

THE
CHRISTIAN FRIEND

And Instructor.

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

“Hold fast the form of sound words.”—2 TIM. i. 13.

“Exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.”—HEB. x. 25.

“Building up yourselves on your most holy faith.”—JUDE 20.

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THE CHRISTIAN FRIEND.

SIMON PETER.*

SIMON PETER'S history is deeply instructive, and portrays, in the main, that of every Christian, from the first step in acquaintance with Christ to the state—alas! so rarely attained or maintained—in which the Holy Ghost can without hindrance show forth His power. During this interval the full energy of grace is unfolded, bringing the soul into the knowledge of Christ and of Christian privileges. We see also the breaking down of soul necessary to enable the believer, after having lost confidence in self, to realize his privileges and follow the Lord in the path marked out by Him.

Peter's history in the word of God divides itself naturally into two parts, one of which we find in the gospels, and the other in the Acts of the Apostles. The first part corresponds with the truths mentioned above; the second—at which, God willing, we shall look later on—is filled (though not without failure on the part of the instrument) with the activity of the Holy Ghost in the ministry of Peter, and with that divine power which sustains him as a witness for Christ amidst obstacles and conflict.

* Translated from the French.

"I AM A SINFUL MAN."

LUKE v. 1-11.

The way in which Peter comes in contact with the Lord in Luke's gospel is worthy of note.* Simon's wife's mother (iv. 38, 39) was taken with a great fever which rendered her helpless. Jesus heals her and fits her to serve Him. It is often thus that the soul meets Christ for the first time. It comes in contact with Him by means of *the blessings bestowed by Him on others*. When the moment comes for Him to reveal Himself to our own hearts, we find that He is not altogether a stranger. The Lord uses this preparatory knowledge to shorten the work by which our consciences are awakened to a sense of sin, and our hearts to a sense of grace. In this gospel Simon Peter knew Jesus from having seen Him at work in his house.

The son of Jonas was a fisherman by trade; he possessed what was requisite for catching fish—a boat and nets. He had used them to obtain what he wanted, and had worked all night for this purpose, but without any result. Thus the natural man employs his faculties, and the means placed at his disposal, to obtain something which will fill and satisfy his heart; but it is in vain, the net remains empty. His labour yields nothing which can answer to the deep need of his soul. The night passes, and the day is about to dawn when even as a fisherman he will no longer be able to labour in pursuit of happiness. Simon and his companions, having taken nothing, quit their boats and wash their

* I purposely omit noting what is of interest in Peter's first interview with the Lord in the other gospels. In John's gospel (ch. i. 42, 43), for instance, Peter knows Him through the instrumentality of his brother Andrew, who had already found in Him the Christ.

nets. They set about washing them, for they had taken up nothing but the mud from the bottom of the sea, and when this is done they will recommence fishing. Is it not thus with a man of the world? His labours to attain a desired end are renewed every day without success.

But when man's powerlessness has been made evident Jesus appears, seemingly otherwise occupied than with Peter. He teaches the *multitudes*, but in the midst of His ministry His heart is with Simon, and He does not lose sight of him. Entering into one of the ships which was Simon's, He prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. He *separates* Peter with Himself from the crowd, and thus he hears all the Lord says. Jesus had been no stranger to him previous to this; now he listens to His word, and his position of isolation with Him only contributes to render him the more attentive. Still, from verse 5 we may infer that the conviction of the authority of the Word was all that he retained.

After this we find the Lord more specially occupied with Peter. "Launch out into the deep," said He, "and let down your nets for a draught." Peter had done that all night; but up to this it was by the will of man, now it is at the word of the Lord. Peter believes this word, and submits to it. The first result of God's word is to produce faith, and faith accepts its authority and obeys. The Lord has spoken; that is enough for faith. But Jesus addresses Peter in a yet more powerful way, and shows him in whose presence he is, thus reaching his conscience. He, the Creator who disposes of everything, collects the fishes in broad daylight, when there had been none at night, and fills

Peter's nets with them. He fills the human vessels with blessings such as they are unable to contain without breaking, and which surpass the needs of the disciple. His companions arrive with a second ship, which sinks likewise, so abundant are the riches given by the Lord of glory.

Peter sees (v. 8) all this blessing; but it places him for the first time, as he is, in the presence of Him who is its Source and Administrator. Thus it is not only the word of Jesus which strikes him, but Jesus Himself, and the glory of His person. A revolution takes place in his soul. The blessing, instead of producing joy, causes conviction of sin and fear, because it brings him into the presence of the Lord of glory. On the other hand, the sense of his condition, whilst giving him the terrible certainty that Jehovah ought to repulse him, yet casts him at the feet of Jesus as his only resource. Similarly in Psalm cxxx. 1-4 we see the soul calling for succour from the One whom it has offended. If He marks iniquities it is all over with it; it is lost if the question of sins is not settled. *But the God who has been sinned against pardons.* God is known in His love.

It is blessed for the sinner to know his real condition, the judgment which is his due, and the holiness of the Lord. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man." Peter judges himself to be a sinner, and unfit for the presence of God. He trembles before His holiness and righteousness. As yet he only knows half instinctively what grace is, and is ignorant how God can be just in justifying him that believeth in Jesus; but he is at His feet, and he does not flee away, because if there is any hope it is there. As long as he was occupied in wash-

ing his nets he knew neither God nor himself; but now he knows both, and it is a remarkable thing that he does not judge what he has *done*, but *what he is*. Many souls acknowledge that they have to repent of their guilty acts and judge them, but they have not been brought to see the source of these acts. Underneath the sins there is "a sinful man." The sense of God's presence opens our eyes, shows us what we are, and makes us see that our only refuge is with the One who could condemn us.

Fear had laid hold of Peter, but the Lord never allows fear to exist in His presence. He speaks and banishes the fear, because He is the Lord of grace. He allows everything else to remain—weakening in no wise the effects of the work in the soul—but He *removes the fear*. "Depart from me." No, the Lord will never depart. He says, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men"—if I had not met thee to save thee I could not save others by thy instrumentality. He does more than make Simon Peter happy; He bestows a fresh blessing on him, promising him *service*; so that, instead of remaining a sinner, Peter becomes a servant, able to leave all and follow Jesus.

PETER GOING TO JESUS ON THE WATER.

MATTHEW xiv. 22-33.

Jesus had just satisfied the poor in Israel with bread, according to the prophecy in Psalm cxxxii. 15, fulfilling His character of Messiah in the midst of a people who did not receive Him. After having done them good, He had sent away the multitudes, separating Himself in figure from Israel, whom He was about to abandon for a time. Evening being come, the Lord had gone up

alone into a mountain apart to pray. Then the *night* had come for the twelve whom Jesus had constrained to get into a ship. His connection with the people was over, but He had a remnant for Himself who were sailing to the other shore. The disciples were sore troubled, alone during those hours of darkness on the tempestuous sea, when in the fourth watch of the night, towards three o'clock in the morning, the Lord set out to go to them. His coming was the signal for the renewal of His relations with those whom He will again call His people. He came to them on the angry sea amidst difficulties which were nothing to His blessed feet, but which were *their* pathway for learning to know Him. It is thus that He will make use of "Jacob's trouble." It is a touching scene, and one from which we Christians can draw a moral lesson, though what concerns us more personally is the scene which takes place between Jesus and Peter.

Peter's first act had been to cast himself at Jesus' knees, acknowledging his sinful condition; the second, to set out to meet Him. One cannot insist too strongly on this point.* To go forth to meet the Saviour follows conversion, and precedes service. Peter having as yet only the *promise* of being made a fisher of men, was already impelled to go to meet Him. He turned to look at the One who descended from the mountain-top, and this was but the beginning of the glorious revelations he was to receive as to the person of Christ. Dear reader, have you gone out to meet Him? If you

* We only give here the individual application of this passage, which, properly speaking, completes the general picture in chapter xiv., by marking the position of the Church leaving Judaism to go forth to meet Christ, by faith in His word, and the eyes fixed on Him when apparently there was no way.

have not done so since your conversion, you are not yet beyond the knowledge of salvation, and you cannot pretend to the deeper acquaintance with Christ which was Peter's later on, if first of all the Saviour from heaven has not become your object, and filled you with the desire to go to Him.

Peter's knowledge at first is very superficial. "Lord, *if* it be *Thou*," he says. But it suffices for the start. Everything depends for him on the identity of the person, and if it be He, His *word* is sufficient to make Peter quit the ship: "Bid me come unto Thee on the water." It was a serious thing to leave the place of apparent security to walk where there was no way, but, as I said, the word of Christ sufficed him. He knew its power. At His word he had let go the net; at His word he sets forth. It enables him to walk on the water even as it had brought him to know the Saviour. "Bid me come unto Thee." In asking this favour Peter had no thought of making an experiment, or showing off his cleverness in overcoming obstacles; what he wanted was *to go to Him*. Christ attracted him, and for the moment he thought not of wind or waves. If the natural heart ignores the path which leads to Christ, faith finds a way amidst difficulties of all kinds, in the night as in the storm, and makes use of them to get nearer to the Lord. Faith quits the boat, the only apparent shelter, not esteeming it to be the true place of safety, and, according to a remarkable saying of one of the ancient philosophers, "embarks on a divine word" to reach Jesus, whose presence is worth more to him than getting to the other shore.

We often begin well; the first faith and the first love, the simplicity of a heart filled by an object, sustains

us, and then, alas! we allow the eye to be diverted from its object. Satan had sought to trouble the disciples by making them afraid of Jesus (*v.* 26), but they soon learnt from His lips to be of good cheer. Then the enemy alarms Peter with difficulties. What folly to listen to him; for do not difficulties lead us to Christ? Poor unbelieving creatures that we are! In our trials, as in our needs, the only thing we forget is the very thing we ought not to lose sight of—divine power. In the preceding scene (*v.* 17) the disciples had not forgotten to count their loaves and fishes, nor to reckon the resources of the villages, but they had not counted on the Lord's presence. Peter also, after having set forth, began to think of the violence of the wind, and to look back on his own strength, forgetting that he had before him a power of attraction stronger than the polar magnet which would infallibly bring him to Jesus. And he begins to sink.

Who has not, like Peter, been on the point of sinking? Have not the Church and individuals shared the same fate? But a cry bursts from the lips of the disciple, "Lord, save me;" not "Depart from me," for the believer knows the Saviour, and that His character is to save. Peter calls for help just as he is on the point of attaining his object, and Jesus has only to stretch forth His hand to draw him to Himself. *One moment* more of faith, and the disciple would not have sunk. Shall we still doubt, dear readers? We may with regard to many things, but never of Christ. Let us trust Him who is able to save us to the end; for the storm will not cease until the Lord and His own are definitively united.

H. R.

(*To be continued, D.V.*)

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

CHAPTER viii.

To follow with intelligence the course of events connected with the trumpets, it will be necessary to recall what has already been considered. After the Lamb had taken the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne, and had received the homage and adoration of both heaven and earth, as the One who alone was worthy to make good the character of God in government, in virtue of His redemptive work, He proceeded to open the seals. Six of the seven seals are opened in chapter vi., and the various events connected with them follow in succession. Before the seventh is broken, the 144,000 of the elect of Israel are sealed—sealed for safety and preservation—in view of the approaching judgments which will precede and usher in the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. (See chap. xi. 13.) There is, moreover, the exhibition of the great multitude of Gentiles, who will be brought, according to the purpose of God, through the great tribulation which is about to come upon the whole habitable world. Before therefore God lifts up His rod to smite His ancient people, and also the nations of the earth, He permits us to see that in the midst of wrath He remembers mercy; that while Israel will be sifted among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth (Amos ix. 9); and that the terrible scourge which will be wielded in judgment over the nations will not be

suffered to destroy one of that countless number whom He has named and reserved for blessing. Though therefore His path is in the sea, and He flies upon the wings of the wind, He cheers our heart by unveiling to us the issue of His dealings in judgment in pure and perfect blessing.

Another thing must be observed. There is evidently a break between the first six seals and the seventh with its developments. The first six bring in preliminary judgments, constitute perhaps "the beginning of sorrows," whereas the last introduces that period of "great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (See Matthew xxiv. 8, 21, 22.) Bearing this distinction in mind, it will be the easier to follow the subsequent events.

We have then, first of all, the opening of the seventh seal: "*And when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.*" (vv. 1, 2.) Immediately upon the opening of the seventh seal there follows, not, as in the previous cases, the attendant judgment, but silence in heaven for the space of half an hour. Surely this expresses the solemnity of the crisis which has now arrived. It is, as it were, a divine pause before the infliction of the last and most awful judgments upon the habitable world. The seven angels which stood before God then appear, and to them are given seven trumpets. It will be remarked that the trumpets are developed out of the seventh seal.

Before, however, the angels sound their trumpets,

there is the introduction of a brief but most significant scene. *“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer* it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.”* (vv. 3–5.) This scene is clearly in heaven, as marked by the golden altar and the throne. The angel therefore can be no less a personage than the great High Priest, the Mediator between God and His people. The prayers of all saints—saints on earth, it need scarcely be said—are seen ascending up to God upon the golden altar; but it is the action of the “Angel” in adding the incense that gives the efficacy to their prayers, for the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand. This is a blessed familiar truth to every believer, and one embodied continually in our hymns of praise. For example—

“Boldly the heart and voice we raise,
His blood, His name, our plea;
Assured our prayers and songs of praise
Ascend, by Christ, to Thee.”

Yes, we all know that it is Christ—Christ in all the value of what He is to God, as having glorified Him on the cross, that gives efficacy to the prayers of His

* Literally, the word is “give;” that is, as to its meaning, that He should give efficacy to their prayers.

people; and it is this truth that is embodied in this symbolic scene.

But there is more. It is as an answer to the prayers of the saints that the Angel takes the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth. That is, God is pleased to associate His saints with Himself even in His ways of judgment; and thus the judgments, set forth by the fire of the altar, are seen going forth in response to the cries of His people. This plainly indicates who the saints are. They are the earthly saints after the rapture of the Church, the remnant so often appearing in the Psalms, and pleading for vengeance upon their adversaries. (See also Luke xviii. 7, 8.) The voices, thunders, &c., are but varied symbols of the different forms of divine power in judgment with which this poor world is about to be visited.

The seven angels in the next place "*prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.*" (vv. 6, 7.)* The form of these judgments is reminiscent of those that fell upon Egypt. (See Exodus ix. 22-26.) The language, of course, is symbolical. "Hail" is often found in Scripture as the expression of violent and destructive judgment (see Joshua x. 11; Isaiah xxviii. xxx.; Ezekiel xxxviii. 22); "fire" is significant of the holiness of God as applied in dealing judicially with men, with the thought of an all-penetrating and

* In the best manuscripts, before the statement that "the third part of trees was burnt up," there is found this clause, "And the third part of the earth was burnt up."

consuming character, while "blood" will be indicative of death, but death under the judgment of God. The expression "the third part of the earth," &c., points to the area of the judgments. From chapter xii. 4 there can be little doubt that "the third part" refers to the extent of the Roman empire. If this be so, the prophetic Roman earth will be the scene of the terrible judgments here following upon the sounding of the first trumpet. The objects of the devastating judgment will be "trees" and "green grass." If we connect this with chapter vii. 1, it will be seen that the judgment is one of those restrained by the angels there, until the servants of God should have been sealed in their foreheads. The "trees" here, therefore, will, as there, mean the great ones of the earth, while the "green grass" being burnt up would signify, as it appears to us, the destruction of all general prosperity. God at length has stepped in, and dealt with "the man of the earth" in his pomp and pride, and dried up at the same time the sources of his wealth and greatness; but it is only as introductory to even severer judgments.

The next, as connected with the sounding of the second trumpet, is described as "*a great mountain burning with fire,*" which was "*cast into the sea.*" A mountain in Scripture is figurative of established power, and hence sometimes of the seat of government. This symbol will accordingly mean that some such power, kindling with fire as God's judgment, is cast into the midst of the seething masses of the people, as represented by the sea. The consequence is that "*the third part of the sea became blood; the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.*" (vv. 8, 9.) The extent of

these judgments is the same as that of those which precede, as shown by the term "the third part;" and first, all through the peoples (the sea) of the Roman earth, the "blood," the "deathful power of evil" prevails; a third part of the creatures in the sea that had life died; *i.e.*, as another has written, "I suppose dying here to be departure from the profession of association with God, public separation from Him, or apostasy." Infidelity and atheism indeed always flourish in times of great disturbances, social earthquakes, and revolutions. The destruction of the third part of ships points plainly to the ruin of commercial means of prosperity.

Upon the sounding of the third trumpet "*there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and many died of the waters, because they were made bitter.*" (v. 11.) A star is the symbol of authority in government, not supreme (for this is represented by the sun), but subordinate, and one therefore, from the very emblem employed, who should have been the source of light and order to men. But he falls "from heaven," from the place in which he had been set by God (for the powers that be are ordained of God); that is, he is now by his fall dissevered from all connection with God, though he still burns, not as a star, but as a lamp, and thus attracts by his light and radiance. He falls upon and corrupts all the sources, the moral sources, of life, as set forth by the rivers and fountains of waters. Accordingly his name indicates the effects of his action, for a third part of the waters (the sphere and range of his influence) become wormwood, bitter and poisonous to those who drink of them,

and consequently many die. (Compare Deut. xxix. 18 ; Proverbs v. 4.) An illustration of such an effect may often be seen when one who has been prominent in the Church of God becomes unfaithful or apostate, and morally destroys his hearers by infidel teachings. In manifold ways it is possible for those who have fallen from high places, whether amongst men or in the Church, to poison the sources of life, and it is just this that will take place on a grand scale, alas ! at the fall of the star Wormwood.

It is the governments of the earth that are affected by the sound of the fourth trumpet (*v.* 12), and no form of it escapes ; for, as before pointed out, the sun is a symbol of supreme authority, the moon of that which is derived from the supreme, even as the moon derives her light from the sun and reflects it, while the stars as plainly speak of that which is subordinate. Sun, moon, and stars, therefore, are an expression of every class of human authority in government. Again, the "third part" appears in these judgments ; that is, they are as yet confined to the Roman earth, to its western empire ; and the effect is, that confusion and darkness reign instead of peace and order. Little do men apprehend how much they are indebted to orderly and stable governments. It is only in insurrectionary or revolutionary periods, when thrones are overturned and lawless passions reign supreme, that they learn the value of the priceless blessings, which, in a human sense, are connected with the maintenance of sovereign and righteous rule. Hence the striking language here employed to designate the dire consequences of the overturning in judgment of "the powers that be." "The day shone not for a third part of it, and the night

likewise;" that is, as another has said, "Not only the public course of things was cast into confusion and darkness—the day in sunlight darkened, but the more private and hidden life of man lost the light that guided it."

A division occurs between the first four trumpets and the last three, and this is marked by the last verse of this chapter. "*And I beheld, and heard an angel* flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound.*" (v. 13.) As this solemn proclamation (if it be not denunciation) forms the introduction to the last three trumpets, comment upon it may be reserved for the next chapter. The judgments following upon the first four trumpets have covered the whole of symbolic creation. The earth, trees, grass, the sea, rivers, fountains of waters, and the celestial bodies, all have been smitten—proof of the unparalleled character of the sorrows and trials which will compose what is termed "the great tribulation," "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Chapter iii. 10.) But when God arises to judgment, if men repent not, He will vindicate His name and authority with ever-increasing severity; and hence we find that, terrible as the first four trumpets have been, they are surpassed in their judicial terror by the three "woe" trumpets yet to be sounded.

E. D.

* There can be scarcely a doubt that "eagle" should be here substituted for "angel."

A VOICE FOR THE NEW YEAR.

1890.

ANOTHER year its course has run,
 And stamped its change on all below ;
 The century's last decade begun :
 How it shall end, none here can know.
 The "little while" is growing less,
 The Lord His promise shall fulfil,
 He'll come Himself His saints to bless,
 And thus complete the Father's will.
 The hour is fixed, the day is near
 When He will call them hence away ;
 His well-known voice each one shall hear,
 And pass into eternal day.

Then closed the open door shall be,
 Repentance cease to find a place ;
 And to the dens and caves they flee
 Who had refused the proffered grace ;
 Who would not hear that gracious voice
 Inviting weary ones to come,
 Shall then be left without a choice
 To meet the sinner's awful doom.
 What voice is that which now we hear ?
 Whose sound the echoes still repeat,
 "Behold the Bridegroom ! He is near !
 Go forth your coming Lord to meet."
 Ye sleeping saints, awake ! awake !
 And trim your dying lamps anew,
 Our cloudless morning soon shall break ;
 That midnight cry calls loud to you.

G. W. F.

SONSHIP, AND THE LEADING OF THE
SPIRIT OF GOD.

It is only by the surpassing riches of the grace of God that any of us are His children; and because it is wholly of grace, it must be therefore on the principle of faith, and not of works. Hence we read, "Ye are all the children [sons] of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. iii. 26.) It is, however, very blessed to *know it* on the authority of the word of God as a divine certainty; but more blessed still to have the *enjoyment* of this new and everlasting relationship by the truth brought home to our hearts in the power of the Holy Ghost. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Another inspired apostle says, "Beloved, *now* are we the sons [children] of God." (Rom. viii. 16; 1 John iii. 2.) It is scarcely possible that anything can be more simply or more definitely stated. There is no "if" or "but" in the sentence; no "hoping to be" or room for the shadow of a "doubt." The fact is unmistakably set forth, that all who truly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, are "children of God." Let us never forget that this is what the Spirit of God teaches, and it is therefore God's truth, and not man's opinion. Till we receive what God says about the death and bloodshedding of His own Son, and because He says it, we are not believers, not children of God. But having been born of the Spirit, and having received the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit is given to indwell us as God's seal, His anointing, the

earnest of the inheritance, to lead us also and teach us, so that we might *know* and *enjoy*, on the authority of Scripture, our new and everlasting relationship of children. He witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God; and it is a never-ending source of holy enjoyment, thanksgiving, and praise. In this way the soul begins to know God as Father. "Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. iv. 6.)

Nor is this all; for we are further instructed, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. viii. 17.) Let us not, dear reader, lightly pass this by, but consider how far *we know* and *enjoy* this blessed relationship to God into which we have been brought. Let us remember that we have "joy and peace in believing;" not in knowing the doctrine merely, but in receiving the truth of it into our hearts as from the mouth of God. Thus eating the words of God for ourselves, making them our own, we live day by day in the comfort of this unchangeable and everlasting relationship. Sure it is that, however pious we may appear, we cannot walk as children of God unless we know we are His children. Many will say, "Yes, I see it," or, "I have known it for some years," but to live day by day in the enjoyment of it as a settled reality, and look on to the blessed prospect laid out before us, produces gladness of heart and holy liberty as nothing else can. Let us then not fail to *receive from God* by His word, and *enjoy before Him*, the astounding truth that His own unfathomable grace has made us His children to

care for and comfort for ever to His own everlasting praise and glory.

Observe, too, that the Spirit given to us to make us know that we are God's children is spoken of as "the Spirit of His Son," that we may have in our measure His own feelings and affections; and that He is also spoken of as "the Spirit of adoption," to make us realize our position, and give us thoughts, feelings, and affections suited to Abba, Father. Our Lord prayed that the love wherewith the Father loved Him may be *in* us, and also referred to a time when the world will know that the Father has loved us as He loved Him. Precious grace!

The Holy Spirit is also our Leader. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." And be it remembered that He is here also to guide us into *all* the truth. He is never spoken of as *driving* us, but in all the tenderness of a loving nurse *leading* the little children. This is in full keeping with divine love; and being led by Him is a mark of sonship. As to this leading of the Spirit of God, it is easy to say, "I am led of the Spirit to do this or that;" but it is certain that He never leads us to have confidence in the flesh, or to covet a position in the world which has crucified the Lord of glory, or to do anything contrary to His word. Doubtless His usual way of leading is by the written word, though as to time, place, circumstances, and other details, if we walk in the truth, watch His eye and hand, having no will of our own in activity, but with all humility having an eye to His glory, He will assuredly guide. The Spirit is the Glorifier and Testifier of the Son of God, and takes of the things of the Father, and of the Son, and shows them unto us; and these are important landmarks never to

be lost sight of. To separate, therefore, the operations of the Spirit of God from the testimony of the written Word, and from the person of the Son, would be misleading and unsound.

The Holy Spirit brings us into conscious association with Christ. Even if He occupies us with ourselves to reprove us for sin, it is to bring us with self-judgment into the presence of God. As we are called into the fellowship of the Son of God, to have parted company with Him is to have descended to the thoughts of the flesh. Communion with the Father and the Son is the normal state of the child of God; and it is maintained only in the power of the Holy Spirit. The world does not receive the Holy Spirit "because," as our Lord said, "it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him;" to His disciples, however, He blessedly added, "But ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John xiv. 17.) All believers who know they are God's children, know, in some feeble measure, the Holy Spirit, and something of His gracious operations and ways. Those who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them have a personal consciousness of God's love, for it is shed abroad in their hearts; they delight to bow to Jesus as their Lord as well as Saviour; and they know that they are God's children. They realize also His power in ministering the precious things of the Son of God to them, while drawing their hearts upward to Christ, and outward for Christ. Examples of the leading and operations of the Spirit abound in Scripture, not only in associating our hearts and minds with Christ, but always in the most suitable and seasonable way as meeting our circumstances and service. Let us look briefly at some of them.

In Acts ii., Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, stood up to preach. And to what did the Spirit of God lead him? His sermon, from beginning to end, was concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter refers his hearers first to the prophet Joel, who spoke of the Spirit being poured out. He proves that Psalm xvi. was fulfilled in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. He quotes from Psalm cxxxii. to show that Messiah must be of the fruit of David's loins according to the flesh. He turns to Psalm cx. to show the fulfilment of the ascension and session of Christ at God's right hand, till He comes forth to judge, and His enemies are made His footstool. He also sets Christ before the people as the One who received in glory the Holy Spirit, and sent Him down. Peter brings in all his hearers guilty of the crucifixion of Christ, but earnestly commends to them God's grace as willing to give them remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. We ask, Could there be a finer example of the Spirit's leading and operation in using the written Word concerning the glorified Saviour consequent upon His finished work upon the cross? And could any line of things be more suitable to the preacher and the hearers in their then circumstances and need?

Let us look also at Stephen in Acts vii. How did the Spirit lead him? We read that "he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." The Spirit occupies him with the glorified Man on the throne of God as an absorbing Object, and the most suitable ministry that he could have at that time. His testimony, therefore, was not one word about him-

self or his sufferings, but of Jesus. He said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Could there be a more touching witness of the Spirit's leading an afflicted soul into the present sustaining and comforting blessing of the ever-living Son of God? Can we conceive anything that could be more truly meat in due season? And what was its effect? Was he not so strengthened to bear his terrible sufferings that in his measure, like our blessed Lord, he could pray for his murderers, and calmly commit his spirit to his Saviour, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

We read of John that he "was in the Spirit on the Lord's-day." And what did he see and hear and learn? He *heard* a great voice as of a trumpet saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." He *saw* the Son of man, in His own faithfulness and grace, "in the midst" of the assemblies on earth. And he *learned* his own nothingness and weakness, the mystery of the Lord's person, and that He had died and was alive again, and that for evermore. He felt the surpassing tenderness of His right hand laid upon him, he tasted the exceeding comfort of His "Fear not," and knew Him now in the place of authority over death and hades, for He held the keys of both. Can anything, we ask, more fully show that when the Spirit leads He brings us to have to do with Christ, and that too in the best possible way to meet us in our present state or circumstances or service? How else could John have been fitted to discern and communicate to us the mysteries of the visions which were to pass before him for our guidance and untold blessing? Hence the next words were, "*Write* the things which thou hast seen,"

&c. Happy are those who thus go into service from personal intercourse with the Son of God. How else can we expect to be divinely used instruments?

So clearly is the testimony of the Spirit connected with true thoughts of Christ, that the apostle John lays it down as a test of those with whom we come in contact, that "every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God: and every spirit who does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God" (N.T.), whatever their pretensions may be. So vital is this point that it is prefaced by the saying, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God." Such also not only "love the brethren," but are subject to the apostle's words, "He that is of God heareth us. . . . Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (1 John iv. 1-8.)

Look also at Barnabas when full of the Holy Ghost, and see what characterized his ministry. Did he not direct the young converts to have to do with the Lord Jesus Christ? Yes; "he exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." (Acts xi. 23, 24.)

Take the apostle Paul as another example, not only in all his epistles ministering Christ, variously and yet seasonably, to each and all; but he serves also to show us that when a man is under the Holy Spirit's leading, he will have such a keen sense of what dishonours the Lord and perverts the truth of God, that his whole soul will be filled with holy indignation. He had anguish of heart, much affliction, and shed many tears over the Corinthian dishonour to Christ; he wept over professors, because they were ministering to the flesh instead of reckoning themselves dead with Christ, and thus were "enemies to *the cross* of Christ," as he states

in his letter to the Philippian saints. (2 Cor. ii. 4; Phil. iii. 18.) But on another occasion, when "filled with the Holy Ghost," he found one perverting the truth, and seeking to turn away another from the faith, and Paul "set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of *the Lord*? And now, behold, the hand of *the Lord* is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season," &c. (Acts xiii. 9-11.) We may be sure that when the Spirit leads, He gives us to have to do with Christ, to honour, serve, and look for Him, and to see every thing in relation to Him, according to His own blessed word of truth. May we more rejoice that we are God's children, and as such look for the constant leading and operations of the Spirit till Christ comes! H. H. S.

 SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

REV. v. 9, 10.

WE have received the following communication concerning this scripture: "Allow me to refer to your exposition of Rev. v., on page 259 of *The Christian Friend and Instructor* (of last year). In great doubt myself for a long time as to how the passage should read, owing to the state of the authorities (and before the reading of the Sinaitic MS. was ascertained), I think—with A, and many cursives to support these two ancient witnesses—verse 10 must be regarded as definitively settled for 'them' and 'they' (instead of 'us' and 'we'); and that the true text of verse 9, *i.e.*,

omitting 'us,' is preserved by A and Codex Bergiæ, with the Æthiopic to support it. The way indeed the witnesses for insertion vary as to the place in which they insert the pronoun confirms the evidence of those that omit, combined with the fact that verses 9, 10 thus read give the least probable reading *prima facie*.

"But, taken spiritually, there is, when, as I believe, the true text is restored, as above, and according to your note, a beautiful reason for the omission of the personal reference, without altering so seriously the persons referred to in the song. It is that given in the *Synopsis*, that it is not any particular class, but rather the value of the act (of redemption) which constitutes the motive for praise. They care not to specify themselves as the subjects of it, but their hearts are absorbed with the value of the work in itself, and the worthiness of Him who wrought it.

"I say 'so seriously,' because if the true reading, as I am convinced it is, points to another class, as your note affirms it must, we lose the positive identification of who the elders are, and put the redeemed after the Church is gone into the place of rule, which is reserved for the heavenly saints and the two companies that are privileged, as cut off from the earthly portion, to have part in the first resurrection. (Rev. xx. 4.) The place of the redeemed after the Church is gone is seen in chapter vii.

"Nor can ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς be truly translated 'on the earth;' it should be 'over the earth,' for it is the subject, not the place, of rule which is here indicated (the contrast of ἐν in a place, and ἐπὶ over a people or a land may be seen in 2 Samuel v. 5. Compare, in the LXX., Judges ix. 8, 10, 12-15; 1 Samuel viii. 7, 9, 11, also Matt. ii. 22," &c.)

Having re-examined the subject we cannot doubt that our correspondent is right, and hence that the part of note two on page 259 (vol. xiii.), which refers the "them" and "they" of this scripture to another class must be cancelled. The point is so important that we are glad to make the correction, and to commend it to the attention of the reader.

II.

ROMANS ii. 7; vi. 23; 1 TIMOTHY vi. 12-19.

IN Paul's writings eternal life is generally viewed in its full result, according to God's counsels; viz., conformity to Christ in glory. In John's gospel and epistles, on the other hand, it is looked upon either as a moral state, as in chapter v. 24, (where he that hears, &c., has eternal life, *and is passed out of death into life*), or as a present possession, as above, and in 1 John v. 12, 13. The above passages from Romans and 1 Timothy may easily be understood if the distinction made is borne in mind. Thus in Romans ii. 7 "eternal life" comes after "incorruptibility;" for this, not "immortality," is the exact rendering. Now, incorruptibility applies to the bodies of the saints in resurrection (see 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54), and hence eternal life here is the eternal perfected condition of the saint in glory, according to chapter viii. 29. This is a most interesting point, inasmuch as it shows that the apostle assumes Christian knowledge in this scripture. Chapter vi. 22 is also future. It says, "The end everlasting [eternal] life," and the expression must therefore be interpreted as in chapter ii. Nor is verse 23 an exception, as eternal life is in contrast with death, as the wages of sin, only here it is more abstract, in that our attention is directed to its being the gift of God, and thus not earned, as

death is by sin. The apostle will therefore not have us forget that eternal life, in all its blessed fruition, is the pure gift of God's grace, and *in* Christ Jesus our Lord. Moreover, as has been written, "it is not merely that eternal life is the gift of God, but the gift of God is nothing less than eternal life." Taking now 1 Timothy vi. 12, we see no reason for departing from the above interpretation. Timothy is exhorted to "lay hold on eternal life," and surely as the end and issue of the life of faith. Two considerations support this conclusion: first, the exhortation succeeds that as to fighting the good fight of faith, which must include the whole of the believer's pathway; and, secondly, the apostle adds the words, "Whereunto thou art also called," which could not mean less than the full issue in glory of the Christian life. In fighting the good fight of faith, therefore, Timothy was ever to have his eye on the goal (compare Phil. iii. 10-14; Heb. xii. 2); and "laying hold" of that, he would be furnished with a mighty stimulus and incentive to persevere with all fidelity and courage in the good "conflict" of faith in which he was engaged. In verse 19 of this chapter the correct reading is, "That they may lay hold on that which is really life." It is therefore not exactly eternal life here. It is what is life before God in contrast with finding one's life in uncertain riches. (Compare Luke xii. 15.) The rich were thus to be charged to put their trust, not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, to use their riches in view of their being but stewards, and thus of the future (for this is really the meaning of "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come"); and in this way they would lay hold of that which was really life both now and in eternity.

E. D.

THE PLAINS OF MOAB.

NUMBERS xxii.

It is a blessed thing to begin with God. He ever acts from what He is, not from what we are, and the final result of this will be that man will be blessed through eternal ages according to the outgoings of the heart of God. In carrying out this purpose He has disclosed the mystery of His will that every thing in heaven and earth is to be headed up in Christ as man. Man is the being in whom the blessing is to flow out through the creation of God. He is blessed in order to be a blessing, and the highest form of it is seen in a Man being now in the glory of God, and the Church united to Him there as His body.

On earth Israel are the people, having their own special links with Christ as Son of Abraham and Son of David, in whom the blessing of all the nations of the earth is secured. They were a family, a nation chosen of God out of the system of nations which compose the world, to be Jehovah's witnesses and the vessel of His blessing to all the families of the earth. The head of this family was separated by divine call from country, kindred, and father's house. The nation of Israel were separated from the world by divine call also (Hosea xi. 1), made good in the power of redemption. The world out of which they were taken is morally a system of which Satan is the god and prince. Of Israel God has said, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise." (Isa. xliii. 21.) No wonder

that such a people were the objects of the deadly hostility of Satan. In order to bless the world God must first take a people out of the world and connect them with Himself. Hence He said to Abraham, when He called him out, "I will bless thee, and make thee a blessing." It is ever so. The Lord speaks of those whom He has chosen out of the world thus: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;" and then He adds His purpose as to them: "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."

Israel then was a nation in whom the rights and title of God, in the blessing and government of the world, were to be made good against the power of Satan exercised amongst the Gentiles. This power was specially maintained by idolatry, which was in reality the worship of demons. We can now understand that Satan's hostility to God, and his opposition to the purpose of God in blessing, would be manifested in antagonism against the people thus separated from other nations to be the special objects of His dealings. His first effort was to hold them captive. When that is unavailing, his opposition is directed against them to weaken and spoil them, and, if possible, intervene between them and the Lord who had chosen them. Two questions are thus brought before us; first, the state of the people themselves—sinful and powerless; secondly, the sovereignty of God in goodness and power, whereby He effectuates His own purpose and call.

We have said that Israel was called out of Egypt where they were in captivity under the power of Pharaoh. Egypt represents to us the world in its state by nature, enjoying indeed the providential goodness of

God, but alienated from Him. He is not acknowledged as the source of their prosperity, but the providential supply is claimed as their own. "My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself." (Ezek. xxix. 3.) It is there the people of God's inheritance are held captive by its prince, serving divers lusts and pleasures. In accomplishing their deliverance from such a bondage God had to meet the sinful state of the people, and also to annul the power of the enemy. When Pharaoh refused to let them go in obedience to the demand of Jehovah, their deliverance must be accomplished by judgment; but if God acts in judgment He is no respecter of persons, for He is righteous. Consequently He must judge sin wherever He finds it, whether in an Israelite or an Egyptian. In grace He provided a shelter for Israel by the blood of the paschal lamb being sprinkled upon the lintel and doorposts of their houses. Thus were they secure in that night when God executed judgment against Egypt by slaying their first-born. Their deliverance thus was according to righteousness, but it must be fully accomplished by freeing them from the place of their captivity as well as from the power that held them. Through the waters of judgment which overwhelmed the enemy, Israel passed into liberty—free now to be Jehovah's people and to go on to their inheritance with Him. This now is the theme of their song: "Jehovah hath triumphed gloriously." All is of Himself. He who sheltered them has now delivered them. He is manifestly their God. "He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." Thus they sing. They anticipate too the full accomplishment of His purpose concerning them. He

who led forth a redeemed people would bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of His inheritance. The power already manifested on the banks of the Red Sea was a pledge of the overthrow of the enemy in whatever way he might assail.

Israel are now in the wilderness—delivered indeed, but in themselves a feeble folk. Under grace our wants and weakness are but the occasion for the blessed God who has redeemed us to shew how sufficient that grace is for us. So we sing—

“On to Canaan’s rest still wending,
E’en thy wants and woes shall bring
Suited grace, from high descending,
Thou shalt taste of mercy’s spring.”

But Satan knows that the flesh is weak, and, though no longer able to hold captive, he will use his power in the world to persecute and harass the redeemed people. Hence the attack of Amalek. (Ex. xvii. 8.) We are told that Amalek met them in the way, “and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.” (Deut. xxv. 18.) Our weakness may become the occasion for the enemy’s attack. The wilderness is a place of sore trial for the flesh, and if the flesh distrusts, as it always does, the power and goodness of God, it soon becomes the point of attack. But to attack the feeble saint is really to attack God. “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.” (Zech. ii. 8.) The unbelief and murmuring of the flesh had shown itself at Meribah. They were faint and weary, and wanted water, and, notwithstanding their failure, God had supplied them from the smitten rock—the type of the heavenly springs which refresh us in the desert. Our weakness lays us open to attack. Satan in some way

would take advantage of it; but the Spirit is given to shed the love of God abroad in our hearts, and in His power the enemy now is *resisted*. "Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (1 Peter v. 9.) We have, moreover, the intercession on high of Him who is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. The hands of Moses are lifted up and in them the rod of God's power which led forth the people, and smote the sea and the rock. It is the Lord's battle, and victory is secured by those uplifted hands. Amalek was touching the rights of the Lord in His people, his hand was on the throne of the Lord, therefore it is perpetual warfare until the name of Amalek is blotted out from under heaven. Weak indeed we are, but not captives; the Lord's people, and hence ever the objects of Satan's attack, but more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

A totally different character of opposition now demands our notice, and it is a very terrible one, for the agents of the enemy are the world's power represented by Balak, and a corrupted religious element, having the knowledge of God and using His name, but seeking power from enchantments. Such was Balaam. The victories gained over the world, represented by Sihon and Og, had made Moab sore afraid. We may notice the character of these further on. There are moments when the world is forced to own that the power of God is with His people. The question now raised is, whether there is any power that can frustrate the purpose of God, or intervene between Him and His people? *There is none*. There is no divination or enchantment against Israel; nor is there angel, princi-

pality, or power which can separate the believer from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. If God has taken up a people for blessing, and to make them a blessing, He will accomplish in power what He has purposed in love. According to that purpose, Israel is yet to blossom and bud and fill the earth with fruit. The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples as a dew from the Lord. The whole creation is now groaning as it waits to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God. Moab was frustrating their own blessing, not the purpose of God, in hiring Balaam. On account of it they lost the privilege of entering into the congregation of the Lord. "Even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever." (Deut. xxiii. 3, 4.)

The history of Balaam is most solemn. While it serves to bring out the sovereign grace of God, it reveals also the elements of religious corruption which prevail in the last days. Satan, powerless to prevail against the saints of God by open hostility, will corrupt. In Balaam we have the character of that which corrupts. There was a knowledge of God—he had this, he even says "Jehovah my God." (Num. xxii. 18.) He called Israel's God his God, but his heart was exercised with covetous practices, he "loved the wages of unrighteousness." This is the character also given to Judas by Peter. (Acts i. 18.) Thirty pieces of silver were "the reward of iniquity" given to the man who said to Jesus, "Hail, Master!" Both these men describe a feature of religious apostasy which at last perishes in its own corruption.

There is nothing more awful than when that which

bears the name of God is associated with the power of Satanic evil. Possessed by a covetous desire, Judas becomes Satan's instrument in betraying the One whom he called Master into the hands of His enemies. Balaam too will seek to curse the people whom the One he called "Jehovah, my God" had blessed.

God takes up the cause of His people. They knew not what was taking place between the messengers of Balak and Balaam, but "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." All was known to the Lord. "Lodge ye here this night," said Balaam to the men who brought the reward of divination in their hand. To entertain those who sought to curse the people of the Lord showed the wicked inclination of his heart. He is only hindered by the positive intervention of God. We mark here the working of Satan with him. "I will bring you word again," said he to the elders of Moab, "as the Lord shall speak unto me." Satan can present himself before the Lord (Job i. 6), and be used of God in afflicting His servant. Nor is there a more terribly fiery dart than the taunt of Satan to a failing saint. "There is no help for him in God." (Ps. iv. 3.) "Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed" is God's answer to this wicked waiting upon Him. Such a reply might well have hindered Balaam from again asking the servants of Balak to tarry another night, when they bring a second invitation to him to come and curse the people. Conscious that he *cannot* (for he would) go beyond the word of the Lord to do less or more, he again seeks to know what the Lord would say unto him more. Though the very thought of his going was opposed to the mind of God, yet, if the men came

to call him, he was to go and speak the word which God should say unto him. The haste of Balaam anticipates this, and manifests how perverse his way was before the Lord. God uses the dumb ass speaking with man's voice to forbid the madness of the prophet. Balaam now must go, and not only to Balak, but, by means of his prophecy, declare to all generations the settled purpose of God as to Israel. In contrast to this we have spiritual wickedness, which, owning the name of the Lord, acquires its power by falling into the hands of Satan.

It is remarkable that in Leviticus xxiv. there is the same contrast. The lamps are ordered before the Lord from the evening to the morning continually by Aaron alone; that is, by Christ. The light in the sanctuary is maintained by Him during Israel's night. Again, the twelve loaves of shewbread, representing the twelve tribes, are put upon the pure table before the Lord with the added frankincense. "He shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel *by an everlasting covenant.*" It is at the time when this memorial of Israel being ever before the Lord is ordained, that we have the account of the man who blasphemed the name of Jehovah. His mother was an Israelitish woman, his father an Egyptian. The offspring of this mixture of the people of God and the world curses his God. Let the reader weigh this well. It is in the heart of God to bless man. Man's heart can so fall under the power of Satan that he will curse God and curse His people. What would man be but for the sovereign grace of God? Well may we use Balaam's words: "God is not man."

T. H. R.

(To be continued if the Lord will.)

SIMON PETER.

PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH CHRIST.

MATTHEW xvi. 13-23.

PETER had learnt to know the Lord as the One who could meet his needs, as a Saviour for his sins, and for his weakness. Now he had to learn something deeper and more marvellous—what the Lord was in Himself.

It is always so; the believer advances step by step in the knowledge of Christ. Still it was not by his faithfulness that Peter acquired this new blessing, but by the faithfulness of God, who had separated him from men to give him such a revelation. It was the Father, not flesh and blood, who had revealed these things to him. (v. 17.) Introduced by the Father to the centre of blessing, Peter was set in the presence of the living God. He recognized in the Son of man Christ, the object of all the promises, and to whom all the counsels of God were attached, but this Christ was the Son of the *living God*. He was not only the Man born into the world whom God had declared His Son in saying, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee;" but He was the Son of the living God. He possessed a power of life which belonged to God only, and all the fulness of which was found in Christ.

Those from whom Peter had been separated for the reception of this glorious revelation were utterly ignorant of the majesty of Jesus. For them He was only Joseph's son, or, at the most, one of the prophets. They found themselves in the presence of this majesty which was unknown to them; for there must be a revelation

from the Father for that. Henceforth Peter knew the Saviour in His personal glory, the source and centre of every blessing ; moreover, Simon son of Jonas was pronounced "blessed" by Jesus Himself. Heaven was opened to him, and he possessed happiness with which nothing could compare.*

But the Father could not reveal the personal glory of His Son to Simon without *the Son* revealing how this glory was connected with the individual and collective blessing of the redeemed. "And I say *also* unto thee." Christ also made known to him what flowed from His character as Son of the living God.

First, "Thou art Peter ;" as the Father has revealed My name to thee, I will make known to thee thine own. Individually and collectively (*i.e.*, together with all believers) thou hast a place in the edifice which is to be founded on this revelation.

Secondly, the foundation of this edifice being henceforth *known* (it was to be *laid* later in the declaration of the Son of God with power, fruit of the resurrection from amongst the dead), the Lord declares that He will *build* on Himself this Church of which Peter is a living stone. "I will build *My* Church." It was to be the Church of Christ, to belong to Him, the object of His interest and affection. For us it is an accomplished fact ; the Church exists and belongs to Him.

And you, dear readers, do you share in some measure the interest and the thoughts of Christ for His Church ?

* I would here remark that this paper does not deal with the way in which Peter laid hold of the things revealed to him, but of the *scope* of these revelations. In reality Peter and his companions only understood and enjoyed these things after the gift of the Holy Spirit.

There are, thank God, Christian hearts which enter into them, if feebly, and which, in spite of its ruin, are capable of comprehending its beauty, because they see it as the Saviour sees it, and estimate it at the price with which He acquired it, saying, as the Spirit of old said of Israel, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither seen perverseness in Israel."

This foundation, a Christ risen and exalted in heaven, gives to the Church a *heavenly character*. Built, without doubt, on earth, her foundation is in heaven, *beyond the gates of hades*. She is there already. The power of death, destroyed by a risen Christ who holds the keys of death and of hades, cannot and never shall prevail against her.

Thirdly, in virtue of this declaration, a new dispensation was to be inaugurated. Israel was to be replaced by the kingdom of heaven, of which Peter was to have the keys; he was to be called to introduce Jews and Gentiles into a new sphere of blessing on earth. In virtue of the revelation of the Son of the living God, there was to be, in this world, a ground on which there would be a *profession* of belonging to Him. Peter was to be, as we shall see in the Acts, the instrument for the introduction into this blessed profession. He would have, so to speak, the external and internal administration of the kingdom, the keys, and the power to bind and loose. Personal acquaintance with Christ opens Peter's eyes to every circle of blessing; he is placed in the centre of blessing, which is Christ, to contemplate the immense domain depending on it. Israel's connection with an earthly Messiah was over. (v. 20.) Later on this relationship will be renewed, but from this moment the Lord revealed to His dis-

ciples a total change in their hopes and position, which from being earthly were to become heavenly.

What glorious truths and precious privileges were contained in the revelation made to Peter! But here we find a new and unexpected revelation; these privileges are consequent on the death of Christ, which acquired them for us; and in order to have them, we must accept the cross. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must . . . suffer many things . . . and be killed, and be raised again the third day." (*v.* 21.) Peter could not accept the fact that Christ must needs undergo such reproach. Could He not accomplish His glorious ends without dying? The disciple took his Master aside, and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." There was natural affection for Christ in this speech, but it also showed that Peter had not understood or appreciated the revelation imparted to him, and which is only ours at this price. More than this, his words denoted that he would not have such a degradation either for a Christ who promised him such advantages, or for himself who with the twelve formed the retinue of the Messiah.

But if in some measure we perceive the human motives which actuated Peter in rebuking Jesus, he did not suspect that Satan was making use of him to endeavour to put a stumbling-block in Christ's pathway. Satan's most dangerous instruments are believers who, possessing the truth, and perhaps enjoying it, yet fear the reproach and enmity of the world.

To shun the cross is to deny Christianity, and it is the tendency of all our hearts naturally. Our inter-

course with the world proves it only too well. It tolerates us when we venture to speak of future events, or of those truths which do not touch the very sources of Christianity; but if we speak of the cross, and the blood of Christ, it despises us. We do not like that, for we want to escape reproach, and so we deserve the Lord's severe rebuke.

What a humiliation for Peter to fall from the height of such revelations, to be convicted of playing the part of the *enemy* towards Christ! He, who had confessed the Son of the living God, who was a future living stone of the Church, who was invested with the authority of the kingdom, had to hear it said to him by the Master whom he loved, "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

But what folly too it was to come and rebuke the Son of the living God, and suggest to Him what He had to do. Ah! Peter little knew himself or Him whom the Father had just revealed to him.

The whole of this account unveils what the flesh is in the believer, seen in its best light, and with its best intentions. It shrinks from reproach, it is an offence to Christ, and Satan can be identified with it. After having been brought into the presence of the living God, Peter learns that his natural thoughts are not on the things of God, but on those of *men*. This word says all; the things of men are those over which Satan has the upper hand. Man and Satan are in perfect unison.

