

THE
CHRISTIAN FRIEND

And Instructor.

PAPERS FOR THE COMFORT AND EDIFICATION
OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

JUDE 20.

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THE CHRISTIAN FRIEND.

GOD'S WAYS AND TESTIMONY.*

JEREMIAH ii.

THERE are two distinct points in the ways and testimony of God as regards us; first, faith is the condition of soul in us which, as it is in exercise or otherwise, may either hinder or favour the enjoyment, which habitually the testimony of the word is to give to us. Then in presenting the objects of faith to our souls—the Father's love, the Son's work—the word of God applies itself to the *conscience* and heart; for where the conscience is not in exercise the heart will not be, and all will be hollow. When the affections are dull then self comes in, and I attach these holy affections to myself; for when I am thinking about *my* affections I am thinking about *myself*; but when the conscience is in exercise we are thinking of the object presented, otherwise the heart is turned in upon self, the Lord is forgotten, and weakness ensues. Consequently we sink into a feeble state; but then the word of God presenting the object of faith applies itself to the conscience, bringing that into exercise, and thus the heart is brought back to God.

*. These are unrevised notes, but attention to the important subject of which they treat is earnestly pressed upon the reader. It is of exceeding value at the present moment.—[Ed.]

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There can be no true love to Christ while there is the sense of wrong done; for I cannot love a person I have wronged. What is needed then is the consciousness of the wrong done. "I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." When the conscience is aroused, and the heart is brought into play, we rest in the presence of God. The Spirit of God may humble us on account of what *we have done*, but when conscience is in play it brings out our *whole condition* before God. It is not the law coming in again, but God presenting *Himself*; thus there will be right affections, and the conscience will be in exercise. Self-confidence and self-exaltation in every form are always the effects of an unexercised conscience. Only put a man in the Lord's presence, and that will keep him lowly, and in a spiritual state of discernment; but there is nothing out of which we so easily get as the consciousness of the presence of God. So also in our prayers. You may often be sensible that you go on praying after you have lost the consciousness that you are speaking to God, still the soul goes on expressing itself; even when led by the Spirit the consequence will be that the manner will be all wrong, though the words may be right. Well, though all this be true, whenever the Lord recalls a soul He recalls it to His own presence. He will act on the conscience; He will speak plainly to us. Why? Because He is conscious of the relationship which ought to have produced the conduct befitting the relationship which we have forgotten. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him." When the Lord recalls a soul to Himself He

may reproach it with having *forgotten* the relationship in which it stood to God, and God to it; but He cannot reproach it as *not having known* that relationship. The power of every rebuke is founded on the relationship, and God remembering the relationship acts on the ground of it with all the affections belonging thereto. Thus every rebuke comes to us as the expression of the most wonderful tenderness; and the more deeply we learn that there is no failure in God's affection, the more deeply we lament our short-coming and failure in that relationship which never fails.

God said to Jeremiah, "Go, say in the ears of Jerusalem;" but, alas! Israel would not hear. Now this was most disastrous; but God remembers His relationship to them, and says, in Hosea ii. 16, "In that day thou shalt call me Ishi;" that is, my husband, "and shall no more call me Baali;" that is, my Lord. Evil as their state was, He recalls with all its force and energy the remembrance of their relationship—"Go, cry in the ears of Jerusalem." It is not, "He that hath an ear let him hear," but God goes and speaks in their ears. Oh that He may speak in our ears! When God spake comfortably to Jerusalem then He spake to *the heart*, and that was after chastening; but here He is at another work, speaking in the ears of Jerusalem that they might hear what God had to say to them. He could say—the true Servant—"The Lord God hath opened mine ear" to hear what God had to say to Him, and He was not rebellious, neither turned away back; but Israel "had forsaken Him days without number;" they had done a terrible thing, such as no other nation had done. "Hath a nation changed its gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory

for that which doth not profit." And again, "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." And now that God is sending a message after them, does He say, "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, I remember *thy sins*"? No, but "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." He is recalling what Israel was to God Himself—I remember the outgoings of thy heart toward Me; "I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals."

Now what a thing it was for God to say to Israel, "I have not forgotten what you were to me in the days of thy youth, when the heart first turned to me." In all this we have the same principle as "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations," when they were quarrelling which should be the greatest. And so Israel were always murmuring, thinking their leeks and cucumbers better than God; but God remembers the *principles* on which Israel acted—"When thou wentest after *me* in the wilderness." They got much of this world's goods in Canaan by following God; they got cities that they had not built, wells that they had not digged, palm-trees that they had not planted, and the like. All these things were the consequences of following God; but He does not mention these. But "thou wentest after me in the wilderness, which was a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought, and the shadow of death, a land that no

man passed through, and where no man dwelt;" "thou wentest after *me* in the wilderness, where there was nothing to set your affections on but myself; I *myself* was the whole and sole object of your affections;" and this it was that God remembered. He overlooks all failure, and the condition which God notices is that He Himself was everything to them; and this is what characterizes a heart when first converted to God—the Lord is everything to it. What is the world to that heart? Dross and dung. Everything, cares and pleasures are alike forgotten, everything counted as nothing, except what is found in God Himself. The praises of Israel were freely given—"I will prepare Him an habitation;" "my father's God, I will exalt Him," because they had found Him who was everything to them, and the world and all it had to give a mere nothing.

Now let us look at the other side of the picture, and see the desperately bad state which the heart of Israel had got into, remembering they are but types of us. They were dissatisfied, and cried, "Would to God we had died in Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and ate bread to the full." And again, "Wherefore have you made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us into this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink." In the wilderness there is nothing to see, nothing to look at; and that is what Israel wanted. God says, "I brought you into a plentiful country to eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered ye defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination." They felt their own importance, and forgot the Lord; they had the blessing, and did not want the Lord of the blessing.

And is not this true of the Church of God? We bring in self, which is but a broken cistern, and depart from Him, who is the living fountain and power of blessing, forgetting that "a Syrian ready to perish was my father." Consequently there is moral weakness, and Satan gets power. A believer cannot get back into the world. A mere professor may, and enjoy it; but a Christian cannot. An Israelite could not get back through the Red Sea again. You cannot think of yourselves and the Lord together with satisfaction to your own souls. The Lord's presence in the soul will bring *self* into utter ruin and nothingness. We have only to let the Lord have His place in our souls, and that will put us into our place. If I am walking through the world, shall I find it a wilderness? To be sure I shall; but then I shall not be thinking about the wilderness if the Lord is my joy and strength. Are your hearts saying, This is a land we cannot see? If so, what does that prove? Why, that you are looking for something to see; and this is the thought you will find in your hearts, "*It is a land not sown,*" although you may be ashamed to own it. But God remembered Israel when they thought it worth while to follow God for His own sake. We feel bound to say it is a happy thing to be a Christian; but when we are alone do not our hearts say, "*It is a land not sown*"? If it be so with you, do not rest until the Lord Himself alone satisfies your soul; for you should delight yourself in Him. Lot *saw* a well-watered plain and a city, and then dwelt in it on the earth, and consequently was in the midst of judgment; while Abraham sought a city *out of sight*, and he enjoyed the blessing and comfort of God being with him, go where he might. When the soul is down like a ship when the tide is low, it is in danger of

shoals and sandbanks; but when the tide is up there are no sandbanks, because the ship is lifted up above them all. Thus when the soul is happy in Christ it will go on peacefully, independently of all the trials we may be called to meet with in our fellow-saints. We are called to walk together through the world, and a mere natural fitness will not do for that. No. We can only go on so far as Christ fills the soul; and thus going on in the tide of divine goodness, forgetting everything else, we can walk together happily, being occupied with Christ, and not with each other.

But notwithstanding what Israel was, still God does not forget Israel. And why? Because He remembers her affection in the day of her espousals, "when thou wentest after me in the wilderness." The soul, when occupied with *God alone*, is holiness to the Lord. God says to Israel, "If thou wilt return, return unto me." It is of no use to attempt to set the soul right except it be set right with God. Israel was "holiness to the Lord." Now holiness is not innocence. God is not what we call innocent, but holy. He perfectly separates between evil and good. So Christ Himself when on earth was separated unto God; and when about to depart out of it He says, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth;" for the meaning of the word "sanctify" in this place is separation to God. So it is with the Church of God. She is separated from the world unto God, taken out of creation for Himself, the first-fruits of His increase. There will be a harvest of blessing when Israel and the nations are brought into blessing, but the Church is the first-fruits of God's increase. God remembers this, though the Church may have forgotten it; but if we know what it is to get back

into the *affections* of God, we must enjoy the love that fails not; for God says, "I remember." The soul then apprehends what the Church of God is in the affection of God, and not what it is down here. Christ was the corn broken and bruised, and afterwards the wave-sheaf before God. So the Church is to be in a low and oppressed state, and afterward to be exalted to where Christ is. God will have the whole harvest, but the first-fruits of His increase is that which occupies His affections.

"What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" Have I failed towards you in goodness? What is the matter now? Is the Lord changed? Is He worth less now than when thou wentest after Him in the wilderness? No; but we have got far from Him, and have walked after vanity, and have become vain. We have enjoyed His blessing, and have got fat and kicked, and consequently have fallen down into the weakness and wretchedness of our own hearts. When did the Lord bring up His people? When the very circumstances through which, and into which, He brought them was the proof that *the Lord* was bringing them there; for He brought them into a land of deserts and pits, where they had no need to lean on "a broken reed, whereon if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce it," because they leaned on God Himself. "Neither did thy raiment wax old upon thee, nor thy foot swell, these forty years." And why? Because "the Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange god with him." So was it with Gideon. (Judges vi.) He remembered what God had been to Israel in the day of their espousals, saying, "Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" And the Lord looked upon him, and said, "Go in this thy might." Thus we see that Gideon's remem-

brance of what God was to Israel in the day of their espousals was the secret of his strength. In Gideon was a soul near enough to God to say, "Where is the Lord?" and then what a burden is taken off the heart. Only let us place ourselves before the Lord, and see if He does not come in remembering the day of espousals.

If I am thinking of the cucumbers of Egypt, the wilderness will not suit me; but if I am thinking of the Lord, I shall have no thought at all whether I am in the wilderness or not. The affections of my soul will be going on with God's affection for me; for He ever remembers "the love of thine espousals" when He first revealed Himself to our souls. It is true we may see chastening, but God never forgets the work of grace in our souls. He never forgets "the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals when thou wentest after Him in the wilderness, in a land not sown." And now thou art "holiness to the Lord;" and though God will have His joy in the harvest of the earth, yet thou art the first-fruits of His increase.

J. N. D.

JOTTING.

LUKE xiv. 15.

THE utterance of this man, who had the privilege of sitting at table with the Lord Jesus, seems at first sight to be a very pious reflection; but looking deeper it is seen to be an attempt to turn aside the application of the Lord's words. The Lord, as men speak, had been intensely personal, and many at the table must have felt very uncomfortable; and the speaker comes to their relief. He said, as it were, Let us raise our thoughts to heaven! Souls in a bad state never like the word to reach their conscience.

E. D.

STANDING AND STATE

IN ROMANS I.—VIII.

WE may look on the epistle to the Romans, speaking generally, as a divine treatise on "The Righteousness of God," for which we have abundant cause for praise and thanksgiving. It consists of four parts.

1. After considering the state of men before law, and the common ruin of Jews and Gentiles since the law—and "all" are proved to "have sinned," to be "under sin," and "guilty before God"—the question is, "How can God be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly?" This is fully met by God justifying "freely," or without a cause, by His "*grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus . . . to declare at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*" (Chap. iii. 9, 19, 23-26.) Thus, Christ having in sovereign *grace* died for the ungodly, and fully glorified God about our sins, God has not only in righteousness raised Him up from among the dead who was delivered for our offences, and given Him glory, but He is also just to Christ in counting us righteous for whom He died. In this way the "ungodly" who believe are "justified;" they are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and their faith is reckoned to them for righteousness.

This section of the epistle extends, as has often been noticed, to chap. v. 11. In it we have the righteousness of God *manifested without law, God imputing righteousness without works.* The righteousness of God is *revealed in the gospel*, so that instead of God, as by law, de-

manding righteousness, His righteousness is *declared*, and is "upon all them that believe."

2. The next subject treated of in this marvellous epistle is how God can, consistently with His own righteousness, deliver us from the condemnation to which we were exposed as having an evil nature—sin in the flesh—which was enmity against God, not subject to His law, and connected us with the first man Adam. Here again we find we are delivered by *grace* through the death of Christ, on the principle of *divine righteousness*. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, *God sending His own Son* in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin" [a sacrifice for sin], "*condemned sin in the flesh.*" (Chap. viii. 3.) Thus our *old man* has been crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled. We have died with Christ; we have died out of our Adam-standing, and have, by *grace*, a new life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This section extends from chap. v. 12 to the end of chap. viii. How truly it is said, "Where sin abounded, *grace* did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so *might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life* by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Chap. v. 20, 21.)

3. Another subject is brought before us in chapters ix., x., xi., which shows how God can justly reconcile His dealings and purposes concerning law-breaking, covenant-breaking Israel, and yet fulfil His promises to them as a people connected with David and Abraham. Though they utterly failed under a covenant of works, are at this moment under judicial blindness, and in other ways under Jehovah's governmental wrath because of their sins, yet *divine grace, through righteousness*, will

yet be put forth for their blessing, through the redemption-work of *Him who died for that nation*. "So all *Israel* shall be saved" (all the twelve tribes): "as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." (Chap. xi. 26, 27.) This will be after "the great tribulation" (see Matt. xxiv. 21) of Jehovah's righteous retribution for the rejection of their true Messiah. Thus wisdom, judgment, mercy, and truth will all be established in connection with the nation of Israel's future blessing. God will also be vindicated in all His ways, and righteousness and peace will kiss each other. One of their own prophets referring to this says: "The *work of righteousness* shall be peace, and the *effect of righteousness* quietness and assurance for ever." Again, "In *righteousness* shalt thou be established . . . and *their righteousness* is of me, saith the Lord." (Isa. xxxii. 15-18; liv. 14, 17.) Now God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have *mercy* upon all. But the word of the prophet must be fulfilled, that "*Zion shall be redeemed with judgment.*" Well might an apostle exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His *judgments*, and His ways past finding out!"

4. The remainder of the epistle gives us for the most part instruction and exhortations as to the life and walk of those who are justified and in Christ Jesus, members of one body, and members one of another; and concludes with affectionate apostolic greetings. Even here, the first-mentioned of the moral ways of the kingdom of God is "righteousness." (xiv. 17.)

We have then in this epistle three different aspects

of God's ways of grace to men through righteousness. The first and second sections show His present goodness and blessing to us; first, as sinners, or *what we have done*; and secondly, as having a sinful nature, or *what we are*. The third section, as we have seen, refers to Israel; but in every case blessing is founded on the death of God's own Son, and flows out in grace and mercy through righteousness.

In reference to the first part, where God is seen bringing such wondrous blessing to sinners—men living in sins—through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, the results stated are—

1. As to *standing*, the believer is brought into a new position; for instead of being an enemy, guilty, ungodly, and unrighteous, he is reconciled to God, and justified by God; the righteousness of God is upon him, and he is standing in the favour of God. Such is the standing here brought before us; and the believer enters into the enjoyment of it by faith. "By whom" (our Lord Jesus Christ) "also we have access by faith into this *grace wherein we stand*." (Chap. v. 2.)

2. As to *state*. This also is new, and beyond anything we could have thought. When faith is in exercise on God's truth, he has "peace with God," stands consciously in the favour of God, rejoices in hope of the glory of God, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost has the love of God shed abroad in his heart. Thus his thoughts, affections, enjoyment, and hope are bright, peaceful, and spiritual.

When we come to the second section a very different line of instruction meets us. It is not about what we have done, but about *what we were*, as in Adam. For

the former we needed *forgiveness*, for the latter *deliverance*. For "sins" we have remission, and righteousness is reckoned; but "sin in the flesh"—an evil nature—cannot be forgiven; we can only be *delivered from it* by death, from under the judgment of God. But there is more here than mere deliverance in righteousness, there is the positive "gift" of a new nature—"the gift of God is *eternal life* in Christ Jesus our Lord"—so that the delivered soul has two natures. (Chap. vi. 23; vii. 25.) And more still; for the Holy Spirit is here seen as livingly connecting us with Christ Jesus—"the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus;" so that the believer who was in Adam in the flesh, is now "*not in the flesh, but in the Spirit*"—"in *Christ Jesus*." An experience and walk are necessarily associated with it.

1. As to *standing*, the believer is looked at in a very different character of standing from what we saw in chap. v., because of the *additional* blessings here made known. He is no less a justified person, an object of divine grace and reconciliation, standing in the favour of God, and having the Holy Ghost, than he was in chap. v.; but *besides all these wondrous blessings*, he is IN CHRIST JESUS, IN THE SPIRIT, and therefore NOT IN THE FLESH; though the flesh is still in him, and he is enjoined to mortify (not the body, but) the deeds of the body through the Spirit. *It is the fixed, unalterable standing of the believer in the One who is the other side of death and judgment, and alive for evermore.* "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." It is true we do not find the Spirit using the word "stand" here as in chap. v., but we have the fact so fully stated, that the believer is no longer looked at as in Adam, or described as in the

flesh, but as *in Christ Jesus*. The believer's position then is in Christ Jesus.

2. As to *state*, besides peace, joy, hope of glory, and God's love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit as in chap. v., we have freedom from the dominion of sin, deliverance from self, spiritual power, and a known relationship of children; we have a divine Leader, and a divine Helper in prayer; we know that God is for us, that all things work together for our good, and, though in present groaning and suffering, are looking for the redemption of the body. We are not only set where there is *no condemnation*, but are associated in life and love with Christ, from whom there is *no separation*. Such, more or less, is *the state* of the believer who knows deliverance through and in Christ Jesus.

It may be, however, that such spiritual power, liberty, and enjoyment will not be known unless the soul has in some measure learnt *experimentally* what he is, in his nature as a child of Adam, and on the authority of God's word, sees that God has delivered him. We say in some measure; for the sense of these things is always being deepened in those who walk in the truth. When the soul knows that in his flesh dwells nothing good, that it is capable of everything bad, that putting it under law only brings out its opposition to God, and with all his desires for good he has no power over it, then, after continually struggling against it, he is forced to the conclusion that the only way it could be dealt with was by death and judgment. Then, recalling to mind the work of the cross and His resurrection, he can say, "*I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I;*" and he now finds that all his *resources* are in a triumphant and

glorified Saviour, and that the Holy Spirit is his *power* for all godliness.

It is not absolutely necessary that he should be in the truth of chap. v. before he knows his standing as in chap. viii. 1, though it is perhaps the usual course. It is possible that he may see at first from the truth of God that he is in Christ Jesus; and if so, he will not know the power of this deliverance till afterwards, when the *experience* of what he is in the flesh casts him upon the redemption and deliverance God hath wrought for him in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We speak of being delivered *experimentally*, because it is a real emancipation from the principle of sin and death, from sin as a master, from our first Adam standing, and a conscious freedom and power to serve and honour the Lord. We are *set free* from the law of sin and death, notwithstanding it is still true that in us—that is, in our flesh—dwelleth no good thing; and, though having the first-fruits of the Spirit, we groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

It is well to bear in mind that deliverance may be accepted as a *doctrine* without deliverance being really known, except so far as informing the mind about it. We believe it is often the case. When this deliverance is known *experimentally*, such habitually take their new *position* as in Christ Jesus on approaching God, and “*walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*”

We must be careful, however, that we do not confound *experience* with *standing*. Paul was as much “a man in Christ” when buffeted on this earth by Satan as when he was in the third heaven. Nor should we confound *doctrine* with *experience*, though we generally accept doctrine before we have experience. There are, however,

some who enjoy much liberty of soul (for they are so occupied with Christ that the Spirit is not grieved) who have but little knowledge of doctrine. They have great nearness to God by knowing Christ their righteousness. Intelligence is not faith. It is by faith we understand, and it is by faith we have peace and joy. Experience, however otherwise useful, never gives peace with God; for peace has been made. We are justified by faith, reconciled, and delivered through Jesus Christ. God is our Justifier, Reconciler, Deliverer, and Glorifier, and to Him be everlasting praise.

Romans viii. is proper Christian experience. May the Lord give us to know it better! It is founded on redemption accomplished, peace made, the believer justified by the blood, reconciled to God, and reckoned righteous; having died with Christ, and now alive in Christ, and having the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him. It is, however, blessed to know that every one who is contemplated in chap. v. as justified by God and having the Holy Ghost, is also in Christ Jesus, as spoken of in chap. viii., *whether he knows it or not*. In chap. v. we have what God has done for us wholly outside ourselves, save giving us the Spirit; and in chaps. vii. and viii. it is God showing how he delivers a distressed soul under law, ready to despair on account of what he finds *in himself*, bringing him deliverance through his having died with Christ; thus judicially setting him aside altogether as a man in the flesh, and giving him a totally new standing the other side of death and judgment "in Christ Jesus." The difference between chaps. v. and viii. is not, therefore, one of attainment, but the way God in grace through righteousness has met every believer as to "sins" and "sin."

Well might the devoted apostle, after tracing out for us these mercies of God, say, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost!"

H. H. S.

THE LORD'S ROLL-CALL.

"The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God."—1 THESS. iv. 16.

O JESUS, come descending
 For saints that sleep in Thee,
 When Thou wilt change the living
 To immortality!

Aye, for the Captain's roll-call,
 Its trumpet-shout is come,
 His double-hosts to gather
 In one assembly home.

The rapture-morn is breaking
 Unclouded, bright and fair;
 His waiting ones are ready
 To meet Him in the air.

"Himself," with shout descending,
 Fulfils His faithful Word,
 To fetch His saints to glory,
 "For ever with the Lord."

"Caught up," for His adorning
 In beauty to excel;
 "Caught up," with shouts exulting,
 In unity to dwell.

"Together" there assembled
 "Together" round Him throng,
 With transport ever singing
 The never-ending song.

C. F. C.

"MY TIMES ARE IN THY HAND."

PSALM xxxi. 15.

THE text at the head of this paper is from a psalm (xxxi.) in which the Spirit of Christ leads the soul into thorough confidence in the Lord, and that on the ground of righteousness. Mercy too being rejoiced in, and God known as a God of truth, everything is trusted with the Lord—"my spirit" (v. 5), "my times." (v. 15.) Trials were there—fightings without, and fears within; but the One who is trusted "has known my soul in adversities," and in the sense that all is in His hands, the one who trusts has the present assurance of the goodness that is laid up for the faithful, and the hopes in Jehovah are strengthened and encouraged. (v. 24.)

Passing on to Psalm xxxii., we have the blessedness of a forgiven sinner. Not only does the exercised soul turn to the Lord as to the only confidence in the midst of times and troubles, but in this psalm he learns to unburden his heart to Him in the confession of sin—the heart is emptied out to the Lord, and the burning fever within is assuaged by the forgiveness of transgressions and iniquity. Jehovah is known now as a hiding-place, instead of One to be hidden from. There is no fear where this is realized that the rest in "the secret of His presence" (Psalm xxxi. 20) can be disturbed from within or from without. Jehovah compasses him about with songs of deliverance, instructs and leads him intelligently, and if necessary with bit and bridle. Trusting in the Lord, mercy shall compass

him about, and in true uprightness of heart there is gladness and shouting for joy.

Psalm xxxiii. takes up this joy; for it is not joy in self, or in circumstances, but in the Lord (comp. Phil. iv.), and for the first time in the Psalms we have "a new song." The saint had been compassed about with songs of deliverance by the Lord; but God Himself is now become the object of rejoicing and song. Not that this new song yet rises higher than the time-scene of this earth; but the great thing in it is that Jehovah is known and praised. Two special things are here celebrated—His word and His works (v. 4); His righteousness, and His goodness or mercy. (v. 5.) True the scene around is full of the counsels of man—Psalm ii. 2 tells us to what a height they rise; but the heart is not occupied with that, but with the Lord; His word is right, His works are truth. The heavens, the sea, the earth bear witness. He has counsels too as to His own creation, as to that which when He spake it was done, when He commanded it stood fast. Shall not they be carried out? Faith rejoicing in the Lord can say that the counsel of the heathen shall be brought to nought, and the devices of the people be made of none effect, but "the counsel of the Lord standeth *for ever*: the thoughts of His heart *to all generations*." It is this "for ever" which we may see spoken of in Eccles. iii. 14; and whatever may be the present apparent prosperity of the counsels of man, underlying it all we may be sure there is the work that God maketh from beginning to end. In Matt. xiii. 24-30 we see the outward effect of the enemy's work; but in Mark iv. 26-29 we have described this underlying work done by the Son of man. Seed is cast into the ground, "times" of sunshine

and storm doubtless pass over it, and it is as if the sower should sleep and rise night and day; but the seed springs and grows he knoweth not how, but eventually the fruit is brought forth, and the harvest comes. It is the work which God maketh from beginning to end.

The heart being thus assured that the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the Spirit of God passes on in verse 12 to the happiness of those whose God is this Jehovah—of being the people whom He has chosen. He had purposes about them. They were to be His inheritance for the earth (even as the Church learns what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints who are associated with Him who is in the heavens, and in whom everything is to be headed up both in heaven and on earth). He took notice of all that was going on among men as He looked down from heaven; He saw the place of *their* confidence; but His eye was resting upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy. Not only do they know Him, but He knows them. (Comp. John x. 14; Gal. iv. 9.) They are the objects of His care, and learn, while He allows men for a time to use His creation according to their own counsels, to *wait* for the Lord as well as to trust in Him—their help and shield. Thus while the heart rejoices in Him, trusting in His holy name, the *patience of hope* is produced in the soul. The "times" are running on, and they form the epoch between the declaration of the counsels of the Lord and their fulfilment, during which the counsels of men are sought to be established. These the Lord will eventually frustrate and bring to nought, so that the thoughts of His heart may stand to all generations. During these

times faith is tried, a trial much more precious than of gold that perisheth, and the soul is exercised and chastened, and taught to wait for the Lord. How blessed to know there is One who passed through them perfectly, who could say, as come to do the will of God, "In waiting I waited for the Lord!" (Ps. xl. 1.) In perfect patience He waited until from the depth of sorrows He was heard, and brought up out of them with a new song in His mouth, even praise unto *our* God.

It is this One who speaks in Ps. xxxiv. He is passing through the times in which He accomplished the will of God, and during which He attached to Himself those who, according to Ps. xvi., were the excellent of the earth—the saints who, however feebly, were walking in the path of faith into which He in grace had entered, so that He might be with those in whom He had found His delight. "He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one." He it is who goes before the sheep when He leads them out. It is in the hearing of these companions—the humble who hear Him and are glad—that He thus speaks: "I will bless the Lord *at all times*; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." Prophets and kings had desired to hear such things (Luke x. 24) as the disciples listened to "at that time." When standing by they heard Jesus say, in the hour of His rejection, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." It was at a time when city after city which had witnessed His mighty works refused to listen, and yet how perfectly does He "praise, bearing witness to

His Father," because it was "well pleasing in His sight." What perfect bowing to His good pleasure! He knew the Father, whose good pleasure it was to carry out His ways by hiding these things from the wise and prudent—those who found their sphere in the present, and by revealing them to babes. Knowing thus the Father's mind, He invites the weary and heavy-laden—those who found that in the present scene "all things are full of labour," to come to Himself, where they would find His rest as this meek and lowly One. Those who thus found His company are the humble of Ps. xxxiv., who hear Him and are glad. Personally they are weak and feeble, and He knows it; and oft-times on earth He had to say to them, "O ye of little faith." And yet what company was like His? It had such attraction that it made Thomas say to his fellow-disciples, "Let us also go that we may die with Him." The attraction and the affection were there, though the flesh was weak; for as they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, though Jesus went before them, "they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid." (Mark x. 32.) He had to speak to them of the times of suffering and rejection that He must pass through ere the time of rest and glory could be reached. It was necessary for the very maintenance of that glory that it should be so; but they were dull of hearing, and "understood none of these things." (Luke xviii. 34.) Still it was *His* path, because it was the Father's will; and if they would go after Him they must take up the cross and follow.

We, as they, often fail to apprehend the holiness and righteousness, as well as the graciousness and mercy, of the ways of God. In His holy government

it is right that man should reap, even in the present, that which he sows. The history of Israel develops these ways of His holy government. For ages they had been sowing to the flesh and turning their backs to God, and they had to receive at His hand double for all their sins. Moreover, they were guilty of refusing the One who had come in grace to bear their griefs and carry their sorrows. Mercy was thus rejected when it came to them in God's "Mercy One" (Ps. lxxxix. 19), and His lips, that spake such gracious words that all wondered, had to utter, "Woe to thee! woe to thee!" (Matt. xi.); and while He wept, to foretell Jerusalem's coming desolation because she knew not the time of her visitation. She would be trodden down of the *Gentiles* according to the word of God, and Jesus Himself be delivered to *them* to be put to death, so completely did He enter into the sorrows and pathway of His people, whose sins obliged Jehovah to give the dearly beloved of His soul into the hand of her enemies. It is not of atonement that we are now speaking, well as we know that it was accomplished in the death of Jesus on the cross, where He did the will of God in that body which was prepared for Him, but of the ways of wisdom, by which He so orders that man should prove himself to be both a transgressor and a rejecter of God Himself in grace, notwithstanding all His long-suffering and patience, and by which He also displays Himself in His own unchangeable nature and character, while He manifests that He has no compromise with evil even in His own people more than in the ungodly. With the latter His long-suffering will finally give way to judgment, after all His dealings to exercise the conscience and attract the heart have been of no avail, judgment which

at the last will be full and final. By these same dealings the saints are taught to discern good and evil while they endure them as chastening for their profit, that they might be partakers of His holiness.

In Caleb and Joshua we learn how the saints may have to pass through the times during which God thus displays His ways and vindicates His character; but they become the opportunity by which God is better known to them, and the power of faith increased by its exercise. Thus Joshua is taught to be strong and very courageous, so that he may lead the people at last into the land with cities walled up to heaven; and Caleb attains a power of faith by which he takes possession of the inheritance on which his feet had trodden with a vigour unabated by forty years of wandering. God was better known to each as the One who had *delight in His people*, as well as in the confidence and faithfulness of an individual saint.

While thus learning God we taste His compassions; for He knows our frame, He remembers we are dust, and He gives strong consolation to those whose eyes rest on the Forerunner who has gone before as the Leader and Completer of faith. He entered into the pathway through these "times," and walked in it in the perfection of faith in His Father and in obedience to His will even to death. We see, in Zechariah xiii. 5, how Messiah was brought by man into the same position in which he was as a tiller of the ground—a servant—and also into the place of death in the house of His friends. Man was in those circumstances, and Jesus entered into them in grace, thus to become, in the perfection of His own walk in the midst of them, the sustainer of the hearts of those who were there. He

could say to them, "Take my yoke, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls"—rest in being in company with Him, and learning to be of His spirit. "To say "I will bless the Lord at all times" would otherwise prove to be difficult, the words would tremble on our lips; but in company with Him, though realizing our own weakness, we hear them uttered by Him, and taste the marvellous grace which bids us join with Him in magnifying the Lord: "O magnify the Lord *with me*, and let *us* exalt His name *together*." Thus have we the privilege of being in company, in spirit, with One who ever turned to His Father; of hearing Him say, "I thank thee, Father," and for our encouragement in the needed exercises of these "times." "I sought the Lord, and He heard me;" and again, "*This poor man* cried, and the Lord heard." Hearing such words, He directs our hearts to His own refuge; and thus "*they*" (His companions) "looked unto Him" (Jehovah, for us the Father) "and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed." We respond to His invitation, "O taste and see that the Lord is good," and learn the blessedness of trusting in Him; or, as Peter puts it, for those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, "Unto you therefore *which believe* He is precious," or "is the preciousness" of God's chief cornerstone.

The present government of God has thus its effect in producing the state of heart and spirit which the Lord can be nigh unto. (v. 18.) No sorrow can go further than He pleases; for "my times are in thy hands." It was needful that every wave of sorrow should dash against the blessed Lord, all must roll over Him, that, as Captain of salvation, He might be made perfect

through sufferings, but not one that was not needed for the accomplishing of all things. He whose Spirit in the prophets of old had written of these sufferings was now passing through them, and when all were accomplished that His Spirit had foretold He could say, "It is finished" (John xix. 28); and then not a bone of Him was broken. (John xix. 36.) "Many may be the afflictions of the righteous," yet personally he is kept. "He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken;" and through delivering mercy it will be testified—

"Garments fresh and foot unwearied
Tell how God hath brought thee through."

Yes; the Lord is gracious. Israel will by these palms learn in their times of sorrow the deep sympathy of the Spirit of Christ, and be sustained by the knowledge of unchanging love—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. xxxi. 3)—when Jehovah allureth them again into the wilderness, and teaches them to sing there. How much more do we know that same eternal love, made known to us in the Son!

The Church too, as well as the individual, has her "times" of sorrow. Rev. ii. and iii. show us the "times" which pass over her, and it is well if, in the light of the searching eyes of the Son of man, any are awakened to know the times, and "learn what Israel ought to do. (1 Chron. xii. 32.) It is not to set up a sign that which has failed, but, in the sense of failure, to understand that these times also are "in thy hands." There we can rest, holding fast that we have (through His grace) until He comes, in whom, as the faithful and true witness, all will yet be brought out in glory at His appearing, which in its own "times" He shall show

who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

It is on the ground of atonement that this blessed "for ever" can take place. To that, as to all God's works, "nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." The smiting of Jehovah's fellow, and the hiding of God's face, when the holy soul of Jesus was made an offering for sin, form the basis of these ways of God, and of the work that He maketh from beginning to end, until all issues in a new heaven and a new earth, where the former things are passed away, and God's "for ever" takes the place of times and seasons.

T. H. R.

JOTTING.

GEN. xlix. 22.

JOSEPH is a well-known type of Christ; but it is not every reader of the Bible who delights to trace out the application and fulfilment of the type. Take, for example, John iv. 6. Why is it mentioned, "Now Jacob's well was there"? Surely to arrest our attention in some special way; and Gen. xlix. 22 discovers the secret. Joseph, we read, is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough *by a well*, whose branches run over the wall. In this wearied Man, therefore, who in that noontide heat sat by the well of Sychar, we see the true Joseph; and even while we gaze upon Him we behold His branches running over the wall of Judaism, and reaching, with their goodly fruit, this poor woman of Samaria. And if not actually, yet morally (for this characterizes this gospel), the archers had sorely grieved Him, and shot at Him, and hated Him; but His bow abode in strength, etc., as is shown by the deliverance He wrought that day for this poor captive of Satan.

E. D.

"THE LOVE OF CHRIST, WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE."

EPH. iii. 14-21.

IN the prayer in chap. iii. the apostle loses himself, as it were, and no wonder. After he has said, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," he adds, "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love" (that is what God is, the Divine nature), "may be able to comprehend with all saints" (taking in the whole unity in which the Holy Ghost dwells), "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height"—he has now got into the infinitude of all God's thoughts and purposes of blessing, and he cannot say of what. Just as the groanings could not be uttered, so the thought cannot be uttered. It is God that has come in, and Christ fills all things, according to the power of redemption, from the throne of God down to the dust of death, and from the dust of death up to the throne of God. Having all things, and filling all things (he says), here he is placed in the midst of this infinitude; and then he adds, "and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." He could go to no place but there he found infinite love and power, the love that brought Christ down, and the power that took Christ up again.

This meets all the exercises of the heart. If brought down even as Christ came down, into the dust of death, the Holy Ghost comes down to the poor man who feels

this power of death in his soul, and dwells in him, and carries him up by the knowledge of redemption into all the fulness of God Himself.

Well, that, beloved, is the result of the dwelling of the Holy Ghost down here, consequent upon redemption accomplished by Christ. The Holy Ghost can come and bring peace to our souls, and the effect of that peace to our souls is to make us pass through all the evil around "according to the power of God." When the apostle speaks to Timothy, he says, "Be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." Where shall we stop? The soul rejoices in that which must be the joy and gladness of the heart that knows God has come down to dwell in it—the immutable blessedness of God's presence. Then, whatever the circumstances in which we are placed, if they be only those of sorrow and trial, what is the consequence? God ministers of the fulness of the sympathy of His love to our souls; and thus they become, so to speak, as a door or a chink to let in God. All the riches, "the unsearchable riches of Christ," are ours, and Christ fills everything. There is not anything we can think of but we find there of the fulness of Christ. If we think of death, we see Christ there; of sin, we do not know what sin is fully until we see Christ "made sin;" of God, it is only in Christ we can know God; of man, it is only in Christ we can see man raised to the height of his blessing; of peace, it is through Christ we know the peace of God; of life, Christ is our life; of glory, it is all in Christ. There is not anything, no matter what we think of, whether in creation or above it, or between God and man, but we must think of Christ in it all. He is the "head of His body, the Church, which is the fulness of

Him that filleth all in all." We can turn our thoughts to no one thing in which we do not find the fulness of Christ; and by the power of the Holy Ghost our souls are brought into the joy of this fulness, as that to which we are, through living union with Him, everlastingly and perfectly united.

There is another point which I have not touched upon, the practical effect of this. What would the effect be on our souls if we really felt we were builded together, &c., if we felt that in the whole world Christians were in truth the dwelling-place of God? What a thought should we have to act upon as to everything! That by which the church of God has been corrupted, ordinances and the like, would disappear as clouds before the presence of the sun. And what thoughts of glory should we have, what thoughts of holiness, what peace as to practical circumstances, what jealousy of grieving the Holy Ghost, what love toward all saints, what joy, what confidence! How we should (not in pride, but in the sense that God was there) mock at all our enemies (Isa. xxxvii. 22, 23), how live and act among men as "sons" and "heirs" of God! What power for everything, in short, would be ours if we remembered the completeness, the peace-giving completeness, of redemption, and could really say that God was dwelling with us!

This is our portion, and whatever our weakness and infirmity (and, alas! it is very great), whatever our failure, still it remains true. We may grieve the Spirit, we may weaken the consciousness of our joy, but still God is with us. The Holy Spirit dwells among us.

May the Lord give us to know and to own what this presence of God in the earth, and that with men, is by reason of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

J. N. D.

ON TRACING THE ACTINGS AND LEADINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

It is an interesting question, and one that sets a certain other question at rest, Ought we not to distinguish between the actings of the Holy Ghost in the world generally and His actings in the midst of the separated people of God?

I see the Spirit of God testifying to God's thoughts of such a separated company, and acting in them, in Mal. iii. "They spake often one to another . . . for they feared the Lord, and thought upon HIS NAME." Was not that of the Spirit? However far away Israel might have been as to the knowledge of the mind of God at that moment, there was no mixture among them; they had the same desire and object. There was no stranger among them; they *knew each other well*, this is evident, and they were in Israel just what Israel should have been as a whole among the nations; viz., "The people shall dwell *alone*, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Such words described this little company, and the Spirit of God tells of God's delight in them as His "jewels."

I see them again, and the Spirit of God drawing attention to them, in Luke ii. There was Anna, and Simeon, and those that "looked for redemption in Jerusalem." There was distinct action of the Holy Ghost among them. As to Simeon the "*Holy Ghost* was upon him." "It was revealed unto him *by the Holy Ghost*" about the coming One, and again Simeon "came *by the Spirit* into the temple." And Anna came in at

the same moment. There was this special favour of God shown to them, that they were instructed and brought into fellowship with His mind and purposes at that moment, a moment of especial interest with Him as to this world. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. They learnt it from Himself. It was a wondrous moment, one that stands alone in the history of this world, when God was bringing in the second Man the Lord from heaven, and the favour of learning His mind about *Him* was theirs, and that little company to whom they belonged, "who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Who can over-estimate the wondrous *favour* of being thus brought at any time into a knowledge of the present thoughts and purposes of God?

But while this was the action of the Holy Ghost towards this little separated company, the "poor of the flock," He was at the same time acting elsewhere, and entirely apart from them. John the Baptist was to be the vessel whom the Spirit would use in another work, and John was "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." It was not the *secrets* of the Lord that were to be revealed to him in the same way as to the little remnant; for John had to confess, "I knew Him not." But there was to be a mighty *public* wave of blessing for Israel, that was to prepare the way of the coming Messiah; and this wondrous wave of blessing, which reached even the throne of the heathen king, was as much the work of the Spirit of God as was the song of praise and thanksgiving raised by old Simeon, when he held in his arms Him whom by revelation he knew as "The Salvation" of Israel—**GOD'S SALVATION.**

There may be a similar public work of the Spirit just prior to our Lord's second coming. But notice the effect of being thus brought into communion with the present mind of God. It is quietness, contentment, satisfaction. Simeon desired NOTHING MORE; and Anna's work thenceforward was but to speak "of Him" wherever a hearing ear was found in Jerusalem. But these quiet, contented, satisfied ones, the feeble few who possessed by special instruction of the Holy Ghost the present "secret of the Lord," are *not* made the instruments of the *public* activity of the Holy Ghost in the land; but John is, as we have observed, and it was a wondrous and stirring moment of God's activity: "Then went out to meet him [John] Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan." Pharisees and Sadducees, publicans and soldiers, the real and the unreal, the "generation of vipers" and those who boasted, "We have Abraham to our father," all were moved; for God was moving among His people, and who could resist Him? But what was the testimony? It was but for them to *prepare* for Him, whom this little company *had already got*; John's testimony being the need of the confession of sins, and baptism unto repentance, and of *the Coming One*, who was to baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. I have no doubt that *they* bowed to the testimony too, and so far went with Israel in this public movement; but they had already more, even Himself, and the deep, deep satisfaction and contentment and joy that He gave, which Simeon's thanksgiving and Anna's expressed; and did it diminish as He lived and walked before them day by day, God's Christ, revealed to them as such by the Holy Ghost?

When drawn to Him, there is ever this in the true heart that contemplates Him, an increased binding of bonds that can never break; and Peter's simple testimony, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life," will answer this question as to whether their delight in Him diminished.

I might also have drawn attention to Paul, the "prisoner of the Lord." The especial depository of the mind of God as taught of the Spirit (1 Cor. ii. 13) at this apostle was, he was shut up in a prison at Rome, whence we have received those wondrous epistles (the dictates of the Holy Ghost), Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Hebrews. But in the *public* testimony (save in the palace, I suppose) the apostle had then no share; yet it went on, and he rejoiced that it did: "Nevertheless, Christ preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." In it too—*i.e.* in the public testimony—at that time Peter and John and others had their share; but to none of them was unfolded the *secrets* of the mind of God as to Paul, as Peter himself will admit (1 Peter iii. 16), and as their own writings prove. It was his wonderful solace to know that the Lord stood with him. Here again then the actings of the Holy Spirit in the world generally, and His actings to a faithful servant, have to be distinguished, and not confounded.

In view of what has been here said, I cannot expect to see but a *separated* people or a *separated* servant to be instructed in the *present* mind of God, and it appears to me that it has been always so: "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel." "If thou take forth the precious

from the vile, then *thou shalt be as my mouth.*" God is sovereign, and in a day of ruin like the present (and it is this as to the Church and the truth in the hands of man) He can work, and does, by whom He will. But we must not depart from obedience and the Word. The question set at rest, as I said at the beginning (if these things *are* so, as to which we must "search the Scriptures"), is, Why does not the Lord use us more in His public testimony in this world? There are new movements of the Spirit of God in the world—salvation armies, gospel armies, and the like. The believer should *rejoice* that "Christ is preached," and that the Holy Ghost is working in this world in this way. But if in a day of ruin we have not both these actings of the Spirit carried on through us, then I covet, for myself and for others with whom God has been pleased to associate me, to be more distinctly of that separated and *satisfied* company to whom He has revealed His *present* mind, rather than to be the more public and apparently more used instrument who is not of that company, but who is as much USED of the Spirit in a *public* sphere (and one must remember it, though not in it) as the others are blessed in a private one.

H. C. A.

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS.

"THE Church's testimony is to a *rejected* as well as to a crucified Lord. His death is to be guarded and witnessed as under *man's* hand, as well as under God's—under God's for the relief of the sinner or the conscience—under man's for the separation of the saints from the world that really accredits that act of man's hand?"

"It is the general deepening of spiritual affection we need in the midst of us, more chastened hearts to give place and liberty, in the absence of nature, to the things of the kingdom of God. The lip watched, the thought watched, the pen watched, and all the instruments and agencies of nature watched, that the Spirit may find in each of us a freer vessel for Himself. But we may be sure we must *wait for perfection*. Had Lot walked separately, his daughters might have been wives of Abraham's seed, instead of mothers of Ammonites and Moabites."

"GORY in a *crucified* Christ will not, if alone, be the perfect thing of this age, there must be *companionship* with a *rejected* Christ also. I am thinking that *Babylon* may be brought to glory in a crucified Christ; that is, there may be much evangelic truth confessed in systems which will be judged at Babylon. For what is Babylon? Is it not a thing faulty or worldly in conduct, as well as delirious in doctrine? The seventeenth and eighteenth of Revelation gives me a sight of Babylon in its *worldly* iniquity, much more than in its idolatries. She may preach Christ *crucified*, but she is not in fellowship with Christ. *Rejected*—she does not continue with Him in His temptations. Is not the rejection of Christ the great *practical* thought for this moment?"

J. G. B.

In times of difficulty faith does not show itself in the magnificence of the result, but in love for God's work, however little it may be, and in the perseverance with which it is carried on through all the difficulties belonging to this state of weakness.

SUITED MINISTRY.

1 PETER ii. 2; 1 COR. iii. 2; HEB. v. 11-14.

WHAT is the suited ministry for believers generally at the present time?

A scripture often cited in answer to this question is in 1 Peter: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." (Chap. ii. 2.) It is contended by many that this means that "milk" is the suited aliment for the young believer. To say nothing of the character of the word used (albeit it is very difficult of translation), the point in the scripture is simply that just as new-born babes desire milk, the believer should long for the word of God. It is, first, a question of appetite; and secondly, it tells us that as milk is the proper food for the new-born babe, so is the word of God for the saint. This is what the Spirit of God teaches by this scripture, and this is the more evident if we add the words, which are now generally accepted as a part of revelation (see New Translation),—"that we may grow thereby *up to salvation.*" It is thus by feeding upon the word of God that we grow, and continue to grow, up to complete salvation.

If we now turn to another passage we shall obtain further light upon our subject. The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and

strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as [according to] men?" (1 Cor. iii. 2, 3.) It is clear in this case that the apostle fed these believers with "milk" because of their bad condition; that he deplored the necessity for doing so; and that had they been responding more fully to God's grace and love in redemption he would have fed them with "meat," and not with "milk." To assume, therefore, that the saints need "milk" is to proceed upon the supposition that they are in a Corinthian state; and to make provision for it is even to foster the condition which all should deplore. We learn moreover that the ministry suited to one assembly may be entirely unsuited to another; and the question may well be pressed home at such a moment upon the hearts of teachers, whether there has been the sufficient exercise of spiritual discernment, as to the state of souls, as a guide to their ministry. Nothing is plainer than that it would be an utter mistake to deal out Ephesian truth to a Corinthian assembly, or Corinthian truth to an Ephesian assembly.

Another scripture may be adduced to aid us in our investigation. Commencing to speak of Melchizedek, the apostle turns aside to add, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving the prin-

ciples of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." (Heb. v. 11-14; vi. 1.)

There are several points here which need very earnest attention. The apostle mourns over the saints' inability to receive the truth he had to communicate. When for the time they had been Christians they might have been teachers, it was necessary to go back to the elements of truth; for they had *become such* as had need of milk—proof that they were unskilful in the use of the Word, and had become dwarfed in their growth. They were babes still, and hence the fervent exhortation with which chap. vi. opens. In a word, these dear saints were unwilling to go forward; and who that had the mind of Christ could be satisfied with such a condition? What teacher could calmly accept their state, and go on feeding them with milk, as if nothing more were necessary?

Surely we do well to attend to these solemn warning words; for might they not be addressed with equal reason to many believers in this day? Are there not hundreds—nay, thousands—who never care for anything beyond the gospel? Sad were it indeed if any saint of God ceased to have fellowship with the glad tidings of the grace of God. That which occupies the heart of God Himself may well occupy the hearts of His people. But this does not involve our feeding on nothing but the gospel or the simplest elements of the truth. By no means; for we need Christ in every character, aspect, and office in which He is presented; and if we fail to recognize this, we shall speedily become as dwarfed as were these Hebrew believers.

