

THE  
CHRISTIAN FRIEND

And Instructor.

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

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"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."—JUD. 20.

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# THE CHRISTIAN FRIEND.



## ACCEPTANCE, COMMUNION, AND OBEDIENCE.

### NUMBERS xv.

WHEN the Lord took up the nation of Israel to deliver them from the bondage of Egypt, He not only regarded their misery, but expressed the desire of His own heart, "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be your God." (Exodus vi. 7.) Later on in their history the prophetic Spirit in Israel thus recognizes another purpose in their call. Jehovah had said unto them, "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." (Isaiah xlix. 3.) In fulfilment of this, they will yet become "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord." Then "righteousness and praise" will "spring forth before all the nations;" not as the result of keeping the law, but of being clothed with Jehovah's robe of righteousness. That which has failed under the law is yet to be accomplished in grace. Had it been possible that they could have been established under the law as a holy people to the Lord, the nations around would have learned from them two things. First, what a blessed people they were; and, secondly, what a God their Jehovah was. (Compare Deut. iv. 6-8.) How everything broke down with them on the ground of their own responsibility their history records. At the same

time the desires of the Lord's heart are expressed in many ways.

At Sinai we see them a delivered people, brought to God; and there the Lord acquaints Moses with His desire that they should make a tabernacle that He might dwell among them, a place that should be sanctified with His glory, and in which at the altar of burnt-offering He could meet with them. Before Moses could make this desire known they had corrupted themselves, "and changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass." Through the intercession of Moses they are pardoned and placed upon the ground of long-suffering mercy (Exodus xxxiv. 6, 9), and he then communicates to them this desire of the Lord. It was a happy time for them while engaged in preparing an habitation for their God. When it was completed and set up, the glory of the Lord filled it. Jehovah took His place between the cherubim, dwelling in their midst.

They are now ready to start for the land given to them of the Lord, carrying with them the tabernacle of the testimony of God. A journey of eleven days brought them to Kadesh-Barnea, the southern limit of their promised possessions. Here the murmuring, which had characterized them before, reached its height; and they despise the pleasant land, and in their hearts turn back to Egypt. But at this moment faith shines out very brightly in Caleb and Joshua. In the sense of the purpose of God to have a people for Himself, they speak to the congregation, not only of the exceeding goodness of the land given to them for *their own* blessing, but they add, "If *the Lord delight in us*, then He will bring us into this land." (Num. xiv. 8.) If any poor sinner now thinks of what happiness it will

be that he should possess the heavenly Canaan, there is a deeper joy than his,—the Lord's delight to have him there. (Luke xv.) But we may say that the Lord was then robbed of His delight, save in the two men of faith, and the people consequently are turned back in the desert to bear their iniquities. It is at this moment that the Lord does not give up His purpose of being glorified in Israel. It could not be accomplished in the generation that grieved Him, and they must perish in the wilderness, but He expresses His determined purpose thus: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (Num. xiv. 21.) It will yet be accomplished when Israel will be fully established under the favour of God in their own land, and He will be glorified in them. This is anticipated by the remnant of Israel in the words of Psalm lxxvii., "God be merciful unto *us*, and bless *us* . . . that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among *all nations*."

In the certainty of His own purpose the Lord (Num. xv.) speaks to them thus: "When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you." Some must enter therein, though those to whom the glad tidings of Canaan were first preached (Exodus iii. 16, 17) did not enter in because of unbelief. Blessed in that exceeding good land those who entered in would be. There they would eat bread without scarceness, and not lack anything in it. But their own blessings in the land is not the subject before us in this chapter. It is the Blessor, who anticipates the approach to Himself in the joy of worship of those whom He has blessed. At rest in the land of their habitations, their happy service will be to make a sweet savour to the

Lord. No doubt there will be holy convocations and set times in which they can offer, but here the free-will offerings of thankful hearts apart from ordered seasons is anticipated. The details of these sweet-savour offerings are given elsewhere. Chief among them is the burnt-offering, which went up wholly as a sweet savour to God; representing thus the intrinsic perfection, so fully proved in devotedness even to death, of Him who said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." How acceptable to God this offering was is shown by its being entirely a sweet savour; and in all this fragrance and acceptability He desires to have worshippers before Himself. But the great point to notice here is the special ordinance, connected with the burnt-offering or peace-offering, of a meat-offering and drink-offering. In other words, they were to be in communion and joy before Him, as well as in acceptance. The meat-offering speaks of the perfections of Christ as a man before God. It was in a Man these perfections were. Hence we, as men, when taught of God, are able to enter into them. No part of the burnt-offering was eaten. In its sweet savour the worshipper knew his acceptance, but in the meat-offering there was communion. God has been well pleased in a *Man*.

"Grace and truth, in love unceasing,  
Rivers on the thirsty ground,  
Every step to God well pleasing,  
Spread their heavenly savour round."

Mark, the communion was not founded on that which the natural man could appreciate—to his selfish heart it would be merely benevolence—but on the apprehension that these perfections were in the blessed Man who said, "I do always those things that *please Him*."



The Lord had His handful from the meat-offering, while those who ate the remainder in priestly nearness were in communion with the deep and spiritual perfections of Christ represented in the fine flour mingled with oil. Then there was the "wine that maketh glad the heart of man." This sets before us the happiness and joy of those who were in this acceptance and communion. It has been noticed that all being grace here, there is one law and manner for all. The stranger is permitted to share in this happy delight of approaching the Lord. Isaiah speaks thus of the sons of the stranger in the purpose and grace of God: "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar: for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." (Chapter lvi. 7.)

So far we see the communion and joy before the Lord of an accepted people. These are their deepest joys. But while He smells the sweet savour of their freewill-offerings to *Him*, He also anticipates *their* eating of the bread of the land. This is more for their own sustenance and blessing, yet even here they are privileged to bring a cake of the first of their dough as a heave-offering to the Lord. He nourishes us with the food of His own land, and the heart is gladdened in knowing that what He feeds us with is acceptable to Him. Just as the pot of manna, the food of the wilderness, was laid up before the Lord, so the bread of the land is offered to Him, though it sustained Israel there. He has always His own share in the preciousness of Christ with which He feeds us.

Following upon these intimations of the Lord's desire

to have a people in happy communion with Himself, comes the provision for sins of ignorance against the commandments of the Lord. It could not be supposed that any who were in conscious acceptance, and happy with the Lord, but would also delight in His commandments. Hence, when fully established in the land, and the law written in their hearts, the blessedness is announced of those who walk in the law of the Lord, of those who keep His testimonies, and seek Him with their whole heart. (Psalm cxix. 1, 2.) The statutes, commandments, and judgments of the Lord are also spoken of as "more to be desired . . . than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Psalm xix. 10.) How much more can the Christian say, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous"! Knowing his acceptance in the Beloved, and brought into communion with the perfections of Christ, he knows also that every commandment given must be the expression of the perfect will of Him who has given it, and therefore must be blessed. Presumptuously traversing that will is the very opposite to the joy of communion, and when grace has offered such a portion, it is the despisal of grace. It is always the character of flesh to be in rebellion; but flesh has been judged in the cross, and the one who knows this must not revive it. There is no provision therefore for presumptuous sins. Grace and the will of God are alike despised. Errors, or sins of ignorance, are those which unwittingly are in contrariety to the good and perfect and acceptable will of God, with whom they were in acceptance and communion. The sense of nearness enables us to perceive that which is contrary

to His blessed will. Many a thing in which we once saw no harm, or justified, is judged when we are in the light of the Lord's presence. There is nothing hidden there, the night shineth as the day. As individuals, through lack of nearness and communion, we may be ignorant of much that is the will of the Lord; but the Christian state is "light in the Lord," and so "understanding what the will of the Lord is," walking as children of light, and proving what is acceptable to the Lord. (Eph. v.) As we are in the light the commandment is true in us as it says, "Which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." (1 John ii. 8.) Yet we often feel as to our actual state how much we need the prayer of the apostle, "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." (Col. i. 9, 10.)

It is a great thing to see that intelligent subjection to the will of God is closely connected with our entering into and enjoyment of the place of acceptance in which we are set. Hence when the whole congregation sinned ignorantly, they offered first a burnt-offering *with its meat-offering and drink-offering* according to the manner, before they offered the special sacrifice which met their error. The burnt-offering is "*unto* Jehovah," the sin-offering "*before* Jehovah." The standing of the whole congregation, as set in acceptance and happy communion with the Lord, is thus recognized first; and then in accordance with that, the error now seen in its true character is judged as sin atoned for in the sin-offering, and it is forgiven. The status of the congregation is common to all, hence,

in the case of an individual, there is only the judgment of the sin, and it is forgiven.

We may note here that though an Israelite could not feed on the meat-offering, and his state was not light in the Lord, and therefore he depended upon a priest both as to communion and intelligence in the Lord's will, yet now even the "little children" have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things. We may further note, how the common portion of Christians in the most blessed intimacy and communion—walking in the light, the blood cleansing from all sin, and forgiveness on confession, is brought out in John's epistle. John puts us in the light, where the blood cleanses so that we can be there, in order that we should not sin. And then he tells us of the advocacy of Christ which is carried on when we sin, to make us conscious of everything inconsistent with, and unsuitable to, the place of communion and light into which we are introduced. In the end of the epistle there is an intimation of "a sin unto death," a very near approach to the presumptuous sin of old. There may be in a Christian an allowance of that evil nature which God condemned in the cross. Unbroken will and unbridled flesh may so mark its working that it becomes a sin unto death. This is very solemn, and the soul is cut off from among his people. No doubt it is the judgment of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. To be taken out of the circle of the fellowship of the saints on earth, as they enjoy the perfections of Christ in the Lord's own presence, is a solemn thing. May the Lord keep us in the sense of the desires of His own heart, not only in the place of acceptance, but endeavouring to be acceptable to Him.

But however sure and immutable the purpose of the Lord to have a worshipping people in His land, Israel were actually in the wilderness. God had brought them out of Egypt to be there with Him, therefore He puts upon them the colour which denoted that they belonged to Him, that they were a holy people to their God. It was their privilege no longer to walk after their own heart and their own eyes, but according to the commandments of the Lord. All the vessels that belonged to the holy places had coverings of blue as they were borne through the wilderness. Notably amongst them it was seen upon the ark. Its place was the holy of holies,—figure of heaven itself. Hence when it “went before them” (Numbers x. 33), only the heavenly colour was seen. This was true in Jesus. He was the perfect manifestation of God in a Man, and as a man ever the heavenly One. When an Israelite looked on the ribband of blue, he saw on the border of his own garment, that which was nearest the earth, the colour which was upon the Ark. We have thus the foreshadowing of the Son of God becoming a Man—the Second Man out of heaven, yet in this world, and a people that are to express His character of blessed obedience in their walk. We can now say, “Which thing is true in Him and in us.” We do not become heavenly by trying to be heavenly, but the perfect love of God has made us what Christ is. “As He is, so are we in this world.” The ribband of blue was not for others to see, but for the Israelite himself. God has put upon us this heavenly colour, so that we may have the conscious sense of belonging to Him, according to the boundless grace which in eternal ages chose a people for Himself.

T. H. R.

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

CHAPTERS xviii., xix. 1-4.

ANOTHER vision opens out now before the mind of the apostle. In the preceding chapter the judgment of the great harlot was announced, and the instruments of its execution are revealed; whereas now we are permitted to see the disappearance of wicked Babylon, and the effects upon the various classes of the empire who had been in relation with her. But, as has been more than once pointed out in these Apocalyptic visions, the result is anticipatively proclaimed. John thus writes: "*And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*" (vv. 1, 2.) Twice before the judgment of Babylon had been mentioned (chap. xiv. 8; xvi. 19), and now the providential governmental instrument, the angel, descends to earth for its accomplishment, working, however, as we have learned from the previous chapter, through human agents, the beast and his vassal kings. But it is rather the accomplishment announced by the angel, revealing, at the same time, what Babylon, that which once bore the name of Christ, has become—the dwelling-place of demons, and the prison of unclean spirits, and of every form of Satan's power.\* The

\* The reader may compare Isaiah xxi. 9; Jeremiah l. 39; li. 8, 37, as to the destruction of the historical Babylon.

grounds, or one ground (see chapter xix. 2), of her judgment is stated. Balaam had taught Balak how to seduce the children of Israel to eat things offered to idols, and to commit fornication. (Rev. ii. 14.) Jezebel in Thyatira followed in his steps (ii. 20); but Babylon seduced the nations and the kings of the earth with the golden cup of her abominations and her fornication.\* (Chap. xvii. 4.) She, moreover, who had professed to belong to Him, who when here had not where to lay His head, made the merchants of the earth "*rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*" (v. 3.) Not only therefore had she become false to Christ, but she was the practical denial of all that He was and is, and, in fact, utterly apostate, completely ruled as she was by the god of this world.

Another voice is now heard "*from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.*" (vv. 4, 5.) This appeal to the people of God has occasioned considerable difficulty, inasmuch as on the surface it leads to the supposition that saints might still be found in Babylon. It must be remembered then, in the first place, that Babylon represents a spiritual system, and that this system, in its main moral features, has been in existence ever since the days of John. Laodicea, in fact, contained the root of all the evils which are afterwards seen fully developed in Babylon. *The instruction therefore is for all ages, calling upon God's people to come out, and to be separate from that which can be spiritually discerned as Babylon, in which, as in Ezra's and Nehemiah's days,*

\* The reader may instructively compare Ezekiel xvi. 15-34.

so many saints are enslaved. (Comp. Jer. l. 8 ; li. 6-9.) And they are also reminded that, if they continue to be mixed up with such a system, they will become partakers of her sins, and governmentally subject to her plagues. Was there ever a day since these words were written when this solemn, urgent call needed to be more persistently sounded out through the length and breadth of Christendom than now? For what do we behold? Babylon plainly manifesting herself, and boldly rearing her head with her arrogant claims, as well as insinuating herself into popular favour and acceptance by her subtleties and flatteries. Let God's people therefore everywhere be obedient to this heavenly voice, and come out of her ; for her sins are fast reaching up unto heaven, and the cup of her iniquities is already nearly full.

The question still returns, Is there no application to the eve of Babylon's destruction? That there can be no Christians in Babylon, at this period, is seen from the fact that the Church is already in heaven. There will be Jewish saints on the earth, and, as chapter vii. teaches, also Gentile believers, who will have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ; but we have no information as to whether any of these, wearied out with their persecutions, may be tempted to seek shelter within the precincts of Babylon. If so, the call would be also addressed to such ; yet the main significance of the cry is to all who may have become at any time mixed up with the principles that will finally concentrate and express themselves in Babylon.

The following verses need careful attention. The voice continues : "*Reward her even as she rewarded you,*



*and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow."* (vv. 6, 7.) The question is, To whom are these words addressed? It would seem to be a continuation of the address to God's people commenced in verse 4; but this is scarcely possible on two grounds; first, because the saints are not the executors of judgment upon Babylon; and, secondly, because we know that the beast and the kings, the ten horns, are the appointed instruments for this purpose. This has led some to suppose that the address is to the latter. This, however, would scarcely be in accord with what is found in this book; and consequently we regard these verses more in the light of an annunciation of the judgment, and the principle upon which it will be executed, than as a summons to those chosen to be the vessels of God's vengeance. The principle of the judgment is a known one in Scripture. God dealt in the same way even with Jerusalem (Isaiah xl. 2); and in Babylon being "rewarded" as she had "rewarded" God's people, we have a direct reminiscence of the manner of the judgment upon Babylon of old. (See Psalm cxxxvii. 8, 9; Jer. l. 15-29.) Then, after the principle of the judgment is explained, we have a striking presentation of the moral character of Babylon. She had "glorified herself, and lived deliciously." What a revelation! And what an unfolding of her utter apostasy! Self, and self-exaltation, the perfect antithesis to the life of our blessed Lord, had been her sole object! And, moreover, her "life" expended itself

in her own gratifications. Morally she was in the desert, and yet she deceived herself into the belief that it was a paradise, and lived deliciously. Even more than this; "for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." This language corresponds, almost exactly, with that used by Isaiah, when denouncing judgment upon the "daughter of Babylon" (chap. xlvii.); and it teaches us therefore that the mystic Babylon of the future is the moral descendant of the city of Nebuchadnezzar, embodying the same moral features, and drawing down from heaven the same vengeance. A still more striking thing to be observed is, that Laodicea's boast, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," is the moral root of all the evil here portrayed as existing in Babylon. While, however, man in his vain self-confidence may shut God out, seek his happiness in his own resources, and vaunt himself upon his own acquisitions and their stability, the time will come, as in the case before us, when God will interpose and exact a strict account according to the standard of His own holy requirements. Hence it is, as following upon the statement of Babylon's pride, self-glorification, and self-sufficiency, that it is said, "*Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.*" (v. 8.) It is the beast and his horns (chap. xvii. 16) who are the seen executors of the judgment, but they are but the blind servants of the will of God.

In the next place, down to verse 18, a description is given of the effect upon various classes of the destruction of Babylon. It will suffice to specify one or two

features of the picture. It will be noted, first of all, that the kings of the earth, those who had committed fornication, and lived deliciously with her, are loud in their lamentations over the destruction of "that great city Babylon." This is by no means inconsistent with the fact that they, or some of them, had united with the beast to despoil her of her possessions. Many a gigantic abuse has often been judged in great popular movements, or even by peaceful legislation, and yet the framework of society has been shattered by its removal. Babylon, with its wide-spreading roots, will have interlaced itself with almost every social fibre of the life of the nations; and her fall, therefore, will spread universal dismay and confusion as well as render human governments unstable and powerless. This will account for the wail of these kings, as they stand "*afar off for fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.*" (v. 10.) The other mourners over Babylon's fall are commercial, "*the merchants of the earth*" (v. 11), those who had been "*made rich by her*" (v. 15) in their traffic in all the various articles, for which the demand had been created or stimulated by Babylon's needs and influence; and "*every ship-master, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea*" (v. 17); for all that had ships in the sea had also been made rich "*by reason of her costliness.*" (v. 19.)

All this description, it will be at once understood, is symbolical, the import of which is that the whole commercial system of the empire is utterly deranged, if not destroyed, by the judgment upon Babylon. The blow that falls upon her destroys with her the pros-

perity of the habitable world; and hence the universal sorrow; for men are ever ready to bewail the loss of the means of their comforts, wealth and affluence.\*

There is ever an utter contrariety between God's thoughts and man's. All classes of the people sorrow over Babylon's fall; and now we are permitted, in contrast with this, to hear the estimate in heaven of this event. "*Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.*"† (v. 20.) What thus causes universal sorrow and widespread dismay on earth is the occasion of joy to heaven, and to those who had been witnesses for Christ, and some of these martyrs for His name's sake (v. 24) on earth.

We have thereon a symbolic action to describe Babylon's destruction. "*And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.*" (v. 21.) So was it with ancient Babylon. Jeremiah "wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon," and he directed Seraiah, who accompanied Zedekiah to Babylon in the fourth year of the latter's reign, after he should have read the book in the very presence of Babylon's prosperity and magnificence, to bind a stone to it, and to cast it into the midst of Euphrates; and as he did so, he was to say, "Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil

\* A striking example of this is seen in the fact that, after the healing of the demoniac, and the consequent destruction of the swine, the Gadarenes prayed the Lord Jesus to depart out of their coasts. They preferred to have the demoniac, and their swine, to the presence of Jesus, because He had interfered with their earthly possessions.

† Literally it is, "For God hath judged your judgment upon her."

that I will bring upon her." (Jer. li. 60-64.) The meaning of the action is the same, therefore, in both cases; it betokened violent, complete, final, and irreversible destruction. Never more was either to rise again; and thus we have in our chapter the solemn declaration that henceforth all strains of music, all mechanical activities, the sound of millstones, should be for ever silenced, that nevermore should shine within her the light of a candle, or be heard the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride. The desolation was to be complete; "*for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.*" (vv. 23, 24.) Combining the several grounds of Babylon's judgment it will be seen that they are four—"idolatry, corruption, worldliness, and persecution." God had borne long with this wicked system which had profaned His name, and falsified His truth; but now His mighty hand has descended upon it, taking vengeance for all the iniquities which had filled the earth with defilement and corruption.

The first four verses of chapter xix. give the celebration in heaven of the destruction of Babylon. John "*heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.*" (vv. 1-3.) It is an interesting question as to who are these that, with "a great voice," raise this

song of praise. They are a class, evidently, outside of the twenty-four elders, and they are as clearly not angels. The inference is, therefore, that they are those who had been martyred on earth after the Church had been removed, called up on high. The ground of their celebration of Jehovah-Elohim, their God, is the character of His judgments—they are “true and righteous,” as displayed in the destruction of the great corruptress of the earth, and in avenging the blood of His servants at her hand. They repeat, in the intensity of their joy, their Alleluia.\* Then the solemn statement, in contrast with this burst of joy in heaven, is given, as significant of the everlasting judgment that has fallen upon the harlot. And her smoke rose up “for ever and ever.” (Compare Jude 7.)

Following upon this, the four-and-twenty elders (seen as the twenty-four elders here for the last time), and the four living creatures, who had been the spectators of the joy of the “much people,” themselves “*fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.*” (v. 4.) The mind of heaven is one, both in praising God, and in rejoicing over the vengeance that has overtaken Babylon; and that mind, while in full communion with, indeed the expression of, the mind of God, is, let it be repeated, in direct opposition to the mind of man. God and all heaven rejoice over that which man esteems as his greatest calamity. What an exposition of the alienation of men “from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart”!

E. D.

\* This means in its Hebrew form, Hallelujah, Praise ye Jehovah, or Jah. The last five Psalms commence and end with this word, this note of praise.

## THE MANNA.

THE PROVISION FOR THIS, ANOTHER DAY IN THE  
WILDERNESS.

THE blessed Lord was ever God's delight, perfect in all His ways as Man down here. The manna, "the bread that came down from heaven," *always* doing the business of the Father—ever pleasing God and doing *His* will—such was His path in the midst of all that characterizes man naturally; namely, the pleasing of *ourselves*.

And we Christians have to "gather up" the manna. God has given it to us as our supply for the wilderness—Himself in His perfect path and service. God has given us that blessed, humbled One as Man down here. There is Christ for us all. Every morning there the manna lay in the wilderness, round about the camp of God's people, "a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground." It is not doctrine, but Christ; a plentiful supply for all, and for strength in wilderness need. It might be trampled upon, but they had to "*gather it up*"; and so have we, and this needs diligence and earnestness, and a refusal of "*myself*," and *my* "things." (Phil. ii. 21.)

Do you want God to see in your life and actions anything different from what He saw in Christ? "Ah! no," you say; "but I have the flesh in me, and He had not." And it is just because you are not perfect that God has given you Christ, the perfect One, for every detail of your path. You must gather up the manna, "every man according to his eating." You and

I want Christ for every occasion, because the flesh (Gal. ii. 17) is always desirous to obtrude itself. The flesh does not assert itself in us all in a similar way, or come out with the same provocation. No, every Christian requires the manna, and must gather it up "according to his eating." Christ "gathered" meets the need of every occasion.

That blessed walk of thirty-three years on this earth for God! Did not God delight in it? He did, He does still; for the pot of manna was "laid up *before the Lord*, to be kept." God will never forget it. Do I want to please God? I must keep it ever before me. I must gather it up daily, and I must feed upon it whenever I hunger (the hunger is the need of the wilderness).