"COME AFTER ME."

MATTHEW xvi. 24-28.

The disciples are here called to come after Christ. In order to come after Him there must be the two things

which we have had in the preceding chapter—personal acquaintance with Christ, and the knowledge of the cross. Peter had received the first, and he shunned the second. But the cross alone removes every hindrance to following Christ. It is our starting-point, our first step in the Christian pathway ; for the believer cannot take a single step unless he starts from the foot of the cross. This upsets all our natural thoughts, all the religious teaching of the day, which amounts to this : Take the first step towards Christ, give up your sins, consecrate yourself to God, and His grace will help you. God never framed such language, as the outset of Peter's history proves. Scripture teaches us that God has taken the first step towards man, and that this first step led the Saviour to the cross, by which alone man can begin to be pleasing to Him.

Such then is our starting-point for following Him. Let us see under what conditions we can walk in this path. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself." Most Christians translate the words thus, "We must give up certain sins and lusts." The Word tells us we must deny *ourselves*. This we can only do in the power of the new man, for the old man cannot put off itself. There must be a new man in order to be able to put off the old, and say, "I am crucified with Christ ; and I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The flesh has no more rights or place for the new man ; he reckons himself dead. The consequence is that only the Christian *can* give up all. What are fleshly habits and lusts to the new man ? For remark, it is no question of making an effort over oneself to get rid of one's chains. What delivers us is the knowledge of a judgment passed on us at the cross, and of the new

place of a man in Christ. The struggle between the two natures follows. To deny oneself is to do what Christ has done, only to us in a different way; for in Him there was no old man to judge. He walked in the absolute power of the new man; for He was, like the heifer, without spot, upon which never came yoke. (Numbers xix.) But Christ as man had a perfect will. He gave it up entirely. He said, "Not My will, but Thine be done." Christ had rights, and He gave them up. He had all power, and He was crucified in weakness. Having entered the scene surrendering Himself, He left it with the same absolute surrender, consummated in the gift of His own life.

"And take up his cross." This is the consequence of self-surrender. He who has completely given up self would find no attraction in what the world offers him, but rather a subject of grief. Christ met temptations, not with indifference, but in suffering. "He hath suffered, being tempted." Thousands of Christians think they are bearing their cross when they are tried, or when the hand of God presses on them in discipline. This is not the cross. Notice the words, "*Take up* his cross." It is not *receiving* afflictions from God's hand, but taking up of one's own will—*willingly*, I might say—the burden of suffering that the world offers. This burden is the more real and heavy, inasmuch as in following Christ we walk more in the power of the new man, who, having no link down here, finds nothing in the world but enmity against the Saviour, and against that which is born of God.

"And follow Me." Following is consequent on the two preceding conditions. To follow Him is to imitate

Him. To imitate Him is to form our acts and thoughts by Him.

These three things are necessary to coming after Him. Where is the power to realize them? Peter deluded himself as to this in Luke xxii. 33. He thought that this power lay in his good intentions and resolutions, in his love for the Saviour. How many Christians think the same. They would readily say, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death." But this power is not of man (we shall take up this subject later on); it is essentially connected with two things, the gift of the Holy Ghost—the power from on high for our walk, and the loss of all confidence in the flesh. Simon Peter learnt with Satan, by a fall, to mistrust himself; Paul with God by acquaintance with Christ in glory. When Peter is thoroughly broken, the Lord says to him definitely, "Follow Me." (John xxi. 19.) And the disciple, following Jesus, sets forth, through death, to reach Christ in glory.

Brethren, let us follow Him to the end. We shall have the present blessed reward of learning here below to know Him in glory, as we shall see in chapter xvii. of our gospel.

H. R.

IN bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, Paul found death to self, and the result was life to the Corinthians. Paul held the power of Christ's death on the natural man, so that when he ministered among the Corinthians there was no Paul at all, but only Christ. It was life to them, because death was working in Paul.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

CHAPTER IX.

THE last verse of the preceding chapter, as before stated, belongs, and is introductory, to this chapter. Four of the seven trumpets have already been sounded; and now John is permitted to see in vision the herald of the remaining three which are yet to sound.* He beheld an eagle—for this is the true reading—flying through the midst of heaven, proclaiming a threefold woe upon the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the coming voices of the trumpets.

The “inhabiters of the earth” is a moral expression, as in chapter iii. 10,† indicating a class; those whose hearts and hopes are set upon earth, those who, in the language of the apostle Paul, mind earthly things. The judgments following upon the preceding trumpets, if the interpretation given of “the third part of the earth” be correct, are confined to the west, whereas these, at least the fifth and sixth, fall upon the east; and this fact sustains the moral significance of the term, dwellers upon earth. It will, moreover, be seen at a glance, that the judgments of the “woe” trumpets are of a very different character from those already passed under review. This will be more clearly apprehended as we proceed.

* It is a characteristic of the sevens in this book, that they are divided into fours and threes, or threes and fours. Compare the division of the parables in Matthew xiii.

† The words are the same, though differently translated.

We read then, first of all, that "*the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.*" (v. 1.) The symbolism of a star has been explained in connection with chapter viii. 10; it means generally some subordinate authority or power, one that should be the means of light and order for the earth. It is evident in this case that he becomes, if he had not been directly so before, a Satanic agent for the infliction, by God's permission, of torment upon the class delivered into his hands. The key of the bottomless pit ("the pit of the abyss") is given (by whom is not said) to him. We learn from the gospel of Luke, that this is the place which demons shunned to enter (chapter viii. 31), and this at once gives the clue to its character. If the four previous judgments were providential, though inflicted judicially by God, this, while still under God's control, is diabolical in its origin and nature. Thus, on the bottomless pit being opened, "*there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.*" (vv. 2, 3.) What the smoke exactly represents it may be difficult to say, but its source and effect are manifest. It comes from the abyss, from hell, and it obscures the sun and the air, shuts man off from all that is needful for his moral and spiritual welfare. It is thus Satan's smoke to-day that darkens the word of God from the souls of men, who, breathing it instead of the pure influences of the Scriptures, become morally poisoned and tormented; and this enables us

to understand the effect of the smoke here in darkening the sun and the air.

Remark, moreover, that the locusts come out of the smoke upon the earth; they originate with, or are produced by, the smoke. The prophet Joel gives us an insight into the terrible nature of the judgment God can inflict with the actual locusts. To-day there is no scourge more feared in the east, and in some parts of Africa, and none before which man is more entirely impotent. Every green thing is often devoured, and so dense the masses in which they move when they fly, that sun and sky (as with the smoke in this chapter) are entirely obscured. This will explain the use of the figure here, and allows us, at the same time, more readily to conceive the character of the visitation indicated by these moral locusts that have come out of the abyss.

Their power is limited; for we read, "*It was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.*" (v. 4.) Two things are determined by this command; first, that, as before stated, they are moral, and not real, locusts, because it is precisely the herbage and trees of the earth that the natural locusts ravage; and, secondly, that the object of this awful visitation is apostate Jews. We learn from chapter vii. that the servants of God, who were to be sealed in their foreheads, are the elect of the twelve tribes, and accordingly those not sealed would be Jews outside of this elect number. And from the subsequent unfoldings of this book, it is very evident that the location of these unsealed Jews will be, for the most part, in Jerusalem

and Palestine. This fact, and it is of great significance, indicates both the sphere and the character of the judgment. It is, in other words, Jewish in its sphere, and is confined to Jews.*

The next two verses (*vv.* 5, 6) give the nature, duration, and effect of this judgment. The "locusts" were not permitted to kill, only to torment, and this for the space of five months.† The effect of the torment is that the subjects of it become weary of their lives, desire to die, but death flees from them. Death would be a relief from their agony, but, suffering by God's appointment, covet it as they may, they are not permitted to find it. This torment is caused by the "locusts," for "their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man." Of the nature of this, whether mental or otherwise, we are not told; but if, as we conclude, these "locusts" are diabolical agents, the seat of the torment would probably be in the soul rather than in the body.

* Through missing these points, those who have adopted what is termed the historical method of interpretation, contend that the plague here spoken of was realized in the invasion of Europe by the Saracens and Mahommedans; while others of the same school would combine Popery with the Saracenic visitation. That this moral plague had some correspondence with the language of our chapter few would deny; that it is its entire fulfilment, none who accept its application to apostate Jews in Palestine could for one moment admit. Besides, the locusts of our chapter had no power to kill, whereas slaughter, and that of immense numbers, was especially that which characterized the Mahommedan inroads and conquests.

† For those who favour the application of this prophecy to the Saracens, it is necessary to adopt the "year-day" theory in explaining the five months; *i. e.*, taking a day to represent a year, the five months are extended to the period of one hundred and fifty years, and this, it is affirmed, corresponds with the period of the Saracenic domination. Unfortunately for the upholders of this view, the year-day theory finds no support whatever in this book.

The shapes, appearance, armour, &c., of the locusts are now given. (*vv.* 7-10.) They were like warhorses prepared unto battle, kingly in their dignity, for "on their heads were as it were crowns like gold;" together with the faces of men, they had the hair of women, and the teeth of lions; they had breastplates as it were of iron, "and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle." The historical interpreters, to whom allusion has been made, love to see in all this description a faithful photograph of the Saracenic armies; and if the inroad of these hordes in the seventh and eighth centuries were a *partial* fulfilment, which became a shadow of the entire realization, of this prophetic vision, there might be some foundation for this contention. But those who have a truer insight into the nature of the Apocalypse will rather see in this detailed description the moral features which will characterize the work and activities of this legion of Satan in their cruel and judicial mission. The following words will explain this to the reader: "They had the semblance of military, imperial power, crowned, and with masculine energy, to those that met them; but they were, if seen behind and the secret disclosed, subject and weak: their faces were as the faces of men, their hair as the hair of women. But they were armed with a steeled conscience."* Rapidity in execution would seem to be indicated by the sound of their wings.

Then, after calling attention to the fact that their sting was in their tails, and repeating that their commission to hurt men was limited to five months, John reveals that their king and leader is the angel of

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. v., pp. 606-7.

the bottomless pit (the abyss), and that his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, in Greek Apollyon. In both languages the meaning is nearly the same—the former being *Destruction*, the latter DESTROYER. Satan's chief angel, *the* angel of the abyss, governs this destructive army; and the vengeance wielded falls on those who bear the name of the people of God (Jews), but who now, alas! have become apostates. It is under Satan's wiles and temptations that they have fallen from their high estate; and now he, whose servants they have become, is their vindictive enemy and tormentor. So is it always when by his diabolical ingenuity he succeeds in entrapping his prey, even though he be but a blind instrument to execute the just judgment of God.

The declaration is now made that the first woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter [after these things]. (v. 12.) Thereupon "*the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an*" (it should be *the*) "*hour, and a day, and a month, and a year,* for to slay the third part of men.*" (vv. 13–15.) The golden altar is that mentioned in chapter viii. 3, the altar of incense; and the voice that proceeds from its four horns is, without doubt, that of God Himself; and coming out, as it does, from the four horns will signify that all the strength of the altar (a horn is an emblem of power) is against the objects of the

* Rendering *the* hour instead of *an* hour, the indefinite article before day, month, and year should be omitted.

succeeding woe, and this probably, as in chapter viii., in answer to the prayers of saints. All that God is, is in favour of His people who approach Him through Christ; but all that God is, is against His adversaries, and is seen to be when He causes His judgments to fall upon the earth.

The mention of the river Euphrates shows that this "woe" is directed against the east, and, inasmuch as the "third part" reappears here, upon the Roman empire in the east. The first four trumpets concerned the western empire; the fifth, apostate Jews in Palestine; and now the sixth deals with the Roman empire, showing that there is order and method in the judgments. Four angels are the instrumentality of this woe. The reader will remember that angels are the administrators of God's providential government; and we thus gather that this "woe" will spring up apparently from human causes, that God's hand will not be made bare in it, though, as the scripture teaches, the source of all that leads to it is in heaven. Unbelief will discover nothing in it apart from man; but faith will connect all with God.

Observe, moreover, that the exact time of this "woe" has been divinely fixed. The angels are prepared for *the hour, day, month, and year*. What a striking proof of the fact that God ever holds the reins of governments in His own hand, and that nothing can be done by man without His permission! How quietly then the believer may rest at all times!

The angels are loosed, and an army appears. The angels are God's providential agents. The army is expressive of man's power—man acting, it may be, solely from the lust of conquest, and yet, at the same

time, the executor of God's judicial will. It is an immense host—200,000,000; and the weapons of their warfare are fire, smoke, and brimstone, which issue out of their horses' mouths—emblems of God's direct judgment—while their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads—pourtraying Satanic vengeance. The heads of the horses, moreover, were as the heads of lions. The whole imagery sets forth God's judgment, executed however through Satan's craft and power, portending an unparalleled woe. The effect is, that "the third part of men" are "killed by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone." (*v.* 18.) And it would seem, from the general statement in verse 19, that with their tails "they do hurt," that others, if not killed, fall under the direct influence of this terrible judgment.

What then does this vision of judgment shadow forth? The interpreters of the historical school answer at once, "The irruption of the Turks into the eastern Roman empire in the fifteenth century." It is quite true that this event happened, and that, coming from near the Euphrates as the Turks did, it was, as in the case of the Saracens, a shadow of the fulfilment of this prophecy. With the view taken of this book in these pages, with its divinely-given threefold division, the Turkish subjugation of the Roman eastern empire could be nothing more than an adumbration of this "woe;" for its real fulfilment can only take place after the rapture of the Church. Premising this, it is quite possible that hordes from the East might in the future, as in the past, be the instruments of this divine vengeance—vengeance poured out upon a godless and a God-denying atheistical empire. The saints of that day will then discover whence the chastisement

proceeds, and understand its real object and character as depicted in the written Word.

The chapter concludes with an account of the hardened condition of those who "were not killed by these plagues." They "*repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornications, nor of their thefts.*" (vv. 20, 21.) What a commentary upon the hardened heart of man under the control of Satan! God's judgments had been before their eyes. They had seen their fellows swept away from the earth by "these plagues;" but their conscience, seared as with a hot iron, was untouched. God had spoken, and warned; but they were utterly deaf to His solemn voice. Remark too the awful moral condition that will characterize the people of this day. God is refused, idols are accepted in His place; all ties between man and man are broken, and the flesh runs riot in every kind of abominable sin. And this is the issue of modern progress and civilization, of perfected methods of education, of enlightened laws for the improved government and reformation of society! For let it be remembered that this revived Roman empire, the sphere of this "woe," will be the expression of man's highest ideal, the issue in this world of all his strivings after the "perfectibility of the race." Behold then the result! E. D.

OUR only home is in the presence of God, and our only happiness is in His will.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

1 TIMOTHY ii. 1-7.

THE "alls" of this scripture are most interesting. The apostle exhorts that supplications, prayers, &c., be made for *all men*. The foundation of this precept lies in two great facts: first, that God is now presented to the world as a Saviour-God, who desires that *all men* should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth; and, secondly, that there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom *for all*, to be testified in due time. In accordance with this attitude of grace toward all men on God's part, and the universal scope of the death of Christ (giving Himself a ransom for all), Paul is commissioned (as a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher) to all. Not to the Jews only, but to the nations (the Gentiles); in fact, to all men. (Comp. Col. i. 23.) We thus see that Christ died for all, that God desires all to be saved, and that Paul was sent with the gospel to all; and hence it is that, in fellowship with the heart of God, and the object of the death of Christ, as well as with the apostolic mission, that believers are to pray for all men. But even while praying for all, the moment kings, and all that are in authority, are brought into view, the welfare of the saints in their worldly circumstances, as under human laws and government, is remembered. How true it is that God's affections and desires should govern those of His people!

II.

LUKE xxiii. 41.

THE "green tree" in this scripture is Christ Himself, and the "dry" is the Jewish nation. Together with others, the women of Jerusalem followed Jesus on His way to Calvary, and, in the natural tenderness of their hearts they "bewailed and lamented Him." Jesus turning, bade them weep rather for themselves and for their children, on account of the judgment that would soon fall upon the unhappy and guilty city and people (*vv.* 29, 30); adding, "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" That is, if such things, wicked malice, hypocrisy, unrighteous judgment, and a degrading death, were visited upon Him who was like a green tree (compare Psalm i. 3; Jeremiah xvii. 7, 8), what should be done to the people, who were as a dry tree, morally dead before God, without fruit or even leaves, and who were now committing their crowning sin in the rejection of their Messiah? For such a state, symbolized by a dry tree, there remained nothing but the axe and the fire. (Compare Matthew iii. 10.)

III.

HEBREWS iii. 6.

THIS verse is more accurately rendered as follows: "But Christ as a Son over His house," &c. To take it as it stands in the Authorized Version would make it mean Christ's, or the Son's, house; but it is God's house. This is clearly seen from the comparison drawn. The Apostle and High Priest of our confession (Jesus) was faithful to Him that appointed

Him, as also Moses was in all His house; that is, in the house of God in the wilderness. But though both alike were faithful, Christ is more glorious in His person than was Moses; for He built the house (see Matt. xvi. 18), and, moreover, having "built all things," He is God. Again, if Moses was faithful in all His house, it was "as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;" but Christ as a Son over His house. The glory of Christ thus outshines that of Moses, both as to His person and as to His position; and we also learn that as Son He is supreme over the house of God. (Compare John viii. 35, 36.) And we believers are the house, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. (See Ephesians ii. 22.) In the wilderness we are tested, and thus continuance or perseverance becomes the sign of reality.

IV.

MATTHEW xxvi. 26.

THE true reading in this passage is "gave thanks," and not "blessed," as in our version. But the variation is valuable as showing the meaning of "to bless" in similar scriptures. (See Matthew xiv. 19; Mark vi. 41; xiv. 22, etc.) It is to bless God, or to give thanks to Him. (See Mark viii. 6; Luke xxii. 17-19; John vi. 11, etc.) The insertion of the word "it" after "bless" has obscured this meaning, and given occasion for the sacerdotal practice of consecrating the bread and the cup before distribution. The passage, moreover, in 1 Cor. x. 16 must be interpreted in the same way; *i.e.* it is the cup of blessing for which we bless God.

E. D.

SIMON PETER.

BEHOLDING CHRIST IN GLORY.

MATTHEW xvii. 1-8 ; LUKE ix. 28-34 ; 2 PETER i. 16-19.

WE have reached a new event in the spiritual life of Peter. Having learnt that blessing could only be acquired by the death and resurrection of Christ, he and his two companions were privileged to behold from this earth the Lord Jesus coming in glory. They were favoured to see where the painful pathway closes which begins at the cross, and to enjoy the vision. It left a deep impression on Peter's spirit, and later on he learnt its full meaning. In chapter i. of his second epistle, after placing before the saints the conditions of entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, remembering the transfiguration, he explains to them in what the kingdom consists: "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 eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." (2 Peter i. 16-18.)

All the truths which referred to the kingdom were summed up in the Person of Christ. It was *His power and coming* ; *His majesty* was seen ; *honour and glory* were given to Him there by God the Father from the heart of the excellent glory. It was above all Christ

who filled the scene of the transfiguration. The disciples had to learn here below who this Christ was who had been speaking to them of His humiliation and cross. Peter needed to know Him, not only as Son of the living God, dispenser of all heavenly blessings to His own, but as a man declared the beloved Son of the Father in glory. He had to behold Him as the *centre of this glory*, a Man from whom not only every blessing flowed, as in chapter xvi., but to whom all honour and glory were given as the unique Object of earth and heaven. A supreme voice sounded in his ears which declared that all *the affections and thoughts* of God were centred on this Man. Outside Him there remained nothing. When the voice had said, "Hear Him," they saw no man save Jesus only; and if He had been taken from them, heaven itself would have lost for them its chief blessedness.

The second truth revealed to Peter on the mount was, that men, subject to the same infirmities as we are, were associated with the Son of man in His glory. It was a remarkable fact that Moses and Elias each failed in their responsibility, and were cut off without having pursued to its close the path of faith. The blessing belonging to it was taken from them; at any rate, it was for Elias in his prophetic office. (1 Kings xix. 16.) It was worthy of note that these two men were very great, for they represented the law and the prophets in the eyes of the disciples. However, Moses struck the rock twice, forgetting to sanctify the Lord in the midst of the people; and he had to die on Mount Nebo within sight of the promised land. Elijah lay down under a juniper-tree, requesting to die; and then pleaded against Israel before God, and had to deliver

up his office of prophet, anointing another in his room. What marvellous grace which sets them nevertheless in the same glory as Jesus—glory *due* to Christ, and *conferred* on His own in virtue of His work! Moses and Elias do not adore here; they *talk with Him*; a sign of perfect *intimacy*. The subject of their discourse was His death. The glory is the result of His death, and His death is the subject of their intercourse in glory.

In the third place, Peter had on the holy mount a complete vision of all that *constitutes* the kingdom—a glorious Christ, saints raised or changed, appearing with Him in glory; earthly saints associated in this blessed scene, all well-known prophetic truths, which I merely touch in passing, and of which the apostle could say, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” (2 Peter i. 19.)

THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

LUKE ix. 34-36.

WE have seen the disciples permitted to enjoy the glory of Christ before the moment of His manifestation. They did not then understand the bearing of the scene which later on served to support their apostolic authority. Not having been called to behold it from this point of view, we only know it on their testimony; but we also are in present possession of a scene of glory, for it is said, “*We all*, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

However, the holy mount is not only the scene of the future vision, or the present contemplation of the glory, but it gives the disciples a *near* portion with Christ. Peter, who a few days previously had incurred the Lord's displeasure, is brought by grace with his companions where man had never before entered. A cloud overshadowed the disciples, and they entered into it with Jesus. For a Jew it was a terrible thing. How could they do anything but fear to penetrate into the cloud which was the sign of Jehovah's presence? How not tremble at the remembrance that even the high priest, in order that he might not die when he went into the sanctuary of God, had to envelop himself with a cloud of incense? But the disciples might be reassured; the cloud was no longer for them the abode of Israel's Jehovah, but the *Father's* house. The presence of Christ with them in the cloud was the means of revealing to them the name of Him who dwelt therein. They became companions not only of the Son of man in His glory, like Moses and Elias, but of the Son in the Father's house. To dwell in the glory is indeed a future blessing which not even one of the saints fallen asleep has yet attained; to dwell in the Father's house is a present as well as a future portion. If I can say in speaking of the future, "I *will* dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalm xxiii. 6), I can just as well cry in speaking of the present, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord *all the days of my life*, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple." (Psalm xxvii. 4.) The prodigal son was brought into the Father's house when he was converted; clad in the best robe, and standing

in the dignity of a son, he was there given to share in all the Father's possessions, and in the joy which He had in communicating them to him. This house is the *secret abode of communion*. Many things attracted the gaze of the disciples at the transfiguration; the face of Christ shining as the sun; His raiment white as the light; Moses and Elias, two celebrated men, appearing in glory. There was none of this in the cloud. Like Paul, caught up into paradise, the disciples *saw* nothing, for Moses and Elias disappeared; but it was in order that the disciples might give undivided attention to a *word* in which all the mind of God is summed up.

Peter forgot the pre-eminence of Christ as long as he saw Moses and Elias. He said, "Let us make three tabernacles." He wanted to put the law and the prophets on a level with Christ by associating them with Him; and there are many Christians who unconsciously do the same. Poor Peter! How unworthy he showed himself of the vision! His language, his sleep, and his fear, betrayed the state of his soul, and the more the perfection of Jesus shone out, the more Peter's imperfections were multiplied. We find it so at every turn, until he has fully judged himself. The Spirit gives him power, the flesh deprives him of it; the Spirit enlightens his understanding, the flesh shows its ignorance, above all, concerning the cross; the Spirit directs his gaze to the glory of the kingdom, the flesh lowers this glory to the level of failing man. The same thing comes out in the scene of the tribute money, at the supper, in Gethsemane, and in the court of the high priest, until Peter learns what the flesh is, and receives power from on high.

The excellent glory, far from repelling the disciples, attracted them to Christ, and set them at His feet as disciples, saying to them, "Hear Him." Thus Peter, with the rest, was brought to enjoy the thoughts of the Father towards the Son of His love, and the Father's house was the scene of this revelation. The disciples, as we have said, heard one word, the brief expression of what the presence of the Son called forth from the Father's lips, but it is a word which lets us into the secret of His heart: "This is My beloved Son: hear Him."

Such is our present blessing. We have been allowed to share the secret of the Father. He has brought us now into intimacy with Him which cannot be exceeded even in the eternal state, although, of course, it will be more perfectly enjoyed. We shall there see all the display of Christ's glory, and we shall be seen in this glory; but now we are the depositaries of the Father's thoughts revealing the Son, the Father revealed by the Son. "When the voice was past, Jesus was found alone." As we listen to this voice we shall learn more and more what the Father is to Him and to us.

H. R.

THE PLAINS OF MOAB.

NUMBERS xxiii.

How blessed to meditate on what God is in Himself; He acts in the supremacy of grace according to His own holy nature. The evil which is in man does not affect that. We have seen the perverse prophet who would for reward help on the enmity of the world against the people of God, while at the same time that

very people had been rebellious against the Lord from the day of their departure from Egypt. (Deut. ix. 7.) Neither the way of Balaam nor the stiff-neckedness of the people can alter what *He is*. He will rebuke the madness of the prophet by his own ass; and He will chasten His people as often as they need it; but He is God.

Having shown Balaam the perversity of his way, it is now God's will that he should go with the princes of Moab, and speak the word only which God compelled him to utter. He meets Balak thus, "Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak." The high places of Baal, to which Balak conducts him on the morrow, witness the impotency of the power of evil. Balak and Balaam offer sacrifices, but to whom is not said. Perfect in number, but in character spiritual wickedness. This done, Balaam bids Balak stand by his burnt-offering, while he goes alone to the meeting of a superior power, with a "peradventure" that it might be the Lord. "And *God met Balaam*;" and in reply to his recounting the sacrifices he had offered, Jehovah put a word into his mouth. He returns to Balak, and took up his parable. Brought out of Aram from the mountains of the east to curse Jacob and defy Israel, he has to own his inability to curse those whom God hath not cursed, or to defy those whom Jehovah hath not defied.

But more, he is obliged to survey the people from the height of God's purpose. "From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him." He looks at them, not according to their actual state as in the valley below, but from *above*. From Pisgah's top (compare

verse 14) Moses was permitted to view the promised land; and from an exceeding high mountain John was shown the holy city—new Jerusalem. Ezekiel also, from the same vantage-ground, saw the city whose name was to be, "The Lord is there." To the same point, an exceeding high mountain, the devil took the blessed Lord, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—all was made to pass before Him in a moment of time. From such a point Balaam views the people in the visions of God, and from thence he has to declare God's thoughts as to them. "So the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." In the mind of God they are a separate people.

We have seen that Abraham, by the call of God, had been separated from the midst of the idolatrous nations to know Him, and to walk before Him as the Almighty God. To his seed according to the flesh the name of Jehovah was made known; and by His mighty arm they were redeemed to Himself out of Egypt, that they might be His people. The revelation of His name put them into relationship with Himself as so revealed. They could not belong to God and to the world also. Further, to be God's people necessitated that they should dwell alone. The fact of His dwelling among them, that He went with them, was the principle on which they were, and the cause of their being, separated from all people on the face of the earth. (Exodus xxxiii. 16.) It is ever so. There is the broad road of the world, and the narrow and separated path which leads to life. We cannot walk in the two at once. Conversion to God is to quit the highway of the world, and to enter the strait and narrow gate. Instance after instance may be

given in confirmation of this separated path, and passage after passage from God's word to show that it is God's mind for His people. "Beware that thou bring not my son thither again," was the chief injunction of Abraham to his servant. Isaac must not return to the country whence his father had been called out. Consequently we find him, at his father's death, dwelling by the well Lahai-roi (Genesis xxv. 11) —the well of Him that liveth and seeth me, the secret of the presence of God. This well had been made known to Hagar; but Ishmael, her son, and his descendants, dwelt from Havilah to Shur, the great highway of the world between Egypt and Assyria. In the New Testament this separation received its force from the death of Jesus. His cross is the boundary line between the Christian and the world. He gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world. (Gal. i. 4.) Its character is unaltered; therefore the apostle John thus writes, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." (1 John v. 19.) The mind of God then as to His people is that they dwell alone. They are His, and this He will give the enemy to know.

Let us further survey them in the mind of God. Balaam proceeds with his parable: "Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" One solitary man had been called out from the midst of the nations. "I called Abraham *alone*, and blessed him, and increased him." (Isaiah li. 2.) A childless man, alone, he was bidden of God to look toward heaven and tell the stars, if he were able to number them. So was his seed to be. In the same

plains of Moab, where Balaam's prophetic utterance, "Who can count the dust of Jacob?" was spoken of Israel, Moses said of them, "Ye were the fewest of all people." (Deut. vii. 7.) A separated people, dwelling alone, may apparently be for the time "a little flock;" yet when the purpose of God is fully accomplished, what countless multitudes will fill both the heavens and the earth. "Look now towards the heavens." Do they not declare the glory of God? Those redeemed from every nation by the blood of Christ are there—an innumerable throng of heavenly saints, each one in the likeness of Christ. On earth they spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses, the witnesses of Jehovah and of His redemption. They are the children of the separated Joseph—the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh. (Deut. xxxiii. 16, 17.) Besides, there is a countless multitude for the earth (Rev. vii. 9) of Gentiles, who find their place in God's holy temple. (Comp. Isaiah lvi. 7, 8.) But whether on earth or in heaven, Jesus will see in these countless multitudes of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. They are witnesses of redemption power and glory. Who then shall count them?

Well may Balaam conclude his parable, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." It is the "last end" which is important, whether for Israel or an individual. Death is the "last end" for man here. Death, vanquished in the power of resurrection, is now the beginning according to God. The way of the Lord is prepared by proclaiming that all flesh is grass. That flesh is grass is fully brought out in the parable and dark saying of Psalm xlix., and yet the inward thought of man is to continue

here. This their way is their folly. Each will admit it is folly, yet their posterity approve their sayings, and hence each, while he lives, will bless himself. Nevertheless death shall feed upon them. Balaam would curse Israel to bless himself. His way is his folly. Under the power of the word of Jehovah, which he was compelled to speak, he desires the end of the righteous, but in heart approves the present way of the world. The righteous—the saints of old—died according to faith. They rested on the promise and embraced it, though to them it was a parable—a dark saying. Such was the utterance of the psalmist: “God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave.” Life and incorruptibility are now brought to light by the gospel. Death, the last end of man, opens out into the light of resurrection and heavenly glory. It is no longer a parable. Israel too, as a nation, will eventually awake from the dust of the earth, when they have been brought to know that all flesh is grass. Of old, God led them through the wilderness “that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy *latter end.*” Their entrance into Canaan under Joshua was not the *fulfilment* of that word, it was but preliminary to their deliverance from a wilderness condition, in which they will be found in the last days, into the fulness of their blessing. They will pass through the time of Jacob’s trouble, and be saved out of it, having been brought up as from the grave. (Ezek. xxxvii. 12.) What an awakening it will be! Balaam, in wishing for himself the last end of the righteous, anticipates in his parable what that end will be. We have yet to see how such a people can be reckoned righteous.

This parable of Balaam is rightly interpreted by Balak as a blessing. The Lord had indeed chosen them to be a special people to Himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth—who then should bring accusation against them? Looked at as the people of God they were blessed—shielded by the power of Jehovah. Would it be possible to curse part of them? “Thou shalt see but the utmost part of them,” says Balak, “and shalt not see them all.” The “utmost part” is a place exposed to danger; it was there the fire of the Lord burnt at Taberah. (Chap. xi. 1.) Nearness is always a safe place; while to be at a distance leaves us open to attack. Could the power of the enemy prevail there?

Again sacrifice is offered, and again Balaam went to meet a mysterious power “yonder.” But Jehovah met Balaam. At first, when the separation of the people was declared, *God* met Balaam. Now it is manifestly Israel’s God—Jehovah—who put a word into his mouth. He returns to Balak; but he no longer merely confesses his inability to curse. There is a commanding power in his utterance as he replies to Balak’s question, “What hath the Lord spoken?” “Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man.” The word Balaam uses here—“El”—is the expression of absolute Deity. Man is thus vividly brought into contrast with God in His essential Being. Blessing—our blessing through grace—is thus connected with what *He is*. This title of God is used several times in this prophecy. (See chap. xxiii. 8, 19, 22, 23; xxiv. 4, 8, 16, 23.) It is put into Balaam’s lips, and bespeaks the absolute character of the blessings pronounced. “Hath He spoken, and

shall He not make it good?" Consequently there is a further title used (chap. xxiv. 4), "Almighty"—the Accomplisher of all that He has spoken. He is too in relationship with those He blesses—"Jehovah *his* Elohim is with him;" and when the rising of the Star out of Jacob is predicted, then the title "Most High" is brought in (xxiv. 16); for the Sceptre of universal dominion arises out of Israel, and Jehovah their God is then Most High over all the earth. It is His millennial title. How blessed to be in the secret of these titles! (Compare Psalm xc. 1, 2.) Soon will they be celebrated in heaven thus, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Almighty reigneth." But He who is thus celebrated we call in the Spirit of adoption, Abba, Father! T. H. R.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

CHAPTER x.-xi. 14.

SIX out of the seven trumpets have sounded; and now there is an interval before the announcement of the third woe which is heralded by the seventh and last trumpet. It follows that chapter x. to xi. 14 is parenthetical. There is a similar interval between the sixth and seventh seals, with, as often noticed, a slight difference. The events depicted between the sixth and seventh seals are preparatory to the latter, whereas those contained in the parenthesis between the last two trumpets are connected rather with, and supplementary to, the sixth trumpet. This may be seen from the fact that it is not until chapter xi. 14 that the proclamation is made: "The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly."

There are two subjects dealt with in the parenthetical scripture now under consideration ; first, the action of the "mighty angel" in chapter x., and the state of the temple and of Jerusalem, together with the testimony of the two witnesses, as given in chapter xi. 1-14.

John says as to the former : "*And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud : and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.*" (v. 1.) Such is the personal description of this mighty angel, a description which, in several of its details, points us to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is clothed with a cloud. A cloud is often connected with the divine presence, and hence with our Lord. This may be seen in the New Testament as well as constantly in the Old. On the mount of transfiguration a cloud overshadowed both Him and His disciples (Matt. xvii. ; Luke ix.) ; and when He ascended up into heaven a cloud received Him out of the sight of His own. (Acts i.) When also He returns to the earth, He will come in the clouds of heaven. (Matt. xxiv. 30 ; Rev. i. 7.) In chapter iv. the rainbow is round about the divine throne ; here it is upon the angel's head, and the rainbow is the symbol of God's everlasting covenant with the earth. (Genesis ix. 12, 13.) None, therefore, but a Divine Person could wear the rainbow on His head. The last two characteristics, "His face as it were the sun, and His feet as pillars of fire," are almost exactly the same as those given in chapter i. 15, 16. There cannot be a doubt, therefore, as to the identification of this mighty angel with Christ.

In His hand there was *a little book open*. It is not a sealed book as in chapter v., the contents of which could not be known until the seals were broken, but an open book, the contents of which were already known, referring, doubtless, to the fact that the action of Christ in taking possession of the earth and the sea (and all represented by the earth and the sea), as symbolized by His right foot on the sea, and His left foot on the earth, had already been made known through prophetic writings. (See, for example, Psalm lxxii. ; Isaiah xi. xxv. lx. ; Zechariah xiv., and numberless scriptures.)

Having set one foot on the sea, and the other upon the earth, He "*cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth : and when He had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.*" (v. 3.) The subject of this cry is concealed ; for when John was about to write what the seven thunders had uttered, he was commanded to seal up the things he had heard, and not to write them. (v. 3, 4.) But from the imagery employed it is not difficult to discern that the cry of Christ, and the voices of the seven thunders, were expressive of His wrath, indignation, and righteous judgment ; for, as we know from various scriptures, it is in anger, righteous anger, that He will come and deal with the man of the earth. (Compare Isaiah ii., xxvi. 20, 21, xlii. 13 ; Joel iii. 16, etc.)

The next three verses explain the significance of the action described in verse 2 : "*And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up His hand to heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are,*

and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer : but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets.” (vv. 5-7.)*

Whether taken symbolically or literally, the action of the mighty angel (the Lord Himself) in setting one foot on the sea, and the other upon the earth, whether, that is, the actual sea and earth are meant, or whether they are figures of “the flowing masses of the people,” and of the ordered governments of the earth, the significance is the same. It is Christ come down, after His long season of patience at the right hand of God, to take possession of His rightful inheritance. (See Matt. xxviii. 18 ; 1 Cor. xv. 24-28 ; Heb. ii., etc.) It is to be observed also, that He takes possession, though He has acquired the title through His redemption work, in virtue of the sovereign rights of the Creator. Hence it is that, lifting up His hand to heaven, He swears by the eternal God, the universal Creator. It is creation’s Lord who has bestowed the title, and now He comes to make it good, and accordingly declares that there shall be no longer delay, but that all the judgments, “the mystery of God,” which concerns His dealing with the world between the first resurrection and the appearing of Christ in glory, should now be completed, in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, as preparatory to His coming in the clouds of

* The word rendered time in this clause is χρόνος, which means “time,” but also “a certain definite time, a while, period, season ;” and hence, taken in its connection in this passage, should be translated as in the margin of the *Revised Version*, and as in the text of the *New Translation*, “delay.” It should therefore read thus, “That there should be no longer delay.”

heaven, when every eye shall see Him, to establish His sovereignty over the whole earth.

John is now commanded to take the little book that was open (or opened) in the hand of the angel that was standing upon the sea, and upon the earth. The contents of the opened book are to become the subject of John's testimony as to* peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings. But if God sends His servant to prophesy, He will first qualify him for his service; and thus John must first "eat" the book (compare Ezekiel iii. 1-3), he must appropriate and digest these divine communications before he can rightly communicate them to others. A lesson surely for God's servants in all ages. Notice, too, that while in the mouth the book should be sweet as honey, it should make John's belly bitter. So it ever is. How sweet is it to our taste when God communicates some new truth to us! We rejoice in it as those who have discovered hidden treasure; but all truth is death to the natural man, and accordingly when it is applied inwardly in the power of the Holy Ghost, we find it bitter in its working and effects. It is only after the truth has thus been made our own by inward application, that we can be taken up and used to testify of it to others. To attempt to "prophesy" before we have "eaten" and "digested" will only be to discover our nakedness in the presence of the enemy. This is the history of many who have made shipwreck as to the faith.

CHAPTER xi. 1-14.

In the next place there was given to John "*a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and*

* The word translated "before" in verse 11 should be "as to." It is *ἐπι* followed by the dative.

measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." (vv. 1, 2.) Everything betokens here that we are now transferred to Jerusalem; for we read of the temple of God, the altar, the court, and the holy city. The mention too of the Gentiles, the nations in contrast with the Jews, points to the same conclusion, as well as the fact of their domination over the holy city. (Compare Luke xxi. 24.) The object of it is to show the state of that temple (where God's heart and eyes were perpetually to be) and of that city which He had chosen, on the eve of the final judgment, and of the Lord's return to it in glory. (See Matthew xxxiii. 37-39.)

But John is commanded to measure with the reed given to him the temple, the altar, and them that worship therein. The temple, inasmuch as the events of this chapter concern the period after the Church is gone and before the Lord's appearing, must be that which will be built by the Jews, while in unbelief, after their return to their own land. We find, nevertheless, that there is a true remnant in the midst of the corrupt nation; and measuring the temple, the altar, and the worshippers will signify that they are owned of, and, it may be, appropriated, or claimed by God. The word temple is that used of the house itself, including the holy place and the holiest; not the word sometimes employed, which indicates the whole of the sacred buildings, together with the court, etc. As a matter of fact, the worshippers had no access into the holy place; but we are taught here that God regarded them as belonging to

it, even though they could not enter, and that thus the remnant are really invested before Him with a priestly character. How precious in the eyes of God are this believing residue, who, resisting all the seductions and temptations by which they are surrounded; and incurring thereby the hostility and persecution of the Gentile power, that will be at this time supreme in Jerusalem, cleave in all fidelity to the God of their fathers, and, though in the deepest distress, wait only upon God for deliverance.

The court without the temple was to be left out—rejected; that is, the mass of the nation, whatever their profession (for they will have, in the last days, fallen again into idolatry), are refused. Another will have come in his own name, whom they will have received. (John v. 43.) They will have accepted Antichrist in the place of their own Messiah, who had been crucified by their fathers on Calvary. On this account the court—a figure of the unbelieving nation, for it will be the place of their “worship”—is given unto the Gentiles; and they will also tread the holy city under foot forty and two months. Later on we shall see the signification of this period; but the reader will do well to remember it, as it forms the key of the concluding prophetic events of Scripture.

The following paragraph, from verse 3 to 13, concerns the remarkable apparition of the two witnesses. We may enquire, first of all, what is exactly indicated by the two witnesses. It must be remembered that we move in this book in the midst of symbols; and it might be, on this account, two companies of witnesses, if they are not two individuals. The point, however, to be seized lies, doubtless, in the number, two being ever

the number of adequate testimony.* There will always be then, during this time of Satan's greatest display of power before the eyes of God's professing people (the Jews), an adequate testimony for God and His claims.

The next thing to be noted is the duration of their prophetic testimony. It will be a thousand two hundred and sixty days. In the previous verse we read of a period of forty-two months, during which the holy city will be trodden under foot of the Gentiles. The two periods coincide, both being exactly three years and a half.† It will suffice here to say, as the subject must be more fully gone into when chapter xiii. is reached, that this three years and a half are the last half of Daniel's seventieth week (Daniel ix. 25-27), the period of Antichrist's frightful sway in Jerusalem, with the support and shelter of all the power of the last head of the Roman empire; the period, at the close of which Christ will come in glory, and consume that wicked one with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming. (2 Thess. ii. 8.) Throughout this period of unequalled sorrow the two witnesses will courageously raise their voices, clothed in sackcloth, expressive of the sorrowful nature of the work owing to the character of the times, in which they are found. Apart from all around, mourning over the fearful apostasy of the beloved nation, and rejected

* This is strikingly seen in the Gospel of Matthew, where we have two demoniacs (chap. viii.), two blind men (chap. ix.), &c., because in this gospel it is a question of sufficient, or adequate, testimony to Israel.

† As before pointed out, and as may be easily proved from Scripture, there is no foundation whatever for the year-day theory; *i.e.*, for taking the 1260 days to mean so many years.

by all, sackcloth is but a fitting emblem of their testimony.

We are now told what they are: "*These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God* of the earth.*" (v. 4.) The connection between this description and that given in Zechariah iv. is apparent, and will afford the clue to the interpretation. As another has said, "They bear witness to the order and blessing of the Jewish state when Messiah shall reign; but they are not in that state. Not a candlestick with two olive trees (as in Zechariah), but two candlesticks and two olive trees. But they are before the God of the earth."† They are anointed ones, for they are olive trees, and they thus testify in the power of the Holy Spirit. They are the two candlesticks, &c.; their testimony therefore is the light from God amid the darkness of that day. And standing before the Lord of the earth shows that the subject of their testimony is the claims of the coming Messiah as the rightful Lord of the earth. (Compare Joshua iii. 11.) Moreover, they are two *anointed* ones; and this also points, in addition to the power of their testimony, to the fact that it is as King and Priest—a Priest upon His throne, Melchisedec—that Christ will come and take possession.‡

What follows is easily apprehended. If any one would hurt them, fire will proceed out of their mouth and devour him. (Compare 2 Kings i.) As Elijah of old, they will have power to shut heaven that it should

* The more generally accepted reading is "Lord."

† *Collected Writings of J. N. D.*, vol. ii., Expository, p. 554.

‡ If any desire to enter more fully into this subject they may read *Zechariah the Prophet*, chapter iv. W. H. BROOM AND ROUSE.

not rain. Like Moses, they will have power to turn the waters into blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will. (*vv.* 5, 6.) After their testimony is finished, not before, as in the case of John the Baptist, the beast that ascendeth out of the abyss—the last head of the Roman empire—will be permitted to kill them. (*v.* 7.) Then their dead bodies will lie in the street of Jerusalem (now, alas! spiritually Sodom and Egypt) “*where also our Lord was crucified,*” and where they will be a spectacle to peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations for three days and a half. They also that dwell upon the earth (the reader will remember the moral force of this expression) will, in their folly and imaginary triumph, make every demonstration of joy over the death of those who had tormented them. (*vv.* 7–10.)

God now steps into the scene, and raises His dead witnesses. “*And they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.*” (*vv.* 11, 12.) What a revolution! And how short-lived the triumph of these foolish worldlings! Nor is this all; for judgment descends “*the same hour*” upon that poor guilty city, and “*the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand.*” (*v.* 13.) The remnant were affrighted, and give glory, not to the Lord of the earth, but to the God of heaven. They still refused the testimony of the witnesses. The proclamation is now made, “*The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.*” (*v.* 14.)

E. D.

ISAIAH VIII.

THE Lord pronounces judgment on Ephraim by the hand of the Assyrian. Because "they refused the waters of Shiloah which flowed softly," He therefore allowed the mighty torrent of the world's opposition to flow and overflow all its banks. And this scourge was not to confine itself to Ephraim, for Judah too would fall under the avenging rod because of its departure from the Lord. It would be vain to associate and gird themselves, for God was with those who inflicted the chastisement. There is, however, a remnant, personified by the prophet, who were taken by Jehovah's hand and instructed by Himself, who are exhorted to "sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself," and to those He would become a sanctuary in that day of adversity.

This is analogous to our Lord's first coming. There were those, such as Simeon, Anna, Mary, Zacharias, and Elizabeth, who sanctified Jehovah, and to whom He became a sanctuary; while to the unbelieving mass of the nation He was "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence" (1 Peter ii. 8); and for the time the testimony was to be bound up and sealed among His disciples. Still the faithful remnant preserve their confidence in Jehovah; and though He has for the time hidden His face, they still look to Him.

It is with the remnant in this anomalous state of things that the Saviour identifies Himself, and whose utterances in this position are so largely given us in the Book of Psalms; and it is His perfect trust in Jehovah, though apparently forsaken, and His entering so

perfectly into the sorrowful position in which the true remnant are found, which generates confidence in their hearts, and begets a seed of confiding ones ("the children whom the Lord hath given Me"), who are a sign from Jehovah of Israel's ultimate blessing. When tempted to have recourse in their affliction to evil and false aids, such as spiritualism, clairvoyancy, and the like, they are to appeal to "the law and to the testimony," as Christ did in the wilderness. The written Word is to be everything to them, exposing all that was evil and preserving all that was good; whilst for those who heeded not that Word, nothing would be left but a night of darkness, through which they should pass distressed and famished. So terrible would this experience be—no relief from around, no light from above—that they would curse both their king and their God, looking first upward (not the upturned look of faith, but of hopeless despair), and downward again to the earth; and trouble, darkness, and gloom closes the scene upon those who had deliberately refused the light of God when He came in grace and humiliation, and who when here gave timely warning that "if they would not walk in the light, darkness would come on them." How terribly will those words find accomplishment in that day of which the prophet speaks!

H. A. C.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

CANTICLES viii. 6, 7.

WITHOUT doubt this scripture is the language of the bride, the true remnant who become the bride, personified in this book as Jerusalem. This last chapter takes up

and sets forth all the principles of the whole song; and hence it is that we are led back in verse 1 (though at the close of the previous chapter the bride rests in the happy consciousness of being possessed by the Bridegroom, and of being the object of His affection) to the time when all her desire was to find Him, and to be permitted to express her ardent love. In verse 5, after the exclamation, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" the Bridegroom reminds His bride that for all the blessing she has entered upon, yea, for her very existence as the object of His affection, and as the companion of His joys, she is indebted, wholly and entirely, to His grace. It is in response to this that she cries, "Set me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm," &c. The heart and the arm (the shoulder probably) are, as ever in Scripture, emblems of love and strength, and may refer to the names of the twelve tribes engraved on the breastplate, and on the onyx stones on the shoulders, of the high priest. The meaning will thus be, Set me as a seal, symbol of security (for a divine seal can never be broken), upon Thy heart and shoulders, that I may ever be borne upon Thy divine love, and upheld by Thy divine power. The reason for this desire is given in the fact that "love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave [Sheol]: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame."* These are figures to show forth the intensity of love. It is as strong as death. When death closes its fingers upon its victim

* Some translate, "Its ardours are the ardours of fire, a flame of Jah." (See the French Bible, translated by J. N. D.) In the Revised Version it is given, "The flashes thereof are flashes of fire, a very flame of the Lord."

there is no power upon earth that can unlock its grasp. And who can separate us from the love of Christ? When the grave receives its prey it closes over it, and shuts out every other object; and divine jealousy claims its object entirely for itself. (Compare James iv. 4, 5.) Moreover, it is so ardent that it can only be compared to the consuming and purifying effects of fire, "a flame of Jah," taking us back to the essence and magnitude of its character, for love and light are the words used to express the divine nature. This love is also inextinguishable, whether by the "many waters" or by "the floods." The bride will have learned this in her own experience, when she finds herself associated with the Bridegroom in the glories of the kingdom after the unequalled sorrows of that great tribulation, of which the Lord spoke when He said there had not been such "since the beginning of the world," "no, nor ever shall be." Lastly, we are taught that this love cannot be purchased. No, it ever has been, and always will be, a sovereign and divine gift; and on this very account it is both immutable and eternal. (See Jeremiah xxxi. 3.)

II.

JOHN xiv. 16, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7.

