

WORDS OF HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

JANUARY, 1955

VOL. XLIV

No. 1

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11, Little Britain, E.C.1.

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 84, Upper Grosvenor Road.

Philadelphia: J. D. ROBERTS, 300, Walnut Street.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto.

Australia: B. LICKLEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castle-craig, Sydney, N.S.W.

PRICE THREEPENCE

May be ordered through most Booksellers

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

All communications for the Editor should be sent to W. G. TURNER, The Gables, St. Nicholas-at-Wade, Birchington, Kent. All business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP, or other publications mentioned, must be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND, 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

In the Beginning

(S. John i. 1)

BEGOTTEN of the FATHER,
Eternal SON art Thou;
Of Heaven and Earth CREATOR,
Our souls before Thee' bow.
Thou art our LORD and SAVIOUR
Who came'st from realms above
To tread this world a stranger,
In all-surpassing love.

We worship and we praise Thee
While on Thy grace we muse,
Which led Thee, high in glory,
Such worthless ones to choose.
Thee still, unchanged and changeless
Eternally "THE SAME,"
We'll praise through endless ages,
And magnify Thy NAME.

C. MOSS.

How Old Art Thou?

(A NEW YEAR REFLECTION)

By THE EDITOR

WAS it the hoary head, the furrowed brow, the care-lined countenance, the limping gait of the aged Patriarch which prompted the Pharaoh's question, "How old art thou"? For the passing of the years undoubtedly leaves the fingerprints of time on the human frame and features. "We spend our years as a tale that is told," says Moses in his recorded prayer in Psalm xc, and the reply given by Jacob seems at first to be self-revealing as of one who, to quote the Psalm again, has not always "so numbered his days as to apply his heart unto wisdom." A note of regret, of disappointment, creeps into the Patriarch's reply to the Pharaoh of Egypt as he replies, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage" (Gen. xlvii. 9).

It has been remarked that retrospection leads to introspection and issues in circumspection, and as the old man reviews his chequered career he doubtless reflects how differently things might have turned out if the vow of youth had been kept from Bethel to Peniel. But those vital twenty years of early mid-life had been squandered by him in following too much the devices of his own heart, in planning and scheming. They had been days of increasing anxiety and bitterness of spirit, indeed as a later prophet writes, "the days which the locusts have eaten." Maybe, as he reflects upon those wasted years which he describes as "few and evil" he realised how he had shortened them by his forgetfulness of the GOD of Bethel, foolishly trusting in his heart.

So his testimony given to the great man of the world in his day is tinged with regretful remembrances. "The days of the years of my pilgrimage" is how he now regards his life—a pilgrimage. All along the road he has travelled he can now recall the milestones, Bethel, Mizpah, Mahanaim, Peniel or Penuel.

What memories these invoke! Bethel, where in the day of his self-caused distress GOD chose to reveal Himself as a Blessor. He was a wanderer, self exiled from his father's house by his own wrongdoing; lonely, friendless, with a bad conscience making him a prey to dread of just retribution. In his fitful slumbers he dreams and sees presented to his astonished gaze a ladder set up on the earth but reaching to the heavens, as a busy highway thronged with GOD's messengers who are still sent forth to be ministering spirits to those who shall be heirs of salvation. Above the heavenly ladder stands the LORD of heaven and earth in His gracious majesty, speaking a message of grace to the unworthy pilgrim. Friendless!—"I am with thee; I will keep thee; I will bring thee again into this land; I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." So runs the blessing of the GOD of Jacob at Bethel. On awaking his faith begins to work, though but feebly. Another has said, "Jacob barely believed, and will wait to see whether all will turn out as it has been promised." Nor is he contented with repeating to GOD the terms of his engagement, but he adds a couple of clauses which strike him as being important, and as having been omitted. There was nothing about "bread to eat and raiment to put on," nor about coming back again "in peace," so he adds these. It is so much easier apparently to trust GOD for eternal blessings rather than for temporal daily needs, our own hearts being witnesses, at any rate, in this matter. "GOD ALMIGHTY appeared unto me and blessed me," was Jacob's reflection upon the beginning of his pilgrimage. Then and there it was he made the vow, proceeding on his journey with the assurance of GOD's care and protection. Twenty years, however, with Uncle Laban, spent in scheming as each sought to outwit the other, caused the vision of Bethel to fade. At length business and domestic relations becoming too strained, Jacob seeks, by a subterfuge, to extricate himself from the unpleasant situation. The circumstances created by his own greed and sharp practice are, however, now overruled by GOD to awaken Jacob from the spiritual lethargy into which he has drifted. It is here that memory would recall the next milestone on his pilgrimage during the "few and evil days" complained of by him. For Mizpah, where the exas-

perated Laban comes to demand reparations, became GOD'S beacon or witness, bringing inexpressible relief to Jacob. Mahanaim, the milestone after Mizpah, is the place where once more the angels of GOD meet him with assurance thus of divine interest still being maintained in him and his journeyings. At length the final one on the actual journey is reached and at Peniel or Penuel he learns GOD'S strength and his utter personal weakness. Here he confesses who and what he really is—Jacob a supplanter—and receives the new princely name of Israel, a "prince with GOD."

Hence it is at the close of the audience granted by the then mightiest earthly potentate, it is he who blesses the Pharaoh, the lesser being truly blessed by the greater. Personal failures and regrets notwithstanding, it was as the inheritors of the promises that the Patriarchs blessed others in their day.

When speaking to Joseph later, Jacob, still looking back over the years of his pilgrimage, presents an entirely different side of experience. This time it is nearly all about GOD that he speaks, the mention of Whom does not once occur in the record of the Pharaoh audience with its dreary recital of "the few and evil days." On the contrary, here the whole of his stormy life is shown to have been spanned by the merciful rainbow of GOD'S gracious providence and protection. As Jacob now reviews the past, what a strangely different and contradictory account of the days and years of his life is given by him. "GOD ALMIGHTY appeared unto me and blessed me . . . the GOD which fed me all my life long unto this day, the ANGEL which redeemed me from all evil" (Gen. xlvii. 9; xlviii. 3, 15, 16).

When viewed in its true perspective with GOD as both centre and circumference, life is seen not as a matter of days few and evil, as it must be when He is left out of it, but as being "satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD" (Deut. xxxiii. 23).

It is a pilgrimage, however, but along the road are milestones to remind the pilgrims of the divine patience and perseverance with us. Birthdays, recoveries from illness, the surprising turn in domestic and business affairs, moments when the angels of

GOD meet us in human love, friendships, good books, and those unforgettable moments when from one cause or another the Presence of the LORD is more realised by us. Whatever the changes, "JESUS CHRIST is the SAME yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." So as old Bishop Bickersteth greeted the years we too may sing:

"O Thou, Who canst not slumber,
Whose light grows never pale,
Teach us aright to number
Our years before they fail.
On us Thy mercy lighten,
On us Thy goodness rest,
And let Thy SPIRIT brighten
The hearts Thyself hast blest,
'Till clothed in light for ever
We see Thee face to face."



Eventide for the Christian

"THE best is yet to be; the last for which the first was made." May not this sometimes apply to the eventide of life as well as to the hereafter? The evening has a beauty all its own. One evening at Oban I stood by the memorial to the men of the town who had gone west in the first world war. As the sun descended in superb splendour behind the hills towards the Atlantic, it lit up the windows of the town at the back with an exquisite golden glow.

Someone has said that youth, like spring, is an overpraised season. 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? The mellowness, peaceful radiance and gently warm sunshine of a fine day in early October are symbolic of the cheerful godliness of a joyfully maturing Christian 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.

For increasing infirmities and disabilities the last lap in life's race has compensations in the shape of lessened responsibilities, deepened serenity, the philosophic mind, and the pleasure and profit derived from the mental album that memory is always compiling from the material of other days. And to laugh with the mind is one of the minor joys of everyday life at any age.

Of course the weather in the autumn is often bad, but the believer who is no longer young is justified in looking forward, in GOD'S mercy, to a period of spiritual health and useful service, even though the kind of service may not remain the same. We can epitomise the First Psalm thus: Fresh and fruitful all the time.

Looking back, as we naturally do at the end of any period of life, we have much failure to regret. But what abundant cause of gratitude have we for all GOD'S tender mercies, spiritual and temporal, including what He has been so patiently and graciously teaching us from the time we first learnt from Him our need of the SAVIOUR.

A retired London City missionary known to me has said that as age advances the Christian heart thinks less of doctrine and more of love as the chief thing. Towards the end of his life, however, Paul stresses sound doctrine. But we need not set doctrine, which is the food of faith, in opposition to love. It is Paul who says, "And so there remain faith, hope and love—these three; but of these the greatest is love." And the Second Epistle of Peter puts love at the crown of the Christian graces, while almost its last word is an exhortation to hold the truth. Spiritual love is not a passion or emotion, but a *principle*, an attitude of the will. As shown towards GOD it means receiving His Word unreservedly and heartily, and joyfully choosing His will as the object of paramount importance. As shown towards men, Christian love is *the habitual practice of goodwill towards all*, it may be at his own expense. Certain it is that the *summum bonum* of life, here and hereafter, is *the joy of loving God*.

In this world our frail humanity is unfitted for a life of uninterrupted happiness. Effort and struggle are native to us and our present habitat. All life as we know it involves pain and conflict, sacrifice and disappointment. Many a hope is longed for, but never seen.

And rhythm is a law of all life. The tide may be running out fast; wait awhile and it will return. The uphill work of the cyclist is rewarded sooner or later by the restful descent. It is well to wait before worrying. Even apart from sin, hours of joy in GOD do not last; they come, and go, and come again.

And mystery belongs to all life. Our knowledge, as Paul reminds us, is only partial, and so is Divine revelation; but both are *sufficient for our doing the will of GOD*. In fact, the happiest and most useful Christians—other things being equal—are those who accept the truths of revelation without seeking overmuch to harmonise them, and the facts of life without trying to explain them. Behind and greater than all mysteries, however dark, is CHRIST our DIVINE REDEEMER and LOVER of our souls.

Our spiritual education is lifelong, and will continue, as our gracious INSTRUCTOR enables, until travelling and schooling days are done.

E. ADAMS.



Age after Age

Christ is the Key to prophecy; His Cross the pivot upon which all turns, for heaven and earth.

OUR interest in larger, wider affairs than those which press for immediate attention is commonly feeble and fragmentary at the most. But being ourselves in the stream of human history, we should study what has been written for our learning in this respect, and so learn to adore GOD in His ways with mankind.

The consideration of the beginningless past, and the unending future, Eternity, as we name it, leads finite minds into an element transcendent and incomprehensible to them, until the divine light of revelation from GOD comes to their aid. The consideration of the beginning of the world and all created things, also

quickly serves to throw our ignorance out into relief; we having no source of exact information as to the genesis of things, apart from the light of "Genesis" itself.

The end of all things too—as to how human history will end—fills the mind with perplexity and amazement. The appalling misdirection of the results of much scientific research in certain directions of discovery and invention, to the wholesale destruction of mankind fills the thoughtful mind with horror and terror at what might soon be the end of human civilisation and history.

The Christian mind turns to Holy Scripture and there learns with relief of One Who is the "appointed *Heir of all things*"—Who is also the end of all human history, He for Whom all things were made. That this same One, too, is He "by Whom all things were made." The *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the Beginning and the Ending. (Cf. Jno. i. 3; Col. i. 15-20; Heb. i. 1-3).

The Heir of all things and the Creator of all worlds is, necessarily, before all things: "Being the brightness (effulgence) of His glory and the express image of His being," though begotten of the Father yet equal with the Father. "The Father hath life in Himself, and hath given unto the Son to have life in Himself" (Jno. v). The Son is the effulgence of the Father, Light of Light, as St. Athanasius so forcibly affirms in the well-known passage where he demands of Arius, "Who is so void of understanding as to doubt concerning the eternal being of the Son? for where has one seen light without effulgence?" The brightness of GOD'S glory is the express, substantial, real image of His being; so that "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (Jno. xiv).

The Heir of all things; the Maker of all worlds; Himself the true living expression of GOD'S Person; One Who also is "upholding all things by the word of His power"—this One throughout all human history, by His interest, providence and power reveals Himself as being that Eternal Wisdom Whose delights were ever with the sons of men (Prov. viii). The Creator, and Sustainer of all things is also the Redeemer of mankind, so we read that when He had "by Himself purged our sins," He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. With CHRIST as the Key of Prophecy, and His Cross the pivot upon which all

turns for heaven and earth, we may safely trace the ways of GOD through the ages of time, until time itself merges into Eternity.

The forty centuries of the forbearance of GOD, the twenty centuries of the long-suffering of the LORD, the golden age for earth, and the eternal glories of new heavens and a new earth are shown to be entirely bound up with, and dependent upon, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Lamb of God, the Revealer of the Father, the Reconciler of all things by His Cross, and the Redeemer of His people.

Starting then from Eternity, human history begins with man placed in Eden in a state of Innocence; from which, alas, he quickly falls. The *first* period of time is from Adam fallen (in Gen. iii) to the Judgment of the Flood (in Gen. vi-ix); and this may be described as the *Age of unrestrained self-will*. Man when left thus for some sixteen hundred years without special manifestations of GOD, and guided only by Conscience, as a consequence quickly degenerated into a self-willed creature led captive by the Devil (Rom. v. 12-19; Ephes. ii. 2). There were marked exceptions as Abel, Enoch, Noah; but the general character of this period was such that only the "Flood" could cleanse the deeply corrupted earth of a race that had become completely reprobate. Noah and his family were saved by the obedience of faith from this otherwise universal destruction. The world that then was perished.

The *second* period, lasting from the "Flood" to the "Call of Abram," opens the story of a new era for mankind. It was characterised by *The institution of Civil Government; The Peopling of the earth; The judgment of Babel; and The introduction of Idolatry into human history*. Taken together, these warrant us in calling this the *Age of Public Governmental dealing by God*.

The *third* period, like the preceding one, was roughly four hundred years, and extends from the Call of Abram to Moses the Lawgiver. Man is here placed upon a new ground, namely, that of promise (Gen. xii; Gal. iii. 16; Rom. xi); and Abram becomes the root of GOD'S testimony on earth. This period therefore may properly be called the *Age of Promise and Testimony*.

The **fourth** period from Moses to CHRIST and Christianity, one of ~~some~~ fifteen hundred years, covers the times of Priests, Prophets and Kings. It is the *Age of Law and Kingly Government*.

The **fifth** period is from the Ascension of our LORD till the translation of the Saints to Heaven. "*Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Rom. v. 21). It is the present age, an indefinite period, during which a world-wide testimony to the Risen Son of GOD is being proclaimed; it is the day of salvation, too, during which the heirs of GOD, and joint-heirs with CHRIST are being gathered out from all nations by the effectual testimony of GOD'S SPIRIT and Word. The *Age of God's long-suffering grace to a guilty world*, the times in which our lot is cast.

The **sixth** period is a short but severe one of some seven years only, lasting from the Translation of the Saints at the Coming of the LORD, to their appearing with Him in glory when He comes to this earth again to take the Kingdom. It is an *Age of Coming Crises and Satan's rule*.

The **seventh** and final period is the thousand years of the golden age of CHRIST'S reign on earth, the Millennium, extending from the Introduction of the Kingdom of the Son of Man, until its close. This is indeed the *Age of Righteousness, Blessing and Glory*, and the final dispensation. One brief, decisive clash with all organised evil led by the Evil One in person; then the final judgment of the Great White Throne; after which CHRIST having put down all authority, delivers up the Kingdom to the Father, and time merges into Eternity, when GOD shall be all in all—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—the ever-blessed, all-glorious Trinity in Unity; then appear the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, but throughout all the Church in her predestined station eternally witnesses to the manifold wisdom, grace, kindness, power and glory of Him that is, and was and ever shall be; and to the Lamb of GOD the Effectuator of all the Divine purposes, the One Who bore away the sin of the world.

But who that glorious blaze
 Of living light shall tell,
 Where all His brightness GOD displays,
 And the LAMB'S glories dwell ?
 GOD and the LAMB shall there
 The light and temple be;
 And radiant hosts for ever share
 The unveiled mystery.

W.G.T.

(Next month, D.V., How the world went wrong.)

Jesus Christ's God-given Revelation

THE closing book of the Bible is regarded by all who are not deliberate unbelievers as given by inspiration. It falls naturally into two distinct parts, and, being the "Word of Truth," it requires to be "Rightly divided." Its object is stated plainly in the words "To show to His servants (literally slaves) the things which must soon take place." It begins with a benediction, stating the happiness of those who read and listen to its words, and those who treasure its messages, as things near at hand.

Then there are very significant addresses to seven outstanding assemblies, that are plainly eras in the earthly history of the one body, referred to as the church in the New Testament. This ends with the third chapter and the church is not directly referred to again, but the inspired writer is shown an open door in the sky, and is invited by trumpet sound to mount and be shown things which must take place after those already mentioned. Surely the implication is plain enough that the church has been translated before the things arrive which are unfolded to him in the place that he occupied by invitation above, beginning with the grandeur of the presentation of the One Who has prevailed to open the seven seals of the book of judgment, the LAMB as it had been slain, to Whom is ascribed along with Him Who is seated on the throne, "Blessing, honour, glory and power to the ages of ages," and worshipping homage paid.

Reader, beware of those who say that the seals have already been opened. The resurrection unto life, spoken of by the LORD

JESUS in John v. 29, takes place before the first seal is opened, and what is the first thing that happens when the LAMB opens the first seal? The prophet sees a white horse whose rider was armed with a bow, and had a crown on his head, and he goes forth conquering and to conquer. White is the symbol of a righteous cause, and what could be more appropriate than the cause of GOD'S earthly people, the Jews, and the establishment of the bounds of the ten kingdoms represented by the ten toes of Daniel's image. The nation is providentially re-established in its own land under the hand of GOD, ready for the "Great Tribulation" of prophecy, when the whole world will be put to a final test.

A faithful remnant will declare itself for GOD, rather than for the Devil, and will refuse the Antichrist on the same grounds that the apostate nation refused the true CHRIST—that He, being a man, made Himself GOD. Most of them will have to pay for their faithfulness with their lives, and the time of the tribulation is made as short as possible, otherwise no flesh would be saved. (Matthew xxiv. 22).

Those who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie, are to be made the synagogue of Satan, and the LORD promises to keep from the hour of temptation (The Great Tribulation) those who have kept the word of His patience (Rev. iii. 10). Gold tried in the fire, and white raiment are available for those who are wise enough to "buy" them from Him Who has them for disposal, and surely the "buying" is without money and without price. What humiliation to be found naked after all! (Rev. iii. 18).

G. S. PURNELL.



"Idle Talk is a Disease — Rumourtism"

THESE words appear outside a church in an English coast town. A pithy slogan runs as follows: "Those are good teeth that can hold back the tongue." Very great power resides in the little member, both for good and for evil. Control of the tongue is a test of the mature Christian character.

The Word of GOD tells us that our speech is to be true, wholesome, kindly, useful and pungent. "Let your speech be always

with grace, seasoned with salt." Words are children of the heart, and we must educate them. Even light words may reveal the quality of the heart, of the inner life.

He who *says* what he likes will *hear* what he does not like. Blunt speaking sometimes cuts keenly. Much harm and pain are caused by fault-finding and idle and mischievous gossip among those who profess to be Christians. We should be slow to believe any story against another believer. It may be a spiteful invention, born of jealousy; or a distortion; or an exaggeration. And there is always the other side; if we knew *all* the important facts, the impression left on the mind would be different.

Concern for the Kingdom of GOD and a generous heart will help us to exercise restraint when speaking of fellow-Christians. Fortunately for our peace of mind, most of the things that people say about us never reach our ears!

The idle talk that damages another's character is more than a disease; it is a sin (James iii).



Letter to the Editor

Dear Brother,

The articles on "The love of the Risen Lord" I enjoyed very much, specially when read with the previous one on "The need of today." Of course what the writer of the *latter* says is right, as he has the Word for his authority. But when you and I look back over 50 years and reflect upon the havoc caused by the unbridled use of "discipline" and little use of the "restoration" part, in my humble judgment the least said about it the better. No doubt, however, many of your readers know nothing of the past, so it *may* help them.

When reading these articles through again, my thoughts would go back to the good old days when at the Whitsuntide Conferences Mr. Kelly almost invariably spoke on the Monday night, and that dear and saintly Mr. Burbidge on the Tuesday evening. The one the usual learned and logical facts, and the other a quiet exposition of love, grace and blessing in an ever present realization of the Risen Lord. I had better say no more, but on "The love of the Lord in Resurrection" both articles were much enjoyed by me.

E.T., London, S.E.

Sparkling Gems

The ways of GOD are always according to what occupies Himself, and what He is doing in a general way. Yet at the same time He carries on a moral government with every one of us, so that we have to do with Him.

* * * * *

Love, everywhere precious, never out of season, above all it is the lifebreath of the church. Where love is not the regulating power in the SPIRIT, the very nearness of the saints to each other and the action of the gifts, prove the greatest dangers; where love governs, all else works smoothly to the edification of the saints and to the LORD'S glory.

* * * * *

Man was made to look up, not physically alone but morally, in dependence on GOD, the source and giver of all goodness.

Faith is not fanatical; it reasons as soundly as it feels loyally and works by love.

* * * * *

CHRIST'S resurrection is the pledge of ours, the witness of salvation, the pattern of deliverance and the spring of hope in the midst of labour as well as suffering for CHRIST.

* * * * *

If one walks quietly, submissively and obediently, with a will not seeking itself . . . one will find happiness even here.

* * * * *

Faith tested is faith strengthened.

* * * * *

There is no position a saint can be in but that he may go to GOD for help.

* * * * *

There is nothing too great for GOD to give; nothing too small to be beneath His care.

* * * * *

If the Christian tries to make the best of both worlds—to stand for the truth and yet to cultivate the approval of the ungodly, he will find that his testimony has lost its power and the world itself does not respect him.

* * * * *

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“Increasing in the Knowledge of God”

(Col. i. 10)

ETERNAL life means knowing GOD. We begin to know GOD when, at conversion, our spirits are quickened by the Divine SPIRIT, raised from their sleep of death, and endowed with a new power of perception.

Growth in the knowledge of GOD leads to a deeper peace, a wider and more useful outlook, a stronger faith, more effective prayer, and a deeper joy in GOD. The “joy of the LORD” is the singing heart of those who are homed in GOD and who adoringly delight in Him and His ways.

Practical Peter’s final exhortation to grow in the knowledge of the LORD agrees with Paul’s ruling ambition: “that I may know Him.” To know Him is our truest possession, and whatever we may leave behind when we leave time for eternity, we shall certainly take with us the knowledge of GOD we gain down here. The “summum bonum” of life, here and hereafter, is the joy of knowing and loving GOD.

Oh, to know Him better as SAVIOUR from sin’s power and for holy living, as FATHER, TEACHER, GUIDE, Provider of material supplies, Restorer and Maintainer of health, Director and Empowerer of service, and Object of joyful worship.

Whatever else you may be ignorant of, *be sure of GOD.*

E. ADAMS

Caleb, Barzillai, Anna

"They shall still bring forth fruit in old age"—(Ps. xcii. 14)

By THE EDITOR

THAT these words are intended to bring much comfort to aged pilgrims cannot be doubted, and three illustrations in Scripture serve to confirm them. Caleb at eighty-five, Barzillai at eighty, and Anna, the prophetess, at about eighty-four years of age are all shown there bringing forth fruit in old age "to show that the LORD is upright."

The ardent desire of a true child of GOD is to bear fruit acceptable to Him; else what is life worth living for in a world where "man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble"? And how forcible are the words of our Saviour, "Herein is My FATHER glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples" (St. John xv. 8). The consistent testimony, too, of the HOLY SPIRIT, through the Apostle, strongly witnesses both to the possibility and the great desirability of fruit bearing by the true believer.

"Fruit unto holiness" is the product of the new condition as connected with Him Who having died for our sins is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto GOD (Rom. vii. 4). The true believers in the province of Galatia are sharply reminded by the Apostle that the fruit (singular) of the SPIRIT has a threefold character: Godward as love, joy, peace; manward as longsuffering, gentleness, goodness; selfward as faith (literally fidelity or faithfulness), meekness, temperance (literally self-control).

Now, while fruit-bearing is effortless it is neither causeless nor automatic. There is obviously what produces fruit, and what causes it to be borne in old age; so consideration of the three Scriptural characters mentioned earlier may reveal the secret of fruit bearing even in old age, such fruit as refreshes both the LORD and His people, and "shows that the LORD is upright," as the Psalmist affirms.

Caleb, the first, is a man of eighty-five of whom the Divine appraisal is "My servant Caleb, he hath followed Me faith-

fully," and in some half-dozen references where he appears in the pages of Scripture always the consistent record runs of one "who wholly followed the LORD." Hence, at eighty-five, with strength renewed like an eagle, he says to Joshua, "I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; the LORD has kept me alive these forty-five years." And the secret of his continuance is found in that he had wholly followed the LORD, and so enters into the promised possession with strength renewed, enabled to expel the sons of Anak, the giants, and showed that the LORD, Whose servant the whole course of his life had shown him to be, is upright. Caleb's secret may also be that of all who wholly follow the LORD, "*for such shall bring forth fruit in old age to show that the LORD is upright*" (Ps. xcii. 14).