Would not God have Christ, in all His separation from the course of this world, in all that lonely path of obedience and REST, reproduced in every one of us? Is not a Christian GOD'S workmanship, an "epistle of Christ," "known and read of all men"? How much of this very day have I been occupied in gathering up my soul's food—in gathering up the manna? "Oh for more knowledge myself of what the manna is!" Surely every believer will say "Amen" to this—more gathering of it—more feeding upon it. After another night's sleep in the wilderness what was the first thing that greeted an Israelite going out of his tent door? It was God's provision for him for that day. Christ for me for this day, and Christ for God. Nothing else fully satisfies Him.

"Nothing but Christ, as on we tread."

"I am among you as he that serveth." "I receive



not honour from men." True honour comes from God only. (John v. 41, 44.) If I know something of gathering up the manna, Christ's *friends* (mark it well) will be *my* friends. His path will be mine, His joy mine, His interests mine. The meekness and gentleness of Christ I shall know, if only a little, a *something* about it. And the world—this poor world, with all its pomp, and pride, and empty VANITY—will be to me "vanity of vanities; all is vanity." He is real and she is real, amidst all its unreality, whose eye is on CHRIST, and who is seeking, through grace (for all is of grace) to walk here daily "as He walked." H. C. A.

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## EXTRACTS FROM A LECTURE ON FRUIT-BEARING.

JOHN xiii. 1-8; JOHN xv. 1-11.

Now let us look at the other side for a moment, and that is the advocacy. In John xiii. I do not believe it is priesthood but advocacy we get. But, you see, I was careful to speak of the *position* of Christ, and not of the *office* only. He rises from supper, takes a towel, and girds Himself. The girdle is used in Scripture as a figure for service and judgment: we find the latter view in the Revelation. The Lord in the midst of the seven churches, "girt about the paps with a golden girdle," judicial attire; but here in John xiii. He is manifesting Himself in grace, so we have the Lord adapting Himself to this new ministry. He has begun a new service. I do not think we understand John xiii., unless we understand that it is a change of position of Christ

from the cross to the glory. That is, He has finished one work completely, and has gone into a new service to adapt Himself to those now to whom He adapted Himself on the cross.

“He poureth water into a basin.” Feet and water go together, as souls and blood go together. He has “washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and *His* Father”; for it is always His Father in the Book of Revelation. So here we have the ministry of Christ, not His past work, but His present work; He takes a towel, girds Himself, and pours water into a basin. I dwell on chapter xiii. because here we find the way in which He prepares that state of soul, the outcome of which is fruit in chapter xv. Thus we have a series of chapters connected with the present ministry. He pours water into a basin, and washes the disciples’ feet. Why feet? Because, “How beautiful are the feet of them which preach the gospel of peace,” originally the feet of Him (Christ); and feet, you see, are always in connection with the ground on which we travel. It is as though the Lord Himself said, I would not only cleanse you from your sins, but I desire to have your feet so clean that you and I can ever be in company and fellowship together, though I shall be at the right hand of God, and you for a time down here. That is the heart of Christ. He says, I am going away in order to adapt myself to the service that will keep you in continual fellowship with me. Now, it is an important point, because Peter refuses the ministry. He says, “Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet.” Now mark the words of the Lord Jesus, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part *with* me.” He did not say no part *in* me, that was

settled for ever in the cross, but no part *with* me; you will not have fellowship with me unless you have clean feet. Of course, it is moral here; but I refer for a moment to Revelation iv., where I find the basin, as it were, stereotyped, I find the sea of glass like unto crystal; it is the figure, or rather the substance of what we have here—of what indeed the laver in the Old Testament typified.

In Revelation we have reached the place where no defilement can be contracted; the streets are of gold, and hence no necessity there for the towel and the basin and the water; but still we have kept before us that which has cleansed our feet as we passed through the wilderness. Like the golden pot of manna laid up as a witness of how God sustained His people as they passed from the Red Sea to the land of Canaan, where they ate manna no more. And it is thus the advocacy of Christ keeps our feet clean here, in order that we may walk with Him and serve Him, for remember it is always a matter of feet when it is a question of service. It is of no use preaching well if you cannot walk well. We have an illustration of the advocacy in the case of Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee; that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Now, you have in chapter xiii. the way the Lord produces the state of soul of chapter xiv.; that is the point now. I ask every one of you, How do you like the present ministry of Christ? I find it is not generally liked; but if you refuse the present ministry of Christ, you need never expect to be a fruit-bearer. And as we are believers, we should be exercised believers, not

content to go on day after day in ease and indifference, but as those who at the end of the day say, What have I learned of Christ to-day? Is there any fruit gone out to-day? Have I produced any fruit for God? How careful that vine-dresser was. He said, "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bring forth fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." And the tree was chopped down. Let us mind we do not get cut down because we do not produce fruit, and only cumber the ground. Many have been. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." The time of fruit-bearing is *now*, and the place is *here*: if we are taken away the time of fruit-bearing will be over. Hear the words of the vine-dresser, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" I believe this was with a very distinct view to believers, and that many a tree has been cut down. Remember, I am not speaking of salvation, but of fruit-bearing. J. S. B.

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## SCRIPTURE NOTES.

### I.

#### ISAIAH l. 4.

ALTHOUGH the translation of this scripture is a little difficult, arising out of the ambiguity of the word rendered "learned," the sense is simple and easily apprehended. The Hebrew word in this passage signifies, in different parts of the verb, or in words formed from it, 'to train,' 'to teach,' or 'to learn.' If this is remembered, it will at once be perceived that the word "learned," in the last clause of our verse,

would be better rendered, "learner," or, as many prefer, "disciples." This change, moreover, brings out, in a still more striking way, the wondrous place of subjection and humility which our blessed Lord took here as a servant. In verse 1, He speaks as Jehovah; in verses 2, 3, He declares His almighty power in creation and redemption; and then, in verse 4, we are permitted to behold Him down here in all His lowly grace as the teacher of His people, and as such entirely dependent upon God for the words He received and communicated. (Compare John xii. 49.) He thus says, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned" (the same word as at end of verse), of those who are taught or instructed, "that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learner," or as "disciples." What an example! And what a blessed lesson for all the Lord's servants! The power to speak the message, and the manner of its delivery, must all come from Himself; and, together with this, there must be the maintenance of constant dependence, the suited condition of soul, in order to hear and to receive the words He would put into our mouths. The apostles surely understood this when they said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

## II.

EPHESIANS ii. 22; REV. xviii. 2.

ONE of the most striking contrasts in all Scripture is found in these two passages; and the special form of the word, here translated "habitation," does not elsewhere occur. This fact adds immensely to its

significance, and to the designed instruction. In Ephesians, then, we learn that believers are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit, that the house of God on earth now is composed of His people, and that He dwells in it by the Holy Ghost. Passing on to Revelation, we read that Babylon is become the "habitation of demons." Now Babylon is that which the professing church of God on earth has become. It had once been in the place of God's light-bearer on the earth; but after the rapture of the saints, and the rejection of Laodicea by Christ, because of its denial of Christianity, Babylon arrogates to itself the claim to be the bride of Christ. But the Spirit of God terms her a harlot, and the mother of harlots (chap. xvii.); and in our scripture we further learn, that Babylon, instead of being the habitation of God, is the habitation of demons. It is the full expression of the utter apostasy of that which had once borne the name of Christ, seen in the substitution of the power of Satan for that of the Spirit of God. It is for the spiritual mind to discern in how far Christendom has already become morally the home and dwelling-place of demons. (Compare Matt. xiii. 31, 32.)

### III.

EPHESIANS iii. 17; 1 JOHN iv. 15, 16.

It is a matter of great regret that the translators of the Authorized Version should have employed so many words to express the same word in the original; and, on the other hand, should have often used one word to render different words. The exact meaning of Scripture has been thereby much obscured. As an example of the former, 1 John ii. 24 may be cited, where "abide,"

“remain,” and “continue” are found as the rendering of one and the same word; and, as an example of the latter, the word “dwell,” in the above scriptures, is the translation of two different words. The word in Ephesians is, we judge, rightly given as “dwell,” whereas that in 1 John would be better given as “abide”; and the difference is not unimportant. In the former case it occurs in the apostle’s prayer, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;” that is, that He, through the faith of His people, might find a home in their affections, that He might be enthroned, and so find His *dwelling-place* in their hearts. In the latter case it is impossible to say, for instance, that he that findeth his “home” in love, findeth his “home” in God, although the word “dwell” really signifies this; only here, in our translation, it is used in a secondary sense, as synonymous with “abide.” The meaning, however, of the apostle is, that whosoever abideth in love, in divine love, abideth in God, and God in him, because he is shown thereby to be a partaker of the divine nature. Abiding in love is thus the expression of the activity of the divine nature in a believer, and not only therefore does he thus abide in God in real living dependence, but God also abides in him, and is Himself seen in this expression of activity in and through the believer of what is really divine. Hence it is, “God is love;” this is His nature; and he that abides in love abides in God (for God is love), and God in him; for abiding in love is the expression of what He is. But, as another has written, “While God’s dwelling in us is a doctrinal fact, and true of every real Christian, our dwelling in Him, though involved in it, is connected with our state.” (See chap. iii. 24.)

E. D.

## ITTAI.

LUKE ix. 57, 58 ; 2 SAMUEL xv. 19-22 ; JOHN xii. 26.

" LORD, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest."  
 How oft our hearts re-echo this ; and He  
 Asks, in heart-searching tones, so true and tender,  
 " Know 'st thou the path of those that follow me ? "

As when of old the king, despised and lonely,  
 Disowned and wandering on the hill-side bare,  
 And one—a stranger and an exile only—  
 Sought even then his master's fate to share.

Knew he the path—the meed of shame and sorrow  
 Involved in following after David then ?  
 To-day the crossing Kidron, and the morrow  
 Dark with defection of the greatest men.

Knew he the ups and downs of desert wanderings ?  
 Knew he the hardships that he there would find ?  
 And did his heart, deep in its inmost ponderings,  
 Sigh for the rest and comfort left behind ?

Only one thought the exile's heart engrosses,  
 Only one longing, one desire has he—  
 " Surely in that place where my lord the king is,  
 Even there also will thy servant be. "

Yea, it is David who his soul is filling ;  
 And having him, nought else his soul can crave ;  
 More than content to follow—aye, and willing  
 To have his present portion but a grave.

Greater than David may we seek to follow—  
 Keep our hearts ever and our eyes on Thee ;  
 Knowing Thy word will soon come true in glory,  
 " And where I am there shall my servant be. "



## THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

### CHAPTER xix. 5-10.

IN this section the marriage of the Lamb, the event for which He had so long waited, now takes place. To possess the pearl of great price, He "went and sold all that He had, and bought it"; but although He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, and even though He had the Church in heaven with Himself, He waits in patience for the presentation of His bride, until Babylon, the harlot, the false bride, should have been judged and utterly destroyed. The marriage of the Lamb does not then take place for some little time after the Church has been caught up to be with the Lord. (1 Thess. iv.)

It would seem that verse 5, while following upon, and, it may be, connected with the worship of the elders and the four living creatures, is really introductory to the universal joy of heaven consequent upon the marriage of the Lamb. The "*voice came out of the throne,*" and this shows us that the event about to be celebrated is connected with God's ways in government, that is, as it is presented in this book. It must be remembered, indeed, that both the judgment visited upon Babylon, and the marriage of the Lamb in heaven, are preparatory to the appearing of Christ with His saints, to make good His title on earth, both as against evil and in taking possession of His kingdom. Having made good all that God is, borne the whole weight of His glory on the cross, He is in this scene about to vindicate also His name in government on the

earth. The command that issues from the throne is, "*Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great.*" It is a "voice" that gives the command; whose voice is not said; but it is charged with the authority of the throne, and the speaker, inasmuch as he uses the words "our God," associates himself with those addressed. (Compare verse 10.) The character, moreover, in which those called to worship are viewed, is noteworthy. They are simply "His servants, and ye that fear Him," terms therefore which would include all the saints of all dispensations, as well as perhaps all the angelic host. There will not be one among all the multitudes of heaven that is not embraced under these appellations. (Compare Psalms ciii. 20-22; cxviii. 1-4.)

The response is as instant as overpowering in its grandeur: "*And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.*" (vv. 6, 7.) There are two grounds given for the praise rendered. The first is, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, showing that the kingdom is regarded as already established. In fact, God has only waited for the vindication of His name, and for making good His power in government, until He had set aside for ever in judgment the great harlot who had corrupted the earth. Thereon, after the marriage of the Lamb, the heavens would open for the issuing forth of Christ to put down all the rule and authority wherewith the beast and the false prophet had deceived the habitable world, and to

establish His own sovereignty over the nations of the earth. The names under which God is here celebrated are remarkable; they comprise the several characters in which He was revealed to the saints of old, viz., Jehovah, the self-existent One, the One who is, and was, and is to come, the name in which He was pleased to reveal Himself in relationship with Israel; God, the expression of all that He is in His own being, viewed absolutely, the One with whom man has to do as a responsible creature; and, finally, Almighty, or Omnipotent, answering to Shaddai in the Old Testament. (See Genesis xvii. 1; Exodus vi. 3, and compare 2 Cor. vi. 18.) The reason for the introduction of these names, the names of the One whom Christians know as their God and Father, is found in the fact that He is here brought before us in relation to the kingdom and to the earth. The "reigning" which is here celebrated is connected with His kingdom in display on earth, not in heaven, and hence with the overthrow of all and everything that had exalted themselves against Him and His Christ. It is, in fact, the substitution in this world of God's power for that of man's, and consequently the introduction of the era of righteousness, peace, and blessing.

The second ground of heaven's joy is the arrival of the time for the marriage of the Lamb, and His wife having made herself ready. As before noted, this event does not take place until after the false bride has been judged; and now we also learn, that in heaven there was a necessary preparation for the marriage: the wife must "make herself" ready. The character of this "readiness" is seen in the following verse, where we read, "*And to her was granted that she should be*

*arrayed in fine linen, clean and white : for the fine linen is the righteousness [or, righteousnesses] of saints."* (v. 8.) This will help us to determine the meaning of "making herself ready," as well as to fix precisely the time of the marriage. It must be observed, first of all, that the righteousnesses are those of the saints, and not what we know as God's righteousness according to the teaching of the Epistle to the Romans. (See also 2 Cor. v. 21.) Now we read in 2 Cor. v. of the judgment-seat of Christ, before which we must be all manifested, when every one will "receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Whatever good any of His people have done, although it was by the Spirit and through His grace that it had been accomplished, will then, in the same grace, be imputed to the vessel which He had deigned to employ for the purpose, while every work of the flesh, whatever its outward appearance, will be traced back to its root, and its real nature exposed. And we shall thus learn of the grace that had borne with us in our failures as much as in using us in His service, and in reckoning to us what He had given us to do. But we are now concerned only with the latter; and we see then from this scripture, that all the good put to our account, when we are manifested before the tribunal of Christ, will constitute, not God's righteousness which in Christ we have already become, but, our righteousness, and it is these righteousnesses which are here symbolized by the fine linen, clean and white. Not only therefore will the bride be beautified with God's own beauty, His righteousness, but she will also be robed in what He is pleased to call her own righteousnesses, and it is as so arrayed that she is here seen

as ready for the marriage, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"; made meet, but only through unspeakable grace, to be the companion of Christ throughout eternity.

Moreover, this, as has been said, fixes the time of the marriage. When the Lord descends from heaven with a shout, etc., it is to receive His people unto Himself. The dead saints raised, and the living changed, all will be caught up together to meet Him in the air, and we shall then be for ever with the Lord. His first act will be to introduce us into the Father's house. (John xiv.) Beyond this we have no revelation until we come to the judgment-seat of Christ, which would seem, from what takes place in heaven in this scripture, to immediately precede the marriage. Consequently the Lord, who had long since espoused His bride, does not take her in marriage until upon the eve of the appearing.

The question still remains as to the significance of the marriage. To understand this we must borrow the light of another scripture. In Ephesians v. we read, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (vv. 25-27.) This scripture travels far beyond our immediate subject, showing us, as it does, how Christ, in His surpassing love and grace, and at what a cost, possessed Himself of His bride; how that, in the same love, He cared for, and prepared her for her destination, making her worthy of the place into which His love was calling her, and bestowing upon her the

moral fitness to enjoy His companionship and affection. The marriage itself is contained in her presentation to Himself, and it is this presentation which is signalized in heaven in our chapter. Two things in connection with this should be noted; first, that it is the heavenly bride, distinguished from the earthly bride, of which our scripture speaks;\* and, secondly, that the heavenly bride is composed, and composed alone, of the saints of this dispensation; that is, of all the saints from Pentecost onward until the return of the Lord to receive His people unto Himself. The saints of other dispensations, both before Pentecost and after the Lord's coming the second time, will have their own special place of perfect blessedness, but they are not included in those who form the bride, the Lamb's wife. This fact explains another thing; that the twenty-four elders are seen here for the last time. The elders, as before explained, comprise all who share in the first resurrection (saving those afterwards added as found in chap. xx. 4, 5); all the saints of Old Testament times, as well as the Church. Since then it is only the Church that has been sovereignly chosen to be the bride of Christ; the elders disappear, as they could no longer be representative of all the saved. The Church from this moment is apart, taken apart, to enter into her special relationship to Him who had purchased, redeemed, and fitted her to be the sharer of His exaltation, His affections, and His joys throughout eternity.

In the next verse, the two classes of the redeemed, all those who had hitherto in this book been represented by the twenty-four elders, are clearly distinguished:

\* The earthly bride is Jerusalem, but Jerusalem as the expression of Israel; and this is the bride of the Song of Solomon.

*“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.”* (v. 9.) Here, then, we have the Lamb, the Lamb’s wife already specified, and those who are invited to the wedding feast; the last class being all those outside of the Church, who had been exhibited under the symbol of the elders. Even in regard to the earthly bride, the same distinction is made. When the disciples of John were somewhat jealous for the reputation of their master, he said, “Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” (John iii. 28, 29.) All these, therefore, who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb, are, like John, friends of the Bridegroom, and, while not in the intimacy of the bride, will have their own special portion, and will rejoice greatly because of the Bridegroom’s voice.

It is to be observed that, while the fact of the marriage is stated, and the wife is seen as made ready, also the guests as invited, the joys of the feast are not exhibited. The reason is that no one could be permitted to enter into that which must for ever remain a blessed secret between the Bridegroom and the Bride. The Bride, later on, shall be shown out in all her magnificent beauty, “having the glory of God,” but no stranger could “intermeddle” with the joy of the Lamb’s union with His wife. But its significance and importance in the counsels of God may be gathered from the universal joy it occasions in heaven, and from the place it occupies in His ways in relation to the earth.

And what a relief, and indeed encouragement, it is, beloved reader, to turn our eyes away from all the confusion and discord presented in the spectacle of a broken and divided Church on earth, to the perfection of that day when the Church, now fully answering to the mind of Him who had loved her and given Himself for her, enters upon her long-looked and waited for union\* with her Lord. It is for this moment He also had been waiting for ages, and now His joy is displayed at the marriage feast, in His resting in His love, in His joying over her with singing, and in the consummation of her hopes, as well as in the fruition of her joy.

John is overwhelmed by the character of the revelations vouchsafed to him, and after the solemn affirmation of their truth in the words, "*These are the true sayings of God,*" he says, "*And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*" (v. 10.) However exalted the personage, the angel, who had been commissioned to make to John these communications, he was yet but a fellow-servant, and of all who had the testimony of Jesus; and that testimony, now that the Church was on high, was the spirit of prophecy. (Compare chapters i. 2; xii. 17.) The angel's place, therefore, equally with that of John and all other servants, was obedience to the will and word of God. Worship was due to God alone.

E. D.

\* We speak, not of union with Christ as members of His body, for that is true of the believer as soon as he is sealed with the Holy Ghost, but of the union of the bride with the Bridegroom.



## THE HOLLOW OF JACOB'S THIGH.

GENESIS xxxii. 24-32.

"JACOB was left alone." This was the occasion of his greatest blessing. The beginning of his spiritual history was at Bethel (chapter xxviii.); but here he is thoroughly broken down, and receives that wonderful name of Israel.

Notice how a crisis like this is often the moment of richest spiritual blessing. Jacob had just escaped from the clutches of Laban, only apparently to fall into far worse hands—even those of his offended brother Esau, and *God* now seemed against him. "There wrestled a man with him." Later on in his history this same Jacob uttered the cry, "All these things are against me." But in both cases the suffering was the precursor of blessing. The process of breaking us down is often long, but there cannot be real blessing to our souls apart from it. The experience of God's children in all ages attests this. Paul is let down in a basket before he is caught up to the third heaven. If God is dealing with us, however painful the process, the blessing is sure to follow, if we only get low enough before Him. It is not great or splendid gifts we need so much as to have the hollow of our thigh touched—to have no confidence in the flesh; for when we are weak, then are we strong. But we do not like to admit we are weak, and God has to wrestle with us as He did with Jacob; not to prove He is stronger than we are, but to make us conscious of our weakness, and in order that we may lean upon Him for strength.

Jacob continued wrestling until the hollow of his thigh was touched and out of joint. He could then no longer wrestle, but he could cling, and he did.

It is not now God wrestling with Jacob, but Jacob clinging to God; and this is what it ought to be with all of us. If we cling to another, it implies that we trust in his strength; if we wrestle, it shows that we have confidence in our own. Are we clinging or wrestling? Weakness clings, strength wrestles. Which is it with us? Have we learnt how to cling to God? It is in doing so we find blessing. It is one thing for God to lay hold of us, quite another for us to lay hold of Him. Only felt weakness knows how to do that. "To Him our weakness clings," as we sometimes sing.

"Let me go, for the day breaketh." Ah, Jacob, you can let go now! The day has come. Is that Jacob's thought? Far from it. "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," he says. Day must have been very welcome after such a night of travail, but to Jacob God was better than all. And notice, it is from the very One who has caused Jacob's thigh to be out of joint that he expects the blessing. And he was right. Have we learnt to know God thus—that He only afflicts in order to bless, only weakens to make room for His strength? Perhaps you have had some affliction. Have you laid hold of God in it, and cried, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me"? For there is blessing behind as there was for Jacob. It was painful to have his thigh out of joint—perhaps more painful to confess what he was; but what a blessing follows! God does not afflict for affliction's sake, but only to prepare the ground for the blessing in store. Are we ready to say to God, "Thou mayest take everything

away from me, only give me thyself? I will not let thee go."

And God said, "What is thy name? And he said, Jacob." There must be the fullest confession if we want the blessing. If God is not to have any reserve towards us, we must keep nothing back from Him. He confessed he was Jacob. He confessed, as it were, "I am the supplanter." He learns two lessons here, which we also must learn; his weakness and his sinfulness. His weakness was demonstrated by his thigh out of joint, and his sinfulness in that he was a supplanter. And now that these two lessons have been learnt, God can come in and say to him, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel." What a change! But so it is. "He raiseth up the *poor* out of the dust, and lifteth the *needy* out of the dunghill; that He may set him with *princes*, even with the princes of His people." (Psalm cxiii. 7, 8.)

Why are we not more blessed? The simple answer is, We do not fulfil the conditions; we have not learnt our utter helplessness, come to the end of ourselves. The *poor* and the *needy*, as our Psalm tells us, and those who become weak, like Jacob, are those whom God can make princes. But there is a further question, "How is this condition to be reached?" By having to do with God. By getting often into His presence. By seizing every opportunity of being alone with God. By learning that it must be Christ and not self.

And then God interprets the name for him. "For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." It was his weakness that prevailed, not his strength. Yes, it is our weakness that has

power with God. Just as an infant's cry has power with a mother more than the cry of a strong man. Why does a mother run so eagerly at the cry of her babe? It is the cry of helplessness, and until we learn our utter weakness we shall never have power with God. It was not the strong Jacob of verse 24, but the weak Jacob of verse 25, that prevailed.

