short that will have found all their boast in that SAVIOUR whom they once despised and in that which was their abhorrence. Then it will not be a base and selfish seeking of what merely suits themselves and allows them to vegetate in idleness. Not so; but it is the day for the King to lavish what He has Himself wrought, and for GOD to manifest what was ever in His heart. For GOD has always longed to bless men; but He awaits the day when He can righteously as well as freely bless them. Alas! man has never

yet been in the state wherein he can be blessed. For to bless him when his heart is at enmity to GOD, where would be the good of it for man, not to speak of GOD? Would it not be, on the contrary, the grossest mockery to pour out blessing on man who, being unrenewed and unrepentant, must after all be cast into hell? Such is the state of every man naturally; no showers of blessing from above, if this were all, could change the soil. In his natural state he is not fit for heaven, nor even for the earth under the reign of our LORD JESUS, but only to be cast into the place that is prepared for the devil and his angels. But in the day that is coming the LORD will have a people born of GOD, washed every whit clean, and rescued out of the hand of the spoiler, by His own redeeming grace and power; and then we see the LORD JESUS bringing out all that will manifest the goodness of GOD and glory of GOD, making the heart of man to rejoice before Him, and his face glad for ever. Then shall man know what is the GOD he has to do with, when he sees reversed and set aside and rooted out every vestige of Satan's old lie that GOD does not take pleasure in goodness and in lavishing the fruits of it on man here below.

This then is the scene that is soon to open, surpassing fable indeed, and yet true. Mark too how all confirms it in the context. CHRIST is the antitype of Melchizedek, the king of righteousness and afterwards of peace. Then will be the day of peace founded on righteousness. But further He is the "priest of the most high GOD." Glorious title! It is not merely "JEHOVAH," nor merely "ALMIGHTY." The almightiness of GOD comes out in protecting His poor pilgrims; and His character of JEHOVAH, as of old in judgment when the people were under the first covenant, so under the second, particularly when He shews Himself the unchangeable GOD, who cleaves to His purpose of blessing a people that were alas! changeable more than all others on the earth. But "the most high GOD"—what is its force? Just this. When all other oracles are dumb, when every false god becomes, like Dagon, a fallen and dishonoured stump before the true ark and Him whose glory dwells there, then and then for the first time, since Satan foisted idol-worship into the world, shall every idol vanish out of it, and their worshippers be ashamed before the only true GOD. Then shall GOD have His place as "the most high GOD."

Yet He is not only this, but "the possessor of heaven and earth."

When will that be, and what will display His possession of heaven and earth? We all know He is so now in real title; but when is the due testimony to it on the earth? Where the power that enforces it? As far as one sees, man is the possessor of the earth now; and if one bows to scripture, who can deny that the devil is the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air? It is only *faith* can say that GOD is really so; but in that day it will be evident to all. His possession of heaven and earth will be manifest when the LORD JESUS comes. For whence does He come? Not from Bethlehem then, but from heaven. He will come from God's right hand and put down all contrary powers here below, and the heavens and earth, long severed, will be manifestly at one. The mind of heaven will be no longer as now in contrast with the mind of the earth. Then will come the reconciler, the blessed ONE who will unite, for GOD's glory and under His own sway, "all things, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth"—even in Him "in whom we have obtained an inheritance."

This then is the evident meaning of the glorious foreshadowing brought before us in this divine tale of Melchizedek.

I need dwell no more on the history, except to point out one moral feature, the beautiful manner in which Abram, thus blessed, and deeply affected by both GOD's dealings on the one hand and this remarkable confirmation of his faith on the other, answers the king of Sodom, who, feeling all thankfulness for the mighty intervention of divine power through Abram, offers unsought to give Abram the goods. But Abram at once shews us that faith is more generous still, knowing what it is to be rich toward GOD, and refusing to tarnish His testimony by anything that would enable the king of Sodom to say "I have made Abram rich." At the same time he pleads for the others. Whatever may be the self-renouncing grace of Abram, he in the largeness of his heart forgets not what is due to those who had not his faith. He asks for Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, who had helped him. It was only and quite right that they should participate in the spoil.

I need not spend many words in exploding the petty and nauseous hypothesis which regards the whole chapter, the battle of the kings and the interview of Melchizedek and Abram, as a traditional patch worked in at this point. Certainly there is a

discriminating use of the divine names in the different portions of Genesis as everywhere in Scripture even to the Revelation of John in the New Testament; but only the credulity of an infidel could have thence been induced to believe that Genesis, any more than the Revelation, is a compilation of distinct documents by differing writers.

A rationalist may be learned; but he is necessarily ignorant of GOD's mind in Scripture, as his false principle leads him to deny it, and hence not even to seek it, as the believer does who sees in the word of GOD the SPIRIT'S testimony to CHRIST.

W. KELLEY

THE BEST LAST

“**T**HOU hast kept the good wine until now ” (John ii. 10). These words spoken by the president of the feast after he had tasted the “water that was made wine” must have made a lasting impression on John's mind. It is GOD's way to keep the best wine until the last.

This principle finds an illustration in the various stages in the earth's renovation and in the creation of the various forms of life as described in Genesis 1. Vegetable life is followed by animal, and that is succeeded by man, the crown of GOD's creative process. Made in the image of GOD, and capable of communion with his MAKER, man is a kingdom, a world, in himself.

The same principle is seen in the structure of the Bible, recording, as it does, the progress of Divine revelation to man. The Bible is the inspired record of the progressive revelation of GOD and His salvation through law-giver, prophets and the events of history, culminating in the person, work and teaching of CHRIST. GOD usually moves in slow stages, in the changes of the seasons, in the movements of Providence and in the revelation of His will. The progress is not of course in the character of GOD, nor in the truth itself, but in the unfolding of it. The mists gradually roll away from the landscape, disclosing scene after scene, but the whole landscape was there all the time. There is progress in the New Testament as compared with the Old.

And there is progress within the New Testament itself. Contrast, for instance, the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount

with that of the Upper Room. Further, in the course of His farewell address, our LORD said, "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He the SPIRIT of Truth is come, He shall guide you into all the truth." (John xvi; 12, 13). After He had returned to the unseen world He continued to teach and direct His apostles by His SPIRIT, and the record of that further teaching is found in the Acts and the Epistles. This further teaching never contradicts CHRIST's own teaching as given in the Gospels, but enlarges and develops it. So that the teaching of the *whole* of the New Testament is the teaching of *one* mind, the mind of CHRIST. And the Apocalypse, with its unfolding, in the form of spectacular symbolism, of the age-long struggle between the Church and the world, of judgment and of final victory, makes a fitting conclusion to the Word of God.

Christian experience should also be a continuous progress. John speaks of "babes," "young men" and "fathers." Peter's closing word to "grow in grace" applies to believers of all ages. "For one look at self take ten looks at CHRIST," said the saintly McCheyne. Yes, but let us take the one look at self. Occasional spiritual stock-taking is an excellent and wholesome exercise. Among marks of Christian progress may be mentioned the following: abiding assurance of salvation; increasing purity of motive; acting from principle rather than from impulse; greater broadmindedness—of the true kind; less relish for the world; a deeper peace amid the things that happen; and the organizing the entire life around GOD and His will.

"The best is yet to be; the last for which the first was made." May not this apply to the eventide of life as well as to the hereafter? Someone has said that youth, like the spring, is an overpraised season. At all events, it is in the early fall of the year that nature yields most of her fruits. And may we not expect some, at least, of the best fruits of grace to be produced in the autumn of life?

Stanley Jones tells how an Indian lady was entertaining some visitors. One was impressed by her poise, dignity and sweetness, and said, "You are so beautiful!" "Why shouldn't I be?" she replied; "I am 72 years of age." She had evidently learned to grow old gracefully and gratefully.

And "the best last" applies—for the Christian—to the future as compared with the present life. *Now* we are at school; *then* we shall be at home. *Now* we are subject to the limitations and infirmities of the time-state; *then* we shall enjoy to the full the liberty of the sons of GOD. *Now* "we see through a glass, darkly; but *then* face to face." *Now* life entails pain and conflict, sacrifice, frustration and disappointment; *then* it will mean victory and fulfilment.

"Like a river glorious
Is GOD's perfect peace,
Over all victorious
In its bright increase;
Perfect, yet it floweth
Fuller every day;
Perfect, yet it groweth
Deeper all the way."

E. ADAMS.

"LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY"

(JOHN x. 10)

AS soon as our first parents fell, GOD in His grace gave a word for faith to take hold of and trust in, and so it has been ever since, divine revelation becoming gradually fuller and clearer, and perhaps more and more generally known in the world.

Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith in His word, its reception because it is GOD's word and comes to us with divine authority, is the indispensable condition of spiritual blessing, and of personal intercourse between the soul and GOD. Yet the degree and specific character of the blessing have altered from time to time. The case of Abraham, for instance, stands out conspicuously, in contrast with the antediluvian patriarchs, and in some respects even in contrast with his descendants under the yoke of the law. For, though testimony as to the MESSIAH and His kingdom was constantly getting clearer and brighter with the unfolding of prophecy, still the Sinaitic covenant "gendered to bondage" (Gal. iv. 24); such was the result to the Israelites of

putting themselves under law, instead of casting themselves upon the grace of GOD, as expressed in His unconditional promises to their fathers, the result in fact of their utter ignorance alike of GOD and of themselves.

But though JEHOVAH's righteousness has ever been that in virtue of which sinners have been saved—though in the mind and purpose of GOD even before our being justified by faith, and not by works (by works only evidentially,) nevertheless of accomplished righteousness, and the subsisting justification which depends on and follows it, none could derive the benefit, as a known state and standing, till it became and was proclaimed as an existent fact. The prophets prophesied of it (Isaiah lvi. 1); and Daniel stated (ix. 24), that seventy weeks were determined amongst the things “to bring in everlasting righteousness.” It was spoken of, and trusted in, from of old, but not “revealed,” nor could the SPIRIT consequently be given as the seal of accomplished righteousness (John vii. 39), till the LORD JESUS died, rose, and was glorified in ascension. Paul however, formally dwells upon it as accomplished and revealed (Rom. i. 17, iii. 24–26); and the whole teaching of the New Testament as to christianity, and even as to eternity, is based on it. Vain is the attempt, then, to obliterate distinctions GOD Himself has made, and to reduce all His dealings to one common level. The wisdom of GOD's ways, as displayed in the successive dispensations, will remain for ever marked like the rings which mark the growth of the tree, or the successive accretions, the age of a stone.

The glory of GOD, and blessing of man, have all and completely depended on CHRIST as MEDIATOR. Through Him only have men ever been saved. But this does not mean that, in the administration of divine grace to men through Him, there have been neither degrees of spiritual intelligence nor diversities of spiritual privilege. An infant has not the intelligence of a full-grown man, and what is in this true in the case of individuals is true of dispensations. The spiritual status granted to saints of previous economies was wholly and in all cases inferior to the christian status, as is very clearly stated in Luke vii. 28; and consequently the spiritual capacity and intelligence were also very different. It is fallacious to say that because Old Testament saints were born of GOD, and are now in heaven, that therefore what is known

by the christian, such as remission of sins, justification of life, peace, the heavenly calling, etc. were known to them as to us. They had simple childlike faith in GOD, and in His word—a faith given by GOD in the coming MESSIAH, sustained by Him, and which GOD did not disappoint, for He uses this resource in this world, and afterwards took them to heaven. But to apply to them, either as regards spiritual intelligence, state, or condition, truth, which for its revelation and subjective realisation depended on the accomplishment of atonement, and on the descent of the HOLY GHOST, is altogether a mistake, and (though unintentionally) disparages virtually the work and person of our LORD. The Epistle to the Romans, for example, is written from a christian stand-point: the spiritual experience and privileges, therein spoken of, must be taken as in the light of christianity, and can be understood only from the christian position, and by the christian sense. The sins of the Old Testament saints are said simply to have been “passed over,” or pretermitted (Rom. iii. 25). In fact the value and effect of the work of CHRIST could be known, in the intelligence and power of the SPIRIT, only after CHRIST had suffered, been raised, and was glorified. And the personal and practical state is necessarily and at all times contingent on, the revelation which GOD gives, varying in degree with it in such a way that whilst in each dispensation, individual and personal faith and apprehension varied, yet dispensational light, state, standing and privilege vary also, as a whole and as a system—the christian economy being the climax and perfection of all, and justification of life, and life in resurrection, being characteristically christian privilege. In Rom. vii. 14–24, the man spoken of has light beyond that of an Old Testament saint, but not up to the full christian standard. As to the divine nature there was that in the saints of Old Testament times, which through grace enabled them to please GOD up to the light He gave them. They were born of GOD, and therefore feared, trusted, and obeyed GOD. But we must distinguish between the quickening grace of the SPIRIT, and the SPIRIT as indwelling and so the seal of accomplished righteousness. “Ye are not in the flesh but in the SPIRIT, if so be that the SPIRIT of GOD dwell in you,” could not have been said till the SPIRIT was given. It is a test now, but would have been no test then, because, though born of GOD and by the

SPIRIT, they had not the *gift* of the SPIRIT. Nor in their case was the distinction brought to light between the mind of the flesh and the mind of the SPIRIT, because flesh and SPIRIT were not then known to be irreconcilable. Without this profound and SPIRIT-taught knowledge, they simply walked in the fear of GOD, and with the sense of His mercy which enabled them to say, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O LORD; for in Thy sight shall no flesh be justified"; whereas the christian knows that he will never come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.