It will certainly be replied, "But remember how many newly-converted souls there are. These are truly babes,

and would you not feed these with 'milk'?" The word of God is our only guide, and we have two instances at least of the way in which the Spirit of God ministers to such. The epistles to the Thessalonians were written soon after the Church there had been formed—both probably within a year after the saints had been turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. (1 Thess. i. 9, 10.) And what do we find? In the first epistle we have the return of our blessed Lord presented in every variety of aspect, and this too distinguished from His coming to the world, besides a deal of practical instruction for the building up of these saints on their most holy faith. In the second the apostle still goes further, and teaches the full character of the appearing of Christ, the truth of the man of sin, the blessed fact that the Church must be caught away from this scene before this son of perdition is revealed, &c. Now these can scarcely be termed elementary subjects; but they were intended for the instruction and comfort of these "babes," and were indeed necessary to them for the understanding of Christianity.

We have another example in John's first epistle. Dividing the whole family of God into fathers, young men, and babes, in what manner does he address this last class, the youngest of God's children? "Little children," he commences, "it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come," &c. (Chap. ii. 18.) He then proceeds to point out the danger arising from antichrist's having already appeared. He puts them on their guard by giving the marks of *the* antichrist, and leads them to the source of their safety in their having the unction of the Holy One and the word of God. It

is, in fact, a remarkable correspondence with the teaching of Paul in 2 Thessalonians.

Here then we have divine wisdom to guide us in teaching "babes." They must be nourished with the word of God; they must be fortified against danger by the revelations and warnings which it provides; and they must have a whole Christ—Christ in all that He is in Himself, in all that He is to God, and in all that He is to them, unfolded—that they may grow thereby up to salvation. This is a very different thing from occupying them with questions and controversies instead of Christ; and it may be added, that the maintenance of simplicity in the manner of instruction is entirely consistent with leading souls on in the knowledge of their portion in Christ, as well as of the dangers of their path. We hesitate not to say, that the falling away of so many young converts, and the yielding of many more to the influences of the world, may be traced back, in many instances, to our failure in supplying them with suited food. Knowing scarcely anything beyond the forgiveness of sins, they have little interest in the Scriptures, and thus the means of their growth and safety are neglected.

The doctrinal order of the epistles enforces the same lesson. Romans would undoubtedly be called the elementary epistle, but how many stop at chap. v. 1? And how many learn the truth of chap. vi.? Or if they learn it doctrinally, are there not many who never pass through chap. vii. experimentally, so as to enter upon the enjoyment of the wealth of blessing contained in chap. viii.? But Colossians is a stage beyond Romans, and Ephesians is, once again, beyond Colossians; and certain it is that a Philippian Christian cannot be seen

in this world without having learnt the truth of the first epistles named. Are these divine treasures then to be for ever withheld from the saints? Are we to surrender, even for the babes, the truth of death and resurrection with Christ? If so, the foundations of Christianity are gone, and we shall easily—and speedily—fall back to Jewish ground and to a Jewish experience.

May the Lord make us all, whatever our stage of growth, increasingly desirous of following after, if that we may apprehend that for which also we are apprehended of Christ Jesus!

E. D.

“ADAM,” “THE SEED OF THE WOMAN,”
AND “PART WITH ME.”

GENESIS iii. and JOHN xiii.

SOME have found a difficulty in understanding *what* the Lord is opening out to “His own” in this central part of John’s gospel, and by washing the disciples’ feet that they may have “part” with Him in it. They therefore fail in their communion with the departed One, in this *new* portion and place to which His unbounded love has carried us with Himself.

1. It may be helpful to such, in apprehending what it is to have “this part” with the only-begotten Son, where He now is (and instructive for other reasons), if a previous inquiry be made as to the original “portion and part” which we all inherit with the man *who fell*. “Adam begat a son in his own likeness, and after *his* image.” This personal relation as his children, is not

all that constitutes our "part" with *him*; for "by one man *sin* entered into the world, and death by *sin*, and so *death* passed upon all men: for that *all* have sinned." Thus in our life and nature, as well as by the activities of our being, in mind and will, we have a very conscious *part* with Adam fallen, and in a world which still "groaneth under the bondage of corruption." Moreover, our own sins and iniquities placed us under *the like* condemnation and judgment of God. Heavy and dark as these inflictions and penalties upon mankind are known to be by us, because we each inherit a suffering *part* under the justice and righteous government of God the Creator, yet by sovereign grace and through faith we have another *part* in the promise—"The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," and through which we are by Christ redeemed. It is this "seed of promise" in Adam's world, or "the corn of wheat" when this seed was manifested (as the Christ of God) in *this* world, or as "the wave-sheaf" by His resurrection out of the grave, which safely conduct us, in their appointed times and seasons, outside and beyond the *part* we had as sinners with the man who fell, into "our part" with a risen and glorified Christ.

2. In the onward history of God's ways with the races of men upon this earth, we come under and take our *part* with Noah, as the second head in a world since the flood; but under different conditions and in another standing as a family. God created Adam alone, and in "His own image," and put him as the responsible head over an unfallen creation; but "Noah found *grace* in the eyes of the Lord," and was led into, and through,

and *out of, the ark* on the other side of death and judgment, as a redeemed man, to begin a new history in another world under God's promises and covenanted blessings. By *faith* he builded an altar, and took of every clean beast, and offered burnt-offerings to the Lord; and God blessed Noah and his sons, and accepted them "in that sweet savour," saying, "I will establish my covenant with you and with *your seed* after you . . . from all that go out of the ark to every beast of the earth." Upon this new ground it is, that God gave the world out afresh to him by adding, "Into your hand are they delivered, and the fear and dread of you shall be upon them."

We never had "any part" with Adam in innocency, nor was he *then* the head of the human race, but became such when driven out of paradise. It is as fallen and expelled, that all his posterity had "part and place" with him as sinful and guilty creatures. The second head in this second world (or the world since the flood) was Noah; but upon these altered relations, and under covenanted and unconditional blessing, of which the rainbow set by God in the cloud was the comprehensive token, and under the protection of which we take our *part* as "his seed" and descendants. It is this unchanging covenant which rests upon the faithfulness of God that secures all blessing to every living creature, and that marks the difference between these two heads in their respective worlds, and shows our *part* in relation to each. After this, the earth was re-arranged and apportioned between Noah's three sons; and the world became geographically divided into the Shem, Ham, and Japheth nations, in the last of which divisions we find "our place and part" as Europeans.

3. But besides being children of Adam and of the seed of Noah, we pass on to the special and distinct "*call of Abraham*"—a third head of patriarchal and covenanted blessing, to whom "the God of glory appeared," and said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and *come* into the land which I shall show thee." Under this headship of Abraham, viewed according to the patriarchal line, as having the sign and seal of circumcision in the flesh, and restricted by genealogy, we could "neither take part nor place," being the wrong people, and were also dispensationally and governmentally excluded from the land of Canaan which God gave to him and his posterity. We were thus outside this Abrahamic circle of promise and blessing according to the flesh; nevertheless the covenant ran—"In thee and in thy *seed* shall all the families of the earth be blessed," which in its prophetic and wide extent embraces all, and has yet to be fulfilled. In the meanwhile, and through sovereign grace, those who are "of the *faith* of Abraham" are blessed with him; as it is written, "For the promise, that he should be *the heir* of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of *faith*." Shut out as we were, and having *no part* or portion by genealogy and the flesh, yet we gain a title, and inherit upon this divine principle of faith. Again, our title to blessing under this third head with Abraham, the friend of God, rests not only upon the sovereign grace of being counted righteous by faith; but, higher and better still, we can *now* trace "our part" and portion *downward* from the true seed himself at the right hand of God; for "if ye be Christ's, ye are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise."

4. Another and a different display of God's wisdom and power was yet to follow these three ancestral heads of races, and their divisions and settlements in the earth; for the set time was now come for Moses to bring forth the nation of Israel out of Egypt according to that word—"When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people, and Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." In this fourth circle of promise and blessing, when all mankind were classified under the head of Jews and Gentiles, it is evident we could nationally have *no* part or portion, being "called uncircumcision, by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands, that at that time ye were without Christ . . . having *no* hope, and without God in the world." Moreover, we were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise; so that personally, relatively, and dispensationally we could *not* be numbered among the twelve tribes and their promises under Moses, nor could we inherit the blessings with them under Joshua when the land was divided and allotted, or even claim protection under the kingly rule and power of David, or the throne and sceptre of Solomon.

At this point, nevertheless, we may notice there was an exception made by God governmentally on "behalf of a stranger," provided he were circumcised, and thus became identified outwardly with Israel after the flesh. So likewise, in the celebration of their yearly feasts to the Lord, they were "not to make clean riddance of the corners of their fields, but leave the gleanings to the poor, and to

the stranger." But above and beyond these exceptional cases of men, it is instructive to observe that, though God may form a dispensation, and put His people into it as He did under Moses and the law at Mount Sinai, and even walk with them in these narrow confines for their well-being under government, yet He always maintains Himself upon the sovereign rights of His own nature and supremacy over all, and is always free to act according to "the good pleasure of His will." In the exercise of this prerogative, God put an outward difference between the nation of Israel and all other nations, as we have seen under Moses, by the law and circumcision. Thousands of years after, He brought in and established righteousness by the death and resurrection of Christ, even the righteousness of God, which is by *faith* of Jesus Christ "unto *all* and upon *all* them that believe," as a new principle, and declared there is "no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," when the *glory* became the last standard and test of relationship with Him.

Consistently with this great change in dispensation, which is proclaimed by the gospel of Christ, and of our salvation, the question is boldly asked, "Is He the God of the Jews only? is He not also of the Gentiles?" Yes, of the Gentiles also, seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by *faith*, and uncircumcision through *faith*, "in and by the death and propitiation of the Lord Jesus Christ." But the Spirit of God and of truth carries us farther than *this* in Christianity, inasmuch as it declares "the middle wall of partition is broken down," and there is no difference, because in the risen and glorified Head there is neither Jew nor Greek, nor bond nor free. Dispensationally by-and-bye, and in the

thousand years of millennial blessing, the Spirit of prophecy teaches us that these differences will exist *again*, and that during the future reign of the Lord Jesus as the Messiah on earth, *each* will be nationally gathered together upon the sovereign ground of "the mercy of God;" as it is written, "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, *with* His people." In that day "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the earth with fruit;" and "the Gentiles shall also glorify God for His mercy," according as it is said, "For this cause I will confess to Thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto Thy name." In this light *we*, who "have part" with the departed One, can say with Paul, "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out," seeing that in the previous economy under Moses and the law, *we* were "the uncircumcision according to the flesh;" but in this economy we are "the *true* circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Under the former dispensation, which boasted of descent and genealogy, we were *incomplete* and shut out; but in this dispensation (if indeed it may be called one) we "are complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power," in whom also we are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.

5. Besides these four heads of patriarchal and national history there remains another; for in the righteous government of God with the nation of Israel (because of its rebellion and sin) He transferred kingly power from the throne and sceptre of Solomon into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, as head of the Gentiles, and gave Jerusalem to be trodden down by them, till the times of

the Gentiles are fulfilled. The centre of administrative authority, was thus changed from a theocracy in "Jerusalem, the city of the great King," to Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, who was (as Daniel writes) a king of kings. A vast territorial grant was likewise assigned to him; "for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, strength, and glory;" also "the children of men, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven, hath He given into thine hand, and made thee ruler over them all." Supreme power was also granted unto him, and whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive. "Thou, O king, art this head of gold;" and under this headship it is, that the nations of the Gentiles, in their respective times, are gathered into *their part* and portion, as of Babylon, or Persia, or else of Greece, or Rome. Geographically, too, and dispensationally, as in this nineteenth century, their lot is cast under "the fourth beast" of Daniel's vision, or else of the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw, and possibly among the ten toes or kingdoms of the Roman earth. Prophetically, "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands" will as surely do its work upon the entire image, by grinding it to powder, as the promised seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head; or the corn of wheat, by passing through death, bring forth in the glory of resurrection its much fruit.

As in the flesh, we can plainly discover and understand our "part and place" in this Gentile image by our natural birth, and yet by the Spirit of grace, and as born a second time (born of God), be assured we have *no* fixed part with this doomed head of gold, but pass out of it into our "part and portion with Christ" as King of kings and Lord of lords. "*Our* citizenship is

in heaven," by that eternal redemption which He has obtained for us through the shedding of His blood, and by His glorious ascension there. In the meanwhile, and "under the sun," the history of *power*, as connected with the Nebuchadnezzar image, runs its downward course from gold to silver and brass and iron, and the feet part of iron and part of clay, till they shall be broken in pieces, with those who take pleasure and have part and portion therein. This transfer of power, from the kings of Israel and the throne in Jerusalem became the occasion for Babylon, under the proud absolutism of its monarchs, to display itself in a far worse form of wickedness, by their own alienation from God, and the idolatrous worship by which the kingdom of this "head of gold" was inaugurated. The profanation and blasphemy by which it was followed, and exceeded at Belshazzar's feast, have been continued in Gentilism and its history; so that the little horn of Daniel, which "spoke great words against the Most High," prophetically remains undeveloped till "the man of sin," or the "son of perdition" in Paul's writings, appears, and is only consummated in the yet future Antichrist of the apocalyptic visions. Associated with this abomination are the ten horns (whether of Daniel's prophecy or the apostle John's), who give their power and strength unto the beast; and "these make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

Adam fell, Noah fell likewise, the nation also fell, as did Solomon, its king; and "Mene, mene, tekeli, upharsin," was written upon the walls of great Babylon, and its head of gold driven into the fields to eat straw

like an ox, "till he should know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." Power and majesty, dominion and glory, kingdoms and thrones, have thus in the sovereignty of God been bestowed upon the elect and royal line of Israel, but only to be profaned in their use, and still further desecrated, when transferred to the great head of the Gentiles and his successors, till Pilate crucified Jesus,—and Barabbas became the man of the people's choice.

6. What is the summary of these enquiries and examinations? It is *this*. A world in which the Creator put Adam in His own image, and in which He walked and talked with him in the cool of the day, is become a "paradise lost." The heavens and the earth which were of old have perished by the deluge, and the heavens and the earth which are *now* by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men, when the elements melt away by fervent heat.

"Part, and portion," and place like this, and even *now* in a groaning creation, with Satan the god of this world, where men are led captive by the devil at his will, is the common ground for all its teeming populations, and is only one remove from the blackness of darkness, and the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched. And this is where *we* all once lived, and had *a part* under condemnation before God, "*dead* in trespasses and sins," and were by nature children of wrath even as others. In such hopelessness and despair, where could the eye look? The cherubim and the flaming sword, which turned every way, barred the road

back. To whom could the heart and conscience turn? The power of death had been let loose, and violence and corruption had come in, "till it repented God, that He had made man upon the earth." The Deliverer—and the needed deliverance could not enter from the north, or the south, or the east, or the west; and the wide world said, "It is not in me;" nor had any above or below heard "the fame thereof." The only resource was in God Himself, and this was declared by "the still, small voice" in which He whispered to the ear of faith what His reserves were, in "the promised seed" of the woman. The bright line of covenant and prophecy, whether to Noah or Abraham, the friend of God, or David, the man after his own heart (along which these meditations have carried us), historically are faith's stepping-stones into "our present place, and portion, and part," with the second Man in glory, as "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." J. E. B.

(To be continued, D.V.)

35

TIME AND FOR EVER.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." (Eccles. iii. 1.) Every thing under the sun is measured by "times." There is a time to be born, and a time to die. No matter what the purpose which the sons of men may take in hand under the heaven, each has its time, but only its "time." It is not "for ever," and its time passes on and is gone. Well is it if they who are passing through these varied times are exercised by the travail which they occasion. (Eccles. i. 13; iii. 10.) But beneath the exercises of these times there is a "work that God maketh from the

beginning to the end;" for there is a path which the vulture's eye hath not seen. It is hid from the eyes of the living, but God understandeth *the way* thereof (Job xxix.), and this *work*, wrought in *ways* of infinite wisdom, is "for ever." "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be *for ever*: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it that men should fear before Him." It is done to produce holy fear, the beginning of wisdom in man, and becomes the means of the senses being exercised to discern good and evil in those who otherwise would put good for evil, and evil for good. (Isa. v. 20.) Man cannot find out this work, because his vision is bounded by the horizon of time, and he can but take in by his own powers and senses those things which are thus measured. Very different is God's "for ever." He is the A and the Ω , the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End; and blessed it is to know that as the varied seasons roll round, and a time to weep and a time to laugh succeed each other, that a feeble creature of time, by faith, and through sovereign mercy, can find his dwelling-place in the eternity of God. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations . . . from eternity to eternity thou art God."

The saint now, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, has the mind of Christ. On Him rested the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. Even as a child He grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him. He needed none of the exercises of these times, though He learned obedience by the things which He suffered in passing through them. He judged not by the sight of His eyes, nor the hearing of

His ears, but by the divine wisdom with which He was filled; and the saint, as having His mind, is able to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, according as he is filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; but there is the flesh in us, and the needs be of breaking our will, so that we may follow in His steps who said, "I do always those things which please Him," and thus the exercises of the way teach us something of the work which God is doing from beginning to end.

But further, though creation was set up in *time*, when God made everything beautiful in his *season*, there is a new creation, which began with a Man raised from the dead in the power of an endless life. In the time scene the first man, who was made a living soul, was set in his creature estate by God, to have and to hold so long as fealty was rendered to the Creator who set him there. Such an estate could be lost, and has been lost; but new creation is no creature estate. Everything there is "of God," and has the stamp of God's "for ever." It is the scene where the Father—blessed source of all that can ever be told out of the divine nature and fulness—is manifested in the Son by the power of the Holy Ghost. This time scene is but the platform on which the work that God maketh from beginning to end is being carried out. The centre of it all is the Word made flesh, the person of the Son—unfathomable mystery known only to the Father. He it is who has been here and known a time to be born, and a time to die. Surely we bow our heads and worship as we behold Him, whose goings forth have been of old, from the days of eternity, and whose Spirit could prophetically utter those words, "My times are in thy

hand," take His place in this time scene, and pass through it and out of it, by death and resurrection, to the throne of the Father, where He now is. He is there as the Christ of God, in whom all God's counsels are to be brought out for eternity.

What different thoughts fill our minds as we apprehend these counsels of God, and this time scene which otherwise so engrosses us, as the platform for their accomplishment, and the place too where we practically learn "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" thus learning that though that which is first is natural—a creature, a living soul—yet that the work which God maketh from beginning to end is accomplished by Him who is a quickening Spirit—the second Man, the Lord from heaven. A Man He was, and yet out of heaven. Man in himself is but a creature, and yet in Christ we see him as the object of the counsels of God, and in his history in time is brought out the wisdom and power of God in His ways of accomplishing His thoughts and purposes.

T. H. R.

MAN looks not beyond the circumstances which surround him. To tarry in circumstances is unbelief; affliction springs not out of the dust. Satan is behind the circumstances to set us on; but, behind all that, God is there to break our wills.

THE BOOK OF JONAH.

CHAPTER I.

THE book of the prophet Jonah stands alone. Its peculiarity is that it does not contain a single prophecy. There is the message to Nineveh—if that can be termed a prophecy—but beyond this there is no record of what Jonah was used to communicate. That he did fulfil his office is plain from a solitary statement in 2 Kings. There we read that Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, “restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher.” (xiv. 25.) Nothing else has been preserved; for when we examine the book we discover that its instruction lies in Jonah’s personal history, or rather in his conduct, when commissioned by Jehovah to go and cry against Nineveh, because its wickedness had come up before Him. The book therefore has, we might say, a parabolical character—Jonah, both in his unfaithfulness and when under judgment because of it, being taken up and used for typical instruction. It is this feature which has made the book in all ages so full of interest in its various applications.

The facts are very simple and familiar. Sent of the Lord to preach against Nineveh, Jonah fled, and going down to Joppa, and finding a ship about to sail for Tarshish, he paid his fare, and embarked “to go with them unto Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord.” Such was the vain thought of the prophet, as it is often

the foolish thought still even of many of the children of God. The Lord sent out a storm upon the sea, so that the ship was nearly wrecked. Brought face to face with death, the sailors in their terror cried every man to his god, and attempted by throwing overboard their cargo to lighten the ship. All this time Jonah, on whose account this "mighty tempest" had arisen, with strange insensibility, was lying fast asleep. The captain aroused him to a sense of their danger by the solemn words, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." The crew then proceeded to cast lots, having a kind of instinct—awakened, no doubt, by divine power—that the storm was occasioned by some sinner amongst their number. God was behind the scene, and, directing the lot, it fell upon Jonah. They then demanded of him the cause of the evil that had fallen upon them, his occupation, whence he came, his country and his people. Jonah told them all the truth, and even that he had fled from the presence of the Lord. They were smitten with fear when they heard that God was dealing with them on account of the prophet, and they asked what was to be done. • Jonah at once replied that the only way of safety for them was to cast him overboard. With real kindness of heart they were unwilling to do this, and laboured hard to bring the vessel to land. But it could not be; and thus, after they had prayed that they might not incur the guilt of innocent blood, they took Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea. The effect was instantaneous; the sea ceased from her raging, and they, impressed by what they had seen, feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows. More than

this, the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Such is the outline of the first chapter, and we have now to enquire as to its meaning.

1. In the first place Jonah is a type of the Jewish nation in one particular character. Nineveh, there is little doubt, is a symbol of the world, or, as another has said, the haughty glory of the world, which recognizes nothing but its own importance—the world, the open enemy of God's people simply by its pride. As such it was subject to the just judgment of a holy God. Israel, on the other hand, was God's candlestick on the earth, responsible therefore to bear witness to and for Him who by His grace had called them, and, separating them from the other nations of the earth, made them His people, and dwelt in their midst between the cherubim. We read thus in Isaiah: "Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this? Let them bring forth their witnessess, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth. *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am He: before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour.*" (Chap. xliii. 8-11.) Such was the divinely-given position of Israel in the midst of the world; and inasmuch as the God they knew, and with whom as Jehovah they were brought into relationship, was a righteous God, "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and caust not look upon iniquity,"

their mission was to cry against Nineveh (the world), because its wickedness had come up before the Lord.

How then was their mission fulfilled? The conduct of Jonah supplies the answer. He rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. This is, in one word, the history of Israel as God's messenger. They were quite willing to be exalted by their privileges above the surrounding nations. In this way, indeed, their pride was fostered; but it was quite another thing to accept the responsibility of their position. Nothing is more sad than to trace their history in this respect, from the time they were redeemed out of Egypt to the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar. The light which they possessed was used only for self-exaltation and self-righteousness, until at length they compelled God—if we may so speak—to depart from them. Not only did they flee from the presence of the Lord rather than fulfil their mission towards the world, but they also sunk down lower morally than the nations against whom they were called to testify. (See, for example, Jer. xxxii. 28-35; Ezek. viii., ix.; xvi. 44-49, &c.) The Lord said, indeed, through Jeremiah, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. And though they say, The Lord liveth; surely they swear falsely." (Chap. v. 1, 2.)

Jonah therefore in escaping to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, is but a true picture of Israel fleeing from God rather than proclaim His message to the world. And we may see, perhaps, in the ship sailing from Joppa, offering the prophet a ready method of flight, the way of Israel's moral degradation. The ship

was the means of trade with the Gentiles, and hence it was through commerce that they acquired familiarity, became conformed in their habits and ways, with the nations of the world, and so lost their power of testimony. Israel thus, like the prophet, with their back toward the Lord instead of the face, and refusing the admonitions of His grace and longsuffering, fell under the chastenings and judgments of His hand. This is represented in our chapter by the statement that the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. But the guilty nation was so insensible that, though the onlookers, the mariners, were afraid, and cried every man to his god in awe before the terrible nature of the storm, they lay, as it were, fast asleep, undisturbed by the roar of the tempest which threatened their destruction.

We need not, however, enter into the details of this strikingly typical narrative, so plainly does it set forth God's dealings with His ancient people on the ground of their responsibility as His light-bearers in the world. Two other points, however, should be mentioned. The unfaithfulness of Israel involves the Gentiles also in the judgments of God. Instead of being the means of light and blessing, they become the occasion of judgment. But, secondly, after the wrath of a holy God has been visited upon his people, the cause of it learned, and the tempest stilled, the Gentiles turn to the Lord, and acknowledge His power and glory. "The men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows." So will it be after the Lord's appearing. "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for

my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent." (Zeph. iii. 8, 9.)

2. The second application of this history is to the servant. Josiah as a prophet was a servant of the Lord, and one, as pointed out, charged with a special mission to the world. His message befitting the dispensation was one of judgment, not of grace or mercy. But he fled, not from the opposition of those to whom he was sent, but from Him from whom he had received his mission. Many a servant, forgetting the source of his strength, as well as the secret of his safety, has been unable to face the power of the enemy in his own stronghold; but Jonah sought to hide himself in the world from the One who had called him to be His servant. Elijah fled from Jezebel, but Jonah, let it be repeated, fled from the Lord. In this he is surely a perfect contrast with our blessed Lord as the faithful witness. He was able to say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation." (Psalm xl. 8-10.) Jonah, on the other hand, fled rather than tell forth the message of his God, and indeed the responsibility of testimony is always the greatest test. In the case of the blessed Lord Himself,

it was His testimony that evoked the bitter hatred of the world. (John vii. 7.) It was under this test that Jonah failed, and perhaps on another ground. The possession of truth, if not communicated, always produces self-exaltation and Pharisaic pride, and where these things are nourished in the heart, there will always be indifference concerning, if not contempt for, the welfare of others. Jonah was a Jew, and God Himself had fenced him off from the world, but that was no reason why Jonah's heart should be without pity for the world. But so it was, and now his real state appears in open disobedience to his Lord.

It is important to note also the amount of self-deception which a soul in an unhappy condition can practise on itself. Jonah confessed to the mariners that he feared the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, who had made the sea and the dry land, and yet he thought to hide himself from His eyes. But if the servant under temptation tries to forget God, God does not forget His servant, nor can He indeed permit him to disregard His authority. Hence He pursues him with His storm; He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, surely not for the destruction of His servant, but to awaken him to a sense of his position and peril. Yea, the Lord loves His servants too well to suffer them to continue in rebellion. But while He is active in pursuit of Jonah, Jonah is asleep in the midst of the signs of His presence and power. Who will not recall, by way of contrast, the storm on another sea, during which He who had made the sea lay asleep on a pillow! In the former case the storm is only appeased by the casting forth of Jonah in the sea; in the latter the Lord, awakened by the importunities of His disciples, mani-

fested His glory and demonstrated His power by rebuking the wind, and commanding the sea to be still.

God's way with Jonah in this chapter illustrates a very important principle. When Israel failed to sanctify His name, God declared that He would sanctify His own name. (See Ezekiel xxxvi. 16-23.) So also with His servants. If they do not glorify Him in the testimony committed to them, He will glorify Himself in them through the chastenings of His hand. Thus in this chapter Jonah proved himself to be an unfaithful servant, one that could not vindicate the name of his Lord before a haughty, wicked world. God then came in and made bare His arm in dealing with Jonah, and by the very judgment which He executed He got Himself praise from the hearts of the heathen. This is a very important principle, and should teach us that, if we are honoured to be servants, we are in no wise necessary for the accomplishment of the purposes of God. Understanding this will keep us very humble, while it will call forth praise from our hearts for the precious privilege of being in any way associated with His divine counsels.

In conclusion it might be profitable to make a twofold enquiry. First, in how far the history of Israel, as shown in this narrative, shadows forth that of the Church in her candlestick position? Alas! the full answer to this question is recorded in the message to the seven churches. (Rev. ii. and iii.) Secondly, we might ask whether we, as the Lord's servants, are found more faithful than Jonah? whether many of us are not buried, like him, in profound slumber, even while the signs of coming judgment are already to be heard? May the Lord Himself awaken us to the truth of our condition, that we may no longer remain insensible to the imminent peril of a godless world. E. D.

“ADAM,” “THE SEED OF THE WOMAN,”
AND “PART WITH ME.”

(Continued from page 53.)

7. Now that the Son of man is crowned with power and glory at God's right hand on high, we can look below to see (and with great joy of heart too) the final transfer of earthly power from the image to the Lord Jesus Christ, as recorded by Daniel in his night vision (chap. vii.): “I beheld one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him before him, and there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages, should serve him,” &c. In harmony with the spirit of prophecy by Daniel, which of us does not heartily join with the elders, and the thousands upon thousands round about the throne in Rev. v. (upon *that* heavenly investiture of power), saying with a loud voice, “*Worthy* is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing”? Moreover, in all that is comprehended in this universal outburst of praise from every creature, we take “our part with Christ,” but on another standing, and say, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.”

8. Precious as it is to see “our part and portion with the Son of man in power and glory at the right hand of

God above, or by Daniel's visions of the future on the earth, or by John's revelations of Him as the Lamb that was cast out and slain, there is still a part which we have by grace with Christ which none other than Himself could disclose to "His own." This is the great subject in that gospel of all others, of which "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was the inspired penman, and it is to *this* that we are now brought.

The revelation of our place and portion with the departed One where He is, and the mode of its communication to us by the Spirit, which proceedeth from the Father and the Son, is as wonderful and peculiar as "the part" itself: "At sundry times and in divers manners God spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, but hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." His change of place from earth to heaven, and His exaltation as the Son of man to the right hand of God, as Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, necessitated no less a power and agency than "the Spirit of truth" for its communication to us. He also is the power for our present communion and "part with Christ" in those things which were kept secret from before the foundation of the world, and lay hidden in God till the times appointed. Therefore Jesus said to His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." This mission and *present* ministry of the Holy Ghost, to glorify the Son, and to take of His things and show them to us (that we may have *part* with Him), is only secondary to the great object

and errand of Him that came forth from God, to "make known the Father," and Himself as "the way, the truth, and the life," amongst the children of men. In reality the Christian economy embraces these two ministries, which are essential to present communion with "the departed One" where He now is, with the Father; and finally for the gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him, in whom we have obtained an inheritance, "according to the good pleasure of His will."

9. Besides these differences of heavenly power and agencies for the revelation of this "part with Christ," and for our fellowship in it, by the unction of the indwelling Spirit, there remains yet for us in this gospel of John, while we are here below, the precious ministry of Jesus Himself, by the towel wherewith He girded Himself, and the water wherewith He washed the disciples' feet. He makes us thus in every way the objects of His personal love whilst in this defiling world, where He has left us (little as they then understood it, as expressed by Peter), and yet draws them to Himself, like John, who, in the confidence and repose of that unfathomable grace, could lay his head upon Jesus' breast, and even ask, "*Who is it*" that betrayeth thee?

He who so well knew what He was doing and what He had done for them, had already declared with His own lips, they were "clean every whit;" and oh, what an assurance for our souls *is this!* Only needing the basin and the towel under His eye and hand for our refreshment, and to keep the feet clean; and then the

beloved disciple's head upon His breast, as the closing scene below. After this manner it was, that His love to His own perfected itself in its own delights with us on earth, in view of our everlasting joy with Himself and with the Father above, when He presents us "holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight." He has part with us, as truly as we have part with Him. We may take, perhaps, John xvii. as a compendium of the blessedness and blessings which are unfolded in this gospel, as our present and everlasting portion with Christ; for it is in this scripture He personally speaks to the Father "of our part" with Himself, saying, "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even *as we* are one." In this intercourse with "the Father of glory" Jesus passes into a region and range of subjects that are peculiarly His own, and of which He is also the centre, as the only-begotten Son, and yet Son of man. In the length and breadth of this precious chapter we are presented to the Father, and are taken into a "part and portion with Christ," where He now is, according to the counsels of God. These carry us with Him (under the anointing of the Holy Ghost) far higher than the promises and covenants and prophecies, whether to Adam, or Noah, or Abraham, or Joshua and David, which have occupied us, and which still await their millennial manifestations below, when Christ comes again. All these illustrious heads of covenanted blessings (with whom we shall then take "our part" with Christ the Lord) have more to do with Jehovah as the God of Israel, and Creator of the heavens and the earth, than with the hidden counsels of the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit, though connected therewith. The mystery of the

eternal wisdom and glory in Christ, and *with* Christ and the Church, throughout the ages of ages, is where we who are "His own" have our place and portion, through the riches of God's grace. But even beyond *this* Jesus said, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me *where I am*; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Founded, too, on the personal ministry of His own grace, He adds, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that *the love* wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." What a blessed part we have in all this *with* Him, and by divine love, and power, and glory, in order that it may be known "what is the hope of His calling," and to manifest "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and the greatness of His power to us-ward who believe."

10. The personal and relative glories of the Son with the Father, and with us "as His own," give occasion for the Headships into which by redemption the Lord has passed in resurrection, as the Pauline epistles unfold, as Head of His body the Church, and in whom all things in heaven and earth are to be gathered together. The offices of Christ likewise, as Mediator, Intercessor, Advocate, and Priest, are the further display of the resources in His glorious Person before God on our behalf, and towards us in the exercise of sympathy and grace whilst we are in "this time of need." Having loved His own which are in the world, He loves them to the end. Yea, more; for, as regards God, "it became Him for whom are all things, and by

whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." And again, as to our blessed Lord and Saviour—"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same" that we might have a part with Him, where flesh and blood cannot enter, nor anything that defileth or maketh a lie.

"All the Father's counsels claiming
Equal honours to the Son;
All the Son's effulgence beaming
Makes the Father's glory known."

J. E. B.

NEHEMIAH AND HIS WORKERS.

I WOULD desire for a few moments, beloved brethren, to direct your attention to Nehemiah viii., which shows us the result of being devoted. We find in this chapter the deepest blessing that could be imagined for any soul. Nothing in the history of God's ancient people presents a greater picture of the grace of God. The blessing of the faithful ones is seen to be higher even than in the palmy days of king Solomon. I speak of it that together we may encourage our hearts in the Lord, and that we may enquire what similarity there is between our circumstances and those of the remnant in Nehemiah's day. Those of whom this chapter speaks were a little company just emerged from captivity. They were setting themselves *to please the Lord*. Blessed object for any people, beloved!

Turn for a moment to 2 Chron. i. 1, and you will there find a point of great importance. It is said with

regard to king Solomon that "*God was with him,*" and in Pentecostal days this fact was acknowledged with regard to the Church. God was known to be in the midst of His gathered ones. He showed also He was there in the judgment of evil which appeared amongst them. A holy fear controlled the hearts of men, and we read, "By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and of the rest durst no man join himself to them; but the people magnified them, and believers were the more added to the Lord." (Acts v. 12.) Also in verse 11 we read, "Great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things," so that in the world it was known God was with His saints, and amongst the saints themselves there was a wholesome fear of that which would not please the One whom they knew to be with them.

But things had changed since the days of king Solomon. All had turned aside, and the children of Israel had been carried into captivity. In their exile God spake to them by His servants, and in this Nehemiah viii. we read of a few who had answered to the prophet's call. We find in 2 Chron. xxxvi. that Cyrus king of Persia took up the prophet's warning, and issued a proclamation to the captives in Babylon. These were his words: "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? *The Lord his God be with him,* and let him go up." That which marked the king of Israel in the days of magnificence, and power, we find promised to the one who sets himself in the day

of ruin, to please the Lord his God, and to obey His word. What wonderful encouragement! A company had gone up according to the decree of Cyrus, and in Nehemiah i. 1 we find them at work in the land of Judæa.

In Ezra we get the account of the building of the house. The setting up of the altar, and building of the house in the name of the Lord, may be regarded as a picture of that which God has done in these last days through a remnant of His people. The power of the name of Jesus has been asserted as God's gathering point for His saints. We are gathered by the Spirit of God, now in this world, to the divine centre—*the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*. The name of Jesus is to us what the altar and the temple were to the returned captives of Judah. Look at Nehemiah i. and you will see amongst these people a picture of deep devotedness to God. The house was built, and the altar was there; but the condition of the remnant who sought to do the work of the Lord was far from what it should have been. The devoted one saw this, and what did he do? He betook himself to prayer. "Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayèr of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel *thy servants*, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee. . . . These are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power." (*vv.* 6-11.)

It is blessed, beloved, when by the Spirit the question is raised in our hearts, "Is there amongst us that which suits the heart of God?" and more especially when the result of such heart-searching is to

send us to our knees in self-abhorrence before God. The state of the remnant exercised the heart of Nehemiah, and prayer to God was the resource his soul prized. There is a personal character about all this, and individual teaching for each of us, beloved brethren. If the condition of the remnant in Israel was to be raised, the work of individual self-judgment was the means to that end, and if we as a whole are to be revived, we must begin at home. In such a way Nehemiah acted. "He sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven." (Chap. i. 4.) His sorrow was real and deep; his countenance was marked by the sorrow which burdened his spirit. The king remarked his look; for Nehemiah was sad in the presence of the king, who said to him, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart." Then Nehemiah told the king the cause of his sadness. "The city of my fathers lieth waste," said he, "and the gates thereof are consumed with fire." (Chap. ii. 3.) And the king encouraged him to make known his desires; but what does Nehemiah first do? Ah, this is beautiful! "So I prayed to the God of heaven." When there is real desire to do God's will, there will be much looking to God, to know what the desire of His heart for His servant is. Having prayed, Nehemiah makes his request to the king. He asked for twelve years' leave of absence, that he might do the work of God, and rebuild the waste places of Jerusalem. He prayed to God before he made his request, and the desire of his heart was granted. The king also gave him letters to the governor, and an escort for the way.

Thus prospered, Nehemiah came to Jerusalem; but,

alas! he found no one interested in the work he sought to do, and single-handed what could he do? Well, by night he surveyed the city. Thus he made himself acquainted with the state of affairs, and then he tried to interest the children of the captivity. "Come," said he to them, "let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." Then he told them of the goodness of God, and the king's words to him; and what effect had this upon them? They said, "Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work." (Chap. ii. 18.) Such was the effect of devotedness in one man. The influences of one such on those round about is unspeakable. The Lord stir up our hearts, each one, that there may be this real devotedness working amongst us!

But no sooner is this real devotedness manifested than opposition shows itself. What would now answer to the devotedness which we see in Nehemiah? Souls being in the place the Holy Spirit would gather them to, and, when there, the heart answering to the claims of Him to whose name they are gathered. Beloved, if you give yourself to this, you may expect to be opposed. Satan ever sets himself against that which is really for God. Nehemiah and his brethren soon found this out. They were loaded with scorn by Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian. How would you have liked that? See how Nehemiah met his opposers! He said, "The God of heaven will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build the wall: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem." (Chap. ii. 20.) Nehemiah knew who sent him to do the work, and he purposed to do it as God

would have him. He took up very exclusive ground. What an example he is to us! I exhort you, and seek for myself to go in for this thorough carrying out of God's will. We are to seek to please Him, and He will prosper us.

The third chapter of this book is very interesting. It shows the record God keeps, how He marks our doings. Each company of workers is spoken of, and what each one did. Notice what is said of the Tekoites. They were so devoted that when they had finished their own work they directed their efforts elsewhere, and repaired "another piece." (Chap. iii. 27.) But another thing is said of some amongst the Tekoites; for everything is marked by God—"Their nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord." (Chap. iii. 5.) I call this chapter a specimen page of the book of eternity. It shows what note God makes of the actions of His saints. It is the Old Testament parallel to what we get in Romans xvi. of the New Testament. There again the deeds of saints are recorded, and divine comment made upon them. Phœbe is spoken of as a servant of the Church and the succourer of many. Such was the letter of commendation the apostle could send with her when she went into a new gathering of saints. Alas! it is not often we can write such letters regarding each other. But some one asks, "Are not all the letters of commendation the same?" The apostle's were not all the same, if we may judge from Romans xvi. He is careful to give each credit for the service which marked him; and in Nehemiah iii. the Spirit of God notices the particular work which each company, and even individuals, did in the service of the Lord in that day. W. P. T. W.

(To be continued, D.F.)

A FAMINE OF THE WORD OF GOD.

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north oven to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.”—
 AMOS viii. 11, 12.

IN time of plenty who thinks of famine? But famine sometimes succeeds plenty. It was so in Egypt. There were first seven years of plenty, and then seven years of famine; and all the plenty was forgotten when the famine consumed the land. So is it sometimes with the ministry of the word of God. At a time when many honoured servants of the Lord are actively engaged in ministering Christ to souls, there are few perhaps who consider the possibility of scarcity following the plenty. It may be that the greatest blessing that God gives to souls on earth is a plentiful and seasonable ministry of His precious word which testifies of Christ; and yet some of us can look back and see place after place where this was so, which has now become little more than a state of desolation and almost famine of the Word; so that those who are children of God are barely *existing* instead of being in holy liberty devoted to the Lord.

About this some believers may be ready to say, “If we are deprived of all the Lord’s ‘gifts,’ we still have the Bible.” True; and we would add, “Ye need not that any man teach you;” for you have received the Holy Spirit, who can “guide you into all the truth;” and happy are those who thus find daily food for

their souls. But there is another side to this. How many are there who read the Bible as a routine, and get nothing for their souls? Why is this? Are we not told that Moses and the prophets were read in the Jewish synagogue every sabbath-day? so that, with the Scriptures in their hands, and read at stated intervals, there was such a famine of the word of God, that they knew not Him of whom the Scriptures which they read spake, but actually fulfilled the same in condemning Him. Again, was not Nicodemus well-instructed in the facts and letter of Scripture? yet was he not ignorant of the foundation truth that a man "must be born again" either to "see" or to "enter into the kingdom of God"? And is it not in the present day most appalling, with so many Bibles and so many readers, to find so few who declare with divine certainty, founded on God's word, their present possession of eternal life; and fewer still who speak of God's word, because it testifies of Christ, being the daily food of their souls?

Is there not at this moment with many, and in many places, "a famine of the Word"? As in the time to which we have referred, those only who in their need had to do with Joseph had bread, so it is now. Christ is our Life-sustainer; and many are faint, and in perplexity and uncertainty, because they do not go to Him to be nourished by His truth. As in olden time the people came to Joseph, saying, "Give us bread," so all believers have to learn that there is famine everywhere apart from the blessing of the greater than Joseph. We are told, "There was *no bread* in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. . . .

And they came unto Joseph, and said, (Give us bread : for why should we die in thy presence?" (Gen. xlvii. 13-15.) Now Jacob was a man of faith, and he bitterly felt the lack of food. He wanted bread, and knew that it could only be obtained from One who was over all the land of Egypt, whatever the instrumentality might be that brought it. This Joseph was a remarkable type of Christ risen and glorified. He had been hated by his brethren, sold by them, falsely accused, put into a dungeon, and after he had been taken out of it was highly exalted. *Then* it was he became, by God's ordering, the dispenser of bread *to preserve life*—a striking type of the Lord Jesus, our Life-sustainer. Jacob and his sons were objects of God's love and care, and they fainted for lack of "*corn*." They hungered for bread ; nothing less than the bruised corn of wheat could satisfy and sustain them ; nothing else could meet their need. Have it they must, if possible ; for they were famishing ; and it could be had only from the typically dead and risen Joseph. May we never separate the Scriptures from Christ, of whom they testify !

Are we, dear Christian readers, panting and longing for more of Christ ? Is it Christ, or something else, we are so desiring ? Is it with us a settled truth that Christ, whom we have joyfully known as the Saviour of sinners, is the only food and Sustainer of our souls ? And can this be enjoyed without personal intercourse with Him through the Scriptures ?

It is a good sign when the believer hungers and thirsts for *more of Christ, and has to do with Him where He now is for present blessing*. Such prove that "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no

might He increaseth strength." We may be sure that it is only by personal intercourse and communion with Him that we can be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might;" "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus;" "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

Truly the famine is sore in many parts of Christendom. Many of God's children seem to be lean and *just existing*, without any power to step out in the ways of faith; and there is no hope of reviving in their souls but by having personally to do *with Christ where He is*. It is to be feared that many seldom read the Scriptures, and others make the serious mistake of reading the Bible as a formal routine, and rest in having done so, instead of through the Scriptures *having intercourse with the Lord Jesus where He is*—"THE OLD CORN OF THE LAND." What then becomes us but to go to the true Joseph, saying, "Give us bread." Let us go hungry, faint, and needy, and He will not send us empty away; for it is still true that "He filleth the hungry with good things," and "exalteth them of low degree."

Like dear old Jacob, you may not be in utter destitution. You may have some balm and honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds; but these things are not "corn," nor can they supply its place. You may perhaps see beautiful things in Scripture; you may have committed to memory some of the sweet incidents there found, be familiar with many of its remarkable historical records, have received solutions of what many call difficult passages of the Word, and know that you belong to God, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Jacob knew that he was an object of divine love and care; but he also keenly felt that, good as "balm" and

“honey,” “spices” and “nuts,” were in their proper places, they were not “corn,” and could not satisfy his pressing need. He therefore said, “*Go again, buy us a little food.*” But about this the patriarch, like many now, made a grave mistake; for he did not imagine it was to be had “without money and without price.” It is true that, through the tender mercy and care of Joseph, it did not hinder food reaching them, nor did any of them conjecture why the money was returned in every man’s sack. When, therefore, they next went for food, Jacob said, “Take a present of the best fruits in the land . . . and take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight.” (Gen. xliii. 11, 12.) All this shows how little they knew the heart of Joseph, or the goodness of God in sending him before them to *preserve life*. And is it not often the same now? Does not a legal spirit so invest some minds in having to do with our Lord Jesus for present blessing, as if His goodness could only flow to us on condition of something worthy of it on our part? But, like Jacob and his sons, such have to learn that He does not feed and sustain us because of our goodness or ability, but because—

“’Tis His great delight to bless us:
Oh, how He loves!”

Yes, He freely and lovingly strengthens and cheers those who wait upon Him, and returns all thought of creature-righteousness into their own bosom. All He wants is a heart to have to do with Him; as He said, “If any man open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

Be assured, beloved Christian reader, it is not the

discovery of beautiful things in Scripture, the solving of intricate questions; but it is *Christ*, of whom the Word testifies, who is *the food of our souls*. It is not "a little balm" or "honey," "spices" or "myrrh," "nuts" or "almonds," that can sustain and nourish our souls, but "the old corn of the land"—having *personally to do with Christ Himself*, who is now crowned with glory and honour, and soon coming to receive us unto Himself.

Most surely we believe that with many *the famine is sore in the land*. The unbelief as to the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth, our need of Him, and the supposed competency of the natural mind for searching, receiving, and communicating the deep things of God, close the door of access to the true Joseph's store. It is when men and the world are rightly considered by us according to Scripture, and it is settled by us that there is nothing for our souls in what is seen and temporal, that we are in a state for looking to the fulness of Christ as the only source of supply for our spiritual necessities. When this is not clearly held, the believer easily glides into the refinements of the world for present comfort; such as science, literature, the fine arts, or its so-called innocent amusements, which are often stepping-stones to the coarser, and more absorbing and soul-damaging, departments of the world socially, commercially, politically, and religiously.

Our first pursuits in the morning generally indicate where our *hearts* are. The children of Israel had to gather their daily food before sunrise, or they would be too late; and if the believer can rise from his bed and go about the business of this life before he has looked up to the Lord, and turned to the Scriptures which testify of Him for renewal of the inward man, it is

more than probable that his *heart* has got away from God. Nothing can possibly make up for a lack of food, for "Christ is all;" and those who really live upon Him can say, "Farewell to cold and dry formality and routine," can detach themselves from worldly religiousness and every false way, and say—

"None but Christ to me be given,
None but Christ on earth or heaven."

Do not many of the religious books of the day bear evident marks of a famine of the word of God? After reading pages, we have sometimes said, "There is no ministry of Christ here. Where is food for souls?" And why do we thus speak? Is it merely to expose the barrenness of the pages? Far be the thought; but rather to warn Christian writers and readers against wasting their time and energies and money in that which neither honours the Lord nor feeds souls. We are sometimes reminded of the prophet's words, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." (Isa. lv. 2.) Oh, the untold blessedness of looking up without a veil to our Lord Jesus Christ on the Father's throne, who is Head over all to the Church which is His body, and finding joy, sustainment, and comfort in the contemplation of the infinite perfectness of His person, work, excellencies, offices, fulness, and glory, as revealed in Holy Scripture! Then our earnest cry will surely be—

"Oh, fix our earnest gaze
So wholly, Lord, on Thee;
That, with Thy beauty occupied,
We elsewhere none may see!"

We are convinced that it is not charity to refrain from looking this weighty subject fairly in the face. That Christians generally are longing after more of Christ, and that many of the books of the present day give a solid ministry of Christ to souls, we fear is far, very far, from being true; but until such is the case all the efforts and devices put in action, and all supposed improvements as to organization, must utterly fail to supply that which *personal enjoyment of the Lord Jesus Christ only can give*. The inspired prophecy of Amos to God's ancient people is very solemn: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but *of hearing the words of the Lord*: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro *to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.*" (Chap. viii. 11, 12.) H. H. S.

ASSOCIATION WITH CHRIST.

"Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb. i. 3.)

"We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." (Heb. ii. 9.)

"Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." (Heb. ii. 11.)

OH, Jesus Lord, Thou matchless One,
 Who once this desert trod,
 What joy to see Thee seated now
 Upon the throne of God!
 With glory and with honour crowned,
 While heavenly hosts Thy praise resound.