THE word rendered Comforter is difficult to translate. It is embodied in some hymns in its Greek form—Paraclete, and is given in 1 John ii. 1 as Advocate. Speaking generally, it means one who undertakes and manages the affairs of another. This is very interesting, especially if we remember that Christ is the Paraclete with the Father, and the Holy Ghost the Paraclete for the saints on earth. As such the latter has taken the place of Christ; and He is thus termed "another

Comforter," one who (in contrast with Christ in this respect) abides with His people for ever. Two distinguishing features may be noted. The office of Christ as the Paraclete with the Father is limited to the believer's sins; and it is thus based upon what He is in Himself as "Jesus Christ the righteous," and on the fact that "He is the propitiation for our sins." The object of its exercise is the restoration of the communion which had been interrupted by sin, by producing self-judgment and confession. In the case of the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete or Comforter there would seem to be no such limitation. It would rather appear that He undertakes all that concerns our interests as saints in our various divine relationships. It must not be forgotten, however, that the activity of the Holy Ghost as the Comforter in regard to our failures is dependent upon the action of Christ as the Paraclete above; and that, indeed, all His work here in testimony to and in the maintenance of the glory of Christ, in guiding the saints into all truth; in a word, in all His ministry, is carried on in connection with the ministry of Christ on high. In grace, both the Paraclete in heaven, and the Paraclete on earth, have become the willing servants of those whom the Father has given to Christ in order to secure their present safety, instruction, and enjoyment, as well as their perfected and eternal blessedness.

III.

1 TIMOTHY iii. 6, 7.

ACCORDING to this scripture, two important things were to be observed in regard to those who desired the office of a bishop; that is, of an overseer of a local assembly; and two dangers are pointed out as the

consequence of neglect of these qualifications. A bishop, among other things, must not be "a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." The word rendered condemnation is rather the ground, charge, or matter of accusation, on which condemnation is passed. (See Luke xxiii. 40; xxiv. 20, &c.) This passage therefore gives a remarkable insight into the cause of the devil's fall. He was puffed up with pride, either tempted on the side of the position he occupied, or on that of his own beauty and excellency (see Ezekiel xxviii. 11-17); and, on this account, judgment was passed upon him. The same danger, as the Spirit of God warns us, might beset a "novice" if he obtained office in the assembly. He might be lifted up with pride, and fall as the devil had fallen. The second thing is that the "bishop" "must have a good report of them which are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." Here the meaning is quite different. If one who occupied the place of rule in the assembly did not possess a good report of those that were without, he would soon incur reproach, not so much for the name of Christ as for his bad repute; and Satan would not be slow to come in and use this as a snare wherewith to entangle his feet. How often have both these dangers been realized in the Church of God! The lesson is, that we should never, under any pretext whatever, depart from these plain and positive instructions of God's word.

E. D.

ALL our blessings are enjoyed on heavenly ground, and flow to us, in the grace of God, through association with Christ.

THE PLAINS OF MOAB.

NUMBERS xxiii., xxiv.

“THE gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” This Balaam now declares. God will not alter the thing that is gone out of His lips, and what He has said that will He do. Balak may conduct Balaam from place to place in order to survey the people, but there is only one point of view from which the prophet is permitted to speak—what they are in the eyes of God. We must remember that God is answering the enemy. That which is taking place on the high places of Moab is a controversy between Himself and the futile power of Satan. He has His own way of speaking *to* His people, and He has His way of speaking *of* them in the face of the enemy. It is a sweet and precious privilege that they are permitted to know how He speaks of them. “I have received,” says Balaam, “commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.” Such is our God. Our blessing depends upon what He is. Had we to consider the state of the people, or the state of any poor sinner whom God takes up to justify, words such as Isaiah spoke to the sinful nation are applicable: “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it.” (Isaiah i. 5, 6.) What they were, what they would be, was fully known to Him who was their Justifier. “*I knew* that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called

a transgressor from the womb." (Isaiah xlvi. 8.) It is of such a people that Balaam is compelled to say: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." How He can be just, and yet a Justifier, is now brought to light by the shedding of the blood of Jesus. God's righteousness is therein declared for the remission of sins that are past. This way of justifying was present to the mind of God when He answered for His people to Balak and Balaam. What an overwhelming sense of the *mercy and goodness in God* fills the soul of the once guilty sinner, as he hears his justification pronounced in the face of the enemy! Sin in me, mercy in God, that all my salvation should be of Him! "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" Again we say, "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Hence, later on in their history, He thus pleads with Israel: "*I, even I, am He* that blotteth out thy transgressions *for Mine own sake*, and will not remember thy sins." What can be done by all the power of Satan against a people who have such a God? "Jehovah his God is with him." He is their Sun and Shield, Giver of grace and glory. And Jesus was this Jehovah. He who blessed and justified on the heights of Moab became a Man—"Emmanuel . . . God with us." He bore their sorrows and carried their griefs, even as He did ours; the chastisement of their peace was upon Him, and with His stripes they are healed. Oh, how irreversible, sovereign, and eternal is the justification pronounced by such a God, and that God was with them!

"The shout of a King is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; He hath as it were the strength of

an unicorn." He is indeed a King against whom there is no rising up. Moab has yet to learn to their cost what the shout of a King will bring to them. "Moab shall die with tumult, with *shouting*, and with the sound of a trumpet." (Amos ii. 2.) "Where the word of a king is, there is power; and who may say unto him, What doest thou?" Royal and victorious power is *for* Israel, and *against* their enemies. So the Spirit of Christ writes for them by the pen of Asaph, "God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by Thy strength." (Psalm lxxiv. 12, 13.) In the power and might of His own right arm He brought them out of Egypt, the pledge of their passing over by the same strength into the mountain of His inheritance. Jehovah, their God, shall reign for ever and ever. "If God be for us, who shall be against us?" "Surely," then, "there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?"

Here let us mark well that it is neither what Israel say, nor what Israel had wrought. It is said of Israel, "What hath *God* wrought?" Having taken the blessing of such a people into His own hands, all is wrought out by Himself. There had been forty years of provocation in the wilderness on their part. How oft did they grieve Him in the desert! And now at the close *it is said*—mark, it was not then wrought, but it was said *at that time*—"What hath God wrought?" In Egypt, the question between God in judgment and His people had been settled under the shelter of the blood-stained lintel. Their deliverance had been effected at the Red Sea. There God wrought, while Israel stood

still and saw His salvation. On the other side of the sea they sang of what He had done. Then came the wilderness journey, with its trial and testing, and at its end they are confessedly proved to be rebellious and stiffnecked. What shall be said of them now? Nothing shall be said of what they had wrought, but of them it shall be said by the mouth of the man hired to curse them, but commanded of God to bless, "What hath God wrought?"

Thus does this prophecy typically bring out the *absolute justification of the believer by God*. His working has accomplished it in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. What God has wrought *for us* must not in any way be mixed with his working *in us*, necessary as that is. The experimental history of our souls has nothing to do with the work wrought for us, unless it be to show how much we needed it. This foundation deepens and widens in the experience of the soul, as we prove who and what we are for whom God has wrought in such marvellous grace, and the heart is filled with joy in God Himself.

Now follows the declaration, that in royal might the people will rise up for the putting down of all hostile power. That is reserved for Israel, as the people in whom the royalty of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, is to be known in the execution of judgment on the power of evil. It is celebrated in Psalm cxlix. 6-9, and the result will be universal praise to Israel's God. Ours is a different vocation. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. The groaning creation waits to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God. That will be when they are manifested. The

peculiar portion of the Church will be the administration to the earth of heavenly blessings. The coming forth of the Rider on the white horse with the armies of heaven, or His making Judah his goodly horse in the battle on earth, is for the clearing away of all opposition, that the heavenly city, in which is gathered up the full administration of heavenly glory and blessing, may descend out of heaven from God. Then will be the rest of creation. The Rod out of the stem of Jesse will smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips will He slay the wicked, so that the knowledge of the Lord may fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

“Neither bless them at all, nor curse them at all” is now the language of Balak, and yet he would fain conduct Balaam to another spot, as if a fresh survey of the people from thence could alter the purpose of God. From three points of view does Balaam look at them, if so be that from either it were possible to curse them. They give occasion for God to declare, first, their separation; secondly, their justification; thirdly, their order and beauty in His eyes, as well as His planting them by His own springs of blessing. No longer does Balaam leave Balak by his burnt-offering while he went to meet with enchantments, for he saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, but he set his face towards the wilderness. *There* he saw Israel abiding according to their tribes. As he thus beheld them, could he see in themselves any comeliness to draw forth the pleasure of the Lord? We know there was none. Comely indeed they were in His eyes, but it was with the comeliness which He had put upon them. The order of their tribes in which

they were abiding was the beautiful order of His own arrangement. Mark well the holy city, new Jerusalem, and note if there is one detail of its glory and beauty which is not descriptive of the Christ in whose light she shines. "The city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." Thus is figured the righteousness and true holiness in which, after God, the new man is created, and the truth in Jesus is, our having put off the old man and put on the new. There is no perfection, but in conformity to Christ in glory. It is in glory the Church knows Him. Therefore if any man be in Christ it is new creation, old things have passed away, the new have come.

As the comely order of the earthly people, abiding in their tents in the wilderness, breaks upon the wicked prophet's view, he becomes the instrument of the Spirit of God, and now he not only hears the words of God, but the vision of the Almighty fills his eyes. A vision it is, and he falls down under it; but it is no passing dream or mere ecstatic utterance, for his eyes are open, and he declares what the people whom he was called to curse were in the vision of the Almighty. They still dwelt in tents and tabernacles, but how goodly in His eyes. He saw them spread forth as the valleys, as gardens by the river-side. They dwelt by the fresh springs of life which He caused to flow for them in the desert. As trees of fragrance and beauty, planted by the Lord Himself, beside the waters whence all their nourishment was derived. The Spirit of Jehovah was with Israel. By it He led them with His glorious arm, *dividing the water* before them to make Himself an everlasting name. By it He led them as a horse in *the wilderness*, and the Spirit of

the Lord caused him *to rest*. (Isaiah lxiii. 11, 14.) Thus Balaam saw them, the cloud of Jehovah's presence resting upon the many thousands of Israel. The Church is now the dwelling-place of the Spirit of God. Its beauty and order flow from His energy in it. Apart from that all is disorder and confusion. In the vision of the Almighty, He looks at it according to His own mind in the fulness of the blessing in which He has set it. This makes it the channel of His grace to all around. Hence we further read, "He shall pour the water out of His buckets, and His seed shall be in many waters." As we dwell by the rivers of waters, we know what it is to be satisfied with favour and full of the blessing of the Lord. Thirsty we were, but we come to Jesus and drink. The first effect is that the inflow of living water rises up to its own source, and there the communion and enjoyment it produces are known, then it flows out. God's covenant with Israel is that His Spirit which is upon them, and the words He has put in their mouth, shall not depart out of their mouth from henceforth and for ever. (Isa. lix. 21.) With them will be the outflow of testimony, and in the "many waters" of the Gentile world will fruit yet be found from the seed of Israel. Well then may the exaltation of the kingdom established in such a people be spoken of. But first it will be a kingdom that will break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms (Dan. ii. 44), in order that the King who is higher than Agag (the tall one) may reign in righteousness. Then, with the Spirit poured out from on high, the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

Hence it is again repeated that in resistless power

God brought them forth out of Egypt. In the previous chapter (*v.* 22), it showed that no other power could prevail against the strength which led them out and wrought for them. Here it is said in connection with the power that would subdue every enemy, and then rest as a couching lion in the conscious might of universal sway.

The blessing of all nations, as we have seen, is bound up with the blessing of Israel because they are Jehovah's people. Balaam therefore concludes his parable with the words of God to Abraham. "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." The fulfilment of this is given in Matt. xxv. There the Son of man, sitting upon the throne of His glory, separates the nations one from another according to their treatment of one of the least of His brethren, the children of Israel. They are His brethren according to the flesh, but He will own those among them as such in that day, who have done the will of His Father in heaven. To them He will stretch out His hand. (Matt. xii. 49, 50.) Such are the company, in Rev. vii., whom the angel from the sun-rising seals on their foreheads with the seal of the living God. He calls them *the servants of our God*. Whatever they may be thought of by others, they are owned by Christ. The blessed among the nations who go into life eternal are those who have succoured and cared for these Jewish brethren of Christ, while the cursed who go away into everlasting fire are those who refused Him by neglecting them. How fully are the interests of His people bound up with Himself! T. H. R.

(*To be continued, if the Lord will.*)

SIMON PETER.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SON.

MATTHEW xvii. 24-27.

PETER had seen on the mount men associated with Christ in the kingdom glory; then, entering into the cloud, he had been permitted to hear the expression of the Father's delight in His beloved Son. Here in the scene of the tribute money the Lord associates Peter with Himself, not in future glory, nor in present heavenly enjoyment, but down here on the earth as a son of God, walking in the consciousness of his dignity as a son.

When the Lord showed to the disciples His companions in glory there came a moment when they disappeared, making room for Jesus only, so that the glory of Christ, more excellent than that of Moses, might be recognized as pre-eminent; but when the Lord associates Peter with Himself as son He sets him and keeps him in the same relationship as Himself to the Father. Three sentences give expression to this blessed relationship: "Then are the *children* free;" "Lest *we* should offend them;" and, "Give unto them *for Me and thee.*"

How little we realize and appreciate this. To be a son of God, in the same relationship to Him as Jesus is as Man, would be incredible and impossible were it not affirmed to us by God. At the same time let us hasten to add that Christ is Son of God under two

aspects. As the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father He has a relationship which is not and never will be ours; but as *Man* He is called Son of God (Ps. ii.; Luke i. 35), and sets us in this relationship, with this difference only between Him and us, that it belongs to Him in virtue of His personal dignity and worth (when Jesus comes into the world God greets Him with these words, "*Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee*"), while we are sons solely in virtue of His work. But it is marvellous to think that our relationship is absolutely the same as His. "*My Father, and your Father; My God, and your God.*" "Ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father.*" (Compare Mark xiv. 36.) "Heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ."

But, alas! here as elsewhere poor Peter's wretched heart is laid bare. When he said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee," his thoughts were human; that is to say, Satanic. As if Jesus could have contemplated self-preservation. On the mount Peter did not know what he said. (Luke ix. 33.) It was ignorance, seeking to make a present out of a future scene. One might compare Peter's words, "It is good for us to be here," with those of Christians in our day who look for the reign of Christ on earth by the gospel during the present economy. Besides, in his ignorance he brought in another authority alongside of Christ; and, as I have already stated, it was like multitudes of Christians who mix law and grace—grace being what saves us, and the law our rule of life. Peter's earthly thoughts were an offence to Christ, and He rebuked him severely; but on the mount God in grace meets his ignorance (what condescension!) by

setting Christ before him as the only One to whom he should listen.

In the scene of the tribute money we find Peter anxious to claim for his Master the character of a zealous Jew. This is somewhat similar to the attempt often made nowadays of accommodating Christ to the religion of a world which has rejected Him, in order that He may be accepted, acknowledged, and honoured. Peter did not wish Jesus to be treated as a stranger in the official system, nor that He should seem to separate Himself from it. The Lord showed him that He walked before God, and not before a system. If Christ was thenceforth a stranger to the Jewish system, it was that the latter was *estranged from God*; whereas Jesus was a Son before God. More than this, the Lord of the temple ought not to pay tribute for the temple. He the Creator, who had all power over creation, could not be compared to the creature. He to whom even a fish from the depths of the sea brought tribute ought not to pay tribute.

When man is delivered over to himself how miserable are his best thoughts concerning Christ. Thus the Lord in His communications is never able to recognize Peter's intelligence, except in the case where he received a direct revelation from the Father which flesh and blood could not have taught him. But, as we have said, the folly of the disciple is met by grace. The Sovereign accepts this position of humiliation which was not His by right so as not to offend them. He does not combat a system abandoned by God, though not yet judged. He who was already in reality rejected would not offend those who had rejected Him. Though a Son, He yet accepts the place of dependence given Him.

Moreover, He will not, by refusing to pay tribute, humiliate and belie His poor disciple before the world. What condescension !

He does more than this. In His answer He reveals to Peter his association with Christ as Son of the sovereign God. On the mount the disciples had received the revelation of the Father concerning the Son ; here Jesus reveals to Peter a marvellous family relationship. They are both sons of God ; but Peter is a son only in virtue of the fact that Christ humbled Himself to save us. Such blessings are present ones. On the mount three poor fishermen, sunk in fear, sleep, and ignorance, were called to enter into the Father's house to hear His expression of delight in His Son ; here at Capernaum we see a poor, weak disciple whose human zeal to honour Christ has the effect of lowering Him, called as he was to walk with Him always in humility, yet also in the consciousness of the dignity of a son of God.

H. R.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

CHAPTER xi. 15-18.

WE find the significance of the seventh trumpet in chapter x., where we read, "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets." Accordingly here, immediately on the sounding of the seventh angel, "*there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ ;**

* This has been more accurately rendered, "The kingdom of the world of our Lord and His Christ is come." The Revised Version gives it, "The kingdom of the world is become *the kingdom* of our Lord, and of His Christ.

and *He shall reign for ever and ever.*" (v. 15.) That is to say, the end is now in a general way reached, and the announcement is made in heaven, that Christ has at length interposed, and assumed His sovereignty over the earth. There are many details, and fuller instruction yet to be given, but the time of which prophets had prophesied, and saints of past ages had longed for and anticipated, has now come. The very appellations used—our Lord and His Christ—mark the period indicated. It is that of the second Psalm, wherein, in face of the rage of the heathen, and the vain imagination of the people, when "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed [*His Christ*], saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us," the Lord, "laughing" at their vain impotence, will "speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure." He will, at the same time, announce, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion."

Such is the event proclaimed in heaven on the sounding of the seventh angel; for Zion will be the seat of the government of the Lord's Christ; from thence Jehovah will send out the rod of His strength, and, ruling in the midst of His enemies, He will reign for ever and ever, until He hath put all foes under His feet. (See Psalm cx.; Luke ii. 30-33, 67-75, etc.)

But why, the question may be asked, should the setting up of the kingdom of Christ in this world be termed a "woe"? The class for whom it will be a "woe" is specified in chapter viii. 13; it is for "the inhabitants of the earth," not exactly, as has been more than once explained, for the *inhabitants* of the earth,

but for those whose desires and affections are bounded by this world, those who make their home in it, who are therefore morally dwellers upon earth, and who, as such, are enemies of God and His Christ. Truly speaking, every unconverted soul belongs to this class now, and so will it be when the Lord returns to earth and takes His kingdom—all the unconverted will form the inhabitants of the earth. And for them the reign of Christ will bring unmitigated woe, for a sceptre of righteousness will be the sceptre of His kingdom; and thus it is that His arrows will be sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, and the peoples will fall under Him. Can anything be sadder than the thought, that the event which will inaugurate an era of peace and blessing for this poor world will constitute nothing but woe for the dwellers upon earth?

This, however, will explain to us the contrariety between heaven and earth that follows. The moment the declaration is made that Christ has established His world-sovereignty, "*the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats [thrones], fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come;**" because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry," etc. (vv. 16-18.) What a contrast! That which causes joy in heaven produces anger upon earth. The nations are angry; for they have usurped the power belonging to God, thrown off His yoke, and now will be made to know that they are amenable to His authority, who will smite through kings in the day of His wrath, who will judge among the heathen, fill the places with the dead

* This clause "art to come" should be omitted.

bodies, and wound the heads over many countries. The elders, on the other hand, have the mind of God; they have had His patience in the presence of Satan's power, and of the evils which have corrupted the earth; they had known what it was to have fellowship with a rejected Christ, and now they rejoice with full hearts that God has stepped in, asserted His rights, and vested the sovereignty of the earth in the hands of His Christ. The Lamb that was in the midst of the throne is now the exalted One on the earth; and all kings must fall down before Him, and all nations must serve Him; and the hearts of the elders, charged to overflowing with heaven's joy, express their gladness in thanksgivings and worship before God.

A few points in connection with the elders may be noticed. We are again reminded that they sat on their thrones before God. It is not so much that they were sitting there at this moment, although they were doing so, as that their place in the presence of God is thus indicated. It is characteristic; the elders occupied thrones before God. What a view is in this way afforded of the exaltation of the glorified saints! Grouped around the Eternal Presence, and seated themselves on thrones—for they are kings as well as priests—they are spectators, adoring spectators, of God's ways in the government of the earth. It will also be observed that they worship God as revealed in the Old Testament; viz., as Lord God Almighty (Jehovah Elohim Shaddai), and for the reason that it is now the question of God's kingdom on earth—"because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned." The words "and art to come," as already said, are to be omitted, and this is significant. No doubt the

eternity of God is expressed in the threefold phrase—"which art, and wast, and art to come"—present, past, and future. But when used in reference, as here, to the earth, the kingdom, the future is, so to speak, merged in the present, for He has come and taken to Himself His great power. (Compare chapter i. 8.)

The effect of the assumption of the sovereignty of the world by the Christ of God is then given by the elders: "*And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, to be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.*" (v. 18.) It is a general, and only a general, statement of the consequences of the establishment of the kingdom in power, and thus reaches down even to its close, inasmuch as it is not until then that the dead will be judged. (See chap. xx.) There are three things specified; first, *the anger of the nations*, and this may include the gathering together of the kings of the earth, with their armies, under the leadership of the beast (chapter xix. 19) to make war against Christ as He comes from heaven with His army, and the nations from the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, gathered together by Satan at the close of the thousand years (chapter xx. 7-9); secondly, *the wrath of God*, as seen in judging the dead, and in destroying them which destroyed the earth; and lastly, *blessing* in giving reward to His servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear His name, both small and great. This is not the heavenly blessing of the Church of the saints of this dispensation. In this scene they are already on high, and they, with all

indeed who share in the first resurrection, will come forth with Christ, when He takes His kingdom; but the reward here spoken of is for the kingdom—for the saints on earth in the kingdom. That there are special rewards also for other saints in the kingdom is quite true, only the specification here of prophets, saints, and those that fear Thy name would seem rather to mark out earthly and not heavenly saints.

The third woe has now been inflicted. The first was characterized by Satan's power, and its subjects were apostate Jews; the second was human in its instrumentality, and this was visited upon the Roman empire; the last is emphatically God's woe, and it falls upon the nations in general, inasmuch as it is connected with the setting up of Messiah's kingdom.

It may aid the reader to point out that in this last woe, the end of the forty-two months, or the 1260 days (chapter xi. 2, 3), *i.e.*, the prophetic half week of this book, concluding the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy (chapter ix. 25-27) has been reached; and that thus, as to time, it coincides with chapter xix. 11-16. The succeeding chapters must not therefore be read as following consecutively in the history; for, as pointed out, we have now arrived at the terminus, the kingdom of Christ established. Details are afterward given, fuller developments, specific instruction as to many events, the inflictions of still severer judgments, and, above all, the direct connection of heaven with what transpires on earth, together with the divine interest, expressed and manifested towards those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, those who, amid general apostasy, are found faithful, not loving their lives unto the death. E. D.

ON THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

THERE is no doubt that those are so far scripturally right who, while pointing out the sin of sectarianism, press the importance of subjection to the divine authority of Scripture, and of being gathered to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; but some, perhaps, have little considered what is involved in being so gathered, and this is why they are silent as to the truth of the unity of God's assembly. Since the assembly was formed by the coming and baptism of the Holy Spirit, we have really no other ground given to us for corporate action. It is by "one Spirit" dwelling in each and all that we have *power* for practical ways according to this unity; and the written Word enjoins us to use all diligence to *keep* this unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. Though Scripture speaks of our *individual* blessings, relationships, and obligations to Jesus our Lord, and of *each local assembly* being accountable to Him, as almost all the epistles show, yet they certainly do not recognize any *corporate* arrangement formed by anything less than the precious truths of "one body" and "one Spirit."

Hence, in Rev. ii. and iii., while each local assembly is regarded in direct obligation to Christ, yet all are held together in the unity of God's assembly—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the *churches*." This unity was so practically acted on, that if a person was received into one assembly, he was virtually received into all the assemblies on the

earth, and one "put away" from one meeting was excluded from all other meetings. This also is why letters of commendation were used in the case of any going from one place to another; for the action of "one Spirit" in one place, whether it were as to receiving or putting away, was everywhere recognized.

The more we search Scripture the more we shall be struck with what being gathered to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ means, whether for prayer, worship, or discipline. (Matt. xviii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. iv. 23, v. 4.) It is surely to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ who is glorified that the Spirit gathers.

1. As having accomplished redemption for us, and being now crowned with glory and honour.

2. As the ascended One given to be Head over all to the assembly which is His body.

3. As having when ascended sent down the Holy Spirit to baptize us into one body.

4. As quickly coming to receive us unto Himself.

The question is, How far have we known what it is to be thus gathered and to *enjoy* our Lord's presence "in the midst"? for we have only to ponder the scriptures which teach us these things to see how impossible it is to be really gathered to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ without embracing the unity of God's assembly on earth, and in faith and conscience standing for it as according to His own revealed mind and will. Not a few, however, are to be found who, while admitting the truth of separation in some respects, omit the divinely given truth for the corporate ways and unity of the Church on earth till our Lord come. No failure or state of ruin can abrogate these scriptures; for if we are now told to go forth without the camp it

is "unto Him;" if to purge ourselves from vessels to dishonour, it is to be with those who are characterized as calling on the Lord out of a pure heart. Whatever the state of Christians may be, these foundation principles abide, and it becomes a simple question of faithfulness to our Lord to act upon them. Is it not well then to ask ourselves how far the unity of the Church of God moulds our thoughts and ways? And if it be true that we cannot be according to His mind in a corporate sense without its frequently exercising us, how important that we should be in the current of His thoughts, feelings, affections, and ways, as to every member of His body. (2 Tim. ii. 19-22; Eph. iv. 3, etc.)

It is perhaps because many have before them the thought of *an* assembly, instead of "*the* assembly which is His body," that the seriousness of corporate failure seems to be so unfelt, if not overlooked, and the truth of being gathered to our Lord's name so little known, so little affecting us. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular," is a word never needed to be more pressed upon us than at this moment.

There was one special defect in the Colossian saints. Were they not true believers? Yes; for the apostle commends them for their "love in the Spirit." Were they not walking orderly? Certainly; for we read of their so walking, and of their being steadfast in the faith of Christ. Where then was that serious defect which caused the apostle such great conflict or agony? They were not, in conscience and practice, in the unity of the Church of God—one body—and therefore not in the practical administration of it, which no doubt is the special truth for this time from Pentecost onward. We

read they were exposed to the snares of Rationalism or philosophy, Ritualism, worshipping of angels, &c. And why? Because they were "not holding the Head, from which *all* the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." Because of this, Paul's agony or conflict for them was intense, and Epaphras prayed that they might "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." (Col. ii. 1-19; iv. 12.)

It is clear then that we cannot be right with the members of the body unless we are holding the Head. And observe, this is not merely holding the doctrine of the Head, however orthodox; but it is having heart-felt communion with Him who is the Head, in His thoughts, feelings, and affections, touching *all* the members of His body. The idea, therefore, of separation merely from evil, important as it is, falls short of meeting the Lord's mind; for He would have us also be in communion with Him the Head, touching the whole assembly of God. Every saint would then be an object of our hearts' interests, and prayers. It is this positive and divine side of the truth we are in danger of letting slip. We may be sure that where this is not held and cultivated the best local meeting will not rise morally beyond a sect, with a little more truth than is held by some others. If the Head and members have not their true place in our hearts and ways—"one body"—we cannot be keeping the "Spirit's unity" as we are enjoined. Those who in faithfulness return to that which was from the beginning of Christianity, and not merely to the Reformation, blessed as the action of the Spirit then was, will have the sweet consciousness of being on the divine ground of God's assembly, and will own their

obligation to use diligence to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace."

When we think then of God's assembly on earth, it seems impossible that we can have a right view of it if our souls are not taken up with Him who is the Head of it. It is not only the path into which the Spirit leads, but it is connected with untold blessing to our souls. Nothing else, we are persuaded, can effectually deliver us from sectarianism; and nothing else can give full scope to our hearts touching the whole Church of God.

There is another point. Christ's heart is set upon *all* His saints. He *nourisheth* and *cherisheth* all the members of His body. Gifts too from Christ in ascension are not merely for the benefit of this or that meeting, but for "the building up of *the body*." Hence we read that "God hath set some in the Church," or assembly, including all saints on earth, "first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers," &c. (Eph. v. 29, 30; iv. 12; 1 Cor. xii. 28.) No doubt there are local offices, as, for instance, "elders;" but gifts are for the benefit of the whole Church of God; and this is why we never read in Scripture of *a* pastor of *a* church, or *a* member of a church. We belong to the whole Church of God by union with Christ; for, as we have seen, "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." In point of fact, the life and walk of a Christian is largely formed and fashioned by the precious truth of the "one body." (Rom. xii. 4, 5; 1 Cor. xii. 12-27; Eph. iv. 11, 12; Col. ii. 19.)

It is important to remember that the one bread or loaf on the Lord's table is calculated to bring constantly to our remembrance the unity of the Church of God.

“For we being many are one bread [loaf], one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread” or loaf. (1 Cor. x. 17.) The unity of the Church of God is in this way remarkably *expressed*. It is well known that the loaf also is the memorial of Christ’s body which was given for us. However the Church may be practically divided, it must be always “one body” before God, because it is so by the work and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. All sectarianism of every shade not only denies the unity of the Church of God—one body—but also denies the exquisite workmanship of the union by the Holy Spirit given unto us, thus making us “members of His body” and “members one of another.”

Moreover, looking back upon the illustrative history of God’s earthly people, we find that the unity of the nation, if we may so speak of it, was set forth by twelve loaves (expressive of the twelve tribes) being *always* on the table of shewbread before Jehovah. This was of God’s ordering. When, however, through man’s failure, sin and corruption had so come in that Elijah, a faithful man, felt himself alone in Israel, and the time came for him to build an altar to Jehovah, we find he took twelve stones. And why? Because he knew that in God’s mind the tribes, however then divided and torn asunder, were always twelve. Further on, when Ezra returned from the captivity with a handful of only two of the tribes, we are told that he “offered for *all Israel*, twelve he goats, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel.” (1 Kings xviii. 19; Ezra vi. 17.) Later still, when corruption and evil had so set in that the glory of Jehovah departed from Israel, the prophet Ezekiel is instructed

to map out the land for the possession of the *twelve tribes* in the day of Messiah. Long after this, when the nation had been given up to judicial blindness till the Deliverer shall come, the apostle Paul on one occasion said, "Unto which promise our *twelve tribes*, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come." (Acts xxvi. 7.) And only a little before this James wrote his epistle to the *twelve tribes scattered abroad*. Both Paul and James knew that in God's mind the people were *twelve tribes*.

Is it then too much to say that we cannot be fully according to God's mind as to position, walk, or service, unless we are in conscience in the unity of the Church of God through holding the Head? Can any failure of man undo this divinely-formed unity? Granted the professing Church has ruinously fallen away from the blessings in which God set it, and that there is no hope from Scripture of its ever being re-constructed on earth, are we not clearly taught that separation from evil, the principles of holiness, and keeping the unity of the Spirit are to be faithfully maintained?

H. H. S.

THE completeness of God's love, its perfectness, was shown in a double way: He could not give more, He would not give less. It is infiniteness in the fact and perfectness of the will—I mean of the will in love.

It is a blessed thing to see that what saves us—the death and resurrection of Christ—takes our affections also clean out of this world, and places them wholly, as to the very nature of them, in life and object elsewhere.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

PSALM lxxxiv. 9-11.

"SHIELD" in these verses would seem to be used, in one aspect, in a twofold sense. The true Israel have, as the results of all their exercises in passing through the valley of Baca, at length in Zion appeared before God. Their first feeling, wrought in their hearts by the Spirit of God, is that of dependence: "O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob." Then it is, "Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of Thine Anointed." Behold, not ourselves, but the Christ, who is our shield; so that we regard "the face of Thine Anointed," not God Himself, as the shield. It is the believer presenting, and so hidden in, Christ before God; and this is the only true way of access, from Abel onward, whether for sinner or for saint. In verse 11, on the other hand, it is what the Lord God is—He is both a sun and shield; only it must be remembered that the Christ, God's Anointed, is the Jehovah of the Jews. (See Isaiah vi. 5 with John xii. 41; Isaiah xxv. 8, 9.) It is only another proof that Christ is everything (Colossians iii. 11, N. T.) and that, look where we will, it is His glory that irradiates every page, whether in the Old or New Testaments.

II.

LUKE iv. 5-7.

AS to the question whether Satan had really the power which he here claims, it is, like every other, answered

by the word of God itself. The point in the temptation, we apprehend, was to induce the Lord, if that had been possible, to take the sovereignty of the kingdoms of the world from Satan's hand, instead of from God's, and apart from the cross. This wile was instantly defeated by the invincible sword of the Spirit, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Passing onward to a later day, we shall find one who did receive his sovereignty from Satan. In Rev. xii. 3 we have the vision of a great red dragon, who is declared in verse 9 to be "that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan," who has seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns (diadems) upon his head. In the next chapter (*v.* 1) we see a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns (diadems); and we read, in the following verse, that "the dragon gave him [the beast] his power, and his seat, and great authority." Without entering into details, as we hope to do in the exposition of the Apocalypse, we may say, that this beast represents the head of the revived Roman empire, and that he has all the forms of governmental power (for the number seven indicates completeness), and that ten kingdoms, the ten kingdoms of prophecy, as shown by the ten horns with their respective diadems, will form his dominion and own his sway. We learn then that Satan had at this period the sovereignty of the kingdoms of the world in his possession, and that he bestowed it upon one who worshipped him—as is evident from the second part of chapter xiii. But Christ, as we have seen, refused the gift from Satan's hands. He, the blessed, perfect, dependent One, would take nothing, whether the "cup"

or the glory, but from the hands of His Father. And passing now still further on, we shall discover that it was only for a brief season that Satan was allowed to tempt man with his golden bait, and only for that brief season, in order to show out all the depths of man's evil heart before judgment fell both upon man and upon himself. God never surrenders His rights, or allows His purposes to be frustrated; and thus in chapter xix. we behold heaven opened, and a white horse issuing forth; "and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, *and on His head were many crowns*" (*diadems*). (vv. 11, 12.) At length the diadems are on the head of the rightful Sovereign, the One who has on His vesture, and on His thigh the name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Man is for ever discrowned, and Christ having waited in patience His Father's time, for the accomplishment of His glorious purposes, has at length all things put under His feet. On His head are MANY diadems; for the fulness of all dominion is His, and His by right. He who had been the humbled One is now the exalted One on earth, as well as in heaven.

III.

COLOSSIANS i. 24.

IN the consideration of this remarkable scripture, it should be noted that the word "afflictions" ("afflictions of Christ") is never found elsewhere in connection with our blessed Lord. But it is constantly used of the saints, and indicates the trials, persecutions, tribulations, etc., that come upon them from without in consequence of their confession of Christ, and of fidelity to Him in

the midst of an evil world. The point is important, as conclusively showing that these afflictions of Christ are altogether apart from His sufferings on the cross, when making atonement. They are rather the sufferings He endured in His whole pathway of doing the will of God, but viewed here as encountered through His love to the Church. "He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it," and this entailed upon Him these afflictions which came upon Him through the instrumentality of man in the hands of Satan. The apostle Paul through grace was animated by the same love, however inferior the degree; and he could thus write, "I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." (2 Tim. ii. 10.) He laboured and suffered for the same object as his blessed Master. This gives at once the key to our scripture. He here says, "I rejoice in my sufferings for you," that is, for you Gentiles—sufferings which came upon him peculiarly in connection with his ministry of the truth of the one body, exciting as it did the deadly enmity of the Jews. Inasmuch, therefore, as the word of God was not "completed" until the truth of the Church was promulgated, Paul as its minister suffered in an especial manner for Christ's "body's sake, which is the Church," and could thus say, since he participated in them, that he filled up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ. They were Christ's own afflictions, and Paul filled up, so to speak, their measure. In principle, if a servant now suffers in the same way, from the same motive, and for the same object, he would be sharing in, if not filling up, that which is behind of these afflictions of Christ.

E. D.

THE PLAINS OF MOAB.

NUMBERS xxiv.—xxv.

THE blessings pronounced by an unchangeable God through Balaam's mouth, which we have hitherto considered, sound the death-knell of the world in its opposition to God and His people. Balak smote his hands together—the purposed curse had been turned into a threefold blessing, and he who would fain have secured the wages of unrighteousness and the honour of this world, unhappy Balaam, receives the withering taunt of Balak as he bids him flee to his place: "The Lord hath kept thee back from honour."

But Balaam is still on the heights of Moab, and, covetous as he was, he was there controlled by the power of the prophetic Spirit which had come upon him. Were it a house full of silver and gold he can neither speak good nor bad of his own mind. "What the Lord saith, that will I speak," and thus he continues: "And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days." Again he takes up his parable, adding to his former utterance that he knew the knowledge of the Most High. It is Jehovah's title of universal supremacy. (Psalm lxxxiii. 18.) He takes it as possessor of heaven and earth. (Gen. xiv. 19.) Abraham learned the secret place of the Most High when Melchizedek blessed him. In that secret he dwelt, and refused the world; hence it was further revealed to him that the shadow of the Almighty was his abode. (Gen. xvii. 1.) It is

in this way that the saints learn this title; for He—who is Himself the Most High, and yet in grace was born into this world, and called the Son of the Highest—is the Teacher of the saints as to this hiding-place of faith. This is His utterance, “I will say of Jehovah, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.” (Psalm xci. 2.) Hence in verse 9, He is thus addressed by the spirit of prophecy in Israel: “Because Thou hast made Jehovah, which is my [Israel’s] refuge, even the Most High, Thy habitation; there shall no evil befall Thee,” &c.

But the Gentile world will learn it differently. In Nebuchadnezzar we see the first proud head of Gentile power. The supremacy taken from Israel was given of God to him. Apart from the acknowledgment of Him to whom power belongs, the most exalted of men descends to the level of a beast. Driven from among men, with his dwelling among the beasts, according to the decree of the Watcher and Holy One, Nebuchadnezzar learned *by judgment* that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and having learnt it, he blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever. Secondly, there are nations who, in the last days when God is about to make good His purposes as to Israel, and to re-establish them in His land, will come against them. Hence they are looked at as *God’s* enemies. (Psalm lxxxiii. 2.) They hate Him. Their first thought is to cut off Israel from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. Then they desire to take to themselves the houses of God in possession. Moab is one of these nations. It is this rising up against God which brings the call for judgment, not merely that Israel may be delivered, but

that men may know that Jehovah, Israel's God, is Most High over all the earth. It is in this title that the blessing of God to the whole earth is secured; yet to acknowledge it the beast's heart must be changed to the heart of a man, and judgment must remove what opposes, in order that God may take the place of blessing. It is of this Balaam now speaks. If Israel eats up the nations His enemies, it is not mere revenge; it is in order that the millennial kingdom of the Most High may be established in the hands of Christ and His people. Hence Balaam at once speaks of the coming of the Star of Jacob, and of a Sceptre rising out of Israel that shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth (or tumult). The rule and government of Him who was born King of the Jews (compare Matt. ii. 2) is here foreshadowed. Balaam in prophetic vision sees, in the far distance of the latter days, the dominion that will be exercised by Christ in the midst of Israel. But, unlike Daniel, whose visions were also for the time of the end, and yet when the end came would stand in his lot, he has neither part nor lot in the matter. Balaam's sad words, "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh," not only point to the distant future, but proclaim that, Judas-like, the beams from the coming Star shone not for his covetous heart.

The enemies which he takes up in succession seem to give us a moral picture of the forms of Gentile power over which in the latter day the triumph of Israel is assured. We have seen in verse 17 that Moab is identified with the tumultuous rising of the nations that will seek to overflow Israel in the last days. (Psalm lxxxiii. 6.) Edom, who hated them with

perpetual hatred, and in the day of their calamity took vengeance, and sought to possess the two countries of Israel and Judah (Ezekiel xxxv. 5, 10), becomes the possession of Israel. The strength and rule are with them, and the remnant out of the city—the centralization of this world—is destroyed by Him who wields the dominion in their midst.

In Amalek is represented the Gentile world in its foremost place of power and hostility, and in the Kenite the vain security in which the man of the earth confides. Neither the pride of power, nor the strong dwelling-place, can prevent the one perishing for ever, and the other being wasted in captivity; for Balaam's parable does not here speak of Israel accomplishing these things, but, "Alas! who shall live when *God* doeth this?" Then in a few words the three families of Noah are finally brought upon the scene. Kittim was a descendant of Japheth, Asshur of Ham, and Eber of Shem. All will be engaged in the final conflicts of the last days. God will use one to afflict another, but utter destruction awaits the final rising up of Gentile power.

We now enter on the last stage of Israel's history connected with Balaam. Hitherto we have considered his attempt to curse, and the way in which God turned it all into blessing. We have been in company with the Lord in His unchangeable purpose, as Balaam was forced to express it on the heights of Moab. Of what Israel actually were in the plains below, and of their conduct, no question has been raised. We now descend to them. "And Israel abode in Shittim." (Chap. xxv. 1.) Their history is thus resumed from the end of chapter xxi. There we see them victorious over Sihon

and Og, and free to pitch on this side Jordan in the plains of Moab by Jericho. Let us consider their position. They had really left the wilderness. The thirty-eight years of wandering there was over, and the journey proper had been resumed. It was not now turning back into Egypt; but when they crossed the brook Zered, the wilderness testing was over, and they were really bound for Canaan. Figuratively the judgment of sinful flesh in the brazen serpent, and the power of life in the springing well, enabled them to be companions of the heavenly calling. They want simply to pass through the enemy's country in peace; for they are going to Canaan. They want nothing of theirs, only to be permitted to pass on. So for us, if our hearts are true to the heavenly calling, we want not anything of the world save to pass on in peace; for we are going to heaven. But to journey on as a heavenly people the enemy will not suffer, and he uses the proud, overbearing spirit of the world to resist. But we *must* pass on, and hence the world draws down upon itself the conflict and contention. The saint has a title by redemption to use this present scene, not to dwell there while Christ is absent. He uses it as belonging to Christ, for we shall yet possess it with Him. Satan, as the prince of this world, is a usurper, holding that which belongs to Christ and the saints. Heaven indeed is our inheritance, but the world to come is also to be subject to Him who is Heir of all things, and we shall reign with Him. The territory given to Abraham included all the country taken from Sihon and Og even to Euphrates (Genesis xv. 18), as well as that within Jordan. The hostility of the world, as possessing that which rightfully belongs

to Christ and the saints, but through which they now only want to pass, leads to its downfall. The blood of the martyrs, in days of old, was the seed of the Church. The attempt to exterminate the Christians, and to prevent a heavenly people having a lodging-place on earth, only brought out the right and title of Christ as having all power in heaven and earth to give His saints the victory over it, and to maintain them in their onward journey.

We see such a moment, after the outbreak of persecution about Stephen, in Acts ix. 31: "Then had the churches rest . . . and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were *multiplied*." So doing, all is well; but unless we pass on, the very victory is danger. Israel possessed the land both of Sihon and of Og, and though it is not mentioned in Numbers until chapter xxxii., yet we may gather from Deuteronomy iii. 12 that the giving of this territory to the two and a half tribes, at their request, was very closely connected with the acquisition of it by conquest. The mention of Beth-peor (*v.* 29) and Baal-peor (chap. iv. 3) occurs after the request to possess it. There was the desire to settle down where they should have been passers through. Consequently the words, "And Israel abode in Shittim," are the prelude to the dreadful history of this chapter. It is from the New Testament we learn that it was Balaam who taught Balak to cast a snare before the children of Israel. He leaves the high places where he had seen them in the vision of the Almighty dwelling in beauty and order, and now, away from the power which had overruled him, he instructs Balak in this diabolical method of bringing

the chastening hand of God upon His people. We do well to lay to heart, "that the friendship of the world is enmity with God." The enmity of the world only brings in the power of God on our behalf. What a change when His jealousy is roused, by Satan having caught us by that which is in the world, and brought us into a position of antagonism against God!

T. H. R.

(To be continued if the Lord will.)

NEARNESS TO CHRIST THE SECRET OF POWER.

"And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils."—MARK iii. 14, 15.

WE often look at the apostles as vessels of power, taken up by the Lord, and qualified by Him for the accomplishment of His gracious and mighty work on earth. And we are right; for they were ordained by Him to preach, to heal, to cast out devils, and thus to illustrate the infinite power of the blessed Redeemer. That He should have possessed such power, that He should have entered the domain of Satan and spoiled his house, is no wonder when we remember who He was. But it is marvellous to think of the apostles—men—wielding a similar power! They received it from Him in dependence upon Him. They carried His authority, and lived on His account.

But, whilst all this is true, we are prone to overlook the first great privilege, and that from which all the others flow; viz., that "*they should be with Him.*" They were ordained to this as fully as to the others.

The principle thus asserted is, that communion precedes service; and this company of the Lord is that which alone fits for testimony.

Now this is exceedingly happy. The blessed Master, in order to make His service a pleasure, calls us first into His presence, and creates us His friends. This is Christianity and the atmosphere of love. "Henceforth," He says, "I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends." The idea of slavery is thus precluded, and the service, though intensely real, is perfect freedom. It is the service of love, and a pure, holy, happy service therefore. Hence the first consideration on the Lord's part was, that "*they should be with Him.*" How can you send a servant to do your bidding if he be not within call? It is necessary that he should be at your constant command. You must have him near yourself. Again, How can you familiarize your messenger with your mind and ways if he should habitually live apart from you? Proximity creates acquaintance, and companionship produces similarity; and this is indispensable when accurate witness is to be borne. The ambassador must be in the secret of his government, and the servant of Christ in the sweet enjoyment of His presence.

Moreover, as to power or authority, where else can such a one find this? If the Lord authorize for service He also grants the needed power, but only on this ground, that it is held as in Him alone, and by us as in full dependence on Him. The excellency of the power is of God, and not of us. Mark this, it is "*not of us.*" We are in no sense depositaries of power. Nay, but we may be its channel; yet only then as

being in company with the Lord. "That they should be with Him . . . and to have power" (authority). Being with Him (in spirit now) and having power go together. He has most power who abides most in his Lord's blest company. The nature of the power is not the question. Mighty signs and wonders may not be seen, but he is always a man of spiritual power who walks with the Lord; for with such communion is the first thing, and service results from that. Such service is, like Mary's ointment, precious to Him, and it fills all the house as well.

J. W. S.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

CHAPTER xii.

THIS chapter really commences with the last verse of that preceding. The temple of God was opened in heaven, and in it the ark of His covenant is seen. This indicates at once that Israel is coming into view, and that God is about to renew His dealings with His people on the basis of His everlasting covenant. But signs of judgment—lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail are connected with this scene; for it is in judgment that God will proceed to establish His covenant and restore His people to His favour and blessing—judgment upon His enemies, and also upon His people. (See Psalms lxxxiii., xciv., xcvii.; Isaiah lxvi.; Zechariah xii.-xiv., &c.) There are thus here judgments proceeding from above, and convulsions below, which will precede the making of the new covenant with the house of Israel of which Jeremiah speaks. (Chap. xxxi. 31.) Unmingled blessing will follow.

Coming to the chapter itself, we find in it "a brief but all-important summary of the whole course of events, viewed, not in their instruments on earth or the judgment of these, but the divine view of all the principles at work, the state of things as revealed of God." This important and comprehensive sentence, if rightly understood, will unfold to the reader the means of solving all the symbols of the chapter. It may further assist, if it is pointed out that the sphere of these "wonders" and visions is "in heaven." (See *vv.* 1, 3, 7, 10.) First seen there, and seen according to God, divine intelligence will be possessed for the exposition of the events on earth which the visions shadow forth.

In the first place, "*There appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*" (*vv.* 1. 2.) There is no difficulty whatever in identifying the woman with Israel, but Israel as it appears in the purpose of God. It must be remembered also that Jerusalem is often taken in Scripture as the expression of the people, and hence it is that she is continually regarded as the earthly bride. But when so viewed, it is always as standing for the whole nation. (See Gal. iv. 25; Isaiah xlix. 13-26.) Three things mark her. First, she is clothed with the sun. The sun, as has been seen before, is an emblem of the fount of all authority, in accordance with the place assigned to it in creation. It is the "greater light to rule the day." (Genesis i.) Israel therefore is here seen as invested with supreme authority. Even in the days of the kingdom, God dwelt between the cherubim: it was there in the temple that He had

His earthly throne; and in the days yet to come Messiah's throne will be in Jerusalem, and from thence He will govern the nations upon earth. (Isaiah lx.) Secondly, the moon is under her feet. Two things characterize the moon; she is the lesser light to rule the night, and her light is derived and reflected from the sun. We are therefore plainly pointed back, by this symbol, to the glory possessed by Israel under the first covenant. All the light she had in former days, and there was no light elsewhere upon earth, was derived from the presence of Jehovah in her midst, and from the sacred oracles committed to her care. The moon thus fittingly symbolizes this her past glory, and is now seen, in the presence of the splendours of the sun (compare Isaiah lx. 20) as under her feet. Finally, she is crowned with twelve stars; that is, she has also the glory of perfect administration in man, which is the symbolic significance of the number twelve. Our Lord thus said to His disciples, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matt. xix. 28.) It is needless to add that Israel has never yet corresponded on earth to this divine portraiture; but "in heaven" God has always seen her arrayed in this perfect beauty. So in the wilderness of old, whatever the state of things in the camp, the seven lights of the golden candlestick were ever burning in their perfection, and the twelve loaves of the continual shewbread, covered with their pure frankincense, were at all times duly ordered, in the holy place before the Lord. It is an immense encouragement to turn away from the actual

state of things, whether in Israel or the Church, and to contemplate both the one and the other as they are seen in all their perfection in the purposes of God. (Compare Numbers xxiii., xxiv.)