As soon as our LORD came into the world, hearts were opened to see in Him the SAVIOUR, and to receive Him as such. Simeon takes up the blessed Infant in his arms and said, "Now lettest Thou Thy servant, O LORD, depart in peace according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." And when thirty years after, that BLESSED MAN, anointed with the HOLY GHOST, went forth upon His mission, far surpassing any that the Old Testament saints knew was the privilege of those who saw, heard, and received Him. *In short His appearance in the world constituted an epoch (1 John i.), a fresh starting point in every sense, and in all GOD'S dealings with men, either spiritually or temporally. Saints were not merely quickened but made "children of GOD by faith in CHRIST JESUS," with the SPIRIT of adoption given to enjoy it and cry to the FATHER. They had a conscious relationship, and a nearness of position, never known before. Of this salvation, Peter tells us, the prophets had enquired, but were told that not unto themselves but unto us they ministered the things now revealed by the HOLY GHOST sent down from heaven (1 Peter i. 10-12). We are told also by Paul (Titus ii. 11), that "the grace of GOD that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" etc. True, this does not mean that men did not look for a SAVIOUR before; but it certainly means that a vastly more advanced and privileged position is now proclaimed to all, and is ours by faith.*

J.B.P.

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The Gospel is as powerful as ever. If we could but get it out of the sheath of so-called culture, education, progress and questioning and could use the bare, two-edged sword of the Gospel upon the hearts of men, we should again hear shouts of victory.

* * * * *

You can very well afford to be quiet with your fellow-men when you yourself are perfectly restful in the living GOD.

* * * * *

If you are conscious of the LORD's presence, you will do the best thing possible by being very calm, deliberate and quiet in His service.

* * * * *

All around us there is growing up in tangled masses *the ill weed of "modern thought,"* which is nothing better than an infidelity too cowardly to wear its proper name.

* * * * *

It is not want of knowledge that hinders souls from acting according to GOD: I speak now of the general rule. But want of faith dulls the force of what we know and makes it as if we knew it not.

* * * * *

Of the New Heaven and the New Earth, Rev. xxi. 1-7; tells us what will not be there but very little of what will. The latter we shall know later.

* * * * *

The present seems to be a time for preparing the stones for the future temple of GOD rather than for displaying that temple in miniature.

* * * * *

Each stone has to be precisely prepared in GOD's way for the place and purpose it has to fulfil. No tool will be lifted up upon it when the building is erected.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond.)

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A Song from a Sick Bed

NEVER MIND

NEVER mind the why and wherefore,
Never mind the how and when;
For the thoughts of GOD are higher
Than the thoughts and ways of men.

Never mind the peradventures,
Never mind the "ifs" and "buts";
JESUS holds the Key of David,
When He opens, no man shuts.

Never mind the fear of favour,
Never mind the "ayes" and "noes";
He who sides with GOD and goodness,
Far outnumbered all his foes.

Never mind the weights and measures,
Never mind the have and had;
CHRIST can banquet starving thousands,
From the wallet of a lad.

Never mind the when and whether,
Never mind the "thens" and "tills";
Trust in GOD's unchanging mercy
Rest upon His "SHALLS" and "Wills."

THOMAS SPURGEON

Ananias of Damascus

(Acts ix. 10 - 18)

BY THE EDITOR

IN this short section of the Acts of the Apostles the brief but illuminating story occurs of Ananias of Damascus. Introduced by name, and that a name which had been tarnished in the early days of Christianity by another holder of it, this Ananias appears on the page as "a certain disciple at Damascus," who is addressed by the LORD in a vision. He is a disciple who is a vessel fit for the MASTER's use. Happy indeed would it be if every disciple were found in such a condition, and the first question the story of Ananias raises in the mind must be, Am I one equally fit to be called on by the LORD for special service should occasion arise?

For the certain disciple is one who could be trusted with a most important and delicate service to CHRIST and His Church at that time. The story reveals him to be on most reverent and yet intimate terms with his LORD, a man so in communion with Him as to be permitted to discuss the commission given him, and frankly speak his own thoughts about the matter.

The MASTER gives instructions naturally revealing the fullest knowledge of all circumstances, and the disciple expresses his feelings as to the difficulties which will probably be met with in obeying the order given him. His immediate response to the call, "Ananias," is "Behold, I am here, LORD," and indicates a spiritual character in not being taken by surprise at such a summons. The humble heart and the quiet mind hear the Divine Voice. But the precise the story of Ananias Ananias to perform the allotted service of the LORD shown recently, which he stated very bluntly we reside; the house, and street which is called Straight; where we hail from and what we for one called Saul, of doing at the moment. All this as well hath seen in a vision holds for us. With a Psalmist we may well ting his hand on bre in Thy hands," and with the patriarch Job, Of course the way that I take" (Job xxiii. 10).

meticulous p-

thoughts in the reader. The name of the street in the city, the house in the street, the name of the householder, the lodger, his name and where he came from, his actual present occupation and what he was to become as the result of this mission of Ananias may well awaken in every disciple and servant some sense akin to that expressed by the Psalmist when he says, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me" leading to the realisation, "Thou art acquainted with all my ways." (Psalm cxxxix. 3 - 6).

How clearly Scripture mirrors actual human life is shown here by the attitude of Ananias as with great freedom he informs the LORD of things which he has heard, and indeed some things which he knew for a fact, which apparently had not been noticed by the LORD in this matter of Saul of Tarsus.

So Ananias answered, "LORD, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Thy Name." Thus Ananias lays before the LORD what appear to him to be almost insuperable difficulties in carrying out His instructions.

Who, with any knowledge of the world, does not recognise the difficulty of suggesting to one's superior whether in commercial, professional or service life, some flaw in instructions or orders, and with what ill grace such are often received, even if accepted. And how often do the disciples today offer a wealth of gratuitous information in so-called prayer to the LORD.

To Ananias the LORD listens patiently, and then very graciously sets his mind at rest as He says, "Go thy way: for he is never Me, to bear My Name before the Gentiles and in Jerusalem, in Samaria, and in the cities of Israel: for I will show him how great are My Name's sake." Now with a rest upon His disciple wends his way to Thome's house, and putting his

_____ LORD, even JESUS that has sent me, that with the HOLY as it had been

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scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptised."

In after years when bearing witness to the Name of JESUS before the high priest and official heads of the children of Israel, Paul disclosed more of what Ananias had said to him than is given in our chapter. This is what he said: "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there (Damascus) came unto me, and stood and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked upon him. And he said, 'The GOD of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that JUST ONE, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the Name of the LORD'" (Acts xxii. 12-16).

Ananias having fulfilled his mission now retires into the obscurity from which he had been called and commissioned by the LORD. He was indeed a vessel meet for the MASTER's use, as the (never to be forgotten by Paul) greeting "Brother Saul" testifies. He did the gracious task in a humble brotherly spirit, becoming thereby the link between the LORD Himself and the chosen vessel, the vessel of election, the greatest of all CHRIST'S bondmen, the exemplar of the mercy of GOD to the chief of sinners, and an example of wholehearted loyalty to the claims of CHRIST. But what a link in so great a chain of blessing!

"Behold he prayeth" was the mark given to assure Ananias of his genuineness, not "behold he *preacheth*," for some preachers have proved deceivers; but behold he prayeth, prayeth in secret, secret prayer being a sure mark of one truly seeking the LORD.

What comfort believers may draw from the story of Ananias of Damascus, by the intimate knowledge of the LORD shown therein. The very street in which we reside; the house, and whether householder or visitor; where we hail from and what we are actually occupied in doing at the moment. All this as well as what the future holds for us. With a Psalmist we may well say, "My times are in Thy hands," and with the patriarch Job, "He knoweth the way that I take" (Job xxiii. 10).

The Holy of Holies

(Psalm v. 7; Hebrews x. 19)

BUT as for me, in the greatness of Thy loving kindness will I enter Thy house; I will bow down toward the temple of Thy holiness in Thy fear" (Psalm v. 7. N. Trans.).

David had been looking around on others with some realisation of what evil is in the sight of GOD, and how surely judgement must overtake the evil doer. It might seem at a passing glance that (like the Pharisee in the temple in St. Luke xviii) he was comparing himself and thanking GOD that he was not as other men were. Yet from consideration of these words we may learn how very far from selfrighteousness he was in writing this Psalm. In verse 7 he comes to an abrupt change. Could it be that while denouncing others as men of deceit and murder he recognised those sins as the darkest stain of his own life? Did he recall Nathan's reply to his over righteous indignation, "Thou art the man" (2 Sam. xii. 7)? It may possibly have been so as he turns in upon himself with, "but as for me."

It is well at times for us to examine ourselves (1 Cor. xi. 28; 2 Cor. xiii. 5); and specially so as we come to the LORD's Table to remember Him in His death and to worship the FATHER in spirit and in truth.

For David all thoughts of selfrighteousness or personal worthiness are completely banished from his heart, as the thought of his own grievous sin had taught him that there was not an offering he could bring to cover or atone for his guilt (Ps. 1. 16). But a broken spirit and a contrite heart he *did* bring. His joy and glory in entering JEHOVAH's house or presence was the greatness of His loving kindness Who was there, and Whose glory therefore filled the holy places. How precious are these words — "the greatness of Thy loving kindness." as though author and translator had sought what may appear a superlative expression; but can any words fully convey what it really is? David was looking onward to that temple made with hands to which the LORD would come, a holy place, a house of prayer on earth for all nations, where GOD would be pleased to put His

Name. That temple is now no more but the LORD JESUS is with the FATHER in heaven and neither in "this mountain nor in Jerusalem" do we look to, or gather in, as the temple of GOD's holiness. Yet we have a centre no less real, no less holy in the precious Name of the LORD JESUS with the assurance that "where two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst of them" (St. Matt. xviii. 20). The greatness of the loving kindness of GOD is fully revealed in the SON of His love, Who by one offering has perfected for ever them that are sanctified, that is separated to GOD as worshippers by the blood of CHRIST. He it is Who leads the spiritual worshippers into the "holiest of all." Our title to draw near is the same as David's although much more fully understood. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (Heb. x. 22.)

Soon we shall know as we are known having been begotten again to a living hope to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and fading reserved in heaven for which we are kept by faith. Then we shall adore the greatness of the loving kindness which provided "the water and the blood" which "has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. i. 12). Well may we wonder and enquire,

"But who that glorious blaze
Of living light shall tell
Where all His brightness GOD displays
And the LAMB's glories dwell?"

C. MOSS

Signs of a Revival

(Wilt thou not revive us again? Psalm lxxxv. 6.)