It was a wonderful name Jacob received. But he was not content, he wanted to know something else. And he said, "Tell me, I pray thee, *thy* name." With Jacob now, the desire is to know God. He is looking away from himself. He is in the presence of God, and all else is forgotten. "I will not let thee go! Tell me thy name."

Once more, "As he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh." We must ever keep in the place of weakness, for it is the place of power. Jacob here was like one afterwards who could say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities." Israel had ever to return to Gilgal. Paul had a thorn in the flesh. We have no resources in ourselves. Jacob had gained the victory through his disjuncted thigh. He halted upon his thigh; nevertheless he had prevailed. "The race is not to the *swift*, nor the battle to the *strong*." He had to meet Esau now with a shrunken sinew; but it taught him not to trust in his own natural strength, but in the One who had weakened him and made him strong.

We have glanced at the beginning of Jacob's spiritual history, and have dwelt at greater length upon another eventful period; we would now conclude by touching upon the close of his life. We refer to Hebrews xi. 21, where we read, "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying,

blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." It is the only mention of him in this chapter; but he is seen as a worshipper, and his staff denotes his strangership. With his staff he passed over Jordan at the commencement of his wanderings, and now he is on the verge of the grave, and it is still the staff; but how different, how changed the man who leans upon it! It is the sequel to the hollow of the thigh being touched. The lesson has been learnt. He leans. The one who can worship and bless others must himself be dependent. And can we ever afford to be anything else? To Jacob everything was now a wilderness, for he was outside the promised land. But what a moral grandeur invests this aged pilgrim! He blesses the sons of Joseph, and he worships God.

R. E.

## THE OCCUPATION OF THE SOUL.

"Manoah and his wife LOOKED ON."—JUDGES xiii. 20.

CHRIST is the grand subject of the Bible. He is the object of God, in type and shadow, in the Old Testament, but in real substance in the New. Hence, when on earth, He said, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of ME." There is blessed food for the soul in reading the Old Testament in this light. Christ is the key which unlocks the treasure to us.

The burnt-offering—Christ in all His blessed perfection—wholly burnt—a sweet savour to God (Leviticus i.)—is before us in this offering of Manoah and his wife. The burnt-offering was *all* for God, none of it could

be eaten by man; but along with it we find God provided a meat-offering (*vv.* 19, 23), and of *this* the priest might eat.

Christ, as the food of God, is presented to us in the burnt-offering. What did Manoah and his wife see? They saw it was all for God. God has found infinite satisfaction and delight in the work of the cross. It all went up a savour of infinite sweetness to God. But God has called us in to share in our measure in this His own delight in Christ and His work. There is a meat-offering. He has given to the believer that same blessed Christ to be the continual food of his soul. Christ is the fatted calf of Luke xv. God says, "Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry." Who are the "*us*" here invited to "eat, and be merry"? It is the Father *and the returned prodigal son*. God says, "I have found my delight in Him, and now do you come and find your delight in Him too." Thus by His own request I feed upon what the Father feeds upon.

Do not be for ever occupied with, and complaining of, your leanness; we *must* all admit it, and then it is time to have done with it. Can you fathom what that blessed Christ is to God—the burnt-offering? No, you cannot; but you can do what Manoah and his wife did. You can "look on" and *see* what God's estimate is. We want more of this habit. We want daily to say, "Well I know what Christ was to God in all the work of the cross;" and as I look on and am occupied with *that*, I am feeding upon what delights the heart of the blessed God Himself. And note it is God's WISH for me to be thus occupied. It will be the theme of eternal occupation in heaven, and if so it is fitting

that it should be my theme on earth. Thus we feed upon that which has eternally satisfied God.

The fire is judgment. But what need of the judgment of God upon Him? Though Christ in all His absolute perfection is seen in the burnt-offering, the fire proclaims that He took the place of judgment. The sin and the sinner needed this, and the holiness of God demanded it. But then God has accepted that work. Yes, He finds His delight in it. It is *done*; and as we contemplate it *we* partake with God. We "look on" upon that wondrous scene, always fresh to God, and we see Christ, and the work He accomplished, all going up and accepted by Him. We are called in to share with God in all the blessing of it, to feed, and if I am not there I am not in communion with God's thoughts of His blessed Son.

"God, thine everlasting portion,  
Feeds thee with the mighty's meat;  
Price of Egypt's hard extortion,  
Egypt's food no more to eat."

God delights to draw our attention to His own delight in Christ. May our hearts find their true rest there. It is not what I am or can be, it is what Christ was and is. May it be *now* the food of our souls, as it will be throughout eternity.

H. C. A.

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TRUTH, and the application of truth, are two very different things. It is one thing to speak of the peculiar glories of the Church, and quite another thing to be practically influenced by those glories.

C. H. M.

## FURTHER EXTRACTS FROM A LECTURE ON FRUIT-BEARING.

JOHN xiii. 1-8 ; JOHN xv. 1-11.

WELL, I return to the chapter, and at the end I find John so near the Lord, that he could ask Him the question which Peter could not, and I believe that there is a ministry of Christ to the soul outside of failure. He works in the soul by His word, by the Spirit, so that I become an instrument ready to be used. I take the Lord Himself as an example. In Isaiah xlix. He says, "In the shadow of His hand hath He hid me, and made me a polished shaft: in His quiver hath He hid me." We must be in the "*hand*"—that is, the place of formation—before we are in the quiver ready to be used. And He comes forth brightly burnished, we might say, proclaiming, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." That is the pliability of the servant which we have in Christ, who adapted Himself to every service upon earth. He could take a child in His arms and bless him, or call Lazarus forth from the grave.

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Now turn to the Old Testament Scriptures for a few illustrations; for the Old Testament is like the log-book aboard ship; in it we find all the way in which the Old Testament saints have failed—run against this rock, grounded on that shoal. Abraham went down into Egypt, Isaac wanted to go. David and Solomon failed, and so on, one after another; that is the log-book.



But in the New Testament we have the chart that goes straight away and leads into the glory. Turn to David. He comes forth as the deliverer of the children of Israel out of the hand of Goliath. He refused to go in man's strength and power, but he went to the brook, and from the brook he took five stones, and they were smooth ones. He knew where to go to get a usable weapon. Why smooth? They had been under the action of the water, the water had played upon them and rubbed off every rough edge until they were usable. Do you like the rubbing? You will never be smooth without it. I do not know how long they had lain in the brook, some stones take longer to smooth than others; for if you will not submit, but will be obstinate and crooked, He will keep you under the action of the water until you are ready to be used. Oh that we might sit down, as it were, and allow the water to play over us, rubbing off the edges! You never see a square stone on the sea-shore. How often have we admired the round pebbles there! A stone fresh cut from the quarry is rough, and has jagged edges; but put it on the sea-shore, and, perhaps not in a day, or a week, or a month, but after a time it will lose all the roughness. I only use this as an illustration to show that if you and I submitted more to the water (the present ministry of Christ), we should be more usable in His hand; but if you refuse to go under the water, you will never be a smooth stone. David knew where to get the stones, and *one* stone did the whole thing. That is power. And if we are ever to be burden-bearers, or weapons in the hand of Christ, we must have the water of the Word playing on our hearts; and the man who will not submit to

John xiii. never has the condition of John xiv. John xiv. is the state produced by the power of the present ministry of Christ. If we are not in a good state God cannot use us, but the devil can; and do you know the devil's device? He never thrusts a man down all at once, he works insidiously until he has changed the state of soul, and corrupted him, and then he trips him. A fall arises from a bad state of soul, caused by not subjecting ourselves to the present ministry of Christ.

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Now turn for another illustration to Joshua v. The Lord brought Israel into the land of Canaan without their being circumcised. They had not circumcised them by the way, and there were three things that took place in Joshua v. They were circumcised—the power of the flesh set aside. They kept the passover, and they ate of the old corn of the land; and then, after that, the Captain of the Lord's host joined them, for He never joined them before they were circumcised. Joshua sees a man with a drawn sword in his hand, and he goes to him and says, for faith knows no neutrality, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" "Nay," he said; "but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. . . . Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy." Now, the Captain of the Lord's host only came after they were circumcised, kept the passover, worshipped and fed on the figure of the heavenly Christ, and then the result is, the victory of Jericho in chapter vi. And if you and I want the company of the Captain of the Lord's host we must be circumcised; then we must

submit not only to the application of the cross, but to the exercise of Christ's present ministry to the soul. That is what fits the servant now. Everything comes from within. If the within is right, all will be right; and if the within is wrong, all will be wrong.

Now let me ask you, Does your state trouble you? Your standing should be a joy, for the standing is Christ's work. But how about your state? Our state should correspond with our standing. Perhaps you are concerned about circumstances, but do not let them stand between your soul and God; for the present ministry of Christ enables us to pass over these present things, producing the state of chap. xiv., and the outcome of that is fruit. I desire to press this; first, that the power is in chapter xiii., the state produced is in chapter xiv., and the outcome of that is fruit for the *Father* in chapter xv. Now in chapter xiv. the Lord speaks of His return. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." He counted upon their affection in His absence. Now in chapter xiv. there is a peculiar state of soul, it is communion—the abiding of chapter xv. And you will not produce fruit until you understand what the abiding is, and the communion is produced by chapter xiii., where I get my defiled feet washed.

The Lord Himself acts as the advocate, and when I sin I confess my fault, and He restores again to fellowship; *but you have lost to-day, you have lost a day's earnings, a day's wages.* Peter, you know, walked on the water, but he went down; but he was not drowned, the Lord picked him up, the Lord rebuked him at the same time that He helped him. You have in Ephesians: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but

as wise." And why? The next verse gives the answer, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." If you do not walk circumspectly you will fall down and lose time, and we often think little of the loss of time; but we shall not think little of it at the judgment-seat of Christ. We shall not think lightly of losing a day's wages then, when all our works are inspected. In the diamond-fields in South Africa, they bring the earth up from the pit, and one man throws a whole bucketful out upon the table, and they all work their fingers through it feeling for the diamonds, and throw aside everything else. So at the judgment-seat of Christ, every work shall be picked out; works that you and I have thought lightly of, the Great Valuator will gauge at a different value.

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But now for verse 12 (chap. xiv.) for a moment: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do . . . because I go unto my Father." Now you know it is not the man that *did* believe, but He is speaking of the present activity of faith—he that *believeth*. We have two points in verse 12. He speaks of His own present position like Elijah and Elisha. Elisha had a double portion of Elijah's spirit, for in 2 Kings ii. we read, that is the correct reading, "If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so." What was that? It was a figure of Christ in the glory. The power for service upon the earth—that is the figure for us to-day—is in having our eye fixed upon Christ in heaven. Now, the two points, dependence and obedience, are the two conspicuous characteristics seen in the Lord Himself. Turn to the perfect Man in Psalm xvi.:

“Preserve me, O God”; and verse 8, “I have set the Lord always before me.” The very description of the perfect Man upon the earth and in contrast to Adam in the garden, for he was neither obedient nor dependent. In chapter xiv. He said, “If ye shall ask anything in my name.” (v. 14.) That is dependence. And in verse 23, “If a man love me, he will keep my word.” He did not say keep my commandments. It is keeping the word of the Lord. It is being near Christ. How near the mighty men were to David. David never told them to go and get him water from the wells of Bethlehem, but he expressed a wish: “Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!” And the three mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines and got it; and then David would not drink the water, for he said, It is the life of these men. But mark you, he never told them to go. Are *you* waiting for some word from the Lord to *tell* you to go? I do not think you will get it, then; for if you are a smooth stone you are ready to be used. If you have been long enough in the “shadow of His hand” to be fashioned, He will then pass you into the quiver to wait the time He will use you. The secret is, these men were so near to David that they knew what David wanted. Are you and I so near to Christ as to know what He wants?

Now just a parting word from Luke xii. 37: “Blessed are those servants. . . . Verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself . . . and will come forth and serve them.” Here we have the saints of God in glory. It is beyond John xiii. Here we are in the Father’s house, led in by Christ. Christ setting us down to the Father’s table, and He deigning to serve His people still.

May our hearts be attached to Him more. Waiting for Him, He is waiting for us, and we are in the kingdom and *patience* of Jesus Christ. We wait *His* time, *He* waits the *Father's* time, and in the meantime may we see to it that we submit to the present ministry of Christ.

J. S. B.

## ON SUFFERING.

NATURE, of course, shrinks from suffering; still, when it comes, if we are *with God*, strength and joy are there. I have found in the little difficulties I have had much more trial in expecting trial than when it was there. When there I was calm and quiet, and no way uneasy; whereas I was when expecting it. Out of it, if it threatens, you are thinking of it. In it, you are looking out of it to the Lord. Of course there must be the power of the Holy Ghost. It is true I have a sadly fearful mind. But Paul (Philippians) was there in presence of the danger. He was in presence of his trial for his life; but he was surely wonderfully sustained. Still it was not a question of avoiding, but going through, and then it is comparatively easy.

The difference of nature and the power of the Spirit you see in comparing Phil. iii. and Mark x. In this, in the young man in Mark x., you have legal righteousness—all given up as worthless in Phil. iii. Money clung to in Mark x.—all gain to self, dross and dung in Phil. iii. The disciples amazed and following trembling in Mark x.—a privilege to have the fellowship of His sufferings in Philippians iii. But in Philippians you have the full power of the Spirit all through. Sin

is never mentioned in the epistle, nor flesh as affecting the experience of the apostle. It is the experience of one living in the Spirit, in its power, and is exceedingly beautiful in this light, in every respect. He does not know which to choose, death or life—one gain, the other labour for Christ; and so, self having gone, he decides his own trial, for it was good for the saints he should stay. Christ had all power, so he was going to stay. He had, moreover, the same mind as Christ in going down to the death of the cross, and so perfect and delicate consideration for others admirably coming out in unconscious fruit—energy in following Christ, before him as his Object in glory, to win Christ, and then with the resurrection from among the dead. A humbled Christ formed the character; a glorified Christ gives the energy of “this one thing I do”; then superiority through experimental acquaintance with Christ’s sufficiency to all circumstances. It is the epistle of proper Christian experience. I do not think he was asking for trial, though we may desire generally to have fellowship in Christ’s sufferings; that one can earnestly do. “To you it is given . . . not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” But one does not desire suffering in itself. Only when sufferings are present they are a subject of all joy. Faith is given for them. The apostle was in prison, and just awaiting his trial. But he could say in his ordinary life of service, “Without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down,” etc.

As to suffering for Christ, I am sure if the Lord lead one into trial for His name, He will give us strength to glorify Him. We can do nothing. But

if living with Him in the secret of our souls, we shall not find it hard to die for Him. See how bright Stephen was, how quiet, kneeling down to pray for his persecutors. He was full of the Holy Ghost. We have to pray that we may be so filled that what comes forth may be Christ, and Christ fittingly for what is before us. I find this a great test in practice of how far I am practically identified with Him. From Him came forth not merely what was right, but just the right thing in what He had to do or to say.

The Lord make us, dear brother, to find Christ everything, that whatever comes with Him we may joy in, so be with Him that we have the consciousness of common interests, though He be Master; but as those who have His secret with us, His counsels, His objects—stewards, who have His interests at heart more than their own, and then go to see Him, and be with Him!\*

J. N. D.

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## SCRIPTURE NOTES.

### I.

#### 1 TIMOTHY iv. 10.

THE word here translated "Saviour" is the one usually so rendered, as, for example, in Philippians iii. 20; but it means also "Preserver" and "Deliverer." The context therefore must in each case decide upon the signification; for it must always be borne in mind that "Saviour" has other senses than that attached to the

\* Taken from *Letters of J. N. D.* Vol. ii. pp. 147-149.



word in connection with our salvation. When thus the Lord said to His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep," they replied, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well"—literally, "he shall be *saved*," using a kindred word—the verb formed from the same root as "Saviour." Remembering this, it will be at once seen that it is no question in Timothy of the salvation of souls, and that therefore "Saviour" is not used with a spiritual meaning. The apostle had been contrasting "bodily exercise" and "godliness"; and, while admitting that the former profited "for a little," that is, in some matters, points out that godliness is profitable "unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." This truth formed the principle of his service and activity; for he trusted, not in his own efforts for the needed strength, but in the living God, who is Preserver of all men, specially of those that believe; for they, it may be added, are the chief objects of His care even in government, and occupy the nearest place to His heart. It is very evident therefore, in view of this special use of the word Saviour, that "Preserver" expresses more exactly the mind of the Spirit in the scripture.

## II.

JOB xix. 25-27.

WITH all the admitted difficulty in translating this scripture accurately (see the Revised Version, and the French by J. N. D.), the sense is tolerably plain. Two things have, however, to be remembered—the meaning Job attached to his words, and the mind of the Spirit in them. It is quite possible (we do not say that it was so) that Job only thought of his deliverance from

his present condition, his restoration and vindication. But the language as used by the Holy Ghost becomes undoubtedly a prophecy of the coming of Christ (in its general sense), and of the resurrection of His people. The same thing is often seen in the Old Testament Scriptures. Many of the Psalms, for example, were written in connection with David's experiences; but these very experiences became, as wrought by the Holy Ghost, typical of the experiences of our blessed Lord. So, too, with the prophets. Speaking of some near event, their words often contained predictions, unknown to themselves, of larger events in the last days, of which what was passing around them was but a shadow. (Compare 1 Peter i. 10-12.) It is of the first importance to remember this principle in studying the prophetic, and, indeed, many of the historical scriptures.

### III.

ACTS iii. 19-21.

THE meaning of this scripture is almost entirely obscured by its defective rendering. When our blessed Lord was on the cross, He prayed for His enemies, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34.) This prayer was heard, and the answer is seen in the presentation of the gospel by Peter and the other apostles to the Jews as a nation. As a nation, by the mouth of their chief priests they had not only rejected Jesus as the Messiah, but they had also denied their national hope and expectation of any Messiah in their fatal words, the consummation of their guilt, "We have no king but Cæsar." (John xix. 15.) But for the intercession of Jesus, therefore, judgment swift and

sure must have been their portion. This, however, was delayed, in order that they might have another opportunity of receiving Christ, as proclaimed in the ministry of the Holy Ghost, through the apostles. Peter's cry, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," is thus addressed rather to the Jewish people than to individuals (although there would be a special blessing for every individual who complied with the exhortation), for he adds (as it should read), "So that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you." The character of these times of refreshing is seen from verse 21; they are connected with the "restitution of all things," under the reign of their glorious Messiah. Had the Jews then even at this time bowed, as a nation, in contrition, under the preaching of Peter, Christ would have immediately returned, and established His kingdom, and would have brought in those blessed days of prosperity of which the apostle speaks. But they still rejected their Messiah, and the restitution of all things is postponed, although it must, according to the purpose of God, take place at a future day. Meanwhile, the counsels of God's grace in connection with the glory of His beloved Son, and the Church, are being accomplished; and hence the Jews must now wait for the fulfilment of the glorious predictions of their prophets, until after the Church shall have been presented to Christ, "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." As the reader, therefore, will perceive, the passage is entirely of a dispensational character.

## IV.

## GALATIANS v. 5.

HERE (in this passage) is the Christian's position. He does not seek for righteousness before God as a man who does not possess it; he is the righteousness of God in Christ, and Christ Himself is the measure of that righteousness. The Holy Ghost dwells in him. Faith rests in this righteousness, even as God rests in it; and this faith is sustained by the Holy Ghost, who turns the heart that is established in that righteousness towards the glory that is its recompense—a recompense which Christ enjoys already, so that we know what that righteousness deserves. Christ is in the glory due to righteousness, to the work which He accomplished. We know this righteousness in virtue of that which He has wrought, because God has owned His work, and set Him at His right hand on high. The glory in which He is is His just reward, and the proof of that righteousness. The Spirit reveals the glory, and seals to us that righteousness on which faith builds. It is thus that the apostle expresses it: "We through the Spirit wait for the hope" (the hoped-for glory) "of righteousness by faith." To us it is faith, for we have not yet the thing hoped for—the glory due to that righteousness which is ours. Christ possesses it, so that we know what we hope for. It is by the Spirit that we know it, and that we have the assurance of the righteousness which gives us the title to possess it. It is not righteousness we wait for, but, by the Spirit in faith, the hope that belongs to it. It is by faith; for in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working by love. There must be moral reality.

J. N. D.

## THE WORD AND THE ETERNAL SON.

“IN the beginning was the WORD”; and this, to borrow well-known language, is “neither His birth, nor the commencement of His gospel, but His existence before the beginning of everything that had a beginning.” It is, in fact, the assertion of the eternal existence of Him who, after He became flesh, and dwelt among us, was known as Jesus of Nazareth; for “the WORD was with God, and the Word was God.” It is a revelation of the glory of the eternal Son.

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As to the meaning of the term, “the WORD,” it brings before us the fact that “He is, and He is the expression of the whole mind that subsists in God.” All that God is, is therefore revealed in Him; and hence it was said, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” (v. 18.) Only here, He who was the Word is spoken of as the only begotten Son. As the Word He is, and He is the expression of the whole mind of God; but as the Son, the eternal Son, He is, in incarnation, the revealer of the Father.

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There were two ways in which He revealed the Father. He Himself was morally the perfect presentation of the Father to those whose eyes were opened by the Spirit of God, according to His word to Philip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John xiv. 9); but, as the succeeding verse shows, the two channels through which the revelation was made to others were His words and His works. And may we not reverently say that it was so of necessity? Thus

when the Jews said, "Who art Thou?" He replied, "Altogether that which I also say to you" (John viii. 25, *New Translation*); that is, His words were the perfect expression of Himself, and so, being what He was, of the Father. And He said to Philip, in the passage already referred to, "The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." The words therefore He spake, and the works He wrought, were the Father's words and works, and were thus, while the expression of what He the only begotten Son was, who is in the bosom of the Father, also the revelation of the Father.

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With what interest, then, should we ponder His words and works! And how they glow with heavenly light and blessedness as so considered! It is only in this way, indeed, that the Gospel of John can be read aright (for it is specially in this gospel the revelation of the Father is made); read, we mean, so as to apprehend the Father as revealed in and through the Son. With this before our souls every word as well as every work will be felt to come directly from the Father's heart, instinct with some of the blessedness which the name of the Father contains, and unfolding to our souls, at the same time, the unspeakable privilege of that relationship into which He has deigned to bring us, as His children, in association with His beloved Son.

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We shall now more fully understand the words, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me"; by Him who is "the way, and the truth, and the life." Blessed Lord, knowing that Thou art the revelation of the Father, when we come to Thee we have come to Him through Thee, and knowing Thee, we know Him; and Thou hast taught us that all the Father's love rests on us as it rested on Thee! Blessed be Thy name for ever!

## THE TWO TRIBES AND A HALF.

THE history of the two tribes and a half has its own instruction for us, and illustrates a peculiar character of mind and walk among the saints of God. They do not stand exactly with Lot of the days of Abraham, though in some respects they remind us of him.

It is wonderful what a variety of mind, character, and of Christian experience, the soul finds before itself in the histories of Scripture. The soul reads itself there very fully; the workings of nature not only in man, but in the renewed man, its conflicts and its strength, giving us to see so much that we know in ourselves; and at times the lights and shades, as well as the distinctive features, are to be traced.

This strikes one here. The two tribes and a half are not Lot, but there is that in them which tells us of him. Like him, their own distinct independent history begins with their seeing the well-watered plains—the plains good for their cattle on the wilderness side of the Jordan. They think of their cattle rather than of the call of God, and the pilgrimage of their brethren. Had their hearts been full of Christ, they would not have seen anything till they had crossed the river. Abraham, their father, had not remained on that side the river; nor did their expectation, when called out from Egypt, stop short of the other side. Neither had Moses said anything to them about these plains in the land of Gilead. But they had cattle, and those plains were suitable to their cattle, and they sue for an inheritance ere they reach the land, which had been their ex-

pectation when they set out. This was all. They had no thought whatever of revolting, of sacrificing the portion of true Israelites; but their cattle drew their eyes to the goodly plains of Gilead, and they were for possessing them, though they would do so as Israelites.