Barzillai on his eightieth birthday, with a joyful heart (in spite of some physical infirmities) comes down from the heights of Gilead, where his castle was, to conduct his King over Jordan on the return to the capital city. In the day of the unnatural rebellion against David, Barzillai, the chieftain of Rogelim, a very great man, had been prompt in showing his loyalty. He replenished the King's camp at Mahanaim with whole-hearted generosity of which the sacred writer gives a detailed account.

"Beds, basons, earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour and parched corn, and beans, lentiles and parched pulse, honey and butter, sheep and cheese of kine for David and for the people that were with him."

Barzillai was great in his hospitality. As another has well remarked, "You cannot tie up the hands of a hospitable heart." The day of the king's adversity only made the greater claim upon Barzillai's loyalty, while affording opportunity to show it. It was, too, at risk of life and property from the then apparently victorious rebels.

When the tide turned the same loyalty to GOD'S king is seen as the old chieftain hastens to salute him and to conduct him over Jordan.

"Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem," says the king. To which royal invitation Barzillai makes a humble and dutiful plea to be excused the honour. "I

am this day fourscore years old," he says, pleading some of the physical infirmities sometimes attendant upon old age. He seeks neither reward nor honour, the joy of witnessing the king's triumph "to show that the LORD is upright" being sufficient repayment for any services he had ever been permitted to render.

Anna, the prophetess, the widowed daughter of Phanuel, is the only one of note mentioned in Scripture of the tribe of Asher. At the Presentation in the temple of the Holy Babe, "she, coming in at that instant" when aged Simeon, with overwhelming joy had given thanks to GOD, "gave thanks likewise unto the LORD, and spake of Him (the Holy Child) to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." In old age at eighty-four, Anna brings forth fruit as speaking of Him she shows that the LORD is upright, and fulfils His promises.

Some beautiful words of J. N. Darby may well be pondered here. "We see that they knew each other, in this lovely picture of GOD's hidden people: 'She spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Israel.' Anna, a holy widow, who departed not from the temple, and who deeply felt the misery of Israel, had besieged the throne of GOD with a widowed heart, for a people to whom GOD was no longer a husband, who were really widowed like herself; and she now makes known to all who pondered on these things together, that the LORD had visited His temple. They had looked for redemption in Jerusalem; and now the REDEEMER—unknown of men—was there. What a subject of joy to this poor remnant! 'What an answer to their faith!'"

Caleb, a vigorous old warrior, with a sound constitution; Barzillai, a nicely placed old man, but conscious of physical handicaps consequent upon age; Anna, an aged, godly, gifted, gracious woman living in difficult days; each and all alike illustrating by character, conduct and conversation what the Psalmist sang in his great "Psalm or song for the Sabbath day, those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our GOD. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the LORD is upright. He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him" (Ps. xcii. Title and vv. 13-15).

What is Sweeter than Honey?

THE first mention of honey in the Bible (Gen. xliii. 11) shows that it was regarded as something very special in the days of Jacob, for when he as Israel was sending a present to Joseph as the ruler of Egypt, he said: "Take of the best fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds," and honey is always spoken of as the acme of natural sweetness.

Its quality as a food and a real refreshment is shown in the next mention of it, in 1 Samuel xiv. 25, where it is said that "There was honey upon the ground," but though the honey dropped, no man dared touch it, because of Saul's curse upon anyone partaking of food until evening, except Jonathan, who was unaware of his father's curse. "Jonathan put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened." When he was informed of his father's curse, he expressed his disapproval of it, saying that his father had troubled the land by it, and mentioning the enlightening effect that a taste of it had had upon himself.

In Psalm xix. 7-10, the perfect law of the LORD that converts the soul, the sure testimony of the LORD that makes the simple wise, the right statutes of the LORD that rejoice the heart, the commandment of the LORD *that enlightens the eyes*, the clean fear of the LORD that endures for ever, and the judgments of the LORD that are true and righteous altogether, and more desirable than the finest gold, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

Wisdom, in Proverbs xxiv. 13, says: "My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb which is sweet to thy taste," and the effect of the knowledge of wisdom to the soul is likened to the effect of honey to the body. In ch. xxv. 16, the Wise Man says: "Hast thou found honey? Eat so much as it sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it." Too much of mere natural sweetness is not good. It can become nauseous in excess, as mentioned in chapter xxvii. 7. "The full soul loatheth (or, as the margin reads, treadeth under foot) an honeycomb," whereas "to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

In Isaiah vii. 15, where the birth of **IMMANUEL** is mentioned as a sign given by the **LORD** to the house of David, butter and honey are mentioned as His food, "that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good," and prophecy is mentioned as being fulfilled meanwhile.

In Canticles iv. 11, the bride says: "Thy lips, O my Spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under Thy tongue; and the smell of Thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon." The enlightening and feeding value of honey is here ascribed to the Bridegroom.

In Matthew iii. 4, John the Baptist is said to have had for his food locusts and wild honey. He was preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan went to him and were baptised in the Jordan confessing their sins.

"What is sweeter than honey?" is the question raised by those who had found out by underhand means Samson's riddle, and "What is stronger than a lion?" is linked with it. These questions are raised in Judges xiv. 18, in the sad story of the weakness of a man of **GOD** amidst the treacheries of his enemies.

The last mention of honey is in Rev. x. 9, 10, when the apostle John, in the course of his visionary revelations, is told to take the little book out of the mighty angel's hand. The angel let him take it, saying: "Take it and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey." The final victory of his nation was sweet to the apostle's taste, while consideration of the intermediate happenings was bitter to him as he thought of these.

In the burnt sacrifices mentioned in Lev. ii. 11, that speak prophetically of **CHRIST** and His offering of Himself, honey was not to be used. Mere natural sweetness cannot appeal to **GOD** against Whom nature has sinned unto death. This is a hard saying for those who persist in believing that there is some good in human nature after all.

Before Israel can taste the sweetness of millennial bliss, there is the bitterness of the great tribulation which will try all who dwell upon the earth.

G. S. PURNELL

Age after Age

2: HOW THE WORLD WENT WRONG

THE story of HOW THE WORLD WENT WRONG is comprised in some fifteen hundred years of history, and compressed into about one hundred verses in *Genesis*.

Two objections may be raised to the consideration of this subject: first, that it is now a matter of such very ancient history, a happening of so long ago, indeed an antediluvian story; secondly, as to whether time would not be better spent in discussing how to put the world right rather than in thinking of how it went wrong.

The answer to the former is, of course, that history, especially moral history, has a way of repeating itself, and the civilisation of modern times being so uncannily like that of those very ancient days, great profit arises from considering what led to its catastrophic collapse. As to the latter objection—men *have* sought through all ages, and still are seeking without success, how to put the world right. None has succeeded, nor will any succeed until He Who is the appointed Heir of the world comes into His inheritance as King of kings and Lord of lords.

To help in our study, we must note first that the Scripture method of dealing with human history and affairs is selective. The Bible has an Author, Who is also its Editor; and hence we discover the divine method running throughout Scripture is one by which not every event that happened is recorded, but such as are specially *significant*; that not every man who lived in Bible times has biographical mention, but that the men who have this distinction are themselves *typical* characters whose history possessed features of permanent value to the race. Historical, significant and typical are three helpful ideas to store in one's memory as to the general design of the Sacred Scriptures.

The *Dawn* and *Doom* of the earliest recorded civilisation is given in a terse, pithy, pregnant style by the inspired writer. (Gen. iii. vi.)

The root of all human failure; the spring of human sin, sorrow, suffering and death, is seen there. *Disbelief in the goodness of*

God—in His real care for man's highest development and blessing—and *disobedience to the known will of God* by our first parents are there shown to have been the root of all the misery of the human race. These two attitudes of heart towards GOD are as modern as anything can well be. GOD is set aside; man's whole conduct being influenced by self-will. Is not this typical of the present attitude of man to GOD? Our own hearts witness to the recurrent temptation assailing them to doubt His goodness in our personal affairs. And are not disobedience to GOD's will and self-exaltation characteristic features of modern life? In considering the history of the human race we must never lose sight of the part played by SATAN from those earliest days. It was at the instigation of SATAN in his conflict with GOD that the subtle temptation "Ye shall be as gods" assailed our first parents in Eden.

In Gen. iv, we find man not merely as a sinner, but man now become a criminal. A brother is killed in anger and jealousy, and all responsibility for his brother's well-being rudely repudiated by the murderer. "Am I my brother's keeper?" he insolently demands.

Here the foundations of civilisation are uncovered, as *disbelief in God's goodness, disobedience to God's will, and defiance of God and man*, introduced crime which remains still, as an evil legacy, constituting one of the great problems of modern civilisation. If there were no sin and crime, there would be no need for prisons, policemen, courts and judges with all the paraphernalia of punitive and repressive force; but righteousness, peace and joy would be characteristic of what is now confessedly a groaning earth through sin, and the injustice of man to man springing therefrom.

CAIN and LAMECH are the two moving spirits in the setting up of that earliest civilisation. (Gen. iv.) It comes with something of a shock that in the lifetime of ADAM, violence and corruption in the earth had risen to an almost intolerable height; and that all GOD's institutions and injunctions were already being contemptuously flouted. CAIN, his crime having stained the earth with the blood of a righteous man, sets out to make a permanent place for himself in the earth, regardless of what he

has done; settling down he establishes a family; and by calling the city after his son, thereby indicates established proprietorship and his intention to enjoy the world as it was spite of the curse upon it, and the innocent blood of the first martyr, and the witness that it bore as it still cried from the ground. GOD was not in all his thoughts; so the curse that lay on the world on account of his father's sin, and the unrequited blood of an innocent man rapidly passed out of his reckoning. He builds and owns a city, and has a family, with a name in the earth. Says an able writer on this period: "It is very remarkable that we perceive in the Cainite race those very things *which afterwards formed the characteristics of heathenism, as we find it amongst the most advanced nations of antiquity, such as Greece and Rome.*"

The short but startling sketch given of LAMECH and the tragic history of his very talented family confirms this. LAMECH'S sword song (Gen. iv. 23, 24), the earliest piece of poetry in human history, reveals the man, proud, boastful, self-confident, ready for any violence and cruelty to the full extent of his ability. He has two wives; this too is significant. Our LORD said: "From the beginning it was not so." Marriage was instituted in the day of man's innocency for the comfort and continuance of the race; but in that institution there was before the mind of GOD what it symbolises and signifies, the union subsisting between CHRIST and the Church. Hence Polygamy was at once a rebellion against a beneficent provision of GOD for man, and a confusing of the truth intended to be taught by it. His mode of addressing his wives is also revealing. Significant and instructive too in connection with "*how the world went wrong*" are the names of LAMECH'S wives and daughter.

"ADAH" is "beauty" or "adornment"; "ZILLAH" is "the shaded one," from her tresses, or alternatively "sounding," perhaps from her singing voice; while "NAAMAH," as the daughter was called, means "pleasant, lovely, graceful."

LAMECH'S household thus presents a picture of a lawless man, one who fears neither GOD nor man; whose womenfolk bear names that speak of the "*lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh*"—just as ST. JOHN, centuries later in the Greek civilisation

of Ephesus, speaks of these things as being emphatically of the world and not of the Father.

The occupations of LAMECH'S sons help to complete the picture of the Dawn of civilisation. The "*pride of life*" is also included by the Apostle JOHN as part of the fashionable world that passeth away; and commerce, culture, craft and ship are each represented, by JABAL, JUBAL and TUBAL.

JABAL was the father of such as have cattle"; he it was who introduced a social spirit into pastoral life, and what appears previously to have been a nomadic and family needs. He is the father of such as handle the harp and the organ; he it was who is the inventor of stringed and wind instruments. HENRY has it, "If brother JABAL were to show them how to play the harp, then JUBAL will show them how to play the organ; he is the father of the fine arts; the man of culture; the artist; the poet; the musician; the inventor of mechanical arts and invention.

As a whole, the family of LAMECH present an essentially godless civilisation, finding pleasure, occupation, advancement in a world cursed by sin and stained with the blood of a righteous man; they being all the while completely indifferent to the judgment overhanging the scene, of which warning was given by a contemporary, as we shall see farther on in the chapter.

"Then began men to call upon the Name of the Lord," or "to call themselves by the Name of the Lord."

Here we have what had been, in some measure, from the beginning: a division of the race through the deepest things of life. CAIN and ABEL at first were divided by their way of approach to GOD. Then LAMECH and ENOCH—both seventh from ADAM—yet divided spiritually to the roots of their beings; the one the typically godless man; the other a typically godly man. One had no fear of GOD before his eyes; the other worshipped GOD and walked with Him; two typical men indeed—one

essentially an earthly-minded man; the other equally emphatically a heavenly-minded one.

The two significant events occurring in this period are (1) the Translation of ENOCH, and (2) the Flood that overwhelmed all LAMECH'S kind of people.

Of ENOCH we read that "he walked with God"; that he "prophesied of the judgment to come"; "that he had this testimony, that he pleased God"; that "he was not, for God took him." (Gen. v. 24; Heb. xi. 5; Jude, 14, 15.)

"Can two walk together except they be agreed?" asks the prophet. ("Shall two walk together except they have made an appointment?" — R.V.)

For ourselves, in this day of grace, the appointed meeting-place is at the Cross of CHRIST, where all GOD'S grace and man's guilt met in the person of the sinless SAVIOUR. It has become indeed:

The place where GOD and sinners meet
And thousands meet with Him.

Then having received CHRIST JESUS as LORD by faith, so walk ye in Him; (Col. ii. 6) until taken to be with Him before the Day of Doom dawns for the ungodly world of CHRIST-rejectors. (1 Thess. iv. 15-17.) Let us summarise the teaching suggested by all this.

The Dawn and Doom of civilisation of *the world that then was* (2 Peter iii. 6) is given in Gen. iv-vi (*cf.* Rom. v. 12-19); and is shown to have been an age of unrestrained self-will issuing in corruption, violence and lawlessness. There had been some who called themselves by the Name of the LORD, but at the end these disappear save NOAH and his family. Disbelief in GOD'S goodness began the downward move, with disobedience to His known will; defiance of GOD and man followed; *and death reigned*, spite of the lie of SATAN "Ye shall not surely die."

Destruction then threatened, and judgment was pending on account of the blood of a righteous man, and of the curse which lay on the ground through the sin of man. Divine long-suffering waited, only to be completely disregarded by the mass of mankind; and so doom overcame the disobedient, although deliverance was possible by the obedience of faith. There was a divinely

appointed way of escape and those who were moved by fear, acting by faith, found the Ark of salvation available for them.

The first age of mankind's history thus ended in almost general apostasy, prophetic, too, of succeeding ages though under entirely changed conditions; for widely different as the clothing and other circumstances of these men (of days so dimly distant from our own) are from those of cultivated busy men of affairs today, the human form and the human heart remain the same; and fallen man is still alienated from the life of GOD through the evil that is in him. But the long-suffering of GOD, which waited in the days of NOAH, still waits in lingering compassion over the guilty world today, as its doom draws ever nearer.

W.G.T.

(Next month, D.V. : How the Nations Began.)

We have found Him

THE Apostle John was used to give us a most intimate record of our LORD, supplying more of what we might call the "personal touch," in his divinely inspired narrative. He had contemplated, he had handled the Word of life, and he only records that two of the disciples of John the Baptist stayed with the LORD. These disciples were so attracted by John's testimony, "Behold the Lamb of GOD," that they followed JESUS and abode with Him that day. Doubtless it would remain to them as a happy experience which was the beginning of a new day for them. Being so deeply impressed, Andrew quickly finds his brother Peter and tells out the good news "We have found the MESSIAS." The chain of love extends to Philip, likewise deeply moved to exclaim to his friend Nathaniel, "We have found Him—JESUS of Nazareth." The third of these memorable days completes the cycle with the marriage in Cana of Galilee, where "JESUS manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him."

To have seen and companied with the MESSIAS was enough to fill the heart of any godly Jew to overflowing, while waiting

for deliverance and redemption in Israel; but the blessed One Who had invited them to follow Him exceeded all their thoughts and expectations. They knew that His name was to be called "Wonderful" (Isa. ix. 6), but now they had seen and heard, His words and ways were marvellous indeed, and of the memorable events which marked their companionship with Him they could say, "This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." As they felt the power of His love they became more deeply attached to Him, and He was all in all to them. JESUS of Nazareth was a name hated and despised in Israel, but their fellowship with Him brought them in a spiritual sense closer to Him, and gave to their lives a fragrance, and to their words a power, which their enemies could not gainsay. (Acts iv. 13, 33.) JESUS of Nazareth was the superscription on His cross, the name of One despised and rejected of men; the Stone which the builders refused, but the Name of One who was unspeakably precious to them always.

We too have been found of Him, and as we meditate on all His works, and talk of His doings, we say with the Psalmist, "Thou are a GOD that doest wonders" (Psalm lxxvii). May we be much with Him, abiding in Him, learning of Him, delighting ourselves in Him, and drinking abundantly of His preciousness (Cant. v. 1). He satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry with good things. We also wait for salvation and deliverance, and He comes to receive us unto Himself, and we shall abide with Him for ever.

Extract from letter to Editor, January, 1955 :

"I often think of the Iron Room, Straightsmouth. What a good grounding the children in the Sunday School had. What an opportunity the Churches are missing now with the children. I went to help with the girls of 14 years, and was told, along with other teachers, not to tell the children anything they would question when they grew up, such as the story of "feeding the five thousand." I told them I believed the Lord *did* feed them, so you may guess how the Old Testament was treated."

L.T. (Manchester).

Sparkling Gems

To know GOD is the solid ground of endless bliss—everlasting glory.

* * * * *

To apprehend GOD as He is, the sum of all present and eternal blessedness. When the soul finds out GOD, it has found out all it can possibly need, here or hereafter; but He can only be known by His own revelation and by the faith which He Himself imparts.

* * * * *

To walk with GOD comprehends everything within the range of the divine life, whether active or passive. It involves the knowledge of GOD'S character as He has revealed it. It involves, too, the intelligence of the relationship in which we stand to Him. It is not a mere living by rules and regulations; nor laying down plans of action; nor in resolutions to go hither and thither, to do this or that. To walk with GOD is far more than any or all of these things.

* * * * *

“Thus saith the LORD” settles everything. A single line of sacred Scripture is an abundant answer to all the reasonings and all the imaginations of the human mind.

* * * * *

The LORD secured, with His own omnipotent hand, the door, and left Noah the window from which he might look upward to the place from whence all the judgment had emanated and see that no judgment remained for him. The saved family could only look *upward*, because the window was “above.”

* * * * *

GOD makes a promise—faith believes it; hope anticipates it; patience waits quietly for it.

* * * * *

If I am founding my expectation upon men and things, I am not walking before GOD, but before men and things. It is of the utmost importance to ascertain who or what I have before me as an object.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond)

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WORDS OF HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

MAY, 1955

VOL. XLIII

No. 5

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11, Little Britain, E.C.1.

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 84, Upper Grosvenor Road.

Philadelphia: J. D. ROBERTS, 300, Walnut Street.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto.

Australia: B. LICKLEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castle-craig, Sydney, N.S.W.

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

All communications for the Editor should be sent to W. G. TURNER, The Gables, St. Nicholas-at-Wade, Birchington, Kent. All business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP, or other publications mentioned, must be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND, 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

A Fragment Gathered Up

IN considering the shortcomings of an individual Christian it is only fair to take account of the fact that he may be suffering from peculiar disadvantages. It is possible, indeed, for him to overcome them through the all-sufficient power of CHRIST, but, even so, it is right to bear in mind the handicaps in his life. For example, what kind of man was the Christian's father? It may be that he has inherited a grumbling disposition, or a mean nature, from one or other of his parents. He may have been brought up badly and has not yet overcome the prejudicial effects of an undisciplined childhood. Further, *we must ask ourselves how much worse this particular Christian might have been if he had never become a believer.* A cantankerous Christian, but for the grace of CHRIST, might have been a revolutionary, at war with society. A mean Christian might, apart from regeneration, have been a miser, perhaps even a swindler.

Anon.

On Worship

(Ps. l. 23 ; Heb. xiii. 16)

By THE EDITOR

TO bow in adoring worship, praising GOD for His excellent greatness and thanking Him for His wonderful goodness, gives both the Creator and the creature their right places. It is a holy privilege to be engaged thus in "*offering the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips, confessing Christ's holy name*" before Him Who alone knows perfectly the dignity of His person and the value of His atoning work. Presenting ourselves before the Holy One Who inhabiteth eternity, giving thanks unto Him as our FATHER, making all our boast in His beloved SON, our blessed LORD and REDEEMER, our hearts are filled with joy and praise indeed.

But how does He, Who is high above our highest thought, and holy beyond our utmost conception, view our offering of praise and worship? *Can it really matter to Him?* To this question the assuring answer is given in both these Old and New Testament scriptures. How gracious, yet how wonderful, that what we have been doing can so matter to the KING ETERNAL, INVISIBLE, the only GOD, that He is both glorified and pleased by our worship! How this throws into relief the importance of worship, and makes us see that ministry, however much needed by ourselves, is not at all to be compared with giving unto the LORD the glory due to His name!

But joined with these assurances we read, "*And to him that ordereth his conversation (his manner of life) aright will I shew the salvation of God*" : and, "*But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*" Here is the perfect balance, a heart poured out in praise and worship for His greatness and goodness, and a life expressing in practical ways the lessons learned of this goodness to us. Spiritual exercises before GOD must never be permitted to *degenerate into pious emotion*, but on the contrary to *generate practical piety*. The words of our lips need to be *backed by the deeds of our lives, the communication of our substance, to give cheerfully*, as the apostle says, for "GOD

loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix 7). HE is good and doeth good; and the children of such a FATHER are expected to exhibit the family traits of character. The twin sacrifices of praise and good works are what glorify GOD and please HIM well.

In the Sanctuary

Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard
 What GOD has said they shall receive
 Who love and trust His Holy Word,
 Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard
 The wonders that will have occurred,
 No human heart could e'er conceive,
 Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard
 What GOD has said they shall receive!
 To set the LORD before one's face,
 And live life with a single eye!
 To have his honour as a base
 To set the LORD before one's face,
 And know the meaning of His grace
 No darkness clouds light from on high
 To set the LORD before one's face,
 And live life with a single eye!
 With knowledge of the LORD'S Own Mind,
 Instructed by the LORD Himself,
 Led by GOD'S SPIRIT, one can find
 With knowledge of the LORD'S Own Mind,
 By leaving nature's things behind,
 The pettiness of nature's self.
 With knowledge of the LORD'S Own Mind,
 Instructed by the LORD Himself!

“Gathered in My Name”

(*St. Matthew xviii, 20*)

THERE is a vast difference between gathering as Christians adhering to a particular formulated creed, or as followers of a particular servant of the LORD, or as adherents of a particular “church” order of service—on the one hand—and gathering in the LORD’S Name in accordance with these words of the LORD JESUS. It may be profitable to consider the words in their context, their more exact meaning, their application, the privileges they convey, and their importance, also some of the incorrect ways they are quoted and applied.

CONTEXT

These words, spoken by the LORD Himself, are only actually recorded in the gospel of Matthew, the account of the life, death and resurrection of the LORD JESUS which presents Him as born King of the Jews, rejected as such, mocked as the CHRIST and as King, and sealed in His tomb as a deceiver. In fact this gospel, as is well known and very generally agreed, presents Him from the point of view of Jewish responsibility. References to Old Testament passages and the ordinances connected with the worship of Jehovah (GOD-given through Moses and others) are often implied, as well as expressed. Moreover the more immediate connection of these words is seen if the whole of chapter xviii is read. The humility, as of a little child, necessary in order to enter the Kingdom of heaven, leads on to the solemnity of stumbling a little one who believes in JESUS, and then to the seeking of straying ones, and the gaining of a trespassing brother. As to the last of these, prayer is the fourth thing mentioned by the LORD, and the verse we are specially considering gives us the source of the power of such prayer, namely the very Presence of the LORD Himself in the midst of even two, or three, gathered in His Name.

The writer suggests it is important to bear these two preceding paragraphs in mind in considering the more exact meaning of the words and their proper application.

MORE EXACT MEANING

The SPIRIT of GOD taught Israel through Moses, in Old Testament times, that in the promised land there would be a place which the LORD would choose to put His Name in, and to dwell in. In the time of King David and his son Solomon, the LORD made it plain that Jerusalem was the place and the temple was accordingly built there. It does not require much thought in reading Israel's subsequent history to see that the place and the temple building remained important to the people, but the Name and the Presence of the LORD were lost sight of. (So far, references to Old Testament scriptures have not been inserted as they are familiar to most of the readers of this article.) In contrast, the SPIRIT of GOD led Isaiah (lx., 9) and Jeremiah (iii., 17) to write of Israel's sons being brought "from far . . . unto the Name of the LORD thy GOD," and "all the nations (i.e. Gentiles) shall be gathered . . . to the name of the LORD to Jerusalem." So that the Name will be the gathering point of Israel when restored by GOD to their land, and will then also be the gathering point for the nations.