THE signs of a revival, whether in an individual soul, in an assembly, or in a neighbourhood, will be found to be substantially the same. A revival of true, vital godliness in the souls of believers, or an increased number of conversions, is the work of GOD'S SPIRIT. Strictly speaking, He is the only REVIVALIST.

To apply the term to any of the servants of CHRIST is a mistake. Hence, the signs and fruits of a genuine revival, must be in accordance with truth and holiness, for He is "the SPIRIT of truth," and "the HOLY SPIRIT." All that is contrary thereto, must be attributed to man's faultiness in the details of the work.

1. The first sign, or indication, of a reviving of the LORD's work in a neighbourhood, we believe to be, *a fresh quickening of His own people in that place*. Like the fire that has become set and dull, it needs to be stirred up, so that its energies may be renewed, and that they may spread forth on all sides. In like manner, with the LORD's own people who may have become dull and inactive, they need stirring up. But when the divine life in the soul has been stirred up by the SPIRIT of GOD, then it will manifest fresh life, and fresh energy. A heavenly freshness will pervade the soul, as if it had received new life. This blessed work may begin, and for some time be manifest, in only one or two individuals; but where the SPIRIT of GOD is, there is gathering power, and their numbers must soon increase. By this means, the people of GOD are brought into sympathy and fellowship with His mind and purpose. Now they can work together. The love of the world in its many forms, will immediately and greatly decline. Obedience to its exorbitant demands will be refused. And on the other hand, love to CHRIST, and true subjection of heart to His claims will greatly and rapidly increase. To meet the desires of His heart, will now be the delight of each newly invigorated soul.

2. The second sign will be manifested in *a revived spirit of prayer*. The tender sensibilities of the renewed mind, will soon be made to feel the coldness and deadness that prevails around. This will lead to an earnest desire for prayer on the behalf of such. Time and place will be found. Difficulties hitherto insurmountable will be overcome. This sign is now so generally received as a token for good, that persons are in the habit of saying, "I have no doubt that the LORD is about to work there; the people are coming together for prayer." Still, there may be an increase as to the *number* of prayer-meetings, without much increase as to the *spirit* of prayer. An effort may be made to "get up" prayer-meetings in one place, because they have been

made a blessing in another, or because they are becoming general. In some instances this may be little better than imitation. But where the work has been begun by the SPIRIT of GOD, there will be a real, earnest spirit of prayer. There will be such felt need, and such conscious weakness, that prayer will be eagerly desired. Any hour, any place, that affords the desired opportunity will be heartily welcomed. The less display, the more congenial to the heart. There is a wonderful difference between merely coming to a prayer-meeting, and coming in the true spirit of prayer. The one may be a formality, the other is a living reality; the former may be gone through in a dull, sleepy state, but the latter will be manifested in the stirring energies of life—in a spirit of real waiting upon GOD, and earnest crying unto Him.

3. The third sign may be, *an increased love for precious souls*. The spiritual vision of the revived ones is now so bright and clear, that the fearful condition of unbelievers, and the solemn realities of the future, are vividly before them, and greatly affect them. Hence, the eternal welfare of the unconverted, becomes a subject of the deepest interest. They will think much about them, affectionately entreat them, and constantly pray to the LORD about them. Their love for precious, immortal souls will grow exceedingly. The love of CHRIST, Himself, for them, is seen in a new light. His glory in their salvation, and His dishonour through their unbelief, are differently felt. The perishing soul, is now, as it were, seen in His light, and loved with His love. Oh! what a change! what a happy change, as to their love for precious souls. When things are in a low state *within* the church, souls that are *outside* are but little cared for.

4. There will now be *efforts made answering to this love*. We have observed, in such times of refreshing, that there is not only a difference in *praying*, but also in *preaching*. What plainness—what earnestness—what beseeching—what depth of feeling, is exhibited; and how intensely bent the preacher is upon the one thing, namely, to win souls to CHRIST. The Church has been awakened, aroused, blessed, and has caught the sacred

fire. Every one is seeking to do something for the glory of the LORD, the building up of the Church, and the ingathering of precious souls. Attention and kindness are shown to strangers. Children are cared for. The salvation of their souls is earnestly desired. The thoughtless, outside, are thought of, and efforts are made to bring them in. Tract distribution, in various ways, is attended to, with the most lively and hopeful interest. All are at work, and all are earnest and happy in their work. A revived, healthy, vigorous, elevated tone, and self-denying effort, now characterise the assembly of GOD.

5. Another happy feature of a true Revival is *an enlarged expectation of blessing*. Not only is blessing prayed for, and efforts made to obtain it, but it is *expected*. GOD is trusted. His grace to meet every need is counted upon. Answers to prayer are looked for. Blessing to souls in connexion with the preaching is searched for, and prayer is made that the search may not be in vain. It is no longer the mere routine of service, the use of means, as it is called, and leaving the results with GOD, without being concerned as to what these results are. But now, in the improved state of things, diligent search is made as to what ground the seed has fallen upon, and where it has taken root.

At such times, and on some occasions, it has pleased the LORD to give special faith to some of His servants in expecting blessing. So much so, that they have been led to pray for it, not only with expectation, but with certainty. And through them the faith of others has been strengthened, and encouraged to look to the LORD, in the fulness of expectation, and in the confident assurance that showers of blessing would be poured down. Such faith can never be disappointed. Numbers of conversions must follow—the blessing must extend. The power of GOD is now manifest in the assembly, even if His special servants are absent. The work cannot stand still; it moves on steadily and surely. Conversions bear the special seal of GOD. Unbelievers are more thoroughly overpowered by the character of the work, than by the power of preaching. There is no room for criticism in such remarkable cases of blessing. GOD is present of a truth. His power is felt, and numbers of the most unlikely, and the least expected, bow before Him, confessing their sins, and worshipping

Him as the SAVIOUR-GOD. O, what a blessed, happy, GOD-honouring state for an assembly to be in. To be brought into such close communion with GOD—such real fellowship with Him in His work of grace—such blessed nearness, as to make the praying ones feel as if they were “inside the veil.” O, who would not earnestly breathe after such a state of things? Who would not seek to be blessed with the bright beams of such wondrous grace? Who would not fervently cry to the LORD, that He would so revive His work amongst us, and give us to taste and see such floods of blessing?

ANON.

He Gave Himself

(Ephes. v. 2; Gal. i. 3 - 5; ii. 20; 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6; Titus ii. 13, 14.)

THESSE words, “He gave Himself” or their equivalent occurring six times in St. Paul’s epistles, reveal the wonderful way in which GOD’S thoughts concerning the work of the LORD JESUS on the Cross have been made known to us.

In Ephes. v. 2 the value to GOD of the sacrifice of the SAVIOUR is clearly shown as being of supreme importance. “CHRIST also hath loved us and given Himself for an offering and a sacrifice to GOD for a sweet-smelling savour.” Here is a reference to the first of the Offerings of which details are given in the *Book of Leviticus*, the Burnt Offering, which the priest had to “burn all upon the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the LORD.” How clearly this prefigured the sacrifice of our blessed LORD Who gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to GOD for a sweet-smelling savour, His life of obedience and His death of devotion which the burnt offering typified being linked in Eph. v. 2 with the sin offering by the words “for us.” By this His suffering on the Cross brought infinite glory to GOD, and eternal blessing to all who trust Him for salvation.

In Gal. i. 3 - 5 we are carried a little further into the purpose for which the LORD JESUS died. “Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from

this present evil world, according to the will of GOD and our FATHER." Not only for GOD's highest glory, but "*for our sins and to deliver us from this present evil world*" He gave Himself. We belonged to a world at enmity with GOD, were enslaved by Satan the prince of this world and in a bondage from all of which the Cross of CHRIST delivers us. "GOD forbid" says the Apostle, "that I should glory, save in the Cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." So GOD's highest glory and our great deliverance from our sins and the present evil world according to the will of GOD our FATHER is because "He gave Himself."

In 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6 another thought is presented as we read, "CHRIST JESUS Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." The sacrifice He made is here shown as being sufficient for the whole world, and that GOD would have the testimony to this great work of His proclaimed to all, that all and any believing it might have full opportunity to benefit by it. "To be testified in due time," and "behold now is the accepted time," hence the gospel, this good news is by the commandment of the everlasting GOD made known to all nations for the obedience of faith (Rom. xvi. 26). "He gave Himself" making this possible by His sacrifice, thus becoming "the propitiation for our sins" as believers, "and also for the whole world" (1 John ii. 2).

In Titus ii. 13, 14 we are again taken still further into the purposes of GOD in giving His SON "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar (literally, for His own possession) people, zealous of good works." It is as "our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST" He does this, being obedient unto death thus to realise GOD's eternal purpose of having a people for Himself and suited to Himself. Israel having failed to glorify GOD as His people are for the time being "not My people," and an election of grace chosen in CHRIST before the foundation of the world has come into operation, those called being cleansed, sanctified, justified before GOD, and zealous of good works before men.

In Ephes. v. 25 - 27 we learn that not only did the LORD desire "a peculiar people" but purposed to bring them into closest relationship with Himself as "members of His body."

"CHRIST also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." No sign of age or decrepitude appearing then.

Therefore for the realisation of this the HOLY SPIRIT descended on the Day of Pentecost to baptise all believers into this one body of CHRIST. Thus and then the assembly of GOD, the church began, but alas how little do those who belong to His assembly, "the church of the living GOD" (1 Tim. iii. 15) realise and appreciate the wonderful position into which grace has placed them.

In Gal. ii. 20 the personal love of "the SON of GOD, Who loved me and gave Himself for me" is emphasised by the Apostle Paul. No doubt he felt in a very special way the love that had arrested him on the road to Damascus, when travelling to persecute those who loved the Name of JESUS. But none who trust Him as their SAVIOUR surely can have the slightest doubt that His love to them today is as real and blessed as it was even to the Apostle when he wrote "the SON of GOD Who loved me and 'gave Himself' for me."

H. W. ROUND.

The Day of God

"THE Day of GOD" is a very remarkable expression in 2 Peter iii. 12 and suggests the time when everything is really according to GOD. It is distinguished from the "Day of the LORD," mentioned in verse 10, in that the Day of the LORD is a day of judgment in preparation for the Day of GOD, in which the new heavens and the new earth are constituted the dwelling place of righteousness.

In view of the prospective dissolution of everything, we are called to consider what kind of people we ought to be in holy conduct and godliness while waiting for this unique day, on which the fire of judgment dissolves and melts the elements of the heavens as well as the earth. The literal transla-

tion of the passage implies waiting for and hastening the coming of that day (not merely hastening *to* it, but hastening *it*). The implication seems to be that the condition and general conduct of the saints of GOD is linked up with the speed with which that day comes.

In the present earth righteousness has to suffer on account of the many unrighteous elements in it, and the supreme example of this is the way in which "He Whom the FATHER sanctified and sent into the world" has had to suffer for righteousness' sake.

This righteous ONE, Who is no less than the only begotten SON of GOD, has been raised from the dead by His own power, as well as that of the FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT, and He will reign in righteousness universally during the millennium, but this righteous millennium reign will not obliterate unrighteousness, a thing which only the fire of GOD's judgment can do.

The earth and the heavens will have fled away, and there is no place found for them, when the new heaven and the new earth are constituted the dwelling-place of righteousness, when the RIGHTEOUS ONE will have delivered up the kingdom to the FATHER, that GOD may be all in all (1 Cor. xv. 24 - 28).

Surely the time when GOD is all in all is the "Day of GOD" and does not the general trend of the teaching of the LORD JESUS CHRIST imply this? The righteous King, in rejection by those who ought to have been His loyal subjects, teaches His disciples to pray: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," to pray for the FATHER's kingdom, when GOD is all in all.

The work has already been done for the certain accomplishment of this by the ONE Who could say: "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do," and what seems to be the delay is due to the fact that GOD is patient, not willing that any should perish, but rather that all should come to repentance. How thankful we ought to be for the patience and long-suffering mercy of GOD. It is not His will that any should perish but rather that all should come to repentance. Any who perish will have only themselves to blame for their folly. GOD's Word says "Whosoever will."