How natural! how common! In moral power they came short of the call of God, though they held to the hope of that calling, and claimed fellowship only with those who were the objects of it. They were not in power a risen people, though in faith one with such. They were careful to declare and hold their alliance with the tribes who were to pass the Jordan, though they were led to remain on the wilderness side of it themselves. I do not regard them like Lot, a people of mixed principles, who had deliberately formed their lives by something inconsistent with the call of God; but rather as a generation who, owning that call, and prizing it, and refusing the thought of having any other, are not found in the full moral power of it.

Again I say, How common! This is a large generation. We know ourselves too well to ask, Is there such a people?

Moses at once is made uneasy by this movement on the part of Reuben and Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. He expresses this uneasiness with much force. He tells them that they bring to his remembrance the conduct of the spies, whom he had sent out years before from Kadesh-barnea, and whose way had discouraged their brethren, and occasioned the forty years' pilgrimage in the wilderness. There was something so unlike the call of Israel from Egypt in the hope of Canaan, in all this suggestion on the part of these tribes, that Moses at once thus resents it. And



it is bad when this is produced in the soul of a Moses; when the first instinctive feelings and thoughts of a saint, walking in the power of the resurrection of Christ, are alarmed and wounded by what is seen in a brother; but yet how common! Many a Moses nowadays is called in spirit to challenge what offends, as being out of company with the calling of the saints; for many a thing gets its sanction, or its excuse, from the heart of a saint, that cannot stand before the judgment of faith.

Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh have to explain themselves, and to give fresh pledges to Moses that they by no means separate themselves from the fellowship and interests of their brethren. And they do this with zeal, and with integrity too. In this they are not with Lot. Lot's conduct separated him for the rest of the journey from Abraham. But not so these tribes. With zeal they assert their purpose to be still with their brethren. Nay, they would by no means have taken the eastern Gilead, had this produced a forfeiture of their identity with those who were to be on the western Canaan. They are ready to give pledges too, that they will be foremost in the actions which still remain, on behalf of their brethren's inheritance. By no means do they contemplate anything like loss of fellowship with them. In this they are above Lot; but still they have stopped short of Canaan. They are not in the full power of the Canaan calling, not in the thoughts of the man of God, a dead and risen people; for they are pausing, ere their promised inheritance be reached, for the sake of their cattle in the wilderness.

Moses, however, does not let them go, as Abraham let Lot go; they are not to be treated in that way. Neither

does the judgment of God light on them, as on the unbelieving spies who bring up an evil report of the land. They do not belong to such generations, though their way may savour of such. Moses cannot lose sight of them because they purpose to feed their cattle in the plains of Gilead, while they thus with zeal assert their purposed fellowship with their brethren. They are his, and he is theirs still, I may say, and they hold on together, unlike Lot and Abraham, who never met after Lot became a citizen with the people of the land—practically forgetful, so far, of the call of God.

This is so; but still Moses has to eye them, and remember them, and keep his thoughts somewhat anxiously and uneasily occupied about them; and this is not the best witness for a saint. Happy when the Holy Ghost can leave us and our state alone, to lead us still onwards, and feed us still in the knowledge and with the things of Jesus!

Lot and Abraham never met after the way of the world had drawn Lot into it. Jonathan and David met now and again, and their affection, true and warm, there is communion between them. Obadiah and Elijah met only once, and it is but a poor meeting, reserve marking the way of Elijah and effort that of Obadiah; for they were not kindred spirits, the leathern girdle of the prophet but ill assorting with the livery of Ahab. But the two tribes and a half are above these. They are still the companions of their brethren, and will not think of anything else; and Moses admits their title without reserve. Their desire to have their portion in Gilead makes no difference as to this. But still, they do not go through and through, they do not measure the *whole* of the wilderness, but they linger,

and the thought of their cattle being suited in the fields of Gilead attracts them, and there they find an object, though they still accompany the camp.

What shades of difference there are in these different illustrations! What different classes of the people of God! yea, and what differences in the same class do we meet here! Lot and Jonathan and Obadiah are of one class, men of mixed principles, as the expression is, men whose lives are formed by such every-day habits as cannot combine with the pilgrim-character, or the suffering, witnessing-character, to which the call of God leads. Sodom was Lot's place, Saul's court was Jonathan's, and the palace of Ahab, king of Israel, at Jezreel was Obadiah's, while Abraham dwelt in a tent, David in a den or cave of the earth, and Elijah with the provisions of the Lord at Cherith or Sarepta. And yet Jonathan was not either Lot or Obadiah personally, though we have to set them all in one class. Neither was Obadiah Lot exactly. And so between them as a class, and such dead and risen men as Moses and Joshua, we have to bring in the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh—a generation who will by no means admit the thought of their separating themselves from full companionship with the call of God, but who, nevertheless, exhibit in several actions that which is not according to the full measure of that call. And this is indeed a common case, nay, this is *the* common case, among the saints. One knows it oneself. We own the call, we witness it, even speak of Canaan, of death and resurrection, of hopes and inheritance beyond the river; but nature, and present sense, and present desires, the bleating of the flocks, the lowing of the oxen, as they feed on the plains of Gilead, lead to much

which makes the more single eye of a Moses, and the more fixed and simple purpose of a Caleb or of a Joshua, to wonder and enquire. (See Num. xxxii.)

Joshua, who has the spirit of Moses, has them in some anxious and uneasy remembrance like Moses, and he addresses a word of special admonition to them when he takes the conduct of affairs under the Lord and for Israel. For they are still—being the tribes on the wilderness side of Jordan—the occasion of this fear and uneasiness to the more simple and devoted mind of a full-hearted and single-eyed servant of Christ. (See Joshua i.)

There remains, however, another sight of them still in the progress of the history, and one which has its very striking moral features. I mean in Joshua xxii. The ark had gone over. The feet of the priests bearing it had divided the waters of Jordan, and the ark had gone over, conducting and shielding the Israel of God. And it is true that our tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh had gone over with them. But the ark and Israel had *remained* there; that's the difference. The two tribes and a half return, but the ark remains. The place that becomes a ransomed people, a dead and risen people, is left, and they return to *settle* where Israel had but *wandered*.

Joshua, like Moses, instinctively feels all this, and warns and exhorts them on their departure; and as soon as they reach the place they had chosen, they begin to feel it also. They are not fully at ease; and there is something specially significant in that. They raise an altar. The heart of an Israelite in the land of Gilead would just do the same at this day. They are uneasy. Jehoshaphat was uneasy when he found himself in the

court of Ahab, and asked for a prophet of the Lord. The renewed mind speaks that language in a foreign land. They raise the altar and call it "Ed," as a witness, a witness that Israel's God was their God. But why all this? Had they remained in Canaan, where the ark and tabernacle of God were, they would not have needed this. But they were not there. Shiloh was not in view, nor could their souls carry the sense of it, that Shiloh was their common centre with all their brethren. They had to give themselves some artificial help, to give their souls a crutch, if I may so speak, to aid the confidence and joy of their hearts, that as Israelites they had fellowship and common interests and calling with their brethren.

All this is very full of meaning, and is constantly experienced to this day. Some witness of our belonging to the Israel of God is needed, and craved by the soul, when we get into a position in the earth which the call of Israel does not fully warrant. The countenance of others, the restless examination of our own state—reasonings with ourselves—remembrances, it may be, of better days with the soul—something that is as artificial of our own device as the altar of "Ed," and which would have been as unneeded too as that, had the soul been more simple and faithful.

All this is still known, and all this is figured here: it is the writing on this pillar on the eastern side of Jordan. And a wonderful pillar it thus is. Lot's wife, the pillar of salt, has a writing upon it which the divine Master Himself has made for us, and, I doubt not, so has this pillar of "Ed," which the Holy Ghost would fain teach us to read, that we may be warned to know what uneasiness and doubt accompany the soul that

has retreated to find a *settlement* there, where the Church is, and has been, a stranger. This altar witnessed both *for* and *against* these Israelites. It was just what Jehoshaphat's uneasiness was when he found himself with Ahab and the prophets of Baal. It is just what a saint's uneasiness here is when he finds himself involved in a world that he ought to have left. For all this bespeaks the saintly or renewed mind; but in such exercises and experiences, as want of simplicity and the grace of God has caused it.

Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh are challenged a second time—by Joshua now, as by Moses before—because of their pillar now, because of their seeking the plains of Gilead before. This is all natural, as common as Christian fellowship is, but all more or less painful and troublesome nowadays as it was then. A great stir is made among the tribes, and a great ambassage is formed to enquire into this matter. Something appeared in the ways of those who were on the other side of the river, which alarmed them as Israelites, as worshippers of Jehovah. It looked to be something which the common call of God could not allow for a moment. It must at least be explained.

What a living picture this is! Are we not at home here? Do we not know this spot well?

The calling and election of these eastern borderers was not made sure to their brethren, who were living in the place of the ark of God. They have to enquire and inspect their condition; and whatever the result of such inspection may be, the need of such a process is but a poor thing at least. I believe the First Epistle to the Corinthians is very much a Phinehas crossing the river to look after a pillar. There were things at

Corinth which alarmed Paul. They seemed to be reigning as kings on the earth. His ministry in the meekness and gentleness of Christ was getting despised. The world was fashioning the hearts of saints there, and people were valued because of their place in the world. "The princes of this world," the men of the schools or the ways of the schools, were regaining their place, and saints were returning to *settle* where they ought to be *unknown* and strangers. Paul, in the zeal of Joshua xxii., has to cross the river; and whatever the discovery may be, the action is a painful one, and the need of it a sad one in the history of the Church.

The tribes may satisfy Phinehas more than the Corinthians did Paul. All these varieties are known at this hour; but there is this common sorrow and humbling, that the call and election is not made sure; and we have either to take journeys or to occasion journeys, to have our own ways and altars as brethren read, instead of reading together the secrets of God's altar and tabernacle at Shiloh.

J. G. B.

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THERE are two ways the Christian is seen in the New Testament. In Christ—here is no progress, no question: he is accepted in Him—a complete, perfect, present state. But he is also a pilgrim upon earth, having to attain the goal: so always in Philippians. This gives occasion to every kind of exhortation, warning, and "if." Thus he learns obedience and dependence—the two characteristics of the new man. But with this he is led to the sure infallible faithfulness of God to bring him through to the end, and bound to reckon on it. (See 1 Cor. i, 8, which I cite because they were going on very badly.)

J. N. D.

## THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

IN this part of the Gospel of John the Lord is leading His disciples away from earth to associate their minds with Himself up in heaven. That begins from chapter xiii. In chapters viii. ix. we have His rejection. Then (chapter x.) He states He will have His sheep in spite of everything. Chapter xi., that which He was on earth as Son of God borne witness to. Chapter xii., the Son of David riding on an ass, and Son of man when the Greeks come to Him; but He says, "I must die." He cannot have to say to the disciples on the earth, though loving them to the end. Then He washes their feet, and says to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." The possibility of His having a part with man down here was over; the world had rejected Him, and now instead of blessing the disciples here He was taking their hearts up there. The thread that runs through the rest of the gospel up to the last chapter is not *here*, but *there*, and you must take up your cross here.

In chapter xiv. the Lord gives us our portion on the ground of taking us up there. They would not have Him with them; but He says, "Let not your hearts be troubled" at my going away. You don't get the comfort of God by seeing Him in bodily presence, and so with me. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." He is going to prepare a place; that is the whole thing. "I am going to my Father. I have brought you redeemed ones into the same relationship as I am in. He is your Father as much as mine, and your God as much as



mine. I am not to be alone there. In my Father's house are *many* mansions. I go to prepare a place for *you*." The place He was going to prepare (and that He was putting before their hearts) had this specific character, that the children were at home there. He had brought them into this place of children before God and the Father, and, therefore, when the time was come, they should go into the Father's house. The thought and purpose of God was to have us with Christ, and, like Him, His own blessed Son, in His house. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself" (in the Father's house), "that where *I* am, there ye may be also." Where the Son is, in the joy and blessedness and rest and glory of the Father's house, there we are to be with Himself. That is His purpose, what He is bringing us to. Then He adds this blessed truth, that He is coming back Himself to fetch them. He is interested in them, and it is a fixed abiding interest. He would not be satisfied to *send*, but would come Himself. What wonderful blessing! It would be an honour to be *sent* for as redeemed ones, who are everything to Him. I may send to meet a person I make something of; but if I make a great deal of him, I go myself.

He goes on to tell us how we know it all now, so that our souls live in it while He is away, the blessed Lord's death—redemption—giving us a title to be in no less a place than the Father's house, like and with Himself. But while His death accomplished that for us, it was a total breach with the world. "The world seeth me no more." He is going to the Father's house, and the world and the Father are in direct opposition. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God."

They saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. And when He was rejected by the world He went up to sit at the Father's right hand. The *accepted One of the Father was the rejected One of the world.* Man may have hopes that he is going to do a great deal with man. God has done all as to responsibility; and at last He says, "I have one Son; they will reverence Him." But they said, "Come, let us kill Him." The Lord says, "Now is the judgment of this world." The obedient, accepted One of the Father sits on His right hand, on His total rejection by the world, and He takes His redeemed ones with Him there. We get the place of sons; we are to have the glory, to be conformed to the image of His Son, the Firstborn among many brethren. While His work on the cross put away our sins, it gives us a place with Him and like Him in the glory.

After the statement of this in the first three verses we get to realize it now in our souls. There are two parts; first, the object that is before us; and, second, the power that is in us. First He tells us the place He is going to take us to; it is the *Father's house.* And what makes the Father's house of importance to the child, if he has right affections? It is that the *Father* is there. The blessedness of being there is that the Father is there. Christ is there too. However feebly we may enjoy it now, when we talk of "going to heaven" it is going to the Father. The Lord says, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He was going to the Father, and bringing us in spirit there now, hereafter actually in glory. Therefore they say, "Shew us the Father." No one has seen God at any time; but there is that blessed relationship of

the Father to the Son, and to us as putting us in His place. He brings us to the Father. So He says, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas thought of a *place*. "We know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" The Lord says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." And then we get the point. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." If I know the Father, I know where He has gone, and where I am going. When Philip says, "Shew us the Father," He answers, "You have the Father this long time with you revealed in the Son. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." There we have this blessed truth, that when the Lord tells us He is going to bring us to the Father's house, we know what the blessedness of that house is; we know the centre of it. We know the Father because He is perfectly revealed in the Son. In coming to Christ I have found the way. I may see "through a glass darkly"; but as to the object, I have got the Father Himself revealed in Christ, so that in believing on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ I know the blessedness I am called to—the place of Christ as Son, He who is the source and centre of eternal blessedness, loving-kindness, and favour. It is not the mere abstract theory of God, and of a holy place that it is; but I stand in a perfect relationship, and the Spirit of adoption crying "Abba" in my heart, there is a consciousness of the love that has put me in this place of favour. If you say, "How can I know I have seen the Father, a poor worm such as I?" Have you seen Christ, not with the outward eye, but seen Him by faith? "He that hath seen *me* hath seen the Father."

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

## CHAPTER xix. 11-21.

UNTIL this point, from chapter iv. and onwards, we have been occupied with actings and events, whether in heaven or on earth, which take place between the rapture of the saints at the coming of the Lord, as described in 1 Thess. iv., and His public appearing in glory. The time of His patience has now ended; and heaven now opens for Him to come forth in judgment, when "every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." (Chap. i. 7.) It may also be remarked, as helping to understand this section of the book, that from chapter xix. 11 to chapter xxi. 8, we have a consecutive history, beginning with the appearing of Christ, and closing with the eternal scene in the new heaven and the new earth. Thereafter the Spirit of God returns, and exhibits the displayed glories of the heavenly Jerusalem during the thousand years, together with her relation to the earth during this season of millennial blessedness.

The particular aspect of the appearing of Christ is thus described: "*And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war.*" (v. 11.) This is the fourth time the opened heavens are mentioned in the New Testament. When the Lord had been baptized "the heavens were opened unto Him," and, together with the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Him, there was "a voice from

heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. iii. 16, 17.) Here the heavens opened upon Him, as the object on earth of God's own heart. All heaven's delight centred in the One, the lowly Man, who had identified Himself with the remnant who responded to the preaching of the Baptist, and of whom He had said in the Psalms, "In them is all my delight." God's delight was in Him, and His delight was "in the saints that are in the earth, and the excellent." (Psalm xvi.) In John i. He Himself speaks of the opened heavens, and of angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man, the complete fulfilment of which will be in the thousand years, wherein also He is heaven's object on earth. Passing to Acts vii. we read that Stephen saw the heavens opened, and Jesus, as Son of man, standing on the right hand of God. In this scene, He who had been God's object on earth, is now the believer's object in heaven. Coming to our scripture, the heavens open for Christ to come out, surely the object of all heaven as well as the object of all His glorified saints, as He issues forth to have His enemies made His footstool.

The first thing noted is the white horse on which He sits. The symbology of the white horse has been explained in chapter vi. It signifies triumphant power, and here, as there, in conflict. When Christ, therefore, issues from heaven seated on the white horse, it is the precursor of His victorious conflict with His foes, when, to use the language of the Psalm, His arrows will be sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people (peoples, it should be) fall under Him. Next, follows a description of the glorious Rider. He is called "Faithful and True." These

characteristic names are familiar to the readers of this book in other connections. John terms Him "the faithful witness" (chap. i. 5); in the letter to Philadelphia He is called, "He that is holy, He that is true" (chap. iii. 7); and in that to Laodicea both terms are conjoined: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness." (Chap. iii. 14.) In Isaiah, moreover, we read that "faithfulness [shall be] the girdle of His loins." (Chap. xi. 5.) The combination of these scriptures introduces us at once into the meaning of the words. Faithfulness to God, both inward and outward, marked Him in all His earthly pathway, and when He comes forth to establish His kingdom, to make God's character good in government as against the power of evil, and the rebellion and usurpation of man, He will be governed in all that He does by a single eye to the requirements of the glory of God as He was also in His death on the cross. Faithfulness to Him, as already seen, will be the girdle of His loins. Truth in the inward parts, which God sought for, but never found in man until Christ came, will also distinguish Him, so that He will be the perfect expression, and thus a true witness, of all that God is as revealed in His righteous government of the earth. "Faithful and true" reveal, therefore, what He is both to God and for man when He comes forth to assume His rights in this world.

And now mark the contrast with the object of His first coming. *Then* "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn [judge] the world; but that the world through Him might be saved" (John iii. 17); *now* "in righteousness He doth judge and make war." Grace characterized His first appearing in this world, and

righteousness, and consequently judgment, will mark the second, the period of which our scripture speaks. Every one will then be tested by the unerring standard of God's righteous requirements from man, for the day of grace will have closed, and the era of righteous government will have commenced. Christ must, therefore, then "make war" upon everything that opposes itself to, lifts itself up in rebellion against, a holy God.

We read further: "*His eyes were as\* a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God.*" (vv. 12, 13.) It is striking to observe that His eyes are represented by the same symbol as when seen by John in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Fire is always the emblem of judgment, and hence His eyes, being as a flame of fire, sets forth its all-searching penetrating character. The "many crowns" speak of His all-various and universal dominion, of His absolute supremacy in every circle of His headship and authority. Satan had proffered for His acceptance the power and glory of the kingdoms of the world; and on His refusal, Satan afterwards bestowed them on his vassals and slaves the beast and the antichrist. The true Heir waited till the time determined by His Father, and now, after His long session at the right hand of God, He comes forth, crowned with the many crowns, to take His inheritance, and to reign until His enemies be made the footstool of His feet. Concerning "the name written," concealed from all but Himself, it is

\* The word "as" is omitted by many editors, but whether adopted or rejected, the sense remains the same.

the expression of the glory of His person. Whatever His dignity (and He is ever the eternal Son, whatever the relationships He may assume) He comes forth from heaven as Man; but, while this is the aspect here presented, the impenetrable character of His person abides. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." "Name," in Scripture is the expression of what the person is as revealed—and as revealed in what He is for God. It will consequently express the secret relationship of this glorious Personage to His God and Father, into which none can penetrate, and which none can understand but Himself. The next feature, "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood," is explained for us by the prophet: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? . . . Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." (Isaiah lxiii. 1-4.) The "vesture dipped in blood" betokens, therefore, the avenging character of the judgment He is about to execute. His name is also called the Word of God. It is the Word of God that reveals God; and hence this name teaches that Christ, as thus coming forth, is the revelation of God in His righteousness in judging, and in making good His character as such in the government of, the earth. (Compare Psalms xcvi.-xcviii.)

A pause is now made in the description of Christ to introduce His followers: "*And the armies which were*



*in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*" (v. 14.) Who are these? Two considerations will give the answer. As noticed in the earlier part of the chapter, the twenty-four elders are never seen after verse 4; and the reason is that the marriage of the Lamb immediately succeeds; and the elders on this account could no longer represent the Church.\* We are told, moreover, that it was granted to the Lamb's wife to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. Now the armies that follow Christ, on white horses, significant of their association with Christ in His victorious judgment, are also clothed in fine linen; and this at once reveals that the saints who had participated in the first resurrection, and who as with Christ in glory had been displayed by the elders, are those who compose His armies. When Christ appears, they follow Him, and are spectators of the glories of that day.

Returning now to Christ, John says: "*And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*" (vv. 15, 16.) In these few brief sentences the coming of Christ in judgment, the execution of God's vengeance, the establishment of His throne, the subjection of all kings and all nations to His sway, and His supreme exaltation in the earth, are all comprised. It is the complete fulfilment of the

\* We do not mean that Old Testament saints are not included in the representation; only if the saints of this period [the Church] are separated, the rest could no longer be so exhibited.

second Psalm. The sharp sword, as the reader already knows, is the word of God, according to which the nations will be judged, and with which they will be judicially smitten. "The rod of iron" expresses the absolute and inflexible character of His government, while the winepress, as the connection shows, as well as the vintage judgment of chapter xiv. speaks of the unsparing and unmitigated vengeance which will be poured out upon that awful day. It is through judgment, because of what man is, that the Lord will establish His kingdom and sovereignty over the whole earth, when He will be publicly and universally owned as 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.'

The next two verses are preliminary to the awful conflict which closes the chapter. An angel stands "in the sun," the place and seat, according to the symbology of the book, of supreme authority, and, crying with a loud voice, summons all the fowls that fly in the heaven to "*The supper of the great God.*" The flesh of kings, captains, mighty men, and the flesh of horses, as well as of their riders, is to form the horrible repast of these ravenous birds of prey. The flower of Europe in men and arms will be gathered together, and in anticipation of their dreadful fate this angelic summons resounds in the heavens. Thereupon John proceeds: "*And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army.*" (v. 19.) The beast, it must be remembered, is the head of the revived Roman empire, as has been seen in chapters xiii. and xvii., and the kings of the earth will include, if there are other sovereigns also, the monarchs of the ten kingdoms, who will be confederated under the

leadership of the beast. (See chap. xvii. 11-18.) We can therefore at once understand what a huge host will be brought together by the beast and his vassal kings, a host seemingly invincible; and the object of the assembling of which must be connected with the Holy Land, as it is there they are found when Christ comes forth from heaven. It is possible, as hinted, that there may be other nations represented in the armies of the beast; for we read in chapter xvi. that the unclean spirits which proceed out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, the spirits of devils working miracles, go forth unto the kings of the earth, *and of the whole habitable world*, to gather them to the battle of that great day of Almighty God; and, further, that they will be gathered into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. (*vv.* 14, 16; see also chapter xvii. 14.)