In our verse we find parallels and contrasts with the foregoing. In contrast with Jerusalem, a geographical centre where the LORD placed and will place His Name, the LORD JESUS simply says, "where," which has the force of "Everywhere, where," or "Anywhere, where." In fact, in terms of geography, the word "where" covers an unlimited number of places. But while no geographical place is defined, the centre of the gathering is still the Name, the same centre (for the JEHOVAH of the Old Testament is the JESUS—JAH the SAVIOUR—of the New) wherever the gathering may be. It may perhaps be well to remark here that the Name is often used in Scripture to sum up the attributes of the Person of JEHOVAH, in fact to be the very expression of Himself. In Isaiah and Jeremiah, already quoted, we read "to" or "unto" the Name. In our verse the translators of the Authorised version have put "in" the Name. But an elementary knowledge of Greek is sufficient to see that the preposition used is different from asking "in" His Name, and in fact is elsewhere translated "to", "into", "unto" (e.g., Acts xi, 26 "to Tarsus"; Rev. xvi, 16 "he gathered them together into a place called . . . Armageddon").

Consistently with this the New Translation (J.N.D.'s) reads "unto" My Name in our verse. This leads us to the words. "there am I in the midst." We know that the LORD JESUS. Truly GOD the SON, and also SON of MAN, is seated on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. He is also near-at-hand for all His own. Our verse says He is in the midst of those gathered to His Name. All and much more are true of Him, and each truth has its own reality to faith and its own appropriate application and character. While every Christian may know the nearness and presence of the LORD JESUS at all times there is a special aspect of His Presence which should be known by those who are gathered to His Name. It is needful, however, to go back to the word "gathered." The size of the gathering is clearly not of importance from this point of view, for the LORD says "two or three," but they *must have come together* for the verse to be applicable. This will be referred to later.

APPLICATION

Doubtless, ever since the day of Pentecost, twos and threes, and often larger numbers have been gathered together to the Name of the LORD, from time to time, for prayer, for the reading of the Scriptures, for mutual edification, and for worship and praise, irrespective of any sect or denomination—just simply as those who believe in and belong to the LORD. Nevertheless Christians have been and still are divided by many different creeds, or by the special religious guidance of a particular teacher or by a particular order of service and ritual. (For convenience these different companies are referred to herein as "sects"). While christians belonging to a particular sect are characteristically gathered in support of the particular tenets of that sect when they meet in the appropriate church, chapel, or other meeting place for a service, it is no doubt true that, on many other occasions they gather in small or large numbers simply to the Name of the LORD JESUS for prayer, the study of the Scriptures, etc.

About a century ago there was a spontaneous movement among many godly christians (the writer believes most firmly this was the work of the HOLY SPIRIT) to emphasize, among

other things, that Matt. xviii, 20 ought to apply to *every* occasion on which christians gathered together, whether for prayer or bible study, or worship. They accordingly withdrew from the various "sects" to which they previously belonged, as such sects were gathered to their particular tenets, not simply to the Name of the LORD JESUS. In fact the movement had a resemblance, without implying a harsh application to the christians remaining in the churches and chapels, to that described in the verses in Isaiah and Jeremiah already referred to. The LORD had brought them from far to His Name.

The emphasis thus put on this verse, rightly, ought not to obscure either its immediate context or its very general terms. Its immediate context links it with the restoration of a trespassing brother, but the LORD'S words are clearly of such a general character as to have a very wide application. To what has already been pointed out it may be added that, while the "church" is mentioned in verse 17, the general wording of verse 20 does not justify *limiting* its application to a gathering of the church as such. Moreover the verse says "are gathered together." No christians could scripturally be labelled as the "*gathered-to-the-Name-of-the-Lord-Jesus*" christians, not even in thought. This would be simply making another sect. The term could only be true of them when they *are* actually so gathered—though they be only two or three—and they would not then be entitled to the term in any sense that excluded any other christians that might be gathering simply to the LORD'S Name at the time. It is quite possible, alas, for christians, who have taken the position of gathering to the Name of the LORD JESUS on all occasions when they come together, to lose the reality of it in their own souls, and to meet as a formality or routine—in fact to be just as sectarian as those who come together in the churches and chapels which they profess to have left. Sincerity of heart is required on *each* occasion of coming together, on the part of *each* christian that it is to the Name of the LORD JESUS he is gathering, with the assurance that the LORD Himself will be in the midst. Familiarity with truth has its dangers, and those who emphasize Matt. xviii, 20 can drift into the position of following a certain teacher (however truly he may be gifted) or of demand-

ing acceptance of certain stated doctrines and so become sectarian in fact.

PRIVILEGES AND IMPORTANCE

What an inestimable privilege in this world, where sin is on every hand, that sinners saved by grace can collectively be in the very Presence of their risen and triumphant SAVIOUR and LORD! It is a holy place into which we should not dare to come lightly. In fact it is rather that, in infinite loving grace, *He comes* into the midst, but we gather to His Name in the assurance that He will be there according to His Word. His Presence gives sanction and authority to our prayers presented to the FATHER in His Name. His Presence affords us communion with Himself collectively, not merely individually, and we learn more deeply the meaning of the Holy Scriptures concerning Himself and His work. He leads the worship of His gathered ones to GOD in all the sweet savour of His blessed Person. Such great privileges are accompanied, as privileges always are, by responsibilities. The apostle Paul was led by the HOLY SPIRIT to teach us about these in his epistles—matters such as dealing with moral and doctrinal evil, which the LORD may give opportunity for considering in a later article.

Why should this verse be regarded as so important? The LORD certainly attached great importance to the place He chose in Israel to put His Name there and to dwell there, for He speaks of it in this three-fold way over and over again through Moses, David, and the prophets in the Old Testament. Matt. xviii, 20 contains the same three characteristics—His *choice*, His *Name* and His *Presence*. They are the words of the LORD JESUS Himself. Further, it is the purpose of GOD the FATHER that His SON JESUS CHRIST our LORD should be glorified. It brings glory to the LORD JESUS that His Name should be the centre of gatherings, His Presence the authority for our prayers, His Person the object before our souls, Himself the leader of our praise and worship—in short simple loyal response to Matt. xviii, 20, brings glory to the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself, which is well-pleasing to GOD.

J. C. KELL.

Sure and Certain

MANY years had to pass before people in this world were able to respond to the divine invitation through GOD's prophet Isaiah. "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth" (Isa. xlii. 1). Nevertheless the time did come when this became a glorious possibility for all who were interested in what had been written aforetime.

In St. Matthew's gospel, following on the decision taken at a council meeting of Pharisees on how to destroy the Blessed Person in question, the prophecy is quoted. The value of mortal men's appreciation of the CHRIST of GOD as contrasted with that of the CREATOR and LORD of all being thereby clearly shown.

To Christian hearts it is a joy to know that all the plans and purposes of their gracious GOD and FATHER must and will come to pass in His appointed time. The first coming of the SAVIOUR Whom divine love sent to rescue and eternally save the lost and ruined children of Adam's fallen race, occurred just "when the fulness of the time was come" (Gal. iv. 4). His still-awaited second coming to receive from this world all them that are His will take place just at that moment when GOD our FATHER wills it. Moreover, the blest millennial reign of Him Who is KING of kings and LORD of lords will just as surely commence at the appointed time.

Well may believers on JESUS the LORD therefore rest in the assurance that nothing can go awry concerning what has been prophesied in the Holy Scripture whether relating to Himself or to themselves.

It is certain that no munitions of war that men have invented will be allowed to eliminate or reduce the number of those who will be "alive and remain" at the coming of the LORD, Who has also promised that "we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed." Like Job may we not say with patient anticipation "all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come" (Job xiv, 14).

Reverting again to Isaiah's words it is of course to the four accounts recorded by the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John that we must turn to contemplate the Blessed ONE

presented for our adoration and praise. It is, however, in Mark's account that He is pre-eminently before us as **JEHOVAH'S Perfect SERVANT**, while Matthew depicts Him as the **MESSIAH** of Israel, Luke as **SON of MAN**, and John as **SON of GOD**, each in divine terms as directed by the **HOLY SPIRIT**.

In **Philippians ii** we read "He took upon Him the form of a servant," and in the Gospel story we see how patiently, unwearyingly and steadfastly He served until He had "finished the work given him to do." This we well know was consummated by His mighty work of redemption upon the Cross as the One mediator between **GOD** and man. Another has truly said that "when He died the greatest work that **GOD** could do was done by the **LORD JESUS**."

It is instructive to observe the grace of **GOD** in giving to **St. Mark** the privilege of recording the story of His perfect **SERVANT**, for was not he the disciple who himself so sadly broke down as a servant when he departed from Paul and Barnabas from Pamphylia "and went not with them to the work?" (**Acts xv, 38**). We learn, however, that Mark recovered himself afterwards and was fully restored to useful service for the **LORD** and **MASTER** he truly loved in that he became "profitable to the apostle Paul for the ministry" (**2 Tim. iv, 11**).

Is it not comforting for the **LORD'S** servants in this our day that though they may, and do, fail He does not forthwith discharge them from His service finally, but graciously exercises their hearts and consciences in order to recover them that they may again be meet for the **MASTER'S** use.

It is also remarkable that the last two verses of Mark's gospel present the risen **LORD** though on the right hand of **GOD** as working—serving still—working with those He had left behind in the world where He Himself had so perfectly served.

May all who serve Him here today have the sense of His gracious presence working with them till they too are taken up on high. Blessed will it most surely be for all to whom He will be able to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (**Matt. xxv, 21**), and perhaps to the praise of Christian women particularly "she hath done what she could" (**Mark xiv, 8**).

G. HARRISON.

Age after Age

5: HOW THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES COMMENCED

THAT relationship regulates responsibility is taught by the words, "You only have I known of all the families of earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos ii, 2), spoken to Israel.

Apostasy, alas, was very rapid. Under the very shadow of Sinai and even before the tables of stone upon which the law was engraved had actually been received, its terms were openly violated. The Priesthood, too, in the hands of even most favoured men pursued the same sad course of early apostasy. (Exod. xxviii; xxix; xxxii; Lev. x). In little over one month, AARON the high priest-elect is making a golden calf at the people's bidding; building an altar to it; offering sacrifices, and proclaiming it a feast of the LORD.

Still darker is the story of JONATHAN, the son of GERSHOM the son of MOSES the Lawgiver, who first fills the rôle of an idolatrous priest in the house of Micah, and afterwards for the tribe of Dan, in which idolatry was so firmly established that it persisted throughout their entire history (Judges xvii, xviii). So, alas! hard upon the appointment of the priesthood follows the falling away and failure of the priests. Prophets, too, were appointed, established, and sent to ISRAEL that the voice of GOD might be heard by the chosen people of GOD in spite of failure in the priesthood.

SAMUEL the prophet (1 Sam. iii, 20), is a notable example of a prophet appointed, established and known throughout the whole land as the Seer, the Man of GOD. He was a true, faithful prophet. But we read of disobedient prophets, false prophets, schools of the prophets who certainly in one classic instance had no right conception of the mind of GOD at that time. The ominous words: "They prophesy falsely unto you in My name," serve to show how far the apostasy of the prophets eventually proceeded; but a yet more withering judgment upon both priests and prophets is pronounced: "Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law."

This sentence confirms the general failure of priests and prophets alike.

The appointment of Kings for ISRAEL in answer to the popular clamour for a visible monarch is recorded in 1 Sam. xii. 13, where SAUL is chosen by the people, the choice being judicially ratified by SAMUEL as GOD'S representative.

SAUL proves himself to be a man of earth; men not GOD are before him as the motive and spring of actions as his request to SAMUEL "to honour him before the people" shows. He, therefore, quickly proves himself an utter failure as a King and is rejected. Typical Kings of ISRAEL are SAUL the man of earth; DAVID the Shepherd King, who with SOLOMON, the man of peace, gives some expression to the divine thought of Kingship, only to be fully realised hereafter in the reign of DAVID'S greater SON and LORD; AHAB—who did more to provoke the LORD GOD of ISRAEL than all before him; JEHOIAKIM—typical Modernist of his day, using penknife and fire upon the-written word sent him by the LORD; and ZEDEKIAH the last Apostate King in whose reign direct disaster fell upon the Kingdom, the King who feared his subjects, but had no fear of GOD before him (Jer. xxxviii, 19, 20).

Kingly government first committed to ISRAEL and forfeited by them was now to be transferred by the GOD of Heaven to the Gentile NEBUCHADNEZZAR, whom GOD styles "My servant. (Cf. Jer. xxvii, 4-7; Dan. ii, 20, 21, 37).

Then began "The times of the Gentiles", when the GOD of Heaven gave NEBUCHADNEZZAR authority to exercise lordship over ISRAEL (Dan. iv, 17, 36, 37). These times still run on and will only end when the SON of MAN the true King of ISRAEL, comes in glory to judge the living Gentile powers, and to reinstate repentant ISRAEL in the land promised to their fathers ABRAHAM, ISAAC and JACOB.

The four great prophetic empires of BABYLON, MEDO-PERSIA, GREECE and ROME are symbolised by the four metals: Gold, Silver, Brass and Iron; and by the four beasts: the Lion the Bear, the Leopard and the fourth Beast (Dan. vii.)

The sixty-nine weeks of DANIEL'S vision end at the CROSS where MESSIAH the PRINCE was cut off, but not for Himself.

The last week awaits the end of the present dispensation of grace.

The age of Law and Kingly Government ended for the JEWISH nation in the apostasy of priests, prophets, and kings alike.

MOSES at first filled these offices for a while—as priest, in being Mediator for the people; as prophet, in making known to them the will of GOD; as King he reigned in Jeshurun. As prophet, in another aspect of the prophetic office, he predicted the coming of the ONE Who must be obeyed. “A prophet shall the LORD your GOD raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear.” (Acts vii, 37). Samuel also exercised the priestly, prophetic and Kingly offices for over a generation with dignity and ability. But the world waited for a greater than these, and the time was long. Then in the fullness of time the day dawned when CHRIST the true Prophet proclaimed the Kingdom (Matt. iv, 17): when CHRIST the true King entered the capital city of JERUSALEM (Matt. xxi), as prophesied by ZECHARIAH, acclaimed by Hosannas of the temple children to the sore displeasure of the rulers of the people; when CHRIST the true Priest having been rejected as the prophet of GOD, the King of ISRAEL ascended to heaven to commence that eternal priesthood whereby He is able to succour evermore all that come unto GOD by Him. (Heb. vii). “Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things.”

The history of the period shows, therefore, that the Gentile powers started through the failure of the Jewish nation to continue in the goodness of GOD. The Kingly power committed to them having been sinned away was forfeited by them; and government then given into Gentile hands. The JEWISH people themselves thenceforth were under Gentile rule until A.D. 70, whatever their false boast of never having been in bondage, and JERUSALEM itself was then totally destroyed by the Romans as our LORD foretold on the Mount of Olives. The people scattered throughout the world (like Cain to wander as vagabonds, with a mark set upon them on account of the Blood of the Righteous One—their rejected

Messiah), await the last and most glorious chapter of their national history. Scriptures that should be carefully pondered in **this** connection are 2 Chron. xxxvi; Jer. xxvii, 6; Dan. ii, 20, 21, 27; Matt. xxiv, 1, 2; Luke xix, 41-44; xxi, 20-24.

The age of Law and Kingly government ended with the Coming of the ONE Who magnified the Law and made it honourable; Who is Himself "the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth"; Who was born King of the Jews; crucified as KING of the Jews; and Who has gone away to receive the Kingdom and will return to be owned as KING of kings, and LORD of them that rule, in the very place where He was once refused.

Meanwhile, in His personal absence, things of great moment take place, springing from, reaching back to, and fulfilling divine counsels made *before the foundation of the world*; then broadening out beyond Jewish, national and racial boundaries to the greater glory and eternal satisfaction of the rejected King of the Jews. To this we proceed where the story of the Church which is His body and His bride, tells of the unique position for Eternity of all who in this day of His rejection as KING own Him as SAVIOUR and LORD.

W.G.T.

(Next month D.V.: How the Church commenced.)



No doubt if people are always on the hunt for evil they will always find evil enough in such a world as this, and there is no great spirituality in seeing and pronouncing upon evil. The great thing is whether we are able to bring down the goodness of CHRIST to meet the evil and the difficulty. This is where faith really shows itself, not in finding fault only, and finding this or that that is not correct—that is easy enough and requires no power at all, but the other does, *and it requires what is greater than power—grace—willingness and delight of heart for that which is good.*

W.K.

Sparkling Gems

Common sense teaches us that the people must be drawn together first and must be induced to attend to what we have to put before them; and therefore we must lay ourselves out to this end, because it is essential to our highest aim . . . *Unless we mean to be content with empty nets and useless hooks.*

* * * * *

Two things . . . the believer is altogether CHRIST'S: spirit and soul and body . . . And CHRIST is all ours.

* * * * *

A Christian who has been with GOD, in "much prayer," is calm and not easily put out in presence of evil and difficulty.

* * * * *

The Bible is full of CHRIST. He is the heart of the sacred volume and its distinguishing glory.

* * * * *

Let us remember that GOD lives. Glorious thought!

* * * * *

Oh, the Name of JESUS! We could talk until midnight of its depth and meaning, its sweetness, its power; and when the twelfth hour struck we would say to one another: "Why, it is midnight and we are only as yet on the threshold of this theme."

* * * * *

Pray over everything; and that which *you dare not pray over, do not touch.*

* * * * *

Make the GOD of heaven and earth your resource, your confidence, your strength. Do not measure difficulties by your ability, or wisdom, or capacity to meet them, but measure the world, the power of Satan, and the evil of your own heart by what GOD *is* and what He *has* done.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond).

WORDS^{OF} HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

JUNE, 1955

VOL. XLIII

No. 6

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, II, Little Britain, E.C.1.

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 84, Upper Grosvenor Road.

Philadelphia: J. D. ROBERTS, 300, Walnut Street.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto.

Australia: B. LICKLEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castle-craig, Sydney, N.S.W.

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

All communications for the Editor should be sent to W. G. TURNER, The Gables, St. Nicholas-at-Wade, Birchington, Kent. All business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP, or other publications mentioned, must be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND, 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

A Safe Retreat

He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.—Psalm 91. 4.

TH**ERE** is a place of rest and peace
Amid earth's strife and woe ;
“ *The secret place of the MOST HIGH* ” :
Where feeble souls can go.
There 'neath the shadow of GOD'S wing,
Kept by almighty power ;
Nought can disturb that holy calm,
However dark the hour.
There faith can sing, “ The LORD'S my shield,
Deliverer, fortress, might ;
My GOD in whom I put my trust,
My refuge, and my light.”
By day the arrow swift may fly,
Destruction waste at noon ;
The pestilence in darkness walk,
Death stalk amid the gloom :
There's nought to fear, for GOD *is* GOD,
Omnipotent, Divine!
And to the feeble heart He says—
“ Fear not for thou art Mine.”

E. E. NICHOLS.

Age After Age

6: HOW THE CHURCH COMMENCED

THE birthday of the Christian church was the Day of Pentecost. In no sense is it a continuation of the Jewish economy; being, as ST. PAUL teaches, a "new man," CHRIST having broken down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, and having reconciled both unto GOD in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby. (Eph. ii.)

During this, the age in which we live, "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by JESUS CHRIST our LORD," (Rom. v, 2). It is emphatically the age or period characterised by GOD'S long-suffering grace to a world that has been proved guilty not of sins only, grievous as this is, but of the crowning sin of crucifying the LORD of glory Who had come through the tender mercy of GOD in lowly grace to save mankind.

This is the charge which the HOLY SPIRIT on that ever memorable Day of Pentecost brought home with convicting power to the hearts of thousands in Jerusalem.

Goodness Incarnate had been basely betrayed, brutally treated, and rejected, and by solemn judicial forms, ecclesiastical and civil, condemned as worthy of death in its most shameful form. "This is the Heir: come let us kill Him," had been the language of the leaders of the nation. But "GOD raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory"; thereby entirely reversing the verdict of the world.

The Day of Pentecost was the public testimony to the dignity of the Person, the value of the Work, and the present position of the once hated and despised Nazarene. "JESUS of Nazareth . . . being by the right hand of GOD, exalted, and having received of the FATHER the promise of the HOLY GHOST, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear . . . therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that GOD hath made that same JESUS Whom ye have crucified both LORD and CHRIST." (Acts ii.)

So on that great day, the HOLY SPIRIT came to inaugurate a new era, by forming a holy society of redeemed people based on the Death and Resurrection of the LORD JESUS. "By

one SPIRIT are we all baptized into one body whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one SPIRIT." (1 Cor. xii, 13.)

This great act took place historically at Pentecost and is the only baptism of the HOLY SPIRIT of which Scripture speaks. In PETER'S sermon preached with the HOLY GHOST sent down from heaven (much of which is omitted from the record of that notable occasion) two essential things are plainly brought out, first the change of heart-attitude towards CHRIST, followed by the open confession of this by baptism; and secondly, the twofold gift to be immediately received, remission of sins and the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT.

As a result, some three thousand repentant believing persons were baptized and added to that little band which the SPIRIT had already baptized into one body earlier in the day; and from that day until the day of grace ends, the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD is engaged in this gracious occupation of gathering individuals out from all nations and adding them to that one body.

The family of mankind is no longer sharply divided into two sections as Jews and Gentiles, as was the case for the preceding fifteen hundred years, but now, while all the world is guilty before GOD, there are to be found on earth Gentile nations, the Jewish race, and the Church of GOD. So ST. PAUL in giving instructions to Christian believers at Corinth, bids them "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of GOD" (1 Cor. x, 32), carefully recognising and distinguishing each from the other.

This period is an indefinite one; already through the long-suffering grace of GOD it has been nearly two thousand years in duration, and is specially characterised by three important things:—

- (1) A world-wide witness to the Risen SON of GOD. (Matt. xxviii, 20; Col. i, 23.)
- (2) A gathering out from *all* nations by the SPIRIT of GOD through the gospel, of such as are to be, Heirs of GOD, Joint-heirs with CHRIST, His body, church, bride. (Acts xv, 14; Rom. viii; Ephes. i, ii, iii.)
- (3) A great but very mixed profession of Christianity. (Matt. xiii.)

That the commencement of such an age should be marked in a special way was only to be expected; hence we find the early chapters of the Acts full of "signs and wonders and divers miracles, and gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT." Most striking from their gracious character are the reversals of the curse of BABEL, and of the judgment executed at the giving of the Law. In the former instance, when the builders at BABEL all spoke indeed the same language, they were all fatally in the wrong so their speech was confounded. At Pentecost every man heard in his own tongue the wonderful works of GOD, and they "continued praising GOD." "Let us make us a name in the earth," produced the BABEL confusion and scattering. "There is none other NAME under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," was the Pentecostal secret whereby the language barrier was removed, and the gathering power disclosed.

Then at the actual giving of the Law in Exod. xxxii (as the Lawgiver appears with the very tables of stone, the work of GOD and the writing of GOD graven upon the tables) "there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." (v. 28). Upon the manifestation of grace through the work of GOD and the proclamation thereof (Acts ii), "there were added to them about three thousand souls." (v. 41.)

What contrasts are shown. "But if the ministration of death written and engraved in stones was glorious . . . how shall not the ministration of the SPIRIT be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." (2 Cor. iii, 7—9.)

Three thousand perish at Sinai; three thousand saved at Pentecost.

Again, the Coming of the HOLY SPIRIT (Acts ii, 1) was not only for the purpose of baptizing believers in CHRIST into one body and thus to form the Church of GOD; but also very definitely He came to energise for effective testimony to the absent LORD "Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things." The testifying of the gospel of the grace of GOD; the preaching of the Kingdom of GOD; and the teaching of those things which concern the LORD JESUS

CHRIST; can each and all only be done effectively in the power of the SPIRIT of GOD—hence His presence, and the necessity of recognising Him as the Vicar of CHRIST now here on earth.

He is the LORD the SPIRIT, Who has come to reside in the Church to administer for CHRIST in every way, during His absence on high, at the right hand of the MAJESTY.

As such He forms an habitation for GOD in the Assembly; as such He graciously enables the Body of CHRIST to function; as such He compassionately helps our infirmities, witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of GOD, and makes us to know (to apprehend and grasp) the things that are freely given us of GOD. He is the other COMFORTER Whose presence our blessed LORD said was so necessary to us, as to make it expedient for Himself to go away to the FATHER. The age in which our lot is cast is a singularly blessed one for believers, for “the FATHER Himself loveth you”; “the love of CHRIST constraineth us”; and “the love of the SPIRIT” makes the things of GOD real to us.