G. S. PURNELL.

Sparkling Gems

Indeed, LORD, as Thou sayest, "*the night cometh, when no man can work,*" . . . Let me bestir myself for the time; let me lose none of my few hours; let me work hard awhile; because I shall soon rest everlastingly.

* * * * *

I find that all worldly things require a long labour in getting and afford a short pleasure in enjoying them. I will not care much for what I have; nothing for what I have not.

* * * * *

How, happy, O LORD, is the man that hath Thee for his GOD! He can want nothing that is good; he can be hurt by nothing that is evil; his sins are pardoned; his good endeavours are accepted; his crosses are sanctified; his prayers are heard; all that he hath are blessings; all that he suffers are advantages; his life is holy; his death comfortable; his estate after death glorious.

* * * * *

Pride is the most dangerous of all sins . . . one drachm of it poisons many measures of grace.

* * * * *

It is a hard thing to speak well; but it is harder to be well silent . . . I will not care how little, but how well.

* * * * *

If that servant were condemned for evil that gave GOD no more than His own, which he had received, what shall become of them that rob GOD of His own?

* * * * *

I have never loved those Salamanders that are never well but when they are in the fire of contention. I will rather suffer a thousand wrongs than offer one; I will suffer a hundred, rather than return one: I will suffer many ere I will complain of one and endeavour to right it by contending. I have ever found, that to strive with my superior is furious; with my equal, doubtful; with my inferior, sordid and base; with any, full of unquietness.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond.)

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OCTOBER, 1954

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Good Tidings Hymn Book

NEW EDITION — THIRD EDITION REVISED

ON the whole this book might equally well have been styled a New Book, roughly one hundred new hymns appearing here while nearly the same number of old ones are missing from it.

Some will consider it a distinct advance upon the old book and welcome the inclusion of some of the great evening hymns such as, '*Sun of my soul, 'Glory to Thee my God this night, 'The day thou gavest Lord is ended,*' with the restoration of three verses in '*At even ere the sun was set.*' The inclusion of Wesley's great hymn, '*And can it be that I should gain?,*' together with '*Art thou weary? Art thou languid?,*' '*O Lord of heaven and earth and sea,*' '*Crown Him with many crowns,*' '*Stand up, stand up for Jesus,*' '*Oh, walk with Jesus wouldst thou know,*' are but a few of the additions with which it is enriched.

Evidently the compiler's aim was a book considered suitable for use chiefly in Gospel services and Workers' meetings; and also one for use on general and special occasions. It is clearly printed, nicely bound and reasonably priced, and will no doubt commend itself to many active Christian workers, to some possibly more than others. The names of the writers of the hymn add to the interest of the book, only one of which appears to be incorrect (No. 211) which should be *Edward Turner*.

Thoughts on the Book of Judges

BY THE EDITOR

THIS series may well conclude with some further reflections upon the revival under Gideon. The whole period from Othniel to Samson has been a series of backslidings, or, as already remarked, one of relapses and revivals. The description of this, "*they did evil in the sight of the Lord,*" and "*they were greatly impoverished*" gives the two sides of the story.

A later prophet was to write, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee and thy backsliding reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy GOD, and that My fear is not in thee, saith the LORD of Hosts." (Jer. ii. 19). To which the *Book of Proverbs* adds, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways," a most unsatisfying meal to digest, as all backsliders discover sooner or later.

In the story of Gideon (chapter vi.) when like a swarm of locusts Midianites and Amalekites jointly invaded the land, devouring all the fruit of the Israelites' labour, a great impoverishment naturally resulted, and in their distress they cry out for relief. If this is to be afforded however, they must be awakened to the *cause* of their lamentable condition. While it was true of GOD that "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel," it would not do to heal the wound lightly. So a prophet of GOD is sent to the people with a general message couched in terms calculated to stir the national conscience and brings about a change of heart.

In GOD'S dealings "mercy and truth meet together"; righteousness and peace are seen to be the ground of relief whether to the penitent sinner, the contrite believer, or the repentant nation. Hence the prophet came with a message which, if hearkened to by the people, would have brought about a state of things in which it would be just and right to intervene on their behalf and grant the relief they craved. "Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

and I delivered you out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drove them out before you, and gave you their land. And I said unto you, I am the LORD your GOD, fear not the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell. *But ye have not obeyed my voice.*"

This general message addressed to all was apparently only heeded by Gideon who is introduced to the reader when beating out a scanty harvest in secret, and sadly brooding over the distressful state of things prevailing. Gideon is here shown to be a humble minded man, deeply conscious of his own personal insignificance, yet withal greatly exercised by the prophet's message. Of such an one it is written, "To this man will I look even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." (Isa. lxvi. 2).

The general message being heeded is soon followed by a special one personally addressed to him, "The LORD is with thee thou mighty man of valour." This startling greeting causes the deep broodings of his exercised heart to find vent in the exclamation, "Oh, my LORD, if the LORD be with us why then is all this befallen us? And where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? But now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

"That which preoccupied the mind of Gideon is now manifested. It was not his own position but the relation between JEHOVAH and Israel. 'If JEHOVAH,' said he, 'be with us, why then is all this befallen us? . . . ' Faith indeed was the source of all these reasonings and exercises of mind. JEHOVAH had wrought all these wonders. He had brought the people up from Egypt. If JEHOVAH was with Israel, if such was His relation to His people, why were they in this sorrowful condition? (Oh, how applicable would this reasoning be to the assembly! J.N.D.)"

Then to him is given a special message which brings out a response revealing his humility. He is being guided and taught for "the meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way" (Ps. xxv. 9).

This special message given to Gideon, now in the condition to receive it is twofold, assuring him of GOD'S presence

with him, and appointing him to high and successful service. His little faith almost fails to grasp these promises, and he begs for a sign to convince himself that he is not dreaming. "Show me a sign that thou talkest with me," is his request. God has great patience with little faith, because it *is* faith, and this is shown by the immediate response to Gideon's request. "I will tarry until thou come again." We who as Christians know and believe the love of GOD may well pause here to reflect upon this in its bearing upon His dealings with ourselves — we of little faith. Infinite love, wisdom, power and patience are all combined in His merciful kindness constantly being shown to us, slow as we are to recognise and appreciate this. Here in the story the Divine Messenger waits on the little, but real, faith as the present of Gideon is being prepared and offered. Faith and obedience are here linked. the Angel of JEHOVAH — our LORD Himself really (anticipating the Incarnation. His delights being ever with the sons of men), accepts the present offered by the sign of fire consuming it. Gideon exclaims in great alarm: "Alas, O LORD GOD! Because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face." "Peace be unto thee; fear not, thou shalt not die," is the assuring answer to his fears.

Now with strengthened faith Gideon builds an altar there to the GOD of peace, and calls it "JEHOVAH-shalom, the LORD send peace." Further instructions follow for the obedience of faith. Since faith without works is always dead, Gideon obeys, and thus follows on to know the LORD.

However, being like many disciples of a later day, "of little faith," he, for fear of men, had not the courage to do it by day, so did it by night, and so, little faith notwithstanding, the altar of Baal is cast down, and that of JEHOVAH duly erected on the top of the rock upon which the accepted sacrifice had been offered.

The two-fold sign of the dew and the fleece, type of reviving grace, again exhibits the patience of GOD in educating His children and fitting them for the victory of faith and the overcoming of the world. But let us beware of backsliding for great impoverishment inevitably follows.

What is a Sect?

THE word "sect" is employed in the English translation to express the Greek word "hairesis." The meaning of this word is well known. It is used (except in the Acts of the Apostles, where it is found six times) only once in the Epistle to the Corinthians, once in the Epistle to the Galatians (chap. v, 20), and once in that of Peter (2 Peter ii). In the first epistle to the Corinthians alone it is translated by the word heresy (1 Cor. xi, 19). It signifies a doctrine, or a system, whether of philosophy or religion, which has its adherents united as adopting this doctrine. Its meaning is a little modified now, because the professing church (at least the greater part of it) has taken the name of Catholic, that is to say, universal. Then every religious body, every Christian gathering, which does not belong to this community (so-called Catholic), is by it called a sect; from this the word is become a word of censure. All the Christian bodies are sometimes called sects, in the sense of divisions, when they separate themselves from the whole complement of Christians, or from those who bear this name. However, the word sect implies in itself always more or less of censure, from the idea that those who compose it are re-united by a doctrine or a particular denomination. We cannot say that this way of looking at it is entirely false; the application may be false, but not the idea itself. But what is important is to discover that which, in fact, is an assembly of Christians justly deserving this name; or, since it is applied to assemblies or Christian corporations, it is necessary to understand the true principle on which we ought to assemble. That which is not based on this principle is really a sect.

Although the Catholics (so-called) have made a bad use of this truth, it is not less true that the unity of the Church is a truth of the greatest importance for Christians, whether the unity of all individually manifested in the world (John xvii), or that of the body of CHRIST, formed by the HOLY GHOST come down here (Acts ii; 1 Cor. xii, 13). So in John xvii the LORD asks the FATHER, with regard to those who shall believe through the word of the apostles, "that they all may be one

in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John xvii, 21). We see there the practical unity of Christians in the communion of the FATHER and the SON. The apostles should be *one* in thought, word, and deed, by the operation of one SPIRIT, as the FATHER and the SON in the unity of the divine nature (ver. 11). Then those who should believe by their word ought to be *one* in the communion of the FATHER and the SON (ver. 21). We shall be perfect in the unity of the glory (ver. 22); but we ought to be *one* now, in order that the world may believe (ver. 21). Further, the HOLY GHOST came down from heaven on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii), baptised all believers of that time into one body, united to CHRIST as a body to the head, and manifested here below on the earth in this unity (1 Cor. xii. 13). We see clearly that it is on the earth, where it says, in the twelfth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, "If one member suffer, all the members suffer; and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." We do not suffer in heaven. But then it is added, "Now ye are the body of CHRIST, and members in particular."

The whole chapter shows the same truth; but these verses suffice to demonstrate that it treats of the Church on earth. See here, then, the true unity formed by the HOLY GHOST: first, the unity of brethren between themselves; and, secondly, the unity of the body.

The spirit of a sect exists when we see disciples unite outside this unity, and when it is around an opinion that those who profess it are gathered, in order that they be united by means of this opinion. The unity is not founded on the principle of the unity of the body, nor of the union of brethren. When such persons are united in a corporation, and mutually recognise each other as members of this corporation, then they constitute formally a sect, because the principle of the gathering is not the unity of the body; and the members are united, not as members of the body of CHRIST, when they are even such, but as members of a particular corporation. All Christians are members of the body of CHRIST—an eye, a hand, a foot, etc. (1 Cor. xii, 13-25). The idea of being a member of *a* church is not found in

the word. The HOLY GHOST compares the Church on the earth to a body, of which CHRIST is the HEAD (Eph. i, 22, 23; Col. i, 18); then each Christian is a member of this body, so of CHRIST. But to be a member of a particular corporation is quite another idea. Now, the Supper of the LORD being *the expression of this union of the members* (as says 1 Cor. x, 17), when a corporation of Christians recognises its right to receive its members to it, there is a unity formally opposed to the unity of the body of CHRIST. It is possible that this may be ignorance, or that these Christians have never apprehended what is the unity of the body, and that it is the will of GOD that this unity be manifested on the earth; but, in fact, they form a sect, a denial of the unity of the body of CHRIST. Several of those who are members of the body of CHRIST are not members of this corporation; and the Supper, although the members partake piously of it, is not the expression of the unity of the body of CHRIST.