Before going further it should be pointed out that this gathering of the nations is entirely distinct from that found in the siege against Jerusalem at the time of the Lord's appearing, as described by Zechariah (chaps. xii.-xiv.), and in other prophetic scriptures. If the latter are under the leadership of the Assyrian, of whom we find frequent mention, especially in Isaiah, the former are marshalled, as we have seen, by the head of the Roman empire. If, moreover, Armageddon is derived from Megiddo, a place so well known in Jewish history, connected as it is with some of their brightest victories, and also with two of their saddest disasters, and means the Hill of Megiddo, these two armies might well be in Palestine at the same time, that of the Assyrian besieging Jerusalem, and that of the beast on

its way to attack it; but, as is possible, on hearing of the destruction of the Assyrian and his confederates, he proceeds to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army. Human thoughts under the inspiration of Satan were governing the objects of the assemblage of this vast army; but God, working behind the scenes, had His thoughts; and hence it is that the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies are described as being gathered together to make war against the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and His "called and chosen and faithful" followers. What daring audacity! And what a display of the corrupt depths of man's heart, rivalled only by what was seen in the crucifixion of Christ! Then, however, it was in outward guise a lowly Man whom they hated and rejected; now it is Christ appearing in glory, together with His heavenly army, against whom he would dash himself in the inveterate enmity of his heart. What other issue could there be than his overwhelming destruction?

*"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh."* (vv. 20, 21.) It will be observed that there is no conflict with almighty power. Christ "takes" these two impious instruments of Satan, and at once executes judgment, casting them alive into hell. (See Psalm lv. 15.) Two men in the Old Testament, as frequently noticed, pass alive into heaven, and these two arch-enemies of God

and His Christ are cast alive into the lake of fire.\* The remnant, the armies of the beast and the false prophet, are all slain with the judicial sword; and all the fowls are filled with their flesh. The pious remnant of that day, when they hear of the mighty deliverance which their expected Messiah has wrought for them, may well exclaim, in the language of Deborah and Barak, “So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.”

E. D.

\* In 2 Thess. ii. we read only of judgment upon antichrist, the false prophet. The Lord is said to consume him with the spirit (breath) of His mouth, and to destroy him with the brightness of His coming. This description will include all the consequences of being cast alive into hell.

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“TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW.”

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”—  
ROMANS viii. 18.

TO-DAY and to-morrow! How sweet to contrast  
Time's short passing griefs with the glories that last;  
The partings to-day, with the meetings to come;  
The bitter “farewell,” with the glad “welcome home”;  
The “little while” here that is shadowed by sorrow,  
So soon to be changed for the joy of “to-morrow”;  
The cares and the fears of these few fleeting days,  
For the sight “face to face,” and the fulness of praise!  
'Tis “but for a moment,” affliction and loss,  
The glory's eternal, though brief was the cross.  
Look on, fellow-pilgrim, the prospect is bright,  
The road may be weary, but surely 't is right;  
'The heart can rejoice in the midst of its sorrow,  
And “to-day” be illumed by the light of “to-morrow.”

E. I. F.

## SCRIPTURE NOTES.

## I.

REV. v. 12.

As to this angelic ascription of worthiness to the Lamb, it can scarcely be questioned that it is connected with the establishment of the kingdom. The elders, as they sing their new song, speak of the worthiness of the Lamb "to take the book, and to open the seals thereof," as proved by His death, and the redemption thereby wrought out, through the efficacy of His blood, for souls of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. All these were redeemed for heavenly blessing, although they were also to be associated with Christ in the glories of the kingdom. The angels, on the other hand, not being themselves on that ground, have nothing to say of redemption. They speak of what the Lamb is worthy of in Himself, and of the several characters of greatness and glory which would mark His sway in His kingdom. Every possible thing is ascribed to Him that could betoken the perfection and exaltation of His government of the earth. The fact that the ascription is seven-fold would seem to show this. This may be plainer to the reader if 2 Chronicles ix. is read, as we find in it a remarkable foreshadowing of the glory of Messiah's millennial reign. Carefully examined, it will be seen that there are in it all the seven things ascribed to the Lamb. There is "power," for Solomon "reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt" (v. 26); "riches and wisdom" are specified in verse 22; his "strength" is indicated in the mention of his chariots and horsemen (v. 25); his "honour" is told out (the

“honour” in which he was held) in the fact that “all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart” (*v.* 23); his “glory” in the description of the magnificence of his throne, in the state and apparel of his servants, his “ascent” to the house of the Lord, and in his fame that had penetrated into the uttermost parts of the earth; and the “blessing” in the words of the Queen of Sheba, in which she speaks of Solomon as the object of God’s delight (*v.* 8), for it is just because that Christ is, and will be, when He founds His kingdom, the object of the heart of God, that “men shall be blessed in Him, all nations shall call Him blessed.” The correspondence is remarkable, and affords another proof that we never read the Scriptures aright unless we are on the outlook for Christ, in some of His varied glories, in every page.

## II.

2 COR. viii. 15.

A citation from Exodus xvi., this passage is a striking illustration of the variety of meanings which are often given to a scripture by the Spirit of God in its application. In Exodus, after the commandment of the Lord as to the manna, that every man was to gather according to his eating, an omer for every man, etc. (*v.* 16), it is said, “And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack: they gathered every man according to his eating.” (*vv.* 17, 18.) Three things are plainly contained in these words; first, on God’s part equal provision is made for each, “an omer for every man”; secondly, on

man's part "they gathered every man according to his eating," that is, the appetite governed the amount collected; and hence, lastly, whatever the amount gathered, "he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack"; for both the large and the small desires were sufficed by the quantity respectively obtained. The spiritual application of these various points cannot be missed; but it is the last of these that the apostle uses in connection with his subject in 2 Corinthians viii. He is urging on the saints at Corinth, as knowing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to contribute towards the necessities of the poor saints of Judæa, and he thus explains the ground of exhortation: "Not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance [may be a supply] for their want, that their abundance also may be [a supply] for your want: that there may be equality: as it is written, He that [had gathered] much had nothing over; and he that [had gathered] little had no lack." (*vv.* 13-15.) The principle then laid down by Paul, and sustained by the quotation from Exodus, is, that those believers who have much of this world's goods should contribute to the necessities of those who have little, and that if this is faithfully done, those who have much will have nothing over, and those who have little will have no lack. There will in this case be "equality," and both alike will be satisfied. In Exodus it is, briefly, that if we have a felt need for much manna (Christ) we shall gather much, and have nothing over; but if our need is but small we shall obtain less, and shall have no lack. We all, in a word, have as much of Christ as we really desire.



## VARIOUS GLORIES OF CHRIST.

THE foundation, yea, the instrumental means, of redemption, is the precious blood of Christ; and the value of it is only measured by the infinite worth of His Person according to the perfect estimate of God. Hence in this epistle (Colossians) it is, "*In whom we have redemption,*" etc. All that He was entered into, and bestowed its value upon, the work He accomplished.

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It is after bringing us down to the eternal foundation on which we rest, that the apostle proceeds to unfold several categories of Christ's personal glories. He "is the image of the invisible God." Man was created in the image and likeness of God; but Christ, "who is over all, God blessed for ever," could not be said to be the likeness of God, seeing that He *is* God. But He can be the image of God, for "image" is that which represents another, and Christ did this for God perfectly. God is invisible, and it is therefore only as displayed in, and represented by Christ, that we can learn what God is; and we grow by the knowledge of God. (Col. i. 10.) Thus the more we study the image, the more we apprehend Him of whom Christ is the image; for He was *God manifest in the flesh*.

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HE is, moreover, "the Firstborn of every creature," or rather, "of all creation," for the word employed is not that which expresses each individual created thing,

but that which speaks of creation as a whole. The reason given for His pre-eminence in creation is, that He is the Creator of all things, all things in their totality, whether in heaven or in earth, visible or invisible, of whatever gradation or rank—all alike He by His omnipotent power called into existence. Every possible word is used to show that the glory is His—"in" Him, "by" Him, and "for" Him, the "characteristic power, active instrument, and end." And then, still further to enhance His glory, it is added, "And He is before all things"; necessarily so, being the Creator; and by Him all things consist, or subsist together. Called into being by Him, all things are upheld in existence by His own power. Viewed thus in connection with creation, He, in virtue of His rights as Creator, is absolutely pre-eminent.

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"AND He is the Head of the body, the Church." His incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension come between verses 17 and 18; for it was not until after He was glorified at the right hand of God, and the Holy Ghost had come down, that He became the Head of His body, the Church. The apostle passes indeed at once from His pre-eminence in relation to creation to that in connection with the Church. Baptized by the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and formed thus into the one body, we are united to Christ; and He as the Head is absolutely supreme.

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THE next character of glory is set forth in the words, "Who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead." This is not exactly "the beginning of the creation of

God," as in Revelation iii. 14, although that is true; but it is rather God's new commencement, after the failure of the first man, and his judicial end in the cross of Christ. When upon the earth Christ was the Second Man from heaven; but He was not in the condition of the Second Man, according to God's counsels, until after He was risen and glorified. It is as such therefore, as the Firstborn from among the dead, that He is the beginning of the new order of things, after which God is now working, and into which all His redeemed will be finally introduced in full conformity to Him who is glorified at God's right hand. God's counsels, therefore, pass over the entire period of the responsible man, and have their end and object in Christ as the glorified Man, and in the redeemed who are being changed into His image, and who, in result, will be like Him when they see Him as He is.

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THE end of all these glories is, "that in all things He might have the pre-eminence," or the first place. Whether in creation, in heaven or in earth, in the Church, or viewed in relation to all who will participate in the resurrection from among the dead, He is first, and absolutely supreme. All these glories that circle around Him do but proclaim His surpassing place and dignity. And in the measure in which we enter into the mind of God concerning the Son of His love, it will be our delight to accord to Him the first place in every sphere of our responsibility; first of all in our hearts; then in our homes; also in the midst of the gathered saints; and in all the activities of our daily lives.

THEN, as if combining in one sentence all that has been said, it is added, "For all the fulness was pleased to dwell in Him." What the fulness is we are not told. If any explanatory words are given it could only be those in the next chapter, "All the fulness of the Godhead"; thus gathering up and presenting all that made Him what He was and is, whether regarded in His own essential being, or in the relative positions He has been pleased to assume. But it says, "All the fulness *was* pleased to dwell in Him." Is not this a reference to what Christ was in incarnation? And are we not thus reminded, that while in His grace He became a lowly Man, yet that it was in Him as such all the fulness was pleased to dwell? How it enhances our conceptions of the value of the work which He accomplished "by the blood of His cross," to remember that it was He who was all this who was nailed to that bitter tree whereon atonement was made! Therein lies the whole mystery of redemption; and, as we contemplate it, our hearts, when under the power of the Holy Ghost, cannot but overflow in praise and adoration.

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As a concluding remark, it may be added, that while believers are reconciled "in the body of His flesh through death," "the blood of His cross" is the basis of the reconciliation of all things. The full result, therefore, of the efficacy of the blood of Christ will not be seen until the new heaven and the new earth are brought in, wherein all things made new will answer perfectly to all that God is; and God will be all in all. "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

## GIFT AND POSSESSION.

WE find in Scripture two ways in which the truth of the believer's blessing is presented. In Ephesians i. and ii. it is presented from God's side, in connection with His grace and purpose and mighty power. Here, therefore, all is looked at as for ever sealed and complete, even to our sitting in heavenly places in Christ; we are blessed with *every* spiritual blessing, in the heavenlies, in Christ; this is absolutely and unchangeably true of *every* saint. Here there can be no thought of increase or attainment. There is no "if," no contingency, no uncertainty. It is no question of anything on our part, of our knowledge, or enjoyment, or diligence, or experience, or practice; every saint is seen in the fulness of the Christian place and blessing. It is all the fruit of what God is in Himself, who, on the ground of the finished work of His own Son, is now able to act without any hindrance according to His own sovereign love and counsels, and for His own pleasure and glory, and He is displaying this in taking up those who were dead in sins, and blessing them in Christ, according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. This is absolute, unchangeable, and eternal. It depends wholly upon God Himself, His sovereign grace and purpose. His great love and almighty power give us our place in Christ before Himself, according to His own good pleasure, and for His own glory; therefore all must be *perfect* and worthy of God. Whatever may be our feebleness and failing,

and in spite of all the power of Satan, the blessing abides unchangeably settled, and will eventually be manifested to the glory of God. In these chapters the saint is seen in the fulness of Christ's place before God the Father, taken into favour in the Beloved, and by the Spirit united to Christ where He is in heavenly glory, beyond the power of death, a member of His body. He is seen in that new creation where all things are of God; and he is sealed by the Spirit, who is the earnest of the inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. He is thus seen as in Christ, come into the good land, the heavenly Canaan.

But there is another side of the truth to be considered; that is, as to how far *each one* of us has taken actual possession of those things, which are ours in Christ, *in our own individual faith*, so that we not only know that all belongs to us through the sovereign grace of God, but that we have an intelligent understanding and enjoyment of the blessings of this heavenly calling. In connection with this side of the truth, there is room for various degrees of attainment; at the best it is but little that we know and enjoy of these things. Paul himself could say, "Not as though I had already attained." "I follow after." "I press toward the mark for the prize"; and he could say to the saints, "Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule," etc. (Phil. iii.) For this we need to be strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man. The work of Christ *for* us has secured the blessing which is ours in Him; but it is the work of the Spirit *in* us which makes it really good to us through faith as our present portion and joy. *Attainment* is in the knowledge and enjoyment of that which is *already ours in Christ*, and will be

according to our diligence, and the measure in which we walk in the Spirit. "He that seeketh, findeth." "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat." On the other hand, "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." Through negligence he does not enjoy the good of that of which he has got possession. "But the substance of a diligent man is precious."

God would surely have us realize now the reality and preciousness of the standing which He has given us before Himself in Christ, and the blessing connected with it, and have the joy flowing from it in our hearts. "Rejoice in the Lord alway." It is the Holy Spirit's office to guide us into all the truth; to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us. He strengthens us in the inner man, so that we may be filled unto all the fulness of God, and thus the true spiritual state is formed in us which properly corresponds to our calling. But if through carelessness, worldliness, or self-indulgence we grieve the Holy Spirit, the practical realization of the blessing of our calling is lost, and there is no progress in the apprehension and enjoyment of all the unsearchable riches of Christ which are ours by the grace of God. Every saint is seated in heavenly places *in Christ*, and is blessed in Him with *every* spiritual blessing; but many a saint, in his own individual faith, has never yet reached heavenly ground, and, may be, knows and enjoys little if anything of heavenly blessings. The history of the children of Israel in their journey from Egypt to Canaan serves, and it is often used, to illustrate the progress of souls in the apprehension and enjoyment of the truth by faith. In this there is progress,

as the saint walks with God, and with an ungrieved Spirit diligently seeking the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

The truth of God's sovereignty in grace, and of the security of the believer's standing in Christ, was never intended to be a cover for self-indulgence and worldliness. If we are to possess the good land, there must be purpose of heart, and courage to overcome difficulties and hindrances of various kinds, which the enemy would use to hinder us. God gave the land of Canaan to the children of Israel, as He had sworn to their fathers; but they must go over Jordan and take possession of it. Every place that the sole of their foot should tread upon was to be theirs. In view of this God said to Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee." It is to be feared that many Christians are content to stand on the other side of Jordan, gazing on the good land, describing its beauty and riches, without ever thinking of going over Jordan, in the power of the Spirit, to take possession of heavenly things. While knowing a present salvation, and the certainty of going to heaven at the end, they live an earthly life, resting in God's present care, and looking for enjoyment in those present mercies which sustain the natural life of man in this world, which they take as the manifestation of God's favour toward them; in other words, they live the life of pious Jews, with the hope of heaven when they die. But true Christian life has its enjoyment in another sphere. "Our life is hid with Christ in God." "Our citizenship is in heaven," etc. The things which God has prepared for them that love Him are, in the present time,



heavenly and not earthly things; they are really Christ's things. And we must be in present communion with Him to enjoy them, and this must necessarily carry us in spirit to the place where He is. It is the present ministry and power of the Holy Spirit which conducts us there, and into the realization by faith of these our own things. He takes of Christ's things, and shows them unto us. If we are minding earthly things we are outside the line of the Spirit's actings, and we shall not enjoy His ministry.

We thus see that while our standing before God is perfect and unchangeable and independent of everything connected with ourselves, our enjoyment of the blessing connected with it is most intimately connected with our walking in the Spirit. It is only as the truth is made good in our hearts by the Spirit that we are practically fashioned and governed by it. And thus there is progress in the work by which Christ is formed in us, and in our growing up to Him in all things, until in the end each one is presented perfect in Christ. (Col. i. 28.) There is no progress as to the standing itself, but there is progress in the apprehension and realization of it by faith, and in practical conformity to it.

The conflict in Ephesians vi. is not in order to get into the standing, but to maintain practically the possession of that which is given to us in Christ, so as to be living in it, that we may stand where God has set us, against the enemy who ever seeks to deprive us of the enjoyment of that which God has given and secured to us in Christ.

F. H. B.

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

## CHAPTER XX. 1-10.

IT may be well to recall that the events of this chapter form part of a continuous narrative, which commences with chapter xix. 11, and closes with xxi. 8. The binding of Satan therefore follows immediately upon the judgment visited upon the beast and the false prophet, together with their armies as described at the close of chapter xx. *“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”* (v. 1-3.)

It should be carefully noted that this is not the final judgment upon Satan—that is found in verse 10; but it is the effectual curbing of his power by his removal from the scene as introductory to the establishment of the kingdom. When the Lord was about to cast out the demons from the poor Gadarene “they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep.” (Luke viii. 31.) The word “deep” in this scripture is that which is given in our chapter as the “bottomless pit,” literally, in both places, the “abyss.” There now Satan is bound and entombed, that, during the reign of the glorious Messiah, man might not be exposed to his deceitful influences and power. Cast

down from heaven to earth, as seen in chapter xii., he is now expelled from the earth, and thrown into the abyss, where he is bound as a slave by the mighty hand of the angelic executant of the divine will. Two things in the description may arrest our attention. The dragon of this book is the old serpent of Genesis, as well as the devil and Satan of the other books of Scripture. It is the enemy of God and of man, and especially of God's people, as expressed by Satan (the adversary) and the devil (the slanderer). He is both a murderer and a liar, and has ever been so from the beginning. (John viii.) What a mercy it will be for this poor world to be delivered for a season from such a foe! And how vast the moral change thus introduced in connection with the last trial of man under the righteous reign of Christ!

It is also to be remarked that not only is he bound and shut up, but a seal is set upon him; that is, as we understand it, a seal is set upon the mouth of the abyss. If God seals there is no power on earth or in hell that can break it. After that the body of our blessed Lord had been deposited by the pious hands of Joseph and Nicodemus in the sepulchre, Satan instigated his servants to make the sepulchre sure by "sealing the stone, and setting a watch." (Matt. xxvii. 66.) Impotent attempt! for he had to do with the Son of the living God. But he himself is now in the omnipotent hands of the One whom he had thus sought to detain in the grave, and must there remain until he shall be loosed again for a brief space, to prove anew what man is even in the presence of divine goodness, administered under a perfect government, expressed in every kind of favour and earthly blessing.

The era of the thousand years is now presented: "*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and [those] which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*" (v. 4.) The first thing that attracted the attention of John was the thrones and they that sat upon them. In Daniel the thrones are introduced, but only the Ancient of days is seen as seated;\* whereas here, although we know from chapter xix. that Christ is the supreme and central figure in the scene, those who sat on the thrones are chiefly indicated. But even these are represented by the word "they," and the question therefore at once arises, Of whom does John speak? Following the narrative back, it will be at once perceived that the "they" can refer alone to the "armies" which followed Christ out of heaven (chap. xix. 14), who, as already seen, are composed of the saints represented by the twenty-four elders of this book, the saints of all ages up to the coming of Christ, albeit the Church is most prominently displayed. (Chap. xix. 7-9.) On earth they had in their various degrees suffered with Christ, and now the recompense of grace is vouchsafed to them of reigning with Him. They are therefore beheld upon thrones, and as Christ's first act in connection with the

\* This scripture is obscured in our translation by the rendering, "I beheld till the thrones were cast down." (Chap. vii. 9.) It should be given, as in the *Revised Version*, "Till thrones were placed." It is so rendered also in a well-known French version, "Je vis jusqu'à ce que les trônes furent placés."

establishment of His kingdom will be judgment, they share in its exercise. (See 1 Cor. vi. 2; Jude 15.)

But there are two other classes joined with those who had been symbolized by the twenty-four elders: those who had been martyred during the rule of antichrist, and those who had refused his behest to worship the beast or his image, and to receive his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands. These would be mainly of the faithful remnant described in the Psalms, who, under the frightful terrors and persecutions during the iron despotism of this man of sin, maintained their faith and hope in God, and waited for the coming of the Messiah. They lost everything on earth through their fidelity to God, "for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God," and now they obtain the glorious recompense of the first resurrection, and of association with Christ in the glories of His kingdom. They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years, and if our interpretation of these two classes, added to those who had been caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, be correct, the first would be raised and the second changed after the pattern of the two similar classes in 1 Thess. iv.

Their special place and reward are emphasized by the following statement: "*But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*" (v. 5.) In what plainer language could the pre-millennial return of Christ with His people, to take His kingdom, to reign over the earth during the thousand years, be stated? Or how could the truth of the first resurrection as distinguished from the final resurrection of unbelievers be more distinctly unfolded? It is only an inconceivable perversity that

can seek to contend for a "resurrection of spiritual principles." If, indeed, this simple and unambiguous language be thus explained away, it would be impossible to maintain the truth of the great white throne and the final judgment at the end of this chapter. Take the scripture as it stands, and all is plain, as well as in complete harmony with the dispensational teaching of the whole book.

Before proceeding with the description the Spirit of God turns aside to pronounce, as it were, an eulogy upon these favoured saints: "*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*" (v. 6.) All such are blessed indeed (see chap. xiv. 13), and they are holy, conformed now to the image of Christ, and thus answering to the claims and nature of God Himself. As risen out of death, or changed, and mortality swallowed up of life, they are for ever beyond the region of sin, death, and judgment, and it is therefore added, that on them the second death, God's just penalty upon the unbelieving and impenitent, will have no power, no title or right; for the last enemy, death, has for them been for ever destroyed. Moreover, they will be associated with Christ in His royal priesthood, and thus as priests they will enjoy access into the immediate presence of God and of Christ, and they will reign with Him a thousand years. Having, through grace, overcome the power of Satan through the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony—and they loved not their lives unto the death—they are now exalted into the enjoyment of this glorious recompense. Well might the apostle say, when speaking of the

glorious prospect of the believer, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in [or "in respect of"] us." (Rom. viii. 18.)

From verses 6-10 we have the account of the loosing of Satan, his last permitted activity, and the judgment inflicted upon him and his deluded followers. The character of the reign of Christ throughout the thousand years is not found in this scripture; for that the reader must search the Old Testament, especially Psalms and prophets. Here the millennium is introduced upon the completion of the first resurrection, and immediately after the statement that those who have part in it reign with Christ a thousand years, it is added, "*And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.*" (vv. 7, 8.)