What joy to gaze upon Thy face,
 Where glory bright doth shine,
 And tell in God the Father's ear
 Thine attributes divino.
 Of heaven itself Thou art the Light,
 And God Thy Father's full delight.

Exalted now to His right hand,
 The highest place is Thine,
 And yet Thou'rt pouring out Thy love
 Into this heart of mine ;
 Detaching me from things of earth,
 By showing me Thy peerless worth.

Thy death has closed the things of earth,
 But opened heaven to me ;
 And there in spirit now I'm brought
 To dwell, my Lord, with Thee.
 And since Thy place above is mine,
 I'd seek no place on earth but Thine.

For this is but a desert land,
 Because Thou art not here ;
 Earth's brightest scenes attract me not,
 My heart is with Thee there ;
 No more can I be satisfied
 To seek a place where Thou hast died.

A lonely stranger here below,
 Lord, I would follow Thee ;
 Rejoicing only in that cross,
 Which changed all things for me.
 Till Thou shalt call me with Thee there,
 In Thy rejection here I share.

THE CALL OF ABRAM.*

GENESIS xii. 1-10.

THE call of Abram, the father of the faithful, is evidently of special importance in this respect, that it is the first public separation of one called out of this world, and this gives a very particular position to the one so called out. The people of God were always morally, and must necessarily be, a people separate from the world. But Abram was the expression of something different. He was not merely to be a godly man *in* his family, but a godly man *called out* of his family. It was God exercising and establishing a title over those He had morally and spiritually called which broke the ties of nature, claiming them and calling them out into public testimony of separation. This distinguished the call of Abram—the public assertion of the claims of God over His people. The call of Israel out of Egypt is somewhat analogous, though it was not said to Israel, “Come out,” but to Pharaoh, “Let my people go,” because it was the assertion of the right of power over the prince of this world regarding God’s own people. Therefore it was said to Pharaoh, “Let my people go,” and on his refusing to do this God shows His power in redemption—first by blood, then by leading them out by the Red Sea. Thus it was not in the case of Israel the invitation of the power of grace to those who were its subjects to break the tie, but the assertion of the power of God over the enemy, breaking down every claim of the world. In the case of Abram it was not

* These notes have not been hitherto published.—Ed.

precisely that, it was an address to Abram himself—the claim of God over the person thus called. It was love working, not a claim of power. It was grace made effectual in its working in the heart of Abram.

For a time, however, the tie of nature was not broken: Abram went out with Terah his father. He did not leave his father's house, he lingered after something; he did not fully surrender himself to the Lord's will *at once*, and therefore the Lord could not show him the land of Canaan. Abram had left a great deal, but he stopped short of Canaan. It is true he had left his country and his kindred, but he had not left the nearest tie of nature—his father's house—therefore God could not show Canaan to him while he was clinging to Terah, and going but half way with God. Thus he stays in Haran. So it is with us, if there is still cleaving to us a desire after that which naturally belongs to us, there will not be the full entering into those things that God is ready and waiting to show us. All the communications of God to Abram, as to what Canaan was, took place after, or consequent on, his arrival in Canaan. God puts the position he is to be in, in direct contrast with natural ties; He said to Abram, "Get thee out into a land that *I* will show thee." He knew that natural ties were mixed up with what Abram had to leave, but he was to leave his country and all, having no other warrant for it but God's word. God had called him, and the call implied a claim. It was not merely the question of the public government of the world, Abram is entirely separated from that; he is to be a stranger to his father's house, and a stranger still when brought into Canaan. It was the Lord's love resting on an individual, and associating him with all that he had

in His mind, and putting him into the place of all the promises of blessing. We see what he was called out from Joshua xxiv. 2: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods." Men were not merely wicked, but God having manifested in the deluge the power of government in the world, Satan got hold of that power in the minds of men, who were thus led to worship devils, to whom they ascribed the power, and not to God.

It was this which formed the occasion of this public testimony for God in separating Abram from all around him; it separated him totally from every tie which was recognized in the world. He was not merely to be righteous and to be a worshipper, all that is true, but he was to be connected in his own person with a glory the world had lost sight of, for it had put the devil in God's place; thus it says in Acts vii. 2, "The *God of glory* appeared unto our father Abraham." God calls Abram out from the world to a glory set before him. Glory is revealed, and one called out by the knowledge of it. We have thus in principle the public call of God of the heirs of glory out of the world; the world is not set right, but left just as it was, and we find now a special link of connection set up between God and Abram. God reveals Himself to him, and says, "Come out unto a land *that I will show thee.*" The life of Abram depended on a present communication from God, an immediate present connection between himself and God, which was to be kept up by the Lord making good all He has promised. So the Lord reveals Himself to our souls, and gives His word

as a sure ground of our conduct; and, blessed be God, we can count upon His infallible faithfulness, and live by faith in daily, constant, unceasing dependence on Him, to lead on to the possession of the desires of our hearts. But we find also that the Lord's promises involved the acting of Abram likewise, for while he does not leave Terah, God cannot bring him into Canaan. He could not enjoy Terah and Canaan together. God took care of that; if the father's house be not left, Canaan cannot be shown. The blessing to faith is only found in the path of faith. God's call gives the warrant for acting, and so far as Abram acts in dependence on God, the promises are made good to him.

In all that is spoken of Canaan, it is not *rest* that is before us. Look at the book of Joshua; there it is conflict. Does Abram get rest? He had not so much as to set his foot upon, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob—a heavenly position, but with conflict, he gets as soon as he had left Terah, and come into the land of Canaan; for the Canaanites are still there. The thing that God calls us to we do not get now, and that which marks the completion of Christ's work is that He *sat down*. We sit down in heavenly places *in Christ*; but do we get rest? No; we have to fight with wicked spirits in heavenly places. The saint is called into a *place* of rest, but as yet gets nothing. Thus we see that the worship of devils was not set aside, but that Abram was called out and brought into the promised land; but not to rest, because the Canaanites were there.

“And the Lord appeared unto Abram.” (v. 7.) He now appears to him *in the land*. It is not *the call* which sets us in the place of worship; but as soon as we enter

the land, then we can worship, because our relationship with God is known and settled and enjoyed. Before it is the walk of faith; but that is not worship. So we, as seated in the heavenly places, can worship, knowing our relationship as sons. "And *there* built he an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord." In Heb. xi. 8-10 we get three things as regards the power of faith in Abram. 1st (verse 8), "By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." He went in simple present dependence, leaning on the promise of God. There was the life of faith. 2nd, when in the land (verse 9), "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." The Lord's appearing to him was the foundation of his worship, the Lord known in the land; and there he built his altar. The Lord further explains His purposes and intentions to him, and how they were to be accomplished. Thus he got prophetic knowledge. But it was not this which sustained Abram's soul. He could say, "I know now how it is all to be accomplished. It is in my *seed*, and not in myself. I am a stranger here." How then was his soul sustained while he was a stranger? 3rd (verse 10), "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Thus Abram's soul was not merely brought to worship, but he was sustained by a closer communion with that God who had chosen him, in faith that He would build the city Himself.

I have been struck that, in Rev. iv. where, speaking of the throne of God's *government*, there are peoples,

and angels, and assemblies, and living creatures, &c., a whole population there; but when I come to the heavenly city (Rev. xxi.), there is a high wall, and streets, and gates of pearl; but where are the people? No one there, because the people are lost in the idea of the *glory* of God and the Lamb, and nothing else is thought of (though we know it is the Lamb's bride), for God and the Lamb are there. It was looking for this city which made Abram a pilgrim and a stranger. The world could not understand him, and might have said, "Now Abram is in the land, what has he got?" Nothing; for he could not explain *to them* how it was, but he had seen by faith that city of which God was the builder. We see then Abram is called, and having by faith entered into the conditions of the calling, he gets into the land, and when there he has a present revelation of the Lord, which is the ground of his worship; but it is not rest, the Canaanite being there.

If God has called me out, I must leave the world just as it is, and not think of setting that right. God has called me out of the world into connection with Himself, and I cannot connect any natural tie *with such an association*. You cannot hold relationship with Christ and the world at the same time. The worship of God is founded on the knowledge of the heavenly position we are in, being called out of the world into fellowship with Himself. We have not a single thing in common with the world. We can sit and sing of redemption, just as if we were now in heaven. My relationships with God will not be in the least changed when I get home; they will be just the same then as they are now; and there is no ground upon which we shall be there that we are not upon now. He has set us in Christ,

and we can say, as in Deut. xxvi. 3, "I profess *this day* unto the Lord thy God that *I am come* unto the country;" not *shall* come. We are there, and have the understanding of how God will accomplish His promises—"in thy seed." Not the earthly rest in the fulfilment of promise to man, but heavenly rest where He dwells, where the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof—that is where He has brought us.

God says to Abram, "I will shew thee," "I will bless thee." Thus it is now a particular relationship on a new ground with persons He has called, and has its existence in separation from the world. It is well for our souls to have the relationship into which we are called distinctly before our minds, that we may know how to worship and be sustained by the strength which it supplies. And if the foundations of the earth are out of course, *I am not of it*. Having the sentence of death in myself, I shall not fear death; but we shall have the comfort and joy of the place we belong to. The sweetness of a calm is better known when the storm is raging without. May the Lord give us the true revelation of Himself.

J. N. D.

EXPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF JONAH.

CHAP. II.

THE last verse of chap. i. tells us that the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and that Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. It is in this fact that we find the key of the interpretation of chap. ii.; for our Lord expressly connects this circumstance with His own death. He says, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the

whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matt. xii. 40.)* And it is exceedingly interesting to trace the way in which Jonah, under the judgment of God, becomes a type of Christ in His rejection and death.

We have seen, in our consideration of chap. i., that the prophet was a type of the Jewish nation—the remnant who always take the place of the nation before God. Unfaithful in their mission to the world, God rejected them as His vessel of testimony, and caused His waves and billows to pass over them; and it is in this position we see them, as personified by Jonah, at the commencement of chap. ii. Now, it was into this very place that Christ in grace, in His unquenchable love for His people, descended. He was rejected, not by God surely—far be the thought—but by “His own,” to whom He came. Their iniquity, however, black as it was, did but accomplish the counsels of God, and become, at the same time, the occasion for the display of the depths of the heart of Christ. In the same night in which He was betrayed He took bread and gave thanks; and of the cup He said, “This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matt. xxvi.) He thus suffered Himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter, and voluntarily went down under all the judgment of God to make

* Rationalism has sought to discover an inconsistency in this statement, alleging that our Lord was actually only two nights in the grave; but this is merely playing with the common ignorance of Jewish modes of reckoning. With them a part of a day always included the whole, so that our Lord simply adopted the usual manner of speech. Nothing is more sad than the petty criticism of human reason, ever on the outlook to discover a ground of exaltation against the wisdom of God. But “the foolishness of God is wiser than men.”

propitiation for the sins of the people. All God's waves and billows therefore passed also over His head. They had passed over (or rather, viewed prophetically, will pass over) the remnant because of their sins; they went over the head of Christ because in grace He took the place of the people before God, died for that nation, so that God might afterwards righteously, on the ground of the atonement, fulfil all His counsels of grace towards His ancient people.

It is in this way that Jonah in the belly of the whale becomes a figure of Christ in the grave. He thus uses expressions, as led of the Spirit of God, which have a far wider application than to his own circumstances. Look, for example, at Psalm xlii. This psalm is the commencement of the second book, "in which the remnant are viewed as cast out of Jerusalem, while the city is given up to wickedness." They have fallen, therefore, under the judgments of God, and they use, in respect of this, the very words found in Jonah—"All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (Ps. xlii. 7); but the full significance of this statement is only seen when considered in connection with the place our Lord took, when He identified Himself, not only with His people, but also with their sins, when He bore them in His own body on the tree.

We may now trace further the way of God with Jonah, as also with the remnant, as set forth in the language here employed. The chapter commences with the significant statement, "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly." His face is now in the right direction. He had turned his back upon Jehovah; but now, under the stroke of the divine rod, he is not only arrested, but his eyes are drawn upward

to Him from whom he had attempted to flee. Blessed effect of chastisement when the soul owns its dependence, and humbles itself under the mighty hand of God. "Is any man afflicted," says James, "let him pray." Yes, just as a song of praise is the channel of the soul's joy, prayer is the vehicle of its sorrow. Thus Jonah tells us, "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me; out of the belly of hell" (*margin*, the grave) "cried I, and thou heardest my voice," &c. And then the prophet recounts the whole process which had been wrought out in him, and by which his soul had been restored. (*vv.* 2-7.) It will be profitable to mark for our own instruction its several steps.

First he owns the hand of the Lord. "Thou," he says, "hadst cast me into the deep." There was no entanglement in second causes, as is so often the case with ourselves, and by which we lose all the blessing of the Lord's dealings with us. Jonah at this moment thought neither upon the storm nor upon the sailors. It was the Lord who had cast him into the deep. So with our Lord, in a more blessed and perfect manner, when suffering upon the cross. "Thou," he said, "hast brought me into the dust of death." (Ps. xxii.) And what rest of soul it gives to take everything that befalls us, as it is our privilege to do, from the hand of the Lord Himself! It stills every murmur, opens the ear to the divine voice, and puts the soul into the condition for profiting by the discipline through which it may be passing. Moreover, he confesses that the Lord's hand was upon him for judgment. All the figures he employs—the seas, the floods, billows and waves—though literally true in his case, explain this; for they are all the symbols everywhere in the Scriptures of God's judicial

wrath. The effect was, that he felt he was cast out of God's sight, and his soul fainted within him. (*vv.* 4, 7.) In other words, like Paul, though in another manner, he had the sentence of death in himself. He was brought to a sense of his utter nothingness before God, and all the more because it was on account of his own sin. From a rebel fleeing from the divine Presence, he is changed into a penitent, having no plea of justification for what he had done, but taking the place of having nothing, and deserving nothing but the judgment from which he was suffering. And this, the only true place for the soul, whether of a sinner or of a backslidden saint, and the only place where God can meet the soul, on the ground of accomplished atonement, with forgiveness and restoring grace.

Let us, then, now see in what way the Lord responds to the cry of the prophet. Jonah says, "I cried . . . and thou heardest my voice." Again, "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple." (*vv.* 2, 7.) What could more strikingly illustrate the grace of God, or display the tenderness of His heart! The object of His dealings accomplished, He immediately answers the cry of His servant. In the folly of our unbelief how often are we tempted to think that He cannot forgive us after our sinful and rebellious wanderings. But His grace never fails; nay, He waits upon His people, His ear ever being open to their cry; for His attitude towards us does not depend upon what we are, but solely upon what He is in Himself. Satan would always fain deceive us now as he deceived Eve in the garden of Eden, and hence the importance of learning the character and the ways of God from His

own word, and from the revelation He has made of Himself in Christ Jesus. Many examples of His readiness to hear His people's cry, spite of their conduct, might easily be collected from the Scripture. Psalm cvii. is a collection of such; see also Hosea xiv.; and especially the Lord's message to Peter on the morning of His resurrection. (Mark xvi. 7.) These words of the prophet, "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me," should therefore sink deep into our hearts. They are a blessed encouragement to timid, and, beyond all, to backslidden souls, teaching as they do that God waits for nothing, if we have wandered, but our return to Him. We have a sheet anchor whose hold no storm can loosen when we have learnt the simple truth, that God never changes His attitude toward us, that His love is always the same—the same when we have fallen into sin as when we are walking in the enjoyment of the light of His countenance. And it is just because of His unchanging love that He deals with us in chastening and affliction. "Whom He loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. It was, too, on this same principle that He acted with Jonah, and the issue was that the prophet could declare, "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God." (v. 6.)

Thus restored, the prophet now can testify of the folly of sin. "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." And surely this witness is true. Will not all our hearts, indeed, set their seal to it? For whenever we have been beguiled by the lying vanities of the flesh, of the world, or the devil, have we

not proved the truth of the prophet's instruction? Ah! yes, there is a way that seemeth right unto a man (when under the power of these allurements), but the end thereof are the ways of death. Mercy is never found in the path of sin. Under the influence of this truth, wrought out by practical experience in Jonah's soul, he cries, "But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving: I will pay that I have vowed." He thus recognises the source of his preservation and blessing, and renders his thanksgiving and praise.

He then proceeds a step further. "Salvation is of the Lord." And, together with these words, we are told that "the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry ground." This is undoubtedly a remarkable foreshadowing of the truth of deliverance. All the exercises of Jonah's soul lead him up to this beautiful conclusion—"Salvation is of the Lord;" and immediately he is set free. So with the soul in Rom. vii.: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God" (is the answer) "through Jesus Christ our Lord." And the deliverance is reached and enjoyed. Blessed conclusion, again we say, whether for the sinner or the troubled saint—"Salvation is of the Lord." It brings peace into the soul; it stills all doubts and questionings; it puts an end to self-occupation, and it turns the eye upward to the only source of blessing and deliverance. The knowledge of this truth is essential to the whole of the Christian life, and brings ineffable rest to the soul when weary with its burdens and conflicts. "Salvation is of the Lord." Then we have only, like the king of Israel, to say, "We know not what to do: but our eyes are up unto thee;" and we shall find, as he did, that the Lord will come in

with His delivering mercy beyond our utmost thought and expectation.

The prophetic application of Jonah's deliverance to the Jewish remnant in the future is easily perceived. We have already called attention to the identity of the expressions used by the prophet with those found in Psalm xlii. And the Lord's way with them will be precisely the same as that found here. Bringing in upon them all His waves and billows, He will, by thus exercising their souls, reach their consciences, produce in them the sense of their guilt and utter helplessness, and turning their eyes up to Himself, evoke from their hearts cries and supplications for succour and deliverance. Then, as in the case of Jonah, the Lord, who had been waiting with yearning compassion upon His people, will instantly answer their cry and appear for their salvation. Thereon they will cry, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Read Isa. xi. xii.; also chaps. xxv. xxvi.; and Zechariah xii.-xiv.)

E. D.

NEHEMIAH AND HIS WORKERS.

(Continued from page 75.)

AND now look at verse 10, where the work of an individual is recorded—"Next unto them repaired Jedaiah, the son of Harumaph, even *over against his house.*" This is very instructive. The Lord sees and knows what is needed to be done over against our own houses. He takes knowledge of the work of saints, even when engaged on what they deem very small

service. Home labour is little seen by man, but God marks it well. It is most important service. You may not be able to pray in the assembly; it is not the place God has given to some to do so; but have you unconverted ones at home? Do you seek their souls for Christ? Do you seek so to live that Christ is commended to them? This is service very pleasing to God, and in His book you will find it has its own record. "Jedaiah worked over against his own house."

But some may not have houses of their own; they lodge in the house of another. Then the service of such an one we find mentioned in verse 30: "After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against *his chamber*." He did his bit of work there, and it also is taken into account. The service of the sisters has its record here also. "Next unto him repaired Shallum, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and *his daughters*." A lovely sight! There was a thoroughly united household—the daughters heart and soul with their father in the work of the Lord. But all did not work alike, and that also the Lord takes notice of in verse 20: "Baruch the son of Zabbai *earnestly* repaired the other piece." We may well labour earnestly, for Who is the One we are called to serve? The Christ of God. And the building, of which we are the living stones, is the habitation of God through the Spirit. An earthly city was the object of desire with the remnant in Nehemiah's day, but how far surpassing is the one God has given to us—the person of the Christ! We are living stones of the temple He builds.

What motives have we to be in earnest, beloved! Our calling is a heavenly one; but, like the returned

captives of whom we have read, we have come out of Babylon. We have made our exit out of that which will culminate in the spiritual Babylon of Rev. xviii. They came from the literal city. We do not come out of the house of God; it would be a mistake to say that, for we are part of that house; but we are to separate ourselves from that which is not according to the word of God—from the evil that has crept into the house of God. Our calling is to please God. Have we all set out with purpose of heart to do this? If we are faithful in this we may expect opposition; mockery and anger too may be hurled on us. This the remnant of Israel got. "When Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves?" &c. But there was more than this. "Tobiah the Ammonite heard what Sanballat said, and he also spoke contemptuously, "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." Thus was the work of these true-hearted servants despised on all hands. Sanballat mocked them, and Tobiah looked upon their work as contemptible. And are there not Sanballats and Tobiahs now, who speak of the truth for which we contend in a similar way? Alas! there are amongst the children of God some who, from lack of knowledge of what the Lord by His Spirit is doing in these last days, oppose His truth most warmly, and have said of us, "Their work will all come to nothing." Now, let us learn from the captives of Israel how to meet such mockery and contempt. We read (iv. 4), they prayed, "Hear, O our God; for we are despised," &c. They told God they were despised, and they contented them-

selves to leave their defence in His hands. They believed He would care for His work and justify them.

Further, we read (iv. 6) the people "*had a mind to work.*" Perhaps now and then we have a mind to work; but do we come together to pray about the work, as did Nehemiah and his people? Thus only can we be strengthened to go on to the praise of God. If there is not more expression of our dependence on God, the Lord will break us up, beloved. Prayer was always the resource of the captives in Nehemiah's day, and it should far more characterise us. As the enmity against these servants of Jehovah grew hotter, the more we read of their unwavering confidence in God—"Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night." (Chap. iv. 9.) They prayed, they watched, and they worked with a mind. They were in downright earnest. Ah, my friends, would to God these traits were all more seen in us!

But it was not all bright; decay began to show itself amongst the workers. Read chap. iv. 10: "And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is *decayed* and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall." Here is the beginning of *internal* weakness. Hitherto what hindered success came from without; but now faintheartedness appears in the workers; yet there was amongst them a devoted one, who was equal to the moment. Let us see how he acted—"Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall," said Nehemiah, "and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them:

remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses." (Chap. iv. 13, 14.) And what effect had these words of Nehemiah? "And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work." Blessed effect! Their hearts were turned to the Lord when they felt their feebleness; thus were they strengthened to go on. They counted on the great and terrible God, who brought the work and counsel of the sneering to nought, and the faint-hearted burden-bearer was again set heartily to work.

But the workmen were watchmen as well as builders. Read verse 16: "From that time forth, the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons . . . every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and *so builded*." Then at verse 23 they seem to have reached the highest point of devotedness—"So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing."

I pass over chap. v. with but little comment. There was internal trouble, and it came out. It is a poor thing when we fall out amongst ourselves. Satan is not careful what instrument he uses if only he can stop the work of God. His greatest victory is when discord is sown amongst the Lord's people. From verse 15 we learn what it was which ever kept the soul

of Nehemiah right—"But so did not I, because of *the fear* of God." This was in his heart in the presence of God.

In chapter vi. we find the enemy making another and most determined effort. If he cannot succeed by attacking the captives from without, and if the internal trouble is settled, he will now try to get the remnant to be less exclusive. "Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief." (Chap. vi. 2.) Here is the cry for union. "Why are you so exclusive? Cannot you join with us in the work of the Lord?" Now, beloved, Nehemiah teaches us, and Jeremiah also, how we are to meet all such advances. God in His grace has called us out from the evil that has come into His Church, and we must be careful not to lessen in the eyes of others, nor to lose the sense in our own souls, of the distance between the ground on which we are, and that out from which we have come. Beloved saints of God are where we were, but true love will cause us to walk in the light we have received, that they also may learn and obey the truth in the love of it.

Listen to what Nehemiah said to the messengers of Sanballat and Geshem, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Chap. vi. 3.) This was a beautiful answer. So sure as we depart practically from the ground of thorough separation to which our Lord has called us, our strength will be seen to go. Any vacillation brings in weakness. In the world it is said, "Nothing succeeds like success;" but, amongst saints, "Nothing succeeds like consistency."

Nehemiah said, "Why should the work cease whilst I come down to go?" And Jeremiah said another very plain, and most helpful word, which it is well we should heed, each one of us—"If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth; let them return unto thee, but return thou *not* unto them." (Chap. xv. 19.) The separated one must say, "I am here for God, and I must abide with God." But if Nehemiah will not listen to this proposal, Satan will put forth one more effort. Tobiah, Sanballat, and others, sought to make Nehemiah afraid, but again he goes to prayer. In everything he turns to God, and at verse 15 we read, "So the wall was finished in fifty-two days. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God."

Then chapter vii. 2 shows that Hanani and Haniah were put in charge of Jerusalem, and a very beautiful thing is said of one of these men. Of Haniah it is said, "He was a faithful man, and *feared* God above many." A lovely thing to be able to say of a brother in the Lord. May we merit such a comment! Let us seek so to live, that in truth this could be said of us.

In the eighth chapter two things come out—a deepening love for, and intelligence in, the word of God. "The Levites caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their places. So they read in the book, the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." "And all the people wept when they heard the words of the law."

Ah! the word had great power that day on the hearts and consciences of the people. And what followed this real heart-searching? Blessing, of course. "Nehemiah and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people said, Mourn not, nor weep, neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength." And at verse 12 we read of great mirth, "because they had understood the words that were declared unto them." They wept, for they knew how weak they were; but joy filled their hearts because God was their strength. It is well to feel our weakness, and to acknowledge it; but what cause for joy when we learn the strength of the Lord is ours! The joy of the Lord must be that which sustains us. Then we have a strength outside and in spite of all circumstances. Individually we ought to be so happy and so sure of our position that we have a portion to give to others. Streams of blessing should flow from us; we should be a refreshment to every one who crosses our path.

Now I think we learn, from what has been traced in Nehemiah, that as the darkness increases so does the blessing of the soul that is faithful to God. 2 Chron. xxx. 26 confirms what I have just said. There we find that the joy at Hezekiah's passover exceeded all since the days of Solomon. Then we read in 2 Chron. xxxv. 18 that the passover kept in the days of Josiah surpassed any since the days of Samuel; but what is said of the feast in Nehemiah's day, which the returned captives held after the wall of the city was finished? It excelled any since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun; "and there was very great gladness." There had been no feast of booths since the first that Israel kept when they entered the land. It was the brightest point in all

the history of God's ancient people for the one who was faithful to God, though the surrounding darkness was greater than at any other stage of their history. So, no matter what the difficulty, there is joy as deep, for the saint who will do God's will, in the days of decline, as in the first days when all was as God set it up.

What a comfort this is for us! Then let nothing hinder us; for if we make Christ our object, and "have a mind to work," our joy and blessing will be as great as was that of the Pentecostal saints, when *all* were *filled* with the Holy Ghost, and gladness and singleness of heart was characteristic of each one of them.

W. T. P. W.

FRAGMENT.

Do you indeed believe that you are part of the royal priesthood? (1 Peter ii.)—that you are a child of God, and waiting for God's own Son? Do you go through the wilderness musing upon all these wonders, knowing how to enjoy the blessings into which you are brought? When, for example, a little plan comes in, do you say, "No; I am waiting for *Thee* from heaven, Lord?" And then, do you know what it is to gird yourself afresh as one who has taken the attitude of expecting the Lord's return? Surely, if God is calling our attention to our varied positions and dignities which He has given us in Christ, and pours into our souls things of such a character and moment, it is not a marvellous thing that we should be called to show forth His praises. I must say, What a heart He must have! and I ought to be able to find water to satisfy my thirst, and have some for others beside.

G. V. W.

EXTRACT FROM AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER.

“THERE is need of building by the Word, but the earliest fruit of an awakened soul will be feeling, not knowledge, and this will become feeble and unhealthy if not fed by Christ and the Word. But this process went on at first, and has given the Epistles; but we see the weakness which may accompany it—they would have given their eyes, but did not hold fast justification by faith. All this needs the continual work of the ministry, not to make a fuss about the first feelings, the flowers which precede the fruit, but to labour therein to feed the soul.

“As to conversions in singing, there is nothing at all unscriptural. If the truth is in the hymn spoken of with divine affections for souls, affections expressed respecting a truth already outwardly admitted, it is quite within the ways and operation of the Spirit of God to act on the soul in a quickening way by it, not without truth, but by truth so addressed to the soul.

“I do not say that the work will be there as deep, or the foundation as solidly laid at the moment for after exercises, as if it was the direct application of the Word by the Holy Ghost to the conscience, but the heart receives Christ convincingly and lovingly so as to live. I have ever said that the smallest atom of Christ suffices for the Holy Ghost to quicken by, if it be really Him. No doubt a profound conviction of sin by the Word casts off a mass of imaginings of the flesh by a deeper inward work which such a conversion leaves undiscovered. But if God works, He will do His own work, and bring it to a good issue.”

J. N. D.

WHAT IS OUR POWER FOR WALK?

THIS question was recently addressed to us, and, as it may be helpful to others, we propose to answer it somewhat in detail. That the difficulty may be first understood, we give the exact form in which it was put; viz., Is Christ or the Holy Spirit our power for walk? Now, before we take it up in this way, it may be well to point out, what all will admit, that Christ is our example in His walk through this world. This is stated, indeed, distinctly by the apostle John. He writes, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." (1 John ii. 6.) And if all the scriptures which speak of the example of Christ are collected, it will be seen that they are used in a twofold way—either, as John, to point out God's standard for the believer (see 1 Peter ii. 18–25); or to encourage us in following in His steps (Heb. xii.), where Christ is set forth as the Leader and Completer of faith; as a perfect example of dependence from beginning to end; as One who died a martyr's death (though His death was much more than this): and we are exhorted to have His walk before our souls as an encouragement to a like endurance in the path of faith. "Ye," says the apostle, "have not yet resisted unto blood" (as He did), "striving against sin."

Every believer will assent to these statements; and the question, then, now comes, By what power is such a walk to be attained? One or two scriptures will give us the needed information. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as

many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. viii. 13, 14.) Again: "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit." (Gal. v. 25.) Two things are here plainly taught: first, that the hindrance (if we may so put it) to our walking as Christ walked, lies in the deeds of the body, or, as in Galatians, in the flesh which always lusteth against the Spirit, and seeks to re-assert its control over the child of God; and secondly, that the only power by which the flesh can be held in check—kept in the place of death, according to the judgment of God upon it in the cross of Christ—is the Holy Spirit. There is also the additional instruction, that we may be led of the Spirit; *i.e.* that He is not only our power for repression, for the mortification of our members (Col. iii.), but He also enables us to walk—is therefore our power for progress in the divine path. We must hold by these teachings most tenaciously, because we thereby learn that we have absolutely no natural resource; that we are shut up entirely to the energy of the Holy Ghost for conflict and walk, as for every activity of the divine life.

This then, at first sight, would seem to settle the question at the head of our paper. But there is another consideration, and this, if truly comprehended, will go to the root of the difficulty which is felt by so many souls. For be it observed, that though it be accepted that the Holy Spirit is our only power for walk, the question may still arise, How then is it that He does not enable us to follow Christ more energetically? There are numbers of true-hearted saints who long to be like Caleb, but who are disappointed at every step they take. They do follow, but instead of doing so fully, they feel that they are rather like Peter, following

afar off. Now it will help all such to understand that, notwithstanding they possess the Spirit of adoption, and are thus sealed, He will be inoperative, put forth no energy, unless the eye is on Christ; *i.e.* unless Christ is constantly before the soul as the object of faith. As the apostle says, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." That is, his faith had Christ as the Son of God as its object—Christ glorified at the right hand of God, glorified as man, but withal the Son of God, being ever, in this connection, the true and proper object of faith. He Himself said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." And when we are living every hour, yea, moment by moment, in dependence, Christ, as so exhibited, filling the vision of our souls, the object of our contemplation, the Spirit of God is ungrieved, and leads us on by His mighty power, so that the divine life which has been bestowed upon us flows out in the same channels, whatever the difference of volume, as those in which the life of Christ found expression when He was in this world. It is on this account indeed that the Spirit is termed in Rom. viii. 9 the Spirit of Christ.

This also explains another difficulty. To walk like Christ, it is sometimes asked, must we look at Him in His earthly pathway, or as seated at the right hand of God? We have already explained the uses made of the example of Christ in the Scriptures; and it will be readily seen that it is not Christ on earth, but Christ glorified, who is the object of our faith. It is, of course, the same Christ, but Christ as He now is, in the condition of glory, not as He was "after the flesh," is always presented to our souls. We study the life of Christ as

displayed in this scene to learn how He acted, comported Himself in the different circumstances through which He passed; and our souls are drawn out in adoring wonder as we behold the manifestation of His perfections, graces, and excellencies; but we know Him now only as glorified (see 2 Cor. v.); and it is therefore to Him as such, we repeat, that we now look.

Together with this is connected another thing. Contemplating the glory of the Lord, which shines forth without a veil, we are gradually transformed by the power of the Spirit—gradually, because it is from glory to glory—into the likeness of the One with whom we are thus occupied. And the same Spirit, who is the power of our transformation while our eyes are upon Christ, works mightily within us for the exhibition of Christ in our walk. Walking as Christ walked is not, therefore, external imitation, but the display of the inner life, in proportion as we are changed into the same image, in and through us, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

We do not add more for the present; but our readers will see that, when we speak of power for walk, we cannot separate Christ from the Holy Spirit. I might scripturally say, with the apostle, “‘I can do all things through Him’ (doubtless, Christ) ‘who strengtheneth me;’ for He is both my life and my strength” (Col. iii.; 2 Cor. xii.): and I can also scripturally say, “It is through the Spirit alone I can mortify the deeds of the body.” So in the life of our blessed Lord. He acted and wrought, and at the same time all that He did was by the Holy Ghost.

E. D.

A MEDITATION.

1 TIM. iv. 15.

MADE *sin*, Thou bar'st my *sins*
 Thou Holy One of God ;
 Jehovah's sword awoke,
 Thence flowed Thy precious blood.
 Hail ! boundless grace which sets me free,
 Sin judged, my sins too borne by Thee,
 That blood from judgment shieldeth me.

And I am *Thine*, through death
 For me, where wrath impelled
 Its billows all on Thee,
 And ever was annulled.
 Thou liv'st—I live, Thy sorrow o'er ;
 Mine—Thine to share for evermore,
 The Father's house, heaven's boundless store.

Be mine Thy lowly path
 On earth till that blest day ;
 Nothing the world hath now
 To give or take away.
 From all its shadows vain, I flee ;
 Hail ! Prince and Saviour, Lord, with Thee
 I come to spend eternity !

H. C. A.

ON HEBREWS II.

THE first four verses refer to the previous chapter. Christ's divine nature is looked at in chapter i., then in chapter ii. He is looked at as Man. In chapter i. it is the divinity of His Person, in chapter ii. His humanity. In these first four verses the apostle warns us not only not to disobey, but not to neglect so great salvation. You get in them the word of God, the heavenly thing brought down into this world, and applied to our consciences, so that everything in the natural state is judged; for the Word reveals what is heavenly and divine, but then it is *by* bringing in what is heavenly and divine that it judges me.

He goes on to say that everything will be made subject to a *man*, not to angels; they were used as instruments of His power. "What is man?" And yet God has all these wonderful thoughts about him. "What is man?" And then we get the answer—it is Christ; *He* is the Man of God's purpose; He created everything, and so when He takes it up, He must be the centre and Head over it. You find three reasons for this given in Scripture. First, He has *created* all things, and so He must be the Head of it when He comes and takes His place as Man (Col. i.); secondly, in Hebrews i., because He is Son, He is *Heir*; and then, thirdly, in Hebrews ii., because the purpose of God is to *Man*. In Psalm ii. you get Him as Son of God and King of Israel; in Psalm viii. He says, "What is man?" You will find a remarkable illustration of the difference between these two psalms in the end of John i. Nathanael bows to Christ, and owns

Him as the One they expected, according to Psalm ii.; then the Lord says to him, "You have believed me to be the Messiah, but you will see greater things than that; the angels of God ascending and descending upon the *Son of man*." It is a *Man* now that all these glorious creatures of heaven are ministering to. He did not take up angels, but the seed of Abraham. You get Psalm viii. quoted in the end of Ephesians i., and quoted more fully in 1 Cor. xv.; but in Heb. ii. you get it more developed as to the *place* that He takes. Verse 9 is half the Psalm fulfilled; He is crowned with glory and honour, gone back as *Man* into the glory. He is put as *Man* in the place of Lord over everything.

We see Him as regards His *Person*, everything accomplished, but not as regards the *things*; they are not under Him yet. And that is what we find in Rev. xi. — "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty . . . because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned;" and then we get in our chapter how He associates *us* with Himself. Our proper blessedness is to be with Him and like Him. All through the Hebrews we never find the Father's name, nor the Church either, except in chapter xii.; but you find saints walking down here, and Christ as a divine Person up there as Priest. It is the dependence of a weak individual on the priesthood of Christ. There is no priesthood for our *sins* now (He was Priest *and* Victim on the cross), but it is now "present grace to help in time of need." He is an Advocate with the Father for sin. Now He is sitting up there, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool; and we ought to be expecting too, with the blessed knowledge that He is

expecting us. He became a Man in order to be able to die. *We* taste death for *sin*, but by the grace of God *He* tasted it in obedience.

There are four reasons in this chapter why He came down to taste death. First, for God's glory. (v. 10.) It *became* God so to deal with Christ. In Christ's holiness (and it was absolute) He knew what it was to be made sin; in His love He knew what it was to be forsaken. There is not an instant that I am not perfect before God in virtue of the blood. The blood under God's eye never alters in its value; it is perfect and constant. The second reason is, because the power of evil was rampant there. (v. 14.) He takes out the sting of death for the believer. What is death to a person who knows the value of Christ's death? Why, it is simply, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." The very things that would be my ruin—death and judgment—are the very things that have saved me; for Christ has borne them for me. The Red Sea was death and judgment to the Egyptians, but it saved the Israelites. It is not merely the fear of sin or the fear of judgment, but it is the "fear of *death*," and Christ has been through it, and taken the sting out of it. "All things are yours . . . life or *death*." (1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.) The third reason is, our *sins* required it. (v. 17.) A complete, perfect propitiation. I get to feel my sins the moment I am converted, but I had not committed one of them when Christ bore them. It is all one to God when I committed them. It is the value of the work itself before God. I come to know it at a given moment. God would slight the blood of His own Son, if He imputed sin to me. He gave it (the propitiation) in love, and accepted it in righteousness. A person never has guile.

out of his heart till he knows forgiveness; till then he never overcomes the tendency to excuse himself. I do not mean wilful guile. Aaron, for instance, "There came out this calf." (Ex. xxxii.) Adam again, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me." (Gen. ii.) Supposing a man comes to pay my debts, I tell him every farthing I owe—all that is in my heart. When I see what God is going to do, I am glad for Him to know it all. "I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (Ps. xxxii.) Trusting God's love, we come and confess our sins, and find they are all gone. Perfect forgiveness was never known till the gospel came in; forbearance there was. Now we know absolute, perfect forgiveness, and an eternal redemption, as the fruit of Christ's eternal work.

The fourth reason is, He is able to sympathise. (v. 18.) I do not want sympathy for my sins; I want the hatchet of God's word applied to them. "In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." (Chap. iv. 12.) With Him there is an experimental knowledge of all the difficulties the saints pass through. I know Christ's power, of course; but then I know the *sympathy of His heart*. I cannot be in a trouble that Christ is not with me, and that He does not understand, and has felt more deeply than me, for a good deal of pride and selfishness often carry *us* through; but "*He suffered* being tempted," but never gave way. Here we are, walking through this world, but there is not a single thing that Christ does not see, and know, and feel. His disciples were compassed with infirmity; but He went through infirmity, and felt it, and is now on high. We have first in this chapter *where*

Christ is—at the right hand of God, but not all things put under Him yet; and then these four reasons for which Christ took the capacity of dying.

There is another thing which we find in this chapter, and that is, the *positive* blessing in verse 11. It is not the unity of the Body here, but Christ; and they who are sanctified “are all of one,” all one thing or piece, so to speak, but He the Head. Christ and all the saints are one set. It does not say that He came down as one of us, for He was totally alone till His death. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth *alone*.” He has brought us to Himself. As we were one with Adam, we are much more really one with Christ, joined by the Holy Ghost. We do not believe in His love enough, and the full reality and present exercise of it towards us; I mean in Him, of course.

“In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee.” (v. 12.) We ought to feel, each time we meet as an assembly, that Christ is there, and leads the praise. Think what it is that Christ should be there, and raising the song, so to speak! It is a wonderful thing, the present way He holds us as identified with Himself.

The Lord give us to taste and know that constant and exercised love of God towards us, shown in His death, but not all *spent* in His death, but exercised constantly toward us.

J. N. D.

THERE is nothing so petty as the human heart, but nothing on which God, by His grace, can compose such lovely and transcendent music, because man is the subject of redemption through Christ.

J. N. D.

ATONEMENT.

"THE day of atonement" had a very prominent place in the "feasts of Jehovah" which the children of Israel were commanded to observe. It was "an holy convocation" on the tenth day of the seventh month in each year. So important and solemn was it, when carried out according to the direction which Jehovah gave by Moses, that all in Israel were bound to cease from work, and to afflict their souls, or they would be destroyed from among the people. They were to look on, and see how Aaron, by the sin-offering and burnt-offering, made an atonement for all their sins. It was done "once a year" to typify that one sacrifice which Christ offered once for all.

In the chapter (Lev. xvi.) which gives the details of what was done on the great day of atonement, the word "atonement" occurs fifteen times; and the work is presented to us in three different aspects or parts of the one atonement—propitiation, substitution, and acceptance. All were fulfilled in the one offering of Christ, for "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Thus by the atonement made by our Lord Jesus Christ we are brought to God in the perfect efficacy of His work, and accepted in virtue of His offering. We are thus entitled to present rest and peace as well as eternal glory, and our hearts are filled with thanksgiving and praise. (Lev. xvi.)

1. PROPITIATION was for God, though about our sins. It is brought before us repeatedly in the New Testament, and always in reference to sins. "He is the propitiation

for our sins ;" God "sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins ;" "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Propitiation gives us the God-ward side of the finished work of Christ. (See 1 John ii. 2, iv. 9 ; Heb. ii. 17.) As another has said, "God was not as a heathen god, one who had to be propitiated that He might not be against us, but He did require that righteousness and holiness should be maintained in the universe." Man had sinned, had rebelled against God, and dishonoured His throne, which righteously called for the pouring out of divine wrath and judgment ; and though God is love, and loves sinners, yet is He righteous and holy in all His ways. What was then to be done ? for the claims of His throne in dealing with His creature man must be unsparingly met, and His righteousness and truth vindicated. God gave His Son. Divine love and wisdom brought in propitiation—"not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Propitiation then met the claims of the throne of God as to our sins. Hence, in this, the first part of the work of atonement, the blood of the sin-offering was carried by the high priest into the holiest of all—the presence of God—accompanied with a cloud of burning incense which covered the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, when Aaron took of the blood and sprinkled it with his finger *upon* the mercy-seat, and then sprinkled it seven times *before* the mercy-seat. (*cv.* 12-14.) The cloud of incense set forth the sweetness of the excellencies of Christ, and the blood the value of His atoning work for us in the presence of God. There was that now before the eye of God which spoke of propitiation for sins, of divine judgment, and

blood-shedding for remission. Such was the type on the great day of atonement.

But when we look at the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all these shadows pointed, we are taught that He "*once* suffered for sins," "died for our sins," rose again from among the dead, and went *into heaven itself by His own blood*, now to appear before the face of God *for us*. Christ is thus in heaven for us, the everlasting witness that propitiation for sins has been made; and the infinite and eternal efficacy of His blood is always before God. The claims of God's throne have, therefore, been righteously and fully met for all that come to God by Him; for Christ died for all. Because of this, God can now send out a world-wide message of forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation, and as "a just God and a Saviour" welcome, and justify from all things, every one that believes in Jesus. As we have seen, the whole value of His accomplished work is always before God; for Jesus Christ the Righteous is there, and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world; so that God can now say, as to every sinner who comes to Him for salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom," or, as the margin reads, "an atonement." Thus the believer has a place of perfect peace in God's presence in divine righteousness, and the gospel is sent freely to every creature under heaven.

2. SUBSTITUTION is another aspect or part of the work of atonement. If *propitiation* fully met the claims of the throne of God, *substitution* fully meets our need, and purges our conscience.

That another should suffer instead of the guilty, and

atonement made thereby, was often taught by Old Testament types. In Abraham's offering up a ram *in the stead of his son* we have the idea of substitution; and in convicted ones bringing sin-offerings, laying their hands upon the head of the offering, and in this way, as it were, transferring their sins to it, then the victim killed, the blood sprinkled, and the fat burnt; and the word of God declaring that in this way atonement was made, and on this account the offerer was forgiven, the blessed truth of substitution was plainly set forth. In this chapter we find *two* goats set apart for a sin-offering, and on the head of one of them Aaron laid both his hands, and confessed over him *all* the iniquities of the children of Israel, and *all* their transgressions in *all* their sins, *putting them* upon the head of the goat, and sending him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. (Lev. xvi. 21.) Thus we see in type *all* the sins of the people transferred to another and taken away. And in a coming age Israel's song of joy and deliverance will be, when calling to mind the sufferings and death of Messiah for their sins, "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. liii. 4-6.)

This is *substitution*. Jehovah laid the iniquity of His people upon Christ, and judged it all upon Him. God only could do this. He only could separate sins from us and lay them on Another. This He did to the praise

of the glory of His grace. For this we praise Him now, and, in millennial days, Israel will triumphantly celebrate this goodness of Jehovah; for not only will they bless Jehovah because He forgiveth all their iniquities and healeth all their diseases, but they will add, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions *from us*." (Ps. ciii. 3, 12.) They will see that their sins were taken by Jehovah from them and laid upon Christ, and that He was wounded and bruised for them. This is *substitution*; and the same principle of dealing with our sins is set before us in the New Testament. Our Lord said that His blood was shed *for many* for the remission of sins. In the Hebrews we are told that Christ was once offered to bear *the sins of many*; and if an ancient prophet declared "He shall bear *their iniquities*," the apostle to the circumcision says, "Who His own self *bare our sins* in His own body on the tree . . . by whose stripes we are healed." (Matt. xxvi. 28; Heb. ix. 28; Isa. liii. 11; 1 Peter ii. 24.) Here we have substitution plainly set forth. Our sins laid upon Jesus, He Himself bearing them, and we healed by His stripes. Elsewhere we read that He "once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God;" "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." So far we see how truly the Lord Jesus Christ has been our substitute as the bearer of our sins, and also of the righteous judgment for which they called.

But He was not only "delivered for our *offences*," but He who knew no sin was "*made sin* for us," and so bore instead of us the judgment due to sin in the flesh—our evil nature. Hence we are told that "our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be de-

stroyed." After "the fat of the sin-offering" had been burnt upon the altar in token of God's estimate of the value of the offering, the flesh and skin and dung of the victim were carried outside the camp and then burnt—all treated as unclean, thus plainly setting forth Christ "made sin for us," and coming under divine judgment for us, when God condemned "*sin in the flesh.*" Thus the nature from which the sins sprang has been judged, and set aside righteously in divine judgment in the death of Christ—"God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [or by a sacrifice for sin] condemned *sin in the flesh.*" Therefore we now have no place in the flesh before God. Christ having been raised up from among the dead and glorified, He hath sent forth His Spirit into our hearts. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you."

How truly then the type has been fulfilled in the atoning work of Christ, so that *all* our iniquities, *all* our transgressions in *all* our sins, are for ever gone by death and divine judgment; and a just God and Saviour can say of all who believe, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x. 17), so perfect and real is the work of Christ *for* us. But this is not all. There is a third thing—acceptance.

3. ACCEPTANCE. After Aaron had carried in the blood and sprinkled it *upon* and *before* the mercy-seat, and had come out and confessed, with hands laid upon the goat, *all* the sins of the children of Israel and sent him away, we are told that he took his burnt-offering and the burnt-offering of the people to make *an atonement* for himself and for the people. The burnt-offering was a sweet-savour offering; it was not, therefore, about

sins, like the sin-offering. Yet we find it was killed, the blood sprinkled, &c.; and though the offerer laid his hands upon it, it was not, as in the sin-offering, to typically transfer the sins of the offerer, but to identify himself with its acceptability. We read, therefore, in the inspired account of the burnt-offering, "it shall be accepted for him to make *atonement* for him." Atonement then in its application includes the precious truth of acceptance by virtue of Christ. The offerer was accepted with the burnt-offering. This is no doubt why it was offered after propitiation and substitution had been plainly set forth. The burnt-offering was most acceptable to God. All was burnt on the altar to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord. So the death of Christ, under the searching power of divine judgment, showed the perfectness of obedience, love, faith, and entire surrender to the will of God in the most trying circumstances, and was infinitely acceptable to God. In it God found a savour of rest; and as what the Saviour did was for us, as well as for the glory of God, it is accepted for us. Thus the believer, by the atoning work of Christ, is not only delivered in righteous judgment from guilt and condemnation, but he is brought to God, and has a place always before him of acceptance in virtue of that one offering which was once offered.