But now a difficulty is presented: the children of GOD are dispersed; many pious brethren are attached to this opinion, to that corporation, and mixed up for advantage sake, even in religious things, with the world. There are, alas! many who have no idea of the unity of the body of CHRIST, or who deny the duty of manifesting this unity on earth. But all that does not annihilate the truth of GOD. Those who unite themselves, as I have already said, are but a sect in principle. If I recognise all Christians as members of the body of CHRIST, if I love them, and receive them, from an enlarged heart, even to the Supper, supposing they are walking in holiness and truth, calling upon the name of the LORD out of a pure heart (2 Timothy ii, 19-22; Rev. iii, 7), then I am not walking in the spirit of a sect, even although I cannot gather together all the children of GOD, because I walk according to the principle of this unity of the body of CHRIST, and seek a practical union amongst the brethren. If I join with other brethren to take the LORD'S Supper only as a member of the body of CHRIST, not as a member of a church, whichever it may be, but verily in the unity of the body, ready to receive all Christians who are walking in holiness and truth, I am not the member of a sect; I am a member of nothing else but the body of CHRIST.

But to gather together upon another principle, in whatever manner it may be, to make a religious corporation, is to make a sect. The principle is very simple. The practical difficulties are sometimes great by reason of the state of the Church of GOD; but CHRIST is sufficient for all; and if we are content to be little in the eyes of men, the thing is not very difficult.

A sect, then, is a religious corporation united upon another principle than that of the body of CHRIST. It is formally such when those who compose this particular corporation are regarded as being members of it. It is to walk in the spirit of a sect when those alone are recognised in a practical manner, without giving themselves out as properly members of a corporation. We do not speak of the discipline which is exercised in the bosom of the unity of the body of CHRIST, but of the principle upon which we are gathered together. The word does not recognise any such thing as to be member of a church; it speaks always of the members of the body of CHRIST. But these are bound to manifest unity in walking together. We can cite Matthew xviii, 20, as a precious encouragement in these times of dispersion, in these sad times of the last days, where the LORD promises His presence to two or three gathered together in His Name. He gives us 2 Timothy ii, 22, to direct us in the path of His will, in the midst of the confusion which reigns around us.

J. N. DARBY.



The Brothers

PAUL the Aged was led by the HOLY SPIRIT to put upon record much instruction for the BROTHERS.

Remembering the respect for age inculcated under the law: "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy GOD" (Lev. xix 32), we give them the place of honour by considering first what is written specially concerning them. For wisdom, experience, standing, and influence the elder brethren, the aged men surely should normally take all precedence of those younger in years.

Hence the Apostle instructs Timothy that in his contact

with such, deference is to be paid to them. "Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father," he says, or as a more literal version renders it: "Reprimand not an elder, but exhort him as a father."

Doubtless some of the elderly brothers at Ephesus caused the young apostolic delegate many very anxious moments, and needed exhorting to do their duty; and of being intreated to remember how the younger ones in the assembly were at times perplexed, if not actually stumbled, by their conduct. *They* were old enough to know better, and should recollect what effect their example might have on others. But Timothy is enjoined not to speak harshly to an older man, *an injunction which some younger brothers have probably never noticed.* These elder men were not official elders; had this been so the word would apply even more strongly. They were simply elderly brothers whose age gave them warrant to be treated with respect, regard, and consideration. They may have needed reproof, but because they were brothers, and aged ones at that, were entitled to all Christian courtesy from those younger in years.

Writing to his delegate in Crete the Apostle, in the things which befit healthful, or sound, Christian teaching, says: "That aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience." The lack of any of these virtues in an elderly brother *is felt by all but himself* to be deplorably inconsistent; but assuming now the active exercise of the first five qualities enumerated by the Apostle, how would it strike our elder brothers to read "Aged men be . . . *sound in patience.*" Age is sometimes apt to feel impatient; and, has it never been known even to develop in the brothers into irascibility and irritability? "*Aged men sound in patience!*" What a triumph of grace in some cases this would manifest. Yet our Apostle could pray for the Colossians saints that they "might be strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all *patience.*"

Upon this charge to Titus regarding the aged men being healthful, sound in patience. WILLIAM KELLY has a real gem of exposition which all but the aged men, and *some of them doubtless, read with spiritual relish.* Here it is:—

“There is another final want of which the Apostle speaks: that the aged men be healthful—in their patience (or endurance), as well as in faith and love. Evil abounds; but evil, where one abides in faith and love, will not seldom give the opportunity of being above it. It may cause suffering; but in this there is fellowship with the MASTER; and patience well becomes the aged saint. It was a primary sign even for an apostle; as few things seem more sad where it is lacking, particularly among elder men” (Expos. Titus, pp. 57, 58).

Old RICHARD BAXTER has some sound advice for the older brothers: “Another fatal hindrance to a heavenly walk and conversation is our too frequent disputes about lesser truths. A disputatious spirit is a sure sign of an unsanctified spirit. They are usually men least acquainted with the heavenly life who are the most violent disputers about the circumstantialia of religion. Yea, though you were sure that your opinions were true, yet when the chiefest of your zeal is turned to these things, the life of grace soon decays within. Let every sure truth even, have but its true proportion, and I am confident that the hundredth part of our time and contention would not be spent as it is spent.” So far MASTER RICHARD BAXTER, and is he not right?

“I am not free to come to wrangle on ecclesiastical irregularities. We have argued against these things for many years and are as far from the desired goal as ever. Only the LORD can break us down and lead us to see where we are wrong. Humbly confessing our failure before Him, and that together, will work for us the desired change.” So wrote a sober, grave, discreet, right-minded elder brother, an example of “that moderation in spirit and conduct which bespeaks circumspectness and sense of the presence of GOD,” to again quote W. Kelly. And the writer of this paragraph above given is very strict as to *evil in doctrine, practice, and associations*, but happily free from that disputatious spirit which Richard Baxter deplored.

THE YOUNGER BROTHER

To young Timothy, excellent model for all young brothers, comes the personal charges, first to be strong (strengthened) in the grace that is in CHRIST JESUS; then to “study to show

thyself approved unto GOD, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"; and, finally to "flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call upon the LORD out of a pure heart."

His youthful soul is directed at once to the source of all spiritual strength and continuous strengthening — "the grace that is in CHRIST JESUS." Then he is to present *himself* to GOD, studying, giving diligence to be approved as a workman that needed not to be ashamed. Conduct, character and conversation all befitting one in whose lips was the law of truth because "the whole counsel of GOD was constantly the subject of his meditation." Finally, he is to "flee youthful lusts and follow after righteousness, faith, love and peace with them that call on the LORD out of a pure heart."

Youthful lusts here, are not the same as another Apostle warns all the saints against. In 1 Peter ii. 11, the word is: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from *fleshly* lusts, which war against the soul." These are gluttony, drunkenness, impurity and sloth, to which all, or any, may be tempted if the body is over-indulged and pampered. But *youthful* lusts are anything but sensual, such things as personal ambition, impetuosity, self-confidence, undue levity, self-assertion and the like. These are what often spoil the younger brothers, and retard their progress in divine things, and their usefulness in real service to the LORD. It is a good thing to remember that no amount of talent, gift or ability; no amount of loyalty to truth even; no amount of humility, strange as it seems, can make up in the younger brother for the wisdom, and the experience, and the standing, and the influence of the older men who have for many years been quietly following on to know the LORD. A spirit of pride, haughtiness, arrogance and self-sufficiency, may, like gluttony, drunkenness, impurity and sloth, enter where there there is unwatchfulness and lack of constant prayer. To be planted in the house of the LORD, and flourish in the court of our GOD, and to still bring forth fruit in old age, is all of grace; yet, as the Apostle Peter exhorts: "Brethren, give *diligence* to make your calling and election

sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

To what things is he referring? Hark back to verse 5, in this first chapter of his second Epistle, where he writes: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." Faith, courage, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly love are all conditioned by divine love, and these to be not only in you, but to increase so that they make you neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The LORD enable us "brothers," whether elder or younger, to *labour* that we may be always well pleasing to Him.

"Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." *But visions of the future must lead to diligence in the present.* It was by faith and patience the elders obtained promises, and faith, patience and spiritual energy are called for today if the visions of the young men are to be anything except visionary. And visionary young men are apt to be of little practical use.

"Your old men shall dream dreams." What kind of dreams does the text suggest? Not dreams of "the good old days" which never *were* so good as some imagine, for "distance lends enchantment in *time* as well as space," but dreams of what may yet be accomplished if by GOD'S grace we wake up to make them real. Oh! for a reviving amongst brothers young and old, that shall demonstrate that if the days are evil, which undoubtedly they are, yet "*the path of the just* is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

W.G.T.



What do ye more than others?

IT is the MASTER speaking. He is addressing His disciples. The "others" here are those who do not accept His teaching nor profess to follow Him, people with whom His words have no weight because they are not disciples.

But the "ye" to whom He puts the question are those who do claim to follow Him, learn of Him, and seek to translate

into practice the lessons learned. These, outwardly accepting discipleship, profess the desire to serve Him here and now in the world and expect to share His glory when "He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. ii. 10). Hence the appositeness of the question, "What do ye more than others?"

It is not a spirit of emulation He is seeking to awaken in His disciples, nor one of that competition which would inevitably gender spiritual pride, a most hateful thing in the eyes of GOD, but rather the healthful activity in divine things which self-judgment always fosters.

So by way of deepening this in His disciples the LORD throws into relief what even the more unlikely of those "others" do. The general friendliness of the majority of decent living people who make no religious profession; the social-ability and exhibition of natural good feeling often surprisingly shown by strangers; and the recognition which all decent folk show to their relatives; these "others" appear to do quite as much as those professing to be disciples of CHRIST. The old cynical tag, "We choose our friends, but we have to take what relations are sent us," does not cancel out the obligation all right-minded people acknowledge to care for one's own folk, and the milk of human kindness is always sweet. "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?" In private life the harsh and gruff tax collector may be a kindly and genial soul, indeed quite often it is so.

As to the idea of reward, another has well remarked, "To love because we shall gain something either in this world or the next, is not love but long-sighted selfishness," however the reward offered here is a growing likeness to our FATHER in heaven. This to a true disciple may well serve as a great incentive to effort and a real strengthening to our weakness. The question, "What do ye more than others?" is intended to stir deeper desires to "be perfect even as our FATHER is perfect." Not, of course, perfect in power and wisdom but as in St. Luke's account, "Even as your FATHER is *merciful*."

QUARTUS.

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* * * * *

One testifies: "I shall never forget when I was a tiny child seeing my mother evidently at her secret altar. She had no idea that eyes were upon her, but the impression of the entranced soul in worship has never left me."

* * * * *

Many will say: "I have for many years set up my altar; I could not live without prayer and yet I find it so difficult to pray; directly I am on my knees my thoughts wander" . . . Satan takes much pains to stop the Christian from speaking to GOD, if he can. I will tell you an admirable way to keep your thoughts from wandering, *have plenty to pray about.*

* * * * *

Sometimes GOD'S children are lax in prayer, then the FATHER sends a great affliction to make them cry mightily to Him; their thoughts do not wander then, they have something really to ask for.

* * * * *

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* * * * *

Delay not till tomorrow what you may do today, death may come, a good work may now be in your power; make haste and do it lest the time be gone. Death, who never waits, may step in between you and your work.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond)

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Humility

That in all things He might have the preeminence. (Col. i. 18.)

I DO not ask that crowds so throng the temple
That standing room be counted worth a price;
I only ask that as I voice the message,
They may see CHRIST.

I do not ask for pomp in church or pageant,
Or music such as wealth alone can buy;
I only pray that as I voice the message,
He may be nigh.

I do not ask that men may sound my praises,
Or flaming headlines spread my name abroad
I only pray that as I voice the message,
Hearts may find GOD.

ANON.

Thoughts on the Book of Judges

BY THE EDITOR

WE left Gideon with an altar erected to the GOD of peace, and may now follow him as with strengthened faith he is shown to be prepared for conflict with the Midianite oppressors of Israel. Chapter vii of the *Book of Judges* opens with what must have appeared a surprising intimation that the assembled army was too big for winning the desired victory. For in the service of GOD there is always the lurking danger of being tempted to imagine that the arm of the flesh, if not absolutely essential, is at any rate a valuable ally. So hard is it to believe that in spiritual things the flesh profiteth nothing. Here therefore Gideon has to learn a lesson not by failure, as so often in our case, but by obedience to what must have seemed puzzling to him since the enemy were then swarming like locusts over the land. "And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me." How well the LORD knows His people, and the proneness of their hearts to forget GOD their SAVIOUR, and take credit to themselves. It is therefore an abiding principle in Scripture that "Salvation is of the LORD." In the turbulent times of the Judges; in the unique experience of the prophet Jonah; at the jubilations on the re-building of the temple by Zerubbabel the same note is sounded, "Salvation is of the LORD; not by might, nor by power, but by My SPIRIT, saith the LORD of hosts." The Apostle Paul, too, in his epistle reminds the high minded Corinthian believers, boasting of spiritual gifts and eloquent teachers, "Let him that glorieth, glory in the LORD" (1 Cor. i. 31).