So the special witness of this church period is to the Resurrection of the LORD JESUS; the outpouring and indwelling of the HOLY SPIRIT; while outward and visible signs of confession of the Lordship of CHRIST are shown when the initiatory ordinance of believer’s baptism is properly administered; when the LORD’S SUPPER, the perpetual remembrance of Himself in His death until His coming again, is rightly observed; and when the LORD’S DAY is treasured as the weekly festival of the Resurrection and employed in worship, fellowship and service to His praise. All days are His, but if the believer lets slip the importance of the first day of the week, then whatever the ostensible profession of observing all alike to His glory, the practice insensibly tends to a lowering of them all.

As we realise our privilege in this day of grace, this age of long-suffering mercy to a guilty world in which we once had our part, our hearts are thrilled by the enheartening words of our LORD as He proclaims the four great “alls” of Christianity. *“All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach (make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the*

Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always (all the days) even unto the end of the world."

"All power," all authority vested now in Him; "all nations," the sphere of service; "all things whatsoever I have commanded you," the scope of the commission; "always," all the days, the confirming presence even unto the end of the age.

So may we "occupy till I come," when in "a moment in the twinkling of an eye" His faithful people will be translated into His immediate presence as His Coming in the air closes this Age of GOD'S long-suffering grace to a proved guilty world.

(Next month, D.V.: "How the present age will end.")

W.G.T.

The Divine Centre

"There am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii, 20)

IN a previous article on "Gathered in My Name," the context, application, privileges and importance of Matt. xviii, 20 were considered. It appears desirable, and may be profitable, to review some of the implications of the Presence of the LORD in the midst of His own from the subjective, objective, authoritative and judicial aspects.

SUBJECTIVE

"Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever" (Ps. xciii, 5).

In sovereign grace the LORD states He is in the midst of those gathered in (or "to") His Name. It is not expressed as a *promise* but as a *fact*. So when Christians come together in His Name they should have before their minds the fact that they are coming into His very Presence. This is true, according to the LORD'S own words, whether they are two or three individuals meeting for prayer, or a company gathered "in the church," i.e., in "assembly" character as in I Cor. xi, 18; xiv, 23. He is our SAVIOUR—we are not afraid in His Presence; but He is also our LORD. Every aspect of His Person demands our reverence. What seriousness of mind, though

mingled with joy, what consideration of our ways, what self-examination should precede and characterize our coming into His Presence! The simile occurs to the writer of the presentation of a debutante at Court. There may be a feeling of excitement and pleasurable anticipation, perhaps some nervousness, but no frivolity. Much care is taken that the dress is according to the rules of the Court, although having its individual characteristics. Garments in Scripture are used to typify characteristic behaviour. How serious our whole attitude of mind should be, and what care we should take about our behaviour continually as those who have the great privilege of coming into the very Presence of the LORD from time to time!

If the reality of coming into the LORD'S Presence were before their hearts Christians would not be engaged in conversation on frivolous or mundane matters *up to the last minute* before the appointed time, *nor would they arrive late* if it were within their power to be in good time. They would not stay away from prayer meetings, Bible readings, or other occasions when it was possible for them to gather in His Name and be in His Presence. *They would not break out into laughing and chattering immediately the "meeting" or "service" was over.* All these things, alas, do occur, with the sorrowful result that the honour and reverence due to the LORD is lacking, the HOLY SPIRIT is grieved, and troubles arise among the LORD'S people.

If the question arises in the readers' minds where the scriptures are on which the foregoing remarks rest, the answer is found in typical form in the various instructions given to the Levites and priests in the Old Testament. Consider, for example, the consecration of the Sons of Aaron in Exodus xxviii, 40 to xxix, 35—their garments; their sacrifices; the anointing of their ears, toes and garments; their eating of the sacrifice. With all this they had also to wash their hands and feet in the laver (Ex. xxx, 17-21) before approaching the altar. The many types connected with the tabernacle, such as the curtains, the veil, etc., which guarded the approach of the Holiest of all, teach the same lesson. Further, *only* the High Priest, once a year, and that not without blood, could enter into the Holiest (Heb. ix, 7). The epistles in the New Testament also

abound in exhortations as to the walk and ways—the whole general conduct—which should characterise believers in view of the privileges into which they have now been brought. The fact that *all* true Christians have boldness to enter into the Holiest is not because there is any modification of the Holiness of the Presence of the LORD or of the solemnity and reverence which become us on entering in but because of the surpassing efficacy of the blood of JESUS, of the new and living way, and of our High Priest over the house of GOD (see Heb. x, 19 and xii, 14-29). May the HOLY SPIRIT lead us to respond more in our daily walk and conduct and sobriety of mind to the reality of the LORD'S Presence when we come together in His Name.

OBJECTIVE

In the various instances in the gospels where we read of the LORD being in the midst we find He is the centre of attention and everything recorded as happening is narrated as a matter which concerns Him. (Lu. ii, 46; John xix, 18; Lu. xxiv, 36; John xx, 26). It is generally true also in other cases that the individual recorded as being "in the midst" becomes the centre of attention (e.g., a little child in Matt. xviii, 2); Peter in Acts i, 15). Similarly when Christians are *consciously* in the LORD'S Presence their thoughts, meditations, hymns, prayers, praises and worship will all revolve (so to speak) round HIS Person, HIS glories, HIS work, HIS interests, HIS saints. They will lose sight of one another except as belonging to Him. Their individual circumstances, if before their minds at all, will be similarly thought of as His interests. A simple illustration of this principle is found in the message of the sisters in John xi, 3—really the united prayer of two—"LORD, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." They did not simply say "our brother," but spoke of Lazarus in his relation to the LORD.

The supreme occasion for the realization of this objective aspect of being in the LORD'S Presence is the response to His words, "Do this in remembrance of Me." We are then gathered in His Name. His Presence is assured us, and to the extent to which we enter into the reality in our souls our every thought is concerned with Himself to the exclusion of all else. If we think of the church as a whole at such a time

it is as *His* body, the bride whom *He* loved and for whom He gave Himself. If we think of ourselves individually it is in the sense that "the SON of GOD loved me, and gave Himself for me."

The only possible source of our knowledge of the LORD'S Person, glories, work and interests is the Word of GOD, and it is the work of the HOLY SPIRIT to bring these things before our hearts when we are in the LORD'S Presence. (There is, of course, no room for human imagination or speculation.) The Scriptures are so full of these matters that it can be safely said that no Christian has ever exhausted them, and in fact we are extremely limited in our knowledge compared with what we should be. We know it is true that "beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded unto them in *all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself," and this was in connection with His sufferings and subsequent glory (Lu. xxiv, 26, 27). Yet we tend to be limited in our meditations, as far as the Old Testament is concerned, to certain well-known Old Testament Scriptures such as Gen. xxii, Psalms xxii and lxix, Isaiah liii and one or two more. A deeper knowledge of Old and New Testaments would enrich our worship. It may be that we sometimes sing, "Thy beauty, LORD, our souls transport, while bowing at Thy feet," but our knowledge and appreciation of His beauty is limited by our lack of knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures, which speak of Him.

Similarly, a deeper knowledge of the Scriptures would enable us to enter more fully into all aspects of the LORD'S interests when we are gathered in His Presence, whether for prayer or for any other purpose. His interests are far wider than the gathering of Christians with whom we meet, or those in our "circle of fellowship" (an expression not far removed from sectarianism), or the gospel preached in our Hall. The realisation that we are in His Presence when we are gathered in His Name should have objective results which are as inexhaustible as the Scriptures themselves.

The importance of this matter is, first, that the glory of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the SON of GOD, is the purpose of GOD (see Eph. i, 10 to end, etc.), and to the extent to which we fail to have the LORD objectively before our hearts when we are

gathered in His Name we fall short of glorifying Him. Further, when the *beauty* of the LORD'S Presence (Ps. xxvii, 4) is no longer realised, the *bands* that unite the LORD'S people are soon broken (see Zech. xi, 10-14). This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why discord arises among Christians. May the consideration of this theme have a practical effect upon us all when we gather in His Name.

AUTHORITATIVE

The immediate connection of Matt. xviii, 20 is with verse 19. The Presence of the LORD in the midst of even two or three gathered in (to) His Name endows the request which they agree upon with authority acceptable to the FATHER. In the general setting of the whole passage this has *particular* reference to the "gaining" of a brother who has trespassed against another. It is a matter on which we do well to challenge ourselves—how much have we availed ourselves, with this object of the efficacy which His Presence gives to our prayers?

Some appear to prefer to link the authority of His Presence principally with the first part of verse 18, neglecting both the second part of that verse and the immediately preceding verses with which it is connected. In other words His Presence in the midst of those gathered in His Name is regarded mainly, by some, as the authority for dealing in discipline with a Christian erring either morally or doctrinally, by putting him away from among them. That the Presence of the LORD in the midst is, in fact, the authority for such action is undoubtedly correct, and is illustrated by the inspired words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. v, 4, but certain things must first be true in regard to the company claiming such authority. First it is important to notice that there is a break between verse 18 and verse 19 marked by the LORD'S words, "Again I say unto you." Authority of the character of verse 18 is not given to the two or three of verse 20, but to the "church" of verse 17; that is, to the local company of believers—the LORD'S called-out freed-men—when gathered together in His Name. Secondly, there must be the realisation of His Presence, producing the practical results already considered under the headings "subjective" and "objective," otherwise the authority of His

Presence may be falsely assumed. If His Presence becomes merely a doctrine, not a reality in our hearts, and we come together professedly in His Name as a matter of routine, confusion and worse consequences will inevitably speedily follow.

Consideration of the example in 1 Cor. v may here be helpful, especially in the light of the first four chapters. Before the erring brother could be dealt with the Apostle, taught by the HOLY SPIRIT, had to correct much that was wrong in the church at Corinth. Also, although it is clear that the seeds of division existed among the Christians in Corinth the believers had evidently not actually separated from one another, and they could still be addressed as the church in Corinth when they came together. Today Christians are scattered among many companies or denominations separated from one another, and no company in a place can rightly claim to be *the* church there, for the church (or "assembly") in a place includes every true Christian. Yet it still remains true that a company of Christians can be gathered in sincerity in the Name of the LORD JESUS, and can be assured of His Presence. Such companies may be gathered in "church" character, though they cannot claim to be "the church" in the place, and can have the authority to deal with evil which His Presence gives. There must, however, not only be reality and integrity but also the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT, for after His resurrection the LORD Himself linked authority to remit or retain sins with the reception of the HOLY SPIRIT. (John xx, 22, 23).

Scripture does not justify a claim of infallibility by the church (or "assembly"). Authority and infallibility are not synonymous. That there is no failure as regards the LORD'S authority is incontestable, but on our part there may be failure to discern His mind or to be subject to the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT. Scripture history illustrates very fully the fact that man fails in everything entrusted to him. The decision of a company gathered in "church" character, while presumed to have the authority of the LORD in the midst, may be shewn by subsequent events to have been mistaken and to need reconsideration, and it ought always to be borne in mind that the authority applies as much to loosing as to binding, as much to

remitting sins as to retaining them.

It may perhaps be well to add, before leaving this aspect of the LORD'S Presence, that the LORD Himself did not teach His disciples details as to "My church" in Matt. xvi or as to "the church" in Matt. xviii, but it was given to the Apostle Paul by revelation to unfold the details, and it is in his epistles, especially 1 Corinthians, that we can learn the characteristics of a company of believers truly "come together in the church."

JUDICIAL

(Rev. i, 10 to iii, 22)

There is a very solemn aspect of the LORD'S Presence in the midst which is closely connected with His authority, i.e., His judicial character. The seven churches in the Roman province of Asia dealt with in these chapters represent the *professing church* in different aspects and stages, and it is clear that in them there were unbelievers, believers teaching bad doctrine, and believers leading bad lives, as well as those who were true and faithful (see Rev. ii, 14, 15, 20, etc.). However true it may be that we have the subjective, objective and authoritative aspects of the LORD'S Presence in the midst before our souls, and controlling our hearts, minds and actions, we are nevertheless part of the professing church on earth and subject to His judicial scrutiny, rebuke and encouragement. We cannot and dare not think that the scrutiny and rebuke apply to others but not to us. Although in Ephesus there was much to commend, *all* came under the rebuke, "thou hast left thy first love" and the exhortations to repent (ii, 4 and 5). So it is throughout, as the grounds for rebuke increase. Realisation of this should not neutralise the authority which His Presence in the midst gives to those gathered in His Name (whether as two or three individuals or in "church" character), rather the reverse; but it should result in that authority being used in humbleness of mind and in grace.

CONCLUSION

May the consideration of the fact of the LORD'S Presence in the midst of those gathered in His Name, under these different aspects, be profitable to writer and readers, and above all may there be a very practical response in these difficult days for the LORD'S glory.

J. C. KELL.

A Word in Season

BRTAIN has been called a land of Bibles, a Christian land. It sends out untold numbers of Bibles and Missionaries to all parts of the world yearly. No doubt it is on account of this we as a country have had the hand of GOD providing for, and sheltering, this favoured land. Bibles are also still plentiful here; but what about the pressing need of the message it brings. Is it read by us to-day with care and interest?

A Psalmist could say, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. cxix, 105). There is no other lamp or light for our guide to-day. Those who are getting on in years will remember how years ago our streets were thronged with people on Sunday mornings and evenings all making their way to church, chapel or meeting mostly carrying Bibles and books. It is not so to-day as any one can see. So even in this country we have a great need of the truth of the Bible being brought home afresh to us. Let us just think for a moment, and take a few questions as to this need home to ourselves. Do I possess a Bible of my own? When did I last read it? How often do I turn to its pages and make it my counsellor? When I do read it, is it read carefully and prayerfully, or only as a matter of custom? Have I ever read it right through from Genesis to Revelation? Many other people have. If my Bible could speak itself, what answers would it have to give to these simple but searching questions?

A timely message to-day for Britain and for us each is found in Jeremiah ii, 11-13. "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens at this, saith the LORD for My people have committed two evils: they have foresaken Me, the fountain of living water; they have hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."

Let us then be exercised before GOD as to these things; return to Him the source of every blessing; listen attentively to His word, and still prove that, "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry with good things" (Ps. cvii, 9).

L. STEEL

Sparkling Gems

The divine purpose concerning the Church was before the world and GOD will be glorified in it by CHRIST JESUS when the present world has passed away.

* * * * *

The great majority of Christians during the far greater portion of their lives are required to testify for the LORD amid the most ordinary circumstances.

* * * * *

Do not be troubled by the mazes of theology. Get your theology from the Bible and the Bible alone.

* * * * *

Get to know GOD and pillow your soul upon the bosom of His infinite love.

* * * * *

The teaching and interpretation of men have created all the difficulties over which the different schools of doctrine have wrangled for centuries.

* * * * *

Man by nature is at enmity against GOD and nothing but *divine grace* can turn him round.

* * * * *

The active ways of GOD, in all times of blessing, consist in reproducing the glories of the work of the LORD JESUS.

* * * * *

The GREAT SHEPHERD will not forget the labour done in His Name with a happy heart for His dear sheep, poor and necessitous.

* * * * *

Blessed SAVIOUR! for me Thou camest down, for me Thou didst hang on the cross; Thou art gone into the glory and Thou hast brought me into it already in Thine own person, previous to being with Thee and like Thee for ever.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond)

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VOL. XLIII
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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1.

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 84, Upper Grosvenor Road.

Philadelphia: J. D. ROBERTS, 300, Walnut Street.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto.

Australia: B. LICKLEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castle-craig, Sydney, N.S.W.

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A Monthly Magazine for Believers

All communications for the Editor should be sent to W. G. TURNER, The Gables, St. Nicholas-at-Wade, Birchington, Kent. All business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP, or other publications mentioned, must be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND, 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

The God of the Valleys

Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the Valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.—
1 Kings 20, 28.

THOU'RT GOD of the valleys,
As well as the hills,
Whose presence is known
Where run the deep rills.
Thou'rt GOD of the depths,
As well as the heights;
To prove Thyself such
Thy heart e'er delights.
"I never will leave thee,
I ne'er will forsake":
At this word of comfort
Fresh courage we take.
Whate'er may betide us,
Come joys or come ills,
Thou'rt GOD of the valleys
As well as the hills.

Though I walk through the Valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.—
Psalm 23. 4.

E. E. NICHOLS.

Age after Age

7.—HOW THE PRESENT AGE WILL END

THE present dispensation or age, will end catastrophically by the Coming of the LORD JESUS CHRIST into the air to take His people to the FATHER'S House, according to His gracious promise in Jno. xiv, 1-3. This is the Christian Hope; not referred to in the Old Testament but running throughout the New because bound up with the Church—the mystery hidden from the ages.

It is independent of prophetic or other events; just as the Church itself is not the subject of prophecy but of special New Testament revelation, as we have seen.

“For the LORD Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of GOD: and the dead in CHRIST shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air: and so shall we ever be with the LORD.” (I Thess. iv, 16, 17).

This passage, taken with the companion one (in I Cor. xv, 51, 52), *“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”*; clearly establishes the fact of the present age of grace ending catastrophically.

The suddenness of CHRIST'S coming for His Saints at the commencement of this period, is only comparable with the suddenness of CHRIST'S appearing with His Saints at its conclusion. These two distinctly different events introduce and close the short solemn impressive period of the *Age of Coming Crisis and Satan's rule*.

The Morning Star appears (for the Rapture of the Church to heaven) before the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings to bless the earth; and the Rapture of the Church stands as intimately connected with the former, as the Kingdom of the SON of MAN is with the latter.

Many signs herald the approach of the Day of the LORD; prophets of the Old Testament are almost exclusively occupied with the coming Kingdom glory; but no sign or O.T. prophecy announces the Return of CHRIST to take His bride; the personal assurance of the LORD being the sole basis of her hope: "If I go away, I will come again; and receive you unto Myself; that where I am there ye may be also." CHRIST is our Hope. (1 Tim. i, 1).

So in 1 Thess. i, the simple but sufficient description of those early believers is "Ye turned to GOD from idols to serve the Living and True GOD; and to wait for His SON from heaven; even JESUS, Who delivered us from the wrath to come."

This period so blessedly ushered in for the saints of GOD, is, however, solemn and impressive to a degree for the world of guilty mankind. Terrible events crowd these most eventful seven years, for those who know not GOD, and who have not obeyed the gospel in the present age of grace. Many signs of the approach of these may already be discerned by those who are awake to what is transpiring in the world today.

First, will come the utter apostasy of Christendom (*cf.* Rom. xi, 21, 22). Christendom is a word not found in Scripture but one which may very conveniently and aptly describe the home of *nominal Christianity*. In the parable of the Mustard Tree (in Matt. xiii) the tiny seed becomes a great tree, and the birds of the air lodge in its branches. The profession of Christianity likewise has become a great thing in the earth though springing from so humble a beginning.

It is sadly possible for one to be of those who "have a name to live but are dead," and to find a place in the great branches of the tree of Christian profession, maybe, one even of official position and gain, and yet to have no more organic union with the true body of believing possessors of life in CHRIST than the birds have with the tree in whose branches they lodge. All such will be left behind for judgment on the earth, when CHRIST comes for His own people, and will go to swell the ranks of apostate Christendom which will be dealt with by CHRIST at His appearing to judge the quick (living), of which Scripture so solemnly assures us.

Ecclesiastical institutions, buildings and offices being no part of the *spiritual* body of CHRIST will remain on the earth intact; and liturgical services (needing no special operation of the HOLY SPIRIT or presence of real believers for their maintenance) will go on as usual for awhile; endowments, foundations and funds can be maintained and augmented without spiritual help; the rising tide of ungovernable lawlessness will undoubtedly lead to the closer federation ecclesiastically of denominational interests; Bibles, prayer books, hymnals will still be available for use and misuse in religious services; but with the calling away of every true believer in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the withdrawal of the HOLY SPIRIT as restrainer of evil, Christendom will rapidly fall away from the nominal profession of Christianity even in its most corrupt forms. It will be judged at the Appearing in glory when, at the end of the seven years, CHRIST comes attended by the saints and angels to purge His Kingdom of all things that are offensive.

The greater privileges of Christendom necessarily ensure the greater doom upon its apostasy.

Secondly, there will be a SATANIC revival of the Roman Empire, accompanied by the Rise of the Jewish Antichrist (2 Thess. ii); whose schemes and godless activities lead to the solemn time of JACOB'S trouble.

The Great Tribulation (Matt. xxiv) is mercifully shortened for the elect's sakes, as our LORD prophesied in His Olivet discourses.

A godly remnant of converted Jews having been themselves turned to repentance, will be preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of heaven (the LORD calls them His brethren, Matt. xxv, 40); and having gone out with it to the nations, will be persecuted to death for their faith and testimony; as also will a great multitude of their Gentile converts (Rev. vii).

Then shall the sign of the SON of MAN be seen in the heavens; then shall all nations wail because of Him; then will He execute speedy judgments on the nations (Matt. xxiv; xxv.); when He appears upon Mount Olivet to the deliverance of the faithful remnant and the discomfiture of their enemies at the

fearful Armageddon (Zech. xiv; Rev. xvii, xix). Upon how they have treated His Jewish brethren, will the King apportion the sentences in the solemn judgment of the nations. He separates the godly from the ungodly in those living nations; they have each proved themselves to be what they are, by their treatment of Him in the messengers whom He has sent to announce the Kingdom, just before He comes to reign.

During this short but solemn period of Crisis and Satan's rule, the power of the Enemy of GOD and mankind is exerted to the full. Wilfully, and without a tempter, the DEVIL rebelled against his MAKER, and leaving his first estate persistently and malignantly sought the ruin of mankind. In the Man of Sin, in the Antichrist, during this awful time, evil appears incarnate and apparently invincible; until CHRIST the SON of MAN appears in His glory. Then by His word of command Beast, False Prophet, Antichrist the Man of Sin disappear from the region of human affairs while the DEVIL himself, prime instigator of all opposition to GOD and CHRIST, is bound, restrained, and shut up in the abyss for a thousand years. The grand purposes of GOD for the reversal of the world's ruin and misery now take immediate shape and permanence in the Kingdom prepared *from* the foundation of the world under the personal sway of Him Whom the heavens received until these times of the restitution of all things. Great days for the "blessed of MY FATHER" as the King describes some, but the sad prelude to a yet more sad eternity for such as preferred the DEVIL to GOD, and had pleasure in unrighteousness.

A brief outline of the parables of the "Kingdom of the heavens" as given by our LORD prophetically, in Matt. xiii, may perhaps be of some service to the Bible student.

The seven connected parables afford a complete sketch of the "Kingdom of the heavens," which is to be set up by power in manifested glory at the Appearing in glory of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

1. The Sower, obviously a commencement.
2. The Tares, equally clearly a development.
3. The Mustard Seed, i.e.. Christendom.

4. The Leaven, i.e., Bad doctrine with its corrupting and inflating effect.
5. The Hidden Treasure, i.e., What Christ saw in Israel and the Church.
6. The Pearl of great price, i.e., Church in unity and beauty in His eyes.
7. The Draw-net, i.e., Chiefly expressive of the Gospel of the Kingdom after the Church is taken up.

The Design of the Sower is evident; the SON of MAN sows the good seed of the Kingdom in the world.

The Development through unwatchfulness of man is patent to every observer; as the enemy busily works "while men slept."

The Departure from faith and practice (*cf.* 2 Tim. ii, iii), is what characterises "Christendom" in an ever-increasing measure in our day.

The first four parables apply to the *outward* profession of Christianity, and verses 41 and 43 of the chapter describe the two regions of the same Kingdom: the "Kingdom of their FATHER" (v. 43), where the righteous shine, being the upper region; and the Kingdom of the SON of MAN—"His Kingdom"—(v. 41), where the once rejected King of the Jews is to be acclaimed and honoured, forming the lower region of what taken together forms the KINGDOM of GOD. Three considerations, namely Christianity—its solemnity; Christendom—its apostasy; Conscience—its exercise in view of both may well occupy our minds.

(Next month (D.V.) "How the Golden Age will come.")

W.G.T.

A Voice from Heaven

IN John xii, 23-33, the LORD JESUS, the SON of GOD, is making mention of the most significant hour of His presence in this world as the SON of MAN; "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? FATHER save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. FATHER, glorify Thy Name." These were the words uttered, and a voice from

heaven spoke, saying: "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." The bystanders' comments suggested that it thundered, or that an angel spoke to Him, but He said: "This voice came not because of Me; but for your sakes." The great event which meant either salvation or judgment for either acceptance or rejection, was about to take place. Everything was going to be in His hands by the death that He was about to die. (xii: 32). What a moment it was! and who but GOD Himself could measure the significance of it! GOD was speaking from heaven, and even the most intimate disciples of JESUS did not realise what it meant. Reader, what does that voice mean to you?

In Exodus xxiii: 20-21, GOD's earthly people were told that GOD was sending an angel before them, and they were warned to beware of him and to obey his voice. Their fate as a nation depended upon their obedience, and self-confidence glibly undertook to obey. (Ex. xxiv: 3). Here was the voice of GOD through an angel on earth, and the people were warned that the angel would not overlook disobedience, and alas! what humiliation self-confidence had to suffer!