We have next the circumstances of the woman—travailing in birth; but before the birth of the man-child another wonder is seen in heaven: "*Behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.*" (v. 3, 4.) This dragon, the enemy of God and His Christ, is declared to be "that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan" (v. 9); but he is viewed here as identified with the revived Roman empire. This is seen in two ways: his colour is red, not purple, which is specially the imperial colour, but red here because presented under a persecuting, sanguinary aspect; and he has seven heads and ten horns, the same as the beast in the next chapter. (v. 1.) It is, moreover, distinctly declared that "the dragon gave him [the beast] his power, and his seat, and great authority." (Chap. xiii. 2.) Here therefore the source is unveiled, and Satan himself is presented as possessing all that he afterwards bestows upon man in government. (Compare Luke iv. 5-7.) The seven crowned or diademed heads are forms of power, and, taking the number seven in its usual significance, it will portend that as to these there is completeness. But he has only ten horns, administrative instrumental powers, and, since twelve is the number of perfect government in man, he is, as to these, incomplete. The next thing stated is that his

tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the ground. That is to say, in his progress, or march, to supremacy on the earth in the form of the Roman empire, his masterpiece of craft and energy in the last half-week, he overthrows, casts down, all the subordinate powers that had existed in the area of the "third part," in order to substitute the absolute power and despotism of the imperial head, as seen in the first beast of the next chapter.

All this description is introductory to the position of the dragon here exhibited: he stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. We thus learn that Satan knew of the promised seed, the seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head, of the expected advent of David's Son and David's Lord, the One who would reign until all enemies should be subdued; and that, in his enmity to God and man, he lay in wait to destroy the true Heir as soon as He might appear. In the gospels we have the record of the manner in which he sought to compass his ends. Through Herod he sought to destroy the child Jesus; in the wilderness he attempted to allure Him from the path on which He had entered; he stirred up and evoked the bitter hate of the scribes and Pharisees to accomplish his purpose; and, finally, he succeeded in banding together Jew and Gentile, all the factions of Judaism with their oppressors, high and low, rich and poor, every form of earthly power, and the Object of his malice was condemned to die, and was crucified. Apparently the dragon had devoured the Child; but, as every believer knows, what seemed to be his triumph became the means of his everlasting disgrace and defeat. It was God who had triumphed,

having made the wrath of man to praise Him, and having bound the "dragon" to the chariot wheels of His eternal purposes of grace and mercy in and through the redemption wrought out by means of the death of His beloved Son.

The frustration of Satan's object is now related: "*And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne.*" (v. 5.) How entirely all here concerns the earth is seen from the fact, that no mention whatever is made of the church period: the kingdom alone is specified. If Christ is born, it is to rule all nations with a rod of iron, according to Psalms ii. and cx. The cross is not even mentioned, although we know it preceded His being caught up unto God and to His throne.

Christ then has now been born into the world, and, Satan having proved his powerlessness against the Lord's Anointed, He has been caught up, raised from the dead, and has been set in the place of power at God's right hand. The next verse goes on to a time *after the church period*—the last half-week of prophecy, which immediately precedes the introduction of the kingdom of Christ on the earth. Not only therefore is Christ in this scene on high, but the Church also, if not mentioned, has been caught up; and this is proved, as will afterwards be explained, by verse 10. In the mind of God then the Church is included in Christ being caught up, seen, as it were, in Him; so that now, as pointed out (and the reader should pay especial attention to it), Christ has the Church with Himself above. The heavenly saints are thus, even as Christ was, snatched away from Satan's rage; for in truth

he was and is as powerless against them as against Christ Himself. (See Matthew xvi. 18; Romans viii. 31-39.)

The Child was caught away, but the woman was left behind, and, as so left, is also exposed to Satan's enmity. Hence "*she fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.*" (v. 6.) The woman it must be remembered is Israel—Israel as seen in the purposes of God; and Satan, having been disappointed in his rage against Christ, turns only all the more fiercely against God's beloved people. But God cares for Israel, even as He had cared for the "Man-child;" and in His providence He watches over, protects, provides for, and sustains her. Like Elijah of old, she is screened from observation in a place prepared for her in the desert, and as miraculously fed during the whole period of Satan's unchecked domination in and through the Roman Empire—the 1260 days.

Another scene in heaven is next recorded: "*And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.*" (vv. 7, 8.) That Satan has access into the "heavenly places" is revealed in several scriptures (see especially Ephesians vi. 12); and we also know that he even acts there in opposition to the people of God. (Job i., ii.; Zechariah iii. 1; Luke xxii. 31, 32.) It would seem that he takes up there what has been aptly designated an anti-priestly position; that is, instead of interceding for he accuses the saints, in order to deprive them of blessing and to secure their ruin. It is evident also from this scripture that he has

an army of evil angels at his service. Michael and his angels fight against the dragon. The reason that Michael appears on the scene is that Israel is in question as the object of Satan's hostility; for, as we learn from Daniel, Michael is the angelic prince of God's ancient people. (Daniel x. 21.) He is "the great prince that standeth for the children of thy people." (Chapter xii. 1.) In Jude he is termed the archangel, and there also he is "contending with the devil," when disputing with him about the body of Moses. As no other archangel is named it would appear that he is the angelic chief; and, from what has been gathered from the Book of Daniel, that his special service is to frustrate the devices of Satan against Israel. This will explain the "war" in heaven as described in our scripture. There could be but one issue to it; and thus "*the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan,*" the evil spirit that deceiveth the whole habitable world, of which he is the prince and the god. He "*was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*" (v. 9.) He loses now for ever his place in the heavens; and henceforth the scene of his activities is bounded by the habitable world, where he is still permitted, in pursuance of the divine purposes, to be a test for man, until the moment decreed for his own eternal doom.

His expulsion from heaven is celebrated by a loud voice, which John heard, "*saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*" (v. 10.) This loud voice in heaven explains two things; first, that the expulsion of Satan

and his angels from heaven was connected with, and preliminary to, the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth, such being the import, we apprehend, of the words, "Now is come," &c. ; and secondly, it gives the justification of the interpretation that the Church is regarded as caught up together with the Man-child ; for the voice speaks of *our* brethren whom Satan had accused night and day before God.

The next verse reveals the secret and means of their victory over Satan's efforts. They overcame him by reason of the blood of the Lamb, that precious blood by which they had been redeemed, which had answered all God's claims, and which had made them whiter than snow. Satan could not therefore sustain his accusations, and God could not righteously listen to them, for He beholds no iniquity in those who are under the efficacy of the blood of Christ. The weapon of their conflict was the word of their testimony, the irresistible sword of the Spirit ; and their courage was displayed in the fact that they loved not their lives unto the death. So Paul, with the prospect of martyrdom before him, had a desire to depart to be with Christ, which he esteemed to be very much better. What could Satan do with one who had no more conscience of sins, who was armed with the sword of the Spirit, and whose hopes were all outside of this world ?

This passage is interesting in another way. The Church has been caught up ; the Jewish remnant who will come into the place of testimony after the church period is distinguished in the last verse of our chapter, so that these victors, the "our brethren" of verse 10, mark a third class. They are the saints who suffer

martyrdom after the rapture of the Church, and before the appearing of Christ, who, besides those indeed who "had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands," will be added to the first resurrection (chap. xx. 4), and who, therefore, are regarded as heavenly saints—saints of the heavenly places.

The casting of Satan out of heaven produces joy in heaven; but it is woe to the earth and the sea;* for, expelled from heaven, he rages all the more violently, and as knowing "that he hath but a short time." (v. 12.) The first object of his wrath is the woman which brought forth the Man-child, on the principle that whatever is God's special object excites his special malice. Verse 14, we judge, is but a restatement, with additions, of verse 6; but we learn now that God gives to the woman the means of escape. For the Christian it is, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," but for the "woman," having no power of resistance, flight, and means for it, as symbolized by the "two wings of a great eagle," are divinely ordered. (Compare Matt. xxiv. 15-21.) Hidden thus in the wilderness, she has "her place," and is nourished, divinely sustained, "for a time, and times, and half a time" (that is, three years and a half, or 1260 days), "from the face of the serpent." (v. 14.) The serpent, baffled in his object, "cast out of his mouth water as a flood" to overwhelm the "woman"; but the *"earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth."* (vv. 15, 16.) This symbolism is simple. "Water as a flood," or river, sets forth a disturbed

* The words "inhabiters of" have no sufficient authority.

state of the nations, but flowing onward in some special course. The earth, on the other hand, is a figure of organization or ordered government. There was, therefore, a movement of the nations, instigated by Satan, towards the destruction of the "woman," or Israel; but this movement is arrested, under God's providential hand, by the ordered governments of the world, and Israel is secured. Once more baffled, the dragon, "*wroth with the woman,*" goes "*to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus.*" (v. 17.) These are the individual Jews who compose the remnant, the remnant of the Psalms who will be found in Jerusalem and Judæa during the last half-week (see Matt. xxiv.), and who are marked by keeping the commandments of God, and having the testimony of Jesus; that is, the spirit of prophecy. (See chap. xix. 10.) They are, therefore, on Old Testament ground, and are characterized by Jewish feelings and Jewish hopes. Such will be the testimony of the remnant of the last days before the return of Christ in glory.

E. D.

SIMON PETER.

WASHING OF THE FEET AND COMMUNION.

JOHN xiii.

A FRESH aspect of the character of Christ and His work is revealed to Peter at the supper—His service in connection with communion. On the holy mount Peter had been brought into the actual scene of this communion, and had heard the Father's expression of delight in His Son; but he had to learn what was

necessary in order to enjoy this communion, or maintain it, or be restored to it if lost. We may, like the disciple in Matthew xvii., enjoy some measure of intercourse with God, without real communion with Him. Communion is being in *thought and heart one with the Father, and with the Son*. The Lord explains it in our chapter when He says to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." (v. 8.) Have we part with Christ unreservedly in His estimate of things, His thoughts and affections? Have we God's judgment concerning man, the world, sin? Have we His thoughts as to the work of Christ, and the value of His blood? Have we the same affections as the Son for the Father, and the Father for the Son—common enjoyment with God as to the perfection of Christ, common thoughts with the Son concerning the Father to glorify Him, to please Him, to do His will, to trust in Him, to enjoy to the full His presence?*

Alas! when it comes to realizing these things we are indeed forced to own that we know but little of such communion; for in reality the moments spent in heavenly communion are, as it were, submerged in the rest of our Christian life. And yet there is nothing to hinder its being continual; for we have the eternal life which brings us into it. (1 John i.) But if our communion is so feeble, let us not be content with our measure of it, and, on the other hand, let us not be discouraged. God has made provision for all our failures and short-comings in the advocacy of Christ, and by washing of the feet, which is the counterpart.

The basis of this service is the love which has been

* It may be added that "part with Christ" is in the new place on which He was entering—a place, too, made for believers through redemption.—ED.

manifested once, but not exhausted, at the cross; for it remains, and will remain, the same to the end. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." (John xiii. 1.) It was not enough for the Lord to save us; His love would purify us from all defilement; and it is for this that He takes the place of a servant. Nothing can stop or hinder this service for His own. He girds Himself to wash the disciples' feet at the very moment of Judas' betrayal of Him. (xiii. 2.) The possession of all things, His own dignity as coming from God and going to God, do not deter Him either from this service; on the contrary, He makes use of His power, in humbling Himself to serve His beloved ones. Such is His love manifested in the washing of the feet.

The priesthood of Christ itself has many functions. Not to speak of its necessity for making propitiation (Heb. ii. 17), we see it in exercise for the succour of those who are tempted (Heb. ii. 18), and to enable us to draw nigh to the throne of grace. (Heb. iv. 16.) We see it in activity for us that we may have part with the Lord where He is, and recover communion when we have lost it through sin. This is advocacy properly speaking. (1 John ii. and John xiii.) Exercised in our favour advocacy has two sides—the Father's and ours. Christ intercedes for us with the Father, and He brings us succour from Him when we have soiled our feet on the pathway.*

In connection with communion we find in this chapter the Advocate coming in to *help us*; but when

* It may be doubted if the distinction between priesthood and advocacy is here sufficiently observed; and whether the object of feet-washing is, as in the next sentence, "to help us." It surely is restoration to communion, if defilement is contracted through sin.—Ed.

Jesus says later on to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 32), it is advocacy in exercise *with the Father* for the disciple's restoration. Here we see the Lord placing us in contact with the Word (the water of purification), which He applies Himself by the Spirit to our consciences and our walk, in order to give us, not a future, but a present part with Him. "If I wash thee not, thou *hast* no part with Me." This is what we see with many blessed details in the type of the red heifer. (Num. xix.)*

But Peter as yet understood nothing of Christ's service so presented to him, and was unable to enter into what would thereby have been his part. Two things were lacking, expressed in these two words: "What I do thou *knowest* not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (v. 7); and, "Whither I go, thou *canst* not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards." (v. 36.) These two things were knowledge and power.

Peter had real affection for the Lord; but this affection could not preserve him from the gravest of falls. He lacked what was indispensable—*knowledge*—as was proved in the hitherto most striking acts of his life. When he said (Matthew xvi. 22), "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee," it was his affection which spoke; and yet at this very moment Peter was a Satan, who, for want of knowing the heart of Christ, dared to think that the God of love would consent to save Himself. When on the mount he said, "Let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias," it was again his affection for Jesus; but the knowledge of the glory of His person was totally lacking, although with his eyes

* See the paper on "The Red Heifer," *Christian Friend*, 1888.

he beheld the manifestation of it. He put divine grace on a level with the "law" which "came by Moses" to condemn, and prophecy which announced judgment. In the scene of the tribute money, Peter's "Yes," in answer to the question, "Doth not your Master pay?" denotes once more affection for his Master, whom he thought to honour in the presence of his compatriots, but without the least knowledge of the dignity of Him who was God, Creator, Lord of the temple, Son of the Sovereign on His throne. In one sense knowledge precedes affection; for in reality it is no other than the apprehension by the Holy Spirit of the work, the love, and the person of Christ. It follows it too, for affection for Christ is the best way of growing in His acquaintance. In the chapter before us, Peter's words, "Thou shalt never wash my feet," denote again his affection, joined to a sense of the dignity of Christ, but also ignorance of the Saviour's love, which found its satisfaction in devoted service. Then, when the Lord says to him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me," he asks to have not only his feet washed, but also his hands and his head. Truly this was affection for Christ, for he esteemed it most precious to have part with Him; but this affection was accompanied by complete ignorance of the work which had already accomplished purification once for all.*

The secret of our intercourse with our brethren is also found in this knowledge of the work and the love of Christ. As the Lord had loved them (*v.* 34), the disciples were to love one another; as He had washed their feet, they were to wash one another's feet. (*v.* 14.)

* I say "accomplished" because from chapter xiii. to the end of xvii. the Lord is seen as if on the other side of the cross, His *hour* being *come* to depart out of this world to the Father.

And here let us observe in passing, that when we are in need ourselves of feet washing in order to be restored, it is not the moment for us to attempt to wash our brethren's feet. The man himself must be clean who would sprinkle the water of purification on one who had been defiled by a dead body. (Numbers xix.) If we lack vigilance in our walk, we lose not only the communion consequent upon it, but the great privilege of intercessional service towards others.

As we said before, the second thing which Peter lacked was *power*. Humanly speaking, he was characterized by an energy which led him to face difficulties, but which, being energy of the flesh, did not enable him to overcome them. "I will follow Thee." "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." "I will not forsake Thee." Such is his usual language. It was always affection, but without divine power, and an affection which did not hinder the disciple from denying his Master. What was lacking was the power of the Spirit, which is exactly contrary to that of the flesh, and which is only displayed in the measure in which the flesh is judged. For its full manifestation there must be the sense of utter powerlessness.

Peter could not have either this knowledge or power previous to the death and resurrection of Christ, or before the gift of the Holy Spirit; but what he had to pass through when he was not yet in possession of these two things was profitable to him, and is, and will be so, to others. In the Acts of the Apostles Peter's career completely changes. Knowledge of Christ, power, self-forgetfulness, blessed service for others, are met with at every step. Old things are passed away, and we have the new career of a new man. H. R.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

MATTHEW xxvi. 27 ; 1 CORINTHIANS xi. 25.

IN regard to the "cup," it has, as an expression, a very distinct meaning in Scripture. (See Psalm xi. 6 ; xvi. 5 ; xxiii. 5 ; John xviii. 11, &c.) From these and many other passages it clearly signifies what one may be passing through, whether of blessing or sorrow, together with the experience attendant upon it. Thus in Psalm xxiii. it was an overflowing cup of blessing ; while in John xviii., for example, it is an expression for all the sorrows which came upon our blessed Lord in connection with His rejection and death, all of which He would receive, not from the hand of man, but from the hand of His Father. The cup on the Lord's table had its origin doubtless in the passover cup ; and the Lord Himself has affixed its meaning to it in the words, "This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins ;" and the cup therefore is for ever associated with that precious blood of Christ which met and answered all God's claims ; yea, glorified Him in all that He is, and which cleanses the believer from all sin. An empty cup could not signify this ; only it must be remembered that the real point of departure in its typical teaching is in giving thanks—blessing God for it. Then, of course, the cup must be full. It may also be noted that Scripture never speaks of "the wine." It is always "the cup ;" because, indeed, the Holy Spirit would ever associate it

in our minds with the cup of judgment which the Lord took and drained in the accomplishment of redemption. When therefore we rejoice before God in all the blessedness set forth by the cup to our souls, we are at the same time reminded of the infinite price at which our adorable Lord and Saviour has purchased our redemption.

II.

REVELATION XX. 15.

To infer that possibly the names of some in this vast multitude were found written in the book of life is utterly unwarrantable, as well as at the same time to overlook the plainest teachings of Scripture on the subject. All believers, whether of past dispensations or of the church period, will be raised or changed at the return of our Lord. (1 Cor. xv. 23; 1 Thess. iv. 13-18.) Those that suffer martyrdom during the sway of Antichrist, as also those who "had not worshipped the beast, neither his image," &c., will be added to the first resurrection. (Rev. xx. 4-6.) The millennial saints will pass (in what way Scripture does not reveal) into the new earth. (Rev. xxi. 3.) There will consequently be only unbelievers before the great white throne. This, moreover, is plain from the statement of the grounds of judgment. All the dead are delivered up, whether by the sea, death, or hades. Not one escapes. All alike, small and great, stand before "the throne;" and all alike are "judged every man according to their works." This is the positive evidence adduced to justify the irreversible sentence of everlasting judgment. But God is, and ever must be, justified when He speaks, and clear when He judges. Accordingly another kind of evidence is adduced before judgment proceeds.

Every man's works were the positive ground of condemnation; and now the fact that the names of those about to be assigned to eternal woe were not found in the book of life is brought forth to prove that they had no title whatever to escape their doom. On positive and negative evidence alike they are shown to be amenable to the sentence of the lake of fire. It is thus a scene of unsparing judgment upon the unconverted dead of all ages down to the close of the millennial kingdom.

III.

1 JOHN ii. 20, 27.

Attention to the exact language employed will at once show that the "Holy One" in verse 20 cannot be the Holy Ghost. It is an unction "from the Holy One." Now every believer knows that the Spirit of God is Himself the anointing [unction]; and consequently it could not be said, as in verse 27, that we received it *from* Him. The "Holy One" will therefore mean either the Father or Christ; for, as we learn from John's gospel, both the Father and the Son are said to send the Comforter. (See John xiv. 16, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7.) There is nothing in the context to indicate whether it is the Father or the Son that John had in his mind in writing "from Him." In fact, both are so habitually one in his thoughts that we often find in this epistle one named where we might, grammatically speaking, expect the other. (See, as an example of this, *vv.* 28, 29 of this chapter.) We can the better understand this if we recall the words of our Lord Himself: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

IV.

HOSEA xiv. 8.

This scripture, when rightly understood, is most interesting and instructive. The chapter opens with an exhortation to Israel to return to the Lord their God with words of confession and supplication. Together with this there is the renunciation of all other helpers, whether of Assyria, on whom they had so often leaned to their own confusion, or of false gods, whose impotence they had so often proved in the time of their calamities. Israel was now learning that in Jehovah alone "the fatherless findeth mercy." This state of repentance and confession draws forth as ever an instant response of forgiveness, restoration, and blessing. (*vv.* 4-7.) Thereon comes our scripture. First we have the effect of grace on the heart of Ephraim, who says, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Then Jehovah, who ever delights to mark the action of His Spirit on the hearts of His people, speaks: "I have heard and observed him." The next clause again is the language of Ephraim: "I am like a green fir-tree." And then once more Jehovah speaks, to remind Ephraim of the source of his new-found blessing, and says, "From Me is thy fruit found"—a needed instruction for God's people at all times. The last verse, we apprehend, is a lesson drawn from the whole book, as it speaks of Jehovah's ways in the government of His people. To understand them divine wisdom is requisite; and blessed is it for those who can say with the prophet, "The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein."

E. D.

THE PLAINS OF MOAB.

(Concluded.)

NUMBERS XXV.

THE counterpart of Israel dwelling in Shittim is recorded by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, in Revelation ii. To the church at Pergamos the message is sent through John, "I know . . . where thou *dwest*, even where Satan's throne is." In the days of the Church's history, represented by Smyrna, she had suffered tribulation, the direct work of the devil. Some he had cast into prison. There had too been martyrdom, the result of faithfulness where Satan dwelt. The true portion of the Church lay outside the territory where he had his throne. Suffering lay in the pathway through it, but the saints were sustained by the promise of the crown of life from the hands of Him who had gone through death, and opened up the way of life. How marked the contrast between the blasphemy and persecution of Satan, and the promise of Jesus, the First and the Last—"I will give thee a crown of life"! One of old, in the very thick of increasing trials, had said, "I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me." So was it with Jesus Himself on the troubled waters of the Sea of Galilee. The awaking might be in resurrection, or it might be deliverance from so great a death, but the sustaining power of the Lord was known.

The victories over Sihon and Og should have been the earnest to Israel that every power of man, used

as Satan's instrument to prevent them reaching and possessing their inheritance, would be swept away. (Compare Deut. ii. 24, 25; Joshua ii. 9, 10; see also Psalms cxxxv. and cxxxvi.) It is interesting to see how Paul (2 Cor. i. 8-10) connects present deliverance from death, when pressed out of measure beyond strength in Asia, with the God of resurrection. But then Paul had the sentence of death in himself that he should not trust in himself, and this, not only with regard to the pressure around, but also as to the self within, which he reckoned as crucified with Christ. Fighting enemies without is not renouncing self. The sense of deliverance from outward foes is not always accompanied by the sense of deliverance from self. Nay, the rest and ease which follow a victory over the enemy may lead to the indulgence of self, and Satan is not slow to avail himself of such a position, and to bring the allurements of the world to bear on such a state. Israel abiding in Shittim were open to the seductions of Moab. The next thing to dwelling where Satan's throne is, is to be at ease there. And then what may not follow? With regard to Israel, first, they are led into unholy and abominable dalliance with the world; and, secondly, at the invitation of the same world, now friendly in appearance, they forsake the God who had answered for them on the heights above, to eat the sacrifices of idols, and to bow down to the gods of Moab.

While contrasting the effect which the friendship of the world produced upon Israel in the plains of Moab, with the mischief wrought in the Church by the same means, we must remember that Israel had not yet crossed the Jordan; while the place of the Church is

sitting in heavenly places in Christ, according to the power which wrought in Him when God raised Him from the dead, and set Him there. In Christ it is new creation; and, though here as to the body, the saint is to walk according to this rule. The Church was set as the vessel of heavenly light to the world. Her sustainment is from heaven. Heavenly bread, and not the sacrifices of idols, her portion. Christ more precious to her than all the world could offer, and suffering accepted for His sake. So it was in the days of her first love. To be in the place where the doctrine of Balaam affected the saints, necessitated that she should have forgotten her place as united to Christ in the heavenlies, and become a dweller where she was only a stranger. The virgins who went out in the energy of first love to meet the Bridegroom, found a place of ease, and slept; and the saints who suffered in Smyrna from the world, were dwelling there in the days of Pergamos. Consequently those who held the doctrine of Balaam were allowed. When the Church forgot her position and calling to be a dweller upon earth, then the individual saint is exhorted to overcome; but we must remember *there is the state of things* to overcome.

The jealousy of the Lord is aroused. Where is the people whom He had brought out of Egypt, separated to Himself, wrought for, justified, set in order and blessing with Himself? Corrupting themselves, and bowing down to idols. Could He be ought but jealous? His jealousy showed itself in the judicial action which swept away twenty-four thousand men. Moses too calls on the judges of Israel to slay every one his men that were joined to Baal-peor. In Pergamos the Lord

who comforted with sure promise the tried of Smyrna, would fight in this jealousy with the sword of His mouth against the unrepentant.

A people lately victorious are a weeping people, and, alas! when the strength is given to strangers, a powerless people. Let it be remembered here that though the New Testament makes us know that they were suffering from the counsel of Balaam, yet Balaam himself is not seen in the history here recorded. The Spirit of God brings before us the condition of *Israel*. "*Israel* abode in Shittim." "*Israel* joined himself to Baal-peor." God had met Balaam, and frustrated the purpose of Balak; hence the history concludes with, "Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place." What is before us then is not Balaam but *Israel*. It was *their* state which laid them open to the seductions of Moab. Balaam, whatever he counselled, had no place in *Israel*, he returned to his place. He is found again, as it were, in those who held his doctrine in the midst of the Church. "*Thou* hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam," is the Lord's word to the mystic representative of the church in Pergamos. Balaam was outside of *Israel*, affecting them from without, but allowed in the Church. Sad and solemn progress of evil paving the way for the full-blown apostasy. The doctrine of Balaam allowed in Pergamos has borne its fruits in Thyatira. Alliance with the world is systematic there. There is a corrupt public body which is given over to its corruption, and its offspring killed with death. In Jude, verse 11, the corruption taught by Balaam precedes the gainsaying of Core, wherein they finally perish. Cain, Balaam, Core—the genealogy of the dwellers upon earth—who

turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and deny the claims of the Lord.

Here is sorrow indeed. A people weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and Christ fighting with the sword of His mouth against the evildoers. But then, as another has said, "there cannot be any trouble among the saints that does not bring out the faithfulness of Him who waits to bless the overcomer, and thus bring the soul into communion with Christ in a way that nothing else could. For nothing gives the blessed consciousness of Christ's approbation, as between the soul and Himself, like faithfulness when evil begins to corrupt." We see in Phinehas the faithfulness which overcomes. He judges the evil on God's behalf. "He was zealous *for my sake.*" His zeal turned away the Lord's wrath from the children of Israel. Such was the effect of being "zealous for his God." Paul too in later days showed the holy jealousy which would not tolerate evil in the Church. "I . . . have judged already," he writes, "concerning him that hath done this deed . . . to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." (1 Cor. v. 3-5.) And wherefore such jealousy? It was of God. He writes again to them. "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. xi. 2.) The relation of Israel to Jehovah brought out the zeal of Phinehas when he executed judgment, and the sense of what the Church is to Christ creates in the faithful the earnest desire that she should answer to His mind, and be unspotted from the world. Faithfulness calls for the judgment of

evil, as another has written: "We are called upon to judge evil in the Church, for God cannot accept Balaam and Jezebel if we can. Therefore may the Lord give us to remember that failure within the Church is to be judged." Faithfulness brings with it the approval of the Lord. Of Phinehas it is said, "I give unto him my covenant of peace." It was a wonderful thing for him to get such a word. None indeed but One could so come between the jealousy of God and the corrupted people, that the covenant of peace should be for ever undisturbed. The act of Phinehas so far made atonement for the children of Israel by caring for the glory of God, that what will be fully established in Him who perfectly glorified God was given to him on behalf of Israel—the covenant of peace, together with the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. This latter carried with it many things, but among them the place of special nearness and intimacy. (Ezekiel xlv. 15.) Nearness gives the sense of what is due to God, and turning away from iniquity themselves enabled the priestly family to walk with God in peace and equity, and turn many away from iniquity also. (Mal. ii. 6.) The priest too feeds on the choicest food of the sanctuary.

The white stone given to the overcomer in Pergamos marks the approbation of Christ given to the one who receives it. The new name written in it betokens that the overcomer is individually known of Him. Precious knowledge! The Lord give us more to desire it as the result of refusing all fellowship with the doctrine of Balaam. The hidden manna was "God's treasured store." In eating it the soul enters into the delight which God had in the lowly, humbled pathway of Jesus

in this world, but rejected by it down to the suffering of death. When the saints listen to Balaam's doctrine, and get into unholy association with the world, the one who refuses the evil on God's behalf gets special communion with God's thoughts of Jesus. The fulness of this communion will be in heaven, but the promise becomes true as we overcome the snare of association with the world. There is also a special and individual sense of what it is to belong to Christ, the known sweetness of the words, "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me." The intimacy is tasted now, but it belongs to another scene, where the golden pot of manna has been laid up in the presence of God. Then there is not only the individual joy with which no stranger intermeddles; but to judge the evil, and be jealous over the saints with a jealousy of God, is that their hearts may be diverted from the allurements of the world, so that Christ may possess their affections. He does value the love of His own. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

The Lord give us to learn the lessons He would teach us from the history of Israel in the plains of Moab.

T. H. R.

ONE moment's real apprehension of Christ in the glory is sufficient to dim the brightness and glitter of every earthly thing; but the soul must be occupied with Christ alone for this.

DUTIES are more apt to lead the soul away from God than open sin.

LOVE AND HOLINESS.*

THE love of God is the source of all our blessings and joys, and God is love; but in a certain sense His holiness elevates us more. His love is perfect. We dwell in love, dwell in God, and God in us. It is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. It is proved by the death of Christ, and so we are to walk in it. But it cannot be said we are love. God is sovereign in love, "rich in mercy, of His great love wherewith He loved us." All this is, objectively, blessedness, and in us, and enjoyed by us in communion.

It is said we are "light in the Lord." He makes us partakers of His holiness—partakers morally of the divine nature. No doubt we love, but we *are* light. How blessed this partaking of the divine nature! And to this we must have respect too in our relationships with God. We know, thank God, that He is love towards us, and indeed in us. But He is light; and as this tested man, so, in grace, man is made it; *i.e.*, the new man has this character, "after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Now I cannot but feel that, in fact, there are souls perfectly sincere, and in Christ agreeable to God, who as to the Word and prayer are in an outside place practically. The Word is the revelation of God, and, in and by a Man, suited to man, reaching him there where he is; and prayer takes up our wants where we are and presents them to God—goes in where He is, according to what He is.

* This paper is taken from *Notes and Comments*, part iv.

Now there are practically two states—true states—as Christians in connection with this. The Word reaches a renewed soul as for man down here, and so it is, but he takes it, and as down here—it is a light to his feet and a lantern to his path ; but he takes it as suited to him down here. It came, he recognizes, from God ; but it occupies itself with his condition here. It came out from God to him who is outside—came in grace ; and he so received it, and all right. But, save in owning the grace that gave it, he does not go in where it came from, but is thankful for that which is a light where he is, and so far it is all right ; but his spirit remains there, in that which the Word is adapted to ; this was properly the character of the law. In the case I refer to there is this difference between it and law, that grace is owned in God, and in that given, which is very important ; but the man remains outside, and has a word adapted to him as walking as a man outside. He is not living, thinking, feeling inside by it. The ray has come down and lit up his path ; but he is in, and occupied with his path, though acknowledging the Sun as the source of light.

So in prayers. Men are in wants and difficulties down here, and they carry them, as down here, to God ; and this is all quite right ; and they will be surely heard, and graciously heard.

But there are Christians whom the Word carries in to what it reveals, not what it throws light upon. Divine wisdom does give here a path, according to divine wisdom, which the vulture's eye has not seen ; but it comes from above, takes the heart up to the source from which it comes, and reveals what is there, and causes the soul to live there ; and this is another

thing. It does not cease to enlighten the path ; and we need it—God’s wisdom in this world, a divine path in it. But, oh, how much more blessed to have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ—to say, “The only begotten Son, who is (ὁ ὦν) in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him,” to know where He is gone and the way !

Christ is God’s way and truth in this world ; but He is the way to and revealer of the Father, and the things which God has prepared for them that love Him, the way of knowing the things freely given to us of God ; and we may live in them, and understand, for example, the promises to the seven churches, and a thousand other passages which tell us about what is within. We have it revealed in John, we are brought into it by Paul, and even by John too. And so with prayer. I may pray from my wants, and for my wants, and others too, as we have seen, and it is all right. But if I am living in the heavenly things, and see the saints in the beauty that belongs to them in Christ, and my prayers for myself and for them are formed in what I am dwelling in, how much higher and more earnest they will be. I am thinking of them or of myself with the thoughts of God, and want them to reach them. My desires are formed by these, and I labour with God in prayer for them. The Word, through the power of the Spirit, reveals heavenly things—I see the saints according to God’s mind in them ; and as with God, and for carrying out His desires and His thoughts for and in them, I plead with God according to these thoughts. Oh, what a different thing it is ! But how near we must be to God so to labour in prayer—to labour for the carrying out His thoughts in them, as they are inside with Him.

J. N. D.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

CHAPTER xiii. 1-10.

IN the previous chapter the fact of Satan's hostility to the "woman" and her seed is stated: in this the means or the instrumentalities by which he pursues his ends are detailed. They are the two "beasts" who, during Daniel's last half-week, or the 1260 days, will be allowed to exercise their undisputed sway in opposition to God, to His Christ, and to His people. The scene of the visions in the last chapter is in heaven. Here the stand-point of the prophet is the sand of the sea. He writes, "*And I stood* upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name† of blasphemy.*" (v. 1.) If we now turn to the prophet Daniel it will aid us in the interpretation of this vision. He says, "I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another." The first, he tells us, "was like a lion, and had eagle's wings;" the second "like to a bear;" the third "like a leopard;" but the fourth was "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it

* Some read, "And *he* stood," &c. In that case it would refer to the dragon; but the context is, as we judge, in favour of the accepted text.

† The more generally accepted reading is "*names.*"

had ten horns." We learn, moreover, that this fourth beast will continue until the Ancient of days shall sit; and that, on the beast having been slain, the dominion and glory and kingdom are given to One like the Son of man. (Daniel vii.; see also chapter ii.) From the same prophet we learn that the first three "beasts" represent the monarchies of Babylon, Persia, and Greece; and we also know from Scripture that the successor of Greece in sovereignty over the prophetic earth is the Roman Empire. Observe, moreover, that this last form of Gentile sovereignty continues until the end; and this enables us at once to identify the first beast of our chapter with Daniel's fourth beast. We also find from verse 2, that this beast of the Apocalypse combines in himself all the characteristics of his three predecessors, for he was "*like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion.*" At the time of John's vision the first three beasts and their kingdoms had for ever passed away. The fourth had come into their place, and had inherited all their characteristic features, as well as their dominion.

We may now examine the vision a little more closely. The beast rises up out of the sea, looking back to the origin of the Roman Empire, though seen here in its developed character at the end. The sea is a figure for a disturbed state of the nations, masses of the people in commotion, as, for example, in times of insurrection or revolution. It was out of such a state of things that the Roman dominion had sprung into existence. There has been in modern days a remarkable exemplification of a similar phenomenon. The first Napoleon suddenly emerged into view out of the con-

fusion of a revolutionary period, and very soon asserted his power, and extended his sway over the half of Europe. The difference is only in the fact that in his case it was the sudden rise of a person more like the little horn of Daniel vii.; whereas here it was rather the Roman power, although seen at the end incarnated in an individual head.

This beast, the imperial head of the revived Roman Empire, has seven heads, or forms of government, and, as pointed out in chapter xii., therein completeness; and he has ten horns, on all of which are diadems, indicating the fact repeated again and again (see Daniel ii., vii.; also Revelation xvii. 12), that the dominion of the beast is composed of ten kingdoms, having their respective sovereigns, but allied together in a common federation under his imperial sway.

The moral character of this last representative of Gentile sovereignty is exhibited in one word—he has upon his heads the names of blasphemy. He not only is indifferent to God and His claims, but he is in open and wicked opposition to Him, and avowedly so before the eyes of men. Does anyone wonder that such a monster could be tolerated on the earth? If so, let him remember that a neighbouring country has recently had infidel and atheistic governments; and that, in response to the invitation of such, thousands could rush over from “Christian” England to assist at the commemoration of a revolution which sought to dethrone God and to deify man and the reason of man. Ah, no, men were not shocked; for indeed the course of modern thought and of politics is fast paving the way for the apostasy, and the appearance of these names of blasphemy, adorned as they will be with all that excites

the admiration of man as man. His rule will be the expression of all the preceding monarchies. He will be distinguished by the strength and majesty of the first, the voracity of the second, and the swiftness of the third, added to his own irresistible and relentless power. (See Daniel vii. 4-7 with verse 2.)

We have next the source of his dominion unveiled. "*And the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.*" (v. 2.) He is therefore characterized by Satan's inspiration and energy. Such is the picture presented to us, delineated by an infallible hand, of the last governmental power on the earth, before the coming of Christ to establish His kingdom.

In the following verses we have a brief and figurative description of the resuscitation of the Roman empire, and an account of the place and supremacy of its head during his brief career. "*And I saw,*" says John, "*one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world [the whole earth] wondered after the beast.*" (v. 3.) In chapter xvii. we read, "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." (v. 9-11.) Combining these two scriptures, and recalling the fact that the heads are symbols of forms of government, or governing powers ("kings"), the interpretation is not difficult. At the time of the vision five of these governing powers, in the various vicissitudes of the Roman dominion, had passed away; but "one is" said the angel, and that one was the

imperial, for Rome then had its emperors. There was, however, another to arise before the advent of the beast, one who, like Napoleon I., was to "continue a short space," and then, with what interval we are not told, the beast would appear, an eighth; for Satan ever imitates, and thus even here would dazzle the minds of men by the semblance of a resurrection (of which "eight" is the symbolic number). But while the beast is the eighth, he is yet of the seven, and only, therefore, possesses seven heads. The conclusion from these scriptures is evidently that the "head," wounded as it were to death, was the imperial one, seen too in the fact of the destruction and disappearance of the old Roman empire, which to-day, and for centuries past, save in the attempt of Napoleon to revive it, has clean gone from human view. When, therefore, we are told that the "deadly wound was healed," it will mean that this imperial form of government will be restored in connection with the beast of our chapter. It is this unexpected revival that will astonish, and excite the admiration of, "the whole earth."

Two effects follow, effects awful to contemplate, but none the less certain. First, "*they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast.*" (v. 4.) And who are the "they"? The eighth verse, though speaking there of the beast, answers the question. They are all outside of God's elect saints, elect saints on earth, after the rapture of the Church. It will include, therefore, the inhabitants of the prophetic earth, where Christianity was once professed, but who now, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, are under "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.) Such is to be the final issue of

modern civilization, progress in thought, art, and science—men will pay homage to Satan. It is not only that they will have cast off all fear of God from before their eyes, but they will also enthrone Satan in His place. Secondly, they will likewise worship the beast. They will “worship” him because of his wisdom and power; for so blinded will they be, that they will not be able to discern between what is of Satan and what is of God. Adumbrations of this Satanic delusion are constantly seen, when men prostrate themselves before statesmen, or warriors, on account of their genius, “foresight,” and skill in the conduct of affairs. The private lives of the objects of their homage may be never so corrupt, but all is condoned under the influence of their intellectual brilliance.

The character, duration, and exploits of the beast are next given. The reader will remark the repetition of the phrase, there was “given unto him” (*vv.* 5, 7), a phrase explained by verses 2 and 4, reminding us that not only is the beast’s power derived, but also that it was derived from Satan. The time, it must be remembered, is after the Church has been caught away, and before the appearing of Christ, an interval during which God will own no power on the earth until He takes His own in the person of the true King. First of all the beast has a mouth “*speaking great things and blasphemies.*” (*v.* 5.) He will be a boaster, puffed up, like his god Satan, with the sense of his own merits and excellencies; and in his daring impiety he will open “*his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*” (*v.* 6.) He cannot rid himself of God, of heaven, or of the heavenly saints, but in the impotence of his

rage, exulting in his earthly supremacy, he vents his wicked heart in insolent blasphemies. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have him in derision. In the next place, we find again that the duration of his career will be forty and two months—the 1260 days, the last half-week of Daniel's prophecy, completing his seventy weeks. (See Rev. xi. 2, xii. 6–14.)

Two other particulars are added: "*It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*" (vv. 7, 8.) The saints against whom he will wage war are those specified in the previous chapter (v. 17), he being in this, as indeed in all else, but Satan's instrument. God allows them to be overcome (compare Matt. xxiv. 9, 10), not all of them as we learn after, but many, to test their faith, and to purify His people in the furnace of affliction. Moreover, the beast will be irresistible in his might, for "all kindreds, tongues, and nations" will acknowledge his sway. Save the elect, all men also will worship the beast—all that dwell upon the earth, and this expression now, losing its special moral significance, will include every one, within this sphere, except God's people. It will only be the revival of the old Roman custom of paying homage, and offering incense, to images of the emperor. This relic of heathenism is shocking enough to the Christian mind, but in the deification of intellect and human power, already proceeding with such rapid steps, the way will be easily prepared for its restoration. All these who will worship the beast are said not to have

their names written in the Lamb's book of life. (Compare chapter xx. 15.) Those whose names were written in it did not therefore join in this idolatrous worship. One point of difference between the earthly saints, thus negatively indicated, and the heavenly saints may be noted. The latter are said to be chosen in Christ *before* the foundation of the world, whereas the former's election only dates *from* the world's foundation. It is but another proof of how carefully the saints that form the Church, as united to Christ, are distinguished from all others, whatever their blessedness.

This part of the chapter closes with a special proclamation. Solemn attention is called to it by the cry, "*If any man have an ear, let him hear;*" and then it is added, "*He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*" (vv. 9, 10.) Two things are here contained. First, the assurance that divine judgment should surely fall upon the beast, the persecutor of the saints, and that he should be dealt with in the manner in which he had dealt with them (see Psalm cxxxvii. 8); and, secondly, that the attitude of the saints in the midst of this unparalleled tribulation must be one of "unresisting patience," the attitude of our Lord Himself, who, when the hour of man and the power of darkness had come, suffered Himself to be "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." The faith and patience of the saints would be displayed in their confidence in God, and in their meek endurance of the fiery trial through which they would have to pass. (Compare Jeremiah xv. 2.)

E. D.

SIMON PETER.

PETER ENTERS INTO TEMPTATION.

LUKE xxii. 31-62.

PETER had learnt (John xiii.) what was necessary in order to have communion with the Lord. Recalling the blessings which had been unfolded to him since the beginning of his career, it would seem as if the circle were complete, and there remained nothing more to learn. But there was one thing without which all these blessings would be of no effect—the knowledge of and judgment of the flesh, and of its absolute incapacity before God; and this we have in Luke xxii. 31. Satan had desired to have the poor disciples that he might sift them as wheat. As in Job's case, the enemy had presented himself before God to accuse them. Availing himself of the moment favourable to his designs, when the Lord would be taken away from them, and they would be externally unprotected, he had asked to put them into the sieve, in the certainty that nothing would remain which God could accept. In this way he thought to wrest them from Christ, but he was mistaken. No doubt nothing of *man* would remain in the sieve; but what *God* had wrought in the disciples must remain. In his enmity Satan forgot that if he had all power over the flesh, he had none with regard to God and what came from Him. God granted his request because He had purposes of grace and love towards Peter and the disciples, as He had of old towards Job. Peter was to be left in the enemy's

hands that he might learn himself. Such dealing was needful for his blessing.

It was otherwise with Saul of Tarsus, who during his first interview with Christ on the way to Damascus learnt what the flesh was. However painful it was, he had the happiness of learning it with God, and had not to come back again to it. From the first he could say, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing;" and also, "We who have no confidence in the flesh." Until he met Christ, his natural character in its full development had been plainly manifested in its fruits. Circumstances had proved that his flesh was animated without cause or reason by the most terrible enmity against Christ that it was possible to see. His conscience—and he had a great deal, for he said, "I verily thought with myself that *I ought to do many things* contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth"—had constituted him an implacable enemy of Jesus. Peter, as we have often said, had a sincere love for the Lord. If there were anything capable of hindering the flesh from acting, and of keeping him, it was that. Yet his love for Christ only produced self-confidence. Even with Paul, who had learnt his lesson, the flesh sought later on to make communion with God a means of his being puffed up, and he needed an angel of Satan to keep him from falling; just as Peter needed a fall and Satan's sieve to open his eyes.

But if the enemy had displayed his activity, Christ had been at work before him, and had anticipated the moment of the sifting. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." (*v.* 32.) He had interceded for Peter even before anything had passed in his conscience.

The first priestly act, that which regards God, had taken place unknown to Peter, and in view of his fall, which had not yet occurred. The second act came after the fall, when "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (v. 61), and reached his conscience. One look from Christ was the starting-point of all the blessings which followed, recalling his heart to the love which had been in exercise to prevent his falling; and assuring him that this love, inexhaustible in its supply, was not changed by his unfaithfulness, and at length, reaching his conscience, caused him to shed bitter tears of repentance in presence of such grace.

Then only, when truly restored, would Peter be able to strengthen his brethren (v. 32), and to deal with the hearts and consciences of others. Ministry can only be exercised in self-judgment. All that Peter had previously learnt could not have qualified him to be used in blessing to others. What fitted him for this was the knowledge of grace, starting with what he had had to pass through as to his own utter unworthiness.

The Lord now (v. 33) allowed Peter's self-confidence to be plainly manifested. "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." "*I am ready.*" This was the flesh, ready to face everything. The flesh even when warned is *always* self-confident. If it had had even one atom of strength, the Lord's solemn warning should have hindered it from falling. But now the moment came when Peter, left to his own resources (vv. 35-38), accompanied the Lord to Gethsemane, and the Master was left alone. Not one of His disciples could watch one hour with Him. "Watch and pray," said He, "that ye enter not into temptation." (Matt. xxvi. 41.) "Watch and pray," that

was what Jesus did. If Peter had listened (he slept in presence of temptation as he had done in presence of the glory) he would have been on his guard against the temptation, and in dependence on God, and he would not have entered into it. To enter into temptation as a man in the flesh was to succumb to it. Christ alone could *enter* into it and come out divinely victorious, obtaining the victory in dependence. He could have used His power to deliver Himself. At the sight of Him His enemies went backward and fell to the ground. He could have asked for legions of angels; but He submits, endures the treachery of Judas, yields all His rights (and what rights!) into the hands of men, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, without a protestation or murmur. Peter did not watch or pray. He entered into temptation, and succumbed at once. He drew the sword with impatience to defend himself, and shed blood instead of accompanying the Saviour to be struck like Him. He followed afar off, and entered into the high priest's court. The flesh could take him thus far, but then all its strength came to nought at the word of a servant.

THE SEPULCHRE.

JOHN XX. 1-18.

Some women and the beloved disciple had been present during the last scene at the cross. Before bowing His head and yielding up His spirit, the Lord had uttered the words, "It is finished," which conveyed an infinite scope of blessing to the hearts of the disciples, who were thus assured that divine love had taken pity on their state, and had provided for it at all cost. It is finished. Such a work left nothing more to be done.

The cross could no longer hold its victim. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were God's chosen instruments for giving the Saviour a place with the rich in His death, and the passage preceding that which we have now read takes us up to that moment.

It was not indeed all, to know a love which had brought the Lord down to death for them; there remained a capital point to be learnt. What did the sepulchre contain? What had death done with the Saviour? or else, What had the Saviour done with death? If the grave had held Him, His work was vain, and not one of those for whom He had given Himself was acquitted or justified. Mary found the sepulchre open. Peter and John ascertained that it was empty. Peter went in and saw. The attributes of death were there, testifying by their presence that death had been unable to hold its prey, and that, without struggle or conflict, the victory over it had been peaceful. The napkin was wrapped together in a place by itself, as one does with a garment when preparing to go out. The "It is finished" was proved. The love which had undertaken the work had completed it; and the disciples, who as yet knew not the Scripture, were convinced by the testimony of their eyes. They believed, and went away again unto their own home with the *knowledge* of a work thenceforth completed.*

This was a great step no doubt, but, shame be to these two disciples, it was little in comparison to what a poor, ignorant woman found at the sepulchre. Mary Magdalene—witness in person of the love of Christ who had delivered her from the seven devils—loved the

* Peter seems to have been less convinced than John. (Luke xxiv. 12.)

Lord with an affection which sprang from the greatness of His love, and which far exceeded her intelligence. Happy woman after all; for while the intelligence of Peter and John could be engaged and satisfied with a work, Mary's affection could not be; she needed more, she wanted the *Person* who was her object. Peter who had gone into the sepulchre had seen only the linen clothes and the napkin; Mary seeking a Person, as she wept stooped down into the sepulchre and saw the angels. The linen clothes had sufficed for the disciples, but the angels were not enough for Mary. Even in their presence, and without awaiting their answer, she turned back; for she wants her Lord. At first her utter ignorance of the things that were to come to pass hindered her from recognizing Him; but Jesus said to her, "Mary"—one single word, "Mary."

Was it surprising that there should be a link of affection from Mary to Jesus, that the Saviour in the perfection of His person should win all the thoughts and love of a failing, ignorant creature, and above all when she had been the object of such goodness and such a deliverance? But that there should be a link of affection from Jesus to Mary—that was the wonderful thing. Amongst thousands of thousands He knew her by name as His sheep. He remembered the most wretched. She said unto Him, "Master." He replies, not, "Go to my *servants*," but, "Go to my *brethren*, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Mary's affection clinging to Christ received a revelation greater than all those which Peter had had up to this. Love which is set on His person becomes the depositary of further knowledge. Knowing only His work the dis-

ciples had gone away again to their own home; Mary Magdalene with love which clung to His person had learnt at the Saviour's feet the most glorious results of His sacrifice. This is why Peter and John are so in the shade in this scene; a weak woman in all the modesty of her position outstrips them. Their feet were swift, no doubt, to lead them to the sepulchre. Mary was the first to know the path which leads straight to the Father, and, retracing her steps with this marvellous revelation, to carry the message to the disciples.