Our faith and hope then are in God. It was God who sent His own Son; it was God who delivered Him up for us all, who raised Him up from among the dead, and glorified Him as man at His own right hand. It is God who still sends forth the glad tidings of eternal salvation by Christ alone; it is God that justifieth the ungodly who believe; it is God to whom we are now

brought through faith in Christ Jesus; it is the love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us; it is God who keeps us by His power through faith unto salvation; and it is His Son from heaven for whom we wait to take us to the Father's house, to be for ever to the praise of His glory.

H. H. S.

EXPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF JONAH.

CHAP. III.

THE moment Jonah was delivered "the word of the Lord came unto him the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee;" for if the Lord pursued His servant with His storm and tempest, and cast him into the deep, in the midst of the seas, it was for restoration as well as correction, and to put the prophet into a right condition of soul to be the vessel of the divine will. Accordingly he did not now attempt to flee, but he arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. It is always so in the Lord's dealings with His people. If we turn back from the path which He marks out for us, we surely must encounter the chastenings of His hand, and the object of His dealings is never accomplished until we are brought face to face again with the path from which we declined, and made willing, by grace surely, to enter upon it. It is on the principle enunciated by the psalmist--"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word."

This teaching lies on the surface; but the typical import of this chapter has, we apprehend, the deeper significance. Jonah is, in figure, a risen man; for he

says, "Out of the belly of hell" (or the grave) "cried I." Jehovah had brought death in upon him; and together with this, it must be borne in mind, as shown in the last paper, he is identified with the remnant. There is therefore a double symbolical meaning. Israel, in the person of Jonah, is set aside, on account of their unfaithfulness, as the vessel of testimony. Judging according to man the light is quenched; all hope for the world has for ever disappeared. When all God's waves and billows were rolling over the heads of those whom He had chosen as His witnesses on the earth, where was the possibility of any further testimony in the world? We might ask with the psalmist, "Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" (Ps. lxxxviii. 10-12.)

The answer to these questions is only found in the death and resurrection of Christ. All hope, as founded upon man's responsibility, was indeed gone; but God in His grace and mercy sent His beloved Son, and when He came He identified Himself with His people, went down in His compassion into the very place where they lay dead in trespasses and sins, Himself died, undertaking the whole of their responsibility, that He might glorify God in the very scene and place where they had dishonoured Him. As He Himself said, "Like as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so should the Son of man" (the rejected One) "be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." But it was not possible that He should be holden of death, not possible, whether we consider the

glory of God, or the rights of His own person; and hence He rose on the third day as the first-begotten of the dead, and it is of Him as the risen One that Jonah becomes a figure. As the risen One, He is (though He was ever that), the faithful and true witness; and Israel being now set aside, He can, in the fulfilment of the purposes of God, bear testimony to the Gentiles, and the issue shows, in figure, that the casting away of the Jew is the reconciliation of the world. (Rom. xi.) The two things are in the chapter—the historical fact of Jonah's mission, and that of which this mission is an emblem.

Jonah, now obedient, goes to Nineveh; but before his preaching is described the Spirit of God pauses to call attention to the magnitude of the city. It was a city great before God, of three days' journey. Such was the result of the activity of man in his alienation from God, priding himself upon the greatness, the pomp, and magnificence of his works which tempt him to say with Nebuchadnezzar, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" And, intoxicated with his own pride, he cares not, even if he remembers, that the judgment of God has been pronounced upon all his works. It was this judgment of which Jonah was the herald, proclaiming in the face of the "haughty glory" of the world, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

The character of the message demands our attention. It is one of pure judgment, unaccompanied by any offer of mercy whatever, even though the people should repent. This may seem strange; but it must be remembered that Jonah's preaching had reference only to

God's government upon the earth. As a rule indeed the prophets generally were not concerned with eternity; *i.e.* the judgments threatened, and the blessings promised on condition of obedience or repentance, were confined to this world. The subject of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, was not within the scope of their ministry. Connected as they were with the kingdom, they spake only of God's ways, claims, righteousness, and government as displayed in this scene.

Looked at in a typical way, the message of Jonah has another significance. The number forty has a distinct meaning in the word of God, as may be seen in the forty years' wandering of Israel in the desert, the temptation of our Lord during forty days in the wilderness, &c. It indicates the period of full probation. Thus understood in this passage, and bearing in mind that Nineveh sets forth the world—the world, especially in the aspect of its exaltation through its own pride against God, we have simply the annunciation of the fact, that after the world has been fully tested, tested in every variety of way, it will be destroyed. It is the cross of Christ that gives us the culmination of God's test of the world; and hence our Lord said, "Now is the judgment of this world." Judgment irreversible was passed upon it in the death of Christ; for thereby God demonstrated openly, before all, the character, the hopelessness of the evil, of the world, inasmuch as it accepted the leadership of Satan in crucifying God's beloved Son. True it was that God withheld the execution of the judgment; for in the death of Christ was laid the foundation on which God could righteously offer salvation to that same world in

its guilty and lost condition, and accomplish His own counsels of grace in redemption. But the judgment has not been recalled, could not be consistently with the glory of God. It has only been suspended, because the Lord "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But," Peter goes on to say, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which 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. 9, 10.) Yes, it remains true—"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

The effect of the preaching was wonderful. We read, "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them." It began with the king, who "arose from his throne" on hearing the word, "and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes." Moreover, in conjunction with his nobles, he issued a decree that neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, should taste anything; they were not to feed nor to drink water. In a word, an universal fast was proclaimed. All were to be covered with sackcloth, to cry mightily unto God, and to turn from the evil of their ways, in the hope that God would turn away from His fierce anger, that they might not perish. (*vv.* 5-9.) The reader will remark that they believed God. In chapter i. the sailors cried to Jehovah, because there it was the glory of Jehovah in His relation to the Jew that had been manifested in His judgments. Here it is the world in relation to God as such, and this will explain the difference; and

being in this chapter on the ground of creatorial relationships, the cattle are also mentioned; for the whole creation (and this includes them) shall one day be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. (Rom. viii.)

Our Lord refers, in a striking way, to the repentance of Nineveh—"The men of Nineveh," He says, "shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here." (Matt. xii. 41.) It was proof indeed of the hardness of the hearts of those to whom the Lord came preaching repentance because the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matt. iv. 17), that they were insensible to His appeals, even though His appeals were enforced by the miracles which He wrought in their midst. The Ninevites were heathen; the Jews were God's chosen people, and He who came to His own was their own Messiah, Jehovah indeed the Saviour; but they turned a deaf ear to His entreating cries. (Matt. xxiii. 37.) What clearer demonstration could there have been of the utter depravity of their hearts? And are "the men of this generation" any better? Combined with the ministry of reconciliation which is still carried on (2 Cor. v.) in the tender mercy of God, the proclamation is still made—"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown;" and who heeds it? A few here and there, through grace; but the mass, the world, is as insensible to-day as it was in the days of our Lord. And further, suppose that some divinely sent messenger were to stand to-day in the midst of London with the message of Jonah, what would be his reception? It is not too much to say that he would be regarded either

as a fool or a madman. Oh, that it were better understood that the bestowment of light and privileges do but bring an increase of responsibility and of condemnation, when the light is refused, and the privileges are despised! Beautiful spectacle this of the repentance of Nineveh, and no mean foreshadowing of the time when the Gentiles shall serve the Lord with one consent!

The chapter concludes with the action of God consequent upon Nineveh's repentance—"And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not." We see again what is in the heart of God towards men—that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked; and hence, that if He proclaim judgment it is with the object of turning them from their evil way. The people of Nineveh did not know what He would do. They only said, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent?" And God responded to this feeble faith, as He ever does, and spared them from destruction. It is but a human mode of speech, it need scarcely be added, when it says that He repented. His aim was to produce repentance on the part of Nineveh; and this having been done, He could, consistently with His ways in government, show His compassion and forgiveness. What abundant encouragement for the sinner is found in this record.

"He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on Him." But then, blessed be His name, there is also written, "He that heareth my word, and believeth Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.)

E. D.

THE BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE.

THE word of God constantly presents two subjects of the deepest interest for each one of us: one is the degraded state of the heart of man; the other, the manner in which God, in His grace, seeks and saves the sinner. Created innocent, man listened to Satan, and sin entered the world, with its sad consequences of misery of every kind during life; then death, and after that the judgment of God. Placed under the holy law of God, man showed that he was incapable of keeping it. And finally, when called by grace, he has trodden under foot the goodness of God, crucified the Lord Jesus, and resisted the Holy Spirit. The prophet had already cried, "Lord, who has believed our report?" and Stephen, recounting the history of the people of Israel before the Jewish Sanhedrim, says, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them who shewed before the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." (Acts vii. 51-53.)

What a picture of the perversity of a people so favoured of God! But, as has often been remarked, Israel is only an example chosen of God to bring out what man is when placed in the most favourable circumstances for producing good, if good were in him. It is a moral mirror, wherein we can see ourselves as we are, as God sees us. Nevertheless, God has not

given us His word to plunge us into despair, but to make known to us the truth; for His grace cannot be separated from the truth. We see this in the history of the Samaritan woman. When her conscience was reached, she made the confession, "He told me all things I had ever done." Thus the woman had learnt that He who had spoken unto her was the Christ, and in the simplicity of her faith she invites her fellow-citizens to come and see Him in whom her heart, exposed in its depths by the light of the truth, had nevertheless found its refuge. Her invitation led them to say, "We have heard Him ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world." God must act to produce in us the conviction of sin; for without that, the natural heart would always reject the truth. We do not like to hear it; we feel condemned by it; and moreover we love sin.

God operates in man by the conscience. True intelligence of spiritual things is only acquired by the conscience being awakened and exercised in the presence of God. Consequently where God acts, the truth presented to the heart by His Spirit and by His word leads to confession of sins. Instead of seeking to cover oneself and hide from God, as Adam did in the garden of Eden, the hidden evil in the heart is laid bare, upon discovering that it is God Himself who delivers from it. He reveals Himself as the One "who forgives iniquity and transgression and sin." (Exodus xxxiv. 7.) Thus grace and truth came together. The same thing is brought out in the gospels. Before the Lord Jesus was manifested in the world, there to make known the Father, and to accomplish redemption, God sent a man before Him to prepare His way—John the Baptist. For

those who submitted to it, the baptism that he preached was the guarantee that their sins would be put away, although the work in virtue of which this could be done righteously was not yet accomplished. But in thus accepting this ordinance from the God of grace and truth, they took their place before Him, walking in His presence with the blessed conviction of being the objects of His favour, and that in His own way and time He would make known the fulness of His salvation. It was a baptism for the remission of sins in view of redemption. John required sincerity of heart in all those who came to him. "Produce therefore fruit worthy of repentance, and do not think to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham." In other words, "Do not rely on temporal advantages, saying that, because you are descended from Abraham according to the flesh, you must necessarily share in all the promised blessings." No; the time was come when God announced that He would no longer bear with sin. The time of man's prolonged testing had come to a close, and now he must choose between the grace or the judgment of God. And besides, if the promised blessings were to be enjoyed nationally, the people must turn to God, rending their hearts, and not their garments, as Joel, and indeed all the prophets, had said. (Jer. xxv. 4, 5; Hosea vi. 4-6.) On such terms only could the kingdom be entered.

In the desert of Judæa John proclaimed, "Already the axe is applied to the root of the trees: every tree therefore not-producing good fruit is cut down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water to repentance: but He that comes after me is mightier than I,

whose sandals I am not fit to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He shall throughly purge His threshing-floor, and shall gather His wheat in the garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable." (Matt. iii. 10-12.) In view of the announced judgment, every one must take his place before God in integrity, separating himself from the evil which is in the world, and coming to God in order to profit by the proffered grace. In principle the apostle Paul said the same thing at Athens: "God therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, now enjoins men that they should all everywhere repent: because He has set a day in which He will judge the habitable earth in righteousness, by the Man whom He has appointed." (Acts xvii. 30, 31.) Repentance was absolutely necessary, and God required a real work in the heart; for God is not mocked. He knows our most secret thoughts. It is not a question of a profession of religion of whatever kind, but of turning to God in self-judgment to profit by the grace He offers.

And in the case of God's chosen people, this work must be national as well as individual. They boasted of their descent from Abraham; but Abraham's children, if they were to realize as a people what God had promised, could only do so on the condition of partaking of the character of their father, walking with God, and obeying His word. (Gen. xviii. 19.) The Ezras and the Daniels had felt this deeply, and their sense of the national sins were all the deeper from their own walk having been irreproachable in the fear of God. They felt what sin was to God, and judged it as in His presence.

It was while Daniel was thus confessing his sin, and

the sin of his people, that he learned that he was "greatly beloved." (Dan. ix.) Of course, a work in the heart of this nature must be individual. But when God wrought in many, as He did through John's ministry, He brought to light a company of people, who walked in the steps of the men of faith of old, and thus practically formed "the remnant," so often spoken of—the nucleus of God's Israel, over whom Christ was to reign. The moral character of this remnant is beautifully set forth in the beginning of Luke's gospel. They trusted in God's mercy, felt their need of a Saviour, and learned salvation "in the remission of *their sins*." They sought for nothing in themselves which could in any sense give them a title to the promised blessings. They had only their sins to bring to God; but in the blessed sense that, through His mercy, the Day-star from on high had visited them, to shine to them that dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death. (See Job x. 21, 22; xxxiv. 22.) What an assembly was that which surrounded John at Jordan! They were all guilty, self-convicted sinners, who had nothing to plead for their justification, and moreover did not seek to do so. They came to confess the evil that they had committed, and to put themselves into the hands of God. They all understood, as moreover John had told them, that a changed life would manifest the sincerity of their repentance. We cannot confess our sins in the presence of God and yet continue a mode of life characterized by the pursuit of the world and its vanities, and by insubjection to God. We cannot love sin and at the same time hate it. Sincere confession of sin is a proof that we hate it. But the mere fact of hating it does not deliver from it, whether from its guilt or from its power.

In order that we may be delivered from sin, God must intervene. And the baptism of John was the divine guarantee of this intervention; so that the people were in expectation. John had the sorrow of listening to these histories of all kinds of evil; his life was passed in the midst of sinners; his ministry was for them. But he could not yet tell them that their sins had been put away from before God.

In the midst of these people, doubtless despised by the proud world, the Lord Jesus came to take His place. He came from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. John did not understand this act of grace; he strongly opposed it, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? But Jesus said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." The will of the Father was ever the motive power of Jesus, the perfect model of man as he should be according to God's thoughts, and for God on the earth. He could ever say, in the words of Psalm xvi., "I have set the Lord always before me." Thus He would identify Himself in grace with those in whom the Spirit of God was working, leading them to listen to His word, and submit to His will. At the same time He fulfilled another word of this Psalm, showing that He found all His delight in those whom He called "the saints that are in the earth, the excellent." The world despised them; but God in grace had His eye upon them, and the Lord Jesus, publicly identifying Himself with them, began His ministry in thus openly recognizing the work that God was then accomplishing by His servant John the Baptist.

It is evident that personally the Lord did not need to go to John. He had no sins to confess; but in order

to fulfil righteousness, He must recognize that which God was doing, and practically to show who were the persons whom God called "the saints"—those who bowed to the truth of God, with conscience exercised in His presence; those who did not seek to escape from the consequences of a public confession of what they were. Jesus had come to suffer and to accomplish His work of grace for just such. He did not think of Himself; He thought of God, and of the objects of His grace—He identifies Himself with them in grace, however great the humiliation for Him. But God takes upon Himself to glorify Him. "Jesus, having been baptized, went up straightway from the water; and lo, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him: and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight." God shows the personal perfection of the Lord Jesus, and glorifies Him in the eyes of all, at the moment when He came to accomplish this act of humiliation in publicly placing Himself in the midst of sinners.*

But this is not all. At this moment, and in this place, God is fully revealed for the first time as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though proofs of the Trinity are not wanting in the Old Testament, we should there seek in vain for the full revelation that we have here. The Son of God was there—pure, perfect, spotless; the voice of the Father acknowledged Him as such; and the Holy Spirit, in a corporeal form, came to abide upon Him, the only Man who could receive the Spirit

* Later on, those whom He came to save crucified Him between two thieves. How opposed is the heart of man to God! And how the perfect grace of the Lord shines out in contrast with all the hatred that man pours upon Him!

in this way; for He alone was without sin. The dove was a bird that the law of Moses allowed to be offered for a burnt-offering; it was the emblem of the purity that God requires. In taking this form, the Spirit shows that divine purity, absolute and perfect, was found in Jesus.

When the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.), He took the form of tongues of fire, because in us there are ever things which call for the fire of judgment, with which "every one shall be salted." (Mark ix. 49, and compare 1 Cor. xi. 31.) In Jesus there was nothing to judge; everything in Him was wellpleasing to God. And thus He is sealed with the Holy Spirit for His public ministry in a way which morally separates Him even from those in the midst of whom He lived and walked, and whom He brought to the knowledge of God. At the same time, how changed was their position! They had listened to the gospel of repentance preached by John the Baptist, and they now found themselves associated with the One who was declared Son of the Father. Henceforth they were united around His glorious Person. Doubtless they did not yet understand the extent of the blessing into which they had been introduced; but they found themselves in the presence of the One who was the truth, and also the personal expression of all the blessing into which God brings His redeemed saints. They could not enjoy this blessing until redemption was accomplished, and the Holy Spirit had descended upon them. This took place later (Acts ii.); but the expression of all divine blessing, as well as the Christian position fully revealed later on, was henceforth presented to faith in the person of the Lord.

The believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit; he knows the Father, and is the object of His favour; the heavens are opened to him, because the Lord is there, and He who sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one.

The revelation was made in connection with the person of Jesus as a Man upon earth, and humbled even to taking a place with sinners; for in Him all was perfect. *We* enjoy this blessing by virtue of the redemption that He has wrought, and because He has, as Man, taken His place at the right hand of God in glory; for the Holy Spirit could not be given until Jesus was glorified. (John vii. 39.) But as soon as the Holy Spirit was come, the Christian position could be, and was, plainly set forth; so that the believer, sealed with the Holy Spirit, learns that he is united to a glorified Christ, while waiting for the moment when he shall be caught up to be with the Lord in glory in the Father's house. And, in the meantime, the path, the ways, the manner of life of Jesus is the expression of the Christian walk. He said: "The Father has not left me alone, because I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." (John viii. 29, and compare with that John iii. 22.)

May we lay hold of the truth as it is IN JESUS, and together learn the lesson of practical holiness, gathered around His adorable person. May we lay hold by faith of the fulness of the truths conveyed in what Stephen saw, finding the heavens opened to us because Jesus, the Son of man, is there—learning the truth too in such a way that our hearts may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. xv. 13); and while waiting to enjoy the full blessing, of which He is the earnest, have our hearts, thoughts, and affections set upon things above, "where Christ sitteth." W. J. L.

THE PATH OF FAITH.*

TIMOTHY ii. 11-13.

It is a great thing for us to know where we are, beloved—our place and condition in the sight of God; and then to know what God has declared concerning us, not only as to our condition at the present moment, but as to our whole past in the place wherein we find ourselves. It is not enough to know that God has visited us in grace, but also what is the actual result of the grace that has thus visited us; and while called upon to hold fast the great principles connected with the ground on which God at first set us, we may not be able to apply those principles to our present circumstances. Where the original ground has been departed from they are not applicable; still to the path of faith they have their application. We find this exemplified in the history of Israel. In Hezekiah's time, when Jerusalem was threatened with destruction, the Lord said of the king of Assyria, "He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there . . . for I will defend it;" whereas afterward, with the certainty of judgment coming upon the city, the man that would save his life must go out of it. In the one case it was the place of safety. God was not dealing in judgment at the time. In the other there is wonderful difference, not that the relation and mind of God toward His people had altered in any way, or ever will alter—"The

* This is a verbatim report of a lecture given at Edinburgh, by J. N. D., in October, 1873. The reader will at once perceive its special importance and application.—[ED.]

gifts and calling of God are without repentance;" but the condition of the people was entirely different. What I want you to notice is, that the conduct of the faithful was exactly opposite. They abode in Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time. To have done so when the Lord had given it up would have been certain judgment.

We have to know where we are so as to see what the bearing of the word of God is to us in the position we hold. Now suppose we take the beginning of the Acts, and read what is there said about the Church, we find the Lord adding to the assembly daily—the multitude of believers of one heart and soul—all things common, and so on. They went about in the power of the Holy Ghost, and when they came together the place was shaken where they were assembled. Do we find such a state of things now? If I take all the denominations of professing Christians—the Roman Catholic as well—I find none to correspond to it; all are mixed up with evil. Still God has His Church, and knows His Church; but we need spiritual discernment to see where we are, and to perceive the ways and will of God in the circumstances.

Another thing we have to take into account is, that wherever God sets up anything with which the responsibility of man is associated the first thing man does is to spoil it. Take, for instance, Adam in Eden. There we have man created innocent, and put under the test of obedience. He falls, and is driven out: that, in a moral sense, is a total end of him, though not of God's dealing in patience with him. Take again Noah after the flood. What is the first thing he does? The world had been put into his care, under his government, as we say, and one of the first things he did was

to get drunk. Instead of influencing others for good he makes himself a disgrace, and brings a curse upon his children, upon Canaan and his posterity. Take again Israel in the wilderness. There I get the law—another of God's dealings with man in responsibility—and Moses coming down from the mount to find the people already sunk in idolatry! But enough has been said to show that the whole merit upon man's side is gone. The establishment of monarchy but confirmed this. When the house of David reigned, strange women took away their hearts; when Nebuchadnezzar reigned, the golden image was set up, the kingdom was taken from him, and the beast's heart was given to him. So that while we find God uniform in faithfulness, in patient mercy sustaining His people in trial, we find also the constant, uniform way of man is to upset that which God has set up.

Nor, when we come to the Church, do we find it otherwise. Before the canon of Scripture closes the working of this principle is manifest. It is well to mark this. Without doing so it is impossible to walk with any knowledge of our position. The Church had already failed. Nevertheless God has gone on with it in faithfulness and longsuffering ever since. Just as with Israel. In the days of Isaiah we read, "The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing," and so on; yet the predicted judgment was not fulfilled for eight hundred years. The Lord forbore with them, and even when there was no remedy He still went on with various testimonies to them by the prophets. The faithfulness of God is infallible; but if we apply this truth to existing circumstances, so as to sanction the evil man has brought in, the whole

principle is gone, and we find ourselves exactly in the position of those who in Jeremiah's time were found crying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." They were counting upon the infallible faithfulness of God at the very moment He was dealing in judgment with them, and the end of it was ruin, just as it will be with us if we leave out the sense of our responsibility. Again, in Isaiah, the remnant were told to "look to the rock from whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence they were digged"—thus reminded that Abraham was alone when God called him, and gave him the promise that his seed should be "as the stars of heaven for multitude." So now, although they were alone, God was faithful, and, as He had blessed Abraham, would bless them; but in Ezekiel, when seeking to apply this principle, "Abraham was one," they said, "and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance," they misapprehended the condition in which God regarded them. *If we leave out the sense and apprehension of our condition we utterly want spiritual intelligence.*

Now I think we are in the "last days." And I sometimes question if people weigh the full force of that. I could show you from Scripture that the Church, as a responsible system, was—even from the very outset—that which had got into the condition of judgment. A mistake that thousands are now slipping into is, that the Church judges, teaches, does this, does that; but if we take the word of God, we find that God has judged the Church. Yet His long-suffering and patience have borne with it as with Israel. What we have to look in the face is this. Man in responsibility is a uniform failure,

and the Church has not escaped the effect of that principle. God, in His sovereign mercy, allowed evil to come up; so that before the closing of the Word He might give us His judgment upon it. Look at the epistle of Jude: "Beloved, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." There is the faith in danger already. They were to contend for that which was slipping from them. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Then, verse 14, "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these"—that is, those persons he speaks of—"saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all," &c.; thus showing, that those "certain men," who had then come in, were the persons God had spoken of executing judgment upon, and showing too, that, at the very starting-point of the Church's history, sufficient evil was evinced to call for the revelation that the ground of judgment was already there. Take the first epistle of John, and you get further: "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time." Notice, that it is not the coming of Christ, but antichrist, and departure from the truth, that characterizes the last time. The Church of God hardly acknowledges that. In the following verses we read, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be

made manifest that they were not of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." It is as if he would say, "Do not let these things discourage you; you have got that which enables you to be for God even in such circumstances." And what was the practical state of the Church as we find it elsewhere in the Word? Paul, in the epistle to the Philippians, says, "I have no man likeminded who will naturally care for your state; for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." That is what the apostle says of the Church of God at the time he wrote; a sad testimony indeed. And again, in the second epistle to Timothy, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." And Peter, in his first epistle, says, "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God."

I have quoted these passages to show that even then—what was quite true at the beginning, but more manifest at that time—the Spirit of God could, and did, discern and testify of that which was the ground of final judgment, and testify, too, that the Church was already in the place of judgment. Nothing shows this so exceeding strongly as the epistles to the seven churches in the Revelation. There we get the Church in its entire history. I do not refer to that now; but I wish to call your attention to the ever-recurring injunction, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." There is one thing—to my mind a very solemn thing—here. It is this. Christ is not looked at as the Head of the body. (That He is so is nevertheless true. It is His own blessed place for ever and ever, thank God.) But it is not in that character He is here

seen; neither is it as the Father and the Son made known to us by the Holy Ghost, as in the epistles; nor yet in the character of a servant, as when "He took a towel and girded Himself, and began to wash His disciples' feet." But He is here seen walking in the midst of the candlesticks, judging their state, finding something to approve of and much to disapprove of; and consequently we get that condition of the Church brought out which makes it subject to the judgment. Then our ear is called to listen to what He has said; that is, as an individual I have to consider the state of things in which I find myself, and judge of it according to Christ's word. A very serious thing it is to find that, even at that time, the beautiful plant that God had just planted was impaired by man. Not that the blessings had been withdrawn; but the condition of the Church was not what it had been when the blessings were put into the hands of men. Now that they had got the blessings, they were responsible for the use they made of them. Look at Thessalonians. There you get their "work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope;" whereas here you get, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience." Where was their faith, their love, their hope? "Ah!" he says, "you have left your first love;" that is, the condition in which they were when He put them into this responsibility. He deals with them in view of the blessings He had given them. "You have left your first love," He says; "now, if you do not repent, I will come and take your candlestick away;" so executing the judgment which Peter said must begin at the house of God. In this the apostle alluded to Ezekiel: "Slay utterly old and young, and begin at my sanctuary." It was only the beginning of

judgment; for—not the Church merely, but—the whole world has been judged.

The Church of God was set to be the epistle of Christ in the world, and as such utterly failed. Not but that individuals may be found in the path of faith, and walking blessedly, like Elijah. In his day the whole land was given to idolatry; nevertheless God could find seven thousand in Israel whose knees had not bowed unto Baal, and whose mouths had not kissed him. It is not that individuals are not to be found walking in obedience; but that the state of things in which they walk is totally depraved. Such was the state of things in which Elijah found himself. And God sustained him, and greatly blessed him; and we think of him as one of those two who were taken up to heaven without dying. And such is the state of things in which we find ourselves. Surely, beloved, our hearts ought to be thoroughly bowed with the thought that what was so blessed, so beautiful, so perfect, should have been so marred at the very outset. How much more when we see what it has all come to! And why such failure? The strength of God was there, but they did not count upon it, and they constantly gave way; just like the ten spies, when they saw the walled cities and the children of Anak. But it is very important for us to know that, although the Church has utterly failed, the strength of God does not fail. Christ is quite as sufficient as at first; and though the first condition of the Church be lost, all the strength, all the blessing, is as sure to the grasp of faith as ever.

Now mark another thing—a most striking principle in the ways of God—that is, power in the midst of evil. Earth is its sphere of action, not heaven. In

heaven there will be no evil, but all will be blessedness and brightness; nothing to overcome, nothing to watch against, nothing to do with evil. But it is now that we have the power of the Spirit, when evil and darkness are on every hand. Take the Acts again. Read the whole beginning of the Church. See how every difficulty brings out the power of the Spirit, as it brings out the need of the saints. They suffered persecution, and had power to endure it. "And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (Notice that it is not said, "Every Christian shall suffer," but, "All that will live godly.") There we get also the power of the Spirit in miracles, as we have it in the person of Christ before His death. He had power in Himself, doubtless; but, as the dependent One, He received power for His walk. We are told that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him." A display of God like this could not fail to draw out the hostility of the carnal mind. As He said, "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father." And the end was—they crucified Him. When He comes again it will be the coming of good in power—power to overcome the evil, to confine Satan. Then "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree." But now we have good in the midst of evil; and so long as Satan is the prince of this world, if the two things get mixed up, the evil swamps the good. You see this in the parable of the virgins. The wise and the foolish go together, and the consequence is, they all sleep; and the moment they awake, and trim their lamps, they go together again.

Still linked with evil, they fall under the power of evil. Yet the apostle says, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." For an illustration of this, take Israel in the time of Joshua. Joshua's time is a time of power. Jericho is taken; but evil is allowed to come in, and before Ai they fail. Then, going back to Gilgal, they get fresh power. Their enemies are subdued; the walled cities, the children of Anak, are as nothing before them—they overcome all. There we have good in the midst of evil, with power carrying on the good, and putting down the evil. In Judges it is the converse. They are still God's people; but the power is on the side of the evil. How was this? They had gone up from Gilgal (*i.e.* "Rolling away") to Bochim (*i.e.* "Weeping"). Formerly Joshua and all Israel had gone back to the death of the flesh; for that is what we have in figure in Gilgal. There they received power. It just means this: they had crossed Jordan; had come into Canaan, the place of power; and the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. But in Bochim we get another thing. They were still God's people. His power was there, His angel was there; but it was a time of weakness. There is a lesson for us here, beloved. If we do not go back to the true annihilation of self in the Lord's presence, we cannot come out with power. Take the case of any ministering saint. He will break down, he will fail; he must renew his strength. This indeed is the great secret of the Christian's life. If my intercourse with God be broken, I am utterly empty.

How blessed it is to see that Israel's God did not give them up! They built an altar in Bochim; yet they were constantly tried in judgment. How was

this? The people had lost their place. We have to look to that in the consideration of our present condition. The Church has lost its place, and in the same way the Church is under judgment. We read, "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Is not that losing their place? And losing their place, they lose their power, and must remain in weakness, or else get to Bochim. What is peculiar about Bochim is, that they had to say to God there. In the Church of God we find a like relationship with God. Israel is a picture of it. In the beginning of the Church we have good, and power on the side of the good. In one day three thousand, and in another five thousand, are added to it. Alongside of this I get the power of evil. Yet God was showing His power in another way; and I doubt not that if we were more faithful, our experience would be more similar. They were filled with the Spirit. When they came together, the place was shaken where they were assembled. As they lived in the Spirit, they also walked in the Spirit, and they went about manifesting the power of the Spirit. All that was going on with the power of evil; and we do not leave this scene till we have the evil brought to light in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Still the Spirit of power is there. The sin is instantly judged; they are cut off, and the result is that great fear comes upon all the Church. There we have the display of it all—the power of the good in the disciples testifying to Jesus; the power of the evil opposing, and putting them in prison. And then, before the history closes, "the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God;" that is, the last of all times till Christ comes in glory, when His power puts down the evil. J. N. D.

(To be continued, D. V.)

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ON JOHN II.*

THE second chapter is a chapter of signs throughout: the *third* day; the marriage; the vessels of purification empty; the wine failing; the water turned into wine; the, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" the casting out of the temple the profaners of His Father's house; and the raising up of the temple of His body.

The first and second days give us in John i. the ministries respectively of John the Baptist and Christ. John directs to Christ, the Lord gathers to Himself. With the third day the scene is changed; we are here on resurrection ground. Jesus must come again, as they had seen Him depart. Great events belonging to that day are figured here in the marriage in Cana, and the cleansing of the house of God. The marriage of the Jewish bride will then take place, and judgment overtake the profaners of the house of the Lord. "For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and *the year of my redeemed* is come." "She shall be brought unto the *king* in raiment of needlework; upon thy right hand did stand the *queen* in gold of Ophir." (Ps. xlv.) We must not confound the description of the heavenly with that of the earthly bride. "Bride of the Lamb" applies to the heavenly assembly, which He presents to Himself all glorious, without spot, morally perfect. The earthly bride, or queen, is also "all glorious within;" but the "within" seems to refer to the chambers of the King,

* The above paper is taken from a little publication recently issued, *Notes and Meditations on the Gospel of John*, by R. E. (part I.). Our readers will perceive that chap. i. first appeared in these pages.—[ED.]

the nearest relationship to the King. Compare the hundred and forty-four thousand belonging to Judah who stood *with the Lamb* on mount Sion. (Rev. xiv.) This was anticipative of the glory coming in. They are, I believe, of Judah, not of Israel (the ten tribes); the latter class had no part in the sufferings of the rejected Messiah. What a privilege to be permitted to share in His rejection! "Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom." The prophets who wrote after the captivity, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, speak of the Jews and Jerusalem in connection with Christ and the last day. Water-pots without water will no more be found in that day. "Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord. The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar." (Zech. xiv. 20, 21.)

But see how He gives. All is from Himself in John—Himself and the Father. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world."

Verse 7. "Jesus saith unto them, *Fill* the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim." That was the measure, blessed word! oft repeated in various connections; but what marvel, from One in whom the *fulness* itself was pleased to dwell (Col. i.), and who but Himself could administer of this fulness? "Draw out now, and bear"—another word of power and grace. "The servants which drew the water knew." Those who do His will are let into the secret of their Lord's mind.

You will note the order: the water first, and then the

wine; holiness and joy; separation to God; and then power in the Spirit. To think of wine first would be folly, the denial of the truth. "Fill the waterpots with water" was the word; the obedience of the servants was shown in filling to the brim. The Holy Ghost, the living water, is the power of sanctification. Neither the heavenly nor the earthly people can be with God without it. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The way to real joy, to what God calls joy, is through sanctification, the Lord Himself being their righteousness.

Verses 9, 10. There were two mysteries here for the master of the feast: he knew not whence was the wine, nor how it was that the bridegroom had kept the good wine until now. The finger of God was there, nay, God Himself. Who but He could have wrought thus? And to keep the good wine until the last is not man's way at all; with him all ends with the wine out. Man's joy very soon passes away. Look at him in his most joyous and religious aspects, where Christ is not, how soon it withers away. Because it is only his, not the joy of the Lord, it all runs away from the beginning. "All flesh is as grass, and its glory as the flower of grass. The grass has withered, and its flower has fallen."

We realize purity by walking in the Spirit, and joy as the fruit of it. The joy that we realize from mere human things, or even God's providential dealings in our favour, runs out; but He gives the true joy in communion with Himself. We abuse God's natural gifts, so the wine runs out. The Lord keeps the good wine, and He gives it in His own good time. In communion we realize it; we often say, "Thou hast kept

the good wine until now." Practically, we constantly find it thus in our pathway here.

With regard to verse 4, which we passed by, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" I may remark, that the relationship referred to here, represents that existing between Himself and the Jewish people. "Unto us," said the prophet, writing by the Spirit, "a child is born, unto us a Son is given;" but what had He to do with them, in accomplishing His Father's business, or they with Him? "His own received Him not;" "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor;" "When He called, none to answer;" "When He looked, there was none to help, none to uphold." And so in the end, when dying for that nation, as well as for others, it is said, "When He had *by Himself* purged our sins." Blessed word! who could be with Him there? In His path on earth He had said, "Who is My mother?" but when all was over, and His work done, "Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother."

To go back a little, I suppose it is clearly understood that the marriage figured here sets forth His relationship to His earthly people in that day. "Bride of the Lamb" is the designation of the heavenly bride. It was Jesus who said, "Fill the waterpots with water;" Jesus who turned the water into wine. Considered apart from Him, how empty and unreal that festal scene in Galilee! The words of power were, "*Fill with water,*" "*draw out,*" and "*bear.*"

Verse 11. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him." This is His glory in connection with His earthly kingdom, His power to

bring in the blessing. It is not like that of the transfiguration, nor that spoken of in the first chapter, the glory of relationship to the Father. In the transfiguration it is the heavenly glory of the kingdom in His Person—His garments shone as no fuller on earth could whiten them. They are very distinct forms of glory. (That which moves us most, and is indeed the deepest of all, is His eternal relationship to the Father.) Peter says, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." The glory of His Person shone there in heavenly radiance; along with that came the Father's voice, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight." How attractive to the hearts of the saints, the Father's testimonies to His beloved Son! Peter would encourage them by telling them that it was no cunningly-devised fable; that what he saw was the confirmation of the prophetic word.

In this second chapter also, the contemplation of His glory moves the heart. He manifested His glory, and His disciples believed on Him.

Verse 13. "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." He goes up to Jerusalem, and, finding the temple profaned, drives out the traffickers—this was a sign of judgment to come—and on the Jews asking Him, "What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" He answered, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This was the sign of death and resurrection; also that God Himself was there. "I will raise it up." This passage also intimates that in *His mind* the house at Jerusalem was already judged.

At the end He says, "Your house is left unto you desolate." His own body, then, was the only true temple of God. "He spake of the temple of His body." "When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them." Previously we are told that His disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." This reminds us of the words of His youth, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The thoughts of His youth were not different from those of His manhood, as we speak. What concerned the Father—His name, His house, His glory—was ever the first thought of the Son who is in His bosom.

R. E.

 THE LORD'S REQUEST.

Thy parting word, Lord Jesus—
 "This do, remember Me,"
 To those whom sorrow gathered
 That night so close to Thee;
 By grace our hearts do listen
 To hear its echo still,
 It strikes a chord within us,
 And praise our hearts doth fill.

Thy parting word, Lord Jesus,
 Has touched the deepest spring,
 And wakes anew affections
 Our waiting hearts within;
 Thy parting word, when sorrow
 Around Thy footsteps pressed,
 When Satan, death, and judgment
 Their fears to Thee addressed.

Thy parting word, Lord Jesus,
 Ere judgment on Thee broke,
 Ere on Thy holy Person
 Came down that righteous stroke;
 The wrath of God before Thee,
 Whilst foes did gather round,
 There too Thy "friend" betrayed Thee,
 And darkness did abound.

Thy parting word, Lord Jesus,
 Before Thou didst endure
 The being of God forsaken,
 Our blessing to secure;
 Oh, grace beyond expression!
 Which sought that we should be,
 All through Thy time of absence,
 In death remembering Thee.

Thy parting word, Lord Jesus,
 We treasure in our heart,
 And from the love which spoke it
 We never more can part:
 Soon, Lord, Thou wilt receive us
 Unto Thyself on high,
 Till then we Thee remember,
 Who for our sins didst die.

G. W. F.

I AM bound to take every position in which the grace of Christ has set me; and my weakness is because I do not. The position is the verification of Christ's *power*, and in taking it, and maintaining it, I am acknowledging Him, even though thereby my own condition be more openly disclosed. Thus the position of itself affords me *strength* to value and to keep it.

J. E. B.

EXPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF JONAH.

CHAP. IV.

THE instruction of chap. iv. is derived, as in chap. i., from the conduct of the prophet. At the close of chap. iii. we have the grace of God displayed in sparing the people of Nineveh on their repentance—the revelation, in fact, of God's heart. In the first verse of this chapter we have in contrast with this the unfolding of the heart of Jonah. As we read elsewhere, God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner; but on this very account Jonah was displeased exceedingly and very angry. Not only was he out of communion with, but he was in positive antagonism to, the mind of God. Like the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal, he was angry because those who had no claim upon God had found mercy. By this he only showed that he could not enter into the thought of grace. And how often is it so with ourselves! Spite of the fact that we ourselves have been the objects of mercy, and that, apart from the sovereign grace of God, we could have no standing before Him, we, in the folly of our natural thoughts and feelings, desire that others should be dealt with on the ground of justice. How strikingly this was exemplified in the apostolic days may be seen in the conflicts of Paul. Even Peter was afraid to maintain the truth of grace (Gal. ii.); and hence the apostle Paul, as guided by the Holy Spirit, not only withstood Peter to the face, but has also elaborately shown, both in the epistle to the Galatians, and in that to the Romans (chap. ix.—xi.), that the Jew, equally with the

Gentile, was utterly without claim upon God; that had God dealt with Israel on the ground of justice, they, equally with the Gentiles, could not have escaped His judgment. But now He had concluded all, both Jews and Gentiles, in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all. No; the natural man can never understand the grace of God.

But we may go a little deeper, and enquire into the special grounds of Jonah's anger. We read:

"And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." (*vv.* 2, 3.)

That is, he was afraid lest God might show mercy to Nineveh, and, himself desiring judgment and destruction, he was unwilling to be the bearer of the divine message. What narrowness and hardness of heart! we might say. But there is more than this. There is in this foolish prayer the very essence of self and self-importance. To proclaim the message of judgment to godless Nineveh Jonah was quite willing—if he were but sure that it would be executed—for that would exalt Jonah both in his own eyes, and in the eyes of all who believed in the truth of his mission. Even James and John said to the Lord, "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" But the Lord turned, and rebuked them; for God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Jonah was of the same spirit with these disciples, only he went further, and opposed the manifestation of mercy. For if, on the one hand, the annunciation of unsparing judgment exalted the preacher, the exhibition of grace set aside the messenger and exalted God. As another has said, Jonah, instead of caring for Nineveh, thinks only of his own reputation as a prophet. Wretched heart of man, so unable to rise up to the goodness of God! . . . Jonah thought only of himself, and the horrid selfishness of his heart hides from him the God of grace, faithful to His love for His helpless creatures. And we may add that he was entirely without excuse. He says, "For I knew that thou art a gracious God," &c., and yet he was angry—not satisfied with the character of the God he knew!

So great indeed was his disappointment and anger that he requests that he might die. Sad state of soul! for what led him to desire this? The fact that God had spared Nineveh, and, together with this, his chagrin that he and his preaching had apparently been set aside! So petty and narrow is the human heart when occupied with its own things—with its own importance, pride and reputation. The case of Elijah, which, from its seeming similarity, every reader will recall, is very different. In his doubt and despondency he imagined that his work had been entirely in vain. In answer to the Lord's question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away." (1 Kings xix. 11.) For the moment he had lost confidence in God, as he

saw the power of the enemy on every hand. Doubtless he was also disappointed that the Lord did not intervene in judgment to vindicate the honour of his name. But this was quite a different thing from Jonah's desire. He thought neither of the Lord's honour, nor of poor guilty Nineveh; only, we repeat, of his own reputation as a prophet. Nothing, indeed, could be more humiliating than his state of mind.

On the other hand, could anything surpass the tender gentleness of the Lord with His wayward servant? For the moment, He contents Himself with a single word: "Doest thou well to be angry?" or, as in the margin, "Art thou greatly angry?" That is all. Like a mother with a petulant child, who knows that it is useless to reason with him when his temper is being displayed, and therefore pays no attention to his foolish requests, but waits until the passion has subsided, so the Lord dealt with Jonah. Ah, how often have we also in our folly ventured, in the spirit of Jonah, to arraign the ways of our God, and to prefer our foolish petitions, which, if they had been granted, would have entailed sorrow upon us for the rest of our lives! But the Lord loved us better than we loved even ourselves.

Jonah did not reply to the Lord's tender remonstrance; he was too angry for that. And he "went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city." Poor man! he was evidently hoping still that the Lord would destroy Nineveh, spite of its repentance; so little did he understand the heart of the One who had sent him on his mission. But God had done for the present with Nineveh. "He had repented of the evil He

had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not." That, therefore, was irrevocable; and He could not, consistently with His holy name, gratify the evil desires of Jonah. Hence His attention, in His love and grace, was now directed to His servant—to correct and instruct, as well as to explain and justify His own ways. We thus read: "And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad because of the gourd." (*v. 6.*)

It is exceedingly touching to see God thus watching over and caring for His wilful servant, and the pains He takes to convince him of the unreasonableness of his anger. Why did the prophet now rejoice with great joy? (See margin.) Because of the relief he experienced from the shadow of the gourd. As his anger, so was his joy entirely selfish. Accordingly, "God prepared a worm, when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live." Wholly absorbed in the circle of self, he is wretched and miserable; now because the gourd which had been a comfort to him had been destroyed, and perhaps also because of his bodily suffering. It was to this point that God had been leading him, and He once more intervened, and said to Jonah, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death." He had been angry because Nineveh was not overthrown, and now he is angry because the gourd had

been destroyed; angry in both cases because of the influence both the one and the other had upon himself, so wretched was his poor contracted heart. It was on the latter point that the Lord took him up, saying, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" (vv. 10, 11.)

In this manner was Jonah convicted by the words of his own mouth; and God was justified, yea, abundantly justified, by the pity which Jonah had felt for the gourd to which he was bound by no ties of relationship, and which he only valued because of its usefulness to himself. Thus, as always, God overcame when He was judged. (See Rom. iii. 4.) There were two things which the prophet (and, may we not add, many Christians also?) had not yet learned. First, that God's tender mercy is over all His works. (Psalm cxlv. 9.) How beautifully this is shown by the words, "*and also much cattle*"! This tender mercy will be displayed by-and-by, when Christ shall take His rightful power, and reign over the earth; but the heart of God is ever the same, and He has proved it in that He "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" in the fact that Christ tasted death for everything (Heb. ii.), as well as in the lengthening out of the day of grace in His longsuffering, because He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter iii.); and, finally, in His

purpose to reconcile all things unto Himself, through the death of Christ, whether things in earth or things in heaven. (Col. i.) But to enter into this we must lose sight of self, and selfish aims, and be filled with divine thoughts and divine affections. The second thing Jonah had not learned was, that God was "good and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Him." (Psalm lxxxvi. 5.) It was this same lesson that Peter had to teach the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 21); that Paul had to press earnestly upon the Hebrew believers of his day (Rom. x. 11-13); and it is this same truth that many of us, while owning it by the lip, need to hold in greater power at the present moment. If grace is sovereign, as it surely is, on this very account it is unrestricted, and flows out in blessing wheresoever God wills. Oh! how often, in folly similar to Jonah's, do we narrow the heart of God; but in the issue He will show that He has been above and beyond all our thoughts. And, in the meanwhile, let it instruct and comfort our hearts to remember that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

It was no small honour, it may be said in conclusion, for Jonah to be taken up, even in his disobedience, self-will, and anger, and to be thus made a vessel for the exhibition of the mind and heart of God. This also was of grace, and therefore to God is all the praise.

E. D.

PROFESSION without reality is sad; but as to the place of a Christian in responsibility, as God's witness on the earth, a believer—a child of God, without the evidences of life or power, is even more sad.

PHILADELPHIA AND LAODICEA.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.

LAODICEA began in John's time. I do not doubt there is a consecutive history in the passage, which I divide into two parts (chaps. ii. and iii.), for it ends in Thyatira or popery. In chap. iii. you have Protestantism alongside. Philadelphia is a church without pretension, which *keeps Christ's word*, and does not deny His name; which, further, keeps the word of His patience; which still expects Christ, though it may seem 'He will never come. He is waiting, and in the patience in which He waits (for the longsuffering of God is salvation; He is not slack concerning His promise), taking His word to guide, and still waiting; and such will be kept. But it is not the party which *outwardly* characterizes the Church which is addressed—all in a general sense—but, I believe, those who have ears to hear.

It is not apostacy which *characterizes* Laodicea, nor heresy, nor Babylon, but much more, I think—professed light from human sources; from the human mind—and has not God's eye-salve, nor the gold tried in the fire—Christ as divine righteousness. The sum of the value of all things; this just the reality of that which is divine—known by divine teaching. I do not think the seven churches go down a regular declivity. Smyrna is God's stopping decline by persecution. Philadelphia is not decline, nor Sardis; the tendency is there, but it is not absolute or universal. A great deal that is neither here or there has been said as to Philadelphia and Laodicea; but those of Philadelphia are not the description of the progress of evil. Not keeping Christ's word, but denying His name was their danger, and in this they had overcome. The other was

dropping the expectation of the Lord—the word of His patience. In this, too, they had overcome; and they had two promises. Kept from the hour of temptation, they would be off before it (not *ὄλα, ἐκ*); and the ecclesiastical powers, which had despised them, should be humbled to recognize that Christ had loved them. They are singularly identified with Christ. But the faithful in Philadelphia are called to overcome as much as in Laodicea. Faithfulness in the circumstances of each particular assembly is what such are respectively called to.

J. N. D.

AN EXPOSITORY JOTTING.

THE URGENCY OF GRACE.

LUKE xiv.

GRACE is characteristic of the gospel of Luke, and a very striking illustration of its urgency is found in the parable of the great supper. When the supper is prepared, it is simply said that its provider “bade” or “invited” many; and hence, when the servant goes forth, his message to those that were bidden is only, “Come.” After, however, these had all refused the invitation they had received, “the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and ‘bring in’ the poor,” &c. Then lastly, when it was reported that “yet there is room,” the servant was commissioned to “go out into the highways and hedges, and ‘compel them to come in,’ that my house may be filled.”

This gradation in the nature of the message—“come,” “bring in,” and “compel them to come in”—is most instructive.