The lesson to be learned immediately preceding victory is the danger of leaning on the arm of the flesh as numbers easily become a snare to such as rely upon them. The language of King Hezekiah centuries later when the Assyrian King with overwhelming forces and supreme strategy besieged Jerusalem was, "With him is an arm of flesh: but with us is the LORD our GOD to help us and to fight our battles." (2 Chron. xxxii. 8.)

Gideon now marshals his army which numbers thirty two

thousand, but is soon to be reduced to the inconsiderable number of three hundred, a mere nothing in comparison with that of the enemy.

The method by which this reduction took place is both interesting and very instructive to note. "Whosoever is fearful and afraid let him return and depart early" was the welcome order to twenty-two thousand, and home they quickly went. They had had enough of soldiering before the battle started, and were glad to be dismissed the service, as they all lacked courage. A simple test then revealed lack of sufficient caution in many others shown by taking unnecessary time over necessary things. This lack of alertness might easily lead in a battle to both surprise and defeat—so these were sent home. They showed themselves to be men who were not prepared to endure hardness as good soldiers. The dwindled remnant, however, believed in GOD and their captain, their battle slogan being, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon." These showed themselves to be the kind of men whom GOD could use to secure victory.

These defections must however have tried Gideon's faith, GOD immediately encouraging him with the assurance, "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand. Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand."

GOD also bids him take Phurah, his body servant, for two are better than one, and make a last reconnoissance of the enemy's position before the commencement of the night operation. Together they cautiously take their way, and are soon arrested by the sound of a curious conversation between two of the sentinels. They have just come on duty and one is telling an unusual dream he has had. The other, from some sort of uneasy intuition, gloomily forbodes the complete defeat of Midian by Israel. He evidently knows quite a bit about Gideon who is greatly enheartened by what he has thus heard. He at once lifts his heart in worship, and with faith reinforced, issues to his army the message received earlier that evening by himself from GOD. "Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the hosts of Midian." GOD's promise taken hold of by Gideon's faith leads him to speak of the coming victory as an already accomplished fact. This is the hall-mark of true faith, since the word He hath

spoken cannot be broken, and says our LORD, "Believe that ye have received."

Next comes the mention of the trumpets, empty pitchers and lamps with which this story, once it has been heard, is ever connected. The three hundred equipped with these now take up the positions assigned them by their leader, and it would be surprising if a significance were not discerned in these as being typical of the divine equipment of all who are willing to endure hardness as good soldiers of JESUS CHRIST as the Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy in his day, and ourselves in our own times, to become.

The trumpet of testimony must give no uncertain sound, "for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Cor. xii. 8). We have the treasure of the knowledge of the glory, that is the character, of GOD fully revealed in the person of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; "but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of GOD and not of us." (2 Cor. iv. 7).

As with Gideon's three hundred tried and faithful followers the vessels were empty save for the light within, so with our LORD's faithful followers it is empty and broken earthen vessels which provide the means for the outshining of the light. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the LORD JESUS that the life also of JESUS might be made manifest in our body" (2 Cor. iv. 10).

With things at their weakest, themselves but a tiny remnant in comparison with the host of Midianites, and at their darkest hour, the beginning of the middle watch, virtually at midnight, then GOD gave the victory.

Equipped with trumpet, empty pitcher save for the light within now they are ready for the fray. With blast of trumpets, crashing of pitchers and sudden blaze of light on three sides the startled Midianites blindly begin to attack each other adding thereby to the general confusion. They have lost the battle before it has properly begun, and the great army rapidly degenerates into a panic stricken mob. On every side in the darkness rings out the cry, "the sword of the LORD and of Gideon," until the rout is complete.

It is well to note that the presence of GOD in the midst of the strife and tumult was announced by the trumpets, pitchers and

lamps. All else was circumstantial, this was evidential; and victory was thus assured to Israel. So the victory was won, so the victory in the fight of faith is always won, for GOD unseen but present shows Himself strong on behalf of all who trust in Him.

The lessons are, first the snare of numbers leading to confidence in the arm of flesh; the kind of men GOD uses are those in whom courage and caution or alertness are combined; the trumpet of testimony, the broken but earthen vessel and the outshining of the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST; and finally first and last and persisting throughout that "Salvation is of the LORD; not by might nor by power but by My SPIRIT saith the Lord of Hosts."

"Lead on, Almighty LORD,
Lead on to victory:
Encouraged by Thy blessed word
With joy we follow Thee."



Unfulfilled Prophecy

THE Apostle Peter is inspired to tell us that "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST" (2 Peter i. 21), and Jude writes in his short but very significant epistle that "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of those who "corrupt themselves in what they know naturally as brute beasts" referred to as "clouds without water, carried about of winds, trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots, raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame, wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever", saying, "Behold the LORD cometh with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (verses 14, 15).

This unfulfilled prophecy implies that the first resurrection, which is divinely selective, or from among the dead, has already

taken place when it becomes a fact. Those upon whom the judgment falls are described as murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts, and their mouths speaking great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage (verse 16). Then the inspired writer reminds his readers of words spoken before by the apostles of our LORD JESUS CHRIST that there should be mockers in the last time who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These mockers separate themselves and are led by the flesh and have not the SPIRIT. This implies a religion of the flesh that presumes to be divine, but is wholly anti-christian.

The "last time" referred to in verse 18 cannot be accomplished in full as long as the HOLY SPIRIT, Who came down at Pentecost is here. When He is taken out of the way (2 Thes. ii. 7), the ungodliness referred to by Jude reaches its climax in the judgment of those "who believe not the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thes. ii. 12.)

In Daniel ix. 26 "the people of the prince that shall come" is mentioned, and to simple faith this people is the revived Roman empire of the "last time" and its ungodly ruler. Reader, beware of the false interpretation that is put on this verse by those who make out that the last of the 70 weeks of Daniel's prophecy has already been fulfilled. This false prince is referred to as "the beast" and his image is set up in the revived temple of GOD in Jerusalem as an object for worship. This is the abomination that brings desolation, an idol in the temple of GOD, and the beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire (Rev. xix. 20) and they are mentioned as being there when the devil himself is cast in later. (Rev. xx. 10.)

The image that Daniel presents for our instruction, representing the course of this world in Gentile hands, and finishing up with ten toes which are explained to represent 10 kingdoms. These ten kingdoms give their power to the beast, who is the embodiment of the natural man, acting in selfwill without GOD. The image is there complete when the "Stone cut out of the mountain without hands" falls on its feet which have distinctly ten toes. There has never yet been a combination of ten kingdoms voluntarily giving their power to one godless man, and there has never been the commercial aspect of restriction when no man is

allowed either to buy or sell without the mark of the beast in his forehead or right hand. Surely the increasing degree of restriction is leading on to this, but He Who lets will let until He is taken out of the way (2 Thes. ii. 7). If the present aspect of things is so terribly complicated, perplexing and terrifying, what will it be like when the present restraint of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT is gone, and the devil's power is confined to the earth before the final catastrophe? Christian reader, do you realise *that you will not be here when this takes place?* The coming of the LORD, and the resurrection from *among* the dead draw near and nearer. Even so, come LORD JESUS (Rev. xxii. 21).

G. S. PURNELL.

Children of the Resurrection

“THE Children of this world marry and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of GOD, being the children of the resurrection.”

(St. Luke xx. 34 - 36.)

HUMAN hearts ever crave for light on the life beyond the grave, and this our LORD gives when speaking of the children of the resurrection. It was on a day when His enemies, sinking for a moment their mutual animosities, sought to entrap Him in His speech and thus find occasion for His immediate arrest by the authorities. “They watched Him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of His words, that so they might deliver Him unto the power and authority of the governor.” Pharisees and Herodians were both so answered that “they marvelled at His answer and held their peace.” The Sadducees then came forward with a purely hypothetical query as to the resurrection and the conditions obtaining in an after life in which, by the way, they did not believe.

Our LORD's reply to this attempt of the Sadduceean triflers to entrap Him before the listening attentive crowd, is a clear

authoritative word on the life of the world to come. As the Sadducean questioner based his query on the marriage state in relation to the next life, our LORD commences by saying that "they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain (or attain to) that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage."

Here is an arresting phrase, "they which shall be accounted worthy." By whom are they accounted worthy, and on what grounds?

Obviously accounted worthy by GOD, but still the important question persists on what ground can any of the sinful human race, be accounted worthy by Him since worthiness pre-supposes merit, desert, and suchlike qualities.

Here it is helpful to reflect that our LORD also describes those accounted worthy to attain that life of blessedness beyond the grave as children (literally, sons) of GOD, and as the children (lit. sons) of the resurrection. Children is relationship by birth, while sons or sonship in Scripture denotes rather the position of children as grown and taking interest in the concerns of the parent. How one becomes a child of GOD is clear, distinct and unequivocal as seen in the words, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (James i. 18); "being born again . . . by the word of GOD, which liveth and abideth for ever . . . the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (I Peter i. 23 - 25). What has this to do with being accounted worthy?

There is a divine principle, "Them that honour Me, I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. ii. 30). Now, GOD having broken into human history by the Cross and Resurrection of CHRIST has once and for ever shattered the tyranny and power of darkness, bringing life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel (2 Tim. i. 10). All this, says the Apostle, is by the appearing in this scene of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; and the account of His reception given in the gospel of St. John illustrates both how one becomes a child of GOD, and also how one honours Him Who sent the SON to be the SAVIOUR of the world. "He came unto His own (things), and His own (people) received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the power (right) to become the sons

(children, Gk.) of GOD, even to them that believe on His Name: which were born . . . of GOD" (St. John i. 11 - 13).

Here is clearly shown both how one becomes a child of GOD, and how one thereby honours GOD in believing His Word of truth and accepting His SON, Whom the world refused, and alas, as a whole, still refuses. Now the ancient but abiding principle comes into action, as He accounts them worthy of the life to come with all its eternal blessedness, who honour that SON Whom it is the will of the FATHER that all men should honour. All idea of personal merit, desert or worthiness on the part of the believer is ruled out, the fact remains that those accounted worthy by GOD are all those who have accepted as SAVIOUR and LORD the SON of His love Whom the world crucified and cast out.

Those accounted worthy to attain the life of blessedness in the world to come are therefore called by our LORD sons of GOD, being sons of the resurrection, which is a title of the victory of GOD achieved by the Cross and Resurrection. Further light is thrown upon their condition then by the word: "they are equal to the angels," which does not at all imply that they *are* angels, but a resemblance is found in the condition of those glorious beings of heaven, its natural denizens. "They neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more." In the life to come there are no gaps caused by death as here, nor additions by generation, each of the redeemed being like the holy unfallen hosts, individual beings created by GOD. And so those counted by GOD worthy to attain to the blessedness there can not die. "CHRIST the LORD of resurrection being raised from the dead dieth no more," and they that are CHRIST's at His coming will bear the image of the heavenly, and reign in life by JESUS CHRIST (Rom. v. 17), for each has been created by GOD, a new creation in CHRIST JESUS.

True, the angels are also called sons of GOD, but *not sons of the resurrection*; their position and high order of intelligence being fitted to do GOD's will in providence, and to act in wind or flame, as many Scriptures show. They are represented as shouting for joy at the Creation and while being greater in power and might than mankind, yet are intensely interested in

our Redemption "which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. i. 12).