H. R.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

PSALM cx. 3.

IF the translation of this scripture be difficult the sense may easily be gathered. It is altogether a remarkable psalm. In verse 1 we have the exaltation of Christ at the right hand of God as the answer to His rejection on earth; and the period of His session there is indicated by the words, "Until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Verse 2 passes over the whole of the present interval, the day of grace, even over the actual circumstances of His appearing in glory, as well as the destruction of the beast and antichrist, also the deliverance of His people as recorded in Zechariah xii.-xiv., and exhibits the Messiah as already established in Zion. Hence the words, "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." This will at once explain the phrase in the succeeding verse, "The day of

thy power." Messiah has come, and He has established His throne upon His holy hill of Zion; and it is consequently the day of His power, when in His majesty He will "ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness," and when "thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things." (Psalm xlv. 4.) It is at this time, under the influence of the display of His power, their hearts also being touched, that His people will be willing, will be as "freewill offerings;" *i.e.*, will offer themselves willingly for His service. "The beauties of holiness" should be probably rendered "in holy attire," only the idea of the beauty or magnificence of such a spectacle must be added. After "holiness" there should be a stop, the last clause reading, "From the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth." The womb of the morning represents the dawn of the new day, ushered in by the reign of the Messiah; and "the dew of thy youth" would seem to mean that the youths, who will spring up to follow their Messiah in the early morning of His kingdom, will be as the dew, either in the sense of being for blessing, as the dew is for the earth (see Micah v. 7), or in that of being as numerous as the dew-drops of the morning. Both of these senses should probably be combined. The reader will notice the interchange of persons in verses 4, 5. JEHOVAH hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek; and then it is, ADONAI at thy (Jehovah's) right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath—this verse being a direct address to Jehovah. It adds to the interest of the psalm to remember the use of it made by the Lord Himself in dealing with the Pharisees as

to the person of the Christ (Matt. xxii. 41-45); and also by the apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in setting forth the true character of the priesthood of our blessed Lord.

II.

I JOHN v. 18-20.

It is a wonderful conclusion, which we find in this scripture, to the whole epistle. Three times the apostle says, "We know;" and in each case the word employed indicates inward conscious knowledge; that is, not only knowledge of the fact as revealed, and testified to, in the Scripture, but this knowledge also made good in the soul in the power of the Holy Ghost, so that we have the inward conviction and certainty of its truth, and in such wise that living in the enjoyment of it, we are moulded and governed by it. First, "we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not," &c. This is according to John's presentation of the truth (see chapter iii. 6-9), confining himself entirely to what is born of God, being, what is often termed, an abstract view of the case; so that thinking only of the believer as possessing a divine nature, he can truly say that, so regarded, he does not sin. The next clause reveals his liability and his danger, and hence John adds, "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Next we have, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (or, "the wicked one"). It is of immense moment to possess this certainty (compare John viii. 38-45); and having it, as every believer should, we can never be deceived as to the character of the world; for knowing that we are of God, we also

know that the whole world lies in, is in the power of, and morally exists in, the wicked one. For all who have this inward consciousness, an impassable barrier is raised between them and the world, as morally impassable as that which existed between Lazarus in Abraham's bosom and the rich man in torment. Lastly, "We know that the Son of God has come," &c. And having come He has "given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true." Here the word "know" is different, the reason being that the Son of God is presented to us as the object of faith (compare Gal. ii. 20), and thus, while we may inwardly apprehend Him and His presence, it is ever true that we know Him objectively. The reality and the truth of His person is in this way guarded. (See chapter i. 1.) Then it is added, "And we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." The Lord thus said, after speaking of the coming of the Comforter, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and *ye in me*, and I in you." (John xiv. 20.) The Son is "divinely one" with the Father, and we, having a divine nature and eternal life, are in the Son, as to our place before the Father, as also in His own relationship, as we know from His words, "My Father, and your Father." (Chapter xx. 17.) He, moreover, is in us, and this brings in our responsibility before the world. But this travels beyond our scripture. Having said that we are in Him that is true, John concludes: "This is the true God and Eternal Life." He who is the Son, and Jesus Christ, is, blessed be His name, no less than the true God and eternal life. What grace! And what a privilege to "know" this even now!

E. D.

SIMON PETER.

SERVICE AND FOOD.

JOHN xxi. 1-14.

We have in this passage some instruction with regard to the service and food of the Lord's servants, which we will examine in detail.

After Peter's many experiences, it would seem as if he were henceforth qualified for service. He went forth, followed by six other disciples, to fish in the Sea of Tiberias. What characterized this undertaking was that Peter took the initiative himself of setting to work to obtain the results of his labour. It was in vain, and the night waned before he and his companions had seen their efforts crowned with any success. Peter employed the same means as on a corresponding occasion, previous to his conversion. How often when God entrusts us with active service we set about it like men in the flesh, and our work is barren. It is important to understand that in ministry, all, *absolutely all*, must be of God, and nothing of man.

The scene changed as soon as Jesus stood on the shore; His presence ushered in the dawn of a day of blessing. *His presence* was what was most needed. As long as they had toiled without Him, their efforts were fruitless. It was daybreak when this scene took place. There is *a special moment* determined of God for service, and the disciples, unmindful of it, had lost their time during the whole night. They found the fish the right side of the ship, in a special place only known

to Jesus, and Peter had to trust to this knowledge before his activity could be crowned with success. The disciples cast their net at *His word*, having nothing else to depend on, and they captured one hundred and fifty-three great fishes; their fishing in this place closed with a number determined and known only by the Lord. From this moment they had something else to do; they brought the result of their labour to Jesus. (v. 10.) They did not fish for themselves or for others, but *for the Lord alone*.

Oh that our hearts, dear servants of Christ, might all learn this lesson! When, where, with whom, by whom, and for whom, are we working? Does our life consist in one long night of human activity directed by the will of man? or is it like an aurora illuminated by the Lord's presence? and do we see our nets filled because we work in dependence on Him?

As to the food, Jesus stood on the shore and said, "Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No." Doubtless they thought that this stranger, whom they had not yet recognised, was in need of food. But the question forced them to avow that until now all their labour had given nothing to Christ. Then came the words, "Cast the net." It was as if He said to them, "If you would give me something, you must receive it from me." From that moment John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, could no longer be mistaken; for to him the Lord was One who gave, and to whom nothing was given.

Here another point comes out; the disciples themselves had nothing to eat. Labour does not feed, it causes hunger. Even fruitful labour, a miraculous catch of fish, left the disciples a prey to hunger. How

many souls there are in the present day of activity who remain barren, in spite of their work, because they delude themselves as to the profit accruing to their spiritual life from their activity! It was not on the sea amidst all the surrounding effort and agitation, but on the shore where all was still, that the disciples heard the Lord saying unto them, "Come and dine." The meal was not prepared with fish taken from their net, but provided by the Lord Himself, who distributed it to them. They fed on the result of Christ's work, what He alone had done for them.*

May it be so with us, beloved. When we have brought the result of our service to the Lord that He may do as He thinks best with it, let us sit down, invited by Him to feed on Him in the retirement of the shore. Let us return not only for others, but above all for ourselves, to the holy Word which reveals Christ. Having eaten, Peter was led on a step farther in his service, and enabled to feed the lambs and sheep of the Lord.

THE SOUL RESTORED.

JOHN xxi. 15-19.

HAVING fed and satisfied all His disciples, testifying thus to a love which made no distinction between them, the Lord took Peter apart with Himself, and asked him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Peter loved the Lord. Now, there was a disciple who loved Him, I do not say more, but better than Peter. Whilst the latter was occupied in His service, John was occupied with the Lord. He never

* I do not mean this in any way as a typical explanation of this scene. Others have entered upon it in this way, and I can only refer the reader to their writings.

calls himself the disciple who loved Jesus, but the disciple "*whom Jesus loved.*" What seemed wonderful to him to record was that Jesus should love such an one as he, and he does not weary of repeating it.

Jonathan loved David as his own soul, and yet did not sacrifice his position for him. Abigail's love, which more resembled that of John, was but the sense of its being possible for her to be loved by such a man, she who was but "a servant to wash the feet of the servants of her lord."

John, like Mary Magdalene, was occupied with the person and the love of Christ; therefore he was prompt in recognising Jesus, and did not, like Peter, need some one to tell him, "It is the Lord." Peter, with all the impetuosity of his nature, cast himself into the sea to get to Jesus and show *his* affection. John is satisfied to be the object of Jesus' love.

"Lovest thou me more than these?" Peter had said that he loved Him more, and yet had denied Him. The Lord takes him, so to speak, by the hand, and leads him back to the spot whence his fall originated—confidence in his own strength and in his love for Christ. Three times during the Saviour's last interviews with His disciples Peter clearly manifests his state of soul. "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." (Matthew xxvi. 33.) "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." (Luke xxii. 33.) And, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." (John xiii. 37.) The Lord takes up these three words, beginning with the first: "Though *all* men shall be offended." "Lovest thou me more than these?" All, alas! had forsaken Him, but Peter only

had denied Him, and can therefore no longer rely on his love compared to that of others. Thus humbled, he appeals, not to his feelings, but to the Saviour's knowledge. He *knew*. "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." He does not add, "More than these;" for he compares himself with Christ, and in humility he esteems others better than himself.

Then Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." Pastoral care for young souls springs from humility, together with love for the Lord. Where the Lord finds these things in His people He can trust them with this service. Other gifts are perhaps not so absolutely connected with the inner state; but one cannot really take up the needs of tender souls without self-abnegation and much love, not only for them, but for Christ.

"Feed *my* lambs." This one word shows us what they are for Jesus, and the value of what the Lord confides to Peter. They are His property. The heart of Christ had not changed in regard to Simon, and He entrusted him with what He loved at his first step in the painful pathway leading to restoration. Peter's heart was broken, but sustained by Christ in the breaking. Jesus did not probe it three times to give him an answer only at the third; He gave it already at the first. What delicate affection and care in the discipline! If the three questions had been put without the encouragement of a promise with each, Peter's heart, distressed by his failure, would have been overwhelmed with sorrow; but the promise sustained him each time under the stroke intended to break him down. It was like the burning bush, which grace prevented from being consumed. Jesus probed Peter three times; he had denied Jesus three times. The

last time nothing remained but what the Lord had produced and could approve. Sorrow was there too, no doubt, but joined to the certainty that the love which was the fruit of His love, though buried to the eyes of all by manifestations of the flesh, the all-seeing eye of Christ was alone able to discern. "Lord, *Thou knowest all things*; thou knowest that I love thee." After the second and third questions the care of the sheep and the feeding of the *whole* flock were confided to Peter. It was when, through grace, he had seen himself, and been obliged to appeal to the Lord to discover what he gave up discovering in himself—it was then that he found himself possessed of full and unreserved blessing.

H. R.

 DEVOTEDNESS;

OR, BARZILLAI AND HIS COMPANIONS.

2 SAMUEL xvii. 27-29.

How truly said the wise king, "Forsake the foolish, and live;" not forsake folly, that goes with the man or woman; and again, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise," &c. From this double testimony we learn the overwhelming influence of a person. It used to be said of Napoleon the Great, to be in his company was to be drawn by him, even if he did not say anything.

Now, with regard to the above, I wish to call your attention to the passages before us, an oft-repeated story, and a well-known and well-beaten track; but one of those paths of the Lord which always drop fatness; another tree of Psalm i., that produces fruit in

its season, and whose leaf fadeth not. And who, may I ask, interested in the vicissitudes of "the man after God's own heart," has not in spirit fallen into company with these three men—Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai, hitherto comparative strangers in Bible history—as they come forth from their hiding-places? They had perhaps no preconcerted plan to do homage to the king who for the time has lost both crown and throne, and is driven as a wanderer from his house by his son—the rebellious Absalom, while fully owning in it all the retributive justice of God—"for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

I think we learn this from various records of the Holy Ghost; viz., "David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot." "Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His habitation." "So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David." "I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth." How he bowed his heart and his back to the rod! Would that the same spirit were more known to us all who live in these days of rebuke! What humbleness and contrition of heart it would produce, and we should certainly "find favour in the eyes of the Lord"!

But who are these who rise to the surface at such a moment, and choose to come forth and take sides with him who suffers reproach so patiently? Shobi is of the Ammonites, the inveterate enemies to the people of God, whose forefathers were forbidden to the tenth generation to enter the congregation of

the Lord, because they despised and neglected Israel as they came out of Egypt (Deut. xxiii. 3). But here is a descendant who seems to retrieve their character, and who seizes the opportunity of showing his love and loyalty to God's king, and to his own victor; for David had conquered "the city of waters"—a little faint gleaming of "when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Machir issues from a place of "no pasture," but he too found something to bring to the king in his calamity. Then the aged Barzillai from Gilead, a worthy countryman of the restorer of the ten tribes—Elijah the prophet; veritable descendant of him who was separated from his brethren—Joseph, the ruler of Egypt. These all come from various parts of the country, drawn from home comforts and relationships by the all-absorbing influence of *one person*, that one man, and that man in the worst of circumstances of weariness—hunger and thirst. But why not join the ranks of the usurper, whose forces were accumulating with the hour, and who to *sight* had it all his own way? Because *faith*, which pierces the present, and looks at the future, knew that that rejected one, in distress lying at Mahanaim, was God's king, however much appearances belied the fact; and hence they seize the opportunity to have fellowship with the chosen of God, and to minister what is most acceptable; for affection always understands its object's needs.

Now, to turn aside for a moment, may we not be allowed to draw this beautiful scene of affection into the present moment? And may we not transfer it, in a figure, to the gatherings of those devoted to the true David, specially when together on the first day of the

week? Is it then a doctrine, a certain truth, or a particular command, such as "Thou shalt," that draws together the saints of God from all parts and various circumstances to one spot, of no outward pomp or pretension? Surely it is neither one nor the other of these, but it is the Person who has guaranteed His presence to that place (Matt. xviii. 20), acting on hearts as nothing else has power to do; for it is the Person that makes the affections flow, and so engrosses them that all else is lost sight of. What brought the four hundred miserables to the cave of Adullam (1 Samuel xxii.), and Amasai, the chief of the captains, with his Benjamites, the kindred of the reigning power—King Saul? And what could have drawn forth that beautiful expression of self-surrender, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee"? (1 Chron. xii. 18.) And again, who thought of the dingy walls of the hold, cold and cheerless to the natural eye, when the voice of the sweet psalmist of Israel rose in the praise and the worship of that beautiful fifty-seventh Psalm, that wonderful mixture of prayer and praise, beginning at the bottom with man's need, we might say, and rising to the top—the glory of God, and ending in worship: "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing, yea, I will sing psalms. Awake, my glory; awake, lute and harp: I will wake the dawn." And is it not so with us, when gathered around Himself, and the true David leads the praises of the congregation, His new company? To be occupied with aught else would only show where the heart was, for it all depends, at such times, upon the place Christ has in the heart; if

He is everything to me, then there is no such place outside heaven ; be He little to me, then it is a tedious, wearisome service indeed, and the place becomes the absorbent power because the Person is not supreme ; for it is the person that makes the place, and not the place the person. If Her Majesty the Queen sat in a poor man's house for a few minutes, that little cottage would become the point of attraction for all the village, only because of its royal occupant ; how much more so when the Lord Himself takes His place, as an object of faith, amongst His own, according to His promise.

And now the scene changes ; for neither the son of Jesse nor the true David are to be always in rejection. And chapter xix. witnesses the return of the king ; for the decisive battle in the wood of Ephraim turned the scale, and the murderer and usurper has met his just doom. His violent dealing has come down on his own "pate;" and one of his own stamp is the suitable instrument, viz., the bloodthirsty Joab, but whose decision of character is well worthy of attention. "I may not tarry thus," said he, on hearing of Absalom's hanging in the oak. He well knew how much depended on that life ; and with three arrows he puts him to an ignominious death, and he was cast into a still more ignominious grave. Ah ! the righteous government of God, and His retributive justice, as also in His Fatherly care. "God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Such was the end of the man so beautiful to the eyes of the world. "From the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." Alas ! how commonly is there such a veneering to a wicked heart. See the king of Samaria during the siege of that place, the sackcloth covering

the would-be murderer's heart. (2 Kings vi. 30.) But we find no mention of the "man of fourscore years," Barzillai the Gileadite, in the battle. Perhaps too old for active service, we might say; but not too old to welcome the king on his return. Surely not; we may grow too old to preach the gospel, but never too old to welcome the King, or to be "like unto men that wait for their lord."

Now see chapter xix. 31-39, and listen to the voice of the king as the two meet again: "Come thou over *with me*, and I will feed thee *with me* in Jerusalem." Who can fail to hear the distant echo—"To-day shalt thou be *with me* in paradise." "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be *with me* where I am; that they may behold my glory," &c. "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke xii.)

Again, chapter xix. 36: "Why should the king recompense it me with such a reward?" Who could fail to see the bearing of this? Surely the language of every one now, who has received the grace of God, and intensified by-and-by in the glory. To think that such as we shall be in God's glory! To be saved from judgment to come is beyond all our intelligence; but to be conformed to the image of His Son is even beyond that. Again we echo the aged Barzillai's words: "And why should the king recompense it me with such a reward?"

Turning to 1 Kings ii., we find ourselves beside the death-bed of the conqueror of Goliath of Gath; and we tread softly, for death has its own peculiar silence, and the approach of "the king of terrors" throws his

unmistakable shadow before him ; and we listen eagerly for the last words of "the anointed of God ;" and we hear him dealing out stern justice to Joab, murderer of the two captains of the host of Israel, never forgetting the wicked acts perpetrated on these righteous men ; and then the voice seems to change to the softness of grace, as he says, "*But* show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother." And again, righteousness is heard on the other side of this apparent parenthesis, pronouncing the fate of him who cursed God's king, and disobeyed the king's command. (Eccles. viii. 2.) Often great deeds of life pass before the memory of those who are leaving it ; but here is one who thinks of the injustice done to others, and the kindness to himself by comparative strangers.

Having glanced at the type, let us look for a moment at the surpassing excellence of the antitype, as we visit in spirit the house of the leper in Bethany on that wonderful day when "they made Him a supper" (John xii. ; Mark xiv.), and He, David's Son and Lord, receives the worship and attention of grateful hearts in return for the mighty act of His of yesterday. (Chap. xi.) Did He not, as He sat there the centre of His little company outside the world and its spirit, control each heart, and, at the same time, was there to eat the "pleasant fruits" of His own garden ?

Each of these three seizes the opportunity to do him homage. Dear reader, have you done likewise ? Have you yet seized the opportunity afforded by the rejection of the King to declare yourself in this way, "On thy side, thou Son of Jesse ;" or, like another

set, do you find yourself with the ruler of the Jews, Nicodemus, and the honourable counsellor, Joseph, in negative testimony; lacking in that faith which overcomes the apparent difficulties, and boldly declares itself whilst acknowledging the rightness of the path? Such a testimony always existed, from the days of the twelve spies sent by Moses, the two and a half tribes and Israel, the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, but who had not publicly bowed the knee to Jehovah, and the positive testimony of Elijah the Tishbite.

I turn lastly to the "patience" and the "pillar" of Revelation iii. 10-12. He who keeps the word of my patience now, shall be a pillar then. Keeping His word, and not denying His name, is to be a "pillar" in the day of His glory—a special reward for a special testimony.

In drawing this to a close, I would only remark how short the notice given of all these worthies; and none of them scarcely appear again in the Scripture. The long life of the "very great man," Barzillai, who, with no mention in God's record, had perhaps, like many another, lived in his quiet habitation, and such an opportunity for the display of his faith had not arisen before. Or it may be that the Holy Ghost, as in the case of Jacob and his son Joseph, seized the most worthy act, at the end of life, to be placed everlastingly to his account. But is this not the uniform practice of God? How short the account of the visit of Onesiphorus to the apostle in the Roman dungeon, of the refreshment of which Paul made such striking notice, and which he puts in bright contrast to Phygellus and Hermogenes who had forsaken him! Again, how

briefly the service of Epaphroditus is recorded, the man who travelled perhaps one thousand miles to serve Paul and the saints; and we might add to this list Mary of Bethany, and many others. The Lord give us to realize what the present moment affords us.

J. S. B.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

CHAPTER xiii. 11-18.

IN this section of our book we have no less a personage than the antichrist introduced. Again and again his appearance on the scene is predicted, both by prophets of the Old Testament and by apostles of the New; and now, at last, we are permitted to see him emerge into view, and to read the character of his power and kingdom as delineated by the Spirit of God through His servant John. In a few brief words this diabolical instrument is described: "*And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.*" (v. 11.)

Unlike the first beast of this chapter, who rose up out of the sea, out of the masses of the people in a state of lawless confusion, antichrist comes up out of the earth. The earth is a symbol of organized and ordered government, and we learn, therefore, that he gets his place in a regular governmental or political manner—obtains his sway after a legal form; and consequently his position will be in accord with the civil and political arrangements of the period.

Before proceeding to consider the account here given, it may be well to answer two or three questions to enable the reader to pursue the subject more intelli-

gently. First, then, it may be enquired, Have we any information as to who the antichrist will be? From a passage in Daniel it appears that he will be a Jew, an apostate Jew. Speaking of "the king," who undoubtedly is the antichrist (compare Daniel xi. 36 with 2 Thess. ii. 4), he says, "Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers" (xi. 37), that is, Jehovah as revealed to Israel. Our Lord's words point to the same conclusion. He said, speaking to the Jews, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." (John v. 43.) The very contrast drawn with Himself shows that our Lord had antichrist in view; and it is thus sufficiently plain, without adducing other scriptures bearing on the point, that this false usurper will spring out of the Jewish nation.

This conclusion, together with many indications in the Apocalypse, enables us with certainty to determine the next point as to the place and seat of his power. It will be Jerusalem; for at that time the Jews will have returned in unbelief, and will have built their temple (see chapter xi.), and, as a consequence, will be morally ready to receive a false Christ. (See Matthew xxiv.) The apostle Paul declares plainly that this "man of sin," "the son of perdition," will sit "in the temple of God, showing himself that he is god" (2 Thess. ii. 4); and we know the temple will be at Jerusalem. Lastly, we may again answer the question as to the period indicated. It has been already explained, more than once, that these events take place after the rapture of the Church, and before the appearing of Christ.

This is entirely corroborated by the apostle's state-

ment in 2 Thess. ii. He says, "And now ye know what withholdeth that he ['the man of sin'] might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [restraineth] will let [restrain], until he be taken out of the way.* And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." (vv. 6-8.) The Spirit of God in the Church, though the mystery of iniquity already works, restrains, and will restrain the manifestation of the evil in the person of the "son of perdition"† until He departs with the Church. Then room is made for the revelation of this incarnation of evil, and he will continue until destroyed by the Lord Himself at His appearing. It is clear, therefore, beyond all question, that the interval between the Lord's coming for His saints and His appearing in glory is the period of antichrist's rise and power.

Returning now to our chapter, two things are specially noted. First, this beast had two horns like a lamb. Claiming to be the expected Messiah, he imitates, assumes the appearance of, the true Christ. He was like a lamb in the vision; and, moreover, he had two horns; he had, that is, two of the forms of power which Christ as the Messiah will exercise. These

* It has sometimes been contended that this clause ought to be translated, "until he be developed out of the midst," and many quotations from the classics are given in support; the object being to prove that the Church will be here at the same time as antichrist, and thus will have to pass through the great tribulation. Having been at some pains to examine the alleged use of the phrase, we found that in no single instance did the citation sustain the contention.

† The careful reader will recall the fact that the Lord applies this term to Judas.

are here the forms of prophetic and kingly power. Satan could not now give the third form, that of the priest; for he had lost his anti-priestly place when he was cast down out of heaven. (See chapter xii. 9, 10.) The other two he bestows upon his blind tool that he might lure therewith the Jewish nation to destruction. As ever, he will resort to imitation in order to deceive the unwary, and to accomplish their eternal ruin. (Compare 2 Cor. xi. 13-15; 2 Timothy iii. 8.) Assume, however, whatever appearance he may, he cannot morally change his nature; for he spake as a dragon. The dragon is Satan (chapter xii.; also verses 2, 3), and hence, if lamblike in form, his speech betrays him. Those taught of God, therefore, spite of his pretensions, will discern his true character; for the sheep know the voice of the good Shepherd, and they know not the voice of strangers. (John x.) So too, as we read in John's epistle, the babes in the family of God, warned against the many antichrists already in the world, shadows and forerunners of *the* antichrist, are reminded that they have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things. No saint of God, therefore, need be led astray, however specious the deception presented.

We have next the twofold form of his power—what may be termed civil or governmental and religious power. "*And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.*" (v. 12.) We gather from the first part of this description that antichrist will be a kind of deputy, or viceroy of the imperial head of the Roman empire; and consequently that he will be sustained in his position by all the forces of the empire. There may

be a special reason for this. It is evident from other scriptures that antichrist, during his sway, will be exposed to attacks from the "king of the north," or the Assyrian (see Daniel xi. 40-45); and it would seem from another prophecy, that antichrist will enter into a league with the Roman power to make common cause against his adversary. (See Isaiah xxviii. 14-22.) This may account for the fact here stated that he exercises all the power of the first beast before it. In return for the Roman support he assumes the office of prophet to the imperial head, and compels men to worship the first beast. It was a common thing for Roman emperors in the past to demand divine honours; and once more, as we here learn, the same thing will be witnessed in the world's history. The almost miraculous resuscitation of the imperial governmental form of power, when the "deadly wound" is healed (*v.* 3), will make the world wonder after the beast, and will, at the same time, prepare the way for its deification. The poor world, with all its vaunted wisdom and enlightenment, will be unable to distinguish between divine and Satanic power. And the culmination of its progress and civilization will be seen in the worship of the image of a man. Men will readily fall into the snare under the blinding influences of the strong delusion which God, in judgment, will send upon them, "that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned [judged] who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.)

Moreover, he will sustain his claims by miraculous displays of power. Like Elijah, he will cause fire to "come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men;" and even as the Lord Himself, he will work

miracles to accredit his mission (compare 2 Thess. ii. 9), and to prove the first beast's title to divine homage. Thereby he will deceive "*them that dwell on the earth,*" and induce them to "*make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.*" (v. 14.)

He is permitted to go still further under the inspiration of Satan; for he will have "*power to give life* [not life, but *breath*] *unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*" (v. 15.) Nebuchadnezzar went far, when he erected his image of gold in the plain of Dura, and issued a decree that all men should worship it, with the penalty of the burning fiery furnace if they refused. Antichrist will go still further; for his image, instinct with its diabolical breath, and the mouthpiece of Satan in its utterances, will fill the minds of its worshippers with fear and dread, so that all, save the elect of God (v. 8.), will be constrained to obey the behest of antichrist, and to offer their homage to this creature of hell. They would not have God, and now they must worship Satan. Alas for man when he falls under the unhindered power of the devil!

Antichrist proceeds to regulate even commerce. He will cause "*all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*" (vv. 16, 17.) He will thus form a vast organization, composed of all save those whose names were written, from the foundation of the world, in the slain Lamb's book of life, outside of which it will not be lawful to buy or sell. Every member of it

must bear the mark of allegiance to the beast in order to possess the liberty to trade. Under the mask of the welfare of the empire, all will be subjected to this awful tyranny under the pains and penalties of the deprivation of the commonest liberty of the individual. Foreshadowings of this frightful abuse of authority are frequently seen even in this tolerant age, affording a sufficient warning to those whose eyes are opened, that the most absolute despotism may often be cloaked under a profession of the most liberal ideas, and giving also an indication of the ultimate goal of modern politics under the concealed guidance and inspiration of Satan.

The chapter concludes with the number of the beast, which is six hundred and sixty-six. And "*here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man.*" (v. 18.) Many have been the attempts to unravel this mystery; but all have been in vain. And we conclude, from the analogy of Scripture, that it will be impossible to discover the secret *before the beast's appearance*. When at length he shall come upon the scene, those who have the wisdom of God will be able to identify him by the number given; and they will thus be divinely forewarned. The indication here afforded is consequently for those who will be in the circumstances described.

It may be helpful to some if we add, that in order to obtain a complete view of the antichrist the various scriptures on the subject must be combined. Here, as before said, we have his actings in Jerusalem, and his relation to the imperial head of the Roman empire; in Daniel we see him menaced by the king of the north, or the Assyrian; in 2 Thess. ii. he is presented

in relation to Judaism, which he seeks to set aside and supersede by claiming divine homage for himself; whereas in John's epistle he is seen as the denier of the Father and the Son; that is, of Christianity as so revealed. (1 John ii. 22; see also 2 John 7.) What a contrast between the Christ of God and the antichrist of Satan! And let it not be forgotten that the mystery of lawlessness is already working, that many antichrists are abroad at this moment in the world, who, by their specious and subtle reasonings upon the word of God, are fast preparing the minds of men for the total rejection of all revealed truth, and thus to accept the guidance of Satan in the place of that of the Holy Spirit of God.

E. D.

“WHAT MEANETH...THIS BLEATING OF THE
SHEEP...AND THE LOWING OF THE
OXEN WHICH I HEAR?”

I SAMUEL xv.

It is important to remember that we “are not under the law, but under grace.” Israel was under grace when Amalek came and fought against them. (Exodus xvii.) They had not yet placed themselves under the responsibility of keeping the law, and thus made themselves dependent for blessing on their own obedience.

Now, though we are “not under the law, but under grace,” the flesh is not changed. The old nature remains, and Amalek (a type of Satan) can still use it. The Lord had in grace given them water, a supply for the desert, in verse 6, as He has also in perfect grace given to us the Holy Spirit. Amalek opposes at

once this state of things. The people overcame by the intercession of Moses, as we overcome by the intercession of Christ; but the Lord swears that He "will have war with Amalek"—that is, with Satan—"from generation to generation." Only Moses' hands were heavy, and he had to be sustained, and the victory was ebbing and flowing. Christ is never thus; and hence the Christian dependent on Him can always say, "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Rom. viii. 37.)

All our troubles, individual trials as well as conflicts in the Church, come through the flesh. Satan would be no trial to us, did not the flesh exist, on which he can and does act. I ought to treat the promptings of the flesh in me as Satan (Amalek), God's enemy and mine. It was thus the Lord treated it in Peter. Apparently affection, or pity, or amiability; yet the Lord says, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (Matthew xvi.)

Do *we* thus treat the suggestions of the flesh? Alas! no; and hence "this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear." Amalek is spared, for the flesh is spared; and the disturbed and disturbing clang of voices in the camp comes from that which is *spared*, and which ought to be *judged*. Ah! but you say, Is there *nothing* good in me? One has said, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing." But we are ready to respond, "I do *not* know it. Is not my morality, or my industry, or my religion to be of some account?" Saul thought so. He thought there was a best and a worst side to be considered, as you do; and while he would not defend the *worst*, he pleaded for and spared the *best*. Do you

think Satan has a best side in the eyes of God? The flesh came from Satan, not from God. But "Saul and the people spared Agag, and the *best* of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and *all that was good.*" Why? "To sacrifice unto the Lord thy God," he says to Samuel, "in Gilgal." Yet God had said, "Go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have." Something "*good*" from this flesh of mine for God! Something *I* can excuse. A corner *in my* heart on which I write, "This is reserved from judgment." This thing is not, in God's account, wholly gone in the cross! Alas! it is easy to write and exhort. But what are we going to *do*? What am I *sparing* which *you* know nothing about? What are *you* allowing which I know nothing of? We are hindering if we are not helping the peace of the whole company.

And to spare the flesh, though only in its *best* form, is to spare "Agag the king of the Amalekites." Ah! you had no thought of sparing him—God's great enemy—when you pitied *yourself*, and allowed the flesh, in its politest and gentlest form, a little space. Is it any wonder that there is a disturbed clang of voices in the camp, where God dwells among His people? or that there should be confusion in your own soul? Ishmael is allowed a place in that house, and there is no quiet or peace known in it. "As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, *even so it is now.*"

Do you not hear "this bleating of the sheep . . . and the lowing of the oxen"? What means it in your own heart? What means it among God's people? May we be willing to take the true place of owning that *we* have ministered to this state of things, and judge our-

selves in His presence who smites us, but only that He may heal us; that in private and in ways unknown to each other the flesh has been *spared*, and hence the multitude of voices filling the air. God cannot accept that which we spare. The word to us is, "Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord." Oh, may the Lord give us to be simple, and to be real in private and individually, as to these things! H. C. A.

NOTES OF A READING.

PSALM li. ; 2 CORINTHIANS iii., iv.

THERE are two truths which the more we understand with God the more power we shall have. First, what our flesh is—its utter ruin and evil; and, second, the astounding place we are brought into through grace and the redemption work of Christ; and then, gazing upon Him, we find the transforming power changing us into His own image—a very feeble image, but true. These are the two great truths which the Lord weighs out to us in the balances of the sanctuary (we having a title through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ), and in proportion as we learn the one we learn the other.

We only learn truth with God.

There was a wonderful power of the Spirit in king David. He had sinned against many, murdered Uriah, one of his mighty men; but God so fills the vision of his soul that he refers it all to God—"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." He justifies God, accepts the punishment of his iniquity, and comes to be of the same mind with God about his condition. He goes back (verse 5) to original sin (as it is called).

This scripture, Psalm li., is not the deliverance of Romans vii., where a person learns grace. It is more than that; it is judging the nature and flesh, and that condition out of which God delivers me. Here I get the difference of dispensation. A quiet person who has gone on without outward falls or troubles, with the ordinary experiences of a Christian life, may be given by God such a sense of himself as will force him to this verse 5. When I see a thing as God sees it, and am conscious that I do so, there is positive power with God.

The first part of Romans deals with the question of forgiveness of sins. Then comes the question of sin. I find I am nothing but a sinner after all, and if not kept may do worse things than I ever did before. And the answer to that is, You have died with Christ. God says, "You are a dear child, but a poor thing. You have eternal life, my Son's own life, but in an earthen vessel." And then comes our judgment (of ourselves), the loathing of the flesh which characterizes us while possessing the earthen vessel. How far have we all got as to this? If honest with ourselves, how far have we judged ourselves?—not the evil that has come out, but the evil within. David says, Well, there never was any good in me. I have shown it thoroughly out.

Sins are the fruit of the thing I have got. We have to confess our sins; but we have to confess also that our nature is as bad as God says it is; and this leads to liberty of soul, and peace. Peter loved the Lord strongly. He was a fine man, but very self-confident. His *conscience* was not reached by the look when he went out and wept bitterly; his *affections* were reached. But in John xxi. the Lord came to show

Peter he must be broken, asks him three times, "Lovest thou me?" and then his conscience was reached. He got this immense blessing, he judged himself, saw his self-confidence and folly, and that if he was to go on at all it must be the Lord, and not Peter.

Do you think our consciences have been so reached that we are free before God to say we are as bad as He says we are? It is a serious question, because we never shall understand what redemption is until we see in ourselves the total ruin of nature. We are redeemed by Christ, and the treasure is in an earthen vessel. When gazing on Christ, and the affections moved, we are not sinning. Look at 2 Corinthians iii. It is not only for apostles or any particular people, but for all of us. When looking at Him will is not in activity. "We all, with open face beholding," &c. The eye of faith is opened now, and it sees the glory streaming from the face of Jesus Christ. What does the unveiled Face tell me as I gaze upon it there? That no sin and sins exist before God for His people as to their standing. Christ is seen with unveiled face; and there is nothing between us and the eternal God but the love that has brought us there. It is our privilege to be occupied with Him, seeing Him. You cannot follow even a worldly person, if a superior, without imitating him. The more I see the moral glory of the Lord Jesus, the more I see how unlike Him I am—nothing in me as it ought to be; and so the transforming power goes on, and the person begins to bear some faint shade of the image of Christ. A poor thing indeed. Still Paul could write to the Corinthians, "Ye are the epistle of Christ."

In 2 Corinthians iv. we get the contrast between

Moses and the apostles. Moses's face shone. He was a great man, but we (apostles) can say nothing about ourselves; we are hid behind Him in whose face the glory shines. The apostle had seen Christ in the glory, and that was his testimony. As sure as you know He is there you are saved; but "we have this treasure in earthen vessels."

Then we get the provision for the exercises. You must get to the cross as quickly as you can, "bearing about the dying." Finding He is our life, and we failing in manifesting it, God applies death (sorrows, losses, &c.), to us, that the life may be manifested.

We see ourselves in the mirror of God's word in Psalm li., and again in 2 Corinthians iii. The Word is God's great instrument with His people. He uses it as the sharp two-edged sword.

As being saved, because I *am* delivered, and I know that He loves me as He loved the Lord Jesus, I want to see myself as God sees me. He says, You are all bad; no good thing ever came out of you; you had better have done with yourself. G. A.

SCRIPTURE NOTE.

I.

HEBREWS iii. 1.

According to the truth of this epistle believers are seen as a company of pilgrims—Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of their profession, being on high—journeying on through the wilderness to the rest—God's rest—which had been promised, and which remained for the people of God. (iv. 9.) It is to this, in fact, they were

“called.” This calling is “heavenly,” because it comes from heaven and leads to heaven. This is strikingly set forth by the apostle Peter, who says, “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by [in] Christ Jesus,” &c. (1 Peter v. 10.) No doubt there is at the same time a contrast implied. The Jews had an earthly calling, a calling to an earthly inheritance; but the Christian calling, as these Hebrew believers are reminded, is of a heavenly character—one connected with heavenly blessings, a heavenly inheritance and heavenly hopes. Hence it was that, looking for nothing here, their hearts and expectations being outside of this scene, that some of these faithful saints could take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had “in heaven a better and an enduring substance.” (Chapter x. 34.) In 1 Corinthians xv. we learn that believers themselves are heavenly. (v. 48.) The first man (Adam) is of the earth, earthy: the second Man (Christ) “out of heaven.” (See *New Translation*.) All who belong to Adam follow his order; and all who belong to Christ are after His order. And so completely is this the case, that not only are believers heavenly in character, but they will also “bear the image of the heavenly;” that is, their resurrection bodies will be of the same kind and order as the glorified body of our blessed Lord. (See Philippians iii. 21.) Nothing short of the recognition of this is Christianity. The inference is evident, that heavenly ways should distinguish a heavenly people; and this will be in proportion as we seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and our minds are on things above, and not on things on the earth.

SIMON PETER.

"FOLLOW ME."

JOHN xxi. 18, 19.

PETER, trusting in himself, had said: "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." (Luke xxii. 33.) When he had been broken down in soul the Lord could teach him: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest." At the beginning of his career he disposed, so to speak, of his own strength (the girdle is what strengthens a man's loins*). Self-confidence was the result; he went whither he would, and walked thus in independence. "But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." At the close of his career, when his natural strength would have been weakened by old age, he would depend on another for strength, and would consent to be guided by others who would lead him where perhaps his will would never have led him, "into prison, and to death." The thing would take place, but not with man's strength; it would be realized in the weakness of old age. "This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God." God would be glorified in this complete breaking down of man, when, old, weak, and led by others against his wishes, he

* It is interesting to see in the Word that we are girded for the walk (Exodus xii. 11), for service (Luke xii. 35), and for conflict. (Eph. vi. 14.)

might seem to have become a useless vessel. How habitually our judgment is wrong as to what suits and honours God. When, smitten in our bodies, perhaps even in our intellect, we are set aside by men, when feeling our uselessness, we might be tempted to say with the world, that we are no longer good for anything, God declares that we are of use to Him. Up to this the disciple, with all his energy, had often dishonoured instead of glorifying the Lord. Now he is about to grow old and weak and to die, and in view of his death God says, "This is what glorifies me." In order that this glory should be realized, there must be broken, dependent vessels which have no strength but God's.

It was then that Jesus said, "Follow me." He replies to what Peter had said before, "Why cannot I follow thee now?" (John xiii. 37.) Henceforth he would be able to follow Him.

"Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?" (v. 20.) Three things here characterized the beloved disciple. He was *the object of Christ's love*, and he knew it; he had confidence in Christ alone, and his attitude during supper showed that he enjoyed an intimacy of communion with the Father which others did not. There is no more simple motive for following Jesus than this, His love, which we know attracts us after Him, wins our confidence naturally, and brings us into communion with the Lord. Peter was now allowed to follow the Lord step by step unto death. His experiences of self, previous to being restored (Luke xxii. 32), were over; he had lost confidence in self, gained confidence in Christ, and he entered now

on the blessed pathway, in which he was going to learn the realization of dependence unto death. I say "was going to learn," for dependence is not learnt in a day, however deep the work wrought in the soul may be. "When thou shalt be old," said the Lord. Peter had to be tried even to death, and there, as with his Master, would be found the crowning of a life called to glorify God. John had another mission; he was not called to follow the path of Christ in a violent death, but to remain figuratively until the Lord come, present during the decline and ruin of the Church, and with her at the coming in power of the Lord, the picture of which the disciples had seen on the holy mount in connection with the kingdom. But John also follows the Lord. He had not the same need, as Peter, of a command or encouragement to follow Him; love attracted him.

In following the Lord, Peter did not need to be occupied with others. "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." The moment one turns round, one ceases following, and one pauses. It is a serious thing. To follow, there must be unity of thought and a single eye. Peter could not be occupied with John and Christ at the same time. In order to follow the Lord closely, He must have taken possession of us so powerfully, that we belong no longer to ourselves. That is the only means of self-denial and of boldly taking up our cross. We count Jesus alone worthy of being followed down here, even at the cost of a life of suffering. The disciples had followed in two ways, before and after the cross. In the first chapter of John, Jesus said to Philip, "Follow me." In the last chapter He says to Peter, "Follow me." In the first case, before the cross, the disciples had abandoned all

to follow Him, for they had faith in Him; but in presence of Calvary their steps halt, and they all flee. Peter went on the last, and followed afar off, but we have seen how it ended.

After the cross the pathway interrupted recommences, but the disciples thenceforth follow a risen, heavenly Christ, who imprints His character on their walk, and it becomes heavenly. Before the cross, the multitude could follow, though it might be from quite other motives and feelings to the disciples; after the cross, the world can do so no longer; for it necessitates the death of the old man and the power of the Spirit, two things which only the believer finds in the death and resurrection of Christ.

May God give us deeper and sustained and increasing energy to follow Him. It is in following Him who has left us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter ii. 21) that we become ensamples to others. Our privilege is to possess in Him a model Man, walking on earth in absolute perfection, and sanctified in heaven for us; but, let me repeat, it is in following Him that we become ensamples to our brethren. The apostle Paul said, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." (Phil. iii. 17.) Paul, in pointing to himself as one to be *followed*, had no desire to substitute himself for Jesus; but he showed the example of a man who, having no object but this blessed Person, had set forth to follow Him, pressing forward to win Him in glory. Thus Paul's individuality did not hide the Lord from his brethren, but, on the contrary, showed Him forth as the only object worthy of being followed and attained.

H. R.

SANCTIFICATION.

I THESSALONIANS V.

LET us examine a little into that which this passage teaches us with regard to sanctification. It is connected indeed with a nature, but it is linked with an object; and it depends for its realization on the operation of another, namely, of God Himself; and it is founded on a perfect work of reconciliation with God already accomplished. Inasmuch as it is founded on an accomplished reconciliation, into which we enter by the reception of a new nature, the Scriptures consider Christians as already perfectly sanctified in Christ. It is practically carried out by the operation of the Holy Ghost, who in imparting this nature separates us—as thus born again—entirely from the world. It is important to maintain this truth, and to stand very clearly and distinctly on this ground, otherwise practical sanctification soon becomes detached from a new nature received, and is but the amelioration of the natural man; and then it is quite legal, a return—after reconciliation—into doubt and uncertainty; because, though justified, the man is not accounted meet for heaven—this depends on progress; so that justification does not give peace with God. Scripture says, “Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Progress there is, but it is not in Scripture connected with meetness. The thief was meet for Paradise and went there. Such views are an enfeebling, not to say destructive, of the work of redemption, that is, of its appreciation in our hearts by faith.

We *are* then sanctified (it is thus the Scripture most frequently speaks) by God the Father, by the blood and the offering of Christ, and by the Spirit—that is to say, we are set apart for God personally and for ever. In this point of view justification is presented in the Word as consequent upon sanctification, a thing into which we enter through it. Taken up as sinners in the world, we are set apart by the Holy Ghost to enjoy all the efficacy of the work of Christ according to the counsels of the Father; set apart by the communication of a new life, no doubt, but placed by this setting apart in the enjoyment of all that Christ has gained for us. I say again, it is very important to hold fast this truth, both for the glory of God, and for our own peace; but the Spirit of God in this epistle does not speak of it in this point of view, but of the practical realization of the development of this life of separation from the world and from evil. He speaks of this divine development in the inner man, which makes sanctification a real and intelligent condition of soul, a state of practical communion with God, according to that nature and to the revelation of God with which it is connected.

In this respect we find indeed a principle of life which works in us—that which is called a subjective state; but it is impossible to separate this operation in us from an object (man would be God if it were so), nor consequently from a continual work of God in us that holds us in communion with that object, which is God Himself. Accordingly, it is through the truth by the word, whether at first in the communication of life, or in detail all along our path. “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.”

Man we know has degraded himself. He has enslaved

himself to the lusts of the animal part of his being. But how? By departing from God. God does not sanctify man apart from the knowledge of Himself, leaving man still at a distance from Him; but, while giving him a new nature which is capable of it, by giving to this nature (which cannot even exist without it) an object—Himself. He does not make man independent, as he wished to be; the new man is the dependent man; it is his perfection—Jesus Christ exemplified this in His life. The new man is a man dependent in his affections, who desires to be so, who delights in, and cannot be happy without being so, and whose dependence is on love, while still obedient as a dependent being ought to be.

Thus they who are sanctified possess a nature that is holy in its desires and its tastes. It is the divine nature in them, the life of Christ. But they do not cease to be men. They have God revealed in Christ for their object. Sanctification is developed in communion with God, and in affections which go back to Christ, and which wait for Him. But the new nature cannot reveal an object to itself; and still less could it have its object by setting God aside at its will. It is dependent on God for the revelation of Himself. His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost whom He has given us; and the same Spirit takes of the things of Christ and communicates them to us. Thus we grow in the knowledge of God, being strengthened mightily by His Spirit in the inner man, that we may understand with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and know the love of Christ, and be filled unto the fulness of God. Thus, gazing with open face upon the glory of

the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." We see by these passages, which might be multiplied, that we are dependent on an object, and that we are dependent on the strength of another. Love acts in order to work in us according to this need.

Our setting apart for God which is complete (for it is by means of a nature that is purely of Himself, and in absolute responsibility to Him, for we are no longer our own, but are bought with a price and sanctified by the blood of Christ according to the will of God, who will have us for His own), places us in a relationship, the development of which (by an increasing knowledge of God, who is the object of our new nature) is practical sanctification, wrought in us by the power of the Holy Ghost, the witness in us of the love of God. He attaches the heart to God, ever revealing Him more and more, and at the same time unfolding the glory of Christ and all the divine qualities that were displayed in Him in human nature, thus forming ours as born of God.

Therefore it is that we have seen in this epistle that love, working in us, is the means of sanctification. (Chap. iii. 12, 13.) It is the activity of the new nature, of the divine nature in us; and that connected with the presence of God; for he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God. And in this chap. v. the saints are commended to God Himself, that He may work it in them, while we are always set in view of the glorious objects of our faith in order to accomplish it.

We may here more particularly call the reader's

attention to these objects. They are, God Himself, and the coming of Christ: on the one hand, communion with God; on the other, waiting for Christ. It is most evident that communion with God is the practical position of the highest sanctification. He who knows that we shall see Jesus as He now is, and be like Him, purifies himself even as He is pure. By our communion with the God of peace we are wholly sanctified. If God is practically our all, we are altogether holy. (We are not speaking of any change in the flesh, which can neither be subjected to God, nor please Him.) The thought of Christ and His coming preserves us, practically, and in detail, and intelligently, blameless. It is God Himself who thus preserves us, and who works in us to occupy our hearts and to cause us continually to grow.

But this point deserves yet a few more words. The freshness of Christian life in the Thessalonians made it, as it were, more objective; so that these objects are prominent, and very distinctly recognized by the heart. We have already said that they are God the Father and the Lord Jesus. With reference to the communion of love with the saints as His crown and glory, he only speaks of the Lord Jesus. This has a special character of reward, although a reward in which love reigns. Jesus Himself had the joy that was set before Him as sustainment in His sufferings, a joy which thus was personal to Himself. The apostle also, as regarded his work and labour, waited with Christ for its fruit. Besides this case of the apostle (chap. ii.), we find God Himself and Jesus as the objects before us, and the joy of communion with God—and this in the relationship of Father—and with Christ, whose glory and position we share through grace,

Thus it is only in the two epistles to the Thessalonians that we find the expression "To the church which is in God the Father." The sphere of their communion is thus shown, founded on the relationship in which they found themselves with God Himself in the character of Father. (1 Thess. i. 3, 9, 10; iii. 13; iv. 15, 16; and here v. 23.) It is important to remark, that the more vigorous and living Christianity is, the more objective it is. It is but saying that God and the Lord Jesus have a greater place in our thoughts, and that we rest more really upon them. This epistle to the Thessalonians is the part of Scripture which instructs on this point; and it is a means of judging many a fallacy in the heart, and of giving a great simplicity to our Christianity. J. N. D.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

CHAPTER xiv. 1-5.

IN the two previous chapters we have the record of Satan's activity through his chosen instruments in his attempt to place his yoke upon all the inhabitants of the earth. All his malice and hatred are directed against God, against His Christ, and against His people. For the moment, as also when our Lord was crucified, he *seems* to be victorious; he has asserted his power, and his sway is almost undisputed. Evil, and evil in its own native blackness and corruption, is triumphant.