A word or two will explain. Adopting the usually-received interpretation, which we fully endorse—that

the first invitation is to the Jewish nation as such, the second, to the remnant, consequent upon the rejection of Christ by "His own;" and the third, to the Gentiles, —we learn that the activity of the heart of God was only intensified by the wickedness of man. It was in grace surely, though in fulfilment of promise, that Christ was presented to the Jew; and it might have been thought that, when that grace was slighted and contemned, God would have retreated, so to speak, from man altogether, into the circle of His own blessedness. But it was not so; for His heart yearned to bless the objects of His counsels of love and redemption, and therefore He, by the power of the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel at Pentecost in Jerusalem, "brought in" the poor of the flock. Nor did this satisfy the extent of His desires; for from that day to this, and from this day till the coming of the Lord, He has been working, and will work, "to compel" poor sinners to come in, and He will not rest until His house is filled—until there is not an empty place left. It might be a profitable question for many of us, whether we are in the power of this compelling urgency of grace in dealing with those who are not saved. For it should never be forgotten, that every believer is intended to be the expression of the heart of God to the world. Another question might be put; viz., Whether the feeble results of the preaching of the gospel in many places may not be traced to a want of apprehension of the nature of the grace that is now going forth towards sinners? This once understood, there would be no expectation from earnestness or appeals, or from anything whatever, save from the power of the Spirit of God. He alone can *compel* sinners to come in.

E. D.

THE PATH OF FAITH.

TITUS ii. 11-13.

(Concluded from page 151.)

IN the second epistle to Timothy we get a testimony to the growth of the evil where the good ought to be. We find it positively stated that "in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers," and so on. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Then follows the exhortation, "From such turn away." But first we have the positive declaration, that they turn back to evil. Then he goes on to say, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of; knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Notice, that he does not refer him to the Church as a teacher, but to those of whom he had learned these things. Who were they? Paul and Peter and the other apostles. Now, as one who has received the gospel of God's grace, I know from whom I have learned it, and from them I get the declaration that evil had come in, and would wax worse and worse until the perilous times. Then as Timothy is cast upon the certainty of the words of those from whom he had received the truth, in like manner I get the word of God, as that on which my soul is cast when the Church has become a judged thing, "waxing worse and worse," "having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Nor can it be denied that this is the character of the Church at the

present time. It is an astounding fact that we have on every side persons named Christians turning infidels in thousands. There is not, I dare say, one young man in forty free from the rationalistic teaching of the present day. I do not know how you find it here, but it is so in England. Mere formality is turning to open infidelity on the one hand, or to superstition on the other. It is notorious that such is the case. Christendom, even in the sense of outward submission to Christ, is an impossibility. But what we want is Christianity as it is in the word of God.

One very blessed thing through it all is the presence of the Spirit in power, sustaining the Lord's people in the midst of that which is just ripening for judgment. We have something like this in the case of Nicodemus among the children of Israel, and that most blessed testimony in the first two chapters of Luke—Simeon and Anna, and the others who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem. They knew each other, and were found coming together and exhorting one another, just as we ought to be. I felt led to speak thus as to the state of things in which we find ourselves. Whenever we take man's responsibility into account, we find his principle of action is to depart from what God has set up; then growing corruption manifests itself, and goes on till judgment is necessary. This we find in the days of the apostles, but more obviously in the last days. And mark, they were to know that it was the last time, because antichrist was there, not because Christ was come again. Even then the antichristian spirit was evident; but God's patience has gone on with them ever since, as with Israel.

What I desire to bring before the conscience of

brethren is the direction given as to how we are to walk in the midst of such a state of things—"Continue in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of;" that is, we are referred directly to the word of God. It is quite true we are to use ministry. Such is God's will and His way, as we read, "He gave some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." But the reference here to the word of God is a very different thing from that. As an individual I must come directly to it, and let the authority of God determine everything. "Oh, but," someone may say, "I may be mistaken as to the teaching of the Word!" "So much the worse for you," I say; "but that is quite a different thing from denying the operation of the Spirit." Not but that God is pleased to use some as instruments to bring His word to bear on others, as in the case of a mother with a child, where it may be only the activity of nature, or a school teacher with a scholar, or a friend with his friend. But while knowing that, still we must go to the word of God, and that directly. We have to insist on that in these days. God speaks to us directly in the inspired Word. The mother is not inspired. Those who have the place of teachers in the Church are not inspired in the sense that we are ruled and judged by them, but the word of God is, and we must go directly to the Word, not to the Church. I do not get the Church as teaching at all; I deny it totally. What I find is that the Church is *taught*, and that it is the province of certain individuals to teach. When you get the Church of God at first, one of the apostles, or some inspired person, was there to communicate directly to the saints. The saints were taught, but not by the Church; the Pauls and Peters

and Johns were their teachers. God's word is the inspired teacher now. "I charge you," the apostle says to the Thessalonians, "that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." The principle we get there is of all importance. It is no less than God's title to speak to souls directly by His word. This in no way sets aside the exercise of gift in the body. We cannot say of any member, "We have no need of thee." But all service must be in obedience. Take for illustration a servant who is sent by his master with a letter, and knowing the contents of the letter, instead of delivering it, gives the message verbally. It is the master he is setting aside. What we have to insist upon is God's title to speak to His people in His own way, and so to judge them. I don't talk of providential judgment, but of reproof, correcting, and instructing by His word. I must bow to the word of God, not sit in judgment upon it. Judgment is to be exercised in other matters; but the moment I get to divine things I must not think of judging them. Judge the word of God! That is what the rationalist claims to do. The natural man thinks he can judge the word of God; but our place is to hear what God has to say, just as we are all here to-day to hear what God has to say. Far from judging the Word it judges me, in being brought to my heart and conscience. Judge it and you are all wrong. It is true that God's Spirit is needful to convince me as to what the word of God is; but the moment I know it as the word of God my heart is drawn, and my conscience judged.

Now the Scripture says, "Let that abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning." What is it that we have from the beginning? In the beginning I

get that which God has set up to be a witness for Himself on the earth. I get the unity of the body of Christ, and I get the inspired word of God with the doctrines in it which were received from the beginning. Again we read, "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." There is an immense principle here. Nobody who knows ecclesiastical history but is aware of the wretchedness and misery that befel the Church in consequence of failure in this respect. I get now, not that which God set up at the beginning, but what man has made of it. At the beginning I get the unity of the body of Christ manifest upon earth; but do I get it so now? Is it not a fact, that instead of unity there is a constant war going on amongst professing Christians? As far as man's exhibition of it is concerned the unity is gone. The apostle says, "As a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon; but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon;" and elsewhere he speaks of grievous wolves coming in. It is thus put on the footing of man's responsibility and judged accordingly; but where it is viewed as the work of God and His testimony it is a matter of faith. Suppose I find, "Upon this rock I will build my Church"—there I get the thought of the Church, not yet built, but Christ building it. "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Then Peter says, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone . . . ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house;" and in Ephesians we read of "Jesus Christ the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." Here I get divine workmanship.

On the other hand I get, what I was quoting already, God's building put into the hands of men, and every man warned to take heed how he buildeth. The two things are quite distinct. Why do men confound them, teaching to professed Christianity that which belongs only to the saints, and so adding the wood, hay, and stubble? Simply because they do not give heed to the word of God. We must test everything by the word of God. This is God's own principle. It is quite true that we have the power of the Spirit for our walk; but if I be called upon to hear what the Spirit says unto the churches I must discover where the churches are. And if I am warned not to build with wood, hay, or stubble I must find out what that means, so as to be obedient to the word of God; but I do not dwell upon that. You will perceive that I am dealing with great principles merely. The grand secret of power in these days is faith in the presence of the Spirit of God; and while using the word makes us take notice of the state of things in which we find ourselves, we must see that we are not confounding God's faithfulness with man's responsibility; that is what Israel did. But the great thing is to know that there is a living God, and that that living God is amongst us in the person and power of the Holy Ghost. Not that we lose sight of the cross. It is all founded on the cross surely; but what we have to get hold of is this: the Comforter *did* come. By Him we are all baptized into one body; and, whether it be in the individual or in the Church, the secret of the power of good in the midst of evil, outside or inside, the Word being our guide, is the presence of God by the Spirit. "Know ye not," is written to the Corinthians, who

were going on badly, "that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" There they are spoken to as individuals. "Do you believe your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost? Then what kind of persons ought you to be?" You get it again in the second epistle to the same Church—"Ye are the temple of the living God." There they are spoken of collectively; but in both cases we learn that the present practical power of living is faith in the presence of the Spirit of God. Alone I can do nothing whatever for blessing.

"Ye are the temple of the living God." I go back a little on this. We do not find God dwelling with man but on the ground of redemption. Not with Adam: He came down and walked in the garden, but did not dwell with him, nor yet with Abraham, although he visited him, and ate with him. But when the Israelites get out of Egypt God comes to dwell among them. Indeed we are told in Exodus xxix. that for this the Lord brought them out of Egypt. As soon as they are come out of the Red Sea we find God dwelling in the midst of them. The Red Sea gives the thought of redemption. We find the same thing now, but more fully. "If I go not away," the Lord said to His disciples, "the Comforter will not come unto you." Christ was here, but He was alone; like the corn of wheat—except it fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. At His baptism the Holy Ghost came down and abode upon Him; still He was alone. It was not until redemption was accomplished, and He had ascended, a Man in the glory, that the Holy Ghost came down to dwell in us, that we might be the expression of what He is down here. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God;" and,

“Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit.” When we speak of redemption it does not mean merely that a man is quickened, or that he has got life, but that he is washed, and that the Holy Ghost dwells in him, that he is a new man. I only ask you, beloved, if you believe all this. Then what subjection of spirit there ought to be! what manner of persons ought ye to be! what carefulness not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption!

There is one word in 1 Cor. ii. In these days it is well to give heed to it. In verse 9 we read, “It is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” The things of the world are always put in contrast with the things of God; but that is not the special teaching here. Nor is it that the things which are the subject of revelation, when put in contrast with our present state, are so great that we cannot conceive them. “For God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit.” But the apostle is contrasting the state of the Old Testament saints with that of the saints in the present dispensation. In the time of Isaiah their hearts could not enter into the things that God had prepared for them that love Him; but we are in a different condition. In verse 13 he says: “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” This is commonly called inspiration. When the Spirit of God teaches, the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit, because they

are spiritually discerned. There are what may be called three steps in the process of inspiration. First there is the revelation of the things; then there is the word the Spirit teaches; and then the condition of mind in which it is received. We have the living power of the Spirit of God on the one hand, and the word of God on the other, to keep and guide us in our path here. If I take the word of God by itself, and say I can judge of it, and understand its teaching, I am a rationalist. I would be entirely wrong in thinking man's mind capable of judging God's revelation. But when I seek to judge it spiritually, I am right at once. And having the Spirit of God in me to discern it, I have God's own guidance in everything. That is how we are to walk in our present circumstances. And while God has set forth the ruin of the church, as connected with man's responsibility, He has shown us that there is, for the path of faith, just as much wisdom and power as at first.

J. N. D.

CHRIST AND THE ASSEMBLY;

OR, GATHERED TO HIS NAME AND KEEPING THE
SPIRIT'S UNITY.

MATT. xviii. 20; EPH. iv. 3.

THE Lord Jesus Christ is everything to those who know Him. His very name is as ointment poured forth. Where He is not, they find no rest; and apart from Him, life to them is not life. In Him divine and human perfectness shine forth. In Him we see and know the Father. Through Him the fountain of "perfect love" is ever flowing to us. In Him we have the One, who,

at the priceless cost of the sacrifice of Himself, removed everything that hindered our being for ever happy in the cloudless presence of God. In Him, and through His precious blood, we gratefully own that God is for us, God is our Justifier, God is our Father, who loves us as He loved His Son, who hath made us accepted in the Beloved, sealed us with the Holy Spirit, blessed us with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places," and given us the hope of eternal glory.

Seeing, then, that divine love has thus blessed us, and united us for ever to our Lord Jesus Christ, is it to be wondered at that His name is given to us as the only centre of our being gathered together on earth? And when we now think of Him in the glory of God, is it surprising that He should say, for the blessing of those so gathered, "There am I in the midst of them"? Certainly not. Should we not rather say, How can He fail to take His place "in the midst" of those whose hearts are drawn together in His precious name, and who are objects of His eternal, unchanging, and redeeming love? And do we not see how dear to His heart must be such a gathering, which causes Him to take His place "in the midst"? Can anything on earth equal it? Is it possible that any other congregation under the sun can be comparable to it?

It is clear that those only who know the love of Christ as having washed them from their sins in His own blood, can really be attracted by His name, or gathered together around Him. The first time we have it recorded of our Lord's being in the midst of His disciples after His resurrection, we find that the first words He spoke to them were, "Peace be unto you; and He shewed them His hands and His side." This

assured them of everything having been removed by Him, through the work of the cross, that hindered their being happy in God's presence. Peace had been made by the blood of the cross, and now they were to know it, and be happy in Him who had made this peace. The One who was in their midst had removed all guilt and fear, and assured them of such newly-formed and settled relationships, as to say, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." They were thus set free for holy and happy occupation with Himself. "Then were the disciples glad when *they saw the Lord.*" (John xx. 19.) This is surely the true secret of joy.

The Lord also communicated to them life in the Holy Ghost—risen life—which He now had as raised up from among the dead, and which could not have been given to them before. Whatever might have been the character of the life believers had before this, we find *now* One able to breathe on them risen life—"He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." But with this, let us not fail to observe, they were still to tarry in Jerusalem until they had "power" by the Holy Ghost coming upon them. (See Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 8.) This coming of the Holy Ghost Himself to abide with us for ever, took place, as we know, on the day of Pentecost, after Christ was exalted to the right hand of God. But Christ risen and breathing on His disciples *before* He ascended, was a different thing. The Holy Ghost came in consequence of Christ being *ascended*; a point never to be forgotten, because the formation, endowment, power, and blessing of the Church of God on earth are connected with Christ in glory. All our blessings are, no doubt, founded on the work of the

cross, but they come to us in association with Christ exalted to the right hand of God. It was *there* He was given to be Head over all to the Church, which is His body; *there* He received the Holy Ghost and sent down to us; *thence* He gave "gifts" for the building up of the body; *there* we now know Him as the "Head," from whom blessing flows to every member of the body; and from *thence* we look for Him to come.

Before He breathed on His *disciples* here gathered (for there were not only the eleven, but others were also present with them, perhaps all the hundred and twenty, except Thomas—Luke xxiv. 33), He sent them all forth into service and testimony, saying, "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," and their understandings being opened to understand the Scriptures, they had, in connection with their work on earth, authority to remit and to retain sins. This was afterwards carried out in acts of discipline. This forgiveness has been sometimes spoken of as administrative forgiveness. Acts of discipline on earth are, no doubt, ratified in heaven by the Lord, who is in the midst of those gathered together in His name. In Matt. xviii. 18-20, as well as here, binding in heaven what is thus bound on earth, is connected with the Lord Jesus Christ being in the midst, as was afterward so jealously guarded by the apostle at Corinth. (1 Cor. v. 4.)

It is to be feared that many believers in the present day go no further than this in their apprehensions of what is involved in being gathered together in our Lord's name. They know Him in the midst as the administrator of "peace," founded on His own finished work; they are conscious of the need of the Holy Ghost, they realize that they are here to serve Christ,

and have power, as congregations, to remit or retain sins in discipline. But if they stop here, they are not really on assembly ground at all. In the twentieth chapter of John we have not yet the assembly formed on earth, for there was no Head in heaven, and "the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet *glorified*." We have disciples, and the Lord in the midst, and a beautiful sample to us of what His gracious ways with such are. Before the coming of the Holy Spirit there were individual believers, children of God, those whom Christ was not ashamed to call His brethren; but before Pentecost *the assembly* had not been formed. It was by the coming of the Holy Ghost that believers were united to Christ as members of "One body"—"By One Spirit we are all baptized into One body." We have union, not by faith, nor yet even in life, but by "One Spirit." Wondrous truth! "Therefore (Jesus) 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." His coming is thus described: "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts ii. 1-4, 33.) This was the baptism of the Holy Ghost. (Acts i. 5, 1 Cor. xii. 13.) This was the "power" they were told to wait for; and the sequel shows what a mighty power it was. The "One body" was now formed on earth; believers

were united to Christ the Head in heaven by "One Spirit." Precious union! The power and operations of the "One Spirit" were at once seen in the fervent testimony of the saints, their being of one heart and of one soul, unselfishly and practically one; though, as yet, they had not the truth of the assembly revealed to them, nor did they intelligently know what keeping the unity of the Spirit was. In God's sovereignty and goodness this came out after. (Eph. iii.)

But in considering the state of the Church on earth *now*, we have a very different aspect presented to us. More than eighteen centuries have passed since the Church was formed by the coming of the Holy Ghost. All was set up in truth and holiness; and though nothing can possibly alter the union between Christ the Head and the members of His body on earth, yet, as to its manifestation, it has so entirely failed that we now speak of the ruin of the Church, and the confusion in Christendom, because scarcely a vestige of the corporate reality is to be seen as it was set up. *God's* building still groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord in His sight; but when the assembly is looked at as in *man's* hands, where is now any thing like that which was set up at Pentecost? It is so far gone that, instead of finding now in a city one assembly as distinct from the world around, we find saints scattered into sects, and, like the ruins of an ancient temple, many fragments buried in the pursuits and pleasures of the world that crucified the Lord of glory. The faithful therefore have now no resource but to go back to that which was from the beginning, not to reconstruct, which is clearly revealed to be not God's mind, but, while humbly acknowledging the ruin, to rely on the faithfulness of Christ to His own gracious

words—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) It is just here with many in the present day that the practical difficulty occurs. Some, for instance, contend that everything is so far gone that we have nothing left but thus to be gathered, and that we are under no obligation to Christ for the maintenance, as far as practicable, of assembly truth, as found in Ephesians and elsewhere. This at once opens the door to the admission of what is unsuited to Him who is in the midst, gives up confidence in the never-failing faithfulness of God to His own word, the abiding of the Holy Ghost, the Lord's love and relationships to His own, and takes off our heart's interests and affections from the whole Church of God. It really sets up independency, because it ignores responsibility to the Lord to keep the Spirit's unity.

The question is, Can any be intelligently gathered together in the Lord's name, and own Him who is "in the midst," according to the truth, without felt obligation to Him to keep the Spirit's unity, so far as is practicable, and especially with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart? May all our consciences be solemnly exercised before the Lord about this!

First, let us enquire, In or unto whose name are we gathered? Is it to His who is ascended, whom God hath made both Lord and Christ? It was so in apostolic times; for they were gathered "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," and were instructed to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." (1 Cor. v. 4; Col. iii. 17.) It is surely with Christ in glory that we have now to do; though personally, at the right hand of God, He is in the midst of those gathered together in His name on earth. It is

not only that the Holy Spirit is with us, for that He is always; but when the condition is fulfilled of being really gathered together in His name, then the Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst of such. It is a precious fact, and blessedly known to faith by those who in heart and conscience are gathered to the Lord. Holding the principle is not enough, and saying we are so gathered is worse than useless, unless we know the reality of having to do with Him who is in the midst. The point is, Is *His presence* a real enjoyment to our souls?

2. He who is "in the midst" is the One who has accomplished eternal redemption, and went into heaven by His own blood. It is He who ascended unto His Father and to our Father, to His God and to our God, having made peace, and established the most endearing and everlasting relationships, so that our hearts are called out in praise and thanksgiving, and to wait for His return from heaven. How can we fail to praise? The question is, Are we thus praising, when gathered together in His name?

3. He who is "in the midst" has sent down the Holy Ghost, not only to teach us and to abide with us for ever, and the *power* for all godliness, but He also came to form the Church or assembly on earth. "By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." Believers are thus united to Christ—one Spirit with the Lord. Can we then be taken up with Him who is in our midst, and forget that "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones"? (Eph. v. 30.)

4. He who is "in the midst" is "Head of the body, the assembly;" that is, not Head of that particular meeting, but of the whole body—the assembly all over the

world. As we have before observed, it was in ascension, and exalted above every name that is named, that He was given to be Head over all to the assembly, which is His body. Do we know Christ as Head of the body? Are we "holding the Head?" not merely holding the doctrine that He is Head, but by faith "holding the Head"? Is it possible to be gathered to His name according to His mind without "holding the Head"? (Col. ii. 1, 2, 19.) May we fully face this important practical question?

5. He who is "in the midst" presents Himself to us also as "He that is holy, and He that is true." (Rev. iii. 7.) No doubt He is with us to reveal Himself lovingly and suitably according to our need; but He is also there to correct and discipline—"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten;" "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord," &c. (Rev. iii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 30-32.) His name surely calls for holiness and truth. Should we not then be careful what we associate with His name, who bids us to "touch not the unclean thing"? If He around whom we are clustered would have us so separate from evil as not to *touch*, not to be linked with what is unclean in His sight, how can we be gathered together in His name according to His mind, unless we are separate from unsound doctrine, immoral ways, and unholy associations? As to doctrine and practice we are warned of their insidious and spreading effects by the Holy Spirit, who says, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump;" and as to unclean *associations* (the last thing many consciences are moved by) we are to treat

them as we would a leprous garment. We are solemnly charged to "depart from iniquity," and to *purge ourselves from vessels to dishonour* by separating from them. It may be said, "If we act in this way we shall find few will go with us." Be it so, if it be the will of the Lord; but let us at all costs keep clear of associating with that peerless name anything which does not suit the "holy" and the "true." Self-judgment according to His word, the cultivation of personal communion with Himself, and faithfully maintaining our place outside the camp to Him, is the path in which His gracious promise is fulfilled—"He shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." (2 Tim. ii. 21.)

How is it possible then to be gathered in heart and conscience to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to own Him in the midst according to His word, without felt obligation to Him to keep the Spirit's unity so dear to His heart, and to stand for that holiness and truth which suit Him? May the "members of His body" be exercised before Him about these things, and, while seeking the path of faithfulness to Him, be heartily going out toward the whole Church of God.

H. H. S.

AN EXPOSITORY JOTTING.

THE OBJECTS OF GRACE.

LUKE XIV.

It is interesting to notice also in this chapter (see page 167 last month) the objects of the activity of grace as flowing forth from the heart of God. In a certain sense all men may be said to be this, "for God so loved the

world, that He gave His only begotten Son" etc.; and when our blessed Lord tabernacled here, He was light for all. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." In another sense, however, there was limitation, as expressed, for example, when the Lord said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." So also in this chapter. As the Lord sat in the Pharisee's house, He said, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call *not* thy friends, nor thy brethren, . . . but when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind." (*v.v.* 12, 13.) Those who had a claim, as it were, socially or relatively, were to be passed over; and those, according to this instruction, were to be invited, who not only were without claim, but who also were in circumstances of need and sorrow. Accordingly, when the "certain man" (who represents God) makes a great supper, after his first invitations were rejected, he said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt" (the same word as that translated by "lame" in verse 13), "and the blind." Putting these two things together, we may gather some profitable lessons for our edification and guidance.

We learn, first, that the classes represented by these four words (the poor, maimed, lame, and blind) are the special objects of God's heart in the seeking activities of His grace in the gospel. Who, then, are these? By the poor is meant, not exactly those who are so denominated in this world, but rather the poor in spirit (*Matt. v. 3*), those who are conscious of poverty before God—whatever their position or earthly circumstances. The largest numbers of these, it is quite true,

will be found amongst the class known by us as the poor (see Luke iv. 18; 1 Cor. i. 26-29); but thanks be to God, whose grace is sovereign in its operation, there are such in every rank and station of life. The true meaning of the term is found in the contrast made by our Lord Himself: "Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God. . . . But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation." (Luke vi. 20-24.) It is seen again in Abraham's address to the rich man in torment. He says, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst *thy* good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things." (Luke xvi. 25.) These are the poor who have nothing for their possession, satisfaction, or enjoyment in the things of the world—those who have been made to feel that they have nothing for, and can bring nothing to, God. It should not, at the same time, be forgotten, that the really poor have ever been, are, and will be, the special objects of God's care and love. (See, for example, Lev. xix. 9, 10, xxiii. 22; Psalm lxxii. 12-14; James ii. 5, etc.)

The other terms are simple. The "maimed" are those who have suffered in some way or other in their bodies, so that they are now, in greater or less degree, helpless; the "lame" are unable to walk aright, and the "blind" cannot see. Rendering these terms typically, we perceive at once the character of those with whom God is specially concerned in the gospel of His grace. And these were just the classes that were drawn to the Lord when on earth—not those that were whole (for they did not need a physician), but those that were sick—not those who were righteous, or possessed merit in their own estimation—the scribes and Pharisees, but publicans and sinners. No! grace has no attraction for, and, we may

add, no concern with, those who are rich in their own fancied spiritual wealth—only for wretched, helpless, and needy souls. For grace, itself a gift, delights to give, to make the poor rich, the helpless strong, and the empty full. As we meditate upon it, we can but exclaim, What a heart has the God of all grace! What tender compassion! For now, passing by all that sinners are and have done, the moment they turn in faith to the Lord Jesus, He delights to give and to bless according to the infinite thoughts of His own heart and mind. Yea, more than this—even while they are in all their sorrow and misery He sends forth the glad tidings of the gospel, and by the ambassadors of Christ beseeches sinners, as it were, to be reconciled to Him. Such is the response of God, while working at the same time for the glory of His beloved Son according to His eternal thoughts, to the need, the sorrow, and the misery of man!

Then, secondly, we gather that God's people should be the expression of His heart to these same classes. This is the exact point of our Lord's instruction to the Pharisee at whose table He was sitting. "When thou makest a feast," he said, "invite not thy friends . . . but the poor," etc. The Christian, therefore, is called upon, in this day of grace, to be God's representative. This principle, indeed, obtains in every dispensation; viz., that God's people are to act to those around them according to the revelation He has been pleased to make of Himself. Thus a Jew was to be the expression of Jehovah—of a righteous God; and a Christian is to show forth God as revealed in Christ Jesus.

We must be careful in the application of this truth. What the Lord teaches is, as we have seen, that when

God makes a feast, He invites certain classes of people ; and hence, that when we make a "feast," we should be in communion with His own heart and mind. Now the feast that God makes is the provision of His grace—the table which He spreads, as we may learn from the next chapter, is in His own house—the Father's house ; and it is there that all who accept His invitations are brought to feast with Him in His own joy. It is, in a word, the gospel which, issuing forth from His own presence, leads the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind back to the place whence it came, and gives them the ineffable privilege of fellowship with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ.

Understanding this, we might well challenge ourselves—and especially those of us who are evangelists, wherever found—as to whether we have sufficiently borne in mind this instruction of our Lord ; whether, we mean, in the proclamation of the gospel, we have had those before us who are typified by these classes. Some, as may be gathered from any record of religious activity, seek the young, some the aged, some the rich, some the poor ; but God always seeks all alike who are in need and sorrow, those who are helpless and blind. It was so also with our blessed Lord Himself. "Come unto Me," He said, "*all* that labour and are heavy laden : " all such in every rank were the objects of His heart at all times. Nor must our hearts move in a narrower circle than His own ; and should we, acting according to our thoughts, contract this circle, even but for a single occasion, we damage our own souls, as well as misrepresent the all-embracing character of His grace.

Two suggested remarks may be added. It must be patent, in the first place, to any observer (for wisdom is

justified of all her children), that God's special blessing ever rests upon those who seek to carry the gospel to poor, wretched, helpless, and benighted souls. Many an activity of this character—otherwise not to be commended—has resulted in such a number of conversions as might well awaken examination on the part of those who have more intelligence in the word of God. It is equally evident, on the other hand, that when Christians or servants have neglected these objects of God's grace, that spiritual blight has settled down upon them, and their labours have resulted in barrenness. The second remark is, that when the Lord was on earth, it was these very classes—as before pointed out—of which He here speaks, found in numbers among the publicans and sinners, that were drawn to His feet. What has happened then, that they are not thus attracted by the preaching of His servants and His people in the present day? Has grace lost any of its beauty or power? Or is it that we have so sadly failed in its presentation? True that the carnal mind is enmity with God, but so it was in the days of our blessed Lord, and proved itself to be so in His rejection and crucifixion. Still the mighty grace that flowed forth in His words and life laid hold of the hearts of the vilest, and drew them irresistibly to His feet. (See Luke vii. 36-50.) And, thank God, the same mighty operation of His grace is still often seen; but the question is, Why so seldom? Surely this Scripture will afford to us all abundant food for reflection; and it will be happier yet if it leads many of us to self-judgment. Oh, that God would come in with mighty power, and make us more truly the living exhibition of His grace in the midst of a sinful world!

E. D.

“THE WILL OF GOD” AND “THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.”

IN offering a few thoughts on these subjects in the Ephesian epistle and elsewhere, I would suggest, as a leading enquiry, whether there are not the unfolding of great purposes and counsels of God, by adoption and calling, as “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” *prior* to the doctrine of “the unity of the Spirit,” in the power of which they are kept, and to be kept, by us? Purposes which are, in fact, the occasion for these divine revelations of unity in Godhead-counsel, and in manifestation by Christ, and the Holy Ghost? One might further ask, whether the grand subjects of the heavenly calling, and the vocation wherewith *we* are called (and in what these consist), do not occupy a prominent place, and in the order of their wonderful relation to “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,” as a necessary prelude to our knowing or walking worthy thereof? If this be so, they should neither be confounded nor separated by us. Indeed, the revelation by God of “the good pleasure of His will,” and what He had predestinated us unto by Jesus Christ to Himself, was so marvellous to Paul that he prays for the requisite qualifications to be bestowed, in order that the faithful may know “what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints;” viz., that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may *give* you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, being enlightened in the eyes of your heart, so that ye should *know*, &c.

No doubt "the hope of his calling," and the vocation wherewith we have been thus called, and the blessings wherewith we have been blessed in the heavenly places in Christ, must be all comprehended (for our present communion and enjoyment in love), and carried out by power in "the unity of the Spirit," according to the purpose which God has purposed in Himself. Nor is there any doubt these will *all* be manifested in "the exceeding greatness of His power, which He wrought in Christ" when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that to come, and which power is to us-ward who believe. The sonship in the epistles, and the calling of God, and our birthright as children of the Father, and our spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, do not primarily stand connected with the great fact of the unity of the Spirit (essential as this is in operation), but with "the good pleasure of God's will," which He hath purposed *in* Himself.

According "to His will," as believers in Christ, we are called, and have been *sealed* as sons and heirs of God, and joint-heirs *in* this unity, by "that Holy Spirit of promise," which is also the earnest of our inheritance. "The vocation" wherewith we are called opens itself out from the depths of the Father's love, and is for the glory of God in all that He has counselled for Himself, and for the glory of His beloved Son from everlasting, and in whom we have part, and portion, and place, according to the riches of His grace. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in Him who is the Head," &c. All this blessedness and much more has been thus made known to us by "the

spirit of wisdom" and revelation, in which God has now unveiled Himself, and the things which were kept secret before the world was, and declare to us "the will of God" through Christ, and in "the unity of the Spirit."

The glorious incarnation of His Son, and the accomplishment of the work given Him to do below, opened the way by death and resurrection for His triumphant ascension to the right hand above, and to take His place as "the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Moreover, the revelation of this predeterminate counsel of wisdom and glory, subsisting in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and carried out in this essential oneness and unity by sovereign power, is the comprehensive basis of Christianity. This revelation is likewise formative of the present economy, for faith and hope in "the unity of the Spirit," and for our fellowship in the power of eternal life by Christ Jesus, and they go hand-in-hand together. It also takes its commanding place, as giving the true nature and character to every other glory, in union or unity, to which (as believers in Christ) we may have been predestinated, or called out, by effectual grace from this world, and *sealed* for the day of eternal redemption. Nor can the will of God, or Christ and the Church, or the unity of the Spirit, be rightly separated from each other.

It was not till the mystery of "the Word made flesh" that manhood and Godhead were gloriously united, and this "Son of man" no longer seen (to be like Adam) a creature *outside* of God, in mere human and responsible relationship with the Creator, but declared by the Father's voice from the opened heavens, and by the descent of the Holy Ghost like a dove, to be "the

beloved Son, in whom God was well pleased." Beyond this, and in His own essential Sonship, He could say of Himself, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world;" and again, "I leave the world, and go to the Father." By redemption through His blood we have the forgiveness of our sins, and are accepted in "the beloved One" as sons of God, and heirs and co-heirs with Christ, being united to Him who is raised from the dead by "the glory of the Father," and is crowned with glory and honour, all created things being put under His feet. Marvellous as the first creation was, and as those six-days'-work were, on account of which "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," yet all was but a type of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and in which (through sin and Satan) the offended glory of God had to find afresh its suited resting-place and everlasting home.

Adam, though created in the likeness of God, was but the image of Him that should come after; and now that the second man—Jesus, the Son of God—has glorified Him upon the earth (in which Adam dishonoured Him), and finished the work that was appointed Him to do, God has given Him a name which is above every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come. The sovereignty, the majesty, the power, and the righteousness of God, which had been so outraged and violated by Satan, have been reinstated and illustrated in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He took His place as man on this earth; and have been further vindicated against every outrage and blot, whether by the devil or mankind, in His sufferings and death upon the cross. All this work had to be

done by Him in this ruined creation, before the power of that mighty change could operate, by which "old things should pass away, and all things become new, and all things be of God." Other glories waited till He should come 'who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; who is also the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence; for it pleased that in Him should all the fulness dwell.' The Holy Ghost has been sent down from the Father (to the men whom He has called out of this world) as the only adequate witness of the glory which the Son has entered into, and to assure us that the infinite love and wisdom and power of God have found their delight and satisfaction and outlet, toward us in *our* vocation, in this exalted One.

God has glorified Him in Himself, and has come forth to glorify Him again, in the presence of angels and principalities and powers; and to *form* a unity with Himself by the Holy Ghost, of which Christ is the glorified centre and the beginning, having chosen us in Him (and created us according to Himself) that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Moreover, God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the riches of His grace, wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us "the mystery of His will." Oneness, and union, and unity in Christ were purposed by the Father's good pleasure for His own glory, and the glory of His Son, and the glory of the Holy Ghost, and the Church's glory, from before the foundation of the world; and our vocation is connected with Christ in all this love.

J. E. B.

(To be continued, D. V.)

MEDITATIONS ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

By J. N. D.*

INTRODUCTION.

IN the epistle to the Romans Christians are looked at as men living and walking on the earth, but possessing the life of Christ and the Holy Spirit, so that they are in Christ. They have the forgiveness of sins, and are justified by the work of Christ. Their duty is to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, whilst they are transformed by the renewing of their mind, that they may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. (Chap. xii. 1, 2.)

The epistle begins with the responsibility of man, proving all to be guilty on the ground of what they have *done*, and then showing the result of the death of Christ in the forgiveness of sins and the justification of those who believe. Afterwards the apostle considers the condition in which man is found consequent on Adam's sin, and shows how he is delivered from the power of sin.

In Romans it is not a question of the *counsels* of God, except in three or four verses of chap. viii., and then only to prove that the work of His grace is unchangeable, and that, when once it has been appropriated by the call of grace, it is stable and sure, and continues

* These meditations were originally written in German, but the author was not permitted to pursue them beyond the middle of chap. x.

till the glory. The work of Christ is accomplished, and those who believe in Him will be conformed to His image. Thus all is perfectly secure. Possessing the life of Christ, so that we suffer with Him, we shall be also glorified with Him. The epistle contains nothing more relative to the counsels of God. If we want to learn about them we must turn to the epistle to the Ephesians, whilst the epistle to the Colossians speaks of the life of a man who by faith is risen with Christ. In Romans we find the work of God in grace for the justification of the ungodly by the death and resurrection of Christ, their acceptance in Christ, and believers looked at as in Him.

As we have intimated above, the doctrine of the epistle to the Romans comprises two parts, the first of which, up to chap. v. 11, treats of *sins*, their putting away, and the grace of God therein unfolded. From there up to the end of chap. viii. the apostle takes up the second part; namely, *sin in the flesh*, the condition in which we are found consequent on Adam's sin, as well as our deliverance from the same, and our new standing in Christ. Then follow as an appendix three chapters, explaining how the doctrine of the universal condition of sin in which man is found, and of the reconciliation by faith of all with God, coincide with the special promises made to the Jews. The remaining chapters contain exhortations and the rehearsal of certain important principles. The exposition of the doctrine of justification by faith contained in the first part of the epistle is introduced by a sort of preface in which the gospel is founded on the Person of Christ, and is presented as being the revelation of the righteousness of God.

We see then in this epistle how God has met us in perfect grace, when, according to our responsibility as men and in presence of His righteousness, we were totally lost; how out of pure grace He has given to us salvation and eternal life, when we were alienated from Him by sin, and in enmity to Him after the flesh.

Before considering more closely the doctrine of the epistle, and the order and contents of its different parts, we may say a word about the apostle himself. He had never been at Rome; but, clad with divine authority, he was the apostle of the Gentiles, and for this reason he could write to the Romans, although he had not been instrumental in their conversion. He knew some of them well, for Rome itself being the centre of the known world, people from all countries were found there. This, however, gives a special character to the epistle, different to that of the greater part of his other writings. It is more of a treatise than a letter from the apostle to one of the churches which he had himself established. The lack of reference to circumstances and persons gives more room for positive doctrine, and although at the close of the epistle Paul salutes those saints whom he knew, as at its commencement he sought to establish a link of affection with the Roman Christians, still it is *apostleship* which is primarily the basis of his communications to the believers at Rome. No apostle had founded the assembly at Rome. Paul had not yet been there; later on Peter went there to offer up his life in testimony for the Lord, but until that moment he had had nothing to do with Rome, being the apostle of the circumcision.

CHAPTERS I. AND II.

Paul begins the epistle with a reference to his apostleship. He was the servant of Jesus Christ, called an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God; that is, so to speak, his title. He served the Lord, and to this end he had been called and set apart in a special way; he was not amongst those who had followed the Lord on earth; he did not know Him thus. On the contrary, he had shown the most bitter enmity to the name of Jesus, and would have wished to root out this new doctrine—that is, faith in Jesus—from the midst of Israel, and to have punished all its adherents. This path was put a stop to by the Lord, who revealed Himself to him in the glory, and this very glory became the starting-point for Paul as to his service. It was the blessed proof that the work of reconciliation was accomplished, since He who had suffered for sins was now in the glory; and not only that, but the persecuted Christians were acknowledged by the Lord not merely as disciples, but as united to Him—the glorified Man, the Son of God in heaven. We see therefore that Paul was *called* in a special way, and also *set apart* in a special way. The revelation of the Lord in glory separated him first of all from *Judaism*, yet not in order that he should turn to Paganism; but, acknowledging Christ in divine glory, he was taken out “from amongst the people and the Gentiles” (Acts xxvi. 17) to be sent back into the world by the glorified Man, the Lord of glory, to proclaim an accomplished salvation, to give forgiveness of sins to all those who should believe in Jesus, and to deliver the Jews from the yoke of the law. From that time he knew no one after the

flesh, not even the Lord Jesus; that is to say, he did not know Him as the carnally-minded Jews desired to have Him here on the earth, as *Son of David*, although fully recognizing that Christ had come as such, and that He had a perfect right to the title. But the Lord as Son of David had been rejected, and now all was pure *grace*, as well for the Jews as for the heathen, since the first had lost all right to the *promises* through their rejection of Him in whom they have their fulfilment. God will undoubtedly accomplish His promises; but for the present moment all is pure grace through the risen Man, whom Paul had seen in glory. These points are clearly established further on.

For the better understanding of the epistle, it may be well to remark, that although Christ in glory was the starting-point and foundation of Paul's ministry, still as to doctrine he does not in this epistle go further than *the resurrection* of the Lord. It is quite true that the position of the Lord in glory is supposed, and that the few verses which set before us the order of the counsels of God mention also the glorifying of the children of God; for it is part of His counsels that the elect should be conformed to the image of His Son. (Chap. viii. 29, 30.) Nevertheless when the apostle speaks of the groundwork of salvation, how man is justified and saved, he goes no farther than the Lord's resurrection; in fact what Christ has *acquired* for us is another thing from the answer to the question, How can a sinner be accepted by God, and how is he brought into the position of an heir of God?

In the epistle to the Romans we are brought precisely into this position of heirs, as having been made meet in Christ to stand before God, and to inherit with

Christ as man according to righteousness, as quickened and accepted in Him before God ; but there is only a brief mention even of the glory and the inheritance. As soon as Christ as man, gone down into death, had been raised, *man* was brought into an entirely new position, quickened in the power of the Spirit and of resurrection. The work which abolished sin had been accomplished ; our sins had been borne and expiated in death ; God had been glorified in the place where sin was ; the strength of him who had the power of death had been annulled, as well as death itself. There was a new man on whom death had no power. I do not speak here of the Person of Christ, of what He was in His nature, but of the new standing as *men*, into which we are brought by the resurrection of the man Christ Jesus, of man in his new condition according to the counsels of God. It is there that we have the proof that the finished work of Christ is accepted according to the righteousness of God, as well as the pattern, not yet of the glory, but of the normal state of every believer in Christ. They are brought, so to speak, to the other side of death—Satan's power, sin, and the judgment of God—because Christ has perfectly glorified Him ; they stand in the favour of God in righteousness. Such is the bearing of the resurrection of Christ as the fundamental doctrine of this epistle, whilst His death is presented as the basis of His resurrection, and what gives to the latter its value—"Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again."

Thus Paul was called and set apart from all men to preach the gospel of God, the good news of this work of His love. It had already been promised beforehand by the prophets in the Holy Scriptures, but now the

proclamation of it was no longer a promise. We have, it is true, precious promises relative to our path in this world, but the gospel itself is not a promise. It is rather the *fulfilment* of the promises of God, inasmuch, at least, as these have to do with the Lord's incarnation, His finished work, His resurrection (1 Peter i. 11, 12), and His being glorified, although this last point is not treated in the epistle to the Romans. It should be observed here that the "Holy Scriptures" are the promises of God, and that the prophets by whom they were delivered are prophets of God.

In what then does the gospel consist? It is "concerning His Son" (the Son of God), "Jesus Christ our Lord." The Person of Christ is the primary object of the gospel; it announces His coming into the world. But here we have two things: First, the accomplishment of the promises, inasmuch as Christ is Son of David according to the flesh; secondly, He is "determined Son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Those are the two great accomplished facts which make the Lord's coming into the world of value for man. The promises were fulfilled; the Son of David was there. The Jews would not receive Him, and thus lost the advantage of the promises. Still they had their accomplishment, inasmuch as the Lord has come. But then the power of God was revealed in the fact that the Lord, after being made subject unto death, was declared Son of God in resurrection. Although we have the strongest proof of the power of God in Christ's resurrection, still we see already in the raising of Lazarus a manifestation of this divine power, as well as later on in the resurrection of all the saints. "This sickness is not unto death, but

for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." (John xi. 4.) He was, and is, the resurrection and the life. The power of resurrection is the proof that He is the Son of God. This is not at all the fulfilment of promises, but the power of God manifesting itself there, where death had intervened as a consequence of sin.

(To be continued, D.V.)

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EXPOSITORY JOTTINGS.

I.

WHAT IS IT TO BE SEATED IN THE HEAVENLIES IN CHRIST JESUS?

It may not be too much to say that the whole of the epistle to the Ephesians is but the development of chap. i. 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." In this ascription of praise there are three things. First, that all the blessings into which we are brought flow to us from God as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; to us as brought now into the same relationship to God, on the ground of redemption, as Christ Himself enjoys; that is to say, God is now our God and Father, because the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (John xx. 17.) Secondly, that all these spiritual blessings are made ours as being in Christ. And lastly, that the place in which they are possessed and enjoyed is in the heavenlies. Let the reader prayerfully seek to understand these several points, if he would intelligently read this portion of the word of God.

To answer the specific question at the head of this paper, we must first enquire what is meant by Christ being in the heavenlies. This is fully explained to us at the end of chapter i. The apostle prays "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding (heart) being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, *and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies,*" &c. (Chap. i. 17-20.) We are here taught that the mighty power of God was displayed in the resurrection of Christ, that God came in and took Him out of the grave wherein He lay, raised Him up, and set Him down at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named; and then, more wonderful still—more wonderful because of those who were the objects of this perfection of His grace—that His power to us-ward was "according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ." And if chapter i. gives us the effect of this mighty power in relation to Christ, chapter ii. shows us the effect on His people. The chapter thus commences: "And *you*, who were dead in trespasses and sins." And the apostle then points out that the exceeding greatness of God's power met us in the place where we lay dead in sins (for Christ indeed in grace had come down to us—down to the very depths

of our condition of death); and that God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us . . . quickened us together with Christ, and raised us (both Jew and Gentile) up together, and made us (Jew and Gentile) sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Christ, for the glory of God, in the accomplishment of His purposes, having identified Himself with His people, God, in response to the One who thus endured all for His glory, came in and wrought, and the effect is seen in a twofold way—in the place Christ occupies, and in the place we occupy in Him—seated in Him in the heavenlies.

But it is objected that we are only in Christ Jesus in the heavenlies in the sense of being seen in Him as the head of the new race. In the first place, Christ is never spoken of as the Head of a race in this epistle: as the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, He is; and we are also told that all things, whether in heaven or in earth, will be "headed up" in the Christ; but this is a very different thing. Secondly, this would imply that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings *through*, rather than *in*, Christ. Of course He is the only medium through which blessings flow to us, as indeed He is God's only vessel of blessing for us; but, as united to Him, members of His body—and this is the teaching of Ephesians—we are blessed as in Him. This statement, however, is met by the allegation that the members of the body of Christ are on earth, not in heaven. This is not true in the teaching of Ephesians ii. There everything, being on God's side, or, as we often say, on the side of purpose, is complete. The counsels of God are accomplished, and He

has before Him, in Christ, His whole Church, Jew and Gentile alike, all distinctions abolished, seated in Christ. He reveals this to us to show us our true place, the character of our blessings, and the scene in which in spirit He would have us live and move. It may be furthermore objected that Christ is seated at God's right hand, and that, as this place belongs only to Him, we could not be said to be seated in Him where He is. True, most blessedly true, is it that the right hand of God is the pre-eminent place of our blessed Lord, the place which God delighted to give Him, and the place which the saints rejoice to recognize as His alone. But this in nowise militates against the fact that believers are in Christ where He is. His place at the right of God is positional—the token of His supreme exaltation; and it would indeed be unholy presumption to intrude a claim to this. But while asserting this, is not Christ before God? And is He not there as the head of His body? And are not saints actually united to Him? And is it not true, therefore, that God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, has quickened us together with Christ, raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus? There is the whole Church now before the eye of God, and He has it there, "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us through (in) Christ Jesus."

The effect of this new doctrine is to confound the distinctive teachings of the several epistles, to obscure the heavenly character and calling of the Church, as well as to undermine the truth of the believer's position.

E. D.

II.

WHO ARE THE "SPIRITUAL" IN GALATIANS VI. 1.

DOES not the place in which this scripture is found throw great light on its meaning? I believe it does, and I would draw your attention to one or two points that strike me as to it.

It is not supposed as a right condition in a local assembly, whether composed of many or of few, that there is one class who are the "spiritual," while the rest have not attained to that standing; and yet this is often the interpretation which is given to what is said of it. To admit that this is the meaning, and that the apostle is only allowing a common condition, well known among the saints everywhere, as well as in the several assemblies of Galatia, is most disastrous to all fellowship and communion of saints in each assembly. It introduces at once two distinct parties, where but one spirit should animate the whole, of which those who assume to be the "spiritual" are certainly the most culpable, though assuming to possess intelligence beyond the others. The apostle is correcting an evil, not providing for its continuance. Often has the writer, and perhaps the reader too, heard this reason given for not personally visiting a certain failing and erring brother, "Oh, I am not spiritual; that is not my work, so I brought this before brother So-and-so," referring, by thus speaking, to the word spiritual in the passage before us.

Now any one carefully reading the epistle will observe that what is condemned in it is a hard, legal spirit. It is clear that the law exacts and expects from a man, and is the opposite of the Spirit of grace, which

brings all to him, and which is to operate now in all our dealings with each other.

The assemblies of Galatia here addressed were nurturing such a legal spirit. It is not of the Spirit of God, and it is by the apostle totally condemned. To do so is to fall from grace. It tends to exclude from our minds that ministry of love which should and would flow forth amongst us spontaneously. For love acts (when it is divine) quite irrespective of any deserving in its objects.