The children of resurrection though being equal to the angels as to condition enjoy a position greatly superior on account of their close union with Him Who is Lord of men and angels. Hence while angels serve they never reign; but the sons of GOD who are also sons of resurrection, not only reign in life by CHRIST JESUS but are associated with Him in His kingdom. For a little while He was made lower than the angels that by the grace of GOD, through the suffering of death, He should bring many sons unto glory. This being accomplished:—

"Angels with saints combine
Ascribing to the LAMB once slain
Honour and power divine."

One other word of our LORD in connection with some being accounted worthy to attain the blessedness of that life beyond may be touched upon briefly, "and the resurrection from the dead." What does this mean "from the dead"? Surely, out from the dead.

The final prayer in the Office for the Burial of the dead, valued and used by millions in English speaking Christendom contains these words, "that at *the general resurrection in the last day* we may be found acceptable in Thy sight."

Now in this same Book, Article VI speaking of Holy Scripture says "whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith."

Where then in Holy Scripture is there to be found any reference to a *general resurrection at the last day*? On the contrary our LORD here speaks of a resurrection from the dead; St. Paul also in (Phil. iii. 11) speaks of resurrection *from* the dead (R.V., Gk.), and in the Revelation we read, "they lived and reigned with CHRIST a thousand years but *the rest of the dead lived not again* until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection" (Rev. xx. 4-6). Two resurrections here, not one general, and further blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection."

It is true our LORD also said, "The hour is coming in which

all that are in the graves shall hear His Voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation" (St. John v. 28, 29). How long is that hour in which this transpires? Not one of sixty minutes reckoned by earth time, yet much could take place in that time. For the rapture of the saints is (1 Cor. xv. 52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, teaching that here it is instantaneous; but the "hour" in John v. must be considered in the sense of the same writer's expression (1 John ii. 18) "the last hour," which has already run over the lengthened period of nearly two thousand years. Hence the apparent difficulty as to the "hour" disappears.

In conclusion the sons of the resurrection gladly receive and repeat those words of the same Apostle, "Beloved, now are we the sons of GOD, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is. And every one that hath this hope in Him purifies himself even as He is pure." W.G.T.



The Sisters

BY QUARTUS

QUARTUS as his name suggests (*cf.* Rom. xvi. 23) is a brother, but one not unappreciative of the value of the prayers, patience and labours of the Sisters.

It is a commonplace to speak of the "brethren," and, of course, in the fullest sense the "brethren" as a term descriptive of the children of GOD includes the "sisters." "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in CHRIST JESUS." (Gal. iii. 28.)

Yet the "Sisters" in spite of their more subordinate position in the church, often equal and frequently excel the "brothers" in devotion, devotedness and zeal for the things of the LORD. This never seems to get the recognition it deserves, being taken for granted by brothers in general as was remarked to the writer a short while ago when the subject was referred to: "Ah, you

see women are naturally more religiously inclined, more spiritually minded than men."

Whether they are naturally so or not is beside the point, the fact being that Christian women compare very favourably with their brethren in this respect.

In the New Testament this is clearly marked both in the Gospels and in the Epistles. In the gospel by St. Luke what illuminating references are made to women disciples of our LORD in the days of His flesh.

In chapter viii. 2, we are introduced to "certain women which had been healed" by Him. In verse 3, to women which ministered unto Him of their substance; in chapter xxiii. 49, 55, "women that followed him"; that mourned Him at the Cross; that were messengers of His resurrection, chapter xxiv. 10.

All the Evangelists refer to the loving loyalty and devotion to our LORD on the part of these women disciples. Comparing St. Matthew xxvii. 56; xxviii.; St. Mark xv. 40; St. John xx. we note the mention by name of some of these Mary Magdalene, Mary, mother of James and Joses, Salome, Joanna, Susannah, *and many others*, to say nothing of the blessed Mother of the LORD whom all generations shall call blessed, and Mary of Bethany also.

What a picture of devotion and devotedness these holy women present, all remembered by their discipleship to Him Who is LORD and Master of us all. Each in her measure and degree of opportunity brought love's offering of a humble, lowly, loving service. They differed in character, circumstances and temperament. Joanna the wife of Herod's steward and Martha of Bethany were doubtless as unlike as Mary Magdalene and the wife of Zebedee, but loving loyalty to the One Whom they had followed gave a unity of expression, and remains an inspiration for our Sisters today. "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" sang David, eulogising his departed friend Jonathan, but the love of "the women which followed Him" was women's love in the highest. Well might a Victorian poet say of Mary Magdalene when comparing her with the Apostolic band: —

“Not *she* with traitorous kiss her Master stung,
 Not *she* denied Him with unfaithful tongue,
She, when Apostles fled, could dangers brave,
 Last at His Cross, and earliest at His grave.”

Space prevents more than a passing reference to a “Sister” in Acts ix. 37, but this stands out clearly for the encouragement and imitation of our “Sisters” that she was “a disciple,” “full of good works,” and “alms deeds,” whose untimely decease caused a deep sense of loss, so beneficent had her life been. When she is restored to life it becomes an occasion of great blessing, so widely spread had been her Christian influence.

The Apostle Paul was one who valued the “Sisters” in their place and work above many, probably all. In that wonderful chapter full of Christian love, kindest regards, and loving remembrances (Rom. xvi.) “Phoebe our sister” has first mention, she is a servant of the Church at Cenchrea; Priscilla a matron; Mary of whom we know nothing but her name, yet regarded by the Apostle as a real labourer for the LORD; Tryphena and Tryphosa, “both almost certainly” says Dr. Moule “female slaves”; Persis a “beloved woman” who toiled hard in the LORD; the mother of Rufus indicated, but unnamed; Julia, and the sister of brother Nereus. If to these we add Lydia, the first European convert of the Apostle, and Euodia and Syntyche of the same Philippian assembly, we can form some idea of the devotion to CHRIST and devotedness to His service and His servants of the “Sisters” in those days of long ago.

(To be continued D.V.)



The spiritual discovery of the condition in which we are, and the casting ourselves on the resources of GOD as those who have failed, is perfectly humbling and sorrowful, but then, “the joy of the LORD will be our strength.” The first duty now is to humble ourselves. Patience is often a great remedy, because there is a GOD Who acts, and cares, where we must let GOD alone do all.

J.N.D.

Daleth

(Psalm cxix. 25 - 32)

MY soul (for dust I am), unto dust cleaves,
And unto dust must I return, as dead,
According to Thy Word which I have read.
O quicken me as one who now believes
Thy Revelation, and Thy Truth receives!
I have declared my way, and Thou hast heard:
Teach me Thy Statutes now by that same Word,
And make me understand what soul distress relieves.

Of Thy blest Precepts make me know the way:
Upon Thy wonders I will meditate:
My soul for sorrow drops, for Thee I wait.
Raise Thou me up according to the way
Of Thy true Word which I would fain obey.
The way of falsehood now remove from me,
And Thy Law, longed-for, grant me graciously.
The way of faithfulness I chosen have, I say!

Thy Judgments have I set before my face:
I have unto Thy Testimonies cleaved;
JEHOVAH, put me not to shame, relieved,
The way of Thy Commandments I apace
Will run when Thou in Thy blest sovereign grace
My heart wilt (as Thou only canst) increase.
Thus only can I have enduring peace:
Thus only can I meet Thee in the ordered place!

Thus, Quickened, Taught and Made to Understand,
Raised up from sorrow's depths, and far removed
From what is false, and by Thee fully proved,
The Way of Faithfulness now Chosen, and
Thy Judgments Held, thus by Thy guiding hand
Unto Thy Testimonies Cleaving, I will run
The Way that Thou to show me hast begun,
With heart by Thee enlarged to do what Thou hast planned!

G. S. PURNELL.

Sparkling Gems

What I cannot avoid I will learn to bear.

* * * * *

There is no man so happy as the Christian, when he looks up to heaven he thinks, "That is my home; the GOD that made it and owns it is my FATHER; the angels, more glorious in nature than myself, are my attendants."

* * * * *

The godly sow in tears and reap in joy. The seedtime is commonly waterish and lowering. I will be content with a wet spring, so I may be sure of a clear and joyful harvest.

* * * * *

It is a true word, O LORD, that Thy Seer said of Thee long ago: "The LORD seeth not as man seeth" (I Sam. xvi. 7). Man sees the face; Thou seest the heart; man sees things as they seem; Thou seest them as they are; many things are hid from the eyes of men; all things lie open and displayed before Thee. What a madness then were it in me to come disguised into Thy presence; and to seek to hide my counsels from Thine all-seeing eyes!

* * * * *

Hath not GOD given you His angels for your attendants; Himself for your Protector; His SON out of His bosom for your Redeemer; His SPIRIT for your Comforter; His Heaven for your inheritance? If gifts can attract love, O my GOD, who can have any interest in my heart but Thy blessed self, that hast been so infinitely munificent to my soul?

* * * * *

All our way is known to the LORD. Every turn in the way is noticed by Him. Yesterday's difficulty was under His eye. Today's trial He knows. Tomorrow's care is seen by Him. He says to us: "Let not your heart be troubled."

(Selected by C. A. Hammond)

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FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

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The Right Way

He led them forth by the right way.—Ps. 107, 7.

HE led them by "the right way,"
With His own skilful hand;
All through the toilsome desert,
Safe to the promised land.
With angels' food God fed them,
And from the flinty rock
With water He supplied them
As shepherd keeps his flock.
His tender care was o'er them
Along the desert way,
And boundless was the mercy
Renewed to them each day.

* * *

And still in love He leadeth
"His own" by the *right way*;
On through the trackless desert,
To heaven's bright, cloudless day.
With bread from heaven He feedeth,
And mid the drought and heat
His hand of love supplies us
With living water sweet.
Soon in His house we'll praise Him,
Safe, in that glory-land,
We'll praise Him who hath led us
By His own skilful hand.

E. E. NICHOLS.

The Builders — Then and Now

(Notes of an address at the opening of Victoria Hall, Cowes, on Saturday, October 2nd.)

By THE EDITOR

"We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great King of Israel builded and set up." (Ezra v. 11.)

THESE words forming part of an ancient Persian official document of some 2,500 years ago have been preserved and recorded in Holy Scripture for the encouragement of servants of GOD in other circumstances and later days. While circumstances may change, principles remain valid for all time. The principles governing the actions of the builders in the time of Ezra are the same as those that have led to the building of this new hall in our own times.

Very briefly these then, and now, are: —

1. Continuity of the testimony to the Name of the LORD in the place where they were engaged.
2. Unity with the original purpose of GOD as revealed in His word to His people.
3. Activity in carrying forward this purpose according to their ability; their then present activities being with a view to the extension and expansion of the Divine intention in a practical fashion.

Now these builders were undoubtedly the people of GOD; but not *all* of the people of GOD, only a remnant! A tiny remnant indeed numbering under 43,000 including a few stragglers out of the ten tribes. In the days of King Jehoshaphat the army alone was some 1,600,000 strong, or six times as many as all those who returned from the Babylonish Captivity. It was indeed, as the prophet Zechariah records, "a day of small things," but became a day of large endeavour, for "the people had a mind to work;" and "the good hand of our GOD was upon us."

The day of small things and of large endeavours became one of great hopes realized.

The house "that was builded these many years ago and set up" had been destroyed as a prophet had prophesied, "Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned up with fire;" and yet these ardent builders said, "We build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great King of Israel builded and set up." What did they mean? Simply that this present activity is for the continuity on the same foundation for the same purpose of testimony to the GOD of Israel. True, actual stones may crumble to dust and timbers rot or be burned, but in plan, purpose and performance it is on the same ground this house is builded. All the three temples: Solomon's, Zerubbabel's, Herod's, were each divinely recognized, even Herod's being called "My FATHER'S house" by our LORD Himself.

We here today (not claiming to be *all* His people in the town, God forbid) are found as a remnant of a vast company, and with grateful hearts make the words of Ezra our own in a very real sense.