In contrast with this, chapter xiv. opens like a magnificent sunrise after a stormy night. It is a burst of light which contains the promise that all the clouds that had obscured the scene will be swept away. "And

I looked, and, lo, a" (rather, the) "*Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name* written in their foreheads.*" (v. 1.) This, as is often the case in this book, is an anticipative vision, revealing the end for the comfort of the saints, before the judgments are detailed which lead up to this point. In chapter xiii. the frightful oppression and persecution of the saints is seen; and in this vision they are displayed as having been tried and come forth as gold, and, as the result, enjoying a special place of association with the Lamb.

Several points in the vision must be observed. As above indicated, it is *the* Lamb, the Lamb already known as presented in this book. But here He is seen in a new place. In chapter v. He is revealed as standing in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders. Here He stands on mount Zion. John saw Him first "as it had been slain;" and we have thus three successive stages marked: first, the cross; next, His exaltation to the throne of God; and, lastly, His being set as God's King upon His holy hill of Zion. (Psalm ii.) For Zion is the seat of royal grace from David's time and onwards (see 1 Chron. xxi.; Psalm xlvi. 1; compare Heb. xii. 22); and consequently Christ is here displayed in the glory of His kingdom. The vision overleaps all the intervening sorrows and judgments, and, as in the scene on the mount of Transfiguration, permits us to behold His majesty and glory in the seat of His earthly rule and dominion.

* The preferred reading is, "His name and the name of His Father."

There are with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand. Who are these? They are not, though the same symbolical number,* those sealed from the twelve tribes in chapter vii.; for the elect remnant out of the ten tribes will not be restored to the land of Israel until after Messiah shall sit upon the throne of His glory; whereas these are the preserved of the two tribes already in the land, those who will have passed through the sorrows of the period before the appearing of Christ, and hence termed "the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb." (v. 4.) The ten tribes will not pass through the unparalleled troubles of which the Lord speaks in Matthew xxiv. 15-28, all of which will have their centre in Jerusalem, and be, as to the Jews, confined to the land. In the restoration from Babylon, of which we read in Ezra, only two tribes were concerned, saving individuals of other tribes, Judah and Benjamin. It was to these two tribes in the land that Christ was presented; but when He came to His own His own received Him not, and on them therefore lay the guilt of His rejection and crucifixion. By these same two tribes, that is, by the mass and their leaders, antichrist will be received; and thus it will be upon them that the chastisements of that day will descend, when the tribulation will be so great that no flesh would be saved, if for the elect's sake the days were not shortened. The 144,000 are these elect, the true remnant, who, in the midst of the apostasy of their brethren, as well as of the seduction and oppression of the antichrist, cleave to God and His truth, and are

* Twelve is the number representing the perfection of administrative government in man (in Christ). Twelve times twelve will exhibit this in intensified perfection.

saved out of this time of Jacob's trouble. (Jer. xxx. 7.) Their weeping had endured for the night, but joy had come in the morning with the interposition of their glorious and looked-for Messiah. (See Isa. xxv. 9.) In this scene we see the full issue of God's grace through their sufferings, in their being made the companions of the Lamb amid the glories of His kingdom.

They are distinguished, moreover, by having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. The name, or the mark, of the beast had been written on the foreheads (or on the hands) of his followers—sign of their apostasy, and of the degrading yoke which they had accepted; but these, the 144,000, have the name of the Lamb, the expression of their allegiance and of their moral likeness to the One they follow, and the name of His (not *their*, because they, whatever their place, have not the Spirit of adoption) Father written on their foreheads. They had openly confessed the name of God and the Lamb, and had suffered, short of death, as Christ had suffered through the confession of the name of His Father. (See John v. 17, 18.) They had therefore come into His former place on earth, in regard to His testimony, however feebly they had occupied it; and now in the abounding grace of God their foreheads are adorned with the names of the Lamb and of His Father, a proclamation to all of their past fidelity, and of the rich recompense which had been awarded to them by Him for whom they had suffered.

It is in connection with the appearance of this elect remnant with the Lamb on mount Zion that John "*heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and*" (he says) "*I*

heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth."* (vv. 2, 3.) Who these heavenly choristers are we are not told. The voice is "from heaven," and the song is sung before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders. But whoever may be these celebrants of praise, the subject would seem, from the connection, to be that of the victorious issue of the sufferings of this chosen remnant, traced back, doubtless, to God's grace and the blood of the Lamb, (Compare chapter v. 9, 10.) This is the more evident from the fact, that no one could learn that song but the 144,000, for none but they had passed through the sorrows or had experienced the grace connected with their deliverance. The song suited to them in their circumstances was raised in heaven; and they, as in communion with the mind of God, caught up and repeated the strains. Happy are the saints of any period when they are enabled to apprehend in any measure the mind of God concerning His beloved Son, and when, with adoring hearts, they can utter, in the power of the Spirit, His worthiness and praise.

Their characteristics follow. First, they had not defiled themselves with women; "*for they are virgins.*" (v. 4.) In a scene where all had corrupted themselves they had been kept pure, pure from all the contamination by which they had been surrounded, guarding them-

* This should really be rendered "bought." It is remarkable, but very significant, that the word redemption is not found in this book. It is always ἀγοράζειν, and never ληστρούν.

selves from all the seductions of antichrist, and keeping themselves alone for Him for whom they waited. They were, it might be said, espoused to Christ, and they walked as chaste virgins amid surrounding defilements. (Compare 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3.) Then they "*follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.*" That is, they are His companions in His earthly kingdom. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read of the companions of Christ (chap. i. 9; chap. iii. 14*); but these "companions" embrace all Christians; whereas in our scripture they are confined to this suffering but now victorious remnant. Surely they will also confess that the sufferings of the past are not worthy to be compared with the glorious position on which they will have then entered. To have the privilege of being the constant and intimate attendants upon the King in His glory will be the sum and perfection of earthly bliss.

Moreover, they "*were redeemed*" (bought from) among men, being the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb. As with every class of the redeemed in all ages and dispensations, so with these, the blood of Christ alone constitutes their ransom price. Sold through their sins (Isaiah l. 1) into the hand of the enemy, nothing but the precious blood of Christ can redeem any from his power; and hence it is that the fact of the redemption of this elect remnant is here emphasized. As thus "bought," they are the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb, not first-fruits in the sense in which Christ is (1 Cor. xv.), or His people (James i. 18), but the first-fruits of the new scene into which they have been introduced by Messiah's appearing and

* This may be rendered, "For we are made companions of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."

kingdom. In this way they become, as it were, the nucleus of the chosen people when God sets His King upon His holy hill of Zion. Once more we are told, that "*in their mouth was found no guile.*"* (v. 5.) The question is put in Psalm xv., "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" The answer (among others) is, "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, *and speaketh the truth in his heart.*" It is with this last characteristic that the 144,000 correspond, and they are upon God's holy hill of Zion with the Lamb. Having truth in the inward parts, no lie was found in their mouth. Lastly, it is added, "*They are without fault.*" The word rendered "without fault" is the same as is applied to our Lord in Heb. ix. 14, and 1 Peter i. 19, and given as "without spot." They are therefore meet for the presence of Him whose companions, through His grace, they are. But if spotless, and hence qualified to stand in His immediate presence, it could only be, let it be for ever repeated, through the applied efficacy of His own most precious blood. That, and that alone, cleanses from all sin.

What encouragement, it may be added, does this blessed scene afford. In chapter xiii., as has been remarked, Satan and Satan's power are to the outward eye triumphant; but here we behold the issue in the exaltation of the Lamb in the very place where anti-christ had ruled; and in the safety, blessing, and triumph of His redeemed from among men. His sheep never perish, for none can pluck them out of His hand.

* The better reading is "falsehood"; *for they are without fault.* The words, "Before the throne of God," should be omitted, as also, we judge, the word "for" at the commencement of the clause.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

“How true it is ‘we have nothing but the glory before us,’ with Christ and His love as a present object. I do not allow myself, therefore, to think otherwise than that as each day comes there will be grace and sufficiency if we turn to the Lord. Nothing can shut Him out, and eternal things are all the sweeter. It is real to be in the path, and to know Christ as sufficient. This is different to saying so when not in it; but then we each have our path, and it is for us to learn Christ in it. We could not walk in another, however smooth, without Christ’s grace. I have known it for many years, that if I did not serve the Lord in the path where I was, I would not in another; and I have ever found that the difficult path was the easiest and safest, for I was more with the Lord in my soul. But if I look back, what a chequered path it has been! but how faithful the Lord!”

“Christianity is an intense reality; and to live as a Christian needs grace at every turn of the way. For my own part I feel how easy it is to settle down satisfied with being able to state clearly what we believe, and thus to turn the truth into a creed, instead of being and living what is believed. I will not go into details here, but the blessedness of it bows the heart in humbleness. I have always felt. nothing humbled me like the knowledge of the truth, and I feel we cannot know it without this effect. The mind may be active about doctrines, but this has a tendency to puff up, but where

we learn the truth it humbles. For instance, if I have the truth in my heart, that I am fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, or that Christ died for me, the fact that I am such an one humbles me; for there is such little correspondence to it practically; so that if called upon to state it, it must be with humbleness of mind. I think it is J. N. D. who says something like this: 'Some receive the truth merely as a communication reaching them down here, while others are conducted in heart and spirit up to the place whence it is communicated; and the difference is great.' For years it has been a great comfort to me, when I heard the truth stated, to say, 'I am that through grace.' And as our hearts deepen in the knowledge of God as revealed in Christ, what a blessed character we see attaching to everything revealed! I am afraid I am not stating very clearly what is before me. When we see that God only is good and doeth good, and none has the power to bless but God, what a favour to be allowed to come into His presence in prayer, and to come in the consciousness of what His grace has made us. I say it is an immense privilege to be allowed to speak to the only Blesser about myself or others; and then to rest in the sense that He ever acts in grace, because of what He is, and to allow Him to do what He pleases."

"In seeking to answer your question on guidance, I feel how little able I am to fully set forth what I see in it, and what I desire to follow out. Isaiah lviii. 11 is a blessed encouragement for us, as showing how pleased the Lord is to guide, if we are only in a state to be guided. In whatever way you look at guidance there

is one thing prominent, and that is, the practical setting aside of self. What we need at the outset is a single eye, a desire to do His will (John vii. 17); and, as a general thing, we need to be in Colossians i. 9. It is not merely when certain important events arise in our path that we need guidance, but it should be the habit of our souls to be continually waiting on the Lord, and to be guided by Him. For this, however, we need to learn practically the lesson of Romans vii., that there is no goodness in me, and that I have no strength; then we must look out to Another, and the Lord becomes the joy of our hearts. Here we find goodness and power; and He says to us in the midst of weakness, 'My grace, my power.' Connected with this is the joy of the Lord, our hearts learning what He delights in. In all this self is set aside, and the Lord's will becomes ours—not our will subject to His—but *having no will of our own* His becomes our guide. We are thus yielded up to the Lord, and He leads us in His way. Matthew xi. 29 is very important in connection with this subject: 'Take my yoke upon you.' I believe His yoke to be the Father's will. As a Man down here He had no will of His own, we are to take this upon us; *i.e.*, He gives us His place here in this world, and He says, 'Learn from me.' I 'look upon Him as He walked.' His confidence is in the Father, He is dependent, He is obedient, He is meek and lowly, and we see how He did things; this and much more is contained in 'learn from me.' 'My yoke is easy'; He had no contrary will. 'My burden light'; all He met with in His path He received from the Father's hand. It is here we *find* rest; and as we are near the Lord we learn how to do things according to His will. When you turn to the

Lord in special cases, having a knowledge of His will in general, you get the sense that the Lord will be with you, and if so you go forth in faith. The Lord is your strength, and it strengthens your heart to know what He delights in, and thus you are guided. It is very easy to see self has no place in this; yea, more, that it is set aside practically and completely. This must be so; for joy in the Lord, to know the Lord's joy, to delight in His will, and learn from Him, all is outside of self, and must be learnt practically by us as the habit of our souls. There is much more than this, I need not say, involved in guidance; but this is a little of the soul's condition that looks for guidance, and is guided by the Lord. Prayer has a large place in it, together with praise and thanksgiving. And the very difficulties of the path only lead us to feel more distinctly our weakness and dependence on the Lord, and to turn to Him who will never fail us nor forsake us."

W. K. (P.)

CHRIST A REPROVER.*

PROVERBS xxv. 12.

It is blessed as well as happy to mark the characteristics of the Lord's ministry, for His ministry is the witness of what He Himself is, and He is the witness of what God is, and we thus reach God through the paths of the Lord's walk or ministry here. Every step of that way becomes important to us. All that He did and said was but a real, truthful expression of something of Himself; as He Himself was nothing

* From hitherto unpublished notes.

less than a real, truthful expression of God. He that saw Him saw the Father; and he that understands the character of His ministry, or can reach the moral glory that attaches to each moment of His walk and service here, learns what He is, and thus learns what God is.

Among other moral glories which shine in Him, look at that which marks Him as a rebuker or reprover.

When He was exposing the Pharisees, whom *worldliness* had set in opposition to Him, He speaks solemnly and peremptorily—"He that is not with me is against me." But when He alludes to those who were owning Him in their affections and in their testimony, but had not, perhaps, that *strength of faith* that set them in full company with Him, He speaks in other terms—"He that is not against us is for us." (See Matthew xii. and Luke ix.)

When Peter was moved by the spirit of the world (though he was full of amiable feelings and care touching the Lord Himself) the Lord exposes him on the moment with unsparing decision: "Get thee behind me, Satan." But when John Baptist sent a message to Him which was a reproach to Him, and betrayed the wrong, injurious thoughts which he had respecting Him, the Lord rebukes him, it is true, but with marked consideration. He returns a message to him which none but John himself could estimate, none other could feel the point and pungency of it: "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Even John's disciples who carried the messages between them could not have understood this. They were not aware, I may say, how their master had been feeling, and Jesus would not expose their master to them. He would expose John to himself, but not to them, any

more than to the multitude afterwards, in whose eye He strikingly sets off John, by painting, as it were, several dark grounds on which to present John in very lively and beautiful light under their eye. (Matt. xi.) Again, the disciples going to Emmaus He rebukes in a very peculiar way. He addresses a sharp word to them: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe." For unbelief in the fact of the resurrection was a high offence against God in several ways. But in spite of their unbelief, these disciples personally desired Christ. Their hearts affected Him, and He valued that, though connected with their unbelief. And therefore while He rebuked, He warmed and blessed them. He spoke sharply to their ear, but He kindled their hearts.

And how duly and rightly does He measure out different rebukes to Thomas and to other disciples after the resurrection! Thomas exceeded. It was no common character of unbelief which he betrayed, and accordingly it must be no common style of rebuking that he must listen to. But with others it is in softer terms. Again we see the Lord as a rebuker, as between the two and the ten in Matthew xx. But how does He conduct the rebuke there? He tempers it because of the good and the right that was in them whom He had to rebuke, and in this He distinguishes Himself from His disciples. The ten brethren were ministering unqualified condemnation on the two, but the Lord evidently takes knowledge of a something that was right in them, and accordingly tempers or measures His rebuke, and takes a place apart from His heated disciples, who would not have spared their brethren in anywise, and indeed puts the ten and the two on the same level at last.

See the Lord again as a rebuker of John in the case of his forbidding those who were casting out devils in Christ's name, and yet not following with Christ's disciples. At that moment John's spirit had been chastening him. In the light of the Lord's preceding words he had been making some discovery of the mistake he had before committed, and he refers to that mistake, though the Lord had not in the least alluded to it. We may say, after the manner of men, He had not known it. But this being so, John having already a sense of his mistake, and artlessly letting out the vanities of it under force of the light that had revealed it to him, the Lord deals with it in the greatest gentleness. (See Luke ix. 46-50.) There is something very admirable in this, as I judge and feel. And, indeed, when we consider all this moral variety in the action and way of Christ as a rebuker, there is something of excellence and glory in it that is beautiful. Whether His style be peremptory or gentle, sharp or considerate, whether rebuke be so reduced as to be scarcely a rebuke at all, or so heightened as almost to be a kind of repulse and disclaimer, still, when the occasion is duly weighed, all this variety will be found to be but perfection.

I speak here of the Lord's dealing with *His own*; but with *the adversaries or the world*, His rebuke of such was not properly for *correction*, but in judgment. I scarcely call these instances rebukes, they are exposure and condemnation, and I am not looking at them here. Other instances of the Lord's actions in this character will, of course, be found in the narratives of the four gospels. But these may put us on the enquiry, and the enquiry may put us in contact with

some fresh power and light of that moral glory, as we speak, which in its divers rays and shinings constitutes the character of this stainless, perfect Son of man. All these His rebukes or reproofs were "earrings of gold" and "ornaments of fine gold" of themselves, and commonly we may hope hung upon "obedient ears." (Proverbs xxv. 12.)

J. G. B.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

PSALM lxi. 8, 9.

It is in no wise to be inferred from this scripture that natural relationships may be refused. To be "without natural affection" is one of the features of the "perilous times." (2 Tim. iii.) What we have here is wholly different. Before the commencement of our Lord's public ministry He was, as we read, "subject unto" Joseph and Mary. In this relationship, as in every other, He was perfect, and, as such, our blessed example. But when, after His baptism and anointing, He entered upon His service, come as He was to do the will of God, He, as the true Nazarite, had "the consecration of His God upon His head;" and hence, until His work was finished, He was devoted solely and entirely to the glory of God. The claims of God henceforward absorbed Him, the zeal of His Father's house consumed Him; and consequently He became a stranger unto His brethren, and an alien unto His mother's children. When therefore on one occasion some one interrupted Him, and said, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to

“speak with thee,” He answered, “Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?”* &c. When, moreover, at the marriage feast of Cana of Galilee His mother came to Him with a suggestion as to the wine, He replied, “Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.” But when His work was ended, one thing only remaining to be accomplished, He, in the infinite tenderness of His perfect love in the relationship towards Mary which He had condescended to assume, committed her, ere “He bowed His head and gave up the ghost,” to the care of the disciple whom He loved. The application to ourselves is evident. Every relationship in which we are set is to be diligently observed. (See Ephesians v. 22; vi. 1-9; Colossians iii. 18; iv. 1.) If, however, the Lord calls to special service His claims are paramount, and, it might almost be added, exclusive. Accordingly, when He said to one, “Follow me,” and he replied, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father,” Jesus said unto him, “Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” So likewise Levi at the word of Christ “left all, rose up, and followed Him.” (Compare Deuteronomy xxxiii. 8, 9.) True that every believer is now a Nazarite, a Nazarite from his birth (the new birth); but it is not every believer who is a Nazarite according to Numbers vi., one, that is, who, in the energy of the Holy Ghost, is devoted, as Paul, for example, was, wholly and entirely to the Lord and His claims. To this privilege but few attain, even though it is proffered to many. If, however, we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our hearts.

* We do not speak here of the symbolic import of these words.

Next, as to the sacrifice itself, weighty principles are contained in it. No sin could be forgiven without a sacrifice or offering for sin. This particularly characterizes this part of the instructions as to sacrifice. If one failed to discover what he knew, when adjured, if he hid sin, or touched, without even knowing it, what was unclean, when he was aware of it he was guilty. No poverty could bring compassion into play without an offering. Let one be ever so dull in the apprehension of sin, or, consequently, of atonement, still guilt was there if evil was touched. On the other hand, if truth of purpose was there in owning it, and owning it in such sort that the need of atonement before God was felt, which alone, consequently, is recognized as owning sin, the poverty of apprehension does not hinder the perfect forgiveness. That rests on the value of the sacrifice; only Christ must be seen as a Sacrifice for sin, as One rejected, a Sin-bearer for us. The fact of its being fine flour without blood hardly affects the principle of blood-shedding. It comes where blood-shedding is universally required for sin, and is only an exception, in view of poverty, to show that in no case without a sin-offering is there forgiveness, and carries, as an exceptional case, the character of blood along with it as the principle. It is not that one kind of sin requires blood and another not; but incapacity by poverty puts this in place of a bloody offering, and it is so accounted. Only if a real sense of needed atonement be there, the want of apprehension of the full import of sin and death, that is, of Christ's death and blood-shedding, will not prevent the getting the benefit of that death and blood-shedding.

J. N. D.

PETER.*

Luke v. 1-11 ; John xxi. 1-14.

THE soul has its history as well as the body. The soul takes its journeys at times as well as the body. This we know and have experienced. Peter's spirit took a wondrous journey in Luke v. He is there, at first, in the place of nature—an easy, kind-hearted man as ever lived, earnest to love and to serve; and being such an one, he readily lent his boat to the wondrous Stranger who was there addressing the multitude on the shore of the sea of Gennesaret. And when the wants of this Stranger were over, at His bidding Peter put his boat further into the lake, and let down his net for a draught.

But this was nature still. He had not left the place of nature yet—his own place, the place where his natural friendliness and easiness of temper had put him all his life hitherto. “Master,” said he to Jesus, “we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net.”

But now the journey of his soul begins—a wondrous, distant journey, but performed as in a whirlwind. The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof, in their way, were standing and waiting for him. The draught of fishes which came at the word of the Stranger surprised the soul of Peter, and at once bore him into the presence of God. The Stranger was transfigured

* Although a paper with a similar title and on the same scriptures is in print, the notes of this address have not been before published.—ED.

before his soul as in the twinkling of an eye. He was the Lord of the fulness of the sea, who could command the draught, and Peter stood in the presence of God. The living God, the God of glory, was in the place, and Peter had not known it till now, and the sight overwhelms him. He learns himself there, and he is confounded. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." It is no more "Master," but "Lord." It is no more the *fisherman* Peter, who had been toiling all the night at his nets, but the *sinner* Peter. It is a new world to him, the brightness of which is too powerful. He is in God's presence, and it is too much for him. He learns himself where only we can duly learn ourselves, in the presence of the glory of God. We have all sinned, and come short of that glory, and that is discovered by our souls when that glory is reached for the first time.

This was a journey indeed! Peter was taken from the native land of his easy, kindly, but revolted nature (revolted, because it could not stand before God), to the dwelling-place of the glory of God; and he apprehends that place in the brightness of it, and is amazed.

But he must go still further into this new world. He must still travel; and the word, the further word of the Lord, the word of Him whose divine honour and rights had here been discovered to him, must lead him on. "Fear not," says Jesus to him; and when he obeys, and follows where those words lead him, his journey is ended. He may dwell for ever in the place he has now reached. He has left the native land of nature for the presence of God, and found it the home of a poor, convicted, conscience-stricken sinner.

Many a journey, I am sure, the soul of Peter took in after days. He had to pass through the rebukes of the Lord; and they ever give the soul a chapter in its history, or take it some stage of that living way which the word of God has cast up before us, and along which the Spirit of God bears us. But I am thinking only of one other journey which this loved and earnest man had to perform under the hand of the Lord. I mean that which he takes in John xxi. 1-14.

Here we find him again at his fishing. Sweet, natural scene! It is given to us in all the artlessness of truth. He and some companions are again on the sea of Galilee, and again a Stranger addresses him. In like simplicity and friendship which gave him character at the first, he does as this Stranger bids him; and he is, in like grace, rewarded by another heavy draught of fishes. This was a token. It was symptomatic of who this Stranger was. The finger may not be sensitive enough to feel the pulse, or the eye keen enough to discover the mark. Peter fails in this faculty, and John sees for him. "It is the Lord," says he to him. The eye had seen for the body, and then the foot begins its service. Peter's second journey begins, as we tracked him first in Luke v., with the speed of a single, devoted, and loving heart. He is in the water at once to reach the Lord. He *now* knew Him as he had not when he began his first journey. He had already said to him, "Fear not." He now knew Him, and is not amazed. His presence is not that of a glory that was overwhelming, but of a glory that had already given his conscience a home; and though that conscience had every reason at that moment to be a coward, it is bold as a lion. The fisherman Peter, when introduced at first to the presence

of God, had become, in his experience, the sinner Peter; but now the fisherman Peter becomes, in his experience, the loved, saved, accepted Peter. He will tread softly, surely he will, for he worships in the presence of God; but he treads confidently, for he is accepted in that presence, and courts it with all speed and all certainty. Right it was at first that in that presence he should be convicted and discover his sin; right it is now that in that presence he should be a worshipper, a consciously accepted worshipper, for that glory had already spoken comfortably to him.

What two draughts of fishes these were! What two journeys for the soul to take! How Peter's spirit was called to penetrate the new world where the glory and the grace of Christ so shine; and in the display of the grace that is there, I discover the same character after as before the resurrection. A blessed discovery for the soul. In other days, as in Mark iv., the Lord has to rebuke the disciples for their little faith, fearing as they had done when the storm rose on the lake. But ere He rebuked their unbelief He allayed their tremblings. He said, "Peace, be still" to the waves ere He said to the disciples, "How is it that ye have no faith?" And so now with Peter. He sits with Peter, He dines with Peter. The full, free fellowship of his heart with his loved One is made sure to Peter's spirit ere his Lord addresses Himself to his conscience, and brings his ways to remembrance. The Jesus who had once calmed the sea ere He rebuked the disciples, now gives Peter an unbroken net full of fishes, and dines with him, ere He says to him, "Lovest thou me?" Oh, the secrets of that land which Peter had entered!

J. G. B.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

CHAPTER xiv. 6-20.

THE whole of this chapter forms a kind of parenthesis. In chaps. xii. and xiii. the hand of God is not apparent in the events related, although He reveals His own thoughts concerning His people, and concerning the embodiment of Satan's power in the revived Roman empire, together with its head and the antichrist. At the commencement of chapter xiv., as already seen, we have an anticipative exhibition of the blessed remnant who will be preserved through the fiery trial of that day, and who, associated with the Lamb on mount Zion, will have the privilege of following Him whithersoever He goeth. Thereupon, coming now to our scripture, there is a solemn call to repentance, and the announcement of coming judgment upon the different forms of evil which have corrupted the earth. It is not that the judgments are yet actually executed; they are rather warnings of what is at hand, visions of what was impending—vouchsafed to John, and here recorded for the comfort and guidance of believers in all ages.

A "day of grace" always precedes judgment. This is shown in the following words: "*And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth,**"

* In the correct reading the word "dwell" is not the same as that hitherto noticed as having a moral force. The reason for the change lies probably in the fact that the proclamation has an universal importance.

and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him: for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (vv. 6, 7.) On the very surface it is clear that this is not the gospel of the grace of God. It contains, indeed, but two things; first, a command to fear God and to give glory to Him, in the prospect of coming judgment; and, secondly, appealing to men on the ground of creation relationship, exhorts them to worship the Creator. Doubtless it is termed the everlasting gospel, because, apart from all special revelations of God, as to Israel and to Christians, and hence beyond all dispensations, God has ever borne to men the relationship of a Creator to His creatures, and as such is entitled to their reverence and adoration. (Compare Romans i. 18-23.) But man has utterly failed in his responsibility as a creature, and consequently is, on that ground alone, exposed to judgment.*

Then, "*there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."* (v. 8.) The moral character of Babylon, and the details of her judgment, are found in chaps. xvii. xviii. Any remarks therefore may be reserved till these portions of the book are reached, contenting ourselves now with calling attention to the fact that

* Another has said, "The everlasting gospel is the Seed of the woman that shall bruise the serpent's head; that is, the declaration that the Lord shall destroy with power when He comes in judgment. It is the announcement that the hour of His judgment is come, the unchanging good news from the beginning and onward."

Babylon represents the religious corruptress of the earth, is, in fact, what Rome has ever been, and what she will yet more manifestly be, after Laodicea is rejected as His responsible witness on the earth when the Lord comes for His saints. Then she will be "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth," and it is on her as such that her righteous doom is here proclaimed.

The civil power comes next under the eye of God, and hence there follows the third angel, "*saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*" (vv. 9-11). What a contrast between God's thoughts and those of man! On earth men may agree to cast off all fear of God, to profess to ignore His very existence, and to accept the rule of Satan; but the time is coming when God will intervene, and this solemn warning is written for all who will heed it, that judgment, if delayed, will surely fall upon all who accept the yoke and servitude of the beast. It is instructive, moreover, to note in a day when universalism is so popular, even among professing Christians, the character of the judgment. True that it falls upon a class; but if there were only some who will have to endure their punishment for "ages

of ages," and who will "have no rest day nor night," the contention that there is no such thing as "eternal punishment" is utterly disproved. Remark, also, that wherever man takes God's place in the souls of others, wherever men concede to man what belongs to God alone, there is morally the same guilt as that on which these terrible judgments are here pronounced.

It is easy to understand that the faith of the saints in this terrible time of the display of Satan's power will be subjected to no ordinary test. It is in view of this that the Spirit of God adds, "*Here is the patience [endurance] of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*" (v. 12).^{*} These saints are, in fact, the Jewish remnant, those who cleave to the commandments of God, as given in the old dispensation, and who believe in Jesus, spite of the pretensions of antichrist, as the coming Messiah. Tried to the utmost, their constancy will be seen in their holding fast to the word of God, and to their faith in Jesus all through this period of darkness, and of the frightful energy of evil.

Coupled with this, another class, or a class from among these, comes into view. To keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus, and consequently to refuse to render homage to the beast or his image, will be to incur the penalty of death, and, as a consequence, numbers will suffer martyrdom. (See chap. xx. 4.) Now, death to Jewish saints would be the loss of their special blessings, the hope of the coming of their glorious Messiah, of the establishment of His

* The words "here are" before "they that," as in the English version, should be omitted. The last clause of the verse is simply descriptive of the character of the saints.

kingdom in power, and of His dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. (Compare Psalm lxxxviii.) It is concerning this class, and the frustration of their earthly hopes, that John receives a special commandment from heaven to write, "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.*" (v. 13.) Man may be permitted to curse, and to put them to death; but God declares that they are blessed. All who have ever died in the Lord are blessed; absent from the body, they are present with the Lord; but the blessedness of this scripture applies to those whose hopes are not heavenly, but earthly, to those who look for blessing on earth under Emmanuel rather than to be with Him in heaven. Cut off from the earth, they are blessed of God, and the Spirit declares it is that they may have rest from their labours; and, while not permitted to see the fruit of their activities on earth, their works shall follow them in heaven. There they will, by God's special grace, reap the reward of their toils. Further, it is revealed (chap. xx.), that they will have the special privilege of being included in the first resurrection, and thus to be sharers with the heavenly saints in reigning with Christ. (See verses 4-6.)*

The close is once more reached in the next vision. (See chap. xi. 15-18.) The Man-child, caught up to

* There is another possible interpretation of these words. Immediately following, we have the coming of the Lord in discriminating judgment; and it may be that the blessing pronounced upon those who have died in the Lord (so they are divinely estimated) during the sway of antichrist, refers to their public owning and recompense as seen in chap. xx. The reader must examine and weigh these interpretations.

God's throne, now returns in judgment; and the judgment He will execute is of a two-fold character, here described under the figures of a HARVEST and a VINTAGE. First, we have the description of the Reaper: "*And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.*" (v. 14). Both the manner of His advent—on the cloud—and the title—the Son of man—proclaim unmistakably the person of the Reaper. It is the rejected Jesus, who, refused by the Jews when presented to them as the Messiah, took up the wider title of the Son of man (see Psalm viii., Matthew xvi. 20, 27), under which all things are put under His feet. The "golden crown" not only speaks of His royal dignity, but also of the glory of that divine righteousness, according to which everything will be both tested and judged, while the "sickle" announces the immediate object of His return. But as when down here He took the servant's place for the accomplishment of the will of God, so when He comes to execute the judgment written He will still occupy the same position. It is on this account that an angel is introduced, as coming out of the temple, and "*crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.*" (v. 15.)

There is something sublime in the simple statement of obedience to this command: "*And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.*" (v. 16.) As to the character of the judgment here indicated, it may aid the reader to consult Joel iii. 9-17, and Matthew xiii. 36-43. Two or three points may be noticed. It is the *earth* that is

reaped, and hence it is men as men, not the Jewish nation especially, that are in question. Secondly, the angel who cried to Him that sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap," came out of the temple. The judgment therefore was to proceed according to the revealed character of Him whose habitation it was. Bearing these points in mind, it is easily understood that the judgment is of a discriminating character, gathering the wheat into His garner, and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire. The Scriptures deal constantly with this aspect of the appearing of our Lord and Saviour. In some of the similitudes of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew xiii. it is found; so also in chap. xxv., where the Lord, as the King, will gather all nations before the throne of His glory, and separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. (vv. 31-46.)

The scene that follows, while related to the preceding one, has a different character. "*And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, He also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to Him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in Thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in His sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.*" (vv. 17-19.) The first question to be answered is as to the angel that appears here as the executor of judgment. There cannot be a doubt that, although He is not named, it is also the Son of man; for, as we read elsewhere, the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son, hath given Him authority to execute judgment also,

because He is the Son of man. (John v. 22-27.) But He is here seen only as an angel, not merely in accordance with the symbology of the book, but because He comes as the divine instrument of God's will in judgment upon the vine of the earth, and hence, in this case, comes out for this purpose from the temple, from God's immediate presence. He is seen as the Son of man when the judgment relates to the Gentiles; but here as an angel when the Jews are prominent before the mind. For what, we may now enquire, is set forth by the vine of the earth? The figure is familiar. Israel was a vine, brought out of Egypt, and planted in Canaan (Psalm lxxx.), but when God looked for it to bring forth good grapes, nothing was found, notwithstanding all the culture it had received, but wild grapes. (Isaiah v. 1-7.) It was on this account that Christ Himself replaced, before God, Israel as the vine: He became the true vine, of which His own were the branches. (John xv.) The vine of the earth therefore will be that which should have borne fruit for God; and is in the scene before us, inasmuch as it is the object of judgment, apostate Judaism, with which the Gentiles, as we know, will be allied.

The character of the judgment is shown by the words, "the great winepress of the wrath of God." It is thus unsparing judgment (see Isaiah lxiii. 1-4) upon Messiah's adversaries in connection with the establishment of His kingdom. (See for example, Zechariah xiv., Rev. xix. 11-21.)

One thing more is to be gleaned from the last verse: "*And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six*

hundred furlongs." (v. 20.) The term "without the city" indicates undoubtedly that the neighbourhood of Jerusalem is the locality of this unmitigated vengeance. With this agrees the prophet Joel (as well as Isaiah and Zechariah), who seems to combine in one verse (chap. iii. 2-13) both the harvest and the vintage judgments. He specifies the valley of Jehoshaphat as the place where the nations will be judged, as well as the apostate Jews with whom they will be associated. The terrible character of the vengeance of that day is seen in the awful, if symbolic, statement concerning the blood that came out of the winepress, reaching unto the horse bridles, and extending to 1,600 furlongs; that is, as some have observed, to the whole length of the Holy Land. E. D.

READINESS FOR THE LORD'S RETURN.

JOHN xiii. 1-14, xiv. 1-6.

WE were having before us this morning, beloved brethren, the coming of the Lord, and I could not help feeling how necessary it is not only that our hearts should be stirred up to the fact that He is coming, but there is another thing that would weigh upon the heart of every servant of the Lord, certainly on the spirit of all those who have known a little bit of what it is to traverse this scene; that is, a sense of what it is to be *ready*. I am not speaking at all now of what it is to be saved; we are ready for the coming of the Lord in that sense, but there is a preparedness here. I know that in virtue of that cross of our Lord Jesus Christ the dying thief could go straight to paradise.

There is *one* fitness, and, thank God, every believer now in His presence has it; there is only one way to go to heaven, and that is by Christ, as the dying thief upon the cross dropped there and then the thief, and went to heaven in nothing but Christ. That is just how we all go there. But there is another thing, and that is, that while we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, there should be conduct befitting. Looked at as in Christ, we have the wedding garment.

There is no one who knows what it is to have fled to Christ for salvation, and who knows Christ as his righteousness, but has the wedding garment. But let me ask you as to the real preparation of heart and spirit which was brought before you this morning, that as soon as Rebecca knew Isaac was coming, that they were about to meet, she took a veil and covered herself. It is the sense of that I want to put upon your heart. There is a demeanour in us, a propriety of walk and ways, that befits those that say, "Lord Jesus, come." It is easy to sing a hymn, and get a bit excited over it, and say, "What joy!" Beloved friends, do you think of what it will be to enter His presence? I could not really think of entering into the presence of the true Isaac without having the sense that there was a demeanour, a suitability to Him, a preparedness for it. I know we are made meet. All I ask is, Are our souls in the present sense as we speak of the coming of the Lord? Are our souls in the sense of the suitability for the heavenly Bridegroom? I know you have the wedding garment; but, remember, it does not say He made the marriage for the guests, the marriage was made *for His Son*, therefore I have the sense of *whom* I am to be presented to.

Whom? Yes, the heavenly One, the heavenly Bridegroom. In the resurrection we shall be made fit by putting on the image of the heavenly One. It is the deepest joy of our hearts that we shall be like Him; not a single stain of sin there. As you tread that crystal floor you leave no stain. Christ is our fitness, and you will not leave a stain as you tread the crystal floor of heaven. But when the apostle speaks of being presented, he says, "Unblamable and unreprouvable in His sight." He speaks of being blameless. There is a suitability for Him. There is a sense wrought in our souls that we want to greet Him, and when we greet Him, not only that I know I have the wedding garment, but in reality I have been dropping everything that is unsuitable to Him. I want to take it home to my own soul. If my conscience did not answer to it, it would not do for me to speak to you about it. How far is it on our hearts and consciences? I want to drop everything that is unsuitable to Him. It is not only that I am made meet, it is not only you have to go into heaven, but you have to come out of heaven. I do not think people think much about that. When I get into heaven I shall be there with the Lord; you see I shall have done with everything of flesh, sin, and the world, but you have to *come out of* heaven.

Dear friends, when the Lord comes out of heaven to come to this earth, you have to come with Him; and that will be the time when all that has taken place down here will come out. This prospect should exercise all our consciences. The Lord has to display us according to all we have been here. We come back to this earth with the Lord. When He comes back we come back with Him, and we are displayed. I grant you it is

in the heavenlies the display takes place; but it is *to* the earth Christ wants to say of each *one*, This is my righteous one, this is the one that gave up for me, that walked here blameless and harmless as a son of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. God's working in us for the working out of our salvation is to this end.

I have read these two scriptures because you get the Lord's service here in a double way; the one service is, that He goes to prepare a place for us. I do not doubt, as was said, the place is now prepared; but He was going away, and would come again, to receive them unto Himself. Their great thought was that the Lord Jesus would reign upon the earth, and that they would reign with Him. They said to Him, after His resurrection, "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" So little had they taken in John xiv. The Lord was going away—giving up all that He was not going to take into the kingdom, therefore He instructs their heart about this new service of His love. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Heaven belonged to *Him*. He could say, "*My* Father's house." He could say, "I go to the Father." That was His own place; He could *go* there. These dear Jewish disciples knew there was to be the coming kingdom, the coming glory; they knew they were to have their part in that; but He said, "You will not wait for that. I am going away, and I shall come again, and receive you unto *myself*; that where *I am* there ye may be also." You will not have to wait two thousand years. There He is the blessed Servant of the Father's glory; it is prepared now for the saints where He is.

These believers did not really understand it. How

much do we understand what that place is? Have you the sense of what it is to be presented to Him there? to enter into the presence of the heavenly One, the Church to be the companion of the heavenly One? Oh, may the Lord lay it upon our hearts! It is our portion. We could not insist too much on that. I press again, it is the portion of the youngest believer here.

Nothing weighs, I think, more on my spirit, where I see it, than the way young people are coming in now. I don't see that they give up the world. I see they get the blessed knowledge of salvation, but I do not see they really drop the world. It seems to me that a beautiful gospel is preached—so clear, so plain—and I thank God for it. They know the work is finished, but they don't go through much exercise. It was different when I was young. I grant you it was all the wrong way about, because the exercise was legal, but it was good exercise. There was the old saying, A person had got into the way. They did not mean to heaven, but to salvation. But I know this, that what used to be pressed upon us was, that it was a *narrow way*; and I do want you, beloved young believers, to remember it is a narrow way. I don't see the dropping of the ways of the world, the fashions of the world, the games of the world. I don't see the acceptance of the narrow path. There is no room in it for the world. There is only room for you and Christ to walk together.

I have given a word for the conscience. I want to give a word for the heart. Chapter xiii. brings before us the other service of the blessed Lord, that we should have a part with Him.

Dear friends, I believe that service goes on whether you know it or not; you may not even be conscious

of it; it is done in such a beautiful way. If I were to go and say to a believer, "Now, you know such or such a thing is not suitable to a heavenly path," I might do it in a rough way. The Lord does it so tenderly. I don't say there is not pain. He won't let us carry a lot of earthly things along a heavenly path. There is all the tender forbearance and grace of His heart in which He says to us, "Now, drop that, that won't do." Now, that is the service of His blessed grace, that is the meaning of washing our feet. There is a service when there is actual, positive defilement, as when a man touched a bone or a dead body. Then this service of the blessed Lord comes in, but it goes further than the type. It is the way the blessed Lord is dealing with us. The Father has put our feet into Christ's hand to wash them according to His counsels. He says, as it were, "I have put these sheep into your hands to bring them *home*." He is not only the Servant of our need but of the Father's glory. He brings me to the Father's house. He not only gives me the best robe, but He detaches me from what is unsuitable.

Now, beloved fellow-believers, young and old, you are sure to get this ministry, for He loves you, the Lord loves you, and therefore you are sure to get this service. He won't let you carry a lot of earthly things in the heavenly path. He wants you to travel with Him, to go that way His blessed feet have trodden. Some get this thought, and say, "If I were to have a fall, a great tumble, I should need the Lord to come in." Beloved friends, you want it *every* day of your lives, and you get it too. I don't say how you get it, but you *do* get it; every day you get it, and you are sure to have it, because the Lord loves you. Let me say, it

becomes a very solemn thing, the intercession of the Lord—very solemn to think the Lord is always occupied about me there. I will give you an illustration that will make it plain. A relative of my own, who was converted, wanted to go on with the world. He chose the world. Somehow he was always in trouble, never in peace. One day he said, "How can I have any peace when I know So-and-so is praying for me?" He *would* have the world, but he could not enjoy it. Christ is praying for you. That is a solemn thing. It is not a poor relative who is praying for you; it is CHRIST. You will get all His blessed dealings. It is a serious and solemn thing—Christ is praying for me. It is a most blessed thing to think I am an object of His interest; it will sweeten the cup of sorrow. A person may say, These are the dealings of the Lord; or, as Job said, "*His* hand hath touched me." But Job did not know what the hand was, like you and I do. If I get sorrow or affliction, I am sensible of the touch of *His* hand. Don't give up the thought of His love one single moment. He wants you in glory, but He wants you there suitable to Himself. He must remove everything unsuitable. All the trouble He takes, if I may use a human expression, all the trouble He has taken with some of those in this room, shows that *He* is leading us along. Here we are tasting His love afresh, I trust, this evening. Has He ever forgotten us? No, thank God, He never will! Never forget, young or old, the young ones especially, the love of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 5. "After that He poureth water into a bason." The water means that He brings the Word to bear upon us in one way or another. He might have

to bring to bear upon us the word of the cross. It may be a tender word of grace or sympathy. He brings the Word to bear upon us. What the bason may be I do not know; perhaps affliction. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word." Affliction, beloved friends, does not do you any good apart from the tender ministry of Christ *in His word*. Affliction is to bring your ear to the Word. Christ always wants to drop a word into your ear. He knows how to help the weary with a word. When you get up in the morning, have you not the sweet sense, Christ can drop a word into my ear that will help me all day? You say, "I am so poor, so feeble! How shall I get along to-day?" It comes, perhaps, in the form of manna; still it is a word He brings to bear. If we are not listening we lose it. If you do not bend your ear to hear He may bring a word to bear in another way. Many read the Word, and it does nothing but make them uncomfortable. The more uncomfortable it makes you feel, if really the will is wrong, the better. But the great thing in affliction is to bring the Word, that He may blessedly whisper it in my ear. When you kneel down, for instance, you say, "I want to have Thy will done in me." It is a good, acceptable, and perfect will. I may not understand the workings; I may have to pause, and say—

"His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will."

Now a word that may perhaps help you on the Psalms. In the end of the Psalms there is a burst of praise, and all the Psalms lead up to it; but the great end of all the exercises of the Psalms was to bring the people up to *praise God*, and it has taken the Lord now nearly four thousand years of discipline with Israel, before they will be able to utter those hallelujahs. The blessed Lord gives the keynote (Psalm cxlvi.), "Praise ye the Lord," and all bursts forth into praise. It has taken four thousand years to bring them to that. "Now you praise Jehovah." He says, You are the people I have found for myself; you shall show forth my praise. (Isaiah xliii. 21.) He could not give the keynote until He had been through it Himself. "I will bless the Lord at *all* times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth." (Psalm xxxiv. 1.) He knew what it was to go through pressure. How does it all come out? In Psalm cxlv. *He* praises: "I will bless Thy name for ever and ever." Then He leads the praises of His people. "Praise ye Jehovah" (Psalm cxlvi.), and everything bursts forth. There is another note in heaven above still, the Lord leading it. He who has washed our feet. He who has wrought it all with the afflictions, the sorrows, the chastenings of the way. Oh, what will it be when He lays down that service, and has us in heaven, and says, "Now PRAISE," and we all burst forth into praise! Oh, won't that be wonderful, as we surround the blessed Lord, as we not only know how He laid down His life that all I am might be put aside in the cross, that all He is, as divine righteousness, might be mine, but how He wrought in us to put away all that was unsuitable to Himself, so that we may have part with Him in the many mansions of the

Father's house! I want your heart to be thoroughly in the sense of how the Lord loves you.

The thirteenth chapter is His service down here, the fourteenth is when His service down here is ended. Now comes another service of the blessed Lord, How are you going to get to heaven? Peter said, in Luke xx. 33, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee into prison, and to death;" he counted on his own competency. Now, do you think you are competent to tread the path up there? You say, "Perhaps my feet are treading the heavenly road." You say, "I hope I shall get on and get there." You know what Peter was. No, that will not do; the Lord puts Peter all aside. Peter, *you* will deny me. Now I will tell you what *I* will do. "I will come again, and fetch you;" that is how you will go to heaven. That will be the blessed service of the Lord on the morning of the resurrection. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven," &c. &c. He comes to fetch us, and that is how we get to heaven. Just one word more for your conscience. Now, I have shown you how we get to heaven, now one word more about coming out of heaven. It is not any new thought to most of you. We find in the Book of Revelation, that just before we come out of heaven, we are presented. I do not think we are presented when we go in; the moment comes of presentation, and there the acclamations ring out in heaven—"The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her *was granted* that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. Now she is presented to the Bridegroom, but the "fine linen" is "the righteousnesses of the saints," not the righteousness of God.

You are to be presented to Christ in the righteousnesses of the saints. Some one may say, "I am afraid I have very little." That is a great step to find out how little I have got. It says of the earthly bride, "Her clothing is of wrought gold;" but the moment it speaks of presentation, "She shall be *brought unto the king* in raiment of needlework." "Wrought gold" is divine righteousness; but the moment it is presentation, it is the raiment of needlework, as has been said, wrought stitch by stitch, and, therefore, it is the righteousnesses of the saints.

Do you say, "I am afraid I have very few stitches" ? It does not take long to do it, that may be a comfort to some. Now I have referred to the service of the blessed Lord, all the patience He exercises with us, to make us drop the things that are unsuitable, before you put on the veil and wear the demeanour that is suitable to Him. I say it may take forty years, like it did with Israel, to get you to drop the earth. I don't think it takes one minute to flood your heart with Christ when you have dropped it. It is Christ in you, flooding the heart with all His perfections, that will make the demeanour all right. Now, suppose I get a person with an irritable temper; he has struggled with it, but instead of being meek and lowly, there it is always. How will the Lord deal with it? He is so patient with us in doing it. His service is, Now I must work with you in order to make you drop that; and when He has brought you to the judgment of it, and we drop it, Christ can turn round and say, "That is my meek one. It took me forty years to make him that, and now I am going to display him in glory as *my meek one*." Blessed Lord, to

work thus with us. Beloved young believer, do you court the scrutiny of Christ? Don't you get away from the ministry of His word; do you seek the ministry of His word? Very often those who cannot get it would like to have it, and those who have it at their very door, don't trouble much about it. And in private, read His word. You say, "Well, I read it, but I don't quite understand it." Never you mind, it's like putting coals into a grate. Never mind, store it up, the Spirit of God will give a light and power to that word you never saw before. The more you are in His company, and feel His hand dealing with you, bringing the Word to bear upon you even if it is to make you feel uncomfortable, the more you will get these heavenly springs in the desert—for every day; and when you know His company and the service of His love, and how He is coming for you, the more you will look forward to be presented to Him.

T. H. R.

PAUL IN PRISON AT PHILIPPI.

IN this day of difficulty and declension, it is of vast importance for the believer to be in dependence upon God, and in obedience to His word. We know that the blessed Lord is the only One who ever trod this path in perfection. The apostle Paul knew what it was to walk on the safe ground of dependence upon God, having no confidence in the flesh, "always bearing about in his body the dying of Jesus;" and just in proportion as the same thing characterizes us, we have power against evil and for testimony. Acts xvi. gives us a very striking instance of it in Paul at Philippi.

When Paul and his companion entered that city, to which the Lord had called them, they were soon found in the place "where *prayer* was wont to be made," where Lydia's heart was opened to receive the things of the Lord. There is no doubt the enemy knows the power of prayer in the saints, and does all he possibly can to hinder it. As they went^t to *prayer* from Lydia's house, the damsel with a spirit of divination cried *many days*, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." Paul perceived that what was said, though true enough in itself, was not of God, but of Satan. Yet Paul patiently waited the many days before availing himself of God's power to expose and suppress the enemy's opposition. "Paul . . . turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

Evidently Paul was in communion, and, therefore, in a condition of soul for God to manifest His power through him. This victorious act of divine power over Satan set in arms against Paul the masters, the magistrates, and the multitude, resulting in Paul and Silas receiving many stripes, and being cast into the worst place in prison, with their feet made fast in the stocks. This was as far as God allowed man, under Satanic influence, to go. But mark what wonderful things followed in that prison.