The spiritual are those who are controlled and guided by the Spirit of God, and they are in contrast to others who are legal in this epistle. But anything save grace and the Spirit's control is wrong. It is very important to weigh well how strongly the apostle speaks. He says, "I stand in doubt of you." The very Christianity of those who foster this legal spirit in their assemblies was almost questioned by him, so entirely is it apart from the leading of the Spirit of God. In the beginning he calls it another gospel, which is not another, and in this last chapter he shows that it tends to shut out all the manifestations of love to an erring brother. It fosters religious pride. (Gal. vi. 12, 13.) Legality says, "When he has done something to merit my confidence, then I will restore him to the place he once held in my esteem and affections." Spirituality says, "When he is down is not the time to expect him to do much (save show a willingness to be helped). I will go to him in meekness to do something for him, for I consider myself in him, and that I am exposed to a similar temptation as long as I am in the body." How different!

But a word more as to "overtaken." It means either that *I* overtake him, or that the fault overtakes him, for

we are all running along in our Christian course. In either case he has stopped in his race heavenward. Legality still recognizes the flesh, and the flesh stops a man in his race. I should not have overtaken him, and the fault would not have overtaken him, had he continued running. But here he is helpless. Am I to pass him by in my distress? Like the legal spirit of the Levite and the priest, am I to take the other side? Nay; rather let me imitate the good Samaritan, so-called, who "went down to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine." Our blessed Lord Himself is before us here, who turns to each of us individually with His own beautiful homely comment on the whole story: "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves?" and adds that marvellous exhortation, so short, yet so full and pointed, "*Go, and do thou likewise.*" Such is the leading of the Spirit in opposition to legality.

The Christianity of those may well be doubted who take the ground of not being "spiritual," and who act among their brethren in another spirit—on the ground of law and not of grace. They admit that they are *legal*; *i.e.* still in bondage themselves. The Corinthians were not legal, but "carnal." Hence we have a man in one of four conditions now. Either he is *natural*, dead in trespasses and sins; or he is *carnal*, allowing the flesh; or he is *legal*, as the Galatians were, still in bondage, and not in the liberty of the Son; or he is *spiritual*, under the control of the blessed Spirit of God,* and if so, in all the joy of conscious sonship, as a child with the Father. This last is the only proper Christian condition, and Paul insists on it, and

* "Spiritual" is put in contrast with "natural" in 1 Cor. ii., and with "legal" in Gal. vi. 1.

therefore no allowance is made for a class in any assembly who take the ground of not being "spiritual." Nothing can be more solemn than the strong way in which the apostle speaks to them in this epistle. However much there may be of the appearance of humility in one who says I am not "spiritual," yet not to be led of the Spirit is a denial of Christ, and is the overthrow of Christianity.

H. C. A.

HYMN OF PRAISE.

GLORY be and adoration
 To our Father and our God ;
 That He gave His Son to save us
 Strikes in us the sweetest chord :
 Praise and worship
 To the Father of our Lord !

Praise and worship, adoration,
 Unto Him who shed His blood,
 Unto Him who died to save us,
 Son of man and Son of God :
 Endless praises
 Crown the everlasting Word !

Praise and worship, adoration,
 By the Eternal Spirit be ;
 He alone the power and unction
 Of each suited melody :
 Praise the Father ;
 Christ as Priest our praises leads !

Glory be and adoration
 To the Eternal Majesty,
 With whose praise the heavens resound,
 Glorious, endless harmony :
 Praise and worship
 Be to God, supremely blest !

W. R.

“THE WILL OF GOD” AND “THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.”

(Continued from page 196.)

THIS wondrous unity, in counsel and operation by the Holy Ghost, has Christ (and where Christ now is as *our* living Head in glory) for its rule and object, and comprehends a new order of persons, born of God, accepted and blessed in the Son of His love, and indwelt by the Spirit of adoption, witnessing to us that we *are* sons of God. The revelation of His mind, out of which all unity must come, whether past, present, or future, has made known to us, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, that *we* should be to the praise of His glory, &c. The great “mystery of His will” is surely what this glorious *whole* is, which God has counselled in Himself, and which waited for its revelation till sin, the flesh, the world, and death, and the grave, and him that had the power of death (that is, the devil), had been each and all overcome and set aside—waited till the power of God’s might had displayed itself in its *own* glory, by raising up Christ into His appointed place at the right hand of the majesty on high. He sits there in His own righteous title as the Son of man, and as the fore-ordained Head and Centre of this “mystery of God

and of Christ" in all that was comprehended, and to be yet developed and maintained, as "the hope of His calling," and by "the unity of the Spirit."

Indeed, the first creation itself, with its lord and head, was (as has been said of the first man Adam) a shadow or type of this coming perfection in the power of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, as far as what is of the earth can be, respecting what is heavenly and divine. For even *then* it was "the Spirit of God" that moved upon the face of the waters in formative power, to create and maintain the oneness, and union, and unity in all its parts and varieties, according to the mind of the Creator, without a disturbing note. How else could it be written, that "God *rested* on the seventh day from all His work, which He had made; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it" ?

We shall do well to remember that the original creation, in addition to all its wide-spread grandeur and beauty, carried along with it the inner mystery of "the garden which the Lord God planted," and in which He deposited the representative Adam and Eve, as the hidden secret of Christ and the Church. This only came out in its blessed unity and oneness thousands of years after, when the Holy Ghost wrought afresh, in new creation power, to quicken and raise and seat *us* together in the heavenly places in Christ, and to baptize the members of Christ into this marvellous unity with their Head, and to manifest it for the glory of God in the Church, which is His body. So likewise by the mysterious and typical "sleep," through which Adam passed; and the "rib" which God took out of the man, and from which He made the woman, and brought her to the man, we learn the early lesson, that

as they were *one* flesh so are we the members of Christ, "of His flesh and of His bones."

By this teaching of the Spirit, and in its unity and oneness, we also learn that Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. How precious to know *that these paradisiacal symbols and types are of mysteries and things hidden in God* from before the foundation of the world for His eternal glory, and which He brought to light with the image man, and builded up in the woman, on the one bright day of an unfallen creation! The Lord God deposited these mysteries of His will in the garden, which He *planted* with its rivers and trees, and where He walked in the cool of the day, before sin and Satan entered. He also took the man and put him in the garden of Eden, as His representative, in dominion and lordship, to dress it and to keep it. He shared (yea, formed part) in this unbroken oneness, and intercourse, and unity of creation, in which the heavens and the earth rejoiced, because God saw all that He had made was very good; and God rested from all His works, and was refreshed.

But "the good pleasure of His will, which He had purposed in Himself," lay back long before the world was, and could not bear witness to an earthly paradise as the place of His rest, in which to dwell and fill with His *own* glory. No; nor to Adam, its lord and head, though created in the likeness of God (yet outside Him), and upon whose allegiance and obedience the well-being of a creation depended. The "planted garden," with its mystic man and woman in flesh and blood, by which God wrought so wondrously, were only the proof of some

"better thing to come." The garden served its purpose, and was then closed for another epoch, like the majesty, and glory, and kingdom of the Son of man afterwards, were folded up for a better day, at the Holy mount. These early types of the Bride, the Lamb's wife, and lastly of the power and coming of Christ as Lord and King, are still laid up in the future for creation, and Israel, and the Church, and kingdom.

In the meanwhile (by the law from Sinai and in government) God changed His place too, and suited Himself to a fallen creation, by means of a typical *eighth* day and circumcision in the flesh; and has given out promises and covenants to chosen men, with whom He entered into relationship; and devised patterns of things in the heavens suited to sinful creatures, dwelling with them in a tent and in a tabernacle in the wilderness, and gathering them in tribes round Himself as the Israel of God, or else in a temple, as the sign of a future union and rest in Canaan. Moses as the mediator, and Aaron as their high priest, were sent forth by God to teach the people of Jehovah's choice how He might be approached and worshipped; but at the door of the outer court as yet, and only through burnt-offerings and sacrifices *for sin*. The cherubims which stood at the garden-gate with the flaming sword, that turned everywhere in righteous judgment (to keep the way of the tree of life), gladly changed their place, and suited themselves to these new patterns given out from the glory above, and took their appointed *stand* on "the golden mercy-seat," over which they bent themselves, and spread their wings in holy adoration.

The Spirit of God as aforetime, when the heavens and the earth were to be created, does not hesitate to

come forth into the ruins now that the nobler work of its redemption and worship, round this new centre, is about to be introduced, though only as yet by patterns—in shittim-wood, and fine gold, and silver, and purple, and fine-twined linen. Not a man upon the earth could construct the types and shadows of the things to come, which God had commanded Moses to make, "that He might dwell" amongst them. So the Lord called by name Bezaleel, of the tribe of Judah, and filled him with "the Spirit of God" in wisdom and knowledge and understanding to devise cunning works, and in cutting of stones to set them for "the garments of glory and beauty," which were to be worn by the high priest in the midst of the commonwealth of Israel, and of a worshipping people on "the great day of atonement." Outside the sanctuary, and in connection with the throne in Jerusalem and the kingly power of David and Solomon, another centre of earthly blessing was formed, and the Ark accompanied them in all their history, as the witness of *this* glory. He abideth faithful, and in their declension connects Himself, as the Spirit of prophecy, with the fall and with the rising again of Israel, by the encouraging assurance, "My Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not." This same Spirit framed the *last* words of the anointed of the God of Jacob and the sweet psalmist of Israel, when he sang, "He who ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth." It is of all importance (in the subjects we are considering) to observe and mark the willing concurrence of "the Spirit of God" as in union with the promises and ways of Jehovah, whether in the wilderness or in the land of Canaan, by kings and by the long line of

Israel's prophets, who, in their turn, took up the psalmist's song of the coming One, and the morning "without a cloud," to complete their history. This *their* ministry came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were *moved* "by the Holy Ghost." But we need not pursue these actings of the Spirit of God in old time any further, as showing "the unity of the Spirit" in carrying out the counsels and the power of God for blessing in the midst of creation and Israel. Their national glory and beauty, like the paradisiacal figures and mysteries of "the good pleasure of His will," which God purposed in Himself, are amongst His choicest treasures still, and kept in reserve till the time came for God to send forth His Son.

The synoptical gospels begin at this epoch and with this event, and Luke especially shows us the same Spirit of God which moved upon the face of the waters in Genesis, or as the Spirit of prophecy in the Psalms of David, doing a far greater work in this present unity of purpose and calling of God, out of the moral chaos, and from a ruined creation and its sinful inhabitants. We find ourselves at the end of Bezaleel's workmanship, and of Moses and Aaron's ministry, and of that economy which consisted in the cunning devices and patterns, by which they wrought so marvellously "in shittim-wood, overlaid with pure gold within and without." The hour is come for the representative and elect men and women of this present gospel period, to be called out and be filled with the Holy Ghost; to take their places as the chosen vessels for the introduction of "the great mystery of God manifest in the flesh." The Spirit of God, as the "power of the highest," acts

afresh over and above this world of sin and death, and forms the hearts of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, for their suited services in this regeneration, and Zacharias for his prophetic outburst of praise. Besides these, the archangel Gabriel from above is bearer of the glad tidings to an expectant world; and the multitude of the heavenly host welcome by their songs of glory to God in the highest, the Son born. Patterns of things to come are gone, and the shadows flee away before the substance—Christ Himself. Simeon comes in as a new priest of the sanctuary, and, moved by the Holy Ghost, takes possession of the temple as God's appointed centre of blessing for this earth, and brings the glory back again. He begins a new beginning with the young child in his arms, and celebrates the glad tidings of the name of Jesus as the Saviour of the world. Nor should Anna the prophetess, who served God with fastings and prayers night and day, be omitted in this elect group gathered out to the confession of the Lord and the Immanuel, God with us, as the witnesses to this "new thing in the earth;" for she it was who spake of Him to all them that looked for *redemption* in Israel. The fulness of time was come, and the Seed of the woman is given out unto the world, to whom all promise and prophecy pointed, even Jesus, the Son of God; "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel," and ordained for salvation to the ends of the earth.

The Spirit of God which began with the chaotic darkness, and opened a material creation for the first Adam in the image of God, does not hesitate to begin and maintain "*this* calling and election of God," now that

another order of divine workmanship is to be set up in "the second Adam," according to that blessed prophecy—"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;" "a body hast *Thou* prepared me." The beginning of another creation, with its inaugurations and celebrations according to "the will of God," and in "the unity of the Spirit," is proclaimed in the heavens above to the earth beneath by the introduction of the God-man, our Kinsman-Redeemer and Substitute—"the Lamb of God that taketh away the *sin* of the world." He has obtained eternal redemption for us from the fall—by His death and victorious resurrection. By such unknown ways and untrodden steps as these the mighty Conqueror triumphed over sin and death, by the judgment of God *upon* sin at His cross, and then descended into the lower parts of the earth for other purposes of glory, and to destroy him that had the power of death; that is, the devil. In this unity of divine counsel, and under this anointing, He who descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things. He has led captivity captive, and all power has been given to Him in the heavens above and the earth beneath—given to Him who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Another and a new man is before God as "the bringer in of righteousness" upon this earth, who could say, *after* the wilderness temptations, "Get thee hence, Satan!" and, when going back to His Father, "The Prince of this world cometh, but hath nothing in me"—One whose meat and drink it was to

do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name that is named, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Blessed be God who has made this Christ to be unto *us* "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that he who glorieth . . . should glory in the Lord."

Blessed, unspeakably blessed, to know that instead of an Adam made out of the ground as the centre of a material unity, the Son of God has come down from above, "being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person," to glorify God upon this earth, even He who upholdeth all things by the Word of His power, and who, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Precious too for us that *we* know and rejoice in the Man of God's purpose and calling—the One who was in God's counsels from everlasting, brought up with Him, and "the Man whom He had made strong for Himself;" precious it is to see that models, types, and figure-men have been all carried out into their antitype, and substantiated in the Person who could alone embody them in His life and death, and finally, in Himself by resurrection and ascension, make all "the promises of God to be Yea and Amen," and bud and blossom, and bring forth their fruits to the glory of God by us, and for the blessing of every creature. Besides this "Yea and Amen" for the delight of God by Him who is the fruitful vine, there was a giant work waiting Him below as to sin itself, and putting *away* "the sin of the world," which in its glorious results has

yet to be wrought out before the universe of God, so that the leprosy of sin shall be expelled.

Who is he that can be charged with a mission of this kind, and whence does He come, and what is His name? Another gospel (than the synoptical ones) will answer these great questions. The next day John seeth Jesus coming to him, and saith, "Behold, the-Lamb of God, who taketh away *the sin* of the world." This testimony to Jesus, in His sacrificial title as "the Lamb of God," has this groaning creation for its object, and all that groans with it, on account of sin. The Spirit as the dove identified Himself as a witness to Jesus in His manhood, when Jehovah "called His son out of Egypt," to begin His earthly relations with men. It is in this unity, the Spirit in John's gospel bears witness also to Jesus in His Godhead, and reveals His heavenly relations with "His own," and declares the Father. The descending Spirit likewise bears testimony to this other great mission of Jesus—"The same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost," as essential to the formation of another and divine economy. The Lord takes this fore-appointed place for Himself when risen from the dead, as in Acts i., and said to His disciples, "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." Moreover, *this* unity of the Spirit at Pentecost comes in another character and power to this separated company, on whom Jesus had breathed in John xx. The Lord, "being assembled together with them" (after His passion), commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, "but wait for the promise of the Father, which," said He, "ye have heard of *me*." We may be sure that the Holy Ghost, by His presence and

actings, as sent down from the Father and the Son, in connection with the Lord's departure from this world, and being received up into heaven, will equal, if not exceed, His preparation of the elect vessels at the time of His incarnation. And so it was; for when the day of Pentecost was fully come "they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance;" and great wonders and miracles were wrought by the hands of the apostles, and great grace was upon them all. What is *this* but another and a heaven-born Genesis, and the beginning of a new creation in Holy Ghost power and unity, and established in the Christ of God "according to the good pleasure" of the Father's will?

If "the God of glory appeared to Abraham," and made him the head of the family of faith upon the introduction of earthly promise and blessing by means of circumcision and an eighth-day, what less can Christianity be than the unfolding and establishment of every secret purpose and counsel of the Father from everlasting, for His own glory, in the Son of His love, by the power of His resurrection and the baptism of the Holy Ghost? A revelation from God *as* He is could not possibly have any-one less than God for its object, and in its efficiency of blessing and blessedness to others, contemplates the Godhead in the fulness of divine operation. The centre of Christianity is Himself, and in the Person of the Son, whom no one knows but the Father; and yet as "the Christ of God" He is the central object for human *faith*, seen and heard, yea, handled and felt. His Godhead was so veiled in manhood as to make Himself a home with us, and so close to us every day as to ask, "Who *touch*ed me?" Yes, so

one with us and so like, as to say, "Behold, my hands and my feet, that it is I myself." Intimacies such as these, according to humanity, yet so precious to the heart of Jesus, and the faith of those around Him, were fast closing up. Other times and scenes were opening out, and new relations with Himself about to be revealed in a risen Christ and Lord on high; so that in John xx. Jesus saith to Mary, "Touch me *not*: for I am not yet ascended to my Father." Another order and rule is proclaimed by Paul for this "heavenly calling of God," and embraced in "the unity of the Spirit," suited to the position of the glorified Man above; viz., "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more."

Concurrent with this new order, as *in* Christ, and the bestowment of the Holy Ghost, Jesus said to Mary, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." At the mount of Transfiguration, Jesus, as the promised seed, had won the crown and the kingdom of Israel back again for Himself by His righteous obedience before God, and by victorious power over Satan in life; and then for Himself and the elect, by purchase and redemption through death, and which He still maintains in royal title by His resurrection. He was then taken up out of the midst of that expectant company, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. In principle "old things are passed away, and all things are become new;" for man in the person of the Christ has gone up to God, and is in a new and heavenly glory, where man never was before. In that place He is the Head over all things, principalities and powers being made subject

unto Him. Moreover, in these rights and titles that same Jesus is to come a second time, and fill the whole earth with the glory of God. In that day of millennial peace and blessing "Jerusalem shall be called by a new name, and be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God."

In the meanwhile the Pentecostal Spirit, like a rushing mighty wind, descended to begin His new work "of gathering together" (in one) "the children of God that were scattered abroad." He filled the house where the elect vessels were sitting, and rested on them as by cloven tongues of fire; moreover, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as a sign and testimony to the world, which wondered at such a visitation. Zacharias and Elizabeth, and Mary and Simeon, together with the multitude of the heavenly host (in the former treatise by Luke), were appointed for the introduction of the child when born in Bethlehem; but under this baptism of the Holy Ghost, these witnesses are one with the rejected Messiah, and in union with the ascended Lord, and endued with power for *this* testimony to Jerusalem, and to the uttermost parts of the earth by His glorious resurrection from among the dead. Men *in* union with Christ, men *in* this unity of the Spirit, men *in* the adoption and not of this world, men filled with the Holy Ghost, were necessary as the fit examples (in this second treatise) to the glorified Head over all things for "the good pleasure of His will"—men whose citizenship is *in* heaven, from whence also they look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come and change even their bodies into the likeness of His own glorious body, according to the power whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.

J. E. B.

(To be continued, D. V.)

26

MEDITATIONS ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

CHAPTERS I. AND II.—*continued.*

WITH regard to the expression, "the Spirit of holiness," I notice that the Holy Spirit is, so to speak, the operative power in the resurrection as in everything that God has created or done. Thus Peter says with regard to the Lord's resurrection, "Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter iii. 18); and of believers it is written, "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. viii. 11.) But why is it said, "According to the Spirit of holiness"? Because the Holy Spirit is, as it were, God's operative power for producing in man all that is well-pleasing to Him. This power is, of course, always in God. Through it He created the world; by it He wrought in the instruments of the Old Testament and the prophets. But now He was acting according to this divine power in the manhood (that is to say, the life) of Christ, and in the manifestation of man's new condition. The prophets uttered what was given them to say, and then the divine inspiration ceased; also what they announced was not for themselves. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. But Christ as Man was *born* of the Holy Ghost; His life, though human in every respect, was the expression of the power of the Holy Spirit. He cast out devils by the Holy Spirit; His

words were spirit and life. The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily, but His manhood was the expression of the divine nature through the Holy Spirit, in love, in power, and specially in holiness. He was the Holy One of God. By the Holy Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. In all things He served His Father; His service was the perfect presentation of what was divine, of the Father Himself, in the midst of men, inasmuch as that every moment, through the Spirit, His manhood answered to His Godhead, and was the expression and glory of it, without spot or blemish. All the offerings of the Old Testament are types of Christ; but the meat-offering bears the most striking likeness as a type to what we are considering. Cakes of fine flour, unleavened, mingled with oil, anointed with oil, parted in pieces, and oil poured upon them. What a striking type of the humanity of Christ, who, as to nature, was of the Spirit, and had been anointed by the Spirit, each piece being characterized by the outpoured Spirit, and by which all the incense of His grace was offered up to God as an odour of a sweet-smelling savour! It was thus that He was tried by fire, in death, to show that all in Him was a sweet-smelling savour, and nothing else. Finally, the power of the Holy Spirit was shown in the greatest and most perfect way in the Lord's *resurrection*. Put to death in the flesh, He was quickened by the Spirit. The Spirit, which in divine power had been efficacious in His birth and throughout His life, and by which He at length offered Himself to God, manifested all its power in quickening Jesus from among the dead. It is true indeed that He was raised by the glory of the Father; also that He Himself raised up His body, the

temple of God (John ii. 19); but the Holy Spirit was the immediate agent in His resurrection (1 Peter iii. 18); also the body of resurrection is a *spiritual* one.

Thus man was brought in resurrection in the person of Christ into an entirely new place on the other side of death, sin, judgment, and the power of Satan; and it was thus that Christ was declared to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection. This Spirit was the power of holiness throughout His whole life; for "by the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God," and through this Spirit He is declared Son of God with power, and by it He was justified on the earth. As all was accomplished for God's glory by a Man, who was the Son of God, and who as Man has manifested perfect obedience and love to His Father, man, in virtue of this accomplished work and in the living power of the Holy Spirit, is brought into an entirely new standing in the person of the Son of God, so that by faith *we* are accepted and become *sons*. Christ, who, as Son of David, was the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises, being rejected on earth, entered in resurrection the other side of death, which He endured as the fruit of sin, into the position of the second man, the last Adam.

Thus we have here presented to us in the person of Christ the two essential points in the ways of God—the fulfilment of the promises (although the Jews through rejecting Christ have lost all right to them), and the revelation of the Son of God, declared such according to the living, mighty power of the Holy Spirit in a risen Man. The power of God is thus shown, not in the fulfilment of a promise, but in the

present life and standing of the second Man in connection with an accomplished redemption. But here the divine power of life and the new standing in resurrection are specially seen in connection with man's relation to God, as brought into this standing, yet in the person of the Lord Himself in power.

How blessed is the thought, that the eternal Son of God, become a Man, has taken this new position of which we have spoken, and that as Pattern and First-born among many *brethren*, who will be perfectly like Him according to the living power of the Holy Spirit, and in the glory itself. "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Heb. ii. 11.) In truth it is not the glory that is here spoken of; but the Lord, after His resurrection, could say (He could not before), "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." (John xx. 17.)

Thus the object of the gospel, for which Paul was set apart, is Jesus Christ our Lord as Son of David for the fulfilment of the promises, and declared Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Doubtless the apostle speaks in this epistle of righteousness, explaining it all fully and clearly; but the principal object which he has in view is the Person of Christ Himself, and what He is as the fulfilment of the promises and as Son of God in power and in resurrection, which is what the Holy Spirit presents as the object of God Himself in the gospel. It was from Him, as already glorified, that Paul "received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith amongst all nations for His name." The

Romans were amongst these nations. He does not address them as an assembly, which he usually did when writing to any of the assemblies which he had founded, but he addresses his letter to all the beloved of God, called saints, which are in Rome. As apostle of the Gentiles, he could write to all with the authority of Christ.

He always begins his epistles with grace and peace from the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, names to which we often pay too little heed. In the one we have God Himself as Father, known as such in grace; in the other, the glorified Man, the Son of God, who is seated (and that officially) to preside over the house and people of God. With the one we stand in the relation of *children*, with the other in that of *servants*.

The apostle would gladly have paid an earlier visit to the Christians at Rome, but he had been hindered by Satan; for the Lord's work goes on always in presence of the enemy, who seeks to stay its progress, be it through persecution, or through stirring up evil in the assemblies, with which labourers have to be occupied; be it through heresies, which again claim their time, or through all sorts of other devices. It is important for the Lord's servant to observe this. He thereby learns dependence, and that the strength and efficacy of *the Lord* are absolutely needed. Therefore Paul, whilst giving thanks for the believers at Rome, whose faith was spoken of throughout the whole world, prayed always that God would open the way for him to go to them. He longed to see them, that He might impart unto them some spiritual gift, to the end they might be established; but in the same breath he takes the low place in love with them, and says, "That is, that I may

be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." He was the apostle, and acting in love he could come down as apostle to the weakest, to raise them up to divine confidence. He had often purposed coming to them, that he might have some fruit among them. He was debtor to all nations to bring the grace of God to them, and so, as much as in him was, he was ready to preach the gospel to *them that were at Rome also*.

How solicitous he is to express himself suitably! He could not call them Greeks, nor yet barbarians, for that would have been an offence to the inhabitants of the imperial city. He thinks of it all, so as to be useful to all.

This brings the apostle to the *doctrine* of the epistle. He was ready to preach to those who were at Rome because He was not ashamed of the gospel; "for," said he, "it is the power of *God* unto salvation to every one that believeth." It is not man's power even for the acquisition of *human* righteousness, as he explains more clearly and fully further on. It is a salvation brought to man—a holy, righteous salvation—but a salvation from God, through *the power of God*, and truly, inasmuch as the righteousness of *God* is therein revealed, in contrast to *human* righteousness. It is the righteousness of God Himself in which we participate by faith; His righteousness on the ground of *faith*. All is already accomplished, before we believe. It is by faith that we have part in it. This righteousness is not by the works of man, nor by the law, else it would be only for the Jews, who alone had the law. On the contrary, it is for all men on the principle of faith, and so all the Gentiles on believing have part in it. J. N. D.

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI.

SOME introductory words are necessary to enable the reader to enter intelligently upon the study of this most interesting prophet. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi all prophesied after the return of the remnant from their Babylonish captivity; and this fact gives their writings a special interest for those who have been delivered, in any measure, from the corruptions of Christendom in these last days. It must be remembered that they, as we, are in the times of the Gentiles; for God had removed the seat of His sovereignty from Jerusalem, and bestowed the throne of the earth upon the Gentiles. This is indicated by the manner in which this book commences. The prophets before the captivity are dated according to the period of the kings of Judah or Israel in which they exercised their office. Haggai is reckoned from the second year of Darius the king, so also Zechariah. (Compare Luke iii. 1.) It could not indeed be otherwise; for God never ignores His own arrangements. He recognized the sovereignty of the Gentiles, as deriving its right and authority from Himself, and He will have His people also in subjection to the powers which He has ordained. (See Rom. xiii.) While therefore He Himself stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to interest himself in the building of His house at Jerusalem, and to issue his proclamation giving the people permission to return, He made it manifest to all that His people were dependent upon this proclamation for their liberty. It is partly on this account that the position of the remnant, addressed in the last three

prophets, corresponds so intimately with that of our own. Owning God as supreme in authority and power, confessing that His will is our only law, we are yet subject to kings and all that are in authority; and when oppressed by the unjust exercise of power, by tyranny or persecution, we do not seek relief in agitation, disobedience, or rebellion, but we look to the Lord, who turneth the hearts of kings whithersoever He will (as illustrated in the case of Cyrus) to interpose on our behalf, to influence the governments, which have their source in Himself, to moderation and tolerance. The Christian for this very reason, if indeed he understand his place and position, cannot be a politician, to say nothing of the heavenly character of his calling. Subject to human authorities, he is dependent only upon God; and hence, whatever his needs, difficulties, trials or perils, to God alone does he look. Such is the path of faith, and the path of faith is one of peace and liberty.

The book of Ezra must be read side by side with that of Haggai. Turning thus to the former, it will be seen that the first verse of Haggai links itself with Ezra iv. 24: "Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia." This connection must be briefly developed. The object of the people's return concerned the building of the house of the Lord. This was the subject of the proclamation of Cyrus, who indeed had been raised up for this very purpose (see Isa. xliii. 28, and chap. xlv.); and it was for this end that God had wrought in the hearts of those who were made willing to return to the land of their fathers—all, as we read, "whose spirit God had

raised, to go up and build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem." (Ezra i. 5.) When they arrived their first concern was to verify their claims to be of Israel, all who could not produce the register of their genealogy being refused (chap. ii.); for when the Spirit of God was working in their midst, and when, in fact, they had already entered upon the enjoyment of deliverance from captivity, the imperative necessity of a holy separation was deeply felt. It is only in times of coldness, lethargic indifference, or open backsliding, that the people of God become insensible to the claims of God's holiness. Accordingly this feeble remnant, in the first flush of their restoration, purified themselves from all doubtful associations. Some who were put away from the priesthood as polluted might have their claims recognized at a future day, when a priest should stand up with Urim and Thummim (see Exod. xxviii. 30); but for the present place of service and testimony it was essential that the reality of their priesthood should be beyond suspicion, attested by the holy registers. So now many a true child of God may be absent from the Lord's table because he is not able to point to his qualifications as written in the Scriptures. The work of separation accomplished, liberality of heart was displayed in offering "freely for the house of God to set it up in his place." (Ezra ii. 68-70.) Then on the seventh month, which was the month for the blowing of trumpets, figure of the restoration of Israel in the last days, the children of Israel, like the disciples on the day of Pentecost, gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. (Chap. iii. 1.) They were all animated by one desire and one aim—a blessed concord, which can only be produced by the action of the Holy Spirit. There as-

sembled, they builded the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt-offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God. Divine intelligence thus marked them; for they in this way declared that their only ground of acceptance before God, and their only hope of securing His favour and blessing on the work which they had in view, lay in the sweet savour of the sacrifice; and in their subjection to the Word (see verses 2-4) they confessed that divine wisdom alone could guide their feet and preserve them from dangers and snares. They were now formally placed under the protection of the God of their fathers.

Still it was not until "the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem" that they actually laid the foundation of the temple (chap. iii. 8). From the sixth verse it would almost seem that at the very outset—as has been the case in every new movement of the Spirit of God—there was some decline in spiritual energy. At least, the statement is very significant, But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. Be this as it may, the work at length was commenced, and the foundation was laid. To many it was a time of great joy, and their joy found expression in the ancient and divine song, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever." (1 Chron. xvi. 34; comp. 2 Chron. v. 13.) With others their joy was mingled with grief; for "many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice, and many shouted aloud for joy," etc. (iii. 12, 13.) Speaking of the sorrow of the ancient men, another has beautifully said, "Alas! we

understand this. He who now thinks of what the assembly of God was, at the first, will understand the tears of these old men. This suited nearness to God. Further off, it was right that joy, or at least the confused shout, which only proclaimed the public event, should be heard; for, in truth, God had interposed in His people's behalf.*

The work commenced so auspiciously was soon to be interrupted. Nothing arouses the anger of Satan like any attempt to testify for, and to acknowledge the claims of, God on the earth. Immediately, therefore, on the foundation of the temple being laid, we read of the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin seeking to hinder the progress of the building. In the first place they, like the Gibeonites in the days of Joshua, "did work wilily, professing a desire to build with Judah and Benjamin" (chap. iv. 2); and then, on being refused, they threw off the mask of their hypocrisy, "and weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia." (vv. 4, 5.) It is to this point that special attention must be directed in order to understand the commencement of Haggai. Let it be recalled, then, that the remnant who had returned were under the protection and favour of Cyrus, and that in building the house of the Lord they were acting in accordance with the king's decree. With confidence in God, they had therefore nothing to fear from their adversaries. If the king commanded them to desist, they might have obeyed, as they were in subjection to

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. ii., pp. 5, 6.

the Gentile power; but the fact was, as may be gathered from a comparison of Ezra with Haggai, that the people were deterred from continuing their work by their adversaries before the letter of Artaxerxes was obtained. The work of the "house of God which is at Jerusalem" ceased from fear of man—fear of man from having lost faith in God; and once having given up all care for God's interests and claims, they began, with all the more energy, to mind their own things, to build their own houses, instead of building the house of God. Such was the state of things amongst the remnant when Haggai began to prophecy; and bearing this in mind, we shall be the better able to comprehend his words.

Note, first of all, that the word of the Lord came unto him in the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month (see Ezra iv. 24), and that it was addressed to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest. Then, in one verse, the condition of the people is displayed.

"Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." (v. 2.)

Such was the occasion of the Lord's message and remonstrance through Haggai. He had wrought in the heart of Cyrus, He had stirred up the spirit of His people, to accomplish His purpose in rebuilding His house; and now, forgetful of the object of their restoration, they professed to discern that it was not a seasonable opportunity for their work. And what led them to this conclusion? The fact that there were adversaries, that the times were not peaceful. As if

enemies to the Lord's work would ever cease! As if the time would ever come when the natural eye would perceive the opportunity for labour for the Lord! Ah, we have all to learn the lesson that the Word—the mind of the Lord—is the warrant for service, and that when He speaks it is but for us to go forward, whatever the circumstances and however numerous the adversaries. As He said to Joshua: "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." (Joshua i. 9.) Their spirit is a complete contrast to that of the apostle who said, "A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." (1 Cor. xvi. 9.)

It was then to meet this condition of things that the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house to lie waste?" etc. (*vv.* 4–11.) Every word of this message is fraught with instruction, and contains principles of the utmost value, applicable to the people of God at all times. They had said, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. "Is it time, then," said the prophet, "for you to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house to lie waste?" This was indeed a challenge for their hearts, and one that raised an issue that could not by any ingenuity be evaded. For on what ground could they pretend that it was an opportune moment to give the preference to their own interests, to the neglect of the Lord's claims? The secret lay in the fact that building and decorating their own houses raised no opposition. Doing good to themselves would rather elicit the commendation of

their adversaries. It is only testimony for the Lord—testimony in word, work, and life—that provokes the hostility of the world. They had chosen therefore the path of selfish ease and self-interest, minding their own things, and not the things of the Lord. They knew nothing of the spirit of the psalmist who “sware unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.” (Ps. cxxxii.) They were rather like those of whom Amos speaks, who lay upon beds of ivory, and stretched themselves upon their couches . . . but were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. (Chap. vi.) For not only were they diligent in caring for their own comfort, but they were also indifferent to the fact that the Lord’s house was lying waste. God’s eye and heart were upon His house (see 2 Chron. vi. 28); their thoughts were upon their own habitations, and they thus showed that they were utterly out of communion with the mind and heart of God.

And let our own hearts speak, and speak honestly as before God, in the presence of such a charge against this indifferent remnant, whether God’s house occupies the first place in our minds, whether its desolate condition touches our hearts in His presence, whether we are amongst those who sigh and cry because of its ruined condition, whether, in a word, amid the comfort of our own dwellings we are indifferent to the state of the house of God. Let us be clear upon what is meant. It is not asked if we are interested in the Lord’s work, if we are in sympathy with the preaching of the gospel,

if we are diligent in visiting and caring for the Lord's poor. All these things are important, and have their rightful place in the heart of every Christian; but our present question concerns "the house of God, which is the Church of the living God." What then is our attitude to it? For if it is the dearest thing to the heart of Christ, if His eye is upon it perpetually, if He is ever engaged in cleansing it with the washing of water by the Word, we cannot be in communion with His heart unless His thoughts and desires concerning it are also ours. Alas! might not the word of the prophet be also addressed with reason to many of us, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house to lie waste?" Let us then ponder upon the word of the Lord to His people through the prophet.

"Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." (*vv. 5, 6.*)

As our own blessed Lord taught, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it," so was it with the remnant. Setting their hearts upon rest, ease, and prosperity in this world, desiring to find their "life" in their comforts, they lost it; for they had left God out of the account. Making themselves, and not God, their object, putting their own things in the first place, and becoming indifferent to His honour, claims, and interests, they forfeited the very blessings for which they laboured. How common is this mistake even with Christians; for though the character of the blessing may differ, the principle still obtains. Thus you may see a child of

God who, because of his domestic or business claims, as he will tell you, is constantly absent from the assemblies of the saints, and has scarcely any heart for the Lord's objects, but who is withered up in his own soul, and has little peace in his family, and not much prosperity in his affairs. And why is this? Not because of his lack of attention to his own concerns; for, as we have seen, these have the foremost place in his mind. No; but it is because such an one is caring for his own things, all indifferent to the desolation of the house of God; because, in other words, he exalts his own interests above those of the Lord. Let us never forget that there is such a thing as a present judgment of God; that He notices the conduct of His people, and, in His paternal government and care, deals with them according to their state of heart and walk. (See, for example, 1 Peter i. 17.) It was so in the case before us. They were diligent in sowing their seed, but God gave them but a scanty harvest; they ate and drank, but were not satisfied, for God withheld His blessing; they clothed themselves, but found no warmth, and their savings melted away. In this way God dealt with them, to exercise their souls, to wean them from their selfish aims, and to recall them to the object of their restoration to their own land, that, losing sight of themselves, they might find their blessing in communion with the mind and heart of God. It is this truth which is set before them in the following verses:

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.” (vv. 7, 8.)

Again, the Lord calls His people to consider their

ways. Blessed occupation this for His saints at all times, for the tendency ever prevails, especially in seasons of declension, to deceive ourselves into the belief that all is well, even when we may be actually under the chastening hand of God for our unfaithfulness. Many an evil, many a break-down, many a startling manifestation of iniquity in the midst of the assembly would be spared us if we did but heed this admonishing call. It should be, in fact, our constant and habitual employment to consider our ways in the presence of God. There all delusions disappear; there, in the pure light of His holy presence, the secrets of the inmost heart are revealed; and there it is alone that, discerning our true condition and failures, we can receive grace to judge ourselves by the infallible standard of God's glory; and thus, confessing our sins, enter once again upon the enjoyment of forgiveness and restoration. The Lord would therefore call His people, whom He had brought back from Babylon, to come before Him, that they might discover whence they had fallen, and that they might repent and do their first works.

Thereon He commands, or rather perhaps reminds them of, what He desires. They, as we have seen, had set their hearts on their own houses, and the Lord, as it were, says to them, "My heart is on my house. Go up therefore to the mountain, and bring the wood, and build the house." This was the object of their restoration, and the Lord would still have them share the privilege of fellowship with His own purposes. He moreover condescends to say, "I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified." By building the house, they would evoke the satisfaction of His heart and exalt His name. We thus learn that the true way to glorify God

is to be in fellowship with His own mind—not in the activities we may choose, however good in themselves; not in works of beneficence and philanthropy, however the wants and sorrows of others may be thereby alleviated, but in labouring for the object God has before Him at any given time, in working in communion with His mind and heart for the accomplishment of *His* ends, and not our own. Thus in the time of Haggai no labourers would have been acceptable to God as long as the building of His house was neglected. The only proper attitude therefore for any servant of God is, “Lord, what wilt THOU have me to do?” and his only proper aim is to labour or to strive diligently to be acceptable to the Lord.

In the next three verses (9–11) the people are reminded that they are being chastised because of their indifference to the Lord’s house. God was drying up the source of every earthly blessing. He “blew” upon their crops, withheld the dew, called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn—upon everything the earth brought forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands. And wherefore did He send this universal blight upon all the labour of their hands and upon all their expectations? Let the answer be indelibly written upon our hearts: “*Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man to his own house.*”

Is there no voice in these words to the saints of this day? God is still God, and He has His objects now as He had then. If then His objects are not ours, is it any wonder that we are suffering from spiritual dearth and barrenness? that when we have sown much, in preaching the Word, we bring in little? that feeding

continually upon the ministrations of teachers, we have not enough? that we are neither "warm" nor satisfied, and that there should seem to be a drought throughout the assembly of His saints? Let our hearts, we again say, answer the question, whether this is true, in any measure, of ourselves, that we prefer our own houses above the Lord's house. We learn from Rev. i.-iii. how jealous the Lord is of the state of His Church, and that His cry is ever raised in the midst of His saints, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Well, therefore, might we listen to the teaching of the scripture before us; and if our hearts are but bowed to its solemn lessons, unspeakable blessing cannot but be the result. May the Lord Himself make His word with us, as He did with His people in this chapter, living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, for the glory of His own most holy name!

E. D.

As to confession, I can only say for myself that, first, the want of individual spirituality (in its divine and heavenly character), of singleness of eye, and of full purpose of heart; and, secondly, the presence of unjudged flesh and worldliness (shown in mixed motives and intentions, in plannings, and oft in an energy not of God, as well as in ways and doings) press on my own heart, as being among existing obstacles to the Father's working fully and freely for the honour of the Lord Jesus in the present day in England.

G. V. W.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

I. WORSHIP.

"THE worship that involves priesthood, though true, is not of the highest kind. It is worshipping God as such, and not the Father. The former is treated of in Hebrews, where priesthood is found, and looks for mercy and grace to help from a throne of grace. We draw near, having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus ; but it is drawing nigh, more than properly worship. No doubt we worship and adore there, and cannot but do so ; but drawing nigh is what characterizes the epistle to the Hebrews. Can a man draw nigh to God ? Israel could not. We can in the holiest, and find mercy and grace to help in time of need. What I said as to not needing a priest was this, that Christ does not now exercise His priesthood *for our sins* who go into the holiest. That priesthood in the Hebrews is not for our sins (chap. ii. 17 is now finished and over), because we have no more conscience of sins, in that by one offering He has perfected us for ever. It is in respect of grace to help us in time of need. He is as Priest between us and God, in that we are looked at as feeble creatures on earth, and He appears for us in the presence of God on high. In the doctrine of Hebrews we are never in Christ, or united to Him. The word even for worshippers in the Hebrews is not the same as in John iv. It alludes to service among the Jews only, as only a shadow of good things to come, not the image. J. N. D.

"July, 1877."

II. DELIVERANCE.

"I know well how few know deliverance, but it is a great thing to know that I, a poor worm, should be before God and the Father in the same acceptance and favour that Christ

is, loved even as He is loved. But it is the greatness of infinite love. Then it is not generally preached with intelligence; next it is experimental, and above all, we must be in earnest to have it. Who is willing to be dead to what nature and flesh would desire? Yet that is the only way of deliverance. People will tell you it is our standing in Christ. I admit it as Col. iii., and as faith owns in Rom. vi. and Gal. ii.; but who is willing to be in the standing? It is standing, or else we are in the hopeless effort of Rom. vii., or narrow monks' labour, which I have tried; and even if we have experimentally learned, as it must be learned, who is carrying out 2 Cor. iv., so as to have the conscience living in it by an ungrieved spirit? But if experimentally taught, it is of the greatest use to souls, and the joy of being blameless in Christ before God is exceeding great, and one that is eternal and divine in its source and nature—a wonderful thing; “for he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” The world is a terrible snare, and a subtle one, and greatly hinders this deliverance. A soul enjoying deliverance has its object elsewhere. (See Rom. viii.) Then we must remember the diligent soul shall be made fat. I press when souls are in earnest, My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness. For we learn we are without strength for deliverance, and walk in the sense of it if we can be used in service; but His grace is sufficient. Knowing we are nothing is the place of blessing, for then God is everything, and the place of strength; for then Christ can put forth His strength. In this 2 Cor. xii. is a most instructive chapter. Strength *for* service may be found in what in this alone between us and God may be found in the third heavens; but strength *in* it is found in Christ when we are kept in the abiding consciousness that we can do nothing. We all know it. If we have not a permanent thorn in the flesh, we must at any rate return to the camp at Gilgal. J. N. D.

“May, 1880.”

"THE WILL OF GOD" AND "THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT."

(Concluded from page 224.)

NOR is He who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost, and those who are Christ's, to be separated from Himself, or from "the unity of the Spirit," of which He is the centre; for *sealing* by the Holy Ghost is as truly connected with our salvation through faith in the finished work of Christ, as is our membership with Christ, as Head of His body—the Church. We are baptized by this same Spirit into one body, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. It is Paul who was set apart to declare the mystery of Christ, and of the body in its relation to Christ as Head. He had been caught up into the third heaven to be instructed in "the mysteries of God," and to hear unspeakable things, and who, because of the abundance of the revelations, came back with a thorn in the flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure. John's qualifications were derived from the bosom of the Lord whereon he lay, and his subjects were the Father's love, and the Father's house, and the Bride as the Lamb's wife, as well as the reciprocal love of the family, maintained in the power of life in Christ by "this baptism of the Holy Ghost." "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." "He that hath the Son hath life;" and as Christ is, so are we in this world, is our boast and glory. Beyond this we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for

we shall see Him as He is. Perfect in this union of life in Christ by the Spirit, and of living relationship with the Father and the Son, it imparts to us its character, and rules our expectations—"He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure." Blessed surely it is to see a new-born company presented to the world by Paul as "an epistle of Christ," known and read of all men; and equally blessed to find the family under the baptism of the Spirit dwelling together in unity, even as Jesus has loved us, and given Himself for us. The beloved disciple writes, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." It is through this same grace of Christ that Paul says, "None of us liveth to himself, or dieth to himself; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's." The "one thing needful" for light and testimony may vary in different dispensations, though each may be perfect in its time and season. For instance, David in his one desire to dwell in the temple of the Lord all the days of his life, or Mary and Martha in the company of Jesus in their house, or Paul in pressing onward to Christ in the glory. However encouraging to us these variations and measures may be, because so suited to our own state, and by men and women of like experience with ourselves, yet one gladly turns from all to Him who has put His comeliness upon us, and whose glory it was to say, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do . . . these doeth the Son likewise."

It was in this same comprehensive and *united* circle, and with holy men of old in their "times and seasons," that the Holy Ghost had long wrought, and tarried for "the eighth day power," and "the circumcision of Christ,"

that He might come forth in a new character as the rushing mighty wind—come forth to act in unity with the Father and the Son in Pentecostal power, and bear testimony by the newly-baptized apostles of Christ to Christ, and open out the things that were given Him to do for the glory of God, and for His own glory as the Son, and the glory of the Church as His body, and the Bride of the Lamb. The millennial union and glory of Israel and the Gentiles, and the blessing of every creature, as well as the deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, waits in a yet further hope of the day when "the Son of man shall come back in His glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels," and sit on the *throne* of His glory. In the midst of such promises and counsels in the unity of the Spirit, and by the will of God, as are thus made known, and to be displayed in such spheres and scenes as these, both in heaven, and in the heaven of heavens, and in this earth, the Son, in the glory of God will come forth. The unction of the Holy One, and the anointing which *we* have received, or else the baptism and outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh, will each and all find their new and happy fulfilments and ministrations when that which is perfect is come, and all that is in part shall be done away.

The good confession before Pilate which Jesus made, when challenged as to His royal rights and kingdom glory (as well of His mission against the usurpation and lie of Satan) is of great account in these scriptures. It corresponds also with the Baptist's earlier testimony to our Lord's titles, and mission, and sealing by the Spirit, as "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the

sin of the world," adding, "The same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Pilate said, "Art thou a King then? And Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King; but *now* is my kingdom not from hence, else would my servants fight that I should not be delivered up to the Jews." Another object of this confession lay in "the mystery of God's will;" viz., "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, to bear witness of the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." In like manner the Spirit of God writes, in 1 John iii. 8, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might *destroy* the works of the devil;" and another blessing precedes this in verse 5, "We know that He was manifested to *take away* our sins; and in Him is no sin." Another and a blessed result of these grand purposes flows forth *to us* in the statement, "Who is He that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" But beyond these victories over sin, and the devil, and the world, yea, and because of them, is the last great personal assurance in this epistle—"We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know Him that is true, and we are *in Him* that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Well may the Spirit in this unity add, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols;" for all outside this leads to idolatry, or is an idol.

These various quotations from one and another of the apostles show that purposes of blessing now and hereafter originate, and are perpetuated, in the good pleasure of God's will, before the world was. They have been carried out through "the Son of His love" in this

world, before angels and principalities in the heavenly places, and substantiated by His finished work on the cross for our faith and walk before God and men through the Holy Ghost. The truth becomes vital in us as the temples of God by the indwelling Spirit, and is a power by which to fix our affections on the things above (not on things upon the earth), where Christ sits on the right hand of God.