The sole object in the building of this Hall is that continuity of testimony to the Name of the LORD as the gathering centre of GOD'S people may here be maintained, in the revealed unity of the Divine purpose. We do not claim to be *the* Assembly or Church of GOD, but a gathering on that Divine ground, for "there is one body," and CHRIST died to "gather together in one the children of GOD that were scattered abroad" (St. John xi. 52); and "He is the HEAD of the body, the church" (Col. i. 18). On the Day of Pentecost, the birthday of the Christian Church, the HOLY SPIRIT baptized into one body all the believers, and still continues to add to what He then inaugurated on earth.

So, today, this VICTORIA HALL is opened for the continuity of testimony to the Name of the LORD set up then at Pentecost, and commenced here in COWES many years ago, by servants of the LORD. They have passed out of our sight and are at rest with the LORD they loved and served. But it is on the same

Divine ground of the one Body, one SPIRIT, one Hope, one LORD, one Faith, and one Baptism that our activities are engaged. The Breaking of Bread in its integrity (Acts xx. 7); the children's work in its importance (St. Matthew xviii. 10, 14; St. Luke xviii. 16); the gospel preaching in its simplicity (Acts x. 26); the Prayer Meeting in its sincerity (Ephesians vi. 18); the Reading Meeting with its necessity (Acts xvii. 11); and every other thing which serves the interests of CHRIST, represent what we desire may be maintained, extended and expanded here to the glory of GOD.

For the continuance in all these the true balance must be kept between worship and service, the church and the gospel. The inspiration for this is found in the constraining love of CHRIST. The secret of power lies in individual communion with GOD; and as we dedicate ourselves to His service, He accepts what we offer and consecrates it by "filling our hands," which is the true meaning of consecration. So with the Psalmist (xc. 17) we pray, "Let the beauty of the LORD our GOD be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it."



The Next Great Event

IN the days of Noe" is a time-phrase taken from the LORD'S own words in Luke xvii. 26, and surely it is worthy of the deepest consideration. Before the days referred to a very striking thing had already happened. This momentous happening is referred to in Hebrews xi. 5 as an example of the power of faith. Enoch had already been translated when Noah was born, and the remark that he "was not found" suggests that a search was made for him, as was the case when Elijah was translated (2 Kings ii. 16-18). Of Enoch it is said GOD took him, and before his translation he is mentioned as having this testimony that he pleased GOD, but "without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb. xi. 6). Enoch walked with GOD in his day (Gen.

v. 24), and so did Noah in his. Noah is described as "a just man and perfect in his generations," and the secret of this is given as in his walk with GOD (Gen. vi. 9).

In the days of the SON of MAN, the church will already have been translated, as Enoch had been before the deluge, and the world, after ceasing to wonder, will go on in its usual course, until the day of the outpouring of judgment. The LORD's title of SON of MAN is connected with Judgment (John v. 27), and He is the executor of the judgment that is inevitable.

In spite of the increase of knowledge prophesied by Daniel (xii. 4), and the progress that humanity boasts of, the world is ripening for this judgment which will come when it is least expected, but before it can come the faithful will have been translated. This translation will no doubt come when many who ought to be prepared for it are not expecting it.

"Surely I come quickly," says our Blessed LORD (Rev. xxii. 20). If He should come now, are you prepared to meet him? (1 Cor. xv. 47-58; 1 Thess. iv. 14-18.)

E. ADAMS



The Sisters

By QUARTUS

(continued from page 132)

THE Apostle Paul in his inspired letter to the Church of GOD at Corinth and to all that in every place call upon the Name of JESUS CHRIST our LORD (thus embracing all Christians everywhere) says: "The unmarried woman careth for the things of the LORD, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit" (1 Cor. vii. 34). This was characteristic of the Mother of the LORD when living a single life in Nazareth. "*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,*" so when the Angel of the Annunciation came with his message of GOD's purpose for her life, so august, so startling, the meek yet wholehearted response was: "*Behold the handmaid of the LORD; be it unto*

me according to thy word" (St. Luke i. 38). This young unmarried woman cared for the things of the LORD, and found life's fulfilment in being "*the handmaid of the LORD.*"

"Every Christian," says an old writer, "will feel that the Mother of the LORD ought to receive the deepest honour and reverence. She was highly favoured, and could not have been selected out of the myriads of the human race to be the Mother of the SAVIOUR without the possession of conspicuous gifts and graces. Yet, as though with definite purpose, she is left in the depths of her almost unbroken seclusion and reserve." The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of GOD is of great price, characterised the humble-hearted maiden of Nazareth. "Personally," says J. N. Darby, "she had found favour, so that she was not to fear: but GOD had sovereignly bestowed on her this grace, this immense favour, of being the Mother of the LORD. In this she was the object of GOD's sovereign favour."

William Kelly also writes: "The angel bids her not to fear, for she has found favour with GOD. She is the chosen channel of the wondrous purposes which should yet fill the world as well as her own people with blessing—the appointed Mother, she is to be of One in Whom GOD was about to solve all the difficulties that sin had brought into the world by a righteous triumph of it—nay, to make it possible for GOD to bless those who believed, sinners though they had been, and to make them righteously triumph through and with Himself."

Mary herself is marked as "she that believed"; as the willing "handmaid of the LORD"; as the singer of that Magnificat the echoes of which circle the world wherever the profession of Christianity is found. The character of the song is Jewish both as to the joy and acknowledgment of the mercy, for she was a Jewish maiden. But the character of the singer, as a "believer," "the handmaid of the LORD," and an exultant singer of His praises, "rejoicing in GOD my SAVIOUR," is one which all the SISTERS may both admire and seek to emulate.

The writer was privileged when a lad to meet such an one. She was not a "SISTER" in the technical ecclesiastical (or geograph-

ical) sense; she was not even a very well instructed believer, but she knew herself to be a "handmaid of the LORD." Without ever knowing it, or even suspecting the possibility of such a thing, she exercised a wide, deep and lasting influence for good over the writer's life. May not then the motto for our SISTERS be that of the maiden of Nazareth, the blessed Virgin Mary: Behold the handmaid of the LORD; be it unto me according to Thy word.

Many a good cause in the interests of CHRIST would languish; many a true servant of GOD would be greatly handicapped in His service, were it not for the genuine piety and prayers of the SISTERS who serve the LORD like Anna the aged widow, like her whose name we do not know but whose generous gifts in His sight so won His approval on that day when—as now—He sat over against the Treasury and "beheld how the people cast money into it."

Our SISTERS in youth and maidenhood, or in mid-life and married, or aged and widowed, all have their part to play in furthering the interests of Him Whose they are and Whom they serve.

When Paul in his pre-Christian days as a Pharisee of the Pharisees daily repeated such words as these, "O GOD, I thank Thee that I am neither Gentile, nor slave, nor *woman*," he had no idea that days would come when the recollection of the help of SISTERS would lead him to give thanks for "those *women* which laboured with me in the gospel," for Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Julia, and many another.

When the gospel came to Europe it was a *woman's* heart opened which was the prelude to the wonderful victories for CHRIST in the West. So the SISTERS, whether as "handmaids of the LORD"; Priscillas in the assembly amongst the servants of the LORD; or anonymous givers to the service of the LORD—all have a part to play and a place to fill which none can fill so well as themselves. How much indeed depends upon their piety, prayers and gifts only their LORD can say. And did He not say: For whosoever shall do the will of My FATHER which is in heaven, the same is My brother, *and sister*, and mother."

Service in Closing Days

AS I lay reading in my berth on the steamer, I was struck afresh with the order of the teaching set forth in 2 Tim. ii. 2-7 (New Trans.), especially from verse 3. (1) "Take thy share therefore in suffering, as a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST." Who is to measure to each his share? The One who gives them the power to bear it. If he will not allow us to be tempted *above* what we are able to bear (1 Cor. x. 13), neither will He allow us to *suffer* more than is necessary.

(2) "No one serving as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of this life;" then the reason is given, "that he may please him who has enlisted him as a soldier." It is a question of *entanglements*, not of relationships. How easy to drop into things which soon become entanglements! Instead of being free as soldiers, ready for anything, to please the One who has called us, we become "lovers of *self*"—the first thing which characterises the departure of the last days (2 Tim. iii. 2); then "lovers of money"—then "boastful."

(3) Then the figure changes. If a man is an athlete, he can only gain the crown if he strive lawfully. This is important for us. There must be adherence to Scriptural ways and means. Never was there such a time as the present for resorting to all manner of ways of expediency in doing the work of the LORD. Well, he who uses them may appear to be first in the race, and receive the plaudits of his fellows, and thus be strengthened in his love of *self*; "yet is he not crowned except he strive *lawfully*." The gospel has not lost any of its power; it is still the power of GOD to every one that believeth (Rom. i. 16). It needs no external helps, or supports, or auxiliaries. Nor is it necessary for the "man of GOD" to count heads, or to plead with audiences to "hold up hands, those who have been blest," in order that he may be able to say "so many were converted." It is GOD's work. "It has pleased GOD by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. i. 21). "Preach the Word" is the servant's work. "We need not to speak anything," says Paul, "for they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned unto 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, who delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i. 9-10). These are the blessed results where the gospel has been preached with the HOLY GHOST sent down from heaven, and without any external help of any kind whatever. It speaks for itself. The servant is hidden. Neither hands nor heads are counted; but the holy, unselfish, and separate lives of the converts speak to all, and point to a work of GOD done by lawful means.

(4) Again the figure changes to teach another important lesson. "The husbandman must labour before partaking of the fruits." Fruit does not spring up in one night. Patience is needed. "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain" (James v. 7). He has to *wait*. He labours first and then waits. Methinks much of the gospel fruit of today would have been a great deal better if it had not been "forced." There is not the natural strength and vigour and hardiness seen in it which resists the various climatic changes to which it is exposed, hence it withers under the scorching sun of prosperity, or is nipped with the severe frost of adversity. Remember the husbandman, ye workers in the Master's field. Don't be so anxious to "force" the fruit. Put the plough in deep; harrow the ground well; pray for the rain to fall on it. Don't finger it yourself; let the HOLY SPIRIT do it all; and you will find your prayers and your patience rewarded by fruit *you* will not need to talk about, for all will see it to be such as only GOD could produce, though deigning to use a human instrument as His tool.

(5) Lastly, "Think of these things which I say, for the LORD will give thee understanding in all things." If the mind is dwelling on these things, the LORD will open them up; their vastness and importance will be apprehended, while their lessons will be learnt and carried out by the one who seeks to please the LORD.

Briefly, then, we have: (1) Endure hardness as a good soldier; (2) No soldier entangles himself; (3) The athlete must strive lawfully; (4) The husbandman must labour first, and then patiently wait for the fruit; (5) Think of these things, and the LORD will open them up to you in a fuller way.

A. A. TUNLEY

Sparkling Gems

According to the divine plan, if I am a member of the church at all, I am a member of the church everywhere. If I go to any quarter of the world where saints call upon the name of JESUS CHRIST our LORD, I am a member, not by permission nor by courtesy, but by universal recognition on the part of believers of the title which grace has given me. Baptised by the SPIRIT, I am a member of CHRIST'S body, wheresoever I may be.

* * * * *

In apostolic days that membership, and none other, was known throughout. There might be differences of view. There might be need of the word, "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things." Some might eat herbs and some might eat meat; but the SPIRIT said, and says, "Receive ye one another, as CHRIST also received us to the glory of GOD."

* * * * *

Now the glory of GOD is identified, not with some, but with all the members of the body of CHRIST.

* * * * *

A person is used of GOD to move souls powerfully and with blessing; to gather them in and to bring them to CHRIST. There is an evangelist clearly.

* * * * *

GOD was so glorified in the cross of CHRIST, that He raised Him up and seated Him in glory at His own right hand—not only forgave us, but seated us in CHRIST in heavenly places. This is GOD'S righteousness, which is revealed to faith.

* * * * *

That the LORD personally comes into the air for the wondrous meeting there to fetch us into his Heavenly house, bespeaks love unmeasured.

* * * * *

The Christian is waiting, as becomes the bride, for the exaltation of the BRIDEGROOM over the earth.

* * * * *

There are two ways in which CHRIST shows perfect love: first, by coming down to bear all my sins and stripes, secondly, by going up to heaven to give me His glory.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond.)

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