At midnight Paul and Silas *prayed* and sang *praises* to God, which the prisoners heard. Suddenly there was a great earthquake; the foundations of the prison were shaken; all the prison doors were thrown open; every man's bands were loosed; the jailor was converted under a sermon of eleven words, and rejoiced, believing in

God with all his house—the reality of his conversion being shown in the good works upon God's servants.

Here, observe, praise followed prayer before this marvellous intervention of God in favour of His servants. Now, did all this divine display exalt them with pride, and throw them off their guard, and from the ground of dependence? Oh, no! For, note, when the magistrates had become conscious of their error, and had come to the prison to entreat these men of God to come out and leave the city, it is written that Paul and Silas went out of prison, and entered into the house of Lydia. They returned to the house of prayer, as Peter also did from prison; they went back to Gilgal, as we have it in another scripture in a former dispensation. When they had comforted their brethren they left the city in the power of prayer, and to continue their labours in obedience to the word of the Lord.

Beloved child of God, the same enemy is at work with equally adapted opposition now as then; but we have the same resource, and it is Paul who said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Are not these things written for our learning? And are they not our examples? Then may we have grace to learn and follow them for Christ's sake. J. N.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

LUKE xxiv. 29.

ONLY twice is the word here translated "constrained" found in the New Testament. In the other scripture it is used in exactly the same way. Lydia "constrained" Paul and Silas to abide with her (Acts xvi. 15), just as

the two disciples "constrained" our blessed Lord, saying, "Abide with us." It is a strong word, sometimes in classical Greek going so far as to do violence to anyone; and thus it may be understood, in the scriptures referred to, as constraining in the sense of taking no denial. Hence the disciples, as also Lydia, might be said to have compelled compliance with their request from their very urgency. How such a constraint must have delighted the Lord's heart; and with what joy He would respond to a petition so presented. Three other times "constrained" is met with in our English version. (Matt. xiv. 22; Acts xxviii. 19; 2 Cor. v. 14.) In the first two the word means to force or compel. The Lord "forced" the disciples to get into a ship, using His authority to compel them to do as He commanded; and Paul was "forced" by the circumstances, as he thought, seeing no other way out of the difficulty, to appeal unto Cæsar. Peter uses the same word in another form when he exhorts the elders to take the oversight of the flock of God, not by constraint, not as being "forced" to do it, but willingly. The last example is where the apostle Paul says, "The love of Christ constraineth us." Here the word is quite different, and is translated in Luke xxii. 63 "held"—"the men that held Jesus." And this is exactly the meaning; and consequently the apostle sets forth that the love of Christ "held" or possessed him in such a way as to leave no other option than that of entire devotedness to Christ. It will be seen, therefore, that while the word means to hold, the moral idea is well conveyed by "constrain." Blessed state for any of us to be in, it may be added, when the love of Christ so dominates our souls as to constrain us to live for Him

Men might have their opinions or speculate about Him (chapter xvi. 13, 14), but faith alone in Peter, through the revelation made to him by the Father (v. 17), could recognize and confess Him (v. 16) as "the Christ"—the very character in which He had been rejected—and further as "the Son of the living God" (proved to be such with power by the resurrection of the dead. Rom. i. 4). This was the "Rock" on which He would build (v. 18), and it was not until after His resurrection and ascension that He began to build His Church.

We here have the Church or assembly* spoken of as a building and Christ as the builder, *apart from all human instrumentality*.† On the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.) the Holy Ghost descended into the place where the disciples were (v. 2), and as the result of Peter's sermon we find that about three thousand were added (v. 41): "and the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." (v. 47.) (The words "to the Church" are disputed, but the point is "*the Lord added.*")

Peter in chapter ii. of his first epistle doubtless refers to what the Lord had said to him in Matt. xvi.: "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming as unto a living stone . . . ye also as living stones are being built up [New Translation] a

* The Greek word thus translated signifies a *gathering out*, best rendered *assembly*, in contrast to *synagogue*, which means a *gathering together* or congregation.

† By this I do not, of course, mean that men are not used in the conversion of these "living stones," which would correspond to hewing them out of the quarry and shaping them, but simply that Christ alone builds them into His Church, that mentioned in these scriptures. Had man anything to do with that, it would be a failure, as everything else has been to which he has put a hand.

spiritual house." (vv. 3-5.) Here is the carrying out of what had been announced in Matt. xvi. The stones coming and being built up. No builder is mentioned, but it cannot be doubted the Lord is the builder, for they are "*living*" stones. No bad material, no rubbish, finds its way into this building. And as "*living stones*," built upon the "*living Stone*," "*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*"

"View the vast building ; see it rise ;
The work how great ! the plan how wise !
Oh, wondrous fabric ! power unknown !
That rears it on the 'Living Stone.'"

Paul writes in the same way to saved Gentiles, as Peter does to saved Jews. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone ; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." (Eph. ii. 19-21.) In verses 1-3 of this chapter we get the quarry in which the stones originally lay ; in verses 5-10 we get the hewing out and preparing the stones, so to speak, and that by God, and in verses 20, 21 they are seen in their place in the building. Here again we find no builder mentioned, but undoubtedly it is the Lord. Who else could "*fitly*" frame it together ? Verses 5, 8, 13, and 19 show us that they are "*living stones* ;" and the work *going on*, as it is said, "*groweth* unto an holy temple," agreeing with what we believe to be the correct rendering of 1 Peter ii. 5, "*are being* built up." And the structure will not be complete until the last stone is added, the last believer saved and built in.

Stones do not pass in and pass out of this building, as it were. The chief Corner Stone and the foundation of the apostles and prophets are as much in the building now as at the beginning. "The gates of hell [hades] shall not prevail against it." For if we look on to Rev. xxi., where the same building is spoken of by another apostle as a "city," we see the bride, the Lamb's wife, "descending out of heaven from God" (v. 10); "and the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (v. 14.)

How blessed to be allowed to view this *now* growing "building in its completeness, then as it is seen descending over the millennial earth." Now the work is going on silently but surely, as in Solomon's temple of old. "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building." (1 Kings vi. 7.) But *then* it will be seen coming down "out of heaven from God, *having the glory of God*: and her light was like unto a stone most precious . . . and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it." (Rev. xxi. 10, 11, 24.)

Can you, my reader, say, "Through grace *I* have been built into this building? *I* have tasted that the Lord is gracious, a living stone. *I have* been built upon the Living Stone"? If so, what joy must fill your soul as you contemplate the fast approaching day when the last stone shall be added! With what shoutings will it be put in—as is said of another building in Zech. iv. 7! Yea, with the shout and archangel voice of 1 Thess. iv. 16, when the Lord Himself shall descend

from heaven to raise the sleeping and to change the living saints, and catch us up together to meet Him in the air. Then will His work be completed, and His purpose carried out. Then there will be no more flaws or blemishes seen in what professes to be the temple of God; for, as is said of the Church in the character of His bride, He shall "present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but . . . holy and without blemish." (Eph. v. 27.) No bad material either—"wood, hay, nor stubble." *He* never built such into *His* Church. That which is spoken of as such; *i.e.*, empty professors, oilless lamp-bearers (Matt. xxv. 3, 8), will all be left behind in that day; "lukewarm" professors who say, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," will be "spued out of His mouth" then. (Rev. iii. 16, 17.)

What a joy to view the finished building as we find it in Rev. xxi. 10 to xxii. 5, in all its beauty—that which *He* has put upon it, and with which *He* has embellished it—the *reflection* of Himself, and to know that *I*, all unworthy and utterly insignificant as I am, shall have my part in that. And to be able to say too, through grace—and God grant that you also, my reader—that "I am in no other building than that which bears the name of the temple of God," in no system of man's erection, or called "*carnal*" by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. iii. 3, 4); that I am in the same building now, the same Church in which I shall be in heaven. For *there are* others; others designed and erected by men. There are numbers of them on every hand, "Established" and "Non-conformist" churches, as they are

called. So that the *one only true* and eternal Church which Christ builds (Matt. xvi. 18) is completely lost sight of and forgotten by almost all. Men struggle to become, and are proud of being, members of this church and of that, but few, alas! stop to make sure that they are built into that which Christ builds, and glory in that alone.

W. G. B.

(*To be continued, D.V.*)

"DO YE NOW BELIEVE?"

JOHN xvi.

IT has often been remarked, that the disciples in this passage were wrong in saying that they had understood the Lord's words, and that "they *were sure*," etc. (v. 30.) The difference between their state before and after the coming of the Holy Ghost has been also fully insisted upon. Bearing this in mind, it may be useful to meditate, for a few moments, on the deep lesson conveyed in the blessed Lord's words at the end of this chapter. (John xvi.) He was speaking to eleven persons who had believed that He had come forth from God, had seen, heard, and *loved* Him (v. 27); and this fact constituted the grand difference between them and the world who (chap. xv. 22-25) had seen, heard, and *hated* both Him and the Father. They (the eleven to whom He was speaking) had tastes widely different from those of the world; they had a new nature. Love and hate are two extremes.

But the point I wish to dwell upon is this, that the true knowledge of the Son's deity, and of His coming forth from the Father, and going to the Father, is a divine gift. It will be said that this is nothing new.

Granted ; but it is difficult to admit that all is of God, and not allow the mind to work—to be subject to divine action. The disciples had believed that Jesus had come forth from God. In receiving Him, they had received infinitely more than they had supposed, and this reception was not of the natural man. Then the Lord says (*v.* 28) that He had come forth, not merely from God, but *from the Father* into the world ; and that now He is about to leave the world *to go to the Father*. This the disciples understood not.

It has been often remarked that the only begotten Son did not leave the Father’s bosom (“who *is* in the bosom of the Father”); but He came forth from the Father, and in the exercise of divine and infinite power laid aside the majesty of the glory to appear in this world at Bethlehem. What was the distance between that glory and Bethlehem? Oh, subject infinitely beyond us, and yet open to our hearts for eternity! And now, rejected by the world, He was going *to the Father*. It is at this wonderful point that the disciples show the ignorance that they were so disposed at all times to display. (*vv.* 29, 30.) “Thou speakest openly . . . now we are sure that thou knowest all things.” They were treading on dangerous ground in saying, “We are sure.” The only infallible Person present in this world at the present time is the Holy Ghost. Others have pretended to infallibility, and miserably failed ; a Christian as subject to the Spirit and the revealed Word may say “we know,” but no one else. The eleven had not yet received the Holy Ghost, and show by their expression, “we believe that Thou art come forth from God,” that they had understood nothing of what the Lord had said of having *come forth from the Father*.

Our blessed Lord's answer is worthy of all remark. He does not allude to their pretended knowledge, but says, "Do ye *now believe?*" The divine perception by faith of His Person as Son of the Father was wanting. They had believed sincerely in Him as come forth from God, but faith in the Son, by whom the world is overcome, was unknown to them with all their boasting. Their tastes, we have noticed, were widely different from those of the world, but on that very night it would be shown (*v. 32*) that they knew not, by faith, the glory and divine Sonship of the One they loved, and the world should overcome them. "Do ye *now believe?*" They should be scattered, and every one go to his own house, and leave Jesus alone. The *scattering* and *going to one's own house* should display all their weakness and selfishness; no human power could keep them together, and then each one thought of his own personal safety; the Lord abandoned, though not alone. So much for man's wisdom and pretension!

In "that day" all should be changed.

We, beloved brethren, have received the Holy Ghost, and (1 John v. 4, 5) divinely given faith in the Son of God, who has overcome the world. Are we, in practice and in truth, walking so that our peace is in Him? I mean the peace of a heart truly dependent upon Him in the midst of tribulation. (*v. 33.*) We are living in days when man's knowledge is at a premium, Laodicea has grown rich, and even faith is looked upon as a kind of human accomplishment. Do we *believe*, dear brethren, *in the Son of God?* Victory over the world is attached to this true faith; all else must end in utter confusion.

E. L. B.

THE BOW IN THE CLOUD.

“And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud.”—GEN. ix. 14, 16.

IN this day of grace there is always a bow in the cloud. We may be, and sometimes are, so occupied with what is most manifest, the cloud, that we do not discern its heavenly accompaniment; but there it is. Bright and lovely, it stretches from heaven to earth. “All things work together for good to them that love God.” Yes, *all things*. This is the bow in the cloud. What a wide expanse this “all things” opens up to us! Even pain is God’s servant for good to a believer; and so is an earthquake in the world, or a moral convulsion or heresy in the Church. (1 Cor. xi. 19.)

A great and strong wind may “rend the mountains,” and “break in pieces the rocks before the Lord.” This may be followed by an earthquake, and the earthquake by a fire; but though they are the visible cloud, we must not be wholly occupied with these. (1 Kings xix.) The question for us is, What has the Lord to say to *us* in them? The object to Him is *His people*, and we must listen for the “still small voice.” This is the bow in the cloud. If God has swept away man once in the judgment of the flood, the cloud, whatever it be, is afresh declaring *His* estimate of the first man. If mercy has declared itself, and we are spared, still we must never forget that *His* estimate of what we are stands recorded, and that very cloud afresh witnesses to it. And the bow in the cloud declares *His faithfulness to His promise; for “His mercy endureth for ever.”*

We are on the ground of MERCY, and if we forget it, He does not. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of GOD THAT SHEWETH MERCY." (Rom. ix. 16.) We look at the cloud; God looks at the bow. What grace is here! He says, "And the bow shall be in the cloud; and *I* will look upon *it*." The bow tells of God's unchangeable faithfulness and mercy when all is over with man. This is the ground we are upon with God.

"*I* bring a cloud . . . *I* do set My bow." We may not sever these two, nor look at one apart from the other. If it is good for us to be reminded that man (himself and his works) is only fit for judgment, it is good also to be reminded of what God is, or the soul must be overwhelmed with despair. Let us, then, "cease . . . from man, whose breath is in his nostrils" (Isa. ii. 22), and look at what God is looking at. "*I will look upon it*."

This is the way to get God's thoughts. We see that in spite of the cloud God is "for us." Only we must be reminded of what we are, when we think high thoughts, not to drive us to despair, but to keep us low and to lean ever and only upon Him who has taken us up in grace, knowing all about us, and when there was not in us anything to attract Him.

My fellow-believer, in all the exercises of the way God would have us see the bow in the cloud. Think of this in your present trial (all permitted of Him), in that which distresses you most of all, and the existence of which no fellow-Christian perhaps knows of. These words are written for you. Is it trial in the Church, trial in the business, trial in the house, or individually in yourself? "And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in

the cloud." *Try to see it.* It will put you right with God, and so cheer your pilgrim way. The cloud may be dark and gloomy, but there is a beauty in it painted by His own hand, and it tells you, spite of all, what He is to you. And, remember, whether you see it or not, IT IS THERE.

God sees a "needs be" (1 Peter i. 6) for the present trial in the Church. We must be with Him to learn it. The whole experience of the wilderness is for us to learn what we are and what God is. The inclination of the natural heart is always to grow proud and independent. God, who knows the heart, saw this. As to the heart of man, "who can know it? I the Lord search the heart." (Jer. xvii.) He knows it, exposes us to ourselves, and corrects us, and all for good, "for our profit." May we each be so with Him at this moment, that we learn His mind in this trial; for good comes from God, even when it is in the shape of trial. If the heart departeth from the Lord—and it does when we trust in man—we shall be "like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh." (vs. 5, 6.) We shall look upon the present trial and speak of it as "*only another cloud*"; and because of it we shall not see the good in the hand which surely is working through it for us, nor that it is "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." The word to us is, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." All is from Him, "that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end." (Deut. viii. 16.) Let us remember His word: "The bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it." "We change; He changes not."

H. C. A.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

CHAPTERS xv., xvi. 1-7.

THE connection of these chapters is with the thirteenth rather than with that which precedes. The latter, as before observed, is parenthetical. This will be at once seen by the character of the present vision. In chapter xiii. the first and second beasts, the head of the revived Roman empire and the antichrist, are introduced; and the consequent display of Satan's power in spiritual deception and despotic tyranny is exhibited. Here we have the "*seven last plagues*," in which "*is filled up the wrath of God*," brought forth as about to be visited upon the apostate earth, upon that portion of it especially which had accepted Satan's yoke under the deceptive influences of antichrist. The foundations may be destroyed, and the righteous may be almost in despair, but God's throne is still in the heaven; and His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men. (Psalm xi.) After the introduction of the seven angels, having the seven last plagues, there is a significant break, and, as is often the case in Scripture, the end is exhibited before the commencement. Or rather, before the storm of God's wrath bursts all in its desolating fury upon the earth, He vouchsafes to us a vision of the issue of the trial for His saints. We are permitted to see them preserved through all the unutterable sorrows of that day, with their hearts overflowing in praise to Him who had protected them from Satan's power, and snatched them as brands from the burning.

John says: "*And I saw as it were a sea of glass*

mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God." (v. 2.) The "sea of glass" is evidently that referred to in chapter iv., where we read, "And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal." It is moreover as clear from Solomon's "molten sea" that the allusion is to the laver in the holy place. This contained water as the means of purification; the "sea" before the throne is of glass, or "like unto crystal," the figure of fixed and accomplished holiness, without which these saints could not have been in heaven. But it was "mingled with fire," indicative of the fiery tribulation out of which they had come, and which God had used for the trial and purification of their faith. (See 1 Peter i. 6, 7.) Their characteristic description is also to be remarked: they are those "that had gotten the victory over the beast," etc. To man's eyes they were surely vanquished by his power; but before God they were conquerors through Him that had loved them. So too, in outward appearance, it was with our blessed Lord: "He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God." Man's victories are demonstrative and showy; moral triumphs are silent and unseen, and often accompanied, as with these saints, with the loss of everything in this world. Their occupation is praise: they have harps—symbols of triumphant gladness—and they sing. The character of their song is two-fold, "*They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.*" (v. 3.) "The song of Moses is triumph over the power of evil by God's judgments. The song of the Lamb is the exaltation of the rejected Messiah, of the suffering

One, and like whom they had suffered; for it is the slain remnant amidst unfaithful and apostate Israel whom we find here.* The allusion will be therefore to Exodus xv., and perhaps, for the song of the Lamb, to Rev. v.

It is interesting to notice that these redeemed ones celebrate God as they had known Him on earth; that is, as revealed in the Old Testament. It is "Lord God Almighty," Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai; showing the immense difference between the place of the Jewish saints and those of the present dispensation. The ground of their praise is God's marvellous works; that is, we apprehend, as seen in the judgments which had fallen upon the oppressors of God's people; and they add, "*Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.*"† (v. 3.) The interposition of God in judgment had dispelled all the clouds that had obscured (to sight) His ways in government; but, now that the end is reached, they confess that they were both righteous and true; and righteous and true in relation to the world at large, for He is here owned as King of nations. Faith is assured of this when God's way is in the sea, and His footsteps are not known; still this suffering, but now victorious remnant, sustained by divine power, had gotten the victory over the whole power of evil; and, as they review the past, they gladly confess that all God's ways had been according to Himself, and had ended in the furtherance of His own glory.

In the next place they contemplate the effect of God's judgments. It is but the amplification of the

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. v., p. 623.

† It should be "nations," not "saints."

prophet's words, "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isaiah xxvi. 9.) They cry, "*Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest.*" (v. 4.) These saints, it will be remembered, are in heaven; and it is there they anticipate the full millennial blessedness of the earth in the subjection of all nations to Christ as King; and this as the result of God's judgments having been made manifest. (See Psalm lxxii. 8-11; Zephaniah iii. 8, 9; Zechariah xiv. 16.)

All is now prepared; and we now read: "*And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: and the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.*" (v. 5, 6.) As in chapter xi. 19, so here the temple of the tabernacle is opened in heaven; only it is the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony, rather than the ark of the covenant that is seen. In both alike the significance is that God is about to act in view of Israel, and according to His unchanging purposes of grace towards them; but in the case before us, as "the testimony" is prominent, the testimony, that is, embodied in the two tables of the law, it will indicate that this is the standard according to which God will proceed to judgment through the angels as the providential instruments of His government; and that He is thus about to make good His character as so revealed, according to this testimony.

There are seven angels—this number as usual setting forth the completeness or perfection of that in which

they are to be engaged; and their array is distinguished by two things—their pure and white linen dress, and their golden girdles. The white linen is a symbol of spotless purity, absolute cleanness in God's sight, that which should have been seen, as has been suggested, in Babylon, but superseded there by corruption and "abominations." The golden girdles set forth the fact that these angelic instruments were girded by divine righteousness for their service. The white raiment and the gold (crowns of gold) characterize the twenty-four elders (chap. v.), and "the fine linen," clean and white, distinguishes the Lamb's wife (chap. xix.); and both of these traits mark these angels when sent forth on their judicial mission, because "it is really the avenging of what God was, as fully revealed to the assembly."

It is one of the four living creatures who gives "*unto the seven angels seven golden vials [or bowls] full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.*" (v. 7.) It is thus the eternal God who is about to deal with the world through these providential scourges. When we say "providential" we mean that His arm will not be made bare, except to the eye of faith; that to the eyes of the natural man the things which will happen will seem to be the result of the operation of natural laws. Science, for example, might be able to pacify the fears of men by indicating causes, or by alleging an explanation of the events. The reader will remark that one of the four living creatures hands the bowls to the angels, and that the bowls, even as the girdles of the angels, are golden. The living creatures, symbols of the attributes of God as displayed in creation, are always connected with God's throne, and with His throne in its judicial aspect, in its relation to God's government of the earth.

It is therefore in harmony with the action proceeding, judicial wrath in government, that one of these living creatures should be the intermediary between God and the angels. The golden bowls or vials tell again of God's righteousness, what is suited to His own nature which He is about to vindicate in judgment. (Compare Romans i. 16-18.)

The vials given to the angel, another thing is recorded. "*And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power; and no man [no one] was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.*" (v. 8.) The glory of God is the display of what He is. Any putting forth therefore of what God is, whether in grace, in power, or in holiness, is a display of His glory. Here accordingly, as power in judgment is in question, it is the display of what He is judicially according to the requirements of His own nature. (Compare Isaiah vi. 1-4, also 2 Chron. vii. 1, 2.) This at once explains why, until these judgments were completed, no one could enter the temple; for who indeed could stand before a God of judgment?

While one of the living creatures is employed to give the vials to the angels, the command for action proceeds out of the temple itself: "*And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.*" (Chap. xvi. 1.) The attitude of the seven angels is to be remarked as a pattern of all true service. It is an attitude of perfect obedience. They come out from the presence of God, they receive the instruments of their service from one of the living creatures, and finally they do not move a step until

they have a divine command: they "do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word."

Upon the vials themselves but few remarks will be necessary, because of their remarkable similarity to the seven trumpets. We shall therefore content ourselves with calling attention to the points of agreement and difference, and to their general significance. First of all it should be noted, that inasmuch as the seventh trumpet reaches down to the close, and the establishment of Christ's kingdom, the seven vials must, if comprised within a shorter period, be in part contemporaneous with the seven trumpets. If they begin after the commencement of the trumpets, they must still terminate at the same time. Secondly, there is no mention in the vial-judgments, as in the case of the trumpets, of a "third part" being specially affected. That is to say, the effects of God's judicial dealing are not confined, as in the trumpets, to the Roman earth, but are more general in their character. Thirdly, the first four vial-plagues "have the same object as the judgments of the first four trumpets—the whole circle of symbolic nature, but here directly as regards men, earth, sea, rivers, and sun." The fifth and sixth vials correspond with the fifth and sixth trumpets: both alike affect the kingdom of the beast and the Euphrates, while the last two in each series bring us to the close of God's dealings with the earth preparatory to the introduction of the kingdom of Christ.

Attention to the above comparison and contrast will aid in seizing the general meaning of these last seven plagues. The first vial is poured out upon "*the earth*," the scene of ordered government: "*And there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the*

mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image." (v. 2.) Satan may delude men and seduce them into apostasy, and into the acceptance of the beast and antichrist, but God will once more make it known, by causing His hand to fall upon His enemies, as in Egypt in days of old, that He will not suffer His glory to be given to another. The next vial is poured out "*upon the sea,*" the sea representing the masses of the peoples, "viewed as unorganized;" "*and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.*" (v. 3.) It may be difficult to state precisely what is intended here; but plainly some deathful influence goes forth in this plague among the peoples of the earth, resulting in general spiritual death. The third is somewhat similar, only the plague falls upon "*the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.*" (v. 4.) If rivers and fountains represent moral principles, which, in their course, should be the sources of life and refreshment to men, this will portend the corruption of these, the surrender of all such, so that what is offered in their stead becomes the means of death rather than life. It is so in this day, for example, when rationalism and infidelity flow out through the nation in the place of the word of God.

This plague evokes from "*the angel of the waters*" the cry, "*Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be,* because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.*" (vv. 5, 6.) On the ground of righteousness this principle is evident. Men had put to death God's witnesses, rejected His

* Another reading gives, omitting "O Lord," "Thou art righteous, who art and wast, the Holy One."

word, and now they have judicially to "drink" that which causes death. So, for example, the Jews shed the blood of Stephen and others, and they, in this case of their own will, "drank," in their blind hate against God and His truth, that which brought in spiritual death upon their souls. To the cry of the angel of the waters, "*another out of the altar*" is heard to respond, "*Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.*" (v. 7.)

E. D.

NOTES OF A READING ON 1 COR. XIII.

WHAT I think is, that there is many a gift that is not developed from want of devotedness, and chapter xiii. brings us to that. He supposes all manner of gifts with no grace. (vv. 1-3.) That is of moment in the exposition of Heb. vi.

Q. Could there be this faith without reality?

A. Yes; he is talking of faith to remove mountains, not of faith of the Lord Jesus Christ's person. We find power and grace constantly distinguished. We have got the power and not the grace in the Old Testament, in such an one as Balaam for instance, but I have no such instance in the New Testament: there you get Judas rather.

Q. How do you define "love" here?

A. Well, you have a long description of it in the chapter. "God is love." It is sovereign goodness coming out of itself.

Q. Is it beyond what we get in Romans v. 5—"The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost"?

A. Yes, it is the same love, but here you get it in its different characters. "Though I bestow all my goods to

feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." It is not a definition, but the way it works. But what I get here is *divine love in the world*, which is such a different thing from law. I get what is above all the evil that is round it, and therefore that can feel for all the evil affected by it, but never touched in itself by it. That is what I see in its working. I see Christ going through this world, and it is a sovereign thing. There are two kinds of love, both divine, a downward love which is sovereign in its nature—God really—which is in our hearts in a certain sense through the Holy Ghost, and then I find another which goes upward, and there it is a holy affection to which I am subject. You get an analogy to it in husband and wife; but where divine love is working in my heart towards others it goes downwards, but when I get the state of my soul I must look up and I am subject.

Q. What is "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us"? (Eph. v. 2.)

A. That is divine love, and it is the giving up of myself altogether; and then I get to God, and that is the object. And therefore it is said, we are light; but it is never said, we are love, because love is sovereign, and we cannot say we are that. Here I get it in this character of the Spirit of Christ working in us. I must get a power that is above all the evil that is round me and yet walk in graciousness through it all, and that is the reason the love of the Lord would not do for this world. *If* I love my neighbour as myself, it is not enough for a world of evil, there I must have a love that can go on and be superior to all the evil, and that is what Christ was. It can feel

all the evil too, having no self in it; it has no self roused by all the evil that is around, and therefore it can think of the people that are there. I suffer long, and that is downward, "does not seek her own"—downward—it is not that I am delighting in God and in what is blessed here, but it is looking around me in the midst of evil and selfishness.

Q. What is "rejoicing with the truth"?

A. It is in the truth no doubt, the truth is there, and I rejoice with it, and take delight in it. Suppose the truth is being preached, my heart goes with it and is delighted.

Q. What is "I am nothing"? (*v.* 2.) Is it the work?

A. No; it is, *I* am nothing.

Q. What is "believeth all things"?

A. It is not suspicious, believes readily, "Hopeth all things." It does not mean bad, it does not think of evil. Evil tends to depress the soul, but God is above all that. I find constantly the danger of thinking the evil is greater than the good, but if I bring in God, God is greater than all. Christ was here in the world with no thought of suspicion, and that is the spirit in which we are to walk through the world. If you are always suspecting people, who will trust you? I feel the great difficulty in seeing the evil, and it is apt to get the upper hand of one's mind, though it is no good deluding oneself that it is not there, because it *is* there. But love will go on in heaven when there is no evil to think about; prophecies will fail, tongues cease, and knowledge vanish away.

Q. What is "When that which is perfect is come"?

A. The time of glory when everything is perfect, and then partial things will have ceased.

Q. How does "knowledge vanish away"?

A. Knowledge now is merely, we know in part; all that kind of learning things will pass away. Learning is a proof of ignorance, and that will not be. Even in divine things we learn, and all that is testimony to ignorance. I have a great idea of the littleness of man in that way. It is these partial instruments of communicating will be done with when I get to know as I am known.

Q. What is that "know as I am known"?

A. I believe it is God's way of knowing, it is not knowing in part, it is not so much the measure as the manner of God's knowing. God can create ideas; I know so far as things are knowable to be known.

Q. What of faith, hope, and charity?

A. They are not merely put accidentally here. They are the three things that are characteristic of the Christian state now: "Putting on the breast-plate of faith and charity" (same word); "and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." (1 Thess. v. 8.) Some ten times in the New Testament you get faith, hope, and love together; they are positive elements, faith and hope referring to the present state I am in, and charity to the present and eternal state. Faith gets hold of an object and hope desires it. The word charity is an ecclesiastical word. Love is really God. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God" (1 John iv. 16); and that never fails. When I have got a thing, it has done with faith and hope; they have passed into positive fruition, as they say.

In the next chapter he is referring to these tongues which shall cease. The Corinthians were vain of them, and he says they were not to use them at all.

Q. Will there be faith, and hope, and love in heaven?

A. No, there will be love there. We shall not have faith because there will be sight, and shall not have hope because we shall have possession.

Q. Why does it say then "now abideth"?

A. Because it is a present thing, these three, but charity never faileth.

Q. What is the meaning of "darkly"?

A. That we do not see clearly. It is just as I see through a window, instead of seeing the object at once. It is an extraordinary expression. We do not see clearly, but in what you call a mystery; it is not like open, plain things. It is an enigma, though I do not like that word, because it does not fit divine things.

J. N. D.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

HEB. iv. 12, 13.

ALTOGETHER this is a very remarkable scripture, as setting forth the all-searching character of the word of God, when it is applied to us in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is necessary to observe that it is its action on Christians which the apostle has in view. He has been pointing out that there remaineth a rest for the people of God, that it is not therefore to be looked for here in the wilderness, but that it is future, that God's rest, in fact, into which He is bringing His people, is in heaven. Joined to this is the exhortation, "Let us labour [use diligence] therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example [as shown out in the case of the children of Israel] of unbelief."

Thereupon he proceeds to speak of the provision God has made to search our hearts by the living action of His Word upon our souls, which, penetrating into all the secret recesses of our being, detects every tendency to unbelief and departure from God, and reveals everything cherished there unsuitable to Him. Nothing whatever can escape it, when once it finds entrance into our hearts and consciences. It is, indeed, the light which makes everything manifest, as well as that which, sharper than any two-edged sword, cuts down between the most hidden parts of our nature, and exposes everything to view. Then it is that the words follow: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight," etc. The reader will observe this striking connection between God Himself and the Word. We might have expected "*its* sight"; but no, it is "*His* sight." The reason is, God and His word cannot be disjoined. When He speaks, when His word comes home to us, it is Himself we hear speaking; we are brought into His presence, and it is only as being consciously there, that we can judge everything in the thoughts and intents revealed by the Word as contrary to Him, according to His holy nature. Even God's own word remains a dead letter until it comes to us as a revelation of Himself and of His mind. This at once explains to us why we read, in verse 13, "*His* sight," and also that "all things are naked and opened [laid bare] unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Truly we are, in this sense also, in the light as God is in the light, and we can, blessed be His name, be there in perfect peace and liberty, when we remember that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

II.

ROMANS v. 2, 3, 11.

It is well known that the words "rejoice," "glory," and "joy," in these verses represent the same word in the original; and that the true rendering is to "boast." The beautiful connection in the apostle's argument is, to say the least, disturbed by the needless change which our translators have made. Thus, after showing that, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" that through Him "also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand," the apostle adds, "and 'boast' in the hope of the glory of God." We are not in it yet, but having the sure and certain hope of its possession, we can boast of it as in prospect. But what of the persecutions and trials by the way? The answer is: "We 'boast' in tribulations also"; knowing that God takes them up, and uses them for our needful discipline and blessing. Moreover, during this process, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." The proof, as well as the measure of this love, is seen in the death of Christ, and in the death of Christ for us as "without strength," "ungodly," "sinners," and "enemies." This leads the apostle to show what God will yet do, on the ground of what He has already done. A legal person argues, that God's attitude depends upon what he is for God; but grace concludes, as in this scripture, what God will be, and do, from what He has manifested Himself to be, and from what He has done, in the death of His beloved Son. Hence we read, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." The close of

the argument is now reached: "And not only so, but we also 'boast' in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." We "boast" thus in hope of the glory of God; we "boast" in the tribulations that beset us on our journey to this consummation of our hope; and finally we "boast" in God Himself, who is the blessed fount and source of all the blessing we have received, or shall receive, and who, in the display of all that He is as already revealed in Christ, will be the blessed Object of our "boast" throughout eternity.

III.

GALATIANS v. 17.

The translation of the last clause of this verse, as may be seen from the *Revised Version*, is altogether faulty. Taking it as it stands, it would teach that both the Spirit and the flesh are equally impotent, or rather that the result for the believer of their mutual antagonism is that he cannot do anything, that, whatever his desires, the desires of the new nature, even though indwelt by the Holy Ghost, he is utterly helpless, cannot do the things he would. An examination of the context (*v.* 16, for example) shows at once that such a thought is wholly alien from the mind of God; and, in fact, the words should be rendered, "that ye should not do those things which ye desire." This at once clears away the difficulty. The Galatian saints were not walking according to the character of their calling. Losing the sense of grace, they had put themselves back, through the influence of Judaizing teachers, under law; and the consequence was, that the flesh assumed its old dominant place in their lives.

(*v.* 15.) The only remedy for this, as the apostle points out, was to "walk in the Spirit." (Compare Rom. viii. 13.) Thereupon he takes occasion to bring before them the abiding character of the flesh, and its irreconcilable contrariety with the Spirit. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." The two are, and must ever be, opposed. The flesh will always be evil, and cannot be ameliorated, improved, or changed; and the Spirit, blessed be God, is holy; and it is impossible therefore that the two can be in agreement. The flesh "lusteth" against the Spirit, ever antagonizing, and ever seeking, in opposition to the Spirit, to gratify its own inclinations. The Spirit, on the other hand, is ever in opposition to the flesh, and seeks to repress its activities, and thus to lead the believer according to God. The question then is, To which shall the believer yield? If by grace he walks in the power of the Spirit, he will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh (*v.* 16); but if, on the other hand, he surrenders himself to the dominion of the flesh, there is then, as verses 19–21 indicate, no sin, however abominable, into which he may not fall. Give the Spirit His place in our souls, He will produce the beautiful fruit mentioned in verses 22, 23. But then, as the apostle warns these saints, it is a characteristic of those "that are Christ's," that they "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." If, therefore, any were allowing the sway of the flesh, let them take heed lest, after all, they had but deceived themselves with a vain profession, and did not really belong to Christ. If we live in the Spirit, let it be seen—for this is the force of the exhortation—by our also walking in the Spirit.

E. D.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

1 JOHN iv. 10.

THE first thing — legal commandment — disappears, although it is quite true that we ought to love God, as the commandment demands. “Not that we loved God.” Love is the fruit, but never the ground, of my fellowship with God, because I learn that God loved me in my sins (Rom. v. 8); and I learn too that, however excellent, love is a thing not required of a sinner. If it is required, I am lost! But what I now seek to show is, that the sinner is loved when he does not love God. It is the sinner’s needs that draw out God’s love.

You say, perhaps, “I do not find I love.” You mistake the whole matter. “Herein is love, not that we love God, but that He loved us.” Do you say, “I admit it; but I do not see that I have any share in it, for I do not feel its effects”? The answer is, “He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and that is the proof of His love.” It is the eternal enjoyment of it to know eternal life in the Son; but down here we often question it, because we do not see this love in us. Here then is the proof of it, “He is the propitiation for our sins.”

Ah! now I see, when I believe that. In Him, in His death, is the ground of my rest. Therein I learn what love is towards such a sinner as I am. I turn to look at it, not in myself, but in Him, and I rest in God. What my soul rests in is what He is, and

what He has done. He has sent His Son as a propitiation. God has loved me not only when I wanted it, but according to His sense of my want. He has not mistaken my case; for Christ on the cross has made propitiation for my sins, and I have found God. My soul rests there. The cloud is taken away for ever, for God has given His beloved Son.

If, however, you say, "There are such and such sins which I have committed," I answer that it was for these very sins that Christ died. You ought to hate them. God has both the sinner and his sins before Him; but He does not put the man away, but his sins. He cannot bear sin, and therefore His love has wrought a work to bring the sinner without his sins into His presence.

First, then, there is Christ meeting the need of all who come unto God, and then we learn why it is—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." It is important we should know not only our need of Christ in approaching God, but also that God in His love gave His Son that we might approach Him. John says, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us." Faith is always certain, and so I set to my seal that God is true. Thus, believing and looking to God, my soul is certain.

More, "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." My soul rests in His love, dwells in it, and now I have communion—seeing the work He has done to cleanse my sin, as I learn it in Christ—and I am perfectly happy. Why should such an one murmur or be unhappy? No; for we also have known and believed the love God hath to us. God does not expect fruit

from man, but His grace produces the fruit He seeks. Man had no life from which God could expect anything, and so He gives a new nature in Christ that He may produce fruit.

But do I find many sins in myself? Again, we must remind ourselves that Christ is the propitiation for our sins. Believing this, I have rest, and I enter into communion with God in His love. Why, then, do you have fear and torment when you discover sin in yourself? Is it that you cannot trust God's love? that you have not believed the love He has towards you? Have you not had the Father on your neck in your rags? When you know the love God has had to you, you know God Himself. The apostle thus says, "Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment." God's love was manifested to us in sending His Son, that we might have life, and that propitiation for our sins might be made, and now it is perfected that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. I am in Him who will be judging, and He is my righteousness. Why should I not be bold? Nay, "As He is, so are we in this world."

The effect of grace is the cause of our feeling sin, as well as of knowing that it is blotted out, and that we live through Him. "The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them . . . that the world may know that Thou . . . hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me." "There is no fear in love." It is a matter of communion; "Perfect love casteth out fear." We are called to learn God's love by the communication of what Christ is for us, and then we are in Him before God as Christ is. If this be true, I find rest to the heart; for the

heart rests in God, knows God is perfect, knows He has met all its need, and that all its sin is put away, and hence that He is perfect love.

“We love Him, because He first loved us”; and we pass through this sorrowful wilderness leaning on Him who is bringing us through it. Let me then ask, Do your souls rest in the love of God? J. N. D.

THE GROWING TEMPLE AND THE INHABITED TEMPLE.

BUT there is another and very distinct aspect of the Church given in the epistles; viz., that of an *inhabited* temple. We get this in 1 Cor. iii. 9-17; Eph. ii. 22; 1 Tim. iii. 15. And the history of its establishment is given in the Acts of the Apostles. To trace this is a very instructive study, beginning at chapter ii., and through chapter viii.,* where we get the work in Samaria, amongst a kind of mixed people, partly Jew and partly Gentile, leading thus by a gradual transition

* It is important to notice that the first authentic occurrence of the word “church” in the Acts (except vii. 38, which represents Israel) is in verse 1 of this chapter; *i.e.*, after a last offer has been made of Christ to the house of Israel, and refused, as recorded in chapter vii. The offer was made through Stephen of a glorified Christ (chap. vii. 55, 56) to the Jews. Had it been received “the times of refreshing” would have come “from the presence of the Lord;” and He would have sent Jesus Christ for the restitution of all things which God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. (Chap. iii. 19-21.) But they refused Him in *glory* as stoutly as they had in *humiliation*, stoning His witness, and in effect sending a messenger after Him to say, “We will not have this man to reign over us,” as in the parable. (Luke xix. 14.)

to the admittance of Gentiles in chapter x., and thus on to the new centre of departure at Antioch (chap. xi. 19-30, xii. 24, 25, xiii. 4), Jerusalem, the old centre, then dropping out of the record; and so on to Rome, the then centre of the Gentile world. (Chapter xxviii.) But it is beyond the scope of the present paper to follow out its details, marking how link was joined to link, the *unity* of the whole work being thus maintained, as under the guidance of the *one* Spirit, and all *independency* of action or of churches avoided.

In 1 Cor. iii. we get the work of Paul as "a wise master-builder," or architect, in contrast to and condemning what the Corinthians in human "*carnal*" wisdom were doing. From chapter i. 12 the apostle takes up their *sectarianism*, their saying, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ," tracing it to its *source*, "*the wisdom of this world*" (vv. 19-22), (mark it well, my reader), and utterly condemning it, showing that God had "chosen the *foolish* things of the world to *confound* the wise . . . that no *flesh* should glory in His presence." (vv. 26-29.) And, after showing that "the *natural* man" receiveth not, and *cannot know* the things of the Spirit of God, for they are "*spiritually* discerned" (chap. ii. 14); condemning the Corinthians as "*carnal*" and "*not spiritual*" (chap. iii. 1-4); and declaring that the labourers, Paul and Apollos, are nothing, but *God* that giveth the increase (v. 7); he shows what the temple of God in its outward aspect down here is, and warns the builders. God had designed that a Temple, not temples, should be built here, "an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22); and *men* were to be His builders, as 1 Cor. iii. 10-12 shows.

This is not the aspect of the Church which we have in Matt. xvi., and the other scriptures which we have been considering, that *Christ* builds. But it is that of which Paul, according to the grace of God given to him as a wise master-builder, had laid the foundation (v. 10); *i.e.*, in his doctrines, preserved for us in his inspired writings, where he in his apostolic character unfolds the truth concerning the person and the work of Christ—truth which he had received from Christ in the glory and not from man (Gal. i.), and shows that God had commenced a totally new thing of which Jesus Christ was the foundation. It was not an improvement of Judaism. It was not a fresh trial of the first man under new and more favourable conditions. No, it was an entirely fresh start, with “the second Man from heaven” as its foundation, and this after His death and resurrection. It is quite true that others were in the Church before Paul was converted, and that others were apostles before him (Gal. i. 17), but Paul was called as a chosen vessel to a ministry peculiarly his own. He was a minister of the Church according to the stewardship given him of God. (Col. i. 25; Eph. iii. 9.) It was in this character and office then that he “laid the foundation . . . which is Jesus Christ,” and “other foundation” could “no man lay.” No one could relay the foundation, or begin the Church again, even on Paul’s doctrines, for no one had divine commission to do so. But others built upon it. However, all were not *wise* builders, hence the exhortation, “But let every man take heed *how* he buildeth thereupon.” Paul had laid the *foundation*, none other then could be laid, but others could build. The builders are divided into three classes in verses 12–15.

First. Those who built in good material by their doctrines; *i.e.*, who built in true believers (for the *material*, whether gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, stubble, be it good or bad, is *persons*), receive reward.

Second. Those who were themselves true believers, but who built in bad material (for every man's work is to be tried by fire; *i.e.*, tested by judgment (*v.* 13) in "the day" of 2 Cor. v. 10, when it shall be revealed "*what sort it is.*") They suffer loss, but are themselves saved.

Third. Those that defile or destroy the temple of God; *i.e.*, heretics, whom God shall destroy. (*v.* 17.) Awful, solemn words!

But be the builders what they may, or the material good or bad—"gold, silver, precious stones," or "wood, hay, stubble"—the "building" is acknowledged as "God's" (*v.* 9), and is "the temple of God," indwelt by the Spirit of God, and "holy" (*vv.* 16, 17), for the presence of the *Holy Spirit* makes it so.* Alas! that through *man's* failure bad material, *and so much of it, has found its way into the building.* What has not man failed in? In *everything* committed to his responsibility. Adam failed in Paradise; out of Eden, man declined so

* In this we see the fulfilment of the promise in John xiv. 17 of the Spirit to *dwell with the disciples.* The promise is of a double character, and the verse should read, "He shall dwell with you, and shall be in you" (or both should be in the present tense, but the first is best). This was actually fulfilled at Pentecost. In Acts ii. 2 we first of all find the Spirit "filled all the house;" *i.e.*, came to be *with* them, and then "*they* were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (*v.* 4.) The first we find in 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17 and 2 Cor. vi. 16: "Ye are the temple [not temples] of God." The second in 1 Cor. vi. 19, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you."

rapidly, that in about 1000 years "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Gen. vi. 5.) Noah broke down immediately on the renewed earth. Man then became idolatrous. (Joshua xxiv. 2.) The seed of Abraham, called out to witness against this that "the Lord . . . God is *one* Lord" (Deut. vi. 4), put under law, and into the most favourable circumstances, broke the law, and became more idolatrous than the nations which God drove out of Canaan for this very sin. Under their kings they rebelled; their prophets they killed; and God's Son—the last and highest test—they murdered. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that in the best thing committed to his responsibility he has failed the most. Bad material has been built into "the house of God" (1 Tim. iii. 15); and heretics have "defiled" it, so that now "the temple of God," the *inhabited* temple, the "habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22), is a hopeless *ruin*. All the more need, therefore, that every *Christian* worker should take to heart the apostle's solemn warning, "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon" (1 Cor. iii. 10), and see well to it that he is not building in bad material, or on any other foundation or plan than that given by the architect. For "the fire shall try every man's work what sort it is." (v. 13.)* In principle it is true that every man's works will be tried—the believer at "the judgment-seat of Christ" will "receive the things done in his body" (2 Cor. v. 10), and unbelievers will be judged at the "great white throne . . . according to their works." (Rev. xx. 12.) But it is not these *works* that are spoken of in 1 Cor. iii., but their *work as builders*. (vv. 10–12.)

* "Every man's *work*," not *works*.

What a relief again to the one who feels the ruined state of the Church (the house) of God to look beyond it all, beyond time to the Church in the eternal state as we get it in Rev. xxi. 2, 3: "Behold, *the tabernacle of God is with men,*" &c. The Church of God will be the habitation of God, but no ruin *then*. All in *its fair proportions and solid, majestic excellence*. All just as God had planned and purposed from the foundation of the world, carried out and completed, a bride fit for His Son, a companion for Him.

But my reader may ask, "If the Church of God is now in *ruins*, what are we to do?" Thank God, He has answered that question for us. The ruin has been foreseen, although, like everything else, not to be restored. God has provided a remedy, a path for the obedient in the midst of the ruin.

It may be necessary to prove to some of my readers that the Church *is* in ruins, before pointing out the one divine path in the midst of them. For, alas! men are so carried away with the success and spread of their own havoc, as to think that the Church is more prosperous than ever. By that I mean, the increase and spread of denominations or sects into which the professing church is divided. But "what saith the Scripture?" That is the one and only test for everything. 2 Timothy is expressly written with the future ruin, which God foresaw, in view, and which had indeed commenced in the apostle's day. (Chap. i. 15.) There "the house of God," once "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy iii. 15), is compared to "a great house," in which "there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour and some to dishonour." (2 Timothy ii. 20.)

Do not the similes remind one of 1 Cor. iii. 12—"Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble"? Does not this show the ruin? But the apostle is still more explicit. He speaks of some whose "word will eat as doth a canker . . . who concerning the truth have erred," etc. (v. 18.) And in chapter iii. he says expressly, "*In the last days* perilous times shall come," and there describes those who are to be found in the professing church. We might think it was another description of the heathen, it is so similar to that given in Rom. i. 29-31. Did the apostle not say, "Having the form of godliness"? (Read 2 Tim. iii. 1-9, 13, iv. 3, 4; also 2 Peter ii. 1-3.) Such scriptures, describing as they do but too accurately, alas! the present fearful state of things in the professing church around us, leave no doubt on a subject mind that the Church *is* in ruins.

What then is the path for the faithful in the midst of this? Thank God, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, *The Lord knoweth them that are His.*" (2 Tim. ii. 19.) And there are still those who have kept His word, and have not denied His name. (Rev. iii. 8.) This and the previous chapter are another unanswerable proof of the ruin of the Church, giving in the state of seven then existent churches a history of the gradual declension of the Church from the time of the apostle to the Lord's coming. Commencing with departure from first love (chap. ii. 4) to being spued out of Christ's mouth (chap. iii. 16) the last four churches, describing different phases existing now, run on together to His coming, mention of which is found in each.

What then are the true in heart to do? The Word is very explicit, "Let every one that nameth

the name of the Lord* depart from iniquity." (2 Tim. ii. 19.)

We are told whom to separate from and whom to follow with.

1st. "If a man therefore *purge himself from these* [*i.e.*, the "vessels to dishonour"], he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." (v. 21.)

2nd. "*Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*" (v. 22.)

We are here told *whom* we are to follow *with*, and *what* we are to follow. As to the first—"a pure heart." The word "pure" is related to "purge" (v. 21) in the original. A person "of a pure heart" then (in this verse) is one who has purged himself from the vessels to dishonour. We must necessarily be able to determine who these are in order to do what this scripture says. In addition to character and ways, it is *necessary* for us to enquire people's church position in order to do this; *i.e.*, to examine by Scripture their mode of association with others for worship. The "vessels of gold and of silver" no doubt refer primarily to believers, and vessels "of wood and of earth" to false professors crept in. But if a believer debases himself in his associations, and acts like a vessel of wood or of earth, I have to *treat* him as a vessel to dishonour as to my association with him. I should not *call* him "a vessel to dishonour," but I could not call him "a vessel to honour" while Scripture says, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, *he shall be a vessel unto honour.*"

* I have given this according to the Revised Version, which is here the best reading, and brings out Christ's authority.