During the whole period therefore of the reign of Christ over the earth Satan is confined, and men will be free from his temptations. They will have the same evil nature as ever, but man's adversary will not be present to entice, to waylay, and to entrap him into sin. What an immense change! Now, all the influences of the scene are against, then, all will be in favour of, the Lord's people. Now the temptation is to depart from God, then it will be to profess allegiance to His Christ. At the close of this happy period, during which all kings will fall down before THE KING, and all nations serve Him, God will once more demonstrate the incurable evil of man's heart by permitting, through the loosing of Satan, one last and final trial. Nations

in every quarter of the globe are deceived, spite of the manifested glory of earth's rightful Sovereign. As man had rejected Him in His humiliation he now rebels against Him in His glory. Several traces of these rebellious nations are found in the Old Testament. We read in Psalm xviii., "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall yield feigned obedience." (Margin, v. 44; see also Ps. lxvi. 3, lxxxii. 15.) As when some mighty conqueror subdues a country the people submit to his rule through fear of his power for vengeance, so will it be when Messiah establishes His kingdom. Striking through kings in the day of His wrath (Ps. cx.), His enemies, through the greatness of His power, will proffer their submission (Psalm lxvi. 3), lest they also should be destroyed. When therefore Satan is loosed, with rebellion in their hearts, they fall an easy prey to his devices, and, listening to his voice, they allow themselves to be gathered together under his leadership, as the sand of the sea for number, to earth's last battle.\* Drawn together, Jerusalem, as so often in the history of the earth, is the point to which they converge, and the object of their attack. "*And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city.*" (v. 9.)

A remarkable feature of the case is, that Christ Himself is not seen in this conflict. The kings of

\* The reader must not confound the Gog and Magog of verse 8 with "Gog, the land of Magog," of Ezekiel xxxviii. The latter refers, as can easily be demonstrated, to Russia, the Russia of the future; while Gog and Magog in the former indicate, as stated, the nations in the four quarters of the earth. There is another difference. The invasion of the land by Gog in Ezekiel is immediately after the establishment of Messiah's kingdom; whereas the apostasy of the nations in our scripture takes place at the end of the thousand years.



the earth, and their armies, gather together in the previous chapter, to make war against Him; but now the object of their hostility would seem to be the saints and the beloved city. It is God in heaven who is here displayed as the Defender and Avenger of His people; for "*fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.*" (v. 9.) So perished the enemies of God's Christ and His people; God arose, and they were utterly and for ever destroyed. Last of all, Satan that deceived them receives his final doom; he "*was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*" (v. 10.)\* It was the dragon—that is, Satan—who had given the beast "his power, and his seat, and great authority" on the earth, who had inspired the false prophet (and the three together had formed a mock trinity of diabolical evil), and now we are permitted to behold them submerged in one common woeful doom. God thus in His righteousness vindicates His throne, and the throne of His Christ, and reveals at the same time the sure and certain retribution that must overtake all who persist in their enmity to Him and to His beloved Son. E. D.

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## THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF GRACE.

GALATIANS iv. 19-31.

". . . . Look at Adam; his faith was in the promised Seed. Was it a king he expected to arrive, or a judge, or a lawgiver? No; but his faith was in the bruised

\* As bearing on the question of the duration of future punishment, we cannot forbear calling attention to the words here employed. They are *eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn*—"unto the ages of the ages."

Seed of the woman, therefore he called her Eve—the mother of all living. He himself had tainted the channel of life. There is much carnal religiousness about us, or it might be exceedingly simple to understand the new life that a poor sinner finds in the grace of Jesus. Read the epistle—‘I stand in doubt of you.’ Paul had sorrow. Why? The carnal eye would have thought that they had advanced in religiousness in observing ‘times and days,’ etc.; but not so the jealous eye of the Spirit of God in Paul (the watchman of Jesus). He reproaches the Galatians. Was not God sufficient for you? Was not the strength of His grace sufficient? Must you use a crutch to aid or encumber your glorious liberty and strength divine in adding days and months and observances? ‘It is God that worketh.’ Who worked with Him when all the morning stars sang together? From the first breath of life divine the work is God’s. Paul saw the entrance of a legal self-righteousness—a slipping away from the simplicity that is in Christ, which consists in having our minds perfectly formed by Jesus. The serpent would beguile and draw away from simple alliance with Jesus, but the Holy Spirit is given to supply the needful strength. In the remainder of the chapter the two covenants—Sarah and Hagar—are explained. The ulterior revelations of God are always brighter. The devil brings under the covenant of the bondwoman the state of slavery, but when the seed of the grace of God is cast into the soil of a convicted conscience, God in the triumphant march of His own unaided strength by His own blessed Son finds out a remedy for all our wretchedness and sin.”

J. G. B.

## ON SPIRITUAL CAPACITY.

PHILIPPIANS iii.

I WOULD desire to say a few words on the subject of spiritual capacity, its use and its expenditure by the believer. I believe it is a subject of immense importance to each one who by grace has been saved, and has received the Spirit of God. And I would further press it as a matter of exercise for our consciences, as to how far we are making the best use of the grace that has been conferred upon us by God—a capacity unknown to Old Testament saints, which I gather from the apostle's allusion to the state of the saints in the first dispensation in speaking of this; this spiritual capacity superseding entirely the power of the eye, the ear, and the heart of man; that is, all human faculties, whether cultivated or otherwise. (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.)

We find that there were twelve disciples at Ephesus (Acts xix.) who had not received the Holy Ghost. A very rare case to find such. These are the exception to the rule. But I speak of the normal state of things to-night, which is, that every believer has the Spirit dwelling in him, consequent on the finished work of Christ on the cross. (Ephesians i. 13.)

Now I do not mean by spiritual capacity that which we find exhibited in Hebrews xi. There, I think, we have the energy of faith. The chapter is simply a list of feats that faith can accomplish. As I might say of a good horse, "That horse can do anything." But I could not say, when Abraham by faith "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker

is God," that it was the exercise of this spiritual capacity, but rather that his faith rose above his tent and his altar, and penetrated the purpose of God with regard to the city which He had prepared for them, which the apostle does not describe here, though probably in the next chapter. In Old Testament times the Holy Ghost wrought, Peter tells us; but now He dwells, which is a very marked distinction. I could not say that waiting for the *city* which God had prepared was any grasp of heavenly things. Our spiritual capacity is quite apart from our natural, physical, or mental capacities; and all these put together would not help us to grasp or enjoy our spiritual blessings; and if all this is true, should there not be the greatest care possible as to how I can use it to the greatest advantage? In other words, How can I invest my money for the best interest? I cannot afford to risk it, and at the same time I want to get the best interest with security. It is my *capital*, and I must take care of my capital. As I read an account the other day of a celebrated singer who had been engaged by a London company for the season; but after a short time she was required to change her key, which she at once resisted and refused, saying, "If I do so I should injure my voice, and my voice is *my capital*"; and it cost her £1000, as the engagement had to be broken. There was a person who valued her capital, knowing that that was the priceless thing she possessed. And so I would insist on the fact that our spiritual capacity is one of the most valuable things we possess; for it is by it we make our eternal fortune, by it we gather fruit unto life eternal, and apprehend that for which Christ has apprehended us, and enjoy the fruits of the land before

we reach the heavenly country—the things which Old Testament saints only knew in type, and knew nothing beyond, so that when Hezekiah suddenly received the notice of his removal from their midst, he wept and mourned.

But there is not a believer here to-night who should not rejoice in the fact that he is superior to, and of another order from, Hezekiah, or any saint of Hebrews xi. Surely not one of those had the capacity of which I am speaking, because not one there was or could be united to a glorified Christ by the Holy Ghost, which gives power for this entirely new order of capacity. Now the use or misuse of this will determine our progress in heavenly things *here*, and more, our *position* in the kingdom by-and-by, and, I might say, our safety in the course as believers. Then it is of the utmost importance that we should be cautious, that nothing is allowed to lessen our capital. I read part of Philippians iii. 8–21 to show a man, like one of old, whose force had not abated, and point you to a few sentences: “I counted loss for Christ”; “I count all things but loss”; “I do count but dung”; “to win Christ”; “I press forward to the mark,” etc. These are the expressions of one who for the time being drops his character as apostle, and takes the place of leader in the spiritual race, exhibiting distinct spiritual energy; not wasting an atom of it; not stopping to turn aside and look at the dead body of a man, like those in the case of Asahel (2 Sam. ii.); or as some we find to-day occupied with evil doctrines to see how *much good* they contain, wasting time and spiritual energy—like testing adulterated coin to find the amount of silver in them. What a useless task! Decline of

spiritual energy is like the feeble circulation in a dying man; it is felt in the extremities; very small things show it, like a straw the way of the wind.

I will refer you now to some incidents of Old Testament Scripture to show you more clearly what I mean; and first I take the man whose hair fell off his head. (Lev. xiii. 40.) That hair in Old Testament Scripture is a figure of natural strength will not be contested by any here. When Samson had his hair on, neither man nor beast could touch him. He slew the lion in the day of his Nazariteship, and got the honey, which he ate and distributed to his kindred. There was no honey in the *live* lion, nothing but growls; he must be killed to get the honey. I mean, when we have killed our foes by spiritual energy we get the honey from them; no honey in *live* lions. Well, Samson lost his hair, and his power was gone, "and he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." How far we may get from God without knowing it! His hair gone, his power gone, he was at once the easy prey of his enemies, who put his eyes out; and he was a helpless creature, led by a lad, through his disobedience. He never regained his sight, though, says the Spirit of God, "his hair began to grow again after he was shaven." And now he makes the most of it; and at the great Philistine feast he brought down the whole house, and killed more at his death than in his life, but he died himself at the same time.

Then having established a little the meaning of hair, we return to the bald-headed man of Leviticus xiii. The fact of losing his hair did not make him unclean; but in the place of the baldness came the leprosy. Then he was unclean, and outside the camp.

It is a serious thing to have a bald head in spiritual things—weakness set in first, then the disease. Weakness of itself is no disease, but it pre-disposes to any epidemic. How very different the effect of a chill, for instance, on a strong man and a weak one! The former shakes it off easily, but it may kill the latter. I feel, with all the troubles around us to-day, that in most cases there was pre-disposition; and thus it is so important that we should not lose a hair. Jehovah told Ephraim that he had grey hairs, and did not know it; but not many years afterward he found it out, when carried away captive by the powerful Assyrian king, Shalmaneser. If we neglect the warnings of God, we find it out to our cost sooner or later. I take one more case, for evidence in spiritual things is of the greatest moment. When Amalek fought with Israel in Rephidim, he could only catch the hindmost. "All that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary." This is Jehovah's comment on the battle of Exodus xvii., in His notes, Deuteronomy xxv., the book in which He keeps a private account of the wilderness journey.

I close with two cases in New Testament times. In two great corrective epistles of Paul he singles out a peculiar state he designates as spiritual. He says, "The spiritual discerns all things"; and if a man thought himself a prophet or spiritual, he would recognize Paul's instructions to be the Lord's commandments. In Galatians the spiritual could restore an overtaken one. I believe both these to be in contrast with the carnal and the legal. The Lord give us to maintain the capacity, and keep it ever increasing.

## SCRIPTURE NOTES.

## I.

## MATTHEW iii. 11.

WE see no reason for departing from the usual symbolical sense of "fire" in this scripture. It is found in Luke as well as in this gospel, while Mark and John both omit it, simply giving, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." The latter was accomplished, as to the Church, on the day of Pentecost (see Acts i. 5), and accomplished, therefore, by an ascended and glorified Christ. The result was, that believers were brought into union with Himself, and in this way the body of Christ was formed. (1 Cor. xii. 11, 12.) The baptism of fire remains to be fulfilled. That is, taking "fire" as the expression of holiness, the holiness of God as applied in judgment, it will refer to that future day of the Lord's appearing, when He comes forth to judge the living. The first application of this part of the scripture will undoubtedly be to the Jewish nation, the mass of whom will in the last days become idolatrous and apostate. We thus read in Isaiah of the time when the Lord "shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning" (chapter iv. 4; compare chapter lxvi. 24); and in Zechariah the Lord expressly says that He will bring the third part (the saved remnant) through the fire. (Chap. xiii. 9.) It is thus, as we judge, while not excluding further applications, that the Lord will baptize with fire—in the awful judgments which will follow upon His appearing, and which will accompany the establishment of His kingdom. It is quite true, we may add, that, in accordance with Joel's



prophecy, Jehovah will pour out His Spirit on all flesh (chap. ii.); but as this is nowhere termed in Scripture the baptism, or a baptism, of the Holy Ghost, we confine this part of our Lord's blessed work to the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The two expressions, therefore, combine grace and judgment.

## II.

## ROMANS v. 11.

IN the margin, as an alternative to "atonement," is put, "Or, reconciliation." And this is the only possible rendering of the word; and, indeed, it is so translated in every other place of its occurrence. A moment's consideration would suffice to show that "atonement" is a mistake. Atonement is made to God. We receive not it, but the benefits consequent upon it; that is, it is on the foundation of the atonement, which our blessed Lord and Saviour made on the cross, that God is able righteously to forgive, justify, and bless every one who believes in Jesus. (Rom. iii.) We do receive, on the other hand, the reconciliation; for it was not God who needed to be reconciled to us, but we, owing to the enmity of our hearts, who required to be reconciled to Him. And it is He who has done it for us, according to that word, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. v. 18; see also verses 19-21.) And again, "And you . . . hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death," etc. (Col. i. 21, 22.) Reconciliation means for us, not only the breaking down the enmity of our hearts by the revelation in power to our souls of what God is in all His grace and love, notwithstanding all that we have been and are, but also bringing us back into relationship with God in all that He is as revealed in Christ, and according to the efficacy of the death of

**Christ.** It should be noticed, however, that "reconciliation" goes farther in one scripture than in another. It takes its meaning, in each place where it is found, from the context, and in accordance with the distinctive truths of the epistle. It conveys more, for example, in Colossians than in Romans, and more in 2 Corinthians v. than in Colossians. The word "reconciliation," it may be added, in Hebrews ii. 17 should be "propitiation."

### III.

#### GALATIANS vi. 17.

It is not difficult to apprehend the force and meaning of this scripture. The Galatians were, to say the least, in danger of falsifying grace through the influence of Judaizing teachers. The law, together with its rites and ceremonies, was resuming its old place in their minds. Even circumcision was again enjoined. (Chap. v. 1-4, vi. 12, 13.) All these things, subversive of Christianity, called forth remonstrances and solemn warnings from the apostle, who was, in consequence, the object of hatred and persecution on the part of these false teachers. In every possible way throughout this epistle Paul exposes the anti-Christian character of their legal doctrines; and at the end, from verse 14, he goes to the root of the whole matter in concluding his subject. As for him, he will make his boast, not in circumcision, or in the flesh, but "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." He was thus, by the application of the cross to all that he was as a man in the flesh, and to the world, delivered from the whole sphere in which the flesh finds its home. This enables him to state that "in Christ Jesus"—in that new sphere where Christ is—"neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." If

therefore we are brought in Christ Jesus into a scene where old things have passed away, and all things have become new, our walk must be according to it, and not as men in the flesh in the world. Hence he proceeds, "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God," who are now, not the Jews after the flesh, but the true believing remnant. The apostle, having now completed his unwelcome task, adds one word, "From henceforth let no man trouble me," for he could not again turn aside from his service to engage in conflict with these corrupters of the truth; and he gives as a reason, "I bear in my body the marks [or brands] of the Lord Jesus." Slaves often had their owner's initials, or marks, branded into their bodies, that they might be known; and Paul looked upon the scars and wounds he had received in the Lord's service as the "brands" which denoted that he belonged to Christ. Blessed servant! he acknowledged that Christ was his sole master, and to Him, spite of his persecutors, he would devote the whole of his energy in the Spirit. Whatever his opposers might now say or do, he must, in virtue of the claims of Christ, press onward, unhindered, in His service. Christ, and Christ alone, must be the object of his life.

## IV.

## COLOSSIANS ii. 6, 7.

IT is easy for the reader to perceive that the introduction of the word "so" in verse 6 mars the force of the apostolic exhortation. The exhortation is based upon the preceding five verses; and it is as a warning against being deceived by "persuasive" words into seeking help or instruction outside the mystery of God, in which are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, that the apostle writes, "As ye have therefore" (or,

As then ye have) "received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk ye in Him." The position of the words "the Lord" seems to bring His Lordship especially before the souls of these believers, with the implied claim to their entire subjection. It is then in Him, Christ Jesus the Lord, they were to walk, in accordance with their professed reception of Him, in all that He is, together with all His claims—in Him as the sphere and element in which they were to live, and move, and have their being. The succeeding verse, when rightly understood, gives a greatly increased force to the exhortation. Its first words should be rendered, "Having been rooted, and being built up in Him." They had been, and were, rooted in Him, like a tree rooted in the soil; so that all the roots of their spiritual life proceeded from Him. The "being built up in Him" implies two things. Christ was the foundation on which they had been placed, yet more than this, inasmuch as He is a living foundation, and hence it can be said to be "in Him," besides the fact that we are in Him before God; and secondly, being on the foundation (as involved in the word "built up"), these were to be continuously built up—edified, by the ministration and apprehension of the fulness of the Godhead, which dwelleth in Christ bodily, and in whom we are filled full or complete. The apostle adds, "And stablished [or confirmed] in the faith," the truth of Christianity, we judge from the following words, "As ye have been taught . . . abounding therein with thanksgiving." It is a wonderful scripture, and teaches, what indeed is the lesson of the whole chapter, that nothing outside of Christ can in any way contribute to the believer, that in Christ he possesses all he needs, whether it be wisdom, or knowledge, or completeness before God.

## THE MYSTERY.

NOTHING could show more strikingly the importance of the truth of "the mystery," and its apprehension by the saints, than the language of the apostle at the commencement of Colossians ii. In the previous chapter he tells us, that he had been made a minister of the body of Christ, "which is the Church"; that while the mystery had "been hid from ages and from generations," it was now "made manifest to His saints"; and that what expressly characterized "the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles" was Christ in them; not the expectation of the advent of a glorious Messiah, according to the hope of the Jew, but Christ in them the hope of glory, Christ already possessed—the One, who Himself ensured the glory for those in whom He deigned to be, and who, at the same time, was glory's hope.

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"Christ in you" is the leading feature of the Colossians, after the presentation of His personal glories; and Christ in the believer as the power of life, for, as we read in chapter iii., He is our life. Hence it is the practical expression of Christ, in every trait of His character, that is to mark the Christian—the one who has died with Christ, and is risen with Him—while in this world.

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But, as we have often been taught, that which is presented in Scripture as the object of faith is always

the power of life in the soul. (See Galatians ii. 20.) Accordingly, no sooner has the apostle spoken of Christ in us, than he proceeds to add, "Whom we preach," &c., with the object of presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. The formative power of Christ in us, albeit He is in all believers, is the appropriation of Christ as unfolded to us in the Word.

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There is another reason for the introduction of verse 28, before continuing the subject of "the mystery." Until the soul is established individually, so to speak, that is, until redemption is known and enjoyed, it is impossible to apprehend the truth of the one body. Christ, therefore, must be preached to individuals first, and then when they have entered, in some measure at least, upon the blessedness arising out of redemption, deliverance, and being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light (chapter i. 12-14), they can be taught the truth of the Headship of Christ, and of their union with Him, as members of His body.

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This ministry, however, needs special and constant power from God, for the reason that it always excites opposition and leads to conflict. This explains the apostle's words: "Whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily. For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you." No human power, and no mere ecclesiastical statement of the truth, will avail for this service; nothing short indeed of a vessel possessed with divine energy, and one prepared for all consequences while engaged on such a mission.

All saints, moreover, are included in Paul's mission. "For you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." All the saints of God, all the objects of the affections of Christ, are also the objects of his service.

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His desires for them are expressed in chapter ii. 2. It is, first, that "their hearts might be comforted," or encouraged, "being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment [or "full knowledge"] of the mystery of God."\* Every term here used reveals the edifying character of the knowledge of the mystery; and, it might be said, the necessity of this knowledge for all who would understand their place in it in relation to Christ, according to the mind of God. If, moreover, the object of Paul's conflict for the saints was to bring them into the understanding, even unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, of this truth, they could not be in the current of the Spirit of God, if they remained either ignorant of or indifferent to it.

In "the mystery of God," as we must interpret if we omit the closing words of the verse, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." What a mine therefore for exploration! And what a means of enrichment for the diligent saint! The manifold wisdom of God is now made known, through the Church, as we read in Ephesians iii., unto the princi-

\* The readings are somewhat perplexing; but there is scarcely a doubt that the words, "and of the Father and of Christ," should be omitted.

palities and powers in heavenly places; but the saints of this period are included in that wherein all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden, and ministered from the Head, their own place in it being part of the display of these divine treasures!

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We also learn that the apprehension of the mystery—Christ as the Head of the body the Church, of which His people are members, and therefore indissolubly one with Him, since they are united to Him by the Holy Ghost—is the best safeguard against the "enticing words" of man. When "the mystery" has its due place in the soul, there is no room for the intrusion of man or his teachings; for Christ is then everything as object, as well as in all as the power of life. "Holding the Head" becomes then our main concern, since it is from Him "all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

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### "THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR."

THE book of Revelation gives us the prophetic record of the closing up of the history of this world as the platform on which the ways of God in time have been worked out. It speaks of the accomplishment of the mystery of God (chapter x. 7), the ushering of the time-state into eternity. It has been said of this time-state, that it is "a divine parenthesis in the midst of eternity." The eye of man naturally can only look at the condition of things in which as a creature he is set. Hence we



read, in Eccles. iii. 11, "He hath set the world in their hearts," that is, this time epoch (*αιών*), "so that no man can find out the work that *God maketh from beginning to end.*" God is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (Rev. xxi. 6), while man lives in a state of things by nature where there is a time for every purpose under heaven. God in His goodness uses the travail which belongs to such a state to exercise the sons of men in it; but there is a moment coming when the mystery of God, which from beginning to end He has been working out through this time-state, will be finished. "What God doeth it shall be for ever," and the words, "It is done" (Rev. xxi. 6), tell us that time is no more. It is God's for ever—eternity.

There is another parenthesis which we must also consider, not now the parenthesis of time in the midst of eternity, but a parenthesis in the history of this world, and of man in it as the subject of the direct dealings of God. It exists during the period in which the Lord Jesus Christ is hidden in the heavens at the right hand of God. The direct course of God's dealings with the world in succeeding dispensations has been interrupted. In order to Christ's taking the inheritance, not only over the earth, but over all things according to the purpose of God, it was needful that the joint heirs who are to reign with Him should be gathered out while He is hidden in the heavens. A heavenly, glorious Christ is theirs. The saints of this parenthesis know Him in that character by the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from the glory where He is. They wait not for His return to earth—then they reign as joint heirs with Him—but for the moment of their gathering to Him in the heavens. They wait for

*Himself.* The peculiarity of their relationship to this heavenly Christ is, that He will present them to Himself as His bride. It is true they will reign with Him. They will be manifested in glory as the sons of God, and into the liberty of that glory the groaning creation will yet be delivered. They form part too of the heavenly court and temple, kings and priests, as we see in chapters iv. and v.; but besides these heavenly offices they stand in the closest relation to the exalted Man. They form the assembly, His body, of which it is said, He loved the church, and gave Himself for it . . . that He might present the church to *Himself* glorious. (Ephes. v. 25.) All the sin and shame of the first man is gone in the death unto which He delivered Himself up for the church, and she has been formed in the new and heavenly man by the sanctifying power of the truth, so that she might be according to Himself, holy and blameless. There is another joy which belongs to the saints who in this period of His rejection believe on Him while hidden in the heavens. They will be with Him where He is according to His own desire, and behold His glory as the eternally loved One of the Father; and thus, sweet as will be their own relationship to Him, and blessed to reflect *His* glory, it will be infinitely greater than our own blessing to enter into what He whom we love is to the Father. To be in glory like Him will enable us to behold *His* glory.