In conclusion we may ask, With what glory could "the Father of glory" glorify His only-begotten Son (who prayed to Him for it in John xvii.) but with His own glory? And if the same question were asked as regards "the mystery of Christ," and of Christ and the Church as His body and His bride, the same answer must be repeated; viz., "With His own glory." Indeed, it is according to this glory of glories, with the Father and the Son—like "the holy of holies" aforetime—that the Holy Ghost forms the grand doxology for the Church in this chapter as being in this comprehensive and blessed "unity of the Spirit," and "according to the good pleasure of His will," which this epistle reveals: "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church in Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Practically we learn that the scope of the Holy Ghost's testimony, and the range of His operations, are always in keeping with the will and mind of God at any given period or dispensation, and therefore limited or extended by the suited disclosure which He makes of Himself, whether it be to Enoch, who walked with Him before the flood; or to Abraham

as the friend of God in the world that now is; or since by the Son of the bosom, who came to declare and reveal the Father. The lawgiver instructed Israel in these disclosures by the ways and acts of Jehovah in their midst, and even exceeded all previous examples by writing, in Deut. xxix. 29, "The *secret* things belong unto the Lord: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." Solomon, in his book of Proverbs, surpasses Moses and the Decalogue by affirming, "It is the glory of God to *conceal* a thing." The communication of His mind aforetime by prophets and holy men was necessarily in a certain unity of the Spirit, inasmuch as they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless all these previous and partial ministries become proofs of "the mystery of His will," provided and kept in reserve for the subsequent and final revelation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in Godhead unity (and yet in the distinctness of divine operation), to which they all pointed "that they without us should not be made perfect." For this *they* wait, and according to the character of their respective calling and hope of blessing till Christ shall come a second time, and His people be willing in the day of His power.

"The good pleasure" of His will (which has been the subject of our meditations), as the divine source of all blessing and blessedness, reproduces itself by the unity of the Spirit in us; as it is written, "It is God who worketh *in* you to will and to do of His good pleasure." So likewise is it the main spring in us for the endurance of every adverse influence, arising from ourselves or from others—"Do all things without murmur-

ings or disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life." Indeed, we may ask ourselves, What else could "the good pleasure" of the Father's will work out in us (below or above) whom He has sealed by the Spirit in this unity, but that we should be like the beloved Son in whom He was well pleased, both now and hereafter? Exhortations to walk worthy of the vocation, "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love," are founded on these moral glories of Christ, and flow from His fulness as their source of supply; for He was this. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, casts us likewise on His unfailing love; for "unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." What a dignity attaches to the vocation wherewith we are called, whether viewed individually as in union with Christ, or as members of Christ, who is the Head of all principality and power, or as Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all!

"And is it so? I shall be like Thy Son,
Is this the grace which He for me has won?
Father of glory, thought beyond all thought,
In glory, to His own blest likeness brought?"

"Nor I alone, Thy loved ones all, complete
In glory round Thee there with joy shall meet,
All like Thee, for Thy glory like Thee, Lord,
Object supreme of all, by all adored."

J. E. B.

MEDITATIONS ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

CHAPTERS I. AND II.—*concluded.*

It will perhaps be of use to say a word as to the meaning of the expression, "Righteousness of God." In spite of its simplicity, there prevails a good deal of misunderstanding about it. Luther's German translation has instead, "The righteousness which avails before God." Now man's righteousness, according to the law, avails before God; and although indeed it is nowhere to be found by Him, yet still it counts before God; only it is not God's righteousness, were it ever so perfect. In John xvi. 10 we see wherein the righteousness of God has been demonstrated; namely, that God has seated Christ at His right hand in glory, because He has perfectly glorified Him. Righteousness consists in this, that the Father has exalted Christ as man in His own glory—the glory which He had with Him before the world was; and God, as a *righteous* God, has glorified Him because *He* has been glorified by Christ on the cross. (John xvii. 5; xiii. 31, 32.) In the above-cited passage (John xvi. 10) the Lord says: The Spirit "will convince the world of righteousness, *because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.*" In rejecting Christ, come in grace, the world has for ever lost Him [in this character]; but God has exalted and glorified Him. When the Lord speaks of the world, in John xvii. 25, He says, "O *righteous* Father!" but in interceding for His own, He says, on the contrary,

“Holy Father!” (v. 11.) Thus the proof of the righteousness of God consists in this, that He has glorified Christ. As God was in Christ in the world, it must either accept or reject Him. It rejected Him, and for that reason is judged, and will see Him no more until He comes in judgment; but Christ, as man, has perfectly glorified *God* in all that God is, and God in righteousness has glorified *Christ*. The gospel then announces *this righteousness of God*; namely, that Christ, in what He has done for us, having glorified God, has been glorified as man, and seated at God’s right hand, clothed with divine glory; furthermore, that *our* standing before God is the consequence of what Christ has done. *Our* justification and being glorified are a part of the righteousness of God; because what Christ has done to glorify God, has been done *for us*. We are the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. v. 21.) Christ would lose the fruit of His work if He did not have us with Him in the glory as the fruit of the travail of His soul, after having glorified God in all that He is, although we are absolutely unworthy in ourselves.

Thus the apostle shows why such a righteousness, the righteousness of God Himself, was necessary, if man was to be saved. Human righteousness did not exist on earth, and yet righteousness was indispensable. But as it is God’s righteousness, and certainly not of our works, it must be reckoned to us through faith, on the principle of faith; for if man’s *works* could help towards it, it would not be the righteousness of *God*. But if it is by faith that man participates in this righteousness, then believers from amongst the nations have part in it equally with the Jews.

We see, then, that if the person of Christ was placed

in the foreground as the first main subject of the epistle, the second is *the righteousness of God* presented on the principle of faith, so that it is for *all*, and to be received through faith, and thus appropriated by the soul. What made this righteousness indispensable is the universal sinfulness of man, whilst the wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. With regard to the heathen, the apostle gives two reasons for this wrath. First, the testimony of creation (*vv. 19, 20*); and, secondly, that, knowing God, they did not wish to retain Him in their knowledge, preferring idolatry. (*vv. 21-24*.) "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse." (*v. 20*.) That does not imply that they know God in His *nature*, but they ought to have known Him as *Creator*; unless one is blind, one sees a Creator in the creation.

But God had not only revealed Himself as Creator. Noah did not only know Him as such, but also as a God with whom man as a responsible being had to do, as a God who had judged the world for its wickedness, who took note of man's ways, and who would not have unrighteousness and violence. At the tower of Babel they had learnt to know Him as a God who had scattered them, because they desired to be independent in their own wisdom, and mighty in their own strength. Such a God, however, the heathen did not wish to know or acknowledge; they made for themselves gods such as man could make, which gratified their passions, and instead of glorifying the true God, or being thankful to

Him, they fell into the darkness of their own hearts. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." And because they did not wish to maintain the glory of God, but abandoned it for their own lusts, God gave them up to these lusts. He gave them up to vile passions in which they did things unbecoming nature itself, and, filled with all ungodliness and controlled by their passions, they not only did such things themselves, but with deliberate wickedness they found their pleasure in those that did them. It is true that there were some who judged these infamous ways (chap. ii. 1), but they did the same things, and thus condemned themselves, and came under the just judgment of God, whilst they despised the riches of His goodness and patience, not perceiving that this goodness led them to repentance. Instead of giving heed to this goodness, they, by their hardness and impenitent heart, treasured up wrath against the day of wrath.

The apostle comes now to an important principle, simple indeed, but which greatly helps to clear the whole matter. Now that God is revealed, He deals with man according to his action. In the day of judgment He will deal with everyone according to his works, let him be Jew or Greek; for there is no respect of persons with God. It is true that God chose a people, and brought them near unto Himself for the proving of man, and for the maintenance of the truth that there is *one* God; but fundamentally there was no difference amongst men. All were sinners by nature, and all had sinned. We see also that God with regard to His people, although He had given them a law, re-

mained always hidden behind the veil without revealing Himself. But now the veil is rent, and man—first the Jew and then the Greek—must be manifested before Him, each one according to his course, and according to the reality of his moral condition ; and here it is not a question whether his standing be that of Jew or Greek. God, according to His righteousness, looks only at the measure of light which each one possesses. The apostle supposes Christianity when he speaks of those who seek for glory and honour and immortality ; for the knowledge of these things depends upon a revelation. God will give eternal life, without distinction between Jew or Greek, to those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek these things. God looks for the reality of the divine life, and not a mere external form. Those who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, must expect indignation and wrath. “Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile ; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.” All will be judged, each according to his deeds, according to the light which he has possessed, without respect of persons. “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law : and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law. . . . In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.” “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” If one from amongst the nations does what the law commands, he is accepted, and has the preference over one who, possessing the law, does not observe it. As we have said, it is a question since the revelation God has made of Himself, no longer of an external relation-

ship, according to which some are "near" and others "afar off," but of that which is right in the sight of God. In reality, if one of the Gentiles by the Spirit walked in love, he did that which the law commanded; whilst a Jew, who had the law and walked in sin, could not be accepted of God. It is no longer a question of external relationship to God, of His administration of the world and His people, but of the condition of the soul before God, and of the day of judgment, when the secrets of the heart will be brought to light, and man will be judged according to his works.

After clearly stating these great and important principles, the apostle goes on to describe the real condition of the Jews, as he had done with regard to the nations in chapter i. The Jews boasted themselves of the law, and the privileges which they possessed; they knew the will of God, and were able to instruct the ignorant; yea, they even boasted of God. But did they also instruct *themselves*? On the contrary; they did all that which in their wisdom they taught others not to do. They dishonoured God whilst bearing His name. The one true God was blasphemed amongst the Gentiles by them, as it is written. They possessed prerogatives, but if the law to which these prerogatives belonged was broken, their circumcision became uncircumcision. And if the Gentiles observed the law, they condemned those who, possessing the letter and the circumcision, transgressed the law. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly. . . . But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL.

NOT only, as we have seen in former papers, do the Scriptures set forth the sovereign grace of God, the way He saves the sinner, and the holy relationship in which He sets him as saved; they also show the manner in which grace is received into the heart; and they furnish too a perfect expression for the joy that follows upon the reception of grace, so that the saved sinner can worship God in a manner suited to the thoughts of the God who has saved him. We have examples of this in the varied hymns of praise to be found in the Old and New Testament. God has registered them there for our instruction and comfort. There we find the blessed experiences of a soul who has learned in the presence of God that he is *for* it in grace, instead of being *against* it in righteous judgment, and whose joy finds vent for itself in praise to God, the fruit of childlike faith in that which God has said. Faith finds true the words of Elizabeth: "Blessed is she that has believed; for there shall be a fulfilment of the things spoken to her from the Lord." And the Lord Jesus said Himself to Thomas, "Blessed they who have not seen, and have believed." (John xx. 29.) The apostle Paul writes thus to his children in the faith at Thessalonica: "For this cause we also give thanks to God unceasingly that, having received the word of the report of God by us, ye accepted, not men's word, but even as it is truly, God's word, *which also works in you who believe.*" (1 Thess. ii. 13.) "So faith then is by a

report, but the report by God's word." (Rom. x. 17.) It is faith, simple faith, which establishes the soul in this happy relationship with God; and faith is itself produced by His all-powerful word. All is of Him. What blessing to *know* Him as Saviour! For thus it is that He has been pleased to reveal Himself in Christ.

We may remark that, in the songs of praise to which we have referred above, the soul that has found rest in the presence of God is filled with the sense of His absolute holiness. But instead of this being an occasion for distance or fear, it is linked with overflowing joy. This alone would testify to the possession of a perfectly clear conscience; that is, one freed from the burden of its sins, for these have been wholly and entirely blotted out in a way suited to the nature of a holy and a righteous God. God only could have wrought such a deliverance; and the delivered soul recognizes in Him its Saviour, and finds at the same time in Him the source of all its joy, and so can celebrate His perfect holiness as an integral part of its own joy.

We may consider the song of Mary. (Luke i.) She says, "The Mighty One has done to me great things, and HOLY is His name; and His mercy is to generations of generations to them that fear Him." Again, Zacharias says that the God of Israel had visited and wrought redemption for His people, to remember His *holy* covenant, to give us, that we should serve Him without fear *in piety and righteousness* before Him all our days. In the same way the song of the redeemed, in Rev. i. 5, 6, celebrates the efficacy of the work of redemption which has made them fit for the presence of God: "To Him who loves us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, and made us a kingdom of priests to His

God and Father; to Him be the glory and the strength to the ages of ages. Amen."

The first song that we find in Scripture is that which Moses and the children of Israel sang after the wonderful passage of the Red Sea. It is striking to see there how their hearts are occupied with the holiness of God, and that not as an abstract dogma, but as a present reality for their souls. "He was glorious in holiness, and He had guided His people unto His holy habitation." That was for them the result of having known deliverance by the direct intervention of the Lord Himself. (Ex. xv. 11-13.) The second song is that of Hannah. (1 Sam. i. 11.) A very remarkable one from a prophetic point of view; for there, for the first time, the Messiah is mentioned—the Lord's "anointed." Here again the holiness of God is the source of joy for the soul that has been delivered and blessed: "There is none holy as the Lord; neither is there any rock like our God." The Spirit of Christ, in Psalm xxii., gives expression to the same thought, and that in a moment of the deepest anguish: "Thou art HOLY, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel; our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them." After this, in many passages, especially in Isaiah, we meet with this special name of the Lord, "THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL."

We find it three times in the Psalms, and all three in the third book (lxxi. 22; lxxviii. 41; lxxxix. 18). Psalm lxxi. is a practical application to the life of the saint of the truth uttered by the Lord in Psalm xxii., and especially true of Him, showing what was the resource of His soul even upon the cross. Israel's national resurrection (v. 20) is a result of the Lord's having

been heard from the horns of the unicorn. (Psalm xxii. 21; compare, too, Isaiah xxvi. 19.) In this Psalm, then, we find again God's righteousness and truth the source of the soul's joy that finds its rest in the Holy One of Israel. Psalm lxxviii. is the recital of the people's history, bringing into contrast their rebellious ways and God's faithful goodness. It was the Holy One of Israel that they limited. Psalm lxxxix., which closes the third book of Psalms,—the book which treats especially of Israel as a nation, not merely the remnant of the Jews,—takes up the story of God's grace at the point Psalm lxxviii. left it, and shows how the Holy One of Israel is their shield and resource. Here we find added, and much developed, His purpose as to His "anointed," which was merely mentioned in Hannah's song. The King is about to take His place in the midst of the chosen people, and they can say, "The Lord is our defence, and the Holy One of Israel is our King."

This name, so full of blessing for the chosen seed of Abraham, not only reminds us of the inviolable character of God, but also of His settled purpose to bless the people in spite of all their rebellion. God cannot lightly pass over sin, but He righteously takes it away by means of a perfect sacrifice, and in such a manner as that in righteousness He can give free course to His love in favour of the objects of His grace—poor, lost sinners! He shows this in His word by the history of His ways with the people of Israel. In spite of all the goodness of God displayed on their behalf, from the moment of their coming out of Egypt, the Israelites never remained faithful to Him. On the first favourable opportunity they turned aside from the Lord

to plunge afresh into idolatry. If for a moment God brought them back to Himself by the powerful testimony of one of His servants, whether judge or prophet, at the same time delivering them from their enemies, no sooner was the deliverer dead than they again fell into the old sin. (See Judges ii. 10-23.)

The same thing took place under the kings. (2 Kings xvii. 7-23.) Moses had said at the beginning of their history, "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you." Their sad history is summed up in few words in the first verses of Isaiah: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." (Isaiah i. 2-4.) The parable of the vine shows again the same truth. (Psalm lxxx.; Isaiah v.) And so further on: "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" (Jer. ii. 21.)

Do not think, dear reader, that all this is only written as the history of a peculiarly corrupt people. Oh, no; by it God wants to show us what the heart of man is—my heart, your heart—even when God has lavished upon us all His care. The human heart is utterly corrupt; good does not exist in it; and thus it is impossible to get any good out of it. As long as God acted on the principle of law, seeking fruit from

responsible man, the same sad result could not fail to be produced. The trial has been made with the people of Israel once for all. But God will not leave His people in this deplorable condition. After having proved their incapacity to bring forth good fruit, He reveals Himself as their Redeemer. He charges Himself with the work of taking away their iniquity, and gives them a new heart inclined to obey Him. Such are the terms of the new covenant which He makes with them in contrast with the old covenant made at Mount Sinai. (Jer. xxxi. 31-34.) The old covenant proposed obedience as the condition of blessing. (Ex. xix. 4, 5); the new covenant has no "if," it is entirely of grace; God does all Himself, thus fulfilling His promise made to Abraham: "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed." For this reason the prophet says: "For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel." (Jer. li. 5.) The new covenant will have its accomplishment for the people of Israel during the glorious reign of the Lord Jesus Christ on the earth, a reign which will last for a thousand years. (Rev. xx. 16.)

Meanwhile God brings out the contrast between the principles of law and grace, and shows us in what way He can now receive us, and make us to rejoice in His grace, because the work of redemption is accomplished; the Lord Jesus having already suffered for our sins. But since God has put man to the test under law, by means of the people of Israel, it is equally in favour of this people that He shows the resources of His grace. It is this side of the truth which is developed so forcibly and with such detail by the prophet Isaiah in

connection with this name of grace—"The Holy One OF ISRAEL." God reveals Himself thus in spite of all the rebellion of the people. Israel has been against Him; but He is *for* Israel. But in order to be this He must first be their Redeemer, and then the source of all the good which is to be produced in them. Chapters xl.-lvii. are full of this marvellous revelation. One quotation will suffice as an example. "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. . . . For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." (Isaiah xliii. 1-3.) God takes away their sins. He says, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." (Isaiah xliii. 25; xliv. 22.) At the same time He reveals (chap. liii.) the holy victim who should bear them, the Lord Jesus, on whom "the Lord has laid the iniquity of us all." (Acts viii. 35; 1 Peter ii. 24, 25.)

The same prophet speaks of a faithful remnant of the people who will cleave to the Holy One of Israel, believing His word and profiting by His grace. (Chap. xi. 20; xvii. 7.) This will be an individual work; whosoever believeth on the Lord shall not be ashamed. "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." (xxix. 19.) The great principle of grace comes out here, as in the precious words of the Lord Jesus: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 3.)

Dear reader, are you one of these "poor in spirit"? Have you taken this place before God as a convicted

sinner, powerless for good, and accepted His grace which is offered to us in Christ? The blessing cannot fail; for God reveals Himself as the Redeemer, and comes into the midst of His people, as the Holy One, to bless them. So we read again, as in Isaiah xii. 6: "Cry out and shout aloud, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." (Compare Ezek. xxxix. 7; Hosea xi. 9; and Isaiah xxix. 22-24.) You will say that there the people of Israel were still in question. This is true; but God is showing the principle upon which He acts in His grace—the way in which He blesses according to His holy nature—and for us the sole means of receiving blessing from Him. His word can never fail nor ever pass away. It is His word which is preached unto us, and by which too we are born again. "The word of the Lord endureth for ever." (1 Peter i. 25.)

May the Lord open our ears and hearts to receive it in its fulness.

W. J. L.

THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR.

REV. xxii. 16.

I WISH to say a few words on what it is that gives the heart of a believer boldness at all times to say, "Come, Lord Jesus." My own thought as regards this passage is, that nothing but personal affection to the Lord can ever give the heart boldness before Him. The soul must realize that it has been laid hold of by His love, that such a light is shining down upon it from His face as to enable it, under everything coming up against it, in spite of failure, to know that there is nothing but love in the heart of the Lord Jesus Himself towards it.

Yes, through all possible changes we have still His love. I may be a poor thing, as unlike Him as possible, still His love laid hold of me just as I was, and nothing that He can find in me is unforeseen, or can change that love. If the thought of my heart were, "I have been a Christian thirty or forty years, done this or that," would that enable me to stand and say, "Come, Lord Jesus"? No; nothing but love to Himself will.

"I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." All the promises are sure in Him. Have they failed with us or Israel? No; Christ is the guarantee for all. "Root and offspring." Is the root never to bud and blossom, and fill the world with fruit? Should we be content to have Him up there, and Satan possessing the earth? No; in my heart He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; I must see every knee bow to Him. "Bright and morning star." Not of the night, but of the morning without clouds, harbinger of day before the glory of the sun lights up the world, as it will do. This glory, brightness of the morning star, is a glory to be in Himself, seen and admired of His saints, a peculiar glory. It was something to cheer John's heart in the midst of failure (and ours too), to watch through the night for that bright star, that Lord "who loved us, and gave Himself for us."

Then we find the word, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Why displace God's thoughts of the bride for my thoughts of myself? Knowing the grace of Christ, cannot I leave myself in the hands of Christ without reference to what I am? If I can do that, I can say, "Come." If we think we have a multitude of things to do first, we cannot know the blessedness of

waiting and watching for that bright star. John might have said, "I have testified of the failure of all in man." But what there was in Christ to meet it all was his thought; is it yours?

There is no scene so marvellous in the whole world as the description of the bride, the Lamb's wife. Faith identifies the soul that has it with the Lord. You ought to know why you can say, "Come, Lord." Testimony may have failed; and if walking in the Spirit, you can never count you have given Christ what He deserves. How then can you say, "Come"? The name of "bride," connected as it is with the Lord Jesus, brings one to the conviction that God is acting just to please Himself there; that Son to be enthroned in the heavenlies with all possible glory, but not alone. He must have companions there. It is God's thought to have an adopted family of poor sinners there; and who shall stop Him? If a ray of light has come down into my heart from the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ray identifies me with the bride. I belong to Jesus; I must be with Him, go where He is. Strange place for such as I, but I am His; I must be there. The most halting, the "saved so as by fire," will go up to one common glory, brought in because part of the bride. Rewards, differing according to faithfulness, likeness to the Lord, there will be; but when I think of the Christ there in glory, and myself a part of His body in it, how it does away with all thought of creature merit, and faith understands why Christ must have glory, without reasoning; for "He is worthy." The heart that loves will never be satisfied till Christ has all His glory. Oh for softness of heart rather than greatest intelligence! Is there nothing to move the affections

in the certainty of those words being so soon accomplished: "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry"? Are you longing for Him? He is coming! Is the hope ever on your heart? Has that part of God's grace told on your souls? The moment a man gets this hope he must begin to act on it. How sweet to have love drawing the heart in separation to Christ, or to fruitfulness, if unfruitful!

Looking then at ourselves or our service, there could be nothing but despair; but the moment the person of Christ flits before the mind, then comes a joy that neither light or darkness can dim. He is surely coming, and a bride is surely kept to meet Him. Lift up your eyes in the midst of all your failure; He is coming; it is Jesus; and the heart can say "Come" to Him. I cannot think of Him without breathing out, "Come, Lord, come quickly;" and I cannot get to the love in the bosom of the Father without longing for another to enjoy it too, looking out too for another heart to cry, "Abba, Father" with me. That word "come" is a sort of plumb-line to our hearts, a touch-stone by which to test the state of your soul. Is it failure that hinders? And do you ever expect to meet His face with joy on account of your own faithfulness? No, impossible! All your confidence must spring from what Christ is, not from what you are. If this moment we were caught up to meet Him, His first thought would be surely not to find fault. His first thought would be: These are mine; this is the bride made ready by the Father. He never found fault with anything He did. He does not love to find fault; commendation is sure to come first with Him. He will have a private account to settle

with each soul, but not at the hour of meeting—all will be joy then. Living water is ever streaming from that Rock, and where is the limitation? "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." There may be two states of souls thirsting. With the one God deals to make them find out what they are. If you are one trying to snatch at everything to satisfy yourself, to you I could not say, "Drink freely." Another state of soul is seeing everything in Christ to satisfy; but thinking you have something to do to get hold of Him, there is a grasping, a catching, but a never getting hold; seeing the manna and water, really hungering and thirsting, and crying out, "I see, but cannot lay hold." Such a soul has to learn that the God who has showed the blessing is the One alone to give it. Would the Lord coming to-night find you as those having to do with Christ, and not with yourselves?

This portion fits the day we live in! Nothing now remains but for God to introduce Christ, to put down all the wickedness of man; and in the sense of this, at the fag end of the Church's failure for nearly 2000 years, I can still stand and say, "Come, Lord Jesus;" but I could not do so if looking at a single thing around me or in myself. My heart and my eye must be filled with Himself. Then, and then alone, can I cry, "Come, Lord Jesus."

G. V. W.

SOMETHING less than the truth means something less than Christ, for He is the truth. There is more danger therefore in frittering away the truth than in an open attack upon it.

EXTRACT FROM LETTER ON REVIVALS.

WE must look ——'s work and —— ——'s in the face. It is one of the phases of the kingdom of God, like the revival in Ireland and Scotland some years back. The Brethren went on all the same. Some took part in it. Nor did the work in result hinder or affect their testimony. A popular testimony such as theirs never could be deep or extend its influence save in its general effects in Christians many years, and in this respect it does good. One rouses Christians from their slumber, and in respect of the poor dying world; and the other, as regards the state Christians are in. In this, I doubt not, God's hand is in it. But ——'s work, to say nothing of false doctrine in details, avowedly mixes up Christianity with the world and worldly influences, and uses them because it tells in favour of his work, and fosters worldliness and the evils of Christendom. And —— ——'s, while it recognizes the deliverance of Christians from the bondage of Rom. vii. to the liberty of Rom. viii., which Christians greatly need (and in this respect will be useful), mixes it up with the lowest doctrines, man's power and ability. Both do this, though I hear —— has got on. And it does not even possess the true ground of abiding peace with God. There is much evil teaching mixed with both; and man's power for good being their basis, all is based on experience, not really on Christ's work—and, I think, poor experience where searched out, though beyond the state

of Christendom, but tending to fix them at this low point. But if the Brethren are devoted and unworldly, so that there is a practical testimony, their testimony remains where it was. They have to bring in these fuller elements of truth, and truer ground of peace. And if they are possessed really in faith, the rousing of heart and conscience will open there to them. If they have nothing better, it is no matter their being dropped in God's hand. They have; but they must possess it really, and have heart to use it for the saints of God.

——'s is largely modified, and brought more to its full bearing, its real character, since even my little tract and its true ground and meaning made clear. Its trusting to human power I have barely touched. I have not attacked it, save in one point, Christ's personal holiness, where it is on very sad and dangerous ground, but brought out the truth, in which it is wholly defective.

——, I am told, has made progress; but when I knew him he denied openly all grace in conversion, denounced it publicly when fully discussed and held, and preached at Edinburgh that nobody was condemned for their sins, only for not believing—a pretty common notion now, and which is a salvo to the conscience.

The Brethren have the truth of the Word largely where these have not. Some have gone on to make Christ peccable. If they are faithful practically, they will, with their little strength, have an open door. All depends, I believe, on their being in the practical power of the Spirit of God. "To him that hath shall more be given." And it is He that is holy, as well as true, that makes the promises for this time. I am not uneasy or afraid, only if Brethren are to have the

testimony of God with them, they must have it, and be it in themselves. The salt must have its savour, or what is it good for? What would be permanent in both these systems, when the impulse and energy of them is lost, would, I think, tend to infidelity and evil doctrine. It is not the energy and impulse that is to be resisted, though excitement may accompany it, but this evil which is to be met by grace and energy in the truth itself. The mere excitement will soon be over, a matter to be talked of as passed. But Brethren have something that is permanent, and the word of God abides for ever. *Only they must live it.* J. N. D.

February, 1875.

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI.

CHAP. i. 12-15.

IN this section we have the effect of the message sent by the Lord through the prophet, which we considered in our last paper. From Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, down to the lowest of the people, obedience was rendered to the voice of the Lord with one consent. The word of the prophet had been with power, and all hearts recognized the truth of his message, and the claims of their God. And it is important to note, as a principle everywhere affirmed in the Scriptures, that the voice of the Lord is linked with the words of the prophet. (v. 12.) When God sends a messenger He is pleased to identify Himself with His servant. Our blessed Lord thus said to His disciples, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he

that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." (John xiii. 20; see also Matt. x. 40-42.) So in our passage it stands, "And the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him." This is a solemn consideration for the people of God; for the converse is true, that if one who is really sent of the Lord is refused, it is the Lord who is refused in the person of His servant. (Matt. xxv. 41-45.) Not that everyone who claims to be sent of God is to be received as such; for the test is, Do such speak the words of God? (John iii. 34.) And as we are taught elsewhere, many false prophets are gone out into the world; but it is just on this very account that the responsibility is cast upon the saints of "trying the spirits whether they are of God." (1 John iv. 1.) The apostles could say, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (1 John iv. 6.) They could take this ground because they were inspired men, and they had therefore the infallible word of truth on their lips. No servant, however devoted, could now adopt this language; but he might apply the principle to the message he delivered, if that message were indeed the pure word of God. While these limitations are necessarily made in our present circumstances, yet let us not forget that the Lord does in these last days send His servants with messages to His people, and that wherever the soul is in the presence of God they will be readily discerned; and hence that it is no less grave now than at any former time to turn a deaf ear to the words of admonition and warning they may utter. Look at the case before us. Were not Zerubbabel and Joshua the leaders of the people? And who was Haggai? Why

should he set himself against them all? Why should he find so much fault, and prophesy such bitter things? And what had he to recommend himself to the attention of the people? He was evidently of no birth or standing, for his parentage or genealogy is not recorded. He had but one qualification. It was not his position, his office, or his gift; it was simply that he was sent by the Lord their God. So now the only questions for any of us, when a professed servant of the God stands before us, is, Has he been divinely sent? and does he speak the word of the Lord?

The obedience, moreover, which is here spoken of was no mere external compliance with the exhortations they had received, but it was of that sort which proceeds from the action of the word of God on the conscience; for it is added, "And the people did fear before the Lord." This is the sure sign of a real work in the hearts of this feeble remnant. Whether in sinners or saints, if the conscience is not reached, whatever outward and apparent effects may be produced by the ministry of the truth, nothing is gained. In all such cases it will be as Ephraim and Judah, of whom Hosea speaks; their "goodness" will be "as a morning cloud, and as the early dew which passeth away." (Hosea vi. 4.) On the other hand, fear of the Lord will always be produced in a soul when the conscience is in exercise before God; for it is then that God's holy presence is apprehended and His claims acknowledged, while at the same time the sense of failure and sin will not be forgotten. Obedience therefore is the result, as in this instance, God Himself being the object before their souls. It was, in other words, a real turning of heart to the Lord; and recovered from minding their own things, they

now desired to give the Lord and His things the first place.

From what follows we learn that if the Lord chastises, or if He speaks in words of warning and admonition, it is only that He seeks to remove out of the way every barrier to His people's blessing. He had watched the effect of the prophet's words, and immediately the signs of repentance and self-judgment appeared He sends them a message of consolation—"Then spake Haggai, the Lord's messenger, in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord." (v. 13.) The Spirit of God, as it would seem, amplifies the description of the prophet—the Lord's messenger, in the Lord's message—to identify him with his Lord, and to assure the people of the certainty of the truth of his message. There is great significance, moreover, in the message itself. As we have seen, it was fear of their adversaries that deterred the people from the work of building the Lord's house, and now the antidote is administered. How often do we read, for example, in Isaiah, "Fear not; I am with thee." And the Psalmist exclaims, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" Nothing indeed dissipates fear like the assurance of the Lord's presence. But if it is consolation it is also an encouragement, reminding the people that if the Lord called them to go forward in a path of danger, He Himself was in their midst, and would go before them, as He had done in the wilderness, to show them the way. What grace, what condescension, we may add, lies in such a message! These poor, feeble people had but ill responded to the Lord's faithfulness in restoring them from their captivity, and yet, spite of their unfaithfulness and backslidings, the moment their

hearts are bowed before the message of the prophet the Lord with unwearied love declares, "I am with you." Yea, His heart is ever upon His people, and if He punish, it is that in their affliction they may seek Him early, so that He may return to them with the assurance of His love. If His people are indifferent to Him, He is never indifferent to them, and He is never satisfied until in the midst of His people He can rest in His love, and joy over them with singing. (See Zephaniah iii. 17.)

In the next place we have power for work. We thus read: "And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, in the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king." (*vv.* 14, 15.) This statement presents two or three points of special interest and instruction. It should be noticed, first of all, that while the people had left off building, as described in Ezra, from fear of their enemies, before the decree was obtained to prohibit their work, they now recommenced their labours without waiting for the king's permission. Concerning this we quote the remarks of another: "Neither was it because the king's decree was brought them that they began again to build, but because they feared Jehovah, and feared not the king's command, as seeing Him who is invisible. God was not any more to be feared in the reign of Darius than in that of Cyrus or of Artaxerxes; but the source of their weakness was their having forgotten God. . . . All this shows us that, in ceasing to build the temple, Israel was in fault. . . . They had no excuse

for this, since even the king's commandment was on their side. That which they lacked was faith in God. When there was faith they dared to build, although there was a decree against it. The effect of this faith is to give rise to a decree in their favour, and that *even through the intervention of their adversaries*. It is good to trust in God. Blessed be His gracious name." * We thus learn the supremacy of God's authority, and that all His people need concern themselves with in their path and service is the undoubted direction of His infallible Word. If God command, it is ours to obey; and we can leave it with Him to remove, as He did for the remnant, whatever obstacles may seem to lie in the way of obedience.

The source of the power for labour should also be observed. It was not in the people, but in the Lord. It was He who stirred up the spirit of His people, and constrained them to go forward in His service, even as He had in the first instance "raised" their spirit to go up from Babylon to Jerusalem with the object of rebuilding the temple. It takes us a long time to learn that there is no power but in the Lord, that in the Lord's work human energy, will, or perseverance not only go for nothing, but are also really barriers in the way of divine strength. As indeed was said to this same remnant, "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zech. iv. 6.) Thus it is that when we are weak we are strong, because in the sense of our perfect weakness we are led to dependence on the Lord, and He can then display unhinderedly in and through us His own power. The

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. ii. p. 7.

perception of this truth puts our souls also into the right attitude for blessing ; it leads our eyes upward, and keeps us waiting on the Lord in expectation.

And the place in which power comes is most instructive. It is not before but after obedience, and is connected moreover with the assurance of the Lord's presence in the midst of His people. The apprehension of this would dissipate the fallacy often entertained, and sometimes expressed, that we must wait for power in order to obedience. It is not so ; but on obedience the Lord gives power ; first, there must be the obedience of faith, and then power will be bestowed to walk in the divine paths. For example, when the Lord said to the man with the withered arm, "Stretch forth thy hand," he might have replied, "I have no power ;" but with the spirit of obedience he hastened to comply with the command he had received, and he received strength, and was made whole. It is the same order in the account of the remnant in this scripture, and it is ever the same in the history of believers. To be in a right condition of soul is the one thing to be desired. This removes all difficulties, and makes it possible for the Lord to take us up and use us as the vessels of His will. Hence as soon as the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and did fear before the Lord, all was ready ; for the Lord at once stepped in, and said, "I am with you ;" and He stirred up their spirit to accomplish His purpose in building the temple.

The date, moreover, is given when they recommenced their work. It was in the four-and-twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king ; *i.e.* twenty-three days after Haggai commenced to prophesy. (Verse 15 compared with verse 1.) Three short

weeks thus sufficed for the recovery of the people from their backsliding. When God acts in power His work is soon done, and His people are made to rejoice in His restoring grace and pardoning mercy. His delight in the obedience of His people is plainly seen from the record of the date. How yearningly He watches over His saints, and how minutely He notices the first movements of response to His word! E. D.

I MAY have a clear knowledge of all the truth of Christianity, I may be able to expatiate with distinctness on the past and future dispensations of God's ways; but the testing question is, Do I BENEFIT in the daily experiences of my own soul, as I pass through the varied experiences of this life, by the sense of my own *personal relationship* to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Father, and to God? This experience, and the sense of this relationship (but not the mere knowledge of truth), will give real rest and comfort to the heart; for *nothing* can ever alter the place of favour revealed to us here. H. C. A.

EVERY believer is indwelt by the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. vi. 19.) I ought to say therefore, when I rise in the morning, The Holy Spirit, dwelling in me, will reproduce in me this day the walk and ways, the temper and deportment, of Christ, if I do not hinder Him by the allowance of the flesh. The opposition of the world, the flesh, and the devil are nothing to Him, if I am contented to be a broken vessel for Him to use.

H. C. A.

MEDITATIONS ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

CHAPTER III.

THE apostle now begins to meet the Jews on their own ground. Their prerogative was great, the profit of the circumcision was "much every way," chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. The apostle truly and rightly believed this. Whether all were personally converted is not the point under consideration; they enjoyed what were nowhere else to be found—the privileges of the people of God—and if they did not believe, their unfaithfulness could not annul the faithfulness of God. (It is the same now with professing Christendom.) The promises of God will have their fulfilment for the people of Israel through His faithfulness, although they have lost every right to them. But the apostle does not speak of this until later on. (Chap. xi.)

But here someone might say that man's unbelief brings out all the more strikingly the infallible faithfulness of God. And does not the fact of man's unbelief, causing the faithfulness of God to stand out in stronger relief, do away with God's right to judge man? No, in nowise; for according to this principle He could judge *no one*, because the wickedness of the nations also brings out the more clearly His faithfulness. The Jews are quite as responsible as others for their unbelief, and that these would be judged the Jew did not in any way doubt. Thus in spite of their privileges the

Jews have also fallen under the judgment of God. The apostle does not stoop to reply to the wicked insinuation of some—"Let us do evil that good may come"—but merely says, "Their damnation is just." Christians were indeed accused by the world of speaking so. Grace always gives opportunity for accusation as long as the soul is not convinced of sin; but as soon as the conscience comes to the knowledge of sin grace becomes the occasion of heartfelt gratitude.

Were not the Jews better than the Gentiles since they had such privileges? No, in no wise. The apostle had before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they were all under sin. And now he cites a whole number of passages to prove that the Jews by their own Scriptures were considered as being under the guilt and the power of sin. With regard to the heathen there could be no doubt respecting it; they were afar off from God, sunk in idolatry, adoring false gods, and living in iniquity. But the Jew thought quite otherwise of himself. He had been brought near, and made to participate in all the privileges. The apostle himself had acknowledged it as the greatest privilege of the Jews, that to them were committed the word of God, the oracles of God. But what did these oracles referring to the Jews, and in which they boasted as belonging solely to them, say? They said, "There is none righteous, no, not one." A whole series of passages quoted by the apostle from the Psalms and Isaiah prove the sinful condition in relation to everything of those of whom he is speaking. And the Jews, according to their universal maxim, cannot but concede that it is they who are spoken of; for "we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law."

Thus *every* mouth is stopped, and the *whole* world guilty before God. The nations are wholly *without* God; but the Jews are *condemned* by this very word of God in which they boast. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the *knowledge* of sin." The law that man accepted as the rule of righteousness proved that he was a sinner; it convicted and condemned him, and that expressly in his conscience, producing at the same time the consciousness of sin in him.

After proving in this way that all are under sin, the apostle returns to what he had already laid down in chap. i. 17 as the principle of the gospel; namely, the revelation of the righteousness of God. All that comes between chaps. i. 18 and iii. 21 forms a parenthesis to show that the righteousness of God is necessary because there is none in man. After this the apostle enters more closely into the subject of the righteousness of God and its application to man. It does not stand in relation to the law, which was only the perfect rule for man. Again, God cannot measure His righteousness by the measure of man's righteousness, or of his responsibility. It is according to this measure that He *judges* those who have had the law. *His* righteousness must be measured by what He is in His nature, and His nature is revealed in His acts. He must glorify Himself; that is to say reveal Himself; for with God to reveal Himself is to glorify Himself. When He judges He judges man according to human responsibility; when He acts it is in accordance with His own nature. The law knows nothing of this nature; it tells us that we ought to love God, but what is He? The law is adapted to man and his responsibility towards

God. The righteousness of God stands wholly and entirely outside all question of the law, every description of law, unless indeed the nature of God Himself could be considered as such. He is a law for Himself, perfect in His nature. His righteousness is now demonstrated in what He has done with regard to the Person of Christ, whom He has seated at His right hand in consequence of His finished work. The law and the prophets have borne witness thereof. The righteousness of God Himself has been exercised in accepting and glorifying Christ in virtue of His work, and we share by faith in this acceptance because He has accomplished this work for us. Precisely because it is the righteousness of *God* founded on the work of Christ, who died for *all*, it has to do with the whole world and with all men. All who believe on Christ, whether Jews or heathen, have part in it, and in all the privileges which flow from it. Had it been human righteousness it would have had to be according to the law, and then only the Jews could have had part in it, because they alone had the law. But as it is the righteousness of *God* it is manifested for all, and it is imputed to all those that believe. Thus the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is manifested for all sinners; it rests on all who believe in Him. "For there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

By nature then all are in *the same* condition, because all are alike in sin; but precisely in the same way grace is the same for all, because the righteousness of *God* is *the same* for all believers, and in consequence of this all believers accepted in this righteousness stand on

the same ground before God. God has set forth Jesus Christ as a mercy-seat, through faith in His blood, and has thereby shown His righteousness in regard to the sins of the Old Testament saints, which in His forbearance He had passed over. But now, inasmuch as Christ has died for them, His righteousness in thus passing over is shown. By reason of this expiatory death which He had in view God could pass over those sins. Furthermore His righteousness is also declared at this time. It not only throws light upon the ways of God in the past, but it is also at the present time a manifestation of the ground of the believer's justification through a perfect work; it is therefore a present thing realized in the justification of all believers according to the righteousness of a righteous God. God is righteous, and justifies in virtue of the work of Christ; yea, He evinces His righteousness in so doing, not as though we deserved it; but God in justifying us recognizes the value of the work of Christ. Thus justification is a manifest known thing, because the work is accomplished.

There is then no room for man to boast, not even for the Jew, in spite of all his privileges. All boasting is excluded. On what principle? By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Man, whoever he may be, occupies the place of a sinner. Grace, and grace only, avails for all in the same way; for the conclusion has been reached, that man is justified by *faith* without the deeds of the law. "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also." Such He must be, and such He was even in the Old Testament; although when all races of mankind were sunk in idolatry He

chose out of their midst Israel, in the person of Abraham, to preserve on the earth the knowledge of the one God; but now in grace He has taken His place as God over all men according to the truth of His immutable rights, inasmuch as it is one God who justifies the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. The difference between the expressions here made use of—"by faith," or "on the principle of faith" and "through faith"—is explained by the fact that the Jews did indeed seek after righteousness, only on a false principle; namely, that of works. They must have righteousness, divine righteousness, it is true, but on another principle—that of faith; and because it depends on the principle of faith, a believing Gentile participates in this divine righteousness through faith, which is produced in him by grace. Does this principle then make void the law? No, in no wise. The authority of the law is fully established and confirmed, but for the condemnation of all those who are under its authority. Nothing could so perfectly establish its authority as the fact that the Lord Himself has taken upon Him the curse of the law.

J. N: D.

THE TESTIMONY OF GOD.

It has pleased God, in the development of His ways with men, to give us in the Word pictures, perfect in themselves, of what was in His own mind as to the conduct and position of those with whom He was dealing. Whilst others will suggest themselves to the reader, I only advert to two at this moment.

First, in Numbers x., after the arrangement in perfect and beautiful, because divine, order of the camp of Israel, whether at rest or in its order of march, the two silver trumpets are made for calling the assembly together, or for its journeying, with a further direction on Israel entering into the land for their use in time of war, as well as in the day of their gladness, and in their solemn days. Thus, when the trumpets were used, the testimony of God—the Jehovah of Israel—in priestly intelligence was proclaimed. It was *He* that was marching through the wilderness (Ps. lxxviii. 7), and Israel were marching with Him. They were *His* enemies (chap. x. 35) that were scattered. It was *His* people that were summoned in assembly, and *His* charge that was kept as He dwelt in their midst. They rendered testimony to and for Him in their journeyings or assemblies, in their battles or days of solemnity or gladness. This testimony, which was that of priestly intelligence in the mind of God, being established by an ordinance for ever, the people take their first journey in perfect order, without a single let or hindrance; the Ark of the Lord going before them a three days' journey to search out a resting-place for them; and they concluded it by Jehovah returning to the many thousands of Israel. Alas! while it was thus a perfect picture of what the whole journey should have been, it was quickly succeeded by the murmuring and lusting of chapter xi.—the result of departure of heart from the Lord.

Again, in Joshua vi. we have a perfect picture of what conflict in Canaan should have been. The Ark of the covenant of Jehovah—*The Lord of all the earth*—had passed over Jordan, and Jordan had been driven

back before it. The Lord of all the earth was claiming His own inheritance to give to those whom He had taken to be a peculiar treasure to Himself, for all the earth was His. In the wilderness they were the camp in the midst of which He dwelt, and now arrived in the land they are the *Lord's* host. This Joshua learnt when he enquired of the man with the drawn sword, "Art thou for *us*, or for *our* adversaries?" "Nay," was the reply, "but as captain of the *Lord's* host am I now come." In this chapter then we have a perfect picture of the marshalling of the Lord's host, as we had before of the ordering of the camp in its first journey, and as in Psalm lxxviii. 24-27 we have "*the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary*" in the days of millennial rest.

The host is marshalled by the armed men passing on first, then the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horn passed on before the Lord, next followed the Ark, and the rereward or gathering up of the host completed the order of battle. Yet there was neither sword drawn nor shout given; the priests alone are proclaiming in perfect intelligence and order the testimony of God. The rights and title of Jehovah, of Him who dwelt between the Cherubim, of the Lord of all the earth, are proclaimed in every blast of the rams' horn trumpets, as against the power of the enemy sheltered behind the walls built up to heaven. The testimony is perfectly rendered, and the whole power of evil crumbles before it. But the holiness of the Lord must not be belied by the host who proclaim His rights. Joshua had to loose his shoe from his foot in the presence of the Captain, and the host must in anywise keep themselves from the accursed thing. They do transgress

in it, and thus we have recorded the marring of so fair a picture. Fellowship with evil is ruinous in every way; it detracts from spiritual intelligence, and apart from this intelligence the evil remains undiscovered. Spies are sent to Ai, and counsel is taken with flesh and blood. The sense of being the *Lord's* host is lost. All the people need not labour thither, as if all were not concerned in making good the testimony of God, or, speaking for ourselves, as if the interests of Christ, and the testimony of God to that once humbled but now exalted and glorified Man, were not the object of the whole assembly of God, or as if the interests of His body were not the interests of every member of that body. But how can this testimony of God be maintained while His claims upon His own people of holiness and separation to Himself from evil are unheeded? He cannot lead on to victory now. He must first teach those who name the name of the Lord to depart from iniquity. The disaster at Ai led to this purging of themselves.

In turning to the testimony of God, as rendered in New Testament times, we find it characterized in three ways—the testimony of God (1 Cor. ii. 1, 4), the testimony of (the) Christ (1 Cor. i. 4, 9), and the testimony of our Lord (2 Tim. i. 7, 8). The first is somewhat of the same character as the “gospel of God” in the epistle to the Romans, and has for its great subject Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. It was rendered among the Corinthians by the apostle himself in weakness and fear and much trembling; yet it was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that their faith might be in the *power of God*. The cross of Christ set aside both Jewish superstition and Gentile

wisdom; indeed it was altogether the end morally of man in the flesh; but it brought in God. The testimony of God in thus proclaiming what is of God must set aside what is of man. The recipient of this testimony becomes himself of a wholly new order, he is *of God*. "*Of Him* are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." Moreover there are the things which are freely given him *of God*—things which no power of man's nature can know, but which God has prepared for them that love Him, and which He reveals by His Spirit. (Chap. ii. 9, 10.)

"The testimony of the Christ" is that of the exalted and glorified Man who has been set at the right hand of God, and made both Lord and Christ. The Church of God was the vessel of this testimony, and it had been confirmed among those who formed it at Corinth by no human aid, but by the grace of God given them in Christ Jesus, enriching them in all utterance and in all knowledge, so that they came behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, all depending upon the faithfulness of God, by whom they were called into the *fellowship of His Son*. Alas! we see how the allowance of the first man, set aside by God in the cross, led them to lower their portion as being *of God* (in which circle all things were theirs, and they were Christ's, and Christ is God's) to glory in men. And mark the result—sin not known among the Gentiles was allowed, disputes and divisions amongst themselves, fellowship with idols, gifts used for self-importance, and such ignorance of God that the resurrection of the dead was denied by some among them. The Spirit of God by the apostle had

to be a Spirit of rebuke and reproof, and to speak to them as carnal and not spiritual, instead of speaking among them the wondrous wisdom suited to full-grown saints.

It was to the saints at Ephesus that the Spirit of God could unfold the mystery of the Christ of God, the centre of all His counsels, and also the place in which He has been set in the heavenlies as the Son of man for the administration in their proper season of all those counsels of which He is the centre; for all things both in heaven and earth are to be headed up in Him. The further mystery of the Church as His body, the completion of Him who fills all in all, is likewise unfolded to these Ephesian saints. Here again we are occupied with what is *of God*, not now as displacing the first man by the cross of Christ, but God in all the counsels and purposes which He has established in the second Man, in a scene and sphere which lies the other side of death in the heavenly places. Hence the apostle prays that they may know what is the hope of *His* calling, and what the riches of the glory of *His* inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of *His* power to usward who believe. They are thus taught that the power which operated towards them was that by which God had raised the Christ from the dead, and set Him as the exalted, glorified, and heavenly Man at His own right hand, and that thus they were quickened with Christ, raised, and seated in the heavenlies in Him.