As to what we are to follow—be it well observed that “righteousness;” *i.e.*, what *suits God*, and “faith;” *i.e.*, the Christian faith, with which Christ’s authority is joined in Eph. iv. 5, “One Lord, one faith,” come before charity and peace. This is a very different thing to ‘peace at any price’ and love at the expense of God’s commandments (2 John 6), which is so highly commended to-day; but what is “highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”

We have thus examined scriptures which speak (1) Of the Church which Christ builds of living stones only, and apart from all human instrumentality, the growing Temple; and (2) The Church which man builds, the material being good and bad, which has now become a ruin, and degenerated into what is likened to a “great house” in 2 Timothy ii.—the inhabited temple.*

W. G. B.

* There is one other reference to the Church as the house of God; viz., in Heb. iii. In verses 2 and 5 referring to the house of Israel as such in the past. (Reference to Numbers xii. 7 will show that it is God’s not Moses’ house.) But Israel had forfeited and been set aside from this position. In verse 6 the writer assures those whom he addresses that they now occupied this position; that if they no longer possessed it in virtue of their connection with Israel, they held it in virtue of their connection with Christ, as “partakers of the heavenly calling,” “holy brethren” (v. 1), “sons” (chapter ii. 10) who were being led to glory by “the Captain of their salvation;” that, in a word, professing Christians now occupy the position of God’s people upon earth as Israel had once done; and in chapter iii. 6, iv. 12, the possibility of their dropping out of that place of privilege through unbelief is contemplated, as many of God’s earthly people had done before they reached the promised land.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

CHAPTER xvi. 8-21.

THE fourth and fifth vials are easily comprehended. The fourth "*poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him [it] to scorch men with fire.*" (v. 8.) The sun, it will be recollected, is the emblem of supreme authority; and this plague therefore points to some tyrannical exercise of it, some fearful despotism which causes immense trial and suffering to those trodden down under its heel. But so far from humbling themselves before God, while groaning under their sufferings, men blaspheme His name, for in spite of their wickedness they will be made to recognize that He "*hath power over these plagues.*" Yet, such is the hardness of man's heart, "*they repented not to give Him glory.*" (v. 9.)

"*The fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat [throne] of the beast*"; and, like Egypt again of old, "*his kingdom was full of darkness,*" only this, we apprehend, would be moral in its character rather than actual. The consequence was what is really a foretaste of hell; for in the intensity of their distress and misery they "*gnawed their tongues . . . and blasphemed the God of heaven,*" to whom they also attribute "*their pains and their sores.*" But they "*repented not of their deeds.*" (vv. 10, 11.) The reader cannot fail to be struck with the solemn repetition of the impenitence of those who are suffering under the judicial hand of God. They had despised and killed His

witnesses, and now, though they cannot any longer conceal from themselves that there is a God who judges the earth, they refuse to acknowledge their sin. They "repented not"; their evil hearts still clung to the very deeds which had brought upon them their terrible sufferings. What a proof of the incurable evil of human nature, that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually!

The sixth angel "*poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared.*" (v. 12.) The Euphrates, a river well known in Scripture, was, and, as is plain from this scripture, will be, the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire. What is here symbolically described therefore as the drying up of its water, will mean that this boundary is broken through, can no longer be maintained.* Whatever the human instrumentality by which the removal of this boundary is effected, it is the consequence of the pouring out of the angelic vial. It is a "plague" from the hand of God through His providential agent. In connection with this, "*three unclean spirits like frogs*" proceed from the trinity of evil, "*out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet,*" and act upon "*the kings of the whole habitable world.*"† (vv. 13, 14.) Just as Ahab was persuaded by "a lying spirit" in the mouth of his prophets to go up to Ramoth-gilead to battle to his own destruction, so these "*spirits of demons, working miracles*" (v. 14), will

* Whether these kings of the East come at first in antagonism to the "beast" cannot be known. In the issue, it is certain they are his confederates.

† So it should be read, and not, as in the English Version, "the kings of the earth and of the whole world."

influence these kings to combine with one consent with their allies for their objects, all ignorant of the fact that they are being gathered for the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Jerusalem, as we may learn from the prophets, will be the point to which they will converge (see Isaiah lxvi.; Zech. xii.-xiv.; with Rev. xix. 11-21); and Jerusalem will be the object of their attack. At first victory will seem to be theirs; but just as their prey is about to be devoured, the Lord Himself will appear, and, rescuing His people, will "destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." (Zech. xii.)

That this is the event indicated is seen from verse 15. After the description of the action of the three spirits of demons there is a solemn pause, and the Lord Himself speaks: "*Behold, I come as a thief.*" This is the known way in Scripture of His coming to the world; that is, of His appearing. (See 1 Thess. v. 1-4; 2 Peter iii. 10; Rev. iii. 3, &c.) This makes it very clear that the battle of that great day of Almighty God is that consequent upon the sudden appearing of Christ in His glory as described in the scriptures above given. It is because He will come thus as a thief that He adds, "*Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*" (v. 15, compare Matt. xxiv. 36, 37.) This instruction, as well as warning, applies above all to the elect remnant of that day.

One more particular is now added—the name of the place to which the kings and their armies will be gathered. It is called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.* This name has a symbolical import, and

* Some read, Harmagedon.

means, in fact, the hill of Megiddo. Megiddo was the great battle-field of Barak (Judges v. 19), and had, therefore, combined with other events in connection with the same place, a peculiar significance in Jewish history. This will account for its application to that awful place where "the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies" will gather "together to make war against Him that sat on the horse" (the Lord in His glory) "and against His army." (Rev. xix. 19.)

The consummation is now reached. Together with the pouring out of the seventh vial "*into the air, . . . there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.*" (v. 17.) God's preliminary judgments are now completed; and the next thing to follow, not described here, will be the event announced in verse 15, the coming of the Lord as a thief. The effects of this last plague are briefly given. The great city, Rome (chap. xvii. 18), "the unified association of European civilization," for it is the expression of all that the Roman Empire is in all its wealth, art, literature, and commerce (see chap. xviii.) is "*divided into three parts.*" (v. 19.) Babylon is judged, the details of which are found in chap. xviii.; "*and every island fled away, and the mountains were not found*" (v. 20); all the world's stability and order are utterly subverted, and reduced to chaotic confusion; and finally, God's violent judgments (see Isaiah xxxii. 19) will once again descend on men, who, still untouched by His repeated scourges, will in their madness respond with blasphemy "*because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.*" (v. 21.)

E. D.

SAUL, DAVID, ABSALOM, ISRAEL.

“THAT which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John iii. 6.) Such is the testimony of the Son of God; and the Holy Ghost says, “These are contrary the one to the other.” (Gal. v. 17.) Self is always the object of the nature derived by birth from the first Adam, whatever may be the degree of its activity; but God Himself is the object of the life that He has given to us in His Son. In the activities of flesh God is shut out and ignored, or His name used to sanction the fruit of unbelief and self-will; but the new nature recognizes God as not only the source of its being, but His will as the only true spring of its activities, and the controller of all circumstances and events. It can therefore count on God Himself, not only in scenes where His will is effectuated in fulness of blessing, but also in times of trouble and difficulty caused by self, sin, and Satan’s power, and the failure of all around.

Thoughts suggested by the consideration of Saul, David, Absalom, and Israel will be of present profit, if they lead by God’s grace to exercise of soul in His presence, and to a clearer discernment of what are the works of the flesh amongst ourselves, and what “the fruit of the Spirit.”

Saul—the finest specimen of the flesh that Israel could produce, the man head and shoulders taller than any of the people, on whom the Spirit of God had come, as well as having been *anointed* with oil—was

elevated to a higher position than any one had yet been as king over Israel; but when he was tested as to obedience and dependence, like Adam, he entirely broke down, and was set aside for the man after God's heart, whom the Lord had sought to be captain over His people.

David—chosen of Jehovah and *anointed* with oil in secret—was not, like his predecessor, at once exalted to sit on the throne, but had to reach it through a variety of circumstances, often of deep difficulty, trial, and sorrow, the trial of his *faith* being much more precious than of gold that perisheth (as all has which he prepared for Solomon's temple), being found to his honour, praise, and glory. In nothing is his confidence in, and dependence on, Jehovah more strikingly exhibited, than in the way he ever treated the one who stood in the way of his being crowned, viz., Saul himself.

Saul had been raised out of deep obscurity into prominence and position without any action that might win the attention or attract the hearts of his subjects, so that, if the Lord's sanction of him were lost sight of, there was nothing in his own conduct to command their respect or retain their confidence. But whatever may have been the thoughts of Israel generally, to David's faith Saul was always "the Lord's anointed," and as such entitled to the deepest respect; so that, when once and again his life was in David's hand, David would not touch him. Even when David cut off a piece of Saul's robe in the cave, his heart smote him for the oft-repeated reason, "he is the Lord's anointed." (1 Sam. xxiv. 6.) When the news of Saul's death was brought to David by one who, thinking to meet with reward, professed to have given the finishing stroke, David's

resentment broke forth in, "How wast thou not afraid to put forth thine hand against the Lord's anointed?" and soon the Amalekite's own life measured the extent of David's indignation. Was it that David had sympathy with Saul's conduct and ways, or fellowship with him and personal affection for him? Surely not. But in the spirit of Him (David's Son and yet His Lord), who said, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat," etc., David leaves it to the One who put Saul on the throne, to put him from it in His own time and way. He was content meanwhile to suffer, and to have his name cast out as evil by Saul, until the day should come when God should publicly vindicate him, and the united tribes of Israel should accept him as their king.

Far otherwise was it with Saul (as ever with the flesh), on David's first introduction to Israel in the valley of Elah. What a bright display of the courage of faith in contrast to the cowardice of unbelief—Saul and all Israel being dismayed and sore afraid in the presence of Goliath! The shepherd youth, ruddy and of a beautiful countenance, sent by his father on an errand of love to his brethren, thus unexpectedly heard the challenge of the proud Philistine foe, and witnessed its effect on the Israelites. His soul was filled with a sense of the reproach to Israel, no one being found to accept the challenge of him who, to David's faith, was but an uncircumcised Philistine, defying the armies of the *living God*. Strong in the Lord and in the power of *His* might, David stepped into the arena of conflict with the calm confidence of unquestioning faith in Jehovah, God of Israel, having one only object and desire, that God's name should be vindicated, as being

still in the midst of Israel (xvii. 46), and ready to intervene on behalf of His poor and trembling, because unbelieving people.

David's victory, completed by the giant's own sword, and the expressive evidence of that victory (his returning with the Philistine's head in his hand), made him the object of attention to Saul, to his generals, to every soldier in the army, and to all Israel. What was the effect on Saul? Did he share the joy of victory, and the delight of his subjects in the victor? No, the flesh only saw a rival; and anger, envy, jealousy, hatred, took possession of Saul's heart towards the one to whom he owed his life and kingdom. Secretly first, but soon publicly, he sought with all the power at his command to ensnare and destroy David. No gratitude for deliverance from the evil spirit in private, or from the terrible giant in public, had any place in his bosom towards the one who had been the instrument of both deliverances. What was the ultimate result? Whilst every step of David's endeared him more and more to the heart of the people, every step of Saul's only alienated them; so that at last when Saul and Jonathan lay dead, who was there to *weep* for them but David himself? The daughters of Israel, who spontaneously sang David's praises in the day of his victory, were exhorted by him to *weep* over Saul, but without meeting, as far as we know, a responsive throb from their hearts, or a tear from their eyes, so complete had the alienation become.

Thus in the righteous government of Jehovah was the man of flesh (Saul) disappointed and set aside, and the man of faith (David) first enthroned in the affection of all Israel and Judah (xviii. 16), and then

firmly seated on the throne of a united nation. How beautiful it is to see that when there, wielding the power of life and death, David not only remembered his oath to Saul (xxiv. 21, 22), not to cut off his seed after him, but going beyond the unhappy, unbelieving king's utmost thoughts, he enquires (2 Sam. ix.) if there were not any left of the house of Saul to whom he might show the kindness of God. The touching story of the son of Jonathan is the witness in David's day of that full divine grace, that kindness of God our Saviour toward man which has appeared (after all the full seven-fold outburst of the evil of the flesh, Titus iii. 3), "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus iii. 4-7.) What a perfect cluster of divine activities in our Saviour God, our Lord Jesus, the true Beloved, showing us that faith finds suited occasion for its activities alike in the day of rejection and contempt, and in the day of acceptance and honour!

Notice as to this the same difference in Nabal and Abigail. To the one David was a runaway servant, to the other he was the one who, as in the valley of Elah, fought the Lord's battles, whose life was bound up with the Lord his God. Abigail counted on God to yet accomplish every word that He had spoken concerning David, whose anger she deprecated, whose favour she desired, though never thinking that the day would come when she would be united to him,

and become his wife, after the first man had gone under the judgment of Jehovah.

Varied were the activities of faith in David during his reign, but the incurable evil of the flesh is also brought out. Under the pressure of the power of evil it is weak and fearful, and in the enjoyment of that which is good it soon manifests its wickedness.

David's family grows, but faith is not always successional, as it was in Timothy's case; and Amnon's guilty passion and crime furnish occasion for Absalom's wicked and murderous revenge. The father's weakness leaves the rights of the throne unvindicated, to his own eventual deepest anguish and sorrow. What an example David set them, through the allowance of the flesh in himself, in the awful story of Bathsheba, and Uriah the Hittite, showing us that flesh is as bad in the man of faith as it is in those who "have not faith"! The allowance of Absalom's return into the midst of Israel without righteousness being vindicated by a full confession of guilt, and submission to whatever consequences the rights of the throne demanded—his seeing the king's face, and being kissed by him, did not melt his soul, but introduces to us the person of the *rebel*, and the heresy which shook the nation from its centre to its circumference. He goes out from the king's presence to cherish and nourish the secret purpose of his soul, to drive the Lord's anointed (his own father) from the throne, and to seat himself upon it. 2 Samuel xiv. 25 gives us a description of Absalom: "In all Israel there was none to be so much praised for his beauty: from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him."

Note, too, his personal graciousness, his plausible

ways and manner, his pretended anxiety for the good and right to have justice, his condescension and familiarity with the men of Israel, whose hearts he was stealing away from their true object. Then we get his pretended conscience as to his vow to the Lord in Hebron, the spot once honoured by the presence of the king, the Lord's anointed, but now to become the centre of the movement of the arch-rebel, who to accomplish his purpose would cause an open breach between the ten tribes and the two. This breach, though healed over for the time on the death of Absalom and defeat of his followers, yet burst out afresh when Rehoboam listened to the counsel of the *young men*, and found its expression in Israel's answer to the king: "What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David." (1 Kings xii. 16.) So they departed to their tents, taking their first step on that path which led them eventually to Assyria, and their present unknown abode.

Thus we see how the flesh, whether in an individual or a nation, having no ability to see God's kingdom, has no respect for His anointed, no *true* thought of the unity of God's Israel, like the men of another day speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. In Absalom we see no natural affection exhibited, if it stands in the way of his purpose of revenge, or pride and exaltation; he complains of injustice when about to perpetrate the greatest injustice that a son and subject could be guilty of; he spends years in useless inactivity, but is full of restless energy when the day comes for putting his long-cherished plans into execution; and at last, in the

presence of his father, the Lord's anointed, he sets out on his awful course, with a hypocritical profession of respect for the Lord, and of gratitude to Him for His goodness in bringing him back to Hebron. Surely it is Satan himself changed into an angel of light!

Many are the lessons the Lord would have us learn from this portion of His divine word, written for our instruction, and deeply profitable for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; for who has not "the flesh" still in him, however intelligent he may be in the truth that, as to our standing, we are not in the flesh but in Christ Jesus. I ask myself, therefore, and my reader, What should we learn from what God has written about the past, and from our recent experiences of what we are? Should we sit down and give up in hopeless despair? No; if the moral confusion in David's house, and the political confusion in his kingdom, is duly and deeply felt by the man of God, as weeping, with his head covered he ascends Olivet, leaving the *Ark of God* and his throne behind; so the faith that prays, and worships, and discerns the right thing to do, shines out as brightly now as ever.

Whilst owning the Lord's hand in all, and counting on Him even in a Shimei cursing, David goes on meekly whither he may, until the day when peace is restored to all Israel by Absalom's death, and by Sheba's head being thrown over the wall. Then, by Jehovah's judgment on the long-forgotten rash zeal of Saul with regard to the Gibeonites, order is restored, and officers have their places in the kingdom—the civil and domestic war gives way for renewed conflicts with the Philistines. Notice the beautiful song of chap. xxii., and the activities of David's mighty men in chap. xxiii.,

whilst he personally devotes himself (1 Chron. xxviii.), to providing for the building of that temple on which his heart is set, though his eyes were never to see one stone of it laid.

May we, beloved brethren, be made to feel with God by His unfailing grace, our own failures in the light of His faithfulness, and with increasing distrust of *self*, trust Him more simply and fully. Having then internal peace restored, through all hearts bowing to the *rightful* claims of our one and only Lord and Master, may each servant learn his place and appointed work, may each soldier desire to imitate Him who conquered the Philistine in the valley of Elah (Phil. ii.), and may all hearts be filled with hope of the speedy coming of the day of glory, when no unbelief will hinder the bright shining in of the pure light of His own blessed presence!

G. L.

THERE is a great difference between confession and self-judgment. The latter is far the deeper work. Forgiveness follows immediately upon confession, according to 1 John i. 9; but restoration to communion is not reached until after the root of the sin is exposed and judged in the presence of God.

CCROSSING the Jordan represents the believer being set at liberty, and intelligently entering by faith into the heavenlies. It is conscious death and resurrection with Christ. The Red Sea is the power of redemption by Christ.

FIDELITY, in the power of the Holy Ghost, is what the Lord seeks for in an evil day. (Rev. iii. 8.)

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

PSALM xiv. 7; HEBREWS i. 9.

THE question as to the "fellows" of the Messiah is easily answered by the scriptures in which the expression is found. The Psalm, whence the citation in the Hebrews is taken, refers wholly to Christ as the King of Israel. This is clear both from its connection with Psalm xlv., and from the language employed. In verse 2 His beauty and grace, as well as His being the blessed object of God's everlasting favour, is touchingly presented. From verses 3 to 5 we behold Him going forth to conflict with His enemies for the establishment of His throne; and in the following verse the whole truth of His person is stated, together with the consequence, that His throne as God, not His throne as Messiah, is for ever and ever. In whatever character Christ is seen in the Scriptures, the glory of His person cannot be concealed. Then, in the next verse, we behold Him again as the Christ of God: "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Here the kingdom has been founded, Messiah sits upon His throne, and the character of His rule is that He loves righteousness and hates wickedness. It is on this account that God anoints Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows, for in so reigning He vindicates, and makes good, the name of God in His righteous government. The "fellows" therefore will be those who are associated with Him in His Messianic sway; that is, in His kingdom on earth. If we now turn to Rev. xiv. we shall discover

who these are. The one hundred and forty-four thousand (the details of the interpretation have been recently given in these pages) are the believing remnant found in the land during the frightful sway of antichrist, who, having resisted all his seductions, are brought through that time of unequalled sorrow, and who are now seen enjoying the fruits of their victorious suffering with the Lamb on Mount Sion. Of these it is expressly said, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." (v. 4.) There is, therefore, no foundation whatever for the common theological contention, that the "fellows" are other and previous kings of Israel. The word indeed might be properly translated "associates" or "companions." The meaning of the term in the Psalm must also govern, whatever the special object of the quotation, the sense in the Hebrews; and the introduction in the next chapter of the "brethren," and "the children which God hath given me," confirms this conclusion. It is of great interest to add, what is often noticed, that when the Messiah is looked upon in His humiliation, and as about to be smitten, He is termed the "fellow" of Jehovah. The word is not the same as in Psalm xlv.; it is one that speaks, if possible, of still more intimate fellowship. When, on the other hand, Christ is presented in His exalted glories, His people are termed *His* fellows; but, as ever, when His people are associated with Him, His own pre-eminent place is guarded. He is anointed with the oil of gladness *above* His fellows.

II.

EXODUS xxiv. 17; HEBREWS xii. 29.

It is more than probable that there is an allusion in the latter scripture to the former; and it is very evident

that the two scriptures are morally connected. "The sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring [the word might be rendered 'consuming'] fire." This was the glory of Jehovah as revealed in relation to Israel in connection with Sinai; in a word, it was the expression of His holiness as set forth in His righteous requirements. But His people were sinners, and could not, therefore, satisfy His just demands. The consequence was that this glory became in Jehovah's government, as based upon the law, a "consuming fire" in the judgment that was continually visited upon Israel because of their repeated transgressions. Moses thus said, "We are consumed [a kindred word] by Thine anger." (Psalm xc. 7.) In the passage in the Hebrews the apostle says that "our God is a consuming fire." It is to be distinctly observed that it is of "our" God, the God of Christians, that he thus speaks. After the declaration that God is about to shake not the earth only, but also heaven, he proceeds, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear," and this for the reason that the God whom we serve is a "consuming fire." Once more then the "consuming fire" is an expression of the holiness of God—in testing all our service, and in the necessary judgment of all that is evil in it. (Compare 1 Cor. iii. 13.) Grace was unknown at Sinai; but while now God is known as the God of all grace, this in no wise weakens His holiness. He is light as well as love, and, whether in our worship or our service, it should never be forgotten that our God is holy, and consequently a "consuming fire" when He has to do with evil. In the holiness of God, indeed, lies our eternal security. E. D.

PEACE. *

THE connection and place of peace in Luke, and as to the last, or application to us, in John also, is extremely interesting. As soon as Christ is born, the unjealous delight in the divine glory in man's blessing celebrates His birth. They pass over man's fault in putting the Saviour born into the manger, and filled entirely with the divine thoughts in it, celebrate His praise. And what was this? Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good pleasure in man. That was the result in its own nature of the birth of the Saviour. This presence of the Lord, the fruit of infinite grace, was in itself, if received, peace and blessing—carried it necessarily in what it was in itself—and will produce it finally. But the Lord was rejected, and as some received Him, He had to say, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: . . . there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three."

In the end of Luke the kingdom is celebrated, which will indeed bring in peace on the earth. There it is said, "Blessed be the King that cometh. . . . Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." All that God had done on earth had been marred and spoilt by Satan, and as long as these wicked spirits were in heavenly places, thus it must be. But there is war in heaven, and the devil and his angels are cast out, and there is no more place for them. Then there is peace in heaven; Satan is bound. Now there can be peace on earth, and under the Lord's rule there will be peace. But between these two we stand. And in that same Gospel of Luke,

* This valuable article is taken from "Notes and Comments."

the Lord comes after His resurrection and pronounces "peace" on His disciples. But this was a peace of a far deeper and fuller character, not peace on earth, governmental peace, but peace made with God. He had made peace, perfect peace, so that the soul might enjoy cloudless communion with Him; all that is of the world or of this scene, as alive in it, being shut out. He had brought them, or had done what had brought them, into this peace by His death, and now He pronounced it. And if we turn to John, this will shine out with the brightest evidence. The Lord had warned His disciples that He did not come to bring peace, but a sword; so that the peace on earth was not there, but the fire already kindled. But He had ineffable peace of soul as not of the world; He was in, and His soul in the unclouded light of His Father's countenance. It was a link between man and God, infinite in blessing (in Him in every sense infinite, and in us objectively, and as regards the power of the Holy Ghost, and as being in Him, and so in cloudless light with God), no matter what the circumstances. Now Jesus through His death, and as being in Him and He in us, brings us into this blessing—"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." This is unspeakably blessed.

The peace of the Christian is not the same as being justified—"Being justified . . . we have peace with God." This must be according to His nature; hence completely what He is, which makes it very blessed, and though in us connected with our being alienated and enemies by sin, yet in itself is only measured by what He was before sin existed—the outgoing of His own nature in itself before sin, and we in absolute harmony with its full display and proper nature. Sin has been the

means of bringing us to know what holiness, righteousness, and love are; but they are all in God—the last is His nature. Thus in seeing what Christ says, we learn what it is, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” Now, His peace was consonance in every way with the divine nature, and the consciousness of communion with it—that it rested on Him unclouded, but that was not by sin put away. It was in itself divine, and though now in a man, eternal consonance. Now, for us of course it had to be made. He has made peace by the blood of the cross, and this was so perfect as to the whole nature and character of God, that He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; is glorified with God in virtue of that work in which He glorified God perfectly and in respect of which we are as sinners, but glorified God perfectly.

Hence we are brought into this. Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God. It is in the midst of evil no doubt, conflict and warfare around, so that it has the character of peace. Still it is, and this makes it specially to be so, “peace with God.” Not as to the circumstances—that is the “peace of God keeping our hearts”—a blessed thing, but not so deep and direct as this. This is with Himself; our secret with Him, His with us. I think it will turn to delight in His own glory in heaven, to which it ministers now. But here it has the character of peace with God.

Then we must remember that it is a state of mind in the unclouded consciousness of what God is (but necessarily according to His nature) to us according to the value of Christ's work, and in Him.

There is another order of peace from the conformity itself to this nature—a subjective peace. “The mind of the Spirit is life and peace.”

J. N. D.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

CHAPTER xvii.

AT the close of the previous chapter, in connection with the last vial, we are told that "great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." And now, before the specific details of her judgment are described (chap. xviii.), her moral character and her connection with the civil power are pourtrayed, and pourtrayed with such distinctness that her identification is easy, beyond even the possibility of mistake, for those who are not blinded by prejudice and preconceived ideas, and who are subject to the word of God.

"*And there came,*" says John, "*one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.*" (vv. 1, 2.) Then, from verse 3 to verse 6 we have in detail what John saw when he was carried away by the angel "*in the spirit into the wilderness.*" (v. 3.) Next, from verse 6 to the end of the chapter the angel's own interpretation of the vision is recorded, as given to John.

First of all, we may occupy ourselves with the two-fold description of Babylon as the "great whore" or harlot, and as the "woman." In chapter xxi. 9 it is also one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, etc., who says to John, "Come hither, I will

show thee the bride, the Lamb's *wife*." The designed contrast is too evident to escape notice, and at once reveals the significance of the expression, "the great whore." We learn thus, beyond all doubt, that what had claimed to be the bride of Christ, and what indeed had occupied this place upon earth, had, according to the unerring estimate of God, become morally a great harlot. The second verse of our chapter explains this—the manner of her "fornication" with the kings of the earth, and further adds that she had intoxicated the inhabitants of the earth with the wine of her special sin. The Church of God, the bride, the Lamb's wife, is heavenly in origin, character, and hopes; but that which usurped this title became wholly earthly, became a power amidst the powers of the world, made alliances with them, or reduced them to subjection, and thereby she corrupted herself and those with whom she entered into unholy commerce. Thereby, too, she blinded and deceived the inhabitants of the earth with her intoxicating wine, allowing them, under the sanction of her assumed authority, the gratification of every lust of the flesh. Corrupted herself, she corrupted the word of God, and became the corruptress of all with whom she came into contact.

She is, moreover, presented as a "*woman*"; and the angel expressly says that the woman is "*that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*" (v. 18.) The Church, as we have seen, is the bride, the Lamb's wife; but what John saw, when the angel thus described her, was "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." (Chap. xxi. 10.) This affords another contrast. The Church is a heavenly, and the harlot is an earthly city. In both

of these characters therefore Babylon counterfeits the heavenly Jerusalem. This will help us to understand the significance of the "woman." She is a system, the expression of a system, a centre that gathers up and presents all her principles in an organized form. We are acquainted with this symbolism even in our ordinary speech. We say, for example, that a person has "gone over to Rome," meaning that he has joined the papal "church."

Before proceeding further, it will clear our way if we seek to answer definitely the question as to what system is indicated under the figure of the woman. In addition to what has been said, which in itself is sufficient to supply the answer, three things, named in the chapter, may be considered. In verse 9 we read, "*Here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads*" (alluding to the beast) "*are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.*" It would be a waste of time to show, what has been indisputably proved a thousand times, that Rome was ever known as the seven-hilled city. There could not, in fact, have been a more direct explanation given that Rome is the city intended.* Again, in verse 15, it is said, "*The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.*" The significant change should be remarked from the term "woman" in verse 9 to the "whore" here used. When it is a question of locality, identified with the system, "woman" is employed; but seen in connection with the various races and divisions

* If it be objected that the mountains represent the symbolic force of the seven heads of the beast, seven forms of power, the answer is, that the two things coincide, inasmuch as Rome was and will be the seat of government.

of people that own her debasing sway, we have "harlot," to give prominence to her corrupting character. If, then, the city of Rome is plainly intended in verse 9, here it is the fact of her almost universal dominion to which our attention is called. Lastly, in verse 18, it is said that the "woman" is no other than that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth. Every student of history is acquainted with the fact that this is exactly what Rome did in the middle ages. Claiming to be Christ's vicegerents on earth, the popes always avowed their title to sovereignty over the kingdoms of the world; and even now, though to a large extent the nations have revolted against their arrogant demands, the claim is still asserted. Combining therefore these several features, so strikingly set forth in this chapter, only one conclusion is possible, viz., that we have here a vision of papal Rome. But the reader will remember that the time is yet future when she will entirely correspond with the portraiture of this chapter; not forgetting, at the same time, that the moral character of Rome has been the same in all ages.

We may now pursue, with more intelligence, the consideration of details. It should be first remarked that the "wilderness" is the scene of the vision, a moral desert, where, to borrow language, no springs of God are found; and this wilderness is to be regarded as the result of the influence of the woman and of the beast. It is in such a place that John "*saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*" (v. 3.) The beast we already know from chapter xiii. 1, and the reader can refer back to our remarks there; but we may once again call attention to the plain description

here given by the angel: "*The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*" (v. 8.) The Roman empire was in full vigour in the apostle's day, the empire that was shadowed out by Daniel's fourth beast (chap. vii. 7), and which is to be found in existence at the coming of the Ancient of Days. (v. 22.) At the present moment this empire "is not"; and we learn from our chapter that it will, and must, to fulfil the prediction of Daniel, reappear. But it will reappear as devilish in its origin, it will ascend out of the bottomless pit, and it will be blasphemous in its character. (v. 3.) Still more precise information is given. The beast has seven heads—forms of power, represented in verse 10 as kings, of whom five had fallen in the apostles' days. One was then existing, "*the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.*" (vv. 10, 11.) If Napoleon I. is, as has often been suggested, the one who was to make the seventh, there remains now only the appearance of the "beast" to fulfil the angelic prophecy.

Such then is the last awful form of governmental power, embodied in the revived Roman empire, which will fill the minds of all, outside of the elect saints of God, with amazement and admiration. What greater proof could be given of what man is than the fact that his ideal of government will be satanic?

Before pursuing other features of the "beast," we

return now to the "woman" and her relation to it. In verse 3 she is here seen "sitting upon" the beast; that is, what the woman represents, Popery in its full-blown development after the rapture of the saints, is allied with and upheld by the world-power. She is borne up and carried along by all the power of the resuscitated Roman empire. This is the principle of all State "churches," only here it is exemplified in its grossest form because of the character of the "woman." First, her dress is specified: "*And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.*" (v. 4.) What a contrast to the bride, the Lamb's wife! To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white (chap. xix. 8); but this usurper is clad in all the gorgeous beauty of earthly splendour, in the two colours that betoken worldly and imperial glory, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, all of which had their symbolic place in Judaism, in that which since the cross is divinely described as the elements of the world, or "beggarly elements," and which therefore in themselves contain the absolute denial of the Church's heavenly origin and character. She has, moreover, a golden cup in her hand, full of the abominations wherewith she seduces and corrupts the nations of the earth.

Then we read: "*And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.*" (v. 5.) By "mystery" we understand that this had not been revealed before, and that it was something which

could not have been understood but for this divine explanation. "Babylon the great" sets forth her corrupting character. In the Old Testament the symbolical significance of Babylon is "corruption in the activity of power," and that activity of power which brought the people of God into bondage, as the consequence of their sins. What we learn here therefore is, that the professing church on earth, rejected as Laodicea, refused as Christ's light-bearer in the world, will finally concentrate within herself, and in a more intense form, all the evils that marked Babylon of old; and hence it is that she is termed Babylon the great. This wicked "woman" is also a mother, a mother of other systems, as false to Christ as herself. It is thus not only Popery, but all other systems that derive their parentage from her and partake of her character. Are there not such already in existence? "Abominations" also are produced by her. Now, "abominations" is a well-known scriptural word for "idols"; and consequently Rome is a parent of idolatry. Who does not know the fact? And yet people are so willingly blinded as to listen to her protestations of innocence of the charge, and to accept her embrace.*

Lastly, the most heinous charge of all is preferred: "*And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.*" (v. 6.) What Jerusalem became in a past age (see Matt. xxiii. 34, 35), Rome is in the present dispensation. She has ever been and will ever maintain the character of the great persecutress of the saints of God. There is not a land,

* It should be remembered that the name written on the forehead of the "woman" will be only spiritually discerned. Externally she will present everything that is attractive to man as man.

where she has gained a footing, which she has not defiled with the blood of God's elect. Like Manasseh of old, who "shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another," she has hunted, persecuted, burnt or killed the witnesses of Christ in every quarter of the globe. Black Bartholomews, murdered Albigenses and Waldenses, mark her progress at every step, and will continue to do so, for "she will not repent" until the consummation of our chapter is reached.

It is in answer to the astonishment of the apostle that the angel proceeds to expound "*the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.*" (v. 7.) Of the woman we have spoken, as also of the "beast" in its main characteristics. We now proceed to the further development in connection with the ten horns: "*And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.*" (v. 12.) Those who have read with any intelligence Daniel's interpretation of the image Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream (chap. ii. 36-45), and his own vision of the fourth beast, together with the angelic explanation given to him (chap. vii.), will be prepared to understand the meaning of the ten horns or kings of this chapter. It is very plain, from the combination of these several scriptures, that the final form of the restored western Roman Empire will be ten kingdoms, all of which will be confederate under an imperial head—the beast. The angel, speaking of the sovereign of these kingdoms, says they receive power as kings one hour with the beast; and he then adds, "*These have one mind, and shall give their power*

and strength unto the beast." (v. 13.) For the moment these ten kingdoms will be unanimous, holding out to deluded man the prospect of halcyon days of peace and prosperity, in accepting the leadership of the beast, who will thus seem to be resistless and invincible. Hence the introduction here—leaping over the interval, however brief, of other events—of the statement that he with his allies in their mad self-confidence and daring impiety will "*make war with the Lamb,*" only, as we know it must be, to meet with complete and utter destruction. The full account of this is in chapter xix., and we reserve any further remarks therefore till this portion is reached.

Coming now to verse 16, we find a change: "*And the ten horns which thou sawest upon* the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and consume her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.*" (vv. 16, 17.) It would seem from this statement as if the change in the attitude of the imperial power towards the harlot is simultaneous with or consequent upon the federation of the ten kingdoms under the Roman head. Whether so or not, the ten kings and the beast turn round from being the supporters of Rome, and in their hatred confiscate her possessions, strip her of her gorgeous raiment, and utterly destroy her very existence. If we recall chapter xiii., the motive for this action may be gathered. Together with the advent of the antichrist, the "beast" is elevated into the supreme object of

* The word *and* should be substituted for "upon," as being the correct reading.

worship, and thus the "woman," false as she has been to Christ, since she will still traffic with His name, will no longer be tolerated. But in taking vengeance upon her, these potentates all unknown to themselves are the blind executors of God's will. Satan united the powers of the world against Christ, and Satan gives the beast his power, his throne, and great authority, and now we behold Satan himself, in his rage against God and His Christ, accomplishing God's purpose in the extinction of the "harlot."

The chapter concludes, as before pointed out, with an identification of the woman, which admits of no mistake; for there has never been a religious system on the earth, save Rome, which could be said to reign over the kings of the earth. E. D.

WE have an excellent touch-stone by which to try all sorts of teaching and preaching. The most spiritual teaching will ever be characterized by a full and constant presentation of Christ. The Spirit cannot dwell on aught but Jesus. Of Him He delights to speak. He delights in setting forth His attractions and excellencies. Hence, when a man is ministering by the power of the Spirit of God, there will always be more of Christ than anything else in His ministry. There will be little room in such ministry for human logic and reasoning. Such things may do very well when a man desires to set forth himself; but the Spirit's sole object—be it well remembered by all who minister—will ever be to set forth Christ.

C. H. M.

EXTRACTS FROM A LECTURE ON FRUIT-BEARING.

JOHN xiii. 1-8 ; xv. 1-11.

I DESIRE, beloved friends, to say a few words to-night on the subject of fruit-bearing. Fruit is the great test of the tree, and it should be a matter of conscience for each one of us to see that we have borne something that answers to the wonderful ministry that God has given to us in these last days. Have we answered to the culture that has been bestowed upon us? That is the grand question before us to-night. I do not speak of salvation, I speak to those who know what it is to have salvation settled, because until salvation is settled God does not do anything in the way of cultivation, so that point must be settled first. In the first sight it would seem that the Lord Jesus brings in here a subject abruptly, and many times have I been puzzled to understand how the Lord Himself can turn away from the subject in chapter xiv., and take up the subject in these first eight verses that seem so out of connection with that which has gone before. However, you will find that there is the most intimate connection between these three chapters; and I take up the subject of fruit-bearing, not confining myself to any particular line, because the Lord here does not speak of any particular line of ministry, and so setting aside the dispensational aspect of the chapter I desire to bring to bear on your conscience and my own too, the subject the Lord speaks of here—that of fruit-bearing. I say there is the most intimate connection; for in

chapter xv. the Lord speaks very distinctly of the state of the soul. Fruit is the outcome of what is within, and so with us; the heart gets wrong, and everything is wrong. You see God produces a certain state of soul, and the outcome of that state of soul is *fruit for the Father*. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." You see it is not confined to any particular line of ministry. It is not the evangelist, the pastor, the teacher, etc., alone; but you will see that when the Lord speaks of fruit-bearing, He touches the soul and conscience of every one of His followers. This is an important point for each one of us, that in a day like this—a day of spurious imitations—we should desire that He would give us power to produce a distinctive colour to the fruit, a distinct taste when eaten.

Now turn to Psalm i., and there you will find in verse 1, surely a godly Jew, but still Christ in the distance. Verse 1 tells me what he does *not* do; he does not keep bad company to begin with; but in verse 2 he keeps very good company, and that is, his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in verse 3 he becomes like a tree producing fruit in its right season. The first three verses of Psalm i. are important, giving us the principles of fruit-bearing; he does not sit in the seat of the scornful, he does not mix in bad company, but is occupied with God and His word, and the consequence is that he produces fruit, produces fruit in this barren world, where there is nothing of God except that which is seen from His saints. How important it is then for you and me to understand that we are each one responsible to God to bear fruit, responsible because we are connected with Christ, united to Him. I do not attempt to describe the fruit:

your own soul and conscience before God must ever describe that; but ask yourself the question, Have I answered to the wondrous cultivation that God has bestowed upon me? Culture that saints have never received before, although they had the blessings of God's Spirit and of God's word, yet never has God ministered His word in such a marvellous way as He has for many years past; and again I ask myself, and each one here, Have we answered to that which God has so bountifully bestowed upon us? Now if fruit be the outcome of what is within, it is the state of soul that I should desire to have. I find a tree in Psalm xcii. planted within the house of the Lord, and flourishing in the court of the house of our God, and bringing forth fruit in old age; this shows that he was not walking in the world of sense, but in a higher sphere. It is to those who are inside, to those who know where the source and spring of power is, those who know the upper and the nether springs. The *upper* spring, Christ in glory; the *nether* spring, the Holy Ghost on earth. And the question for us is, How have we used them?

Now I will return to chapter xiii. This is a remarkable chapter in this way: we have the Lord commencing a new and distinct thing, a new and distinct ministry. There are three liftings up in John's Gospel. In chapter iii. it is the sacrifice, He is superior to the serpent; the serpent cured the bites where there was faith, but Christ raised up from the earth not only cures the bites—is made sin for us—but He has given to us eternal life. The serpent never could do that. Christ is made sin for us, and sets us in a new sphere—the sphere of fellowship with the Father,

fellowship with the Father and with His Son. The knowledge of the *Father*, not simply *God*. The knowledge of the Father is what characterizes Christians, as the knowledge of the Almighty characterized Abraham.

Now, in chapter viii. you have the second lifting up, and I think it is to show the excellency of His person. "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," is the third. (Chap. xii.). Here it is not so much a question of salvation, but of Himself becoming a new centre or base of work for God—lifted up from the earth, taken away from this scene.

Now, in chapter xiii. He commences a new and distinct order of ministry. Many souls would rather look back and contemplate the Saviour dying on the cross. How many are occupied to-day with the cross? *Well* for them to know, that if they are occupied with the cross they are not occupied with Christ in glory, the One who said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." That is, He set Himself apart on high, in order that we might be set apart for Him here on the earth, and so He says, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The prince of this world judged, the system of this world set aside, and a new order of things introduced, and every believer here to-night is in that new sphere. Are you conscious of it? Conscious of sitting down in the presence of the Father and Christ, and of understanding that it is possible for believers also to be introduced into this blessed intimacy; and thus do you know what it is to sit inside? Many sit outside, and so never know the warmth of

the glorious presence of the Christ of God. But chapter xiii. commences the service that is in keeping with the new order, the present ministry of Christ. Do you understand that? Well, it is not the past, nor is it the future, but it is the present ministry of Christ. It is divided into two distinct offices. He is High Priest for our weakness and infirmity, and He is the Advocate for our sins. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." They are distinct one from the other, and distinct from the cross; the cross it is that brings us into the place, and then it is that we have the Lord Himself as the High Priest and Advocate; two distinct offices.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, which brings before us the wilderness journey of the saints of God in contrast, to the wilderness journey of the children of Israel that brought them into the land of Canaan, we have the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, the One who sustains us in the path, the Word of God that directs, and the priesthood of Christ to support. What a wonderful person the priest is! It was the priest Aaron who carried the children of Israel through the wilderness. Now, there are three very distinct aspects of the priesthood. In Exodus we have the man who maintains the people in relationship with God. You recollect the breastplate and ephod, they were connected together by the ring of gold and the lace of blue, that is, secured by what is divine and heavenly; the link was typically with the High Priest above; and the High Priest there supported the people. And in Exodus xxviii. we find that the breastplate must not be loosed from the ephod, that the one could not be

separated from the other. Aaron wore the names of the children of Israel before Jehovah, their names were on the breastplate, and this is the part of our priesthood, that we try and support the saints of God; we cannot make the link, that is already formed, but as priests we must support the children of God. Now, the Leviticus priest helped in worship, and the Numbers priest helped in service, and did you ever remark the wording of the scripture in Numbers xviii. 12? All the best of the oil, all the best of the wine and of the wheat, etc., was to be given to the priest. Why? Because he had to support the people in service. Now, these are three very distinct aspects of the priesthood, and we are all responsible to the Lord Jesus to manifest these characteristics of priesthood, sisters as well as brothers, it applies to all alike. Now ye are a "holy priesthood," says the apostle, and our bounden duty is to exercise priesthood; and if we understood our responsibilities, and undertook our responsibilities, there would be more power and buoyancy in the meetings, because every one would help and sustain the one who was taking the leading part; because that God has so tempered the body together that one part is dependent upon the other, and so as we are priests God would have us exercise our priesthood; whether as Exodus, Leviticus, or Numbers priests, He would have us holding together, each one feeling that although "I am not a preacher, I may not be anything of that sort, but *you cannot get on without me.*" And why? Because if you have a crooked limb you are not perfect, so the meeting is dependent upon every one, and if we only realized this more, we would have happier gatherings together.

J. S. B.

FRAGMENTS.

IF Christ is the Root and Offspring of David, there are certain glories; and those who delight in Him know that He will show forth these glories; and if His glory shall cover the earth as waters cover the sea, they rejoice in the prospect. Still, that would be nothing to satisfy the heart; and hence there is another thing—"I am . . . the bright and morning star." This is for a people who know the secret, not of being connected only with His manifested glory as the Sun of righteousness, but of being associated with Himself now, a people who have to watch during the night, looking out for the harbinger of day. His people see Him up there, and know they are one with Him, and long for Him to come, because they know there is no rest of heart save in Him.

THIS is the only passage (Rev. xx. 17) in which the Spirit is presented with the Bride. There is something very touching in connection with wilderness circumstances, seeing that the Spirit in this character speaks thus, "Come." Is the Bride for the earth? What has she to do with the earth, with the wilderness, save as Rebecca passing through it?

WE have here, not alone, "I am . . . the bright and morning star," but also, "I come" (v. 20), presenting Himself with all the savour, all the attractiveness of what He is. Have not some of us known Him for years, and have we not found the attractiveness of His beauty deepening in our souls? But what is all we have learned of Him here, when compared with the thought of beholding Himself, looking on His face, seeing the One who died for us, the One who loves us with an eternal love?

G. V. W.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

MARK ix. 49, 50.

THE general meaning of this somewhat difficult scripture is soon apprehended. It was no longer a question now of following a Messiah on earth, or of the present establishment of His kingdom. Christ was in fact already rejected, and the cross was in full prospect. (See *vv.* 9-11, 30-32.) Rejection, therefore, would be the portion of His disciples; and, consequently, the constant and unsparring application of the cross. Everything was to be sacrificed rather than lose entry "into life," and incur the penalty of "the fire that never shall be quenched." It was thus eternity that was now in view, instead of the glory of Messiah's kingdom on earth; and hence there was no alternative between eternal gain and eternal loss. This will account for the distinction between the two clauses of verse 49: the first comprises all men, the second only the true followers of Christ. "Every one"—there is no exception—"shall be salted with fire." That is to say, God will test, and search in order to test, every soul of man by His holiness as applied in judgment; for it is of this that fire is a symbol. Even Christ Himself was so tested, as shown out in the holy fire that fed upon the sacrifices offered to God under the old dispensation. The effect for the sinner will be the eternal fire; while for the believer who is in Christ nothing is lost save the dross. But whether for the saint or the sinner the standard is the same; the former finds the answer to it in Christ, the latter being without Christ will perish.

Then, secondly, "every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." None but real disciples of Christ are here contemplated, their lives being looked upon as a sacrifice to God. (Compare Ephesians v. 1, 2; Philippians ii. 17.) This will be the more readily seen if it is recalled, that it is especially in connection with the meat-offering, type of the perfect devotedness of Christ to the glory of God in all His pathway (including, no doubt, His death, as in Philippians ii.), that salt is mentioned. (Lev. ii. 13.) Now, salt is the energy of grace in the soul, linking it in all its activities with God, and preserving it from the contamination of evil. To borrow words: "Salt is not the gentleness that pleases (which grace produces without doubt), but that energy of God within us which connects everything in us with God, and dedicates the heart to Him, binding it to Him in the sense of obligation and of desire, rejecting all in oneself that is contrary to Him. . . . Thus, practically, it was distinctive grace, the energy of holiness, which separates from all evil, but by setting apart for God." A life without the "salt" would degenerate into human grace and amiability, and would thus be characterized by "honey"—that which was absolutely forbidden "in any offering of the Lord made by fire." (Lev. ii. 11.) We are next told that "salt is good;" that is, "the condition of soul" which is produced by the energy of grace. The activity of grace within begets a state corresponding to its character. (See 2 Tim. ii. 1.) But if the salt, through the lack of watchfulness and of self-judgment, have lost its saltiness, wherewith shall ye season it? "It is used for seasoning other things; but if the salt needs it for itself, there is nothing left that can salt *it*." When we have lost devotedness to God,

together with our Nazariteship, separation from evil, our state is hopeless, unless indeed God once more come in with His powerful grace to restore the soul. The remedy against the danger is to have salt in ourselves, and to have peace one with another. The more we cultivate true holiness, the more we are apart from all evil, the more we shall be in peace with our fellow-Christians; for it is then that the Spirit of God, being ungrieved, works mightily in us, and enables us also to use all diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.

II.

COLOSSIANS iii. 2.

In this scripture the word "affection" scarcely represents the meaning of the original. It refers to the mind and thoughts rather than to the affections. Some examples of its use will make this apparent. When the Lord rebuked Peter, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan," He added; "for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men" (Mark viii. 33); that is, to give two other translations, "thou mindest not," or, "thy mind is not on the things that be of God." So in Philippians ii. 5, where we read, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (See also Phil. iii. 15, 16, 19, etc.) It is thus evident that the apostle's exhortation refers to our minds and thoughts; and the connection of the passage will explain its force. In chapter ii. 20 we are seen associated with Christ in His death, whereby we have died out "from the rudiments of the world," and have, as a consequence, only the place of dead men in this world. Through death with Christ, if through grace

we have entered into it, we are morally outside of man, religious or otherwise, and man's world. But we are also "risen with Christ," and thereby are introduced into a new scene. We belong, through association with Him in resurrection, to the place where "Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (Chapter iii. 1.) Consequently all our objects and interests are there; our "life is hid with Christ in God." It is on this basis, on the foundation of what is true of us as associated with Christ in death and in resurrection, that the exhortation is given, "Seek those things which are above," etc.; and again, "Have your mind on things above, not on things of the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Our minds therefore should be conversant with the things that belong to that new place into which we have already been introduced. If it be asked, What are these things? the answer is easily given. All the glories of Christ, the various glories of His person and offices, unfolded as they are by His personal and relative names; all the Father's things, which are also the Son's (John xvi. 14, 15), the manifold displays of glory connected with the Father's counsels for the exaltation of His beloved Son; and also all the spiritual blessings with which we are already blessed in heavenly places in Christ. (Eph. i. 3.) All these wondrous things are to fill and occupy the mind of Christians; and hence, as in Philippians iii, to "mind earthly things" is to contradict the truth of our profession, as being a practical denial of having died, and having been raised, with Christ. But if Christ possesses our hearts, our "minds" will always be engaged with Him and His things in the place where He is.

E. D.