We shall not catch the force of the expression, "I am the bright and Morning Star," unless in some measure we enter into this peculiarity of our relationship as the assembly to a heavenly and glorious Christ while He is hidden in the heavens before He arises upon this world as the Sun of righteousness. The Lord had said

(John xvi. 7) that His going away would be profitable to His disciples because He would send the Comforter to them. His departure, and the consequent cessation of their knowing Him after the flesh, prepared the way for the Comforter to come and announce to them the truth connected with the new and glorious position into which He had entered. The Holy Spirit when He came would take of His things, the things of the Father into which He was now going, and announce to them. Sorrowful as His departure out of this world was to the disciples, it was better for them, for they would henceforth know Him in this heavenly character. In chapter xvii. 19 He adds, "For *their* sakes I sanctify myself, that *they* also might be sanctified through the truth." They were now to be sanctified in this special and peculiar way by the truth of the Lord taking a place apart from the earth, sanctifying Himself in the heavens with the Father where He was going. The saints of the present period, those who believe "through their word," share the heavenly fellowship of the early disciples as sanctified in the power of the same truth, even as they will be perfected into one in the glory.

While the moral elements of the truth which sanctifies the saints now are thus given by John, to Paul was committed the special intelligence, as well as the administration, of the mystery in which, during this parenthesis, was revealed that Jew and Gentile were "joint heirs, a joint body, and joint-partakers of His promise in Christ," a promise outside of all dispensation, and which could only be made known when Christ, as Head over all things to the Church His body, was set down at God's right hand in the heavenly places. There is not a glory given to Christ as Man

which He will not share with us (His own glory as the Son of course excluded). Will He reign? We shall reign with Him. Will He be a Priest upon His throne? We form part of the priestly family; but the peculiarity of the assembly's relationship to Him is, that by the Holy Ghost sent down she is united to the risen and glorified Man. The assembly is the object of the love of Christ while He has been rejected by the world, and while sitting in patience at God's right hand. The love He has to it is a special love, and, in accordance therewith, He cleanses and sanctifies it in the power of His own present separation to God in the heavens.

The Lord presents Himself in many characters in the book of Revelation. In the beginning of the book, He is the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth, and as such sends greeting to the responsible assemblies on earth. It is the privilege of the Church to have intelligence, and enter into the various glories and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ; but what calls forth her praise and adoration is, that she knows *Himself* in His love to her. "To Him that loveth us." Between this first communication and the close of the book other characters are mentioned. He is the Lamb in the midst of the throne, who, spite of all the working of Satan in the earth, has redeemed a people *for God* out of all the sin and ruin. Then there are His mysterious angelic characters. He holds the seal of the living God. As Angel-priest He gives efficacy to the prayers of saints. He claims the sea and earth for God. Then, as Son of man, He reaps the harvest of the earth, and, though in angelic guise, He treads the winepress of the

wrath of God. Further, He comes forth out of heaven as the Warrior Judge, with His many titles and many crowns; and lastly He is seen as Judge upon the throne of God, closing up the whole record of sin and death in the lake of fire for ever. These wonderful characters belong to Him who is the Alpha and Omega of the ways of God. The book which is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus closes with the announcement, that He whose testimony it was would quickly come, and the scene of responsibility would terminate by the final settlement of the question of good and evil. The unjust and filthy would remain so, and the righteous and holy would be still the same.

But there is another character in which He makes Himself known to the Church. He who is the Root and Offspring of David, and therefore the Fountain and Source of all blessing for the earth, reveals Himself at the close of the book in the character which belongs to the Bride. He is "the Bright and Morning Star." And now it is not the Lord telling His servants that He is coming, or sustaining the faithful with the promise of it; but the voice of the Spirit in the Church responds to His announcement by saying, "Come!" This heavenly character of Christ is peculiarly the Bride's. The Lord wants *us* to respond also. Do *we* hear Christ thus speaking? Do *we* hear the Bride, as moved by the Spirit, instantly recognising that Jesus, as the Morning Star, belongs to her—the Object of her affection and hopes? Then let him that heareth say, "Come!" What a well-known Person He is—"I Jesus!" We might not recognise Him in some of His mysterious characters; and we might regard Him with awe as we survey in prophetic vision some

of His glories. When the disciples of old saw Him walking over the stormy waters, and coming to them thus, they cried out for fear. But the words, "It is I, be not afraid," not only calmed their fears, but produced an answer in the heart of Peter. "Peter answered and said, Lord, if it be *thou*, bid me come to *thee* upon the water." His desire was not for the abatement of the storm, or for mere power to walk upon the water, but to reach Jesus. It is eighteen hundred years since Peter heard those words, "It is I," and stepped out of the ship to go to Jesus. If He had little faith he had affection. The last words of Jesus, as the Book of Revelation closes, announce, above and beyond all the storms of judgment, that it is Himself who speaks to *us* in those words, "I Jesus." Where is the heart of even the feeblest believer who cannot respond to that name? We say at once, "He is my Saviour." But more, He is the Bright and Morning Star, the Harbinger indeed of a day that is yet to break, but known in this heavenly character by the Church before it breaks. He will usher in the morning without clouds, and His glories will shine forth to the earth. But though it will be blessed for the Bride, as the holy city, to be the vessel of the glories of the once rejected and suffering Lamb, it is Himself which causes the Spirit and the Bride to say, "Come!" The present moment is the time when the Spirit is forming a Christ, unseen by the world and hidden in the glory, in the affections of the saints who compose the Bride.

If the Bride is the object of the love of a rejected but glorified Christ, He is also the One who has satisfied the desire which His love has awakened in her. We speak not of how far as individual believers we enter

into this satisfaction ; but the Spirit could not utter for the Bride anything less than the fulness of desire which He would produce in her. Thus, as knowing by the Spirit the living streams which flow from the Christ in glory, to whom she came and drank, she can echo the desire of His heart that any thirsty one should come to the same fountain. In the consciousness that she is the vessel of that grace whose rich overflowings she has received, she can say, that whosoever will may take of the water of life freely. This is very blessed. Judgment is God's strange work. When He does judge, it is to clear away the evil which prevents the fulness of blessing flowing out from Himself. So soon as the powers of evil are put down, the heavenly city is seen descending out of heaven *from God*. Divine glory, light, righteousness, holiness, purity, beauty, symmetry, order, strength, security, every perfection is there. Though it be according to the measure of a man, all is of God. The presence and reign of Christ upon the earth will stablish it in righteousness and peace under His rule ; but in the New Jerusalem, the Lamb's wife, will be learnt by the earthly saints far deeper thoughts of love and glory, in that the Father has given to Christ, while He was rejected from the earth, the company of saints who form His Bride, and in whom He will be for ever glorified. Poor sinners saved by grace, they will be the display in the ages to come of the exceeding riches of that grace. Those blessed on the earth will see the heavenly saints in the same glory as Christ, and know that the Son was the sent One of the Father, and that the love wherewith the Father loved the Son as His sent One is the portion of this glorious company. They are loved as Christ is loved.

What an administration of governmental glory there will be upon earth! and besides, what an outflow of the beneficence of the heavens from the holy city! What marvellous instructions will it afford to those who see its perfections! but within, what a filling up to the fulness of God! Well may the Spirit, in the consciousness of what the assembly is to Christ, and the peculiarity of her present knowledge of Christ as the Bright and Morning Star, utter through the Bride the invitation to Him to come; and then, in the further consciousness of the grace into which she has drunk, repeat, through her to any one that is athirst, the same blessed invitation to come and take of the water of life freely. "Let him that heareth say, Come."

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

T. H. R.

## SAUL'S CHALLENGE.

"Whose son art thou, thou young man?"—1 SAMUEL xvii. 58.

WHAT family a man derives from shows his present interests and his future prospects.

1. I find myself within a vast circle, a system built up under Satan, its accepted prince and ruler. I am surrounded by men and women, called by the Spirit of God in His word, "the children of this world." Faith in Christ says, "*You do not belong to them.*"

2. Do I dare to take a step in opposition to this immense vortex which is surging all around me? It must be in open opposition then to him who energises and moves it all. Can I, dare I, expose myself to his



wrath? Faith in me says, "*I can, I will leave this place.*"

3. Dare I to take a yet further step, and openly to ally myself with those who say they have no interests *here*, but have *died*, and who thus proclaim every link snapped, and that they live in and for another? Faith in me says I can say this, "I am crucified with Christ, yet I live." "The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," and I am in Christ.

There are those three steps in the pathway of faith, and they may be easily discerned in the lives of those whom the Lord is leading on to-day, as they could in past ages, I think, always be discerned. It may be helpful to ask ourselves if we have taken all those. They are illustrated for us in the three actions of Moses. These are found in Hebrews xi. 24, 27, 28.)

First Moses says, "I did not derive from this family. My origin is not from it. I find myself, it is true, in Pharaoh's house. I refuse to own that I am of this family." The child is beginning to walk alone. The soul is waking up to its privileges and its responsibilities. This is of immense and precious moment in its history. I see that I am born of God. (Compare John i. 12 with 1 John iii. 1, 2.) And when the soul has reached this point, we have the *act* of faith. "*By faith* Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

The second step is, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." I give up the whole place, and because I enjoy another, I turn my back on it all. This is the next act of faith. In the midst of the world ruled by Satan I proclaim that I have done with it. "Then you will have to meet

the wrath of the king." Be it so. I see a greater than he, a greater than Pharaoh. He "endured," as seeing "Him who is invisible" to mortal eye.

The third step is, I am linked with Christ on the ground of His death. In the midst of a hostile territory, swayed by an adverse power, I rest in peace. They fed on the slain lamb. "By faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them." I am sheltered by the blood, I am feeding on the Lamb, and the Lord in unsparing judgment is going forth upon all outside.

There is order in all this. 1st. I see my origin—"born of God." 2nd. I see that I have done with this *place*. 3rd. I see that I am under God's shelter, and given His food—His Lamb, with the "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." "Egypt's food no more to eat." I am in the Lord's company. Mine is a wondrous deliverance. Salvation is of the Lord, and I am *gone* in the death of another, even Christ.

One word more. There is a "for" connected with these three steps of faith. As to the first, it might have been thought a great honour that Providence had placed him in the house of Pharaoh. The soul looked higher than this, high as it was. "FOR he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." Faith looks forward. As to the second step, he might have connected himself with God's people and stayed in Egypt. He did not, he forsook the land, it had no attraction for him. He did not look at the wrath of the king, he looked higher than that; "FOR he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." And as to the third step, the enemy is only powerless when he has to do with a *dead man*. "Through faith he kept the passover, and

the sprinkling of blood, LEST [for fear that] he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them." This closes Moses' acts of faith, as given to us here. I am only safe from the enemy while on the ground of life by the death of Christ, in which I met my end in judgment. He cannot touch me. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Here is our *end*, our *origin*, and also our *protection*, but I think *only here*.

Saul's challenge we shall all assuredly hear. I hear it all around me. It is the voice of the man who is here—the natural man—challenging the spiritual man. In Christ we have triumphed over all the power of the enemy. "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." The enemy is overthrown. I see David with the head of Goliath in his hand. *It is all done*; but remember you will have to be challenged, nay, you *are* continually challenged, and it is good for you to challenge yourself as to what *family* you belong to. May the reader be enabled by grace daily to give the reply that Moses gave—he "kept the passover"—this one *reply*—and the Holy Ghost gives us these his three actions, all based upon a living faith in the living God.

H. C. A.

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### MOSES' CHOICE.

THREE memorable steps mark the manhood of Moses. We read that "when he was come to years he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures

in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." (See Heb. xi. 24-26.)

The three steps were—first, the severance of his relationship with Pharaoh; second, his identification with the people of God; and third, his appreciation of the reproach of Christ above the treasures of Egypt.

These remarkable steps were taken "*by faith.*" They were so thoroughly contra-natural, that no man, acting on the instincts of nature, would ever have dreamed of taking them.

Now Moses had, as men say, the ball at his feet. A splendid vista of earthly greatness spread itself out before him. He was dignified by royal relations; he held in his hand a cup that contained the pleasures of sin; and he could command, by virtue of his position, the very treasures of Egypt. His opportunities for self-gratification were almost unparalleled; and yet, just at the time when, in nature, he would have stepped unhesitatingly into the enjoyment of all, he stepped, by faith, outside of it.

What a strange career! And what a complete reversing of all the aspirations of nature did his faith produce!

But notice, "he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." His faith, with her far and telescopic range, swept beyond the confines of Egyptian treasures, and leading him to renounce the pleasures of sin which are but for a season, gave him to grasp the bright reward at Christ's judgment-seat; and under the influence of that, to count all else but dross or dung.

Wise and happy choice made by faith at his manhood! Bright example! See Moses making his first exodus;

bidding farewell to his foster-mother, by whom he had been kindly reared, and at whose expense he had been highly educated; see him deliberately abandon the court of Egypt, and surrender his claim to its every preferment. Wonderful refusal, but very genuine. It was, so far, a negative step on his part, but it paved the way for more—more that was charmingly positive. His full object was, not the relinquishment of Pharaoh's palace merely, it was *identification with the people of God*.

And where were they to be found? In the brick-kilns. And what were they? Bondslaves, brickmakers, and masons—the serf population of Egypt, who eked out a pitiful existence under the lash of taskmasters.

These were the people of God; indiscernible, indeed, to all but faith; but, yet, with a high origin, and having a glorious destiny, Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with such than to quaff the cup of delusive pleasure, whose fleeting season glided swiftly into an undone eternity.

These were the people of God, and these were henceforth to be the friends of Moses. Ah! it is a fine phase of faith that espouses Christ in falling fortune. At such a time a timid Nicodemus may eclipse a boastful Peter; or a despised Mephibosheth cleave to an exile king. And so Moses detected in these serfs the people of God, and claimed association with them too.

Paul in a later day exhorted his son Timothy to “be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God”; for each in his day was animated by a similar faith, and acted

in a similar way. Hence it is we find that Moses "esteemed the *reproach of Christ* greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," when as yet Christ had not been named. But though Christ were not known—had not been revealed—yet His reproach—the reproach always attaching to faith and to its confessors (seen fully in Christ Himself when He despised the shame) was ever true of His people. It is their distinguishing badge as they travel the road from earth to heaven. Now Moses esteemed that reproach. It was of more positive value in his eyes than the treasures of Egypt. To be linked with God's interests here was his chief ambition. He could see no mean between Pharaoh's family and the people of God; between their afflictions and the pleasures of sin; between the reproach of Christ and the treasures of Egypt.

It must be one or the other; and by faith on his part, and grace on God's, this remarkable man, when in the full intelligence of maturity, calmly but decidedly snapped the ties that bound him to the glory and the pleasures of Egypt, and threw himself whole-heartedly into the sympathies of God on earth.

His after course was chequered indeed. It had trials beyond measure, and honours beyond degree. He respected the recompence of the reward, and he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. We may live in a different day, and be surrounded by different circumstances; but faith in its nature is always the same, and we too, who through grace believe on the Lord Jesus, may illustrate our faith by taking the same steps that Moses took—we too may refuse the world, suffer with God's people, and esteem Christ's reproach beyond all earthly treasure.

J. W. S.

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

## CHAPTER XX. 11-15.

THE judgment described in this scripture forms the conclusion of all God's ways with man. The kingdom of Christ on earth has been brought to a close; all enemies have been put under His feet; the devil himself has received his final doom; and there remain only the wicked and unrepentant dead to be dealt with, before the introduction of the new heaven and the new earth. It is this last session of judgment that John here portrays: "*And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.*"\* (vv. 11, 12.)

The character of the throne itself is the first thing to attract the attention. It is said to be "great"—great, either as befitting the dignity of the Judge, or as suited to the magnitude of the judgment; and it is also given as "white." Not here, probably, the colour known as white—as, for example, white linen—but rather, as the word really signifies, clear or bright; that is, the "whiteness of light."† This is the expression of the dazzling purity of holiness, whether of the Judge Himself, or of the standard on which His judgment

\* The word "throne" must, it is generally acknowledged, be substituted in the text for "God."

† A comparison of Matthew xvii. 2 with Mark ix. 3 shows that this, too, was the whiteness of our blessed Lord's garments in the transfiguration.

would proceed; for everything connected with Him, the throne on which He sits, or the sentence He pronounces, must be in accordance with what He is in His own essential nature. Who the Judge is, is not here stated, although John saw Him that sat upon the throne; but we know from other scriptures that it is Christ, that the once rejected Jesus, the Son of God, is He into whose hands all judgment has been committed. (See John v. 22-29; 2 Timothy iv. 1, &c.) As everywhere, indeed, in this book, it is He who ever makes good God's character in government as against evil; and here, as this scene shows, against those who have died in impenitence, as well as against the living rejecters of His authority. The awful nature of this judicial session is revealed by the statement that the earth and the heaven fled away from the face of the Judge. In what manner they disappear we learn elsewhere (See 2 Peter iii. 10-12); the fact only is here stated; and it is given to teach the final character of the judgment. What a close to the history of this poor earth! And what a contrast to the record in Genesis i., when God looked upon His new work day after day as it sprang forth from His creative hand, and pronounced it very good! And to enhance the solemnity of the scene, it may be recalled that He who sat on the throne, in John's vision, is the One by whom all things were created; and now this poor defiled earth, and the heaven that belongs to it, the witness of, and the sharer in, its defilement, are seen fleeing from His face!

Before the judgment commences, therefore, time is no more. The times and seasons have for ever passed (Genesis i. 14), and the great white throne is raised in



eternity; and it is connected, as will be hereafter seen, with the destruction of the last enemy, death, as introductory to the blessedness of that eternal state in which God is all in all.

The dead only, it is plainly stated, appear before the great white throne. Already, in many acts, the living have been judged; and hence, for instance, the judgment of Matthew xxv. 31-46 belongs to another period. The living are judged at the appearing of Christ, and during His kingdom, and consequently only the dead remain. And yet, it may be necessary to affirm, not all the dead. As we have pointed out in chapter xix., an immense army follows Christ out of heaven, and this is composed, as there explained, of all the saints who in every age and dispensation had died, and who had participated in the first resurrection, and of those who, living on the earth at the time of the Lord's return, had been changed and caught up with the risen saints to meet the Lord in the air. During the thousand years (chapter xx. 3, 4) there are no deaths, excepting of rebels against the authority of Christ. The conclusion then, as also from the scriptures before us, is irresistible, that only the wicked, the unconverted dead, are seen in this judgment. There is therefore no foundation in Scripture for the popular conception of a general judgment—for the teaching, so prevalent in religious books, that all alike, the saved and the unsaved, are reserved to be judged at the same time. Such a thought could only spring from ignorance both of the word of God and of the nature of redemption.

All the vast multitude of the unregenerate dead, from the earliest ages down to the termination of the

kingdom of Christ on earth, will be raised by the mighty power of God, and be brought before the great white throne to receive the award of their eternal doom. And to show that not one sinner who has ever passed away, or wherever he may have died, shall escape, it is added in verse 13, "*And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hell [hades] delivered up the dead which were in them.*" At the mighty voice of the Son of God, just as the fish came at His bidding into the nets of His disciples, and Lazarus came out of his tomb, so will all this countless throng "come forth" out of their graves, or last resting-places, unto the resurrection of judgment. (John v. 28, 29.)

We have, in the next place, the principles of the judgment: "*And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is [the book] of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*" (v. 12.) Again we read, "*And they were judged every man according to their works.*" (v. 13.) The first ground of judgment then is the actual works, the deeds, of every soul while living on the earth. And, let it be remarked, that positive evidence as to these is adduced from the "things which were written in the books." All the "works" of men are therefore recorded, and recorded by Him, before whose omniscient eye the nature of every action is revealed. Deeds long since forgotten, sins which, apparently trivial in human estimation, have faded away from the memory, all will be produced as the ground of condemnation. Not only so; but the book of life will also be opened, and if the names of those arraigned before this solemn tribunal are not found in it (v. 15) the sentence is passed, and the

judgment executed. There are thus two kinds of evidence—positive and negative, both condemnatory, and both alike precluding all ground of appeal.

In connection with this, it is worthy of notice, as illustrative of God's ways in judgment, that He, while answerable to none, is ever careful to vindicate, even in the eyes of men, the rectitude of all His judicial acts. When thus He is about to destroy Jerusalem, through the instrumentality of Nebuchadnezzar, and to send His people into captivity because of their persistent transgressions, He is careful first to present the bill of indictment to prove their guilt. (See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 11–21.) So here, before the great white throne, unmistakable proofs of the guilt of those on trial are shown from the books of works; and then, as a conclusive demonstration of their having no title to be spared, it is added that their names were not found written in the book of life. Thus every mouth will be stopped, and will have to confess that He who sits on the throne is justified when He speaks, and clear when He judges.

The doom of this countless throng is next revealed: "*And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.\* And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*" Taking it in the order given, we have, first of all, in figurative language, the destruction of death and hades. (Compare Hosea xiii. 14.) The meaning is, that the power of both will be for ever abrogated under the judgment of God. Death had held its sway over all these souls. Their bodies had been until now in corruption, but called out of their graves for this resurrec-

\* Most editors add here the words, "Even the lake of fire."

tion of judgment, death could claim them no more. When the saints are raised, death for them is swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. xv.); but here there is no victory, for the hitherto prisoners of death receive the same sentence as death itself, both being submerged in the same final doom. The last enemy, death, is thus destroyed. Hades, the prison of the spirits of the dead, shares the same doom, for it has no further use in God's economy. Defiled by the character of those it had detained as captives, it passes away to the punishment of the defiled, the judgment of the eternal fire.

The nature of this judicial doom is explained to be the second death. The first death pronounced, as the penalty on Adam's transgression, meant far more than the death of the body. The moral use of the word in the phrase "dead in sins" proves beyond a doubt that it signifies, in its essence, the separation of the soul from God, together with the state of the soul as being without a single movement of life towards God. This interpretation is confirmed by the statement in Romans, that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin"; for it is clearly the state of man which is thus indicated. (See also 2 Cor. v. 14.) This, rightly understood, throws great light upon the term here employed—"the second death." "Death," then, will keep its meaning—the absolute separation of the soul from God, its total exclusion from the source of all light and life, and its confinement for ever in the region of darkness; for as light and life, so darkness and death are in their very nature indissolubly connected. Then we have the additional element, "the lake of fire." "Fire" in Scripture is the symbol of the holiness of God as applied in judgment. This may be easily traced

through the various books of the Bible, as, for example, in the fire that consumed the sacrifices, and, as again, in the statement that "our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. xii. 29.) The second death therefore is the moral exclusion of the soul for ever from God, or rather, it should be said, the separation of the *whole man* (body, soul, and spirit) from God, under the infliction of His judicial wrath. This is the lake of fire, God's eternal judgment, according to the standard of His own immutable holiness, as visited upon those who refused His grace, rebelled against His authority, and chose death rather than life. It is into this "lake of fire" that every unconverted one, as this scripture plainly teaches, will be, if dying unpenitent, finally cast; for it is there that all this multitude find their doom.

Nothing is said here as to the duration of the lake of fire; but, as has been seen in verse 10 of this chapter, and as many other scriptures indubitably teach, there is no ground whatever for supposing that it is less than eternal. Prophets prophesy smoother things, and dreamers dream according to the imagination of their own hearts; but the word of God abides, and it teaches that the punishment of the wicked, as the blessedness of the saved, is for ever and ever. E. D.

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CHRIST dwelling in our hearts by faith, is enjoyed by him in whom He dwells, not by him who can explain it, though it be true that it must be enjoyed in order to be able to explain it.