In Deuteronomy iv: 23, Moses raises the question: "Did ever people hear the voice of GOD speaking out of the midst of the fire, as they had heard, and still lived?" and in the 36th verse he says: "Out of heaven He made Thee to hear His voice, that He might instruct thee; and upon earth He showed thee His great fire; and thou heardest His words out of the midst of the fire."

In 1 Kings xix: 12, 13, Elijah heard a still small voice that caused him to wrap his face in his mantle and emerge from his hiding-place to hear what was said: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" He had faced apparently unmoved a great and strong wind that rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD, then an earthquake and a fire but the presence of the LORD was not in personal manifestation in these, but, the voice of the LORD moved him, and, as we read, he was ready, after pleading against his rebellious people, to obey instructions.

In Job xxxvii: 5, Elihu says: "GOD thundereth marvellously with His voice: great things doeth He, which we cannot comprehend": He confessed to his heart trembling and being

moved out of its place in connection with GOD's providential dealings (xxxvii: 1); but Elijah faces all these things unmoved. The wrath of a king like Ahab, and the hosts of Baal's prophets did not make Elijah's heart tremble, but distraught by the bitter disappointment of seeing all his efforts for the LORD's honour and glory come to nothing, he runs away and hides himself from Jezebel when she threatens to kill him. He imagined himself the only faithful one left, and what would happen if she carried out her threat against the sole survivor? The LORD has mercy on him in his weakened state, and takes him away, even before he had time to do all that he was commanded. In 1 Kings xix: 15, he was told to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, and Jehu, the son of Nimshi to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah to be prophet in his room, and the 17th verse gives details of what these three would do. In verses 19, 20, 21 Elijah begins with Elisha, and in the confidence of faith he could leave the rest to Elisha, with a double portion of his spirit upon him at his own request. In 2 Kings, ix: 1-10, Elisha sends a young prophet to anoint Jehu, telling him to flee and tarry not after doing it. Then in 2 Kings viii: 7-15, he tells Hazael what he was going to do as king of Assyria, and after indignantly saying "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this?" he goes away and deliberately murders his master.

Elijah seems to have been occupied with the knowledge of the LORD as a righteous judge, and to have expected Him to act summarily against the people's rebellion, but Elisha with the double portion of Elijah's spirit that he had asked for, seems to have realised mercy and grace rather than judgment, and to have been ready to say, when he heard of the king's distress over the sending of Naaman to him for healing, "Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." Then under the LORD's guidance, he heals him and is the means of his conversion. Further on in 2 Kings vi when the king of Syria sent horses and chariots and a great host by night and compassed the city where he was, he could quiet the distress of his servant saying: "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

Elisha prayed, and the eyes of the young man were opened to see a host of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. Then he prayed again, and the encompassing host is smitten with blindness, and led blindfold to Samaria, where at his request their eyes were opened to see where they were. What a lesson he gave to the king of Israel, who had said: "Shall I smite them? Shall I smite them?" "No!" said he. "Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." What a contrast to calling down fire from heaven to consume them!

In Luke ix: 54-56, James and John asked if the LORD wished them to command fire to come down from heaven and consume those who would not receive Him, and what a gracious answer the LORD gave them!

The obedience of faith waits on the LORD, and acts directly under His leading and guidance.

It was a voice from heaven that called the apostle Paul from a zeal for GOD that was not according to knowledge, to an enlightened zeal that has brought blessing to hosts, and enabled them to hear the voice of the SON of GOD, and live.

When Peter, John and James were privileged to see the Kingdom of GOD on the mount of transfiguration, a voice out of the cloud that overshadowed them said: "This is My beloved SON, hear Him." In those days the voice of GOD could be heard on the earth when the SON of GOD was here to do the FATHER'S will, and He could say: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." (John x. 27). This voice may still be heard by faith through the Scriptures, in which the SON of GOD is recorded to have said: "The words that I speak unto you: they are Spirit and they are Life." (John vi. 63). Then in Revelation iii: 20 this same One says: "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." Those who have already heard the voice of the SON of GOD, and are alive again from nature's death, are waiting for the moment when "the LORD Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of GOD"; read 1 Thessalonians iv: 16, 17, 18, and 1 Corinthians xv: 51, 52. G. S. PURNELL

The Way to Self-Control

(From the Dutch Messenger)

THE expression "temperance" in 2 Pet. i, 6, has a deeper meaning than that usually given to it. It is more than temperance in eating and drinking, and properly means self-control. Everyone who can rule himself possesses a rare quality of great influence upon the character and conduct of the believer. Self is like a tree with many branches, on which different fruit can grow. The whole tree has gone bad. Therefore we have not only to judge ourselves when it is active to produce fruit, but recognise it as being crucified with CHRIST. "No longer live I but CHRIST lives in me." When this is a practical reality in us our "self" will not be able to bear fruit.

IN OUR DAILY LIFE

The power of self-control is a fruit of the SPIRIT Whom we possess as Christians. It is one result of our partnership with the life of the risen CHRIST, which divine grace has bestowed upon us. We are exhorted to give all diligence to these things. The exhortation covers our daily life. I have not a single right to speak of an exhortation for my soul as being for the future, nor refuse to acknowledge its meaning for my present conduct. It is in us, but we "died to sin to live to GOD in JESUS CHRIST. He that has died is justified from sin" (Rom. vi). Died with CHRIST and raised, we put to death our members which are on earth. The old man has been crucified and we have put on the new man which according to GOD is created in truthful righteousness and holiness. (Ephes. iv, 24).

Let us now consider the application of self-control of the thoughts, of the tongue, and of the character.

WRONG THOUGHTS

There are few Christians, if any, who have not to struggle against wrong thoughts, these undesirable intruders which pursue us into the most quiet room of our devotions. They also darken the living-room of our soul, and hinder practical fellowship with the FATHER and the SON. We hate these evil thoughts, and it is necessary to judge and put them away.

Somebody said, "I cannot prevent the birds from flying about me, but yet I can hinder them sitting down upon me." So I cannot prevent bad thoughts coming into my mind, but I can hinder them settling there. When our thoughts and feelings are fixed upon the Person of CHRIST, evil thoughts do not vex us. It is when we lapse into mental indolence that unclean bands assail us. Our only refuge is CHRIST, in Him we have strength for all things. The best protection against evil is occupying oneself with good. Experience will teach it to us. "For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue and if any praise, think on these things. What ye have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, these things do; and the GOD of peace shall be with you" (Philipp. iv. 6, 9, N.T.). When our hearts occupy themselves with CHRIST we shall enjoy a deep peace, which is not troubled by wrong thoughts. That is true self-control in the battle of our minds.

TO BRIDLE OUR TONGUE

The tongue is a little but important member, which produces so many good things, but also so many evil ones. With our tongue we can give expression to the tenderest love and the most intimate fellow-feeling, but also to bitter words of mockery and hate. Of great importance is the grace of self-control applied to this member. Many years are not able to make up for that which the tongue can ruin in one moment. "If any one offend not in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body . . . but the tongue can no one among men tame; it is an unsettled evil" (Jas. iii, 2, 8). Who can bridle his tongue in his own power? But in CHRIST, however, is power to enable us, in the consciousness of our own powerlessness, to bring into practice the self-control even in this respect.

GOOD INTENTIONS

How often have we resolved to bridle our tongue, especially when the consequences of our thoughtless words have procured much trouble for us. But, alas, our intentions quickly disappeared as a morning cloud, and nothing resulted but the

sighing over our deplorable weaknesses. What is the cause of all our defeats? Only because we tried struggling in our power. Only when we stand still with the LORD like a child with his mother and expect everything of Him, then we shall succeed in bridling the tongue. These things we should always take to heart. "If any one think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his heart, this man's religion is vain."

THE CHARACTER

Our character is closely bound up with the tongue and the thoughts. When the SPIRIT of GOD directs our thoughts above then only is the tongue an intermediary of the good. Then CHRIST, Who is living in the heart by faith, rules everything. Without Him everything is worthless. Even possessing the outward calm of a Franklin or of a Socrates we can be still ignorant of the temperance or the self-control of which the Apostle Peter is speaking. This temperance is founded upon faith. The exhortation is "But for this very reason also, using therewith all diligence in your faith have also virtue." Faith precedes everything; it is the bond that unites the heart with CHRIST, the living source of all power. Abiding in Him, we are enabled to add to our faith virtue and knowledge, in knowledge temperance, in temperance endurance, in endurance godliness, in godliness brotherly love, and in brotherly love, love (2 Peter i, 5, 6). All these result from our union with Christ, and in Him.

From myself I can exercise as little influence upon my gifts of character as upon my tongue or upon my thoughts. Trying it for all that, I certainly shall fall every moment. Sometimes it seems that a philosopher, who is without CHRIST, shows more self-control than a Christian who does not abide in CHRIST. It is possible to avoid this show when the believer simply conforms to the Word of the LORD. "Abide in me and I in you." When the enemy is the strongest, because we neglect him, he rejoices himself. It is his object to bring to a stumbling the Christian because the name of the LORD is dishonoured by this. These things should always be before our attention. Let us be looking steadfastly on JESUS, that we

may learn to rule ourselves, our thoughts, our tongues and our character. "For he with whom these things are not present is blind, shortsighted, and has forgotten the purging of his former sins" (2 Peter i, 9).

J. MOL, SR.



Night is passing, day appears,
Gone the night of waiting years;
Thou the bright and morning Star!
Shining gloriously afar!

JESUS, LORD we long to be
Soul and spirit, one with Thee
In the blessed home of love,
Now prepared by Thee above.

O what toil was Thine to win
For Thyself, and free from sin,
Pearl of priceless worth so rare!
Bride of spotless beauty fair!

Blessed One! we Thee acclaim,
Sweetly sounds Thy matchless name,
Lord of glory, in Thy day
Heaven and earth will own Thy sway.

Thou remainest; this we own,
Light and love surround Thy throne;
Thou the Bridegroom, we the Bride,
In Thy presence, at Thy side.

L. HOWSON.

Sparkling Gems

Practical sanctification is a capital and constant duty for every Christian.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In His fear is great confidence, for He looks to the man who trembles at His word. No privileges of grace are meant to hinder or weaken this pious fear and godly awe.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The church is a divine institution, not a human one, and every Christian is a living part or member, whatever his place.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

How necessary to cultivate habitually the fear of GOD! There is nothing right where this fails. The holy fear of GOD shuts out every dishonouring fear of man and all tormenting fear of GOD . . . May we all deepen in our fear of Him!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

We need an object from GOD to form our souls and fashion our ways. He sets before us CHRIST. What or who can compare with Him?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Christian ought never to forget that he is a Christian and follows the crucified but glorified One; content—yea rejoicing—to endure till we reign together with Him at His appearing and Kingdom.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

As hatred makes the worst of everything, love is entitled to bury things out of sight; and GOD endorses it as answering to His own nature.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The true principle is that, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and of this suffering the spiritual are deeply sensible. But the self-satisfied one is quite indifferent. He has his party and is content.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

CHRIST would have us wash one another's feet; but what lowliness and love we need to do it aright!

(Selected by C. A. Hammond.)

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FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

AUGUST, 1955

VOL. XLIII

No. 8

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1.

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 84, Upper Grosvenor Road.

Philadelphia: J. D. ROBERTS, 300, Walnut Street.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto.

Australia: B. LICKLEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castle-craig, Sydney, N.S.W.

PRICE THREEPENCE

May be ordered through most Booksellers

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

All communications for the Editor should be sent to W. G. TURNER, The Gables, St. Nicholas-at-Wade, Birchington, Kent. All business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP, or other publications mentioned, must be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND, 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

God's Plan

"ALL THINGS MADE NEW"

An enemy stronger than man
Is doing his utmost to make
Abortive GOD'S merciful plan,
Conceived for misguided man's sake.

Obedience in confident trust
Is given a strength beyond all;
A man in GOD'S potency must
GOD'S glory and honour recall!

The weakness of man becomes strength
When link'd with faith's power and might,
Which owns that all effort at length
In faith undertaken comes right.

Mere man has to learn that defeat
His weakness inherent must bring.
He needs a new nature to meet
The enemy's death-dealing sting.

A nature that when from the grave
The powerful voice of GOD calls—
A nature that then will behave
As GOD wills, whatever befalls.

"As new I make all things, Behold!"
An utterance true and divine.

A city like glass, of pure gold,
Where everything precious shall shine!

The heir of all things shall be one
O'ercoming in GOD-given might;
I'll claim him and own him as son,
And make him My Own heart's delight.

G. S. PURNELL

Age after Age

8: HOW THE GOLDEN AGE WILL COME

THE Golden Age for this world will come with the Coming of CHRIST as King; and will last for that thousand years called *the Millennium*. A complete, concise account of all who will share in this millennial reign of our LORD is given in Rev. xx, 4, 6. Blessed indeed and holy are all who have part in the first resurrection and millennial glory.

It will be that age of righteousness, blessing and displayed glory to which prophets looked forward; of which poets and psalmists sang; for which the heart of humanity has yearned; to which GOD Himself promised ABRAHAM so great blessings should be attached, that all nations should be blessed in him and his seed. * "For GOD does mean to bless this long-groaning creation, and inspired the mouth of His holy prophets to speak of it since time began. They therefore do greatly err who deny the immense and universal blessing in store for ISRAEL, the nations, the earth, yea, even the lower creation. They do not know how GOD intends to crown men here below with loving kindness and tender mercies, when He shall open His hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing."

That this scene shall first have been swept by the besom of judgment, when GOD shall punish the host of the high ones above and smite the Kings of the earth below, we have seen in our last chapter.

What marks the introduction of this golden age of blessing is not only the exclusion of SATAN and his hosts, but the personal reign of the LORD JESUS CHRIST in power and blessing, when He will do justice to the poor, and plead the cause of the meek as the Psalmist sings prophetically in his seventy-second Psalm. This Psalm, though entitled a Psalm for SOLOMON, leads us to look for a greater than SOLOMON to fill the inspired picture presented. Great DAVID'S SON and LORD is the One Who shall fill the whole earth with the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea, as more than one inspired prophet says.

* W. Kelly.

How the vision of this falls upon the great Evangelical Prophet Isaiah, as he predicts it, is clearly shown, as, speaking of CHRIST'S glory, he says: "Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the Knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of JESSE, which shall stand for an ensign of the peoples: to it shall the Gentiles seek; and His rest shall be glorious." (Isa. xi, 5-10.)

To this glowing description of the coming golden age of MESSIAH'S reign with all its great and glorious changes in honour of the once rejected King, the same prophet adds fresh interest and beauty (as in chapters xii, xxv, xxvi, xxxii, xxxv, lv, to indicate but a few references), where he shows the joyful flourishing of CHRIST'S Kingdom and the acclamations of His subjects during that so peaceful and so prosperous age. While the LORD JESUS as King righteously takes in hand the sceptre of the earth; of the land of ISRAEL in particular; all nations will come indirectly under His reign; for there will be, as the prophet affirms, "one King over all the earth," not to the setting aside of others, but as the One Supreme Governor to Whom all others will be compelled to submit. This (as shown in Isa. xlix, 23; lx, 3, 10, 16) will last throughout the unbroken period of the thousand years of the golden age for this world. This Kingdom is not to be transferred to any other, as in the history of the world has always happened, so it is called "the everlasting Kingdom"; "the throne of His father DAVID"; and of CHRIST it is said "He shall reign over the house of JACOB for ever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke i, 32, 33.)

Not "everlasting" in the sense of "eternal," but as age-enduring; lasting so long as the earth endures. It is the earthly

Kingdom of the SON of MAN, when Psalm lxxii shall find complete fulfilment.

The deliverance of creation (now groaning and travailing in pain); the miseries, sufferings and sorrows of a world that for six thousand years had been subjected to vanity and grief. now ended; and GOD demonstrating that whatever SATAN may have introduced into the world, yet goodness and mercy are His own delight; and that He rejoices in His works, and in the prosperity of them that fear Him. A golden age indeed for a world that has known little else save strife, sin, woe and sorrow since the day when the first Adam brought such a sad entail upon his hapless descendants. This then will all be reversed by the LAST ADAM; the SECOND MAN; the HEIR of all things; now come into His inheritance. *Here is the common point of time where the bright visions of all the prophets meet.*

This is the gathering up of all human history in the hand of "the only Potentate"; each of the ages having typically contributed to the "many crowns" seen upon His head. The first Adam with early headships pointing to the LAST ADAM as SON of MAN. (Psl. viii.) Civil government given to NOAH speaking of CHRIST as Judge of the habitable earth; the age of ABRAM to MOSES telling of the true Melchizedec, Priest and King of righteousness and peace indeed; the period of Kingly rule under DAVID and SOLOMON bringing to mind the true SON of DAVID to Whom the Kingdom is given by the LORD GOD; His title of Bridegroom being added for the Church period as forming no part of predicted earthly glory, but most personal and truly blessed in the eyes of those who form His body and His bride; and lastly, the times covered by the four great Gentile monarchies, are seen as giving deep meaning to His title of "KING of kings and LORD of lords."

Having come with myriads of His saints to execute judgment upon the Beast and false Prophet (Rev. xix, 17-21) and their allied forces; having bound SATAN; and restored the Kingdom to ISRAEL, He then blesses all nations with a thousand years of righteous rule; and so this period is *The Age of righteousness, blessing and glory.*

DAVID, in Psalm cxlv, speaks of "the glorious majesty of His Kingdom"; and a beautiful and sublime picture of the millen-

nial scene is also presented in the Transfiguration of the LORD JESUS on the holy mount.

Three of the Evangelists record this (Matt. xvi, 28; Mark ix, 1; Luke ix, 27); the impression made upon the Apostle PETER by this transcendent scene may be gathered from the references in his epistle. (2 Peter i, 16-18.)

It was a striking representation of the coming day of earthly glory. MOSES and ELIAS representing the two classes of saints of the first resurrection who shall reign with CHRIST—those who have fallen asleep as MOSES, and those who at the Rapture will not sleep but will be changed; while PETER, JAMES and JOHN represent most surely those living inhabitants on earth in that day of displayed glory, rejoicing in the presence of the LORD and of the risen glorified saints attending Him.

(Next month, D.V.: "The Final Judgment.")

Abraham, Man of God and Servant of Men

"And Abram passed through the land. . . . And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent. . . . And Abram journeyed, going on still towards the South." (Genesis xii, 6, 8, 9.)

THESSE sentences are typical of the life of Abraham, the pilgrim. He was a "passer through," and confessed that he was a stranger and pilgrim on the earth.

We, too, take up the profession of being strangers and pilgrims, although we cannot help feeling that the journey through this life is full of interest, and we are not, as a rule, particularly anxious to depart and be with CHRIST, though we profess to believe it is "far better." It may be that we need to recover the emphasis upon the eternal things. At all events, while *using* the things of this world, we should *rest* the weight of our affection on "things above," for, like the father of believers, we *are* "passers through."

Abraham was also a worshipper, and his simple mode of worship stands out in marked contrast with the elaborate ceremonial of Judaism. When the woman at Sychar's well, in order to turn the conversation away from her sin-stained past, put to our LORD the vexed question between her people and their Jewish neighbours as to where was the proper place to worship GOD, He used her remark as the occasion of laying down the great pronouncement regarding the spirituality of worship. What is of paramount importance is not the *place* where our bodies are, but the quality of our spirit.

Abraham was emphatically a man of GOD. How out of date that term seems! We are familiar with such terms as "man of the world," "man of the empire," "man of science," "man of learning," "man of the people," and so on. But "man of GOD" is seldom heard outside the circle of the Church. And yet the title is one of the highest that any human being can possess.

Abraham knew GOD as his ALMIGHTY FRIEND; GOD was his Home, his resting-place, his centre, his peace and joy, and his "exceeding great reward." He knew the LORD intimately. Close knowledge of other people not infrequently leads to disillusionment, but "increasing in the knowledge of the LORD" begets confident reverence, and is a never-ceasing feast to the soul. Love delights to reveal itself to its close associates, and Abraham in the Old Testament, and John in the New, are outstanding instances of saints to whom the LORD loved to reveal His secret things. George Muller and Hudson Taylor were prominent examples of men of GOD in the last generation. All who are men and women of GOD are keen "listeners-in"—in the spiritual sense. They realise that hurry may be the death of prayer, and that although it is blessed to talk to the LORD, it is still more blessed to hear Him speaking to us. Perhaps the LORD needs to say to some of His children, "Stop your shouting and *listen* to Me!"

Abraham, too, stands out as a man of solitude. He was of course surrounded by his family and his tribe and his wealth, but still he strikes one as being a solitary sort of individual. We yield to none in our appreciation of Christian fellowship, but solitude has its joys and privileges too. GOD may speak louder in the silence of solitude than in the message of uttered words.

Moses and Paul entered into the silence and solitudes of the wilderness as preparation for their life-work. And we remember that Hudson Taylor made his great decision regarding the manner of his missionary service while alone on the sands of Brighton. Solitude is not the same thing as loneliness. It is the morbid person who is afraid of solitude and is bored with his own company. The crowd-craze is strong, but the effort to obtain solitude in order to do business with GOD will be well repaid, for our deepest convictions are usually born in the silence of solitude, and no man who has not first faced things out alone with GOD can be of much use in helping others in the things of GOD.

But Abraham was not only a man of GOD ; he was a public benefactor. He was the ancestor of the most remarkable people the world has ever seen. "Scattered and peeled," very often hated, despised and persecuted, the Jewish people have survived all down the centuries as a living evidence of the truth of the Word of GOD. Through the Jew the knowledge of the true GOD was preserved in a world almost wholly given over to idolatry. Every writer of the Bible, with the probable exception of Luke, was a Jew. The prophets and apostles were Jews. And touching His humanity, our LORD Himself was a Jew. The world owes an immense debt to the Jewish people. And Abraham as their ancestor was therefore a public benefactor of the most far-reaching order.

And Abraham can be viewed as a type of the Christian Church. For the Church, in spite of its failures, has always been the salt and the light of the world. Even Lecky, the rationalist historian, admits that the history of unselfishness during the last nineteen centuries has been chiefly the history of the action of Christianity upon the world. Darwin, the naturalist, in his earlier days was so struck with the social results of the spread of the Gospel among the cannibals of the South Seas that he wrote in his diary, "The story of the missionary is an enchanter's wand." And good Bishop Ryle of Liverpool declared that of all the debts that have been repudiated since the beginning of the world, the greatest is the debt which the world owes to Christianity. We have only to think of the care, spiritual and natural, of the children which received such an impetus from the work of Robert Raikes of Gloucester; of the reform of the prisons by

Howard and Elizabeth Fry; of the amelioration of the evil conditions of labour in the mines and factories by Lord Shaftesbury; of the orphanages of Muller, Spurgeon and Quarrier; of the social work of the Salvation and Church Armies; of the humanitarian movement of a hundred or more years ago that was the direct outcome of the evangelical revival of the 18th century—to realise how true are Ryle's words. But what interests us more than the indirect results of the spread of the Gospel is its power to cleanse the heart and transform the life of the individual. And that Gospel is in the custody of the Church, each living member of which is a benefactor of the human race.

Abraham was both man of GOD and benefactor of man. And he was benefactor of man because he was *first* man of GOD. And our most fruitful service will be that which is the inevitable outcome of our communion with GOD.

E. ADAMS

The Glory

IT is the privilege of every Christian heart to "rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD" (Rom. v, 2), and we learn from Peter's first epistle (i, 8) that there were indeed those who rejoiced "with joy unspeakable and full of the glory." The hope which accompanies faith has enabled believers on the LORD JESUS CHRIST to go forward with steadfastness in the path marked out for them by "the GOD of all grace Who hath called them to this eternal glory by CHRIST JESUS" (1 Peter v, 10).

The theme of the glory is one upon which the apostle Peter delights to dwell. So, despite the fact that he knew a violent death was to be his portion ere entering that glory (John xxi, 18), he exults in the prospect of being "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed (v, 1), and describes it as "the excellent glory" a glimpse of which he had from the mount of Transfiguration, "the holy mount" (2 Peter i, 17).

It was a great light above the brightness of the sun at noonday that shone forth from heaven when the persecutor Saul of Tarsus as the "chief of sinners" proceeded along the road to Damascus to bind all that called upon the LORD's name and bring them to Jerusalem for punishment. He "could not see for the

glory of that light," and he never forgot the wonder of the sight that so suddenly burst upon his gaze. Was it not the glory of the LORD that shone round upon him (see Acts ix, 3), as in the case of the shepherds in Luke ii, 9?

It is a happy thought that the glory of which we read so much in Scripture is visible even today to the eye of faith. There, behind the skies above us, are realms of light and love and glory unspoiled by any of those features which darken and besmirch this world through man's guilt and sin. Faith would fain spread her wings to reach those fair scenes, but we must patiently await GOD'S time for the blessed day of days to dawn.