The assembly too is the habitation *of God* by the Spirit; there *His* power operates through the gifts bestowed by the exalted Man for the confirmation of "the testimony of the Christ." The Corinthians were

using them for the exaltation of man, and thus we see the difference between the gifts and the vessel in which the gifts were set. The assembly is the vessel of glory to God by Christ Jesus throughout all ages; the Corinthians were glorying in men. It needed that they should practically learn, as unfolded in the second epistle, what it was to have the sentence of death in themselves in order that the vessel might be nothing, and the excellency of the power be of God. Jordan must be crossed and Gilgal reached before the Israelites could be *Jehovah's* host; and it is a people who have learnt that the flesh, as unable to bring forth anything for God, has been ended in the cross, and who know that they are subjects of the power of God working in a scene of death, even the power that raised up the Christ, who will learn to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might, and to take to themselves the whole armour of God. It would go beyond the scope of this paper to enter into detail as to the armour. I believe it to be consistency, practically with the position we are in as in the heavenlies; secondly, the bringing in the power of God; and thirdly, complete identification with the interests of Christ as shown in earnest and persevering prayer for *all saints*, as well as for the man against whom Satan's rage at that time was specially directed, that he might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. *All the host* compassed Jericho as the trumpets proclaimed the rights and title of the Lord of all the earth; all the saints are connected with the testimony to the exalted Man at God's right hand. May the Lord give us to understand what the Church of God is as the vessel of such a testimony. Doubtless the Church has failed to

be this vessel; but not the less can a feeble few act as the Lord's host, and proclaim the testimony of the Christ if indeed we know that the Church has its existence alone upon the ground of the setting aside of the first Adam, and the setting of the last Adam in a wholly new place, consequent on death and resurrection, at God's right hand.

"The testimony of *our* Lord" is more individual, though the assembly as the house of God is that circle upon earth where Jesus is owned as Lord (1 Cor. i. 2, viii. 6; Eph. iv. 5) by those who compose it. Such a testimony derives special force when the house of God has become a place where vessels of wood and earth are allowed as well as the gold and silver vessels of the sanctuary. Then it is incumbent, in the precincts of the house, on every one that nameth the name of the Lord, to depart from iniquity. In Ephes. iii., "Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles," as he unfolded to them the eternal purpose of God, could tell them that his tribulations for them were their glory, but at Ephesus the tide had now set the other way. Phygellus and Hermogenes were leaders in turning away from Paul, and Timothy was in tears. It was at such a moment that he was exhorted not to be ashamed of "the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner," a moment when the ordered vessel of the testimony was being corrupted, and the Lordship of Christ had to be maintained by the individual without fear; for God had given the Spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind. The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth, so God has set it; but now in the time of the Church's failure the man of God individually has to hold fast the form of sound words, and to keep by the Holy Ghost the

deposit with which he has been entrusted. He has to follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that *call on the Lord* out of a pure heart, and solemnly is he charged before God and the Lord Jesus Christ to preach the word and fill up the measure of his ministry, thus would he both hold and proclaim the testimony of our Lord.

Jude tells us that the ungodly men who were creeping in among true Christians were those who denied *our Lord Jesus Christ*; and in connection with the Spirit's testimony by this apostle, we may notice that he speaks of praying in the Holy Ghost. Twice is prayer thus referred to in the New Testament—Ephes. vi. 18 and Jude 20. In the one case Paul is, as it were, in the energy of Joshua, establishing the saints in the heavenly places; while Jude, like Elijah in his mystic journey from Gilgal to Jordan, is prophetically traversing the whole scene of apostacy. There was need to be in the current of the Spirit's mind—praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit—when the Lord's host were maintaining the testimony of the Christ; and need of praying in the Holy Ghost in the day of the denial of the Lordship of Jesus, when souls have to be pulled out of the fire.

Thus "the testimony of God" puts man out of sight to bring in the wisdom and the power of God. And then, whether it be "the testimony of the Christ" by the assembly, or "the testimony of our Lord" maintained by individual faithfulness, both are rendered according to the mind of the Spirit in communion with God. In each case there is as much apparent weakness as in a ram's horn trumpet, but the power of God is known.

T. H. R.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

ON SEALING WITH THE HOLY GHOST, ETC.

“BELOVED BROTHER,— . . . I have thought much since you were with us upon the distinction between the purpose of God concerning us and the application of the work of Christ to us. Of course, in one sense, I had always distinguished between these two things ; but I had not been quite clear as to the time of the application to us *in detail* of the work of Christ. God, of course, always from all eternity, saw us in Christ, and chose us in Him ; but the difficulty is as to when we are or were entitled to look upon ourselves as actually identified with the work and person of Christ, with all that is made good to us in His work and person. I suppose the first action of the Spirit is to give us life, and set us apart (or sanctify us) to God, even though we may not have peace, or be really delivered. Then I suppose it is by the Word that the Spirit gives us this life and sets us apart. Is it then produced by faith in Christ (that is, in His person)? I presume so, as of course we cannot (that is, during the present period of God’s dealing with man this is the case) have life without being also God’s children. The moment Christ is believed on we are children of God (Gal. iii. 26) ; and of course, the Spirit having acted on us, set apart to God ; and this setting apart is, I suppose, according to Christ’s present place for us on high. Having thus got life (eternal life, John iii. 26), we are afterwards sealed with the Spirit (Gal. iv. 6) ; but according to Eph. i. 13 this cannot be until we have believed in the gospel of our salvation, which I suppose would be our believing in Christ as the One who delivered us from the old man (the old Adam standing, not the old creation), from sin within and from the

world; and this He does by having died for us (when He put away our sins), and our having died with Him. We first see His death for us when He put away our sins, and then how we are dead with Him, upon which we get full deliverance and settled peace. I suppose you would say a person was not justified until *by faith* he believes in the work of Christ for justification, even though he might previously have life (see Rom. v. 1); indeed, that the blessings which flow to us from, and are immediately connected with, the death of Christ, such as forgiveness of sins, deliverance, &c., are not actually ours in possession until by faith we apprehend the death of Christ *as that* which gives them to us in detail. Then again, how do you distinguish fully between Rom. vi. 11, and 2 Cor. iv. 10? The former is what faith reckons us, and the latter is practically carrying out death and resurrection; but suppose I give way to the flesh or sin (as Scripture calls it), am I out of the former as well as the latter? This is, as I judge, the most difficult point in connection with the subject to get clear upon; and I should feel much obliged if when you have time you would kindly write me upon it, and also say whether you consider me inexact in anything I have stated above. . . . As to conversion, you would, I suppose, say a person was converted the moment he was quickened; for then he was (though feebly as regards his apprehension of it yet) actually turned to God. I suppose at the same time we are sealed we are also baptized into the body, and the Spirit from the same moment remains in us as the indweller. Repentance is (I judge) distinct from anything I have stated above, and consists in a change of mind (produced by faith) about God and about ourselves, and is consequently a deepening work, and includes, or brings with it, complete judgment upon ourselves and our ways. . . .

“I remain, yours very affectionately,

“4th August, 1872.

“T. R. (W.)”

“DEAREST BROTHER,—The only thing I have to notice in your letter, save to agree, is when you say we are sealed on our believing in Christ as the One who delivers us from the old man (the old Adam standing), sin within, and from the world, and this He does by having died for us when He put away our sins, and our having died with Him, &c. Now, I judge from Scripture that the sealing comes, or may come, consequent on our believing in Christ’s death for the remission of sins, without including our having died with Him for deliverance. This too may be the case. It was mine. But sealing comes on forgiveness; for our being looked at then as clean the Holy Ghost can come and dwell in us. Thus Peter, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.’ So when he preached to Cornelius, who was listening with faith, the moment he comes to ‘receive the remission of their sins,’ as he spake these words the Holy Ghost came upon them. So Rom. v., the Holy Ghost is found before the discussion of our not being in flesh is commenced. If we go through Rom. vii., before Rom. iii., as was my own case, then pardon and deliverance go together; but in these revival preaching days many receive the remission of their sins before they have any self-knowledge, and have, though in a modified form (not substance), to go through Rom. vii. afterwards. But this is always really law; *i.e.* what is expected from us. But there is no *deliverance* without self-knowledge, and the work substantially of Rom. vii. Forgiveness needs no such process. Convinced of *guilt*, no doubt we must be; but this supposes no knowledge of self; that is, state, not acts, which constitute guilt. There is no forgiveness of a nature, but where it was condemned death came in (the cross) and so I am delivered. As regards Rom. vi. 11 and 2 Cor. iv. 10, one is faith as to the truth and position, the other realizing it in practice. Col. iii. gives God’s judgment—‘Ye are dead.’ Rom. vi. 11, man’s faith as to having died with Christ as to the

old man on the cross—I reckon myself dead. 2 Cor. iv. 10 realizes it in practice. I always bear about in my body the dying, never let the flesh from under the power of Christ's death and cross, treating it *de facto* as a crucified thing that has no title to stir though it be really there. Then God passes through circumstances which test how far it is realized. 'If we are faithful to ten' (query, times), is in the form of suffering for Christ, as was Paul's case; if not to make practically good what is wanting, and this is the gracious history of many sorrows. He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous. The Lord be with you. If all be not clear, you can write to me. . . .

"Kind love to the brethren,

"Ever affectionately yours, dear brother,

"September 4th, 1872.

J. N. D."

"BELOVED BROTHER,—There is one point upon which I wish to hear further from you; viz., in reference to the sealing. I quite admit that in Acts ii. and x. the sealing comes upon the knowledge of forgiveness of sins. But my difficulty arose from Eph. i., where the sealing follows the reference by the apostle to the gospel of their salvation. Now if he there makes the sealing consequent upon the reception of the gospel of their salvation, it is clear that it is upon the reception of more than the knowledge of forgiveness of sins, as salvation would, I suppose, include in result our complete deliverance. But I quite admit this Scripture says, '*In whom* also having believed, ye were sealed,' &c. The '*whom*' would refer to Christ; but the gospel of your salvation being referred to seemed to convey more with it than merely faith in His person or in Himself. Now in Gal. iv. the gift of the Spirit to us seems to be in virtue of our sonship, into which position we were brought by faith in Christ personally. I shall be glad to hear again upon the above when you can write.

“Of course what we term the flesh in us is still in us. Now how would you distinguish this from sin in us, which is also in us? Could it be said that this flesh and sin were one and the same thing? If not, how would you distinguish between them? In Romans viii. 3 we read of sin in the flesh, and likeness of flesh of sin. To what flesh is reference made in these two instances? Another question on Romans vi. 11. Can I be said to be only dead to sin while I am actually so reckoning myself? or am I dead to sin at times when I may forget so to reckon myself? . . . “T. R. (W.)

“November, 1872.”

“DEAR BROTHER,—I do not attach especial importance to the immediate moment of the sealing—merely if Scripture ascertain it, it is always gain to know it, and I think it does this. I do not think the passages (already presented to me by others) offer any difficulty. Clearly it is because we are sons that the Spirit is given us to cry, Abba, Father, and we are sons by faith of Jesus Christ. But I do not think this passage says anything as to the moment at which, as its occasion, we receive it, but merely states the fact. Nor does Eph. i. There it is on believing in the most general way in the direct statement, and when we come to the gospel of your salvation it rather confirms it; for what was brought to them was not the subsequent glories in which they were edified, but the fact of salvation; as previously in the same chapter, redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins; as the redemption of the purchased possession comes afterwards, the presenting Christ’s person as the great object of faith is all important. It is just what is wanting in modern gospel preaching.

“Flesh is used in the New Testament for our sinful nature as it works habitually through its lusts. So flesh, sin in the flesh, and sinful flesh are substantially the same, though it may be in different aspects and applications: the mind of the

flesh is also used; (*i.e.*) its bent and purpose or object. Sin has a much wider sense. "Who taketh away the sin of the world," for instance; "to put away sin." But if we look at it in the sense of a nature and principle, it is the same as flesh. It is sin that dwells in me. I know that in me—that is, in my flesh—dwells no good thing. Christ was made sin; here evidently it is not sin in us. Sinfulness is the state of the flesh and fleshly mind. Being dead to sin is the calling and standing of every Christian. We are baptized to Christ's death. In Col. iii. it is said, 'Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.' In Romans vi. faith or the exhortation of the apostle takes this up—'reckon yourselves dead;' but this is founded on knowing that our old man was crucified with him. It is in Christ we have died. 2 Cor. iv. 10 is the proper realization of it; verse 11, God's dealings to test and make it good. Only Paul could say, 'For Jesus' sake.' . . .

"Kindest love to the Brethren,

"Affectionately yours in the Lord.

"J. N. D.

"30th November, 1872."

EPITOME.

God's purpose in blessing has been towards us from all eternity. He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world; but our apprehension and the application through faith to us of the person of Christ and of His work on the cross have been gradual and in detail. Thus:

1. We are born again, receive eternal life, and become sons of God by faith in the person of Christ (John's gospel, first epistle, and Galatians). We are at the same time converted, quickened, and sanctified, by the action of the word upon us by the Spirit.

2. Our sins are remitted, and we cleansed and justified, and we sealed with the Holy Spirit, when we have faith in

the death of Christ, and His blood-shedding upon the cross. (Rom. ; 1 John i. ; Eph. ; Acts x.)

3. We have to reckon ourselves dead to sin on the ground of Christ having died for us to meet the judgment, and of our having died with Him. (Rom. vi.)

4. We get deliverance from ourselves (after experimentally passing through Rom. vii.) by realizing our inability to help ourselves, and by faith in the death of Christ for us and in His resurrection, on the ground of which we shall get ultimate deliverance at the resurrection of the body, and on the ground of which we get present deliverance, looking at sin in us as judged in the death of Christ, and walking by faith in the liberty in which we are placed in Christ. (Rom. vii.-viii. 11.)

5. There are other points not noticed in the above epitome, such as our position in the house of God, and in the body of Christ, also, repentance. T. R. (W.)

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI.

CHAP. ii. 1-5.

WE have seen, at the close of chapter i., how mightily the Lord wrought with His word upon the minds of the people, and how, thus stirred up, they responded to the message they had received through the prophet whom He had sent. Before a month had elapsed, "in the seventh month, in the one-and-twentieth day of the month," He again addressed Himself to the hearts of His servants for their sustenance and encouragement. The subject of this message, like the preceding ones, is still the house of the Lord at Jerusalem.

And what, let us enquire, before we enter upon it, was the occasion of this further prophecy? It was

undoubtedly the thoughts of some of His people while occupied with their work. This may be gathered from the opening words: "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" (vv. 2, 3.) There were some then among the remnant who had seen the temple of Solomon in all its magnificence and splendour, and who, as they contrasted it with the building on which they were now engaged, were sadly despondent if not disheartened. We read of them in the book of Ezra. After describing the joy of the people, when the foundations of the temple were laid, he says, "But many of the chief priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice, and many shouted aloud for joy; so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a great shout, and the noise was heard afar off." (Ezra iii. 12, 13.)

And this sorrow of the ancient men was perfectly natural; for to the outward eye, the contrast present to their minds was humbling in the extreme. The first temple was built amid the glories of Solomon's reign—the king who was the type of the Prince of peace, and one who used all the resources of his mighty empire and of his tributary peoples to erect an house to be the dwelling-place of Jehovah in the midst of His people; for, as David said, "The house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding

magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries." (1 Chron. xxii. 5.) But the house was now being raised by a few feeble captives, dependent upon a Gentile king for the very materials they were using; surrounded by hostile tribes, and, beyond all this, without any of the visible signs of the Lord's presence—no Shechinah, and no fire to come down from heaven to consume the sacrifices they laid upon the altar. (See 2 Chron. vii. 1-4.) More even than this, for the very things that forced their sad condition upon their minds would but call to remembrance that the loss of the first temple, and their present abject state, were but the consequences of their own sins and transgressions. While therefore not insensible to the Lord's present mercy and goodness, it was not surprising that sorrow should fill their hearts when they were thus reminded of the past glory of their nation, at a time too when they walked in the sunlight and joy of Jehovah's countenance. As another has said, "Alas! we understand this. He who now thinks of what the assembly of God was at the first will understand the tears of these old men."

The point however to which we desire to call attention is, that the Lord read these thoughts of His people, and sent a message of comfort and consolation. It is well for us to understand this; that even the feelings of the saints—feelings engendered in connection with the Lord's ways or service—are regarded by Him with tender concern. How many instances of this might be gleaned from the Scriptures. David says, "Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?" Again, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul." Also, "Thou understandest my

thoughts afar off." And it was because the Lord Jesus entered into the feelings of His disciples that He said, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." How different would be our daily lives, if we were in the realization and power of this simple truth!

But let us now see how Jehovah comforts the hearts of His people before us. He says, "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." (vv. 4, 5.) It will be perceived that the Lord addresses all the people—the people as well as their leaders. All are before His mind. We too often deal in generalities. Not so Jehovah; the humblest of His servants does not escape His notice, and if therefore He would encourage His people, He cares for the small as well as the great. He recognises the distinction which He Himself has made, and therefore specifies the governor and the priest; but He is equally concerned for the people under their charge and direction. If, on the one hand, His heart is so large as to embrace the multitude of His saints; He, on the other hand, individualizes every one, that all alike may feel that they are the objects of His mind and heart.

And what is the exhortation He sends? It is, "Be strong;" and the source of their strength is the knowledge of the fact that He is with them. It is so everywhere in the Scriptures. Take two examples: "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward." (Genesis xv. 1.) Again, "Have not I com-

manded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." (Joshua i. 9.) It was on this account, when the Lord commissioned the twelve to go and teach all nations, etc., that He added, "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age," (Matt. xxviii.) It is indeed impossible but that the assurance of the Lord's presence should inspire His people with fortitude and courage. If He is with us, resting confidently in what He is for us, we measure our foes and difficulties, not by what we are, or by our own resources, but by what He is in all His own omnipotence. Then we can boldly say with one of old, "They that are with us be more than they that be with them;" or with the apostle, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" It was in this way the Lord would strengthen His poor feeble people in all the poverty of their circumstances; He would attract their eyes to Himself, that they might labour in faith, fearing no foe because their God, who was with them, had thrown around them His impenetrable shield. He reminds them, moreover, of His faithfulness to His covenant which He made with them, when He redeemed them out of Egypt, according to which His Spirit remained among them. (See Isaiah xviii. 11-14.) Hence He adds, "Fear ye not." Jehovah Himself in their midst, and His Spirit remaining among them, they might well take up the language of the Psalmist: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

There are few, we apprehend, who will fail to see in this double assurance a remarkable foreshadowing of the

blessings of God's people in this dispensation. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst." "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." There is indeed a striking correspondence between the position of this poor remnant, and that of believers who are now gathered to the name of Christ. All was in ruin then, for governmental power had been transferred to the Gentile, because of the sin of Israel and Judah; and those who returned from Babylon, in the mercy of their God, were but a feeble few, and were, as we have seen, without a single external sign of the presence of their God. The fact of His being with them, the acceptance of their sacrifices, the influences of His Spirit, were only known by faith. So now the Church has lost its first estate, and God's people are scattered in disunion and disorder throughout the world. But in these last days a remnant has been gathered out from spiritual Babylon, and as was the house of their God to these Jewish captives, so the name of the Lord Jesus is to them their only centre. Gathered to that ineffable name—expressive of all the truth of His person, work, and authority—on the *ground* of the Church, as defined by the Scriptures, they have likewise the assurance of these two things—the Lord's presence, and the abiding of the Holy Ghost. That is all; but we may reverently add, What an "all!" for everything is comprised in the term—the source of all blessing, and the source of all power. If, therefore, Jehovah sent this message at that time to His people, "Be strong; fear ye not;" no less certainly would He address to us the same words. It is true that "a little strength" may now characterize the most faithful of the remnant, that

they may have in themselves the most overwhelming sense of their own feebleness (and it is right that it should be so); but if they enter, even in the smallest measure, into the power of these blessed truths—that the Lord is with them, and that His Spirit abides—they will be strong and fearless in the face of the most determined efforts of the enemy, because they will have learned that the Lord's strength is made perfect in weakness, and that greater is He that is in them than he that is in the world. But it is our failure that we are more occupied with our feebleness, with our circumstances, and with the activities of the adversary, than with the Lord's presence and the power of His Spirit. May the Lord Himself draw us away, both from ourselves and our surroundings, and engage our thoughts with these blessed assurances of His own word; that He may thus be enabled to use us more in testimony to His glory, His grace, His power and claims.

E. D.

 "GATHERED."

"For where two or three are gathered together in" (or to) "my name, there am I in the midst of them."—MATT. xviii. 20.

GATHERED to Thy name, Lord Jesus,
 Gathered in Thy grace;
 In obedient love, O Saviour,
 Till we see Thy face.

Gathered by the Holy Spirit
 To remember Thee;
 Through Thy word, most sweet and precious,
 Gathered would we be.

"GATHERED."

Round Thy table, O Lord Jesus,
 That is now our place ;
 On it emblems of Thy sorrow,
 Love divine, we trace.

Round Thy table, oh, the sweetness
 Of remembering Thee!
 "In the midst," such is Thy promise,
 Thee by faith we see.

Death most precious, love exceeding,
 All our hearts conceive ;
 Bread and wine the simple " emblems "
 We from Thee receive.

Oh, Thy wondrous love, Lord Jesus !
 Gathered ones, we taste—
 What Thou wast in perfect manhood,
 Godhead manifest.

* * * * *

Gathered thus to show Thy death, Lord,
 Till Thou com'st again ;
 Gathered as Thy word would have us,
 Raise our happy strain.

Praise and worship, adoration,
 All belong to Thee ;
 Thou art worthy, Thou, Lord Jesus,
 All we owe to Thee.

Soon, oh, soon we shall be gathered
 In our Father's home !
 Round Thee, like Thee, with Thee ever,
 Never more to roam.

MEDITATIONS ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

CHAPTER IV.

BUT there was yet another proof that righteousness does not come from works of the law; namely, the example of Abraham, who had the promises before the law was given or proclaimed. The apostle makes use of this part of Israel's history and privileges to confirm his foundation principle. "What shall we then say of Abraham?" he asks. "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Thus the principle of justification by faith is fully confirmed in the example of Abraham. It is not of works; were it so, then the reward would not be of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but *believeth* on Him that justifies the ungodly, faith is reckoned for righteousness. And it was with David as with Abraham. (The apostle cites the example of both these men, because they represent the chief sources of Israel's blessing.) Also David describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Acceptance in Christ goes farther, it is true; but in view of man's responsibility, what we have here is the declaration of the truth that all is accomplished for those who believe in Christ. Sin is no more imputed to them; they are free from all guilt;

all accusation is for ever past. The apostle speaks later on of our standing in Christ. To be accepted in a new standing in Christ according to the value and acceptance of *Christ* before God, is more than justification. But this justification is perfect for us responsible men.

But now the question arises, Is this blessing only for Israel? The example of Abraham decides it. Faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. But when? Was it when he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? In uncircumcision. We see then in Abraham a striking instance of faith in an uncircumcised man being reckoned to him for righteousness according to the will and judgment of God. Circumcision was given afterwards to Abraham as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of *all* them that believe, as well the uncircumcised (that after his example righteousness might be imputed to them also) as the circumcised, so that he is the father of a *true* circumcision, not only of those who are of the circumcision, but also of all believers who, in separation for God, walk in the steps of Abraham's faith which he had being yet uncircumcised.

Furthermore, the promise that Abraham should be heir of the world was not given through the *law* either to him or his seed, but through the righteousness of *faith*; for the law came much later. Thus the whole history of Israel proves that it is not through the law that one shares in the blessing, but solely through faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, then the promise is annulled, and the faith by which Abraham received it is made void and useless. More than this, the law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression; sin indeed exists, but one cannot

transgress what is neither commanded or forbidden. But the apostle further developes from the Scriptures this fundamental principle of the blessing of believers from amongst the nations. He says, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of *us all* (as well believers from amongst the nations as from amongst the Jews), before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." (*vv.* 16, 17.) These words contain a new truth. They refer to the power of resurrection, the power of giving life where death reigned, to creative power. This power also admitted the nations. Abraham counted upon it when his body was in a manner already dead, and Sarah's womb likewise. All depends for faith upon the activity of this power which brings about what God wills. It is not only a mercy-seat set up for all those who, by faith in the blood of Christ, come hither as being the place where God meets with the sinner, but it is a power which there, where there was nothing, creates children for itself out of those who are spiritually dead. Still there is a difference between Abraham's faith and ours. He believed, and rightly so, that God *could* raise the dead; we believe that God *has done it*, and this is a very important difference. Abraham was right in believing God's own word; we have the same faith, but it is founded upon a *finished* work, and that gives rest to the soul. Christ *is* risen. He, who was once offered for our offences, has been raised again, in order that we may believe thereon and be justified.

J. N. D.

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI.

CHAP. ii. 6-9.

THE Lord directs their thoughts, in the next place, to the future glory of His house. After having ministered to their present spiritual needs by encouraging their souls, He proceeds: "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house" (rather, the latter glory of this house) "shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." (*vv.* 6-9.)

This important prophecy requires a careful examination; and as a preliminary, it is necessary to understand two of the terms found in it. The first is, "The glory of this latter house." Now, comparing the words with verse 3, it becomes clear that it should be read as we have given it above—the latter glory of this house. It is doubtless the fact, that the temple during the days of our Lord on the earth was not that which was built by the remnant; and it is also certain, that the one which the Lord will visit, in the time of His kingdom, will be another; but still we gather from the Word, that God does not regard them as so many different houses. It is the same house to His eye, and hence He asks in,

verse 3 of this chapter, "Who is left among you that saw *this* house in her first glory?" The temple therefore is one, whatever the changes it underwent, and notwithstanding the fact that it was, and should be, destroyed and rebuilt. The second term referred to is, "The desire of all nations." This phrase has given rise to great divergence, both in translation and interpretation. It can scarcely be doubted, however, by any one who enters into the scope and spirit of the passage in which it occurs, that it has been rightly applied to the Messiah. Concerning the word itself, we give the remarks of another. "The expression which I have rendered by 'the object of desire shall come' is very difficult to translate. It appears to me that, looking at the context, I have given the sense, and that the Spirit of God designedly expressed Himself in vague terms, which, when the mind apprehended the true glory of the house, would embrace the Messiah."*

The first thing announced then, is that in a little while the Lord would shake all things, as preparatory to the coming of the Desire of all nations. The heavens, the earth, the sea, and the dry land, as well as all nations, should be shaken. Compare verses 21-23. The same thing is found in almost all the prophetic writings, both in the Old and New Testaments. One passage

* We add a note by the same writer. "Diodati's Italian version, which is considered very accurate, agrees with the English. De Wette renders it, 'The precious things;' but it is not what is very generally used for mere costly things, though the same root. This is Chemdath, that Chamudoth. The difficulty is that [the term] 'shall come' is in the plural. . . . The Italian has *la scelta terra*, the chosen object (the choice one) of the nations shall come." We fully endorse these observations, and have therefore no hesitation in regarding this as a distinct Messianic prophecy. This will be more clearly seen in our interpretation.

may be cited from Matthew: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." (xxiv. 29, 30; see also Isaiah ii., xxiv.; Joel ii., iii.; Zephaniah iii.; Zech. xiv.; Rev. vi. etc.) The time referred to is not that of the first advent of our blessed Lord, for the apostle, in writing to the Hebrews, gives the passage a future application (chap. xii. 26, 27), and this future period will be that immediately preceding the appearing of Christ, when He comes with His saints to establish His kingdom on the earth. What a prospect! And what a contrast to the thoughts of man! He labours to secure permanence and stability, and dreams as he labours of a time of peace and prosperity—but without God. The unrest of evil men, revolutionary thoughts and schemes, the fall of thrones, these are all looked upon as an interference with human order and social laws. And they are; but no efforts of man will succeed in producing tranquillity; no laws, however beneficent their object; no reforms, however desirable, will secure the happiness of the nations; for God hath spoken, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is." Hence disorder and confusion will increase; iniquity will manifest itself in ever more startling forms; governmental authority will be more and more defied; until at length the incarnation of opposition to God and His Christ will appear in the man of sin,

and then God Himself will intervene in judgment, according to these words of the prophet, and by the thunder of His power He will arise and "shake terribly the earth." Happy is it for those who have a present portion with Christ, and who will be kept from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. (Rev. iii.)

Such then is the future in store for the poor godless world. Judged in the cross of Christ, convicted already by the Holy Ghost of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (John xvi.), its sentence, now delayed in the long-suffering grace of God, who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, will at length be executed; and who can stand in His sight when once He is angry? The nature of the strokes wherewith He will shake all things may be gleaned from the prophets, and especially from the book of Revelation. (Chaps. iv.-xx.) In view of what is to come, would that men everywhere would listen to the offers of grace and mercy that are everywhere being made known through the gospel; for now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation.

All these judgments are preparatory to the coming of Christ. "And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come." Adopting the interpretation given above, it may be asked by some, In what sense can Christ be thus named? It is not to be supposed for one moment that He is the object of their conscious desires. This could not be, for the carnal mind is ever enmity with God, and the nations will eventually accept the leadership of the Antichrist, who will deny both the Father and the Son. This is quite true; and yet, on the other hand, Christ, the true King,

is what the nations need. In all their passionate longings and outcries for peace, righteousness in government, justice between man and man, in their groanings under poverty, tyranny and oppression, who, we ask, could meet their desires but the One who shall judge His people with righteousness, and His poor with judgment. Yea, let the nations read this Psalm (72nd), and especially verses 12-14, and then let them say whether they have not here the answer to all their wants. And if we look deeper into the needs of the human heart, the inexpressible desires that often find an outlet thence in tears and groans, the unspeakable longings begotten by a sense of disquiet, unhappiness, and unrest, we may see at once the appropriateness of the term which the Holy Spirit employs. Spite of what the nations are, and will be, Christ, Christ as the coming King, though they neither own nor know Him, is their desire, because He alone can govern the world on the foundation of justice and judgment, and cause the whole earth to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

The effect of His coming here is given in the words, "And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." This certifies us, as indeed may be learned from other Scriptures, that the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem; and Ezekiel even gives its divine plan and measurements. It is this house which will yet be rebuilt, identified in the thoughts of God with that built by the remnant from Babylon, that will be filled with glory. God has always filled HIS house with glory. He did the tabernacle erected in the wilderness (Exodus xl.), the temple in the kingdom (2 Chron. v. 14), the church at Pentecost (Acts ii.); and the last house to be

raised on earth will be no exception. But what constitutes the "glory"? It is the Lord's own presence—the sign of which was the cloud, both in the tabernacle and Solomon's temple; but in the temple of the returned captives, as in the assembly of the saints gathered to the name of Christ, this presence, this glory, is only to be apprehended by faith. For the glory of the Lord is the display, whether outwardly or to the vision of faith, of what He is, of the sum and excellency of all His attributes; and He thus fills His house with the manifestation of all the perfections of His own spiritual being. Ezekiel actually beheld in prophetic vision the return of the Lord to the house of which Haggai speaks, and which he himself describes. He says, "And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and his voice was like a noise of many waters; and the earth shined with His glory. . . . And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. . . . And, behold, *the glory of the Lord filled the house.*" (Ezekiel xliii. 2-5.) Thus the Lord will take possession of the house, and dwell in it, in a more surpassingly excellent way than He did either in the tabernacle or the temple. Taking up, therefore, the comparatively mean building His poor people were at that time engaged upon, He comforts their hearts by unveiling before their eyes the transcendent glory and blessing that would be yet associated with it through the Lord coming suddenly to His temple.

Two things are added. The assertion that the Lord of hosts is the owner of the silver and the gold—all belonging rightfully to Him; and then—after reminding His people that the latter glory of the house should

exceed the former, because, as we have seen, the Lord Himself will personally take possession of it—the promise, “In this place I will give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.” The explanation of the first statement may perhaps be found in the language of Isaiah—“The forces” (margin, *wealth*) “of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.” Again, “All they of Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense,” etc. And once more, “Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He hath glorified thee.” (Isaiah lx. 5-9. See also Rev. xxi. 26.) Yea, just as when Christ was born into the world, wise men from the east came and laid their costly gifts at His feet, so will the Gentiles in a future day come and offer of their treasures to the Lord in His temple at Jerusalem. Christ, the desire of all nations, will be the object of their homage, and they will delight to present their desirable things for the adornment and service of His house, as well as for the glory of His name; and thereby they will confess that the silver and the gold are His.

Then there is also the blessed promise of peace. For indeed it will be in the virtue of accomplished atonement, of His death for the nation (John xi.), that the Lord will come back to His people; and inasmuch as through His grace they will, according to His appointment, have afflicted their souls (see Lev. xvi., Zech. xii.), He will righteously bring them into the enjoyment of all the efficacy of His death, and cause their peace to flow like a river. He will speak peace to all His seed; for “thus saith the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold

the man whose name is the BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: *and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.*" (Zech. vi. 12, 13.)

This prophecy, we may say in conclusion, is a beautiful illustration of the tender ways of the Lord. Viewing the desponding thoughts of His people, when engaged in His work, He steps in and unfolds before their eyes the certainty of the coming glory, and of their full millennial blessing. To live in God's thoughts, and in the assurance of the certainty of the accomplishment of all His purposes at the coming of Christ, is a sure antidote to all feebleness or fear. E. D.

THERE is nothing like the cross. It is both the righteousness of God against sin, and the righteousness of God in pardoning sin. It is the end of the world of judgment, and the beginning of the world of life. . . . If a person follows the world, he is an enemy of the cross of Christ. As Christians we have to look into it—how far this vain show puts a spider-film over our hearts. If I take the glory of the world that crucified Christ, I am glorying in my shame.

THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

JOHN xiv. 1-6.

THERE is no portion we are more familiar with than this John xiv. Surely there is no part more frequently read, and turned to for comfort—and rightly so. “Let not your heart be troubled.” The Lord anticipates the disciples being found in circumstances of sorrow and trouble. Of course He refers mainly to His own going away; but when He comes down to verse 27, and has spoken of His going away, and of giving the Holy Ghost, He again says, “Let not your heart be troubled.”

It is one thing to be saved *by* Christ, and another thing to throw in your lot *with* Christ. Every true-hearted servant of Christ, or Christian, would say: “If my Saviour died for me, if He came from God’s eternal presence down to the cross, if *that* was the measure of His love to me, the only answer I can make is, to cast in my lot with Him.” Then he is prepared not to *expect anything* down here. We have no expectations here, where Christ was rejected; and a place is opened out to us up there, where there is no rejection. But there *is* rejection here, and no person can enjoy John xiv. who does not accept rejection with Christ. For why is not Christ here? The fact is (and nothing requires more pressing), that Christ has been rejected, cast out, refused here; and God came in, in the riches of His grace, and turned all that into the fullest blessing for us. Christ has been refused; they would not let Him

remain here. He had a title to everything here, but He accepted this place of rejection. He was the Son of God, the blessed Saviour; and as long as the disciples had the shelter of His wing, they knew what it was to dwell under His shadow and have a place of refuge. Whatever opposition and trouble they met with, they had One to whom they could go and tell their sorrows: they "went and told Jesus." No one can tell what it was to those disciples to walk in the Saviour's presence here. Who can tell what it was to them to hear His voice, to have His ear ever open to them, and to know His care and His presence? Remember that *God* was there manifest in flesh. Think what it was for these poor simple men, who walked in the company of the Son of God in this world, to hear Him say that He was going away, and that He was going to leave them in a world where He Himself met with nothing but rejection. He said He would not leave them comfortless; but they, for their part, looked at the terrible blank the absence of Christ would make to their souls. We must place ourselves in the very circumstances the disciples were in at that moment in order to understand it.

Nothing is plainer than that "the foxes had holes, and birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay His head." He had not a place here, but He was going to speak to them about heaven, with which He was *perfectly* acquainted. He knew all that was there, though it was an entirely new revelation to the disciples. Where can you find in Scripture anything before about the Father's house? There had never been anything unfolded about it before, and now *we* speak about the Father's house as a place we have heard

of all our lives! But think of the Lord going away, and leaving these dear ones He had drawn to Himself; ignorant perhaps, but *they loved their Master*. If you ask me what is the striking characteristic of these men, I would say, their affection for Christ; they really *loved* their Master. Because in an earlier day (John vi.), when the Lord had been speaking of His rejection, and some went back (men who had been outwardly near to Christ, and had seen what they had never seen before, but had no real link in their souls, with Him; merely a passing interest, and when the moment of testing came, they parted company with Christ), yet still *these* disciples were true to Him, and when He said, "Will ye also go away?" there came that beautiful answer, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." They could answer in all the certainty of what they had learnt from Christ, and they could answer rightly. They were not intelligent perhaps, but where a person's heart is true to Christ, everything else will follow rightly.

Christ has gone to prepare a place for those that are His in this world. It is one thing to have a place prepared *outside* this world, and another thing *inside*. In the gospel God does not propose to prepare a place for us *in* this world; there is the unfolding of that which is heavenly, and not the giving us a place or anything down here in this world. That which marked the Master must mark the servant. Some people say: "I would like to understand the truth of the Church of God." You never will, unless you take part with Christ in rejection. You may read a book about it, and have it all in your head, but if you have not broken with the world you don't *know* what the Church is. You must

be *in the company* of Christ, as well as be saved by Him, in order to know what the Church is. Christianity gives you the most wonderful circumstances outside, but it does not propose to give you anything in this world—it will not set things in order around you.

“Ye believe in God, believe also in me.” You have God before you as an object of faith. The invisible God they had believed in; now the Lord was going away, and He was to become an invisible object likewise, but He *claims* their faith. I do not know anything more beautiful than that in sacred Scripture. He has a right to claim your faith, and you know very well whether He has it or not. Christ came from heaven and walked down here for thirty-three years, died for you, and because He died for you he has a claim over you. Do you know Him? Has he gained the confidence of your souls? The Saviour who stood upon this earth is now up in heaven, but He is just the same Lord Jesus, and in the midst of your sorrow you can know how real a thing it is to be brought into personal acquaintance with Christ in heaven. I ask you, What is the greatest favour that God can give to man? “Well,” you say, “He watches over us, and He gives blessings, such as health and strength.” Yes, He does; it is God’s own special mercy. But what is His *greatest* favour? *The revelation of Christ in heaven*—that is His greatest favour. For what do you bless God most? That ever He brought me to bow at His blessed feet. He claims your faith.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.” There is no other way to God. The fact of Christ saying He is the way, declares that man has lost the way. What man wanted was a way back to God, to the Father; and Christ

says, "I am that way," And He is "the truth" as to everything, the truth in relation to God, in relation to man, in relation to time, in relation to eternity; and if you do not know Christ, you do not know the truth about anything. Your judgment of things in this world is a false judgment if Christ is unknown to you. And is He not "the life" too? He claims these three things for Himself. It was claiming to be a great deal, was it not? Is it too much? Do you admit that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life? and have you proved it for yourself? The great thing is for your souls to be brought into association with it. There is no approach to a difficulty on God's side, but on your side there may be difficulties. There is no difficulty about your forming an acquaintance with Christ now. It is a great thing to be able to say you know a Saviour at God's right hand in heaven, and if you do not know Him, you can go to Him now, as you are, and where you are, and say, "Lord Jesus, I should like to know Thee as my Saviour." The man that sets out for God and Christ in that way may say, "Well, I do not know much about doctrines, but I know I have a soul that must live for ever; and, Lord Jesus, I want to know Thee as my Saviour." The heart of Christ is delighted with every soul that turns aside to Him; and not only at the first moment, but a *deepening* acquaintance must delight Him and you too. All blessing depends on it. The first thing is to know Christ, to come to Him, to say, "I desire to bow before Thee, to receive Thee as my Saviour." Christ is either inside or outside your hearts; you have opened the door of your heart to Him, or it is shut against Him. Your blessing in this world depends on a *deepening acquaintance with Christ*. To

think that the Son of God in heaven loves to increase the acquaintance of your soul with Him! There is no company Christ so delights in as the company of those for whom He died. And is your answer, "I delight to be with the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Having claimed their faith He speaks of His Father, a new thing to them. Who can tell what the Father's house is? It was *home* to Christ. Home is home everywhere. Christ had not a home here; He came from heaven, and He measured things here by it. He saw the poverty, the sorrow, the ruin, and death here, and He came down from heavenly glory to tell us what the Father was in Himself, to open up the way to Him, and to speak of the Father's house. Is not that a divine reality? Supposing it were possible to annihilate the opening verses of John xiv., would you feel a blank as to the future? Supposing you had never read them before, what a revelation it would be to you! What could be more wonderful than that the Saviour should tell us all about it? It is as if He said, "I do not propose to find you comfortable nests down here, and to guard you from every anxiety, but I open up a place for you in heaven." A *place*! That is the whole thing in this chapter. No place here, but a place in heaven, a place for man, a place in the Father's house. And when the soul has learnt that, it has got hold of divine possessions, of surroundings which God has given for our comfort in this world. The place which Christ prepared for *them* is prepared for every believer in Christ to-day. Our place was prepared the moment Christ went in as a Man. If Christ is your Saviour, where He goes you go. Christ never goes anywhere that the believer has not a place with Him. As a Man on the ground of

accomplished redemption He goes up into glory, and there prepares a place. We have a place in heaven, not amongst *men*, but a place, a *present* place, in heaven. The moment Christ is our Saviour, God is our Father, and in virtue of what Christ has done, we are brought into the family of God, and that which is proper to the family is the *home*. You never get into the thought of verse 2 unless by meditation and prayer before God. The Father's house, it is greater than the glory of the kingdom. If I had been there in that day, what would have comforted my heart? He tells what there is for us; He knows what there is; a place, many abodes, a rest, and the Spirit of God is given us as the only power to sustain us here. We should go to the wall completely but for the Spirit of God. Our only power is in the fulfilment of, "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."

A Christian is a person who can stand in this world and say, "I am ready at this moment to step into the Father's house." As surely and as really as Christ stood on this earth, and told them what He was going to do, so surely did He tell them He was coming back. Do you believe Christ is coming for you? I do not mean, Do you believe in the second coming? but, Is it *Christ coming for you*? If you believed it, it would settle ten thousand things for you. It is so blessed! It is the heart of Christ which will find out in this world every loved one, wherever they are; the heart and eye and hand and almighty power of Christ will gather them out of this world. *That*, next to the cross, will be the greatest expression of divine affection. Do you know that may take place now? There is not a word of Scripture to

be fulfilled ere He come, and before another hour has passed Christ may be here. We do not know what the circumstances of the rest of our pathway may be, but we *do* know Christ is coming.

Have you weighed and measured everything connected with you in the light of God's eternity? Can you say, "Thank God I have a Father, and a place in the Father's house, and thank God I have a future so brilliant and so blessed that nothing can touch or disturb"? Is it not wonderful? That Christ is really *for us*; that, notwithstanding the poverty of our testimony for Him, His heart has not grown cold, and He never loved His people more than at this moment. He was never in greater activity for them. You can look up to heaven and say, "Christ never loved me more than at this moment, and He is only waiting to have me with Him for ever." One moment we shall be here, and the next moment up there, received unto Himself. Then there will be no separation from Christ for ever. Is it not beautiful? And that is our future! I trust that we may honour Christ by the expectation of Him. When Christ has displayed this most magnificent future, could anything be more sorrowful than that we should treat it as a fable? The moment Satan has got anything in between our souls and the coming of Christ, it has no power over us. If the coming of Christ is a *near* thing to you, it has power. Make it to-morrow, and its power is gone; you cease to wait and to watch. Christ has been refused here, but He is accepted there, and the weakest saint that ever looked to Him is dear to Him, and He will come and fetch that one.

May God make His coming the next thing to us!

E. P. C.

EXPOSITORY JOTTING.

"ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED."

As to the meaning of this phrase we cite a note from the New Translation by J. N. D. He says, after giving the Greek word, "taken us into His favour," "put us into a position of grace and favour." "Accepted us" is too formal a doctrine here, not so general as *χαριτώω* (the Greek word used). But "shewn us grace or favour" does not give the force of the word. "In the Beloved" (*mark this sentence*) is then merely in an instrument; whereas it is in the Beloved that we enter into favour. If we accept *ἡς*, which seems the best attested reading (and the reading, we may add, on which much has lately been founded), we should say "the favour or acceptance in grace, which he has freely bestowed upon us."

This note, like everything written by man, must be weighed and tested by the teaching of Scripture; but while insisting on this, we cannot forget that it contains the judgment of one whose life was devoted to the study of the Word. Still the reader, if a child of God, has the unction of the Holy One (1 John ii. 20), and has the means therefore of ascertaining the mind of God. It may help simple souls to point out that the whole question is summed up in the sentence to which we have called special attention. It is, whether this "favour or acceptance in grace" flows to us *through* the Beloved, or whether it is *in* Him that we enter into this blessed place. There is a wide difference between the two

things. If this favour only comes to us through Christ, blessed as that would be, we might still be, as far as we understand, on the same footing before God as the Old Testament saints as to our standing; whereas if it is in the Beloved we have entered into this wonderful position, it proclaims that we are in Him before God; that "in Him" marks the true place of every believer, and in Him in the place where He is; and that consequently we are, through the ineffable grace of God, in the same position of nearness to God as the Beloved Himself, that, in a word, the place that Christ has (not His supreme place at the right hand of God, but His place in the heavenlies, as the One who has died and risen again) is now the place of every believer.

To determine which of these interpretations is correct, let the reader in prayerful dependence ponder the opening verses of the epistle, especially the third, fourth, and fifth, all of which lead up to the statement we are considering. The secret of much of the prevailing confusion lies in not clearly seeing that God has closed up all His dealings with man in the flesh in the cross of Christ, that the first man—meaning by that term Adam—Adam as the expression of man in the flesh, has been dealt with once and for all in the death of Christ, and that when Christ ascended up on high there was a totally new thing—a Man, albeit He is the Son of God, in the glory of God. Hence a Christian does not follow the order of Adam, the first man of the earth earthy; but he is after the order of the Second Man from heaven. (1 Cor. xv. 47, 48.) He is therefore heavenly in origin and character; heaven is the place to which he now belongs (and on this account he is a

pilgrim and a stranger in this world); and he waits only for the time when, as he has borne the image of the earthy, he will also bear the image of the heavenly. We hesitate not to add, that if this truth is lost sight of, Christianity itself cannot be understood. E. D.

MY PLACE.

No question of worthiness can be associated with the *person* of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor with Him personally in respect of the *place* He now occupies.

So also no thought of any judicial clearance before perfect holiness can come before the mind with respect to the Lord Jesus Himself, and no thought of His responsibility as obnoxious to God's government.

These things do have their place when *man* is considered, but not else. The eternal Son of the Father, by whom also "He made the world," in Him was found before the world was, as ever since, God's perfect rest, complacency, *delight*.

If these questions are rightly raised as to *my* place, how are they met? The answer is, *In Him*, if a believer, *I* stand. In Him, in all the favour of HIS OWN acceptance, as to which not a thought of worthiness can for one moment be entertained. As His worthiness now and always is far beyond any mere judicial clearance—for He is, as always, the delight of the Father—so also am I, as *in Him*. Can we measure or explain this affection? It is past our powers of explanation, and outside all merely human comprehension. Reason must flounder here. Yet—who will deny it?—"As He is, so are we in this world." H. C. A.

ON KNOWING GOD'S WILL.

PEOPLE would like a convenient and comfortable means of knowing God's will, as one might get a receipt for anything; but there exists no means of ascertaining it without reference to the state of our own soul. Further, we sometimes seek God's will, desiring to know how to act in circumstances in which it is not His will that we should be found at all. If conscience were in real healthful activity, its first effect would be to make us quit them. It is our own will that sets us there, and we should like nevertheless to enjoy the consolation of God's direction in a path which we ourselves have chosen. Such is a very common case.

Be assured that, if we are near enough to God, we shall have no trouble to know His will. In a long and active life it may happen that God, in His love, may not always at once reveal His will to us, that we may feel our dependence, particularly where the individual has a tendency to act according to His own will. However, "if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light;" whence it is certain, that if the whole body is not full of light, the eye is not single. You will say, "That is poor consolation." I answer, "It is a rich consolation for those whose sole desire is to have the eye single and to *walk with God*; not, so to speak, for those who would avoid trouble in learning His will objectively, but for those whose desire is to walk with God." "If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if any man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because

there is no light in him." It is always the same principle. "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." You cannot withdraw yourself from this moral law of Christianity. Thus the apostle prays that "ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." The mutual connection of these things is of immense importance for the soul. The Lord must be known intimately, if one would walk in a way worthy of Him; and it is thus that we grow in the knowledge of God's will. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." Finally, it is written, that the spiritual man "judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."

It is, then, the will of God, and a precious will, that we should be able to discern it only according to our own spiritual state. In general, when we think we are judging circumstances, it is God who is judging us—who is judging our state. Our business is to keep close to Him. God would not be good to us, if He permitted us to discover His will without that. It might be convenient just to have a director of consciences, and we should thus be spared the discovery and the chastisement of our moral condition. Thus, if you seek how you may discover the will of God without that, you are *seeking evil*; and it is what we see every day.

J. N. D.