While thus occupied with this subject of the glory, it is profitable to recall that our gracious GOD is "the GOD of *glory*" (Acts vii, 2); our FATHER is the "Father of *glory*" (Eph. i, 17); our LORD JESUS is "the LORD of *glory*" (1 Cor. ii, 8) as well as "King of *glory*" (Psa. xxiv, 10); the HOLY SPIRIT, too, is "the SPIRIT of *glory*" (1 Peter iv, 14). What a revelation of the glory of the FATHER, SON and HOLY GHOST, One GOD manifested in flesh in the adorable Person of the CHRIST, Who is over all, GOD blessed for ever (Rom. ix, 5).

"Unto GOD for ever be,
 Glory, honour, majesty,
 Holy, holy, holy, Thou,
 "BLESSED GOD, to Thee we bow."

G. HARRISON

Occupation With Christ

THERE can be no shadow of doubt that it is the mind of GOD to occupy our attention with His beloved SON so that we may exalt Him. Furthermore, it is according to His purpose that should be the pattern of things *now* and not only hereafter. It may be thought that the only way to do it is to engage in some physically active service, and indeed for this CHRIST has distributed gifts in His church for the furtherance of His work. But there is one service which can, and should begin now and will continue in eternity; unlike evangelism, pastoral care, or the

exercise of any of the other physical gifts. It is to be personally occupied with CHRIST, devoted to Him, worshipping Him: and incidentally, this is the starting point of all acceptable service. To exercise gift with self to the forefront instead of CHRIST is disastrous.

When the LORD JESUS met with ten lepers and sent them to show themselves to the priest (Luke xvii), only one came back to glorify GOD and give thanks to his Benefactor. The LORD's words to him may well remain in our minds: "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" One might say that they were obeying their instructions to go to the priest, to give witness in the sight of men that the MESSIAH had come, but one would gather from the LORD's words to the Samaritan who came back that He valued his thanksgiving more than his witness. Indeed it might be said that his witness was stronger than that of the others, being directed "with a loud voice" in such a way as to bring onlookers to JESUS. This Samaritan obviously thought his first duty was to the LORD rather than to man.

Quality of service may vary in accordance with our valuation of the SAVIOUR. It is not for *us* to decide what we will do and when, but we may rest assured that it is still true that they shall not be ashamed that wait for GOD (Isa. xl, 31), and they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength (Isa. xlix, 23). Occupation with CHRIST cannot fail to fit us for any crisis that may come. Striking illustration of this is afforded by the family of Lazarus in Bethany.

In Luke x, 38-42 we get a homely scene, with the LORD JESUS as the guest, the guest of Martha. *She* had "received Him into *her* house." What a privilege for *her*, and what gracious condescension on His part; and yet something grated on her, and it was the same thing that gave the LORD His greatest pleasure on that occasion. From her it brought the complaint, "LORD, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid *her* therefore that she help *me*." What filled Martha's mind was *her* privilege, *her* service, and the fact that her sister did not do what she thought she ought to for the furtherance of her designs. From the LORD came the reminder, "Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." There was evidently something better in His mind than "being careful

and troubled about many things," and it was occupation with Himself personally, to gain spiritual intelligence when the occasion presented itself, and to get to know more intimately the One who had come to make the mind of GOD known in human circumstances. Mary sat at His feet and heard His word.

Which do we do? Do we decide for ourselves what to do and then try to lead others with us in the belief that no path could be better than ours; or do we first get a full personal acquaintance with the blessed LORD so as to be able to follow the line of His thoughts?

The sequel to this is in John's gospel, chapter xii, where they made Him a supper, whilst Lazarus sat at meat with Him, and Martha, nothing daunted, still served. It was a time when all eyes were on JESUS for His time was drawing near when He would offer up Himself. Some looked with *love*, others with *hatred*, some in *doubt*; but one in that company was prepared, yea, we may say prepared in anticipation, for she had previously gained acquaintance, with what was in the LORD'S mind and He on His part accepted what she did and commended her before all. Mary with the costly ointment anointed the One who was everything to her. The supper and the service, even Lazarus raised from the dead, meant nothing to her then; the contempt and misunderstanding of those who professed to care for the poor meant nothing to her either just then. It was Himself she saw and Him alone; and the house was filled, not only with the odour of the ointment surely, but with the sweet incense of her heart's praise to the One whom Israel, her people, were about to cast out. "Let her alone; against the day of My burying hath she kept this; for the poor always ye have with you, but Me ye have not always." The physical services of Martha may have been very necessary in her view, but His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and only one in that company seemed to comprehend what that meant. How very worth while it was to sit at His feet and hear His word, for the occasion was a fleeting one only, to be fully appreciated by those who were prepared beforehand. How sweet it must have been to the LORD JESUS to have had just one receptive heart with Him on that occasion, and how we are reminded of his previous question: "Where are the nine?" It was not that He was amongst strangers; many

of His loved ones were there, but only one had been so much and so intimately in his presence as to be fully in communion with Him on that occasion.

It is a fact we may attend meetings, listen to addresses and perhaps gain much spiritual knowledge, without gaining an intimate acquaintance with the LORD JESUS Himself. Nothing can take the place of the latter, and it can only be gained by personal contact and communion with Him. It is not what we *learn about* CHRIST that matters so much as what we *learn from* Him when we are in His presence.

We may work in our own way for Him, being perhaps occupied with the service more than with Him; endeavouring with all our might to make it as successful as we can for His glory, *but if it be our appointment* and not His, of what use is it? Far better to wait in communion with Him till He makes plain His mind for us, or the occasion arises when He has something for us to do. But in the meantime we need not be idle, for to be occupied with CHRIST must lead to worshipping Him. When the camp of Israel set their tents, the family of Levi camped around the tabernacle, and in Numbers iii we have them numbered from a month old and upwards. In figure all, however young, were potential worshippers. Chapter iv shows the same families at work in the service of the tabernacle, and there the numbers are given from 30 years to 50 years of age. For worship all are included; but service needs knowledge, strength and experience. Between a month old and thirty years of age is a big gap, but a very significant one if taken figuratively. Surely it teaches us that it is never too soon to be a worshipper; the knowledge of salvation fits us for that, but service depends upon a further appointment of GOD. If our hearts are so full of gratitude to CHRIST as that of the Samaritan leper we shall not think of our own inability, or of who may be watching, but shall be prepared straightway to praise Him in private or in public whenever occasion serves. Other service will follow in due course by divine leading.

It is truly remarkable that it is recorded of the LORD JESUS that He did not enter upon His public course until thirty years had passed. None would dare to suggest that He lacked ability to do it before; He made them wonder at the age of twelve

when He talked to the doctors at Jerusalem. Yet for thirty years He lived a private life of unrecorded detail. Of this early period, Dr. A. T. Schofield wrote: "Five-sixths of CHRIST'S human life was passed under the eye of GOD alone, and there can be no doubt that it was with reference to this very period that the FATHER, at CHRIST'S baptism, expressed perfect delight and satisfaction in His beloved SON." How it all emphasises the fact that our first duty is to GOD and not to man.

Let us make use of the place of nearness that is ours for worship now, even though we may have to wait to gain understanding as to the line of service into which the LORD would direct us. The apostle's advice to young Timothy was, although he was early in service: "Give attendance to reading—meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." Occupation with CHRIST and His things cannot fail to have its effect upon us and on our service.

A. A. TUNLEY

That Weak Spot

I have always known this to be the case—that in the very point in which we have been proud we have been broken down. Have you never seen persons boast of their faith? Look for unbelief there. Have you never seen persons confident of their love? Expect that in that very matter of love they will fail. Have you ever seen them boastful of knowledge? They will break down in knowledge. In the very thing in which we exalt ourselves we must be abased.

What, then, is the great lesson of it all? To boast of nothing, to be confident of nothing, to exalt ourselves in nothing, but CHRIST. Exalt Him, and know that in dependence upon Him we shall be kept, spite of our weaknesses. No previous blessing, no previous power, no previous honour that GOD may have put upon us, is any safeguard in the hour of difficulty, and more particularly when we enter upon anything confidently. W.K.

Sparkling Gems

Love GOD and you will throw off the love of self; love GOD and you will love all that He gives you to love for love of Him.

* * * * *

We may, if we choose, make the worst of another. Everyone has his weak points; everyone has his faults; we may make the worst of these; we may fix our attention constantly upon these. But we may also make the best of one another. By loving whatever is lovable in those around us, life will become a pleasure instead of a pain . . . we shall become not unworthy followers of Him Whose name is Love.

* * * * *

Love is the greatest thing that GOD can give us; for He Himself is Love; and it is the greatest thing we can give to GOD; for it will also give ourselves and carry with it all that is ours. The apostle calls it the bond of perfectness; it is the *old* and it is the *new* and it is the *great* commandment and it is *all* the commandments; for it is the fulfilling of the law. It does the work of all the other graces without any instrument but its own immediate virtue.

* * * * *

We are to have love like that of CHRIST. In one sense this is impossible. "Measured the waters in the hollow of His hand; meted out heaven with the span; comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure; weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance." These are measurable things, but the love of CHRIST is measureless. There is nothing in His nature which is not infinite. The depths of GOD are depths of love, for GOD is love and CHRIST is GOD.

* * * * *

Till the less can include the greater, and the human the Divine, we may not fathom the depths or grasp the dimensions of CHRIST's love. Then how can we keep this new commandment? To love like Paul—to love like John—would be lofty aim, but who can love like CHRIST?

* * * * *

Let us not mistake His meaning. He asks, not that our love should equal His, but resemble His; not that it should be of the same strength, but of the same kind. A pearl of dew will not hold the sun, but it may hold a spark of its light.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond)

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FROM THE
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SEPTEMBER, 1955 VOL. XLIII. No. 9

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1.

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 84, Upper Grosvenor Road.

Philadelphia: J. D. ROBERTS, 300, Walnut Street.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto.

Australia: B. LICKLEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castle-craig, Sydney, N.S.W.

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A Monthly Magazine for Believers

All communications for the Editor should be sent to W. G. TURNER, The Gables, St. Nicholas-at-Wade, Birchington, Kent. All business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP, or other publications mentioned, must be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND, 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

Wrong Righted

“ Behold! ” says the MAKER of all things:
“ Behold I make all things anew;
New heavens, new earth and new life-springs,
New nature and new points of view.”

“ The old things were marred in the making,
The new shall be all without flaw;
The old have been damaged by death’s sting,
The new things shall last evermore! ”

Corruption says: “ Keep to the old things,
In them there must be something good;
Strong desperate effort anew brings
From old things a good understood! ”

“ The origin ill of corruption,
The source of mortality,
By new divine life in full action
Destroyed must eternally be! ”

The MAKER says: “ I have already
Established My power and might;
My mighty wave, constant and steady,
Of right shall drive wrong out of sight! ”

G. S. PURNELL.

Our Unhappy Divisions

BY THE EDITOR

EVERY true Christian believer must deplore what all recognize as our unhappy divisions. That these are a dishonour to CHRIST and a disgrace to Christianity many sorrowfully confess, as it is "*the wolf that scatters the sheep.*" The tragic irony of the situation is revealed by the words of an onlooker who said "they rightly divide the scriptures, yet wrongly divide themselves."

Mistaken applications of Scriptures are not always from want of knowledge, but may easily spring from a sadder want of real fellowship with the mind of the LORD. Then nothing is easier than to cultivate a party spirit which inevitably results in the sin of schism. It is a matter of common knowledge that in all the heresies by which Christendom is, and has been, afflicted party leaders, or would-be leaders, have always been the misleaders of the humbler rank and file in the Christian profession. "*The leaders of this people cause them to err: and they that are led of them are destroyed,*" was the testimony of the Evangelical prophet (Isa. ix. 16). This but confirms the warning given to the Ephesian elders centuries later by the Apostle Paul, when he said, "I know that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them" (Acts xx. 29, 30). These un-apostolic misleaders have had many successors, the tribe not yet being extinct.

The "Accuser of the brethren" (Rev. xii. 10), "*the wolf that scattereth the sheep,*" is in complete antagonism and opposition to the GOOD SHEPHERD who gathers them. Hence it is not surprising that the misleaders of His people cause divisions among them by attacks on the PERSON, the WORDS, or the WORK of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Here the enemy follows the same course as in the days of which St. John three times records a division among them because of Him when here. "So there was a division because of *Him*" (John vii. 43); "and there was a division among them" (John ix. 16) on account of His *work*

in the case of the man born blind being healed; "there was a division therefore again among the Jews for these *sayings*" (John x. 19); and from the early days divisions in Christendom all bear the same pattern.

The early church, disturbed by heresies which have re-appeared in our own times (somewhat disguised maybe, yet all bearing the signature of the Enemy of CHRIST), composed creeds as their expression of "the faith once delivered to the saints." The full worth of the *Athanasian* formula with its astonishing strictness and accuracy of terms is acknowledged as far above the power of the present day, in which the most profound and important essentials of the Christian faith are conveyed, every proposition striking at the *root of an heresy*. What is there stated in metaphysical language and exactness of position as to its vital truth, an unlearned believer in the gospel apprehends by what may be termed the intuition of faith by the HOLY SPIRIT'S guiding. For we have the SPIRIT and the written word withal to instruct us, while creeds are but symbols historically marking the pitfalls, and the recurring snares on the road of the Christian confession.

In recent years among professed disciples the Eternal Sonship of the SAVIOUR has been plausibly questioned—His *Person*; His *work*, as to when, and where, completed by Him also being speculated upon; Eternal life as the present possession of every believer gravely queried in spite of His own emphatic *saying* upon this subject; ecclesiastical judgments by fallible men invested with infallible authority; all these heresies causing confusion, distress and divisions among simple souls. Then scriptures (like 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21) of immense value and importance are hastily misapplied and recklessly used by misleaders and would-be leaders as if forsooth they overrode the direct commandment of the LORD "that ye love one another as I have loved you." Even a casual glance at the word in the Epistle to Timothy shows it to be of individual application, *not of groups* or companies, except as members of such are *personally* exercised by it before the LORD. It is to be greatly feared that another word spoken by Isaiah still has an application to the people of GOD today, "*Their fear toward Me is taught by the*

precept of men" (Isa. xxix. 13). Again the analogy between 2 Tim. ii. 21 and Exod. xxxiii. 7 is patent; the latter reads, "And it came to pass that *every one* which sought the LORD went out," as in the former the word is, "If *a man* therefore purge *himself* from these [vessels to dishonour] *he* shall be a vessel unto honour." It is *individual personal exercise, not joint nor community action*, that is stressed in both scriptures; yet today local leaders do not scruple to force this entirely unscriptural line to convince simple, unwary souls of the rightness of the sin of schism which they (the leaders) are committing either in self will or, more charitably shall we say, in ignorance.

Further, to this individual acting upon 2 Tim. ii. 19-21 in real personal exercise before the LORD the assurance given is of being thereby a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. No such promise is given to groups and mass movements *even though purporting to be separating from their brethren through this scripture*, as a reason for combined acting.

Finally, the acid test is "by their fruits ye shall know them." Is the result an increase of humility, devotedness to CHRIST? and are accessions of useful service the special signs of His approbation of their action? Or does the self complacent spirit which appears to accompany all "holiness" movements in Christendom all unconsciously betray its presence by an assumption of a faithfulness beyond that of those whom they have left? Humble-hearted believers frequently have to confess that views once accepted by them as unquestionably true, and as accordant with Scripture, have afterwards been found to have been rather the result of an honestly accepted tradition which practically makes the word of GOD of none effect. Has not the misuse of 2 Tim. ii. 19-22 often been a case in point?

In days like the present Christian believers who settle down serenely in little nests of holy self satisfied complacency as having now become vessels to honour by separating themselves in error from brethren as jealous for the honour of the LORD as themselves, need to reflect that by their action they place the stigma of being vessels unto dishonour upon those whom they leave. Therefore no one can too solemnly weigh such a momentous step, often too lightly taken at the bidding of some with an

end to serve. It is *the wolf that scattereth the sheep*, even if by good words and fair-sounding speeches.

Where the charge of the *sin of schism* will fall in all such cases it is not for prejudice nor taste to decide; but for the truth of GOD.

Thoughts on Malachi

THE last of the Old Testament prophets comes with a message to a people whose spiritual condition has gravely deteriorated since the revival under Ezra and Nehemiah. Indeed Malachi's ministry is the final stage of divine interposition prophetically before the Coming of the LORD, and a revelation of the condition into which the returned remnant of Israel had drifted either by carelessness or forgetfulness, or both, as to their high calling as the people of GOD. The analogy between Israel then and Christendom now is very striking to a thoughtful observer.

But the everlasting love of the unchanging GOD of Israel still lingered over them longing to recall and reinstate them in the position for which they had been chosen and redeemed. The burden of the word of the LORD therefore *to*, not *against* them, is "I have loved you, saith the LORD." The word is much stronger than appears on the surface, being literally, "I have loved you, and do love you, I have loved you, saith the LORD." Whether the message is one of warning or blessing, it is a message of love; revealing to them on one hand their true condition in severe terms, and on the other with gracious words of tenderness and comfort to all faithful souls however bad the outward conditions prevailing.

But this most gracious utterance only receives the most ungracious, indeed graceless response, of "Wherein has Thou loved us?" In other words, "We are quite unaware of it. In what way hast Thou specially loved us?"

Their election and redemption as a people is the divine answer, recalling the ancient word spoken to their fathers, and enshrined in the book of the law. "The LORD did not set His love upon you nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but

because the LORD loved you . . . and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh King of Egypt" (Deut. vii, 7, 8). Yet seven times over in this short prophecy this graceless rejoinder appears, each repetition revealing either ingratitude, ignorance, complacent profanity, formality, spiritual blindness, unexercise of conscience or an insolence bordering on blasphemy (i. 2, 6, 7; ii. 17; iii. 7, 8, 13).

The relationship between GOD and Israel in chapter i. is viewed as that of sons and servants, but sons who refuse the honour due to a parent, and servants who withhold the respect due to a master. In chapter ii. it is as priests and people they are addressed with the words, "And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you." Why specially to the priests first? Verse 7 gives the reason, "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."

Specially privileged by their position, they had disregarded the special responsibilities attaching thereto, so lamentably failing therein that they had caused many to stumble, and corrupted the covenant. In personal relationships contracting alliances with their heathen neighbours, the house of GOD desecrated for the convenience of some such who were yet enemies of the GOD of the house, and even the high priest's own son in flagrant disregard of the law married to the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite, an open and avowed enemy of Israel. "Like priests, like people"—so the evil spreads, until the community is honey-combed with religious and social wickedness. In the administration of the law, too, they "accepted faces" (Heb.: marg.) and fell into a corrupt respect of persons.

Then by way of contrast the ideal priest is shown to be one who is wholly dedicated to GOD, and walks with Him in truth, in peace and uprightness of conduct, mindful that he is His representative.

These others on the contrary by neglect of His service, the defilement of their priesthood with the resultant abuses arising therefrom, have caused what should be regarded as consecrated, contemptible in the sight of GOD and man.

"Who are the great enemies of the faith?" an ancient writer enquired—"the heathen, Mahommedans, or the Jews?" An-

swering his own question, he continues: "No, the greater enemies are bad Christians, the greatest bad priests." It was Judas' official position enabled him to betray his MASTER. These erring priests in Malachi lacked just that predicated of Levi: "the fear (lit.: reverence) wherewith he feared Me, and trembled before My Name." Destitute of the awe and filial fear, yet with an outward form of piety, they became misleaders of those who rightly looked to them for guidance.

In chapter II, the repetition of "treacherously" is very ominous, being literally unfaithfulness, shown towards their brethren (whom they had seen); towards GOD whom they had not seen but professed to serve, and towards their wives, all of which GOD had observed, and by the prophet sternly condemns. The cruel and heartless way in which they practised divorce at the expense of Jewish wives in order to contract mixed marriages with heathen women, was marked by the righteous GOD who loveth righteousness. "And this have ye done, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out (lit.: sighs), insomuch that He regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hands." The tears of the wronged lawful wives covered the altar so that GOD would neither see nor accept their sacrifices as they formally approached in outward worship; while the sighs drowned all the holy psalm singings as they came into His courts with praise. How necessary for ourselves the truth they forgot: "for the LORD is a GOD of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed" (1 Sam. ii. 3); and what self judgment and contrition we constantly need. "To this man will I look, to him that is poor, and *contrite*, and trembleth at My word" (Isa. lxvi. 2).

But they say among themselves, "Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delighteth in them, or Where is the GOD of judgment?" What did they mean? "Our GOD is a GOD of love; there is no judgment. We need a wider charity as GOD evidently delights in that man, or this man, since He prospers him although he is not a good man." It is an unbelieving echo of Psalm lxxiii, "How doth GOD know? and is there knowledge in the MOST HIGH? Behold these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches." The Psalmist pulled himself up short as he recognized where this line

of reasoning led, even though the prosperity of the righteous was then the mark of Divine favour in that dispensation. He continues, "If I say I will speak thus: behold, I should offend against the generation of Thy children," and betakes himself to the sanctuary of GOD, where his understanding becomes adjusted as to these things. But in Malachi ii. 17, forgetting the LORD who has loved, and still loves them, they virtually say, "Does He care? Things just happen by chance, even if He does."

To them the prophet's sharp stern reproof is, "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words," to be immediately followed with the announcement, "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me; and the LORD whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple . . . but who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" He who was coming *was* the GOD of judgment of whom they had so slightly spoken. That both CHRIST'S first and second comings are brought into focus here is evident from our LORD'S words as to John the Baptist and other scriptures, no reference however being made in Malachi to the return of the LORD to receive His own (John xiv. 3), the rapture of the church (1 Thess. iv ; 1 Cor. xv) which is prior to His coming with the saints as Judge and usher in the Day of the LORD.

But even so, the first coming was a time of sifting and severance according as those to whom He then came did or did not receive Him. So here in chapter iii, just when the cynical petulance of the mass of those who were formally the people of GOD breaks out as they say, It is vain to serve GOD: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt GOD are even delivered," *then* they that feared the LORD spake often one to another. Here was a pious exercised remnant in a day of great difficulty for the godly, and in great weakness as a little company that truly feared the LORD, sorrowing at the dishonour done to His name by those who were called His people. They shared their joy in it, their reverence for it, their attitude to it making a real gathering centre for fellow-

ship in what was a day of small things and an evil day at that. What did the Name of the LORD stand for to a godly exercised Israelite? JEHOVAH, the covenant Name of the Eternal GOD in relationship with a redeemed people was a strong tower and a godly heritage for His own. So of it the Psalmist had repeatedly sung, "In GOD we boast all the day," glory ye in His holy Name. And the generation of the godly came to treasure it because of its gathered associations in their history as a people. Their first father out of a deeply exercised heart had learned and put it on record as JEHOVAH-JIREH, He who provides. The great Lawgiver out of his experience had added JEHOVAH-NISSI, the Giver of victory. In a very dark day in the national history a fresh realisation of JEHOVAH'S interest led another to gratefully say JEHOVAH-SHALOM, He who gives peace. To the priestly prophet, What GOD is, found expression in something yet higher and deeper, whether for the nation or individual, then or now, in the Name JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, the Lord our righteousness. In the days of the Captivity, Ezekiel the prophet closes his prophecy of a glorious future for the people of Israel with a further revelation of the great Name JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, "the LORD is there."

As these humble pious souls in the midst of a time of great departure from GOD'S ways of religious, social, domestic life, like that so prevalent in Christendom, yet more guiltily today, thought on His NAME, speaking of what He did and does, of what He was and is, they were the object of GOD'S loving interest and close attention. "JEHOVAH observed it, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared JEHOVAH, and that thought upon His Name. And they shall be unto Me a peculiar treasure [My own possession] saith JEHOVAH of hosts, in the day that I prepare" (iii. 16, 17, J.N.D. Trans.). The LORD hearkened and heard, listened and paid great attention. As another has said, "this teaches the sensitiveness of the eternal love." It stoops to catch the outpourings of simple loving hearts occupied with Himself. Hence it is no surprise that this faithful remnant were those through whom the light steadily shone influencing others amid the increasing difficulties until He came, not then to judge, but to save. The witness was still borne to the great truths and divine

principles upon which GOD ever blesses faithful souls in days of declension, departure and disregard of His word by faithless formal professors. By and by the survivors of those "who spake often one to another in the same spirit and with the same loving regard for His NAME, appear as Zacharias, a faithful priest, and Elisabeth his wife, both righteous before GOD, come upon the scene walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD blameless; Joseph and Mary the blessed Mother of the LORD, the willing handmaiden rejoicing in GOD her SAVIOUR; the nameless humble shepherds who are also speaking together when the Angel of the LORD fills them with great joy by the message he brings; Simeon, Anna, them that were looking for redemption in Israel, with others who like Joseph of Arimathea a good just man who lived for long years waiting for the Kingdom of GOD.

"They thought upon His NAME," their joy in it, their sorrow at the dishonour done to it, and their hope in it. What value do we set upon it for worship, fellowship and service is a searching question in our own day. For to all that these saints of old could possibly see in it, to us is added the privilege of His assured presence even to two or three gathered by the SPIRIT to it.

QUARTUS

How Joseph knew the Lord

TO Abraham GOD was the Almighty and Everlasting ONE, the Possessor of heaven and earth, the covenant-keeping LORD. To Moses GOD was the great Lawgiver and Leader. To David He was the great Shepherd and King. Joseph also knew the LORD in several distinct ways which we shall briefly consider.

1. *He knew God as the One who was always with him.* (See Gen. xxxix. 3.) As a lad, when serving the Egyptian as overseer of his household, in the prison, when standing before Pharaoh, and as viceroy of Egypt, GOD was ever with His servant, a man "greatly beloved."

"Best of all," said John Wesley as he lay dying, "GOD is with us." During His last discourse our LORD gave the promise of the COMFORTER who was to abide with His disciples for ever.

The HOLY SPIRIT makes good in our experience the presence and fellowship, the power and the love of the LORD JESUS. He is called to our side, to enable us to bear and to do in accordance with the will of GOD. His action upon our regenerated human spirits is constant, although it varies in manner and in intensity.

To practise the presence of GOD was Brother Lawrence's special work in life. But although this may not be our "line of things," yet the Paris lay brother's special emphasis should serve to remind us to pause from time to time during the day and to recall that GOD is *for* us, *with* us, and *in* us. Such a habit would help to smooth away the wrinkles from the face of the inner man, and promote a deeper peace within.

2. *Joseph knew the Lord as the Healer of toil and sorrow*, and as the One who can make a man *fruitful* in the land of his affliction. (See Gen. xli. 51, 52.) He had been torn from his family and spent most of his life in a foreign country, and Egypt was therefore to him a land of affliction in spite of his exalted position.

Probably none of us would like to live his life over again—at all events as he *has* lived it. It has been marked by too many sins, failures and mistakes. When Jacob was 130 years old his piteous exclamation was, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been!" He was taking a backward look over his chequered pilgrimage, with its mixture of failure and success, retribution and consolation.

But Jacob and Joseph both knew, and we with our far greater light also know, that GOD is the Healer of toil and sorrow, and that suffering has a very real ministry. Pain is often the prelude to a higher life. The pain of conviction of sin was the prelude to the joy and privilege of known redemption. It is painful to be made to feel our shortcomings as believers, but in this way repentance issues in prayer and endeavour to do better. "There is no improving the future without disturbing the present." The best way to regard our troubles is to view them as an education and a work by which our salvation is wrought out more effectively.

GOD is our most real possession. CHRIST has been given to us for our present and eternal enjoyment. Those who seek to live

for the future at the expense of the present, for the spiritual at the expense of the natural, for the unseen at the expense of the seen, have, even here, the richest compensation; GOD rewards them with more of—*Himself*.

And the inevitable consequence of this is that they become more fruitful. An unfruitful Christian is, so to speak, a contradiction in terms. For the *normal* Christian life is the life that is—spite of occasional set-backs—victorious, progressive and useful, that is to say, *fruitful*, or pleasing to GOD.

3. *And Joseph knew the Lord as He who brings good out of evil.* (See Gen. 1. 20.) He was himself a living solution of the problem of painful providences—as far as that problem admits of solution. We are sure that as nothing touches our lives by chance, so our GOD designs that our trials and mistakes should work out for our highest ultimate good, and that of others.

The story of Dr. Moon is well known. When quite a young man, with brilliant prospects, he lost the sight of one eye. He naturally prayed that the sight of the other might be spared. But the request was not granted, and he became totally blind. What was then his attitude towards GOD? Did he repine, or fret, or charge GOD with cruelty? Did he renounce all hope of serving his fellow-men? Did he go out into the night of a self-imposed exile? No. Instead of succumbing to these temptations he laid his life—and his terrible disability—at his LORD's feet. His prayer is one of the sublimest on record: "LORD JESUS, I thank Thee for the talent of blindness. May I so invest this talent that when Thou returnest Thou mayest receive Thine own with usury." And all the world knows how abundantly that prayer was answered through the alphabet for the blind with which Dr. Moon's name is connected, and which has been of untold blessing to thousands of blind persons.

Although Joseph lived in the dim dawn of Divine revelation, his faith and life anticipate the New Testament declaration "We know that all things work together for good to them that love GOD.

Age after Age

9: THE FINAL JUDGMENT

THE Great White Throne is the last judgment of all; the end not merely of an age, but of the world itself. The long stream of time then merges into the ocean of Eternity. Ere this actually happens, the Great Assize takes place on the Day of Wrath; and the final scene of the life stories of all the ungodly and impenitent who have ever lived now transpires.

Nothing can exceed the solemn description given in Rev. xx: "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from Whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell (hades) delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works." Only one class is found here—Scripture knowing nothing of "the general judgment" so commonly spoken of in prayers, hymns and sermons. It does speak of eternal judgment, when time has ceased and Eternity begun. Strict justice is meted out to every man according to his works followed by speedy, irrevocable execution. The day of mercy then having passed away, the day of judgment is present. And who can abide it? None of those there present. "The resurrection of judgment" to which our LORD refers in Jno. v will have taken place; and all the evil deeds of lives lived on earth, the blotted pages of their history appear in the books now opened. The book of memory, too, is opened as the ominous "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime" falls upon ears, alas! all too late awakened to their responsibilities as moral beings.

The book of life—with its record of the infinite goodness of GOD, Who had provided a way of escape and deliverance from the dread wrath to come—will be a silent witness at that great tribunal of the Great White Throne. "Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged" (Rev. xi. 18). Death and the grave had claimed their bodies as prey from

many successive generations; and hades had been the abode for ages of their disembodied spirits. These, and the great sea that had swallowed its millions, now pour forth in countless myriads the dead that are in them, to appear before the judgment throne of GOD, that there they who have sinned should as men, *not as disembodied spirits*, answer for their persistent impenitence and rebellion against their MAKER; should have opportunity, too, to explain their deliberate refusal of all his gracious offers of mercy and salvation provided at infinite cost for mankind by the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

It is a day of judgment; not one of wholesale, indiscriminate condemnation; hence the solemn, searching, judicial procedure, which so invests the Great White Throne with its awful terrors. For as truly as GOD is just and the justifier of him that believeth in JESUS, so surely is His justice manifested in the condemnation of the unbelieving, fearful, impenitent, ungodly who neglect, despise or reject so great salvation as that provided by the Cross of the LORD JESUS CHRIST at Calvary—“*Who gave Himself a ransom for all.*”

Of the apostate traitor apostle, JUDAS ISCARIOT, the record solemnly runs: “JUDAS by transgression fell that he might go to his own place.” Upon which a writer comments: “He *made* his own place; he *went* to his own place; and *knew* that it was his own place.” Alike in the justification of the believer, and the condemnation of the unbeliever, the *righteousness of God will be manifested to the higher unfallen intelligences surrounding His eternal throne* with their unceasing adoring ascription of HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY.

Connected with the judgment of the Great White Throne is the end of the world, and everything in it, all being now completely destroyed. “The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter iii. 10).

. . . Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Peter iii. 10-14).

W.G.T.

Sparkling Gems

Love makes us most like GOD; for GOD is love.

* * * * *

Love to CHRIST smooths the path of duty and wings the feet to travel it; it is the bow which impels the arrow of obedience; it is the main spring moving the wheels of duty; it is the strong arm tugging the oar of diligence. Love is the marrow of the bones of fidelity, the blood in the veins of piety, the sinew of spiritual strength, yea, the life of sincere devotion.

* * * * *

Serving GOD with our little is the way to make it more; we must never think that wasted with which GOD is honoured.

* * * * *

My time is short; I must be up and doing; I must go briskly on with my work, leaving it to my LORD to find me strength for it and success in it.

* * * * *

I can never do too much for Him that hath done so much for me; and I will labour to be like my SAVIOUR, by making humility lovely in the eyes of all men and by following the merciful and meek example of the LORD JESUS.

* * * * *

Bible knowledge fetched in by prayer, and watered well with meditation, makes the mind humble.

* * * * *

Above all things, be kind. Kindness is the one thing through which we can the most resemble GOD and disarm men.

* * * * *

All the glory and beauty of CHRIST are manifested within and there He delights to dwell; His visits there are frequent; His condescension amazing; His conversation sweet; His comforts refreshing; and the peace that He brings passeth all understanding.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond)

WORDS OF HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

OCTOBER, 1955

VOL. XLIII

No. 10

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1.

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 84, Upper Grosvenor Road.

Philadelphia: J. D. ROBERTS, 300, Walnut Street.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto.

Australia: B. LICKLEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castle-craig, Sydney, N.S.W.

PRICE THREEPENCE

May be ordered through most Booksellers

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

All communications for The WORDS OF HELP should be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. Hammond, 11 Little Britain, London, E.C.1. until further notice.

OBITUARY

William George Turner

The beloved Editor, passed away suddenly, to be with Christ which is far better, on the 31st August.

Of him it can be said that, after a long life spent in the work of the Lord, he now rests from his labours and his works do follow him.

Age after Age

THE redeeming mercy of GOD through the Dayspring from on high (Luke ii) is the theme of sacred story throughout the ages of time.

“ Soon as the reign of sin began,
The light of mercy dawned on man,
When GOD announced the blessed news,
The woman’s Seed thy head shall bruise.”

For some forty centuries, altars—whether authorised by divine appointment, or unauthorised ones erected as a witness to man’s fear of an unknown Deity, or as a sign of man’s sense of need—had been laden with victims whose sacrifice could never take away sins. For two thousand years, the TABLE with its BREAD and WINE has witnessed to the One Offering made by CHRIST WHO appeared in the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and so:—

“ One Offering single and complete,
With heart and voice we say;
And what He never can repeat,
We show forth day by day.”

The LORD’S DEATH which is shown by the faithful, as in His own appointed way He is remembered, is what gives all point and meaning to the feast of remembrance until He comes.

The THRONE, too, is the sequence to the Cross, for did not our Lord Himself say: “ Ought not the CHRIST to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?”

The HOLY SPIRIT, also, the divine WITNESSER to the SAVIOUR’S merits, leads the APOSTLE PETER to write of: “ The sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow.”

ALTAR of sacrifice, TABLE of remembrance, and THRONE of glory all find meaning and explanation in the CROSS of CALVARY.

Says the appointed minister of the Gospel, and of the Church, one, too, who never tired of preaching “ the Kingdom of GOD and the things concerning JESUS CHRIST”: “GOD forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

Righteous ABEL brought his sacrifice by faith, but it was the light from the hill of Calvary reflecting back upon it which gave it deep value and meaning in the sight of GOD.

The Levitical sacrifices received all their value in the sight of GOD likewise from that One Sacrifice of the LAMB of GOD foreordained from before the foundation of the world and consummated at Calvary.

Penitents were forgiven their sins for four thousand years through the forbearance of GOD in view of that tremendous transaction on the Cross as yet, then, unaccomplished. For in virtue of the precious blood of CHRIST all the Old Testament believers were pardoned, though the full consciousness and joy of being "ransomed, reconciled and forgiven" necessarily awaited the complete atonement made upon the Cross and the witness of the HOLY SPIRIT to the resurrection and glorification of our blessed and most adorable REDEEMER.

The altar was also a standing witness of the holiness of GOD, and of the dire need of sinful men: loudly proclaiming that "without shedding of blood there is no remission."

The LORD'S TABLE (the phrase in Greek is adjectival, authority rather than possessiveness, being the thought as in the only other use of same in Rev. i, 6, "the LORD'S DAY") is so connected with, and dependent upon, the Cross, that it has no meaning apart from what it commemorates, celebrates, and is the communion of. The elements of bread and wine so simple, so significant and hence so solemn in this sacred feast of remembrance, speak to our hearts of the Body and the Blood of the LORD. Not CHRIST as He was in the days of His flesh: not CHRIST as He is now in heaven as the MAN in glory: but CHRIST as He became once—and that when the offering of the Body of JESUS CHRIST—the one offering took place; when His precious blood was shed, and the Atoning Death of the Incarnate SON of GOD accomplished the will of GOD.

"Once, only once, but once for all,
His precious life He gave;
Before His Cross we prostrate fall
And own Him strong to save."

"The Bread of GOD come down from heaven," and "His flesh given for the life of the world."

Bread the staple food of humanity is only produced from the corn which has grown up on the earth, being cut down, subjected to great pressure of the mill, and to the fierce flame

of the oven; so the true Bread of life giving His flesh for the life of the world was subjected to the pressure of our sin's burden upon the Cross, where the fierce flame of divine judgment which they necessarily called forth, came upon our sinless Substitute and Surety, in that hour when He suffered for our sins.

As we reverently receive the broken bread at the Holy Supper, we remember the travail of His soul, and how His sinless body was bruised and broken for our salvation on the Cross of shame.

We *have* eaten by faith, and we live because He died; and so we ponder that deep saying on the night of His betrayal, "This is My body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me."

In the same manner the fruit of the vine has to be passed through the winepress ere it can be used to fill "the cup of blessing"—the cup in which we give thanks. With contrite spirits, and hearts bowed in His presence we worship, and drink of this "cup of the LORD" at His bidding, as we remember what He suffered for our sakes. It is indeed a solemn feast of grateful remembrance of our holy LORD and SAVIOUR in His dying but undying love for us.

"LORD, let us ne'er forget
Thy rich, Thy precious love;
Our theme of joy and wonder here,
Our endless song above."

And this holy feast is peculiar to this *Age of God's long-suffering grace*, during the period of the Church's sojourn on earth.

It is "till He comes," and so it links the Cross with the glory.

"See the feast of love is spread,
Drink the wine and break the bread;
Sweet memorials till the LORD
Calls us round the heavenly board;
Some from earth, from glory some,
Severed only 'till He come,' "

The throne of His Kingdom, the last of the trio of typical diagrams, speaks of that glorious Kingdom characterised by the Reigning of the King in righteousness and peace; the Restraint of SATAN for a thousand years; the Restoration of

ISRAEL; the Reducing of all rule and authority by **CHRIST'S** own power; and then the final Resignation of the Kingdom to **GOD**; when after Armageddon, the Millennium, and the Final Judgment of the Great White Throne, time itself merges into Eternity. Altar, Table and Throne all are linked with that Cross which is the Pivot upon which all turns for heaven and earth in the purposes of **GOD**. W.G.T.

Thanking and Praising

WE are told by the inspired writer in 1 Chron. xxiii, 27, 30. that "by the last words of **DAVID**" certain young men of 20 years old and above were appointed "to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord and likewise at even."

These words of "the sweet psalmist of **ISRAEL**" seem clearly to imply the importance of the holy exercise of offering the sacrifice of thanks and praise unto Him who is the Giver of "life and breath and all things" to all mankind. Thus the Apostle **PAUL** exhorts the Christian Hebrews to "offer the sacrifice of praise to **GOD** continually" "the fruit of their lips giving thanks to His name."

It will be readily admitted by all believers on the **LORD JESUS CHRIST** that there is much more cause for thanksgiving and praise on the part of those whom He has redeemed by His own most precious blood than with the God-fearing ones of pre-Christian days. If one of these could say as he did "What shall I render under the **LORD** for all His benefits towards me?" and answer "I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the **LORD**," should not those who have been saved eternally and made sons and heirs of **GOD** render oftentimes the praises of a truly thankful heart. How regrettable it is if the heart is feebly responsive or the lips dumb concerning the measureless grace and glory we are privileged to behold in the **PERSON** and work of our **LORD JESUS CHRIST**.

It was commanded in **MOSES'** day "none shall appear before me empty" (Exodus xxiii, 15 and Deut. xvi, 16), and we read that in the days of our **LORD** upon earth He said: "If these should hold their peace the stones would immediately cry out." (Luke xix, 40). Verily the **GOD** of all grace and **FATHER** of

mercies must and shall have praise, for "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name is to be praised." (Psalm cxiii, 3).

In chapter 1 of the Revelation of JESUS CHRIST we have the exultant rendering of adoration and praise "Unto Him that loveth us and washed us from our sin in His own blood . . . to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Thus may Christian hearts prepare themselves on earth for the wondrous spontaneous acclamation in glory which cannot now be long delayed. Do we not see "the day approaching"?

In the waiting time we are also exhorted to "give thanks always for all things unto GOD and the FATHER in the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST." (Ephesians v, 20). Moreover it is the Christian's privilege and duty to give thanks on behalf of all mankind (1 Tim ii, 1), for the multitude of GOD's mercies, His patience and long-suffering towards all and for His overruling providence in the affairs of men and nations. If Moses of old pleaded before GOD for mercy for the erring people of his day how much greater is the need now for such pleading and giving of thanks particularly as we are reminded in 2 Tim. iii, 1, 2, that unthankfulness is one of the characteristic sins of men in these last days of GOD's grace.

Let sinners saved give thanks and sing
 Salvation's theirs and of the LORD;
 They draw from heaven's eternal spring
 The living GOD their great reward.

G. HARRISON.

Gathered One by One

IN John xvii, 3, the LORD JESUS is recorded as saying in His prayer to the FATHER, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST, Whom Thou hast sent." In this verse life éternal is connected with the knowledge of GOD the FATHER, and of JESUS CHRIST, Whom He had sent, His Sent One. All Scripture emphasises the fact that GOD desires to be known intimately by His creature man, and has He not done all that was possible to bring about this intimacy? A study of His ways, as revealed in his Word, makes this possible for all who desire it.

Everything connected with this knowledge is a personal

matter between man's heart and GOD. It is the heart that GOD looks on (1 Sam. xvi, 7). In Proverbs xxiii, 26 we read "My son, give Me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe My ways." If we have a heart for the LORD, we shall observe His ways, and learn to know Him in every action that is recorded.

It is the LORD Who gathers the people, as we read in Genesis xlix, 10. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until SHILOH come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." In Isaiah xxvii, 12 we learn the LORD's method of gathering. Here it is *one by one*, an individual matter, and surely, if it is really the LORD's doing, everyone truly gathered has been personally attracted by the LORD Himself.

When He was here, a Man amongst men, many were attracted to Him when they saw His miracles, but in many cases it was only the outward appearance, the visible manifestation, that attracted them; following Him for what He was, became quite a different matter. Multitudes flocked round Him expecting mere material advantage that would either gratify their lusts, or save them trouble, but when He unfolded the truth to them, they could only say "This is a hard saying, who can hear it," and turning away from Him they give up all hope of being able to continue with Him under the circumstances.

There were some who said in their hearts: "What a fine thing it would be to have Him as King, and be able to call upon Him in every circumstance of material need". They then thought of taking Him by force and making Him King, but He knew their hearts, and would not trust Himself to them. Later on, crowds shouted: "Crucify Him" and "We have no King but Caesar," was their verdict.

How true it is that "the LORD knows them that are His," and with this is linked the warning: "Let him that nameth the name of the LORD *depart from* iniquity." What a volume of truth there is in those significant words:—"Except a man be born again, he cannot *see* the kingdom of GOD." The HOLY SPIRIT is here seeking the hearts of the King's true followers, and He is ready to meet and to satisfy whosoever will. He can transfer a servant from active evangelical operations to meet a true seeker like the Ethiopian eunuch on his desert journey.

With GOD "All things are possible to one who believes." "It is with the heart that man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans x, 10).

G. S. PURNELL.

The Work of the Shepherds

(Ezekiel xxxiv)

"**S**HOULD not the shepherds feed the flocks?" yes, certainly they should. How touchingly, in this chapter, GOD takes up the whole matter with the shepherds as to their treatment of the flocks committed to their care.

Alas, these shepherds in Israel, like many of those who take the place of being shepherds in Christendom, had bestowed more work upon themselves than they had upon the flocks. What solemn language He uses, "Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not the flock."

They were thinking of themselves and not of others, seeking their own ease and comfort, forgetful of their responsibility to guard and feed the flock. They had failed to strengthen the diseased, to heal the sick, to bring again that which was driven away, to seek the lost. But, on the contrary, they had ruled with force and cruelty.

The consequence was that the poor sheep were scattered, they were torn by wild beasts, they wandered through the mountains and there was no one to seek them out. They themselves (the shepherds) had eaten up the good pastures and fouled the water with their feet.

This surely is a heavy charge against those who took upon them the work of shepherding the flock. But is it not so in our own day? There are, it is quite true, some true and godly men who lay themselves out to feed the lambs and sheep of GOD's flock; but, alas! how many that feed themselves instead of the flock.

These false shepherds had ruled with force and violence, they compelled the sheep to go the way *they* thought right; if they were weak and sickly and inclined to wander—instead of going after them in a spirit of love, careful lest that which was lame might be turned out of the way, they used the whip and

the stick, and so the sheep have been sadly scattered. Has not GOD a controversy with the shepherds about all this? Surely He has; and the lesson is one which we all need to remember.

But what is so touching and so beautiful to take note of is, that JEHOVAH Himself says *He* will undertake the work which the shepherds ought to have done, but failed to do. "I will both search My sheep, and seek them out . . . I will bring them out from the people . . . I will feed them in a good pasture . . . I will seek that which was lost," etc.

And, above all, He says, "I will set up one shepherded over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd." We know well to whom this refers, even the true David, the GOOD SHEPHERD who gave His life for the sheep (John x). This Shepherd does not drive the sheep but gently leads them; they hear His voice, they know His voice and they follow Him.

And not only so, but this SHEPHERD has both a service of grace and a place of royalty, "And I the LORD will be their GOD, and My servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it." All His power and His resources are at the disposal of the sheep; and they will be so in that day when, turning to Him whom they had so deeply sinned against, they will look upon Him whom they have pierced and mourn for Him as for an only son.

The prophet Jeremiah also, in speaking of the pastors who had destroyed and scattered the sheep of the LORD's pasture, ends on much the same note. He, the LORD, would gather the remnant of His flock from all the countries whither He had driven them, and bring them again to their folds, etc.

And then He concludes with the following precious promise, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby He shall be called, *The Lord Our Righteousness*" (Jer. xxiii, 1-6).

Truly He is a GOD ready to pardon, willing to forgive, as soon as ever the heart turns to Him in true repentance. He delights in grace and mercy, judgment is His strange work.

“I will bring them again,” He says “I will build them . . . I will give them an heart to know me . . . they shall be my people, and I will be their GOD” (Jer. xxiv, 6-7).

Had the shepherds amongst GOD’s people only acted in the spirit in which He himself acts, how much sorrow might have been spared and how many a wandering sheep might have been restored instead of being driven farther away on the dark mountains on which they had been ensnared, or estranged from the path in which He would have them to walk.

“Feed the flock of GOD, which is among you,” says Peter, “taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly . . . Neither as being lords over GOD’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.” Here is a most necessary and important word to all who undertake the work of service or ministry amongst the people of GOD. Let us ponder over them for our soul’s good and profit, as well as for the good of others. ANON.

Living to Self or to Christ

“The love of the Christ constraineth us . . . He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.” (II Cor. v. 14, 15).

THE thought uppermost in my mind in quoting these verses is as simple as it is all-important. It is the question what in the light of this scripture we are living for. Am I living to self or to CHRIST? Is my continual object to please myself or to please CHRIST?

This weighty question is based upon the divine purpose in the death of CHRIST. He died that those who were spiritually dead might live through faith in Him. Christ “died for all” that “they who live” (that is, believers) should live to and for the risen CHRIST. Such lives springing out of and bearing a likeness to the CHRIST who died would be acceptable to GOD. The special feature of such lives is that they live not unto themselves but unto Him who died for them and rose from among the dead. The glory of GOD is visible in such lives.

Here then is the exclusive object of ideal Christian living. There is never a question, great or small, arising in our daily lives in which our decision does not show whether we are living to ourselves or to Him who died for us and rose again.

Often, alas, we have need to rebuke our souls for failing to give the pre-eminence to our LORD. How often, not to say how regularly the first impulse of the heart is to accept immediately whatever is likely to minister to our own pleasure or our gratification or our aggrandisement! What is this but the habit of living to ourselves, which this Scripture condemns?

How many of us can truthfully use the words of the apostle Paul, "To me to live is CHRIST" (Phil. i, 21)? When any matter arises, do we at once say: How will this affect CHRIST? It may be a matter of profit or of loss, of joy or of grief, of advantage or disadvantage; it may apply to ourselves or our children, to our own affairs or our business affairs; it may concern the present and be pressing, or the future, and yet be urgent. In such common, everyday occurrences, is not our tendency to choose what is likely to be best for ourselves rather than what is according to the will of GOD and for the glory of CHRIST?

Now, we are always wrong when we allow selfish interests to govern our lives. Some seek to excuse their worldly ambition by the plea of doing their best for their family. It is true GOD would not have us neglect what is of real benefit to those dear to us by natural ties, but who is most able to judge what is best? Who shall decide most wisely upon the course to be taken? Shall we take the responsibility upon our own shoulders, or shall we wait for the wisdom that comes down from above? How we need not only to have momentary faith in GOD, but to have the patience of faith in Him!

The life that is habitually Christward is fraught with daily difficulty which needs to be overcome. We have the two natures—the old and the new. The old nature, whether impulsive and impetuous or sluggish and sleepy, covets whatever offers a present advantage, but the new nature partakes of the mind of CHRIST who was meek and lowly in heart; and it is content, if it be the will of GOD, to suffer the loss of all things, anxious not to choose for itself, lest it choose foolishly, but desirous above all else that the life of CHRIST should become manifest at all times in its mortal body.

Moreover, living to CHRIST is often accompanied by hardship, suffering, privation, or persecution, from all which the flesh shrinks, and seeks to avoid if possible. Through fear of

such consequences and through inordinate love of ease, many draw back, take not up the cross, but seek rather the agreeable things of this present evil age. Are any of us entirely free from this danger to our faithful testimony in the world as followers of CHRIST who died for us and is alive again?

Here and now, let us remember, is our testing time, not when we are "with CHRIST," having departed from this life. Here it is possible for us, perhaps unwittingly, to conceal our relationship to CHRIST by following the desires of the flesh and the mind, as most men do. And here and now our testimony to the world of devotion to CHRIST so often fails. It is plain to our friends and neighbours that we are living not to CHRIST but to our own selfish interests, as is the way of the world.

If these inconsistencies of conduct are plainly visible in the home, in the office, in the workroom, how grievous are they in the eyes of Him who died for us and rose again that we might live unto Him! Did not the LORD say, "He who does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He that finds his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it" (Matt. x, 38, 39, New Trans.).

Beloved friends, let us consider our ways. Let us more consistently set the interests of CHRIST in the forefront of our purposes, plans, and occupations, for He who searches the reins and the heart will assuredly give unto us according to our works (Rev. ii, 23). May CHRIST Himself dwell in our hearts by faith, for out of the heart are the issues of life. So may we live not unto ourselves but unto Him whose we are and for whom we wait.

Praise the SAVIOUR, we who know Him;

Who can tell how much we owe Him?

Gladly let us render to Him

All we have and are.

—From "*The Bible Monthly*."

Just to Please Him

BELOVED in the LORD, in these days in which we live there is great need that we be more quiet before the LORD, just to enter into, and abide in such sweet communion with Him

that we may at all times feast on that fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, etc. (Gal. v, 22, 23). These verses are just a picture of what our LORD JESUS CHRIST is, and what He wants to be to every one of His dear ones. This is very precious to the heart that has tasted that the LORD is good. Oh, that we might enter more into the mind of GOD about the One whose infinite loveliness is His daily delight, who always pleased Him, who rejoices always before Him (Matt. xvii, 5; Prov. viii, 30).

But when we are rejoicing in His love, do we ever stop to think whether He is happy? We sing, "That will be glory for me." How much more blessed to sing, "That will be glory for Him." Oh, that we might get so completely away from self and from seeking our own welfare, as to be able to live before Him just to minister to the needs of His own loving heart, just to make Him happy. *No one was ever happy who was seeking happiness. Only those taste of real joy who are seeking to give joy to the heart of another!* We come to Him many times to have our own needs met. *Do we ever come just to satisfy the longings of His own heart of love?*

He is seeking worshippers, those who will speak His real worth, His beauty, His glory. Has He found them in us? Have we been seeking to give Him the joy that was before Him when he endured the cross, when He paid the awful price of our redemption? Will our only joy in the glory be that we are saved and made like Him? Will not the joy of knowing that He has been made to rejoice, far transcend all this? Ah, beloved, we are so prone to look at everything from our own standpoint, from the effect it will have on us instead of its relation to Him. We have wept with Him over cold stony hearts. Have we ever rejoiced with Him just because He found His sheep? We are often made to rejoice by the joy of those dear to our hearts. Are we ever happy for no other reason than that we know He is? How often we sell our ointment, that which should have been poured out upon Him under pretence of giving something to the poor (John xii, 1-11). How often we deny Him the time that His loving heart craves under pretence of being too busy with service.

From "To Every Man His Work".

Sparkling Gems

Prayer is the expression of dependence, which is the due attitude of the creature towards the CREATOR. GOD alone is sufficient to Himself. Every creature, whether realised or not, is really dependent; prayer in its foundation principle is the expression of this dependence.

* * * * *

In the present time and in the place where we are, dependence, really felt, expresses itself in prayer. To be dependent upon GOD, Who is love and whose power is limitless—this is happiness.

* * *

A practical conduct pleasing to GOD and an uncondemning heart—a good conscience. These are imperative for intercourse with a holy GOD.

* * *

In the account of Daniel's praying what a curtain is uplifted from unseen things! Many suppose that above this world all is good. But scripture lets us know that there are principalities, authorities and spiritual powers of wickedness in the heavenlies, with whom we are in conflict.

* * * * *

In this warfare, prayer is a distinct weapon, a part of the panoply of GOD.

* * * * *

How often when the well of prayer seems dried, thanksgiving will cause the stream to flow!

* * * * *

The recollection of mercies received and blessings in possession, refreshes the soul and begets the sense that we are in communion with the giving GOD.

* * * * *

An aid and stimulus to prayer is *private reading*—reading GOD's word itself and the valuable written ministry which He has supplied to His children so abundantly as to be within reach of all. Such reading, in a proper spirit, begets prayer.

* * * * *

GOD is the refuge of the soul at all times.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond)

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WORDS OF HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

NOVEMBER, 1955

VOL. XLIV.

No. 11

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1

Wunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 84, Upper
Grosvenor Road.

Philadelphia: J. D. ROBERTS, 300, Walnut Street.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto.

Australia: B. LICKLEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castle-
craig, Sydney, N.S.W.

PRICE THREEPENCE

May be ordered through most Booksellers

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

All communications for The WORDS OF HELP should be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. Hammond, 11 Little Britain, London, E.C.1. until further notice.

"The Son of God, who loved Me"

DOWN to the depths of woe
Christ came to set me free;
He bared His breast, received the blow
Which justice aimed at me.

There justice met my sin
On the accursed tree;
To prove His love, my heart to win,
He "gave Himself for me."

My sin was all condemned
In Him upon that tree;
I trust Him now, the sinner's Friend,
Who "gave Himself for me."

Before the throne complete
I know myself to be;
His work well done, He took His seat,
Accepted there for me.

Through all this desert place
My guide and strength is He,
Till I shall see Him face to face,
When He shall come for me.

The Prayer Meeting

YOU may think but little of your prayers. **GOD** does not. Cornelius was a man devout and prayerful. He "prayed to **GOD** always"; but, while praying on in patience, probably he little thought that one day an angel would be sent to tell him: "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before **GOD**" (Acts x. 2-4).

If you wish for a further proof of **GOD**'s estimate of His people's prayers here it is: "The four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before **THE LAMB**, having each one a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." (Rev. v. 8).

That is what they are. Golden bowls contain them; they are as the fragrance of incense before the throne of **GOD**.

THINK OF A PRAYER-MEETING! Could the exercises of Christians in prayer be made visible you would see the odours ascending to **GOD**'s presence. No matter what the room or surroundings may be, if the hearts are full of **CHRIST** all the grandeur of earth can present nothing so precious. Those humblings of the soul in prayer; those addresses of faith to **GOD**; the workings of hearts inwrought by the **SPIRIT** Himself, though invisible, are momentous; they are fraught with consequences which reach forth into eternity. Such is real prayer. Who that could be present at the **PRAYER-MEETING** would be absent and lose the privilege of a part, audible or inaudible, in its activities?

It is possible that some have not quite a correct sense of the value of the prayer-meeting, regarding it as rather subordinate. Many who would feel condemned in their conscience at absence from the **LORD**'s **SUPPER** look upon attendance at the prayer-meeting as optional. They have not noticed that the promise to be with the two or three gathered to His name is in Scripture specifically attached to prayer: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. **FOR** where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii, 19, 20).

The LORD therefore, is in the midst at the prayer-meeting. Important fact! Possibly some have not looked at the prayer-meeting in this light. Many esteem it merely as a means of spiritual comfort, one of many ways of gaining profit to our souls; they therefore omit attending it or not, as they are disposed. But the LORD is there!

If it was announced that a prince was to be at a meeting, people who would not have troubled to attend would now be found quite zealous, and indeed anxious, to be among the number of those gathered at such a time. But what is a prince, or indeed a King, when compared with the KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS, who is present in the midst at the PRAYER-MEETING?

The prayer-meeting ranks as a meeting of the first order, second only to the LORD'S SUPPER. So it is placed in the divine record of what characterised the first company of the Church: "They continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers." (Acts ii, 42).

Would the Christian willingly be absent when the LORD is present? In this matter have we not sinned through lack of thought or non-apprehension of what the prayer-meeting is in GOD'S sight?

E.J.T.

The Offerings of Leviticus

IT is evident that the great thought in this book is not, as in Exodus, the deliverance and redemption of GOD'S people and their establishment as such before Him, whether under the law, or under the mediatorial system of divine government, which gives room for figures which are the manifestation of GOD to man, and for such as set forth the presentation of man to GOD, both alike and only found in CHRIST. In Leviticus the characteristic theme is *access to GOD*—the means or forms of it (chaps. i-vii); the persons charged with it (viii and ix); the things suitable to those standing in such a relationship with GOD, and the discernment of what defiled (x-xvi); the provisions of the day of atonement for the purification of the

sanctuary, the priesthood and the people (xvi); directions for guarding from impurity both people and priests, in their relations with GOD, with each other, or in any respect whatever (xvii-xxii); the entire circle of the feasts, viewed as GOD'S assembling His people around Himself, and His ways towards them from first to last (xxiii); then we have the intervention of the priesthood that there might be light before GOD, when darkness reigned without, and that the memorial of His people might be ever fragrant, side by side with the blasphemy of JEHOVAH'S name that sprang from the union of an Israelite with an Egyptian, and its terrible doom. Next we have the sabbatical year, and the Jubilee for the land which GOD claimed as His own; and the blessed consequences for the heirs, as well as the inheritance. All pertained to Him and He would surely, in due time assert and make good His rights in their favour. No sale or slavery should prevail when once the trumpet sounded on the part of GOD. If chapter xxvi opens out the miserable consequences of setting at nought the principles which GOD had laid down for the intercourse of His people with Himself, it does not close without a promise that on their repentance, whatever their ruin, He will remember the covenant with the early and the later fathers, when He made known His name to them respectively, as Almighty and as Jehovah. The restoration of Israel will behold all the might and unchangeable purpose unfolded in both titles. The book concludes with the regulation of vows, according to the valuation of the priests.

Thus we may observe how justly Leviticus has been styled as, "The priest's instruction book." Accordingly, it is not the solemn utterance of GOD from Sinai, but "Jehovah called unto Moses and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation." (Lev. i: 1). He is in the midst of a people already recognised as His and He is communicating His mind as to their due means of approaching Him. Manifestly, the work of CHRIST furnishes the sole ground on which GOD could have such relations. The book therefore, begins with the various figures whereby the HOLY GHOST foreshadowed that work, in all its aspects to GOD and to His people. It is to be remarked also that GOD begins, not with that which most nearly

touches the need of the sinner, but with the display of perfectness which satisfied His own heart, JESUS devoting Himself, at all costs to GOD'S will, to death, even the death of the cross. In other words, whatever may be the result in blessing to the sinner, GOD begins with His Son giving Himself up without spot, that GOD might be glorified. Hence we see the key to the difference of the order here and that which governs when the wants of man (priests—chapter viii; lepers—chapter xiv; or any others) are in question. In these cases, the sin-offering has ever the first place; but in the original institution, where CHRIST is looked at rather than the sinner, it comes last.

The first great distinction then, is between the offerings for sin and trespass, and those which precede them in the earlier chapters of Leviticus. The burnt-offerings, the meat-offerings, the peace-offerings, were alike offerings made by fire, of a sweet savour to the LORD; they represent in various forms, the infinite perfectness of CHRIST'S offering of Himself to GOD. On the other hand, the sin and trespass-offerings were charged and identified with sin and were never viewed as offerings of a sweet savour. The very word which described their *burning* was distinct, as was the place; for save in a very partial and exceptional instance, offerings for sin were burnt outside the camp.

W.K.

Eyeservice as Menpleasers

STRIVING to please GOD above all things. Such of course, is always the true Christian spirit. Nevertheless there is a continual danger lest this pure and lofty desire should be clouded or lowered through the deceitfulness of the heart or the devices of the adversary. Hence the importance of being animated by proper motives.

Now, one of the most powerful motives for piety and godliness is to have the fear of God before your eyes in every action, however insignificant it may appear. This is the principle applied by the apostle Paul as a corrective against eyeservice.

Addressing the bondservants in Colosse who believed, he says, "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing GOD" (Col. iii. 22).

Some idea of the cruelties which Roman slaves had to endure from their lords may be gathered from the following extract:—"The bondsman was viewed less as a human being, subject to arbitrary dominion, than as an inferior animal, dependent wholly on the will of his owner. The master possessed the uncontrolled power of life and death over his slave. He might, and frequently did, kill, mutilate, and torture his slaves, for any or for no offence, so that slaves were sometimes crucified from mere caprice." You can easily understand that the profession of Christianity by any of the slaves would be made a reason by their inhuman owners for yet greater barbarities, if possible.

But mark the counsels of grace under these exceptionally bitter circumstances. They are not to plan and plot to cast off their shackles and assert their rights. They are not to give way to sour, sullen, and vindictive feelings, but on the contrary to become patterns of faithful and diligent service. They are to be the more scrupulous to obey their lords in every particular. They are to throw their whole hearts into their work, doing it as unto the Lord and not unto man. They are to avoid being punctilious merely in what meets the master's eye and slovenly in everything else. Such inconsistent conduct may befit menpleasers, but it is a disgrace to Christians who are Godpleasers. Even in the extreme case of slavery, unrighteousness in the master would not excuse unrighteousness in the servant.

What do we find then is given as a safeguard against this menpleasing eyeservice? The elevating and ennobling thought that we serve the Lord Christ. Our work is for the eye of the Lord in heaven, not alone for the eye of the master on earth. Suppose it to be the common drudgery of the most menial of slaves, it should, nevertheless, be done for the Lord of all.

How it brightens and beautifies the daily round of duty to be looking for the approval of Christ! What a difference it makes in posting a ledger, or in planing a cross-grained plank,

or in mastering the conjugation of a difficult verb, to realize that our loving and patient Lord stands at the elbow to mark our efforts and to reward our diligence.

It preserves, too, against the not uncommon fault which the apostle calls "eyeservice." The Christian who is earnestly endeavouring to please the Lord will display as much activity and fidelity behind his employer's back as before his face. He will not idle his time because his master is away, or the foreman is in the next room. Neither will he put an extra polish on the boots he makes, because the soles consist largely of brown paper.

You may say these are trivial matters; but allow me to remind you that there is hardly one of the inspired epistles that does not enforce Christian consistency in such practical details of life; for it is by these ordinary matters that the world judges the believer, and where loyalty to Christ is seen to thoroughly permeate the whole conduct of a Christian it becomes a weightier testimony than the logical argument or the impassioned discourse.

Moreover you cannot *all* be deep thinkers or powerful speakers, but you can all be faithful and consistent lovers. And this responsibility you cannot escape; for Christ "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again". (2 Cor. v. 15).

Let us then not seek to please men, or to please ourselves, but to please Christ. May it be true of us that:—

“ Not to ourselves again,
 Not to the flesh we live;
 Not to the world henceforth shall we
 Our strength, our being give.

No longer is our life
 A thing unused or vain;
 To us, even here, to live is Christ,
 To us to die is gain.

Not to ourselves we live,
 Not to ourselves we die;
 Unto the Lord we die or live;
 With Whom we sit on high."

W.J.H.

Justification by Faith

THE doctrine of justification by faith is expounded with great fulness by the apostle Paul. We find it brought out in his first recorded sermon at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii). In the synagogue there on the sabbath day he preached Christ, as was his wont. He shewed that the word of promise given of old to the fathers, and the voices of the prophets read in their hearing week by week had now been fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Then as an ambassador of Christ he made the gracious declaration that, on account of this fulfilment of promise and prophecy, through this Man they might obtain the forgiveness of sins. Yet blessed as this was, it did not embrace the full extent of the blessing. He proceeded to announce that "by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which," he added, "ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

From this scripture it is apparent that justification is an advance upon forgiveness of sins. It is a blessing in addition to the remission of sins bestowed upon such as believe. The definite teaching of the gospel of grace is that while God (1) forgives sins, He also (2) justifies the sinner.

By forgiveness the guilty soul is released from the consequences of its sins, that is, from their due punishment throughout eternity. But by justification the ungodly, unrighteous person believing in Jesus is reckoned righteous in the sight of God. So that justification gives the soul a standing before God, entitling it to the enjoyment of His favour here in this world.

Now in the matter of justification by faith we have one of those points in which grace so blessedly transcends law. It is in fact utterly impossible for the law to justify man; for its

office is to condemn the guilty, and such, alas! every child of Adam has been proved. Under the law God emphatically said, "I WILL NOT JUSTIFY THE WICKED" (Exodus xxiii: 7). We can readily see that this must be so. For if man takes the ground before God of being awarded according to his deserts, how can he expect to escape? Even among men we reckon that the judge who allows the guilty to go unpunished disgraces the judicial bench. What folly and presumption to expect less from the "Judge of all the earth."

The only case in which law can justify is when the person is innocent of the crime charged. If legal enquiry proves that the prisoner in the dock is perfectly guiltless of the charge made against him, the law is bound to clear him. Such a person leaves the court "without a stain on his character." And in this instance the person may be said to be justified. In a similar sense the Lord may be said to have been justified when Pilate declared from the judgment seat, "I find no fault in this man."

Now it is clear this kind of justification is of no use to sinful men. The law can only justify them if they have done nothing to bring them under its condemnation. But "all have sinned"; and consequently none can escape. Hence it is the triumphant boast of the gospel that it can justify the unjust, which could never be accomplished by the strict administration of the law. Here we have the solution of the ancient problem—How man should be just before God. With man it was impossible, but not so with God. For "now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested . . . which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe." This God has brought in a righteousness of His own providing. Christ has been set forth a propitiation (mercy seat). God's righteousness has been declared. And in direct contrast to the law, the gospel unfolds not only that God is just, but that He is the JUSTIFIER OF HIM WHO BELIEVES IN JESUS.

This constitutes one of the grand foundations of the peace of the soul. I know that the God against Whom I have sinned has undertaken and has accomplished in Christ Jesus my justification. How it rids my soul of every fear! "Who shall

lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. viii: 33, 34). I might well tremble to face the God to Whom I must answer for my sins. But if He becomes my Justifier, of whom shall I be afraid? If God be for me, who can be against me?

But the gospel reveals a further fact. "By him all that believe are justified *from all things.*" While on the one hand I find that the One to Whom I am accountable has declared Himself my Justifier, on the other hand, when I review the dark catalogue of my sins, I am assured that freely by His grace I am "justified from all things." However heinous they may be, however many they may be, by the death and resurrection of Christ I stand before God a justified person—not forgiven only but just.

The difference between justification and forgiveness may be illustrated in the following manner. A servant embezzles his master's money to a large extent. The master finds him out, summons the culprit to his presence, and thus addresses him: "I have discovered your theft, and you are liable to a long imprisonment. But on account of your wife and family I will forgive you and not take legal proceedings against you. But you must leave my service, for you have been following a long course of dishonesty. I cannot allow you to remain in your position of trust, for you are plainly a thief." The man thus escapes the gaol which he deserved, but his character is gone. He is forgiven but not justified; for if he met his old employer in the street he could not look him in the face.

Now God not only forgives the sins, but He justifies the sinner. The sinner who believes is no longer a sinner, but reckoned just, or righteous. Hence the results of justification described in Romans v. "Therefore being justified by faith, (1) we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; (2) by whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and (3) rejoice in hope of the glory of God." We are no longer enemies in our minds by wicked works, but have peace with God. We no longer, as sinners, flee to hide ourselves from His presence, but stand as justified souls in the light and favour of His countenance. We no longer dread the wrath which is to come,

but we anticipate the glory of God which fills the future. So that while forgiveness secures us from hell-fire, justification entitles us to expect to share the glory which is to be revealed.

Justification by faith is not set forth in Scripture as a future thing. On the contrary we read, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (Rom. v: 9). So that it is here and *now*, in this world, we become justified. God means it to be the source of our present confidence and enjoyment. How could we boast in tribulation if we were not justified?

But Scripture is emphatic. "Being *now* justified by his blood." It is the whole point of the apostle's argument that since we are already regarded as righteous men, we need not fear the coming wrath. Wrath is revealed against unrighteousness (Rom. i. 18), so that we are clearly secure. God has wrought for us. He is the Justifier; it is our part to accept by faith, and to rest in assurance upon His word and work, which can never fail.

—*Selected.*

They Made Him a Supper

THE opening paragraph of John xii. brings before us a scene of deepest interest, and full of most precious instruction. We feel we cannot do better than quote at full length the lovely record, for the spiritual benefit of the reader. There is nothing, after all, like the veritable language of holy scripture.

"Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

Here we have illustrated, in the most striking and forcible manner, the three grand features which ought to characterise every Christian and every christian assembly, namely, calm, intelligent *communion*, as seen in Lazarus seated at the table; holy *worship*, as seen in Mary at the feet of her Lord; and loving

service. as seen in Martha, in her activities about the house. All three go to make up the christian character, and all three should be exhibited in every christian assembly. We consider it a very great moral mistake to set any one of these features in opposition to the others, inasmuch as each, in its proper place is lovely; and, we may add, each should find its place in all. We should all of us know what it is to sit at table with our blessed Lord, in sweet communion. This will most assuredly lead to profound homage and adoration; and we may rest assured that, where there is the communion and the worship, there will not be lacking the loving activities of true service.

The reader will observe that, in the above beautiful scene, there is no record of any collision between Martha and Mary. Each had her place to fill. There was room for both. "Jesus loved Martha and her sister." Here Martha is put first. In verse 1, we read of "Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha." Looked at from a divine standpoint, there is no need why any one should in the smallest degree collide with another. And further, we may add, there is no necessity whatever for comparing the sphere of one with that of another. If Christ be our one absorbing object, there will be lovely harmony in action, though our line of things may vary.

Thus it was at Bethany. Lazarus was at the table, Mary at the Master's feet, and Martha was about the house. All was in beautiful order, because Christ was the object of each. Lazarus would have been entirely out of his place had he set about preparing the supper; and if Martha had sat at the table, there would have been no supper prepared. But both were in their right places, and we may rest assured that both would rejoice in the odour of Mary's ointment as she poured it on the feet of their ever-loving and beloved Lord.

Is not all this conveyed to us in that one sentence, "There *they* made him a supper"? It was not one more than another. All had part in the precious privilege of making a supper for the one peerless object of their heart's affections; and, having Him in their midst, each fell naturally, simply, and effectively, into his and her proper place. Provided the beloved Master's heart was refreshed, it mattered not who did this, or who did

that. Christ was the centre and each moved round Him.

Thus it should be always in the assembly of Christians, and thus it would be, if odious self were judged and set aside, and each heart simply occupied with Christ Himself. But, alas! here is just where we so sadly fail. We are occupied with ourselves, and our little doings, and sayings, and thinkings. We attach importance to work, not in proportion to its bearing upon the glory of Christ, but its bearing upon our own reputation. If Christ were our one object—as He surely will be throughout eternity, and ought to be now—we should not care the least who did the work, or who rendered the service, provided His name was glorified, and His heart refreshed.

C.H.M.

God's Faithfulness

IT is a grand thing to be able, come what may, to vindicate God, to stand, even if we can do nothing more, as a monument of His unfailing faithfulness to all who put their trust in Him. What though the horizon around be dark and depressing—though the heavy clouds gather and the storm rage, God is faithful and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it.

The love of God clothes itself in varied forms, and not unfrequently the form seems to us, in our shallowness and shortsightedness, mysterious and incomprehensible. But, if only we wait patiently and in artless confidence, divine light will shine upon the dispensation of divine providence, and our hearts shall be filled with wonder, love, and praise.

We comprehend Him not;
 Yet earth and heaven tell,
 God sits as Sovereign on the throne
 And ruleth all things well."

C.H.M.

Sparkling Gems

Self-pleasing is Satan's service.

* * * * *

Neither the gospel nor the church has a right to our love undividedly, but both in subjection to CHRIST.

* * * * *

To go beyond the written word is to stray and mislead.

* * * * *

JESUS always sees our toils and distresses in this world. We do not see Him and sometimes we think he has forgotten us; but that is never true. He is never indifferent for a moment.

* * * * *

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.

* * * * *

How blessed it is, that in the midst of all the confusion which the devil has wrought, CHRIST sees the treasure of His saints and the beauty of His Church, in spite of all infirmities and failure!

* * * * *

Do you really love CHRIST? Has your heart been touched and attracted by His wondrous love to you? If so, remember that He was cast out by the world. There is no change. The world is the world still.

* * * * *

The words of our LORD JESUS: "I have compassion on the multitude." Our hearts, too, should be compassionate towards the thousands around us who are still in their sins and going on the road to everlasting destruction.

* * * * *

We cannot all be evangelists, but we may all be soulwinners. Try it!

Selected by C. A. Hammond

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