## SCRIPTURE NOTES.

## I.

## 2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 3, 4.

As often pointed out, the part of verse 3 commencing with the words, "Which to you-ward is not weak," and the whole of verse 4, is a parenthesis. The connection therefore is as follows: "Since ye seek a proof of Christ in me, examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith," etc. They had been tempted to deny the apostolic claims of Paul; and, inasmuch as he had been the means of their conversion, he says, in effect: The proof of my apostleship is found in you, if you are Christians. If you deny that I am an apostle, you must surrender your title to belong to Christ. For this, however, they were not prepared; and thus their folly in turning away from Paul is at once exposed. But the question is as to the meaning of the parenthetical sentences. They present, in part, the man-ward aspect, and the divine side of ministry, illustrated by the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The apostle says, after the words, "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me," "who (that is, Christ) to you-ward is not weak," however it may so appear in the person of His servants, who are only made spiritually strong, in proportion as they are weak; "but is mighty in (or, *among*) you," as shown by the effects of the ministry of Paul and his fellow-labourers. He then proceeds, "For though he was crucified through (better, in) weakness," as He was to all appearances, and as to fact, if His bodily condition, as described in Psalm xxii.,

alone is considered, "yet He liveth by the power of God"; for, indeed, it was "according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead" (Ephes. i. 19, 20), that He now lives at God's right hand. These two aspects were seen in the apostle in his service (compare chap. iv. 5-12); and hence he adds, "For we also are weak," as seen by man, since death wrought in the apostle in that he ever bore about in the body the dying of Jesus; "but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you." For it was Christ, who lives by the power of God, that wrought in and through Paul, so that "the life also of Jesus" was made manifest by that power of God, in His service. As He says in another place, "We have this treasure (the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ) in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

## II.

JOHN. v. 31 ; viii. 12-18.

So far from there being any contradiction between these scriptures, they serve together to bring out the whole truth of the person of the eternal Son. The Pharisees doubtless thought that, in referring to what the Lord had formerly said (v. 31), they had detected an inconsistency; but the Lord's reply explains the real import of His words. In chapter v. He had said, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true"; and He then proceeded to show that He had not been alone in His testimony to Himself, that John, His own works, the Father Himself, and Moses, concurred in His testimony. The meaning is thus evident, that had there been no "witness of Himself" except His own,

an impossible thing being what He was, His witness would not have been true. When, therefore, His enemies sought to arrest the force of His announcement, "I am the light of the world," etc., by reminding Him of what He had before declared, He answered, "Though I bear record of myself, [yet] my record is true." And He explained, in His patient grace, the grounds of this apparent contradiction. First, He knew whence He came, and whither He went—which, had He been only man, could not have been the case; secondly, the Pharisees judged after the flesh in a human way according to appearances, thinking that Christ was like themselves, whereas He, while on earth, judged no man; thirdly, He goes to the root of the matter, and says, "If I judge, My judgment is true: *for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me*"; and, lastly, He makes the application, on the basis of the Scriptures, "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true." This condition He tells them is fulfilled in His case, thus confuting their objection, for, "I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." When the Lord spoke, it was not therefore His own individual testimony; the words that He spake, He spake not "from" Himself, but the Father that dwelt in Him, He did the works. (Chap. xiv. 10.) He was the Eternal Son, and the Revealer of the Father; and had the Pharisees but known this blessed truth, their foolish objection would have died away upon their lips. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."



## THREE ANTAGONISMS TO CHRISTIANITY.

## COLOSSIANS ii.

It is the "full knowledge" of the mystery of God that delivers us from all the "enticing words" of man. Once accept the absolute supremacy of Christ as the Head of the body, the Church, it is immediately seen that the Church is subjected alone to Him; that His authority must prevail over every member of His body. No believer, therefore, can ever occupy his true place until he recognizes that Christ is the Head, and that His headship excludes—of necessity excludes—every other authority.

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It is on this account that the apostle specifies in this chapter the various antagonistic influences, which are ever at work to undermine this blessed truth. The first of these is philosophy and vain deceit; that is, as we understand it, philosophy which is nothing but vain deceit. It must be so characterized, for it springs from man's mind; it is formed into a system by human reason, and its object is to corrupt the revelation which God has been pleased to make by His Spirit in His inspired Word. It is Rationalism—Rationalism pure and simple, which judges everything according to its estimate of what is suitable to man. Sinful man would thus sit in judgment upon the thoughts of God! This philosophy, in the words of another, is the wandering of the old man's mind; and, as we read, is after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

But if the danger is indicated, the antidote is supplied. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily, in Him as the glorified Man at God's right hand; and we are in Him there, and as in Him we are complete, filled up to the full, before God. Man, therefore, can contribute nothing to the believer; for he has everything in Christ. What an immense truth! All the fulness of the Godhead is in Christ for the believer, and the believer is complete in Him, as filled up in this fulness, before God. What folly then to turn away to human sources—to broken cisterns indeed, that can furnish no supplies!

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It is, moreover, in Christ that we have been "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh\* by the circumcision of Christ." The place of circumcision for Israel was Gilgal, after they had crossed the Jordan; and this will explain the meaning of this scripture. It is the *application* to ourselves of the truth of the Jordan; that is, of our association with the death of Christ; not His death for us, but our death with Him, and our entering into it. Hence it is "the putting off the body of the flesh," the end of ourselves in the death of Christ; and consequently it is the doorway out of this scene altogether. But if we, as children of Adam, have come morally to an end in the death of Christ, we have been buried with Him in baptism, wherein (or, as some prefer, "in whom") also we are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God,

\* The words "the sins of" must be omitted, as not having sufficient authority.

who hath raised Him from the dead. If, therefore, we have died with Christ out from this scene, we are risen with Him into a new place; but this is only apprehended by faith, as the apostle specially states. But, when learnt, the true character of going back to the tradition of men, and to the rudiments of the world is at once detected.

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The second form of opposition is now reached in the chapter, and it is, in one word—Ritualism. Before it is named, however, the apostle goes back to our past condition, when we were dead in our sins, and the uncircumcision of our flesh, and points out that God has quickened us together with Christ, having forgiven us all trespasses, blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; and, moreover, that He has overcome the whole, and every form, of Satan's power, as against His people, in the death of Christ. Let the reader ponder this remarkable summary. We have been quickened with Christ; have passed with Him out of death into a new sphere; all our sins have been forgiven; all the handwriting in ordinances, which was contrary to us, has been effaced, and we have been rescued from every variety of Satan's power. What, therefore, have we to do with Ritualism, brought out, as we are, from the whole state and scene, in which and where rites and ceremonies apply? Besides, they were, at their best, even as divinely instituted in Judaism, only shadows. The body is of Christ. To accept Ritualism would thus be to deny the heavenly character of Christianity.

The third enemy springing from, and generally allied with, Ritualism is Superstition. The apostle introduces it in connection with the worship of angels. It abounds on every hand; and it increases with infidelity, from which it is the natural reaction. As believers, unless we are in the liberty of grace, and in the sense of union with Christ, we easily fall under its influence in one form or another. The efficacious antidote, both to it and to Ritualism, lies in holding the Head, in maintaining in our souls the practical power of union with Christ, and constant and entire subjection to His authority, as well as the recognition that it is from Him, as Head, that "all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." As members of the body of Christ we are dependent alone upon the Head, and upon the supplies He may minister through "joints and bands"; and consequently we are entirely independent of all human sources. May the Lord teach us increasingly the lesson that all our springs are in Himself.

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### THE PERSON OF THE LORD.\*

How beyond all our wonder and praise is the person of the blessed Lord! As an apostle could say, and more because he knew it better, "Great is the mystery." But in one respect he was one with us all, great as his revelations were. No man knows the Son, yet he lets us see that He is that which no man knows. Who could say but there, "God is known in death"? Is it

\* This valuable paper, taken from *Notes and Comments*, is commended to the prayerful study of the reader.

not there love, God's love, is known, never known really till known there? Yet it is weakness, and, as to His place as man, the very end of man. But in Himself God is known in love by His being down here with sinful men, by that love reaching even to us. He made Himself of no reputation, emptied Himself—not that He could be other than God—there is the mystery—but as to the form of God He did. Hence having taken the form of a servant, He is always such—receives all. Even when he takes the kingdom, He goes a long journey to receive a kingdom, and, when by His perfection in power He has subdued all, He gives it up to God, even the Father. He gives up His own spirit when the time comes, but recommends it to His Father—raises up the temple of His body, but is raised by the glory of the Father—grows in wisdom, speaks what He knows, but He *is* the wisdom of God; He can do nothing of Himself—is obedient, but He *is* the power of God, and quickens too whom He will; created all things, and upholds them by the word of His power. And this was His perfection, with the whole power of evil against Him, never to go out of the path of dependence and obedience, never to use power by His will. Thus He bound the strong man as in the wilderness; in death, how much more even. He could have had, even in dependence, more than twelve legions of angels; but it would not have been obedience fulfilling the Scriptures.

But what an emptying that was when He who was God could come into death, and, though suffering, though obeying, bring all that God was in His moral perfection into death, and then when it was needed, in man's extremity through sin, in man's weakness, in the place

of Satan's power, there glorify it—love, righteousness, majesty, truth, all found glorified there. God is glorified in Him, yet it was in death, and because it was death in all it meant for God; but it was all the power of love; *i.e.* God, in the emptying. I do not turn to John's writings here, already elsewhere spoken of, where the divine nature of the Lord is so distinct,\* where He comes out as God—not genealogic from man—takes the place of receiving everything. It is contemplation of the wondrous and unsearchable fact I seek, not Adam, or Abraham, or David—and yet, as made flesh, always proofs which are everywhere where He is.

But I would weigh some facts in the Gospels as to the manifestation of God in Him. When the blessed Lord had to do with unbelievers whom He knew, and had to treat as adversaries, though His being God comes out—save His knowing all men, as yet not judging—what God is does not come out at all; it is only when driven, by the wilful blindness and hostility of the human heart, to speak of things as they are, that forced and driven to the necessity of it, so to speak, the fact of His being God comes out: "Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at Him, but Jesus hid Himself." There is no revelation of Himself in John viii. He does not come to judge, and the woman is not condemned; she is to go and sin no more. He gives divine power to the law; or rather He is, by His word, divine power in the conscience. No grace is in question, and they all go away one by one—divine power in the word awakes the conscience. He is the Light of the world, and he who follows Him does not walk in dark-

\* John v. gives plainly this position of the Lord, vi. is more distinctly as man, still He comes down and goes up again.

ness. But here there are none such ; it is simply the Light shining in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.

But Christ is divine. He can bear witness of Himself ; yet He says, " As the Father has taught me," as ever, in John, receiving all. Nothing inconsistent with grace, but the simple absence of all contrary to it. He could not contradict Himself, but He is only Light in darkness. As man, He hardly appears here, for that is grace ; other cases present themselves where grace is at work. We may first take the woman of Samaria—but here, away from Jerusalem, where, with the Jews (not *the* people) He is always in judgment ; where the great change of leaving them, and having to do with the world, and bringing men to have to do with the Father and with God spiritually, and that by life in the power of the Spirit, are brought out ; and where Christ is the rejected Man and feels it, but is thereby thrown into the consciousness that He is the divine Giver of eternal life in the power of the Spirit. But here we have the Lord fully as a Man ; the Jachin and Boaz of Christian truth, had been set up in chapter iii. Man or Jew was naught, must be born again, and the Son of man must be lifted up. God had loved and had given. Christ was a rejected Christ. He left Judæa, where the Pharisees were jealous, and would none of Him. Christ must be a rejected Christ for us to have part with Him. Sad thing to say, but so it is ; if the corn of wheat die not, it abides alone. No doubt He could always quicken whom He would, but without His death we could not righteously see God, and if a man received a new nature without His death, there would be no putting away of the old ; we must be risen as well as

quicken— a new place as a new life— and that is only by His death. But He was rejected, felt it, afterwards wept over the city, felt it deeply, as none of us could feel. We see Him comforted, as rejected by His own to whom He came, by fields white to harvest.

He was weary with His journey, and sat alone in the world— Oh, wondrous place! The world He had created— but more, into which He was come in love; and here only a weary Man feeling the rejection of His love, but, as to the place He had taken, dependent for a drink of water— He who had made it— upon this poor sin-wearied woman. But He had come where He could only come in grace. Salvation was not of Samaria, but of the Jews. Promises were theirs, but they had rejected all. Grace had its work outside, but then it was humiliation, and on rejection He must *needs* pass through Samaria. He submits to human circumstance and conditions, He acts in divine grace. Here, therefore, where grace, free grace, works, we find Him fully Man— a weary rejected Man, bound in spirit on a way He must needs take, and waiting on the kindness of another for a drink of water. Grace is in the humbled and obedient Man— there it is that what God is shines out. It is not, "Before Abraham was, I am"; but, "If thou knewest the gift of God," *i.e.* grace, "and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink." It is not the supreme God forced, so to speak, to say He is so to heartless adversaries without conscience, but God revealed in what He was in a lowly man, and by His being a lowly man; and surely if grace is, that is grace.

What heart is in the words! What a need to win the confidence of a weary soul! Yet the simple expression of what His own heart was full of— of God as



goodness, and brought out, as to circumstances, by the pressure on that heart of the rejection by His beloved people which He was suffering under! How wonderful to hear Him saying just then, "Salvation is of the Jews!" Perfect owning of God's counsels and ways! But in His rejection in them, grace flowing freely out—the natural expression of what He was full of; but as that was love, love which seeks to bring a weary soul to confidence in God by bringing that love down to lay its wants at the feet of such an one, to win confidence in a love that could do it. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith"—there He was—"Give me to drink"—come even there—"thou wouldest have asked"—He would have given, for He was the giver. What a scene! Such a lowly place! And to learn what God is in it! Yea, what He is by it!

There is no feeling like that of the perception of the person of Christ, and His words and He are one. He was what He said, always. Yet it is thoroughly in human nature I look at Him here; yea, that is the way, and here I learn it. With adversaries He is simply God—in grace He is a Man yet God, and only precious as a Man because He is, and, as a Man, dependent. Yet we have seen the Father in Him.

I do not go into the state of the woman; that is another part of the question of the chapter. But He is the object of adoration for eternity.

I turn then to the Syro-Phœnician; here it is, "He could not be hid." It was not the flowing out of a pressed heart to sorrow and need, but what God, so to speak, must be where faith is—Himself—He cannot deny Himself. Still grace rises above all promise and curse, and God is revealed. It is not as in John iv.,

where the pressure on His heart of the rejection of His beloved people, and all it implied, had brought out what was in that heart. Deeper still, the divine overflowings of goodness not meeting promise, but finding its comfort in going out in free grace to need where no promise, no title was; rejected love making new channels for itself—God giving—and hence naturally where need, not where promise was, and giving eternal life, and bringing to God in spirit and in truth; for God, as He is, was revealed, and so the Father seeking worshippers. This was John iv., and hence we find the opened hearts of the Samaritans wider than promise—knowing more than appropriating pride—own Him as the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

But in the Syro-Phœnician woman it was different. He goes to the borders of His earthly mission, retires to be alone (Mark vii.), and would not have it known. Here it is not His own rejection, He labours among the poor of the flock—His mission according to prophecy, and as to Israel the designs of God. He is servant of this mission, nothing more, as to the place He takes. He is not rejected by proud Jerusalem, but sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But He is in His mission; but in His divinely traced, not free path, He goes out of the sphere of active service to the borders of the curse without.

Meanwhile, moral truths had come largely out; ceremonial observances contrasted in Israel with divine commandments, but, still further, the heart of man, called in question in contrast with all such mere ordinances, lost in importance, not merely in contrast with divine commandment, but in their nature as merely external; God looked at what came from the

heart, not what went into the belly—a simple truth, but which for man is hard to learn. God goes to the true nature of things in respect of man—what comes out of the heart—what he is; but what did come out of it? Murders, evil thoughts, all manner of evil, and the Lord had no more to say. Then He leaves this scene of labour, is alone personally—as Man in position He would not have it known; but it was. Then we come to what was known. He goes, as I have said, to the borders of the curse—the place which served Him as an example of hard-heartedness—the people on whom God's curse rested as compared with Israel. What wondrous elements are all brought together here! But he sought to be alone, *i.e.*, out of His sphere of labour; His mission, as a sent one, a servant, He insists on. But a want was there, a want which sought goodness in power, and God was there. The poor woman drawn by it, though purposely repelled to prove her faith (the disciples would have got rid of her—neither owned promise, nor in fact exercised love as above all promise), draws out what is above all promise, what recognises fully the right to possess where promise was, but appeals to goodness as, after all, reaching over it, fully recognising man's complete misery and wretchedness without a title—a vile dog, which there was saying everything that was unclean and vile, but appealed to a riches in goodness which could reach in mercy even to that. Could Christ say, "No! God is not that"?

No; God was there manifested, and faith had all it sought for—it had found Him; there was no need of claim or goodness, but the confession of worthlessness and absence of all title—a need whose resource was in

the goodness of God. The Servant who held Himself to His mission, as service He had to do, was after all the God of all grace, and God revealed in Him, and while owning God's ways in Israel, standing alone in the presence of the curse and the absence of all claim, what faith owned, but therein found God and infinite goodness. Israel's servant was God manifest in the flesh, was goodness, above all evil, above all curse, was God and God manifested. What God is, is known in His being revealed in Man—being a Man; for that was infinite love.

J. N. D.

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

**"I AM THE ROOT AND THE OFFSPRING OF DAVID,  
AND THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR."**

REVELATION xxii. 16.

THE Morning Star is shining bright, though clouds my sky may fill.  
Its gleams I catch, a pilgrim here, at peace with God and still.  
And soon I know the day must break, yon Star its Herald there  
Tells of the end of earth's long night and each deceiving snare.

Thou Morning Star! Herald of Day! Lord Jesus, can it be  
That aught of night can chain the soul that's caught one glimpse of  
Thee?

This night aye filled with groans and woe, with agony and pain,  
Whose darkest hour records one fact—"The Lord of Life was slain"?

Thou Morning Star! Lord, fix my gaze, nor ever let me be  
By glittering toys of earth entranced, forgetful, Lord, of Thee.  
Amid earth's roar I hear Thy voice, "The night is round thee now,  
But my day of glory soon shall light thy worn and weary brow."

The Morning Star! I have its cheer, yet clearer may it shine—  
A light to guide me all the way, lit up by love divine.  
I lie within Thy bosom, Lord, the One Thy love has blessed;  
Darkness may thicken, light is mine to Thine own eternal rest.

"And the Spirit and the Bride say, COME."—REV. xxii. 17.

H. C. A., 1868.

## “A GOLDEN BELL AND A POMEGRANATE.”

“A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about.”—EXODUS xxviii. 33, 34.

WE should know something of priestly service as Christians (1 Peter ii. 5, Rev. i. 6), and therefore something of priestly attire. Our great High Priest, ever perfect, is now in the presence of God for us, and the sound of the golden bell is heard; for the Holy Ghost has come out consequent on Christ's going in. But there is in Him perfect communion, moreover, in all His service with God's present thoughts of and for His people; this is the pomegranate.

The pomegranate was the fruit of the land. (See Deut. viii. 8.) Around “the ephod all of blue” (the heavenly colour) and upon the hem of it were these golden bells and pomegranates *alternately*. The measure of my testimony as a Christian (the *sound*) is equal to the fruit which I am feeding upon; it is equal to my communion. Never more, never less. Only as I feed upon Christ will Christ be heard, and the sound come from me; only thus can I fulfil my priestly service. I go in to minister.

This robe (and its accompaniments, the bells and pomegranates) was appointed to be worn when the high priest went into the holiest. But there the priests now have always access. (Heb. x.) It is their place, and this dress was the suited attire for the place. *Every movement of the one thus arrayed would tell, as heard without, that he was in the holiest.* It is not, I think, for us to consider

ourselves fittingly clad if otherwise attired; for then either some other sound, or no sound at all, is heard from me. What was heard without, coming from the priest was not separated from the fruit of the land, which in all varied colours also formed part of his dress; and my testimony is irrevocably linked with it. If I give out in the assembly something which is not God's present sound for His people, though it may be the truth, I am separating the golden bell and the pomegranate. It is not what measure of communion I enjoyed in the *past* that my testimony in the *present* is based upon. This would also be separating the golden bell and the pomegranate. No, it is the fruit of the land in present enjoyment; to this alone is the golden bell united. "As I hear I judge" gives it us from the lips of the Lord Himself. It is as I hear from communion, it is as I feed upon the heavenly, that heavenly sounds will be heard from me. H. C. A.

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### HEROD AND JOHN.

How significant of the heart of man it was when Herod, hearing of the works of Christ, said, "It is John, whom I beheaded." A bad conscience is a very *lively* principle. It acts at once. It takes alarm at the shaking of a leaf. It makes cowards of us all. So was it with king Herod. His conscience kept the image of the murdered man before him, and the thought that John was risen was something of hell itself to him.

The *resurrection of a murdered man is terrible to the murderer*, for it tells him that the God in whose hands

are the issues of life and death has put Himself on the side of his victim.

And thus, beloved, will it be, as between the Lord Jesus in the day of His manifestation and the world. As Herod beheaded John, so has this world cast out the Son of God. And as Herod was all dismay and terror, when he thought that John might be risen from the dead, so will the kings of the earth, the mighty men and the princes, the bondmen and the free men, call on the rocks and the hills to cover them from the face of the Lord in the day of the revelation of His power. (Rev. vi. 16.)

This experience of Herod has therefore a voice in it for the world that persists in turning its back upon Jesus. The fact of His resurrection is hid from men; they go on as if there was no such thing. They eat and drink and rise up to play; but the crucified Jesus is risen. The Man whom men despise is glorified, and the day when this is manifested will be as terrible and insufferable to the world as the fear that the Baptist was risen was intolerable to the conscience of Herod.

I feel we may use this fact, recorded in Mark vi. 14-16, when speaking to men who go on with the course and spirit of the world as though Jesus had never been here rejected and crucified by man, and raised and exalted by God. God and the world are at issue about Jesus. He whom the world murdered, God has glorified. The judgment of the world must follow; and therefore the apostle testifies, "He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." J. G. B.

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

## CHAPTER XXI. 1-8.

AFTER the solemn scene of eternal judgment, exhibited at the close of the preceding chapter, a vision of the unclouded beauty of the eternal state of blessedness is displayed before our eyes. The contrast is as abrupt as magnificent. No sooner had John recorded the doom of those who appeared before the great white throne than he proceeds: "*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*" (v. 1.) Isaiah is the first to make mention both of new heavens and a new earth. He says, speaking in the name of Jehovah, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." (Chap. lxxv. 17.) And again, "As the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain." (Chap. lxxvi. 22.) While, however, the words, new heavens and new earth, appear in the prophecy, it is yet evident, from the context of the passages cited, that they do not contain the same significance as in our chapter. In Isaiah, indeed, scarcely more is meant than that the heavens and the earth shall be morally new during the millennium, that, as the heavens will be cleared from Satan and Satan's power (see Eph. vi. 12; Rev. xii. 10, etc.), and the earth will be freed in large measure from the effects of the curse (see Psalm lxxvii. and lxxviii.), they will be in this sense new. The apostle Peter supplies



the link between Isaiah and Revelation. Taking up, as led of the Holy Spirit, Isaiah's prophecy, and giving to it a deeper meaning, he says, after describing the dissolution of all things, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Peter iii. 13.) This, as will be at once perceived, goes much further than the kingdom during the thousand years, the characteristic of which is that righteousness will reign (see Psalms xcvi.-xcix.; Isaiah xxxii., etc.); inasmuch as Peter speaks of a scene wherein righteousness shall  *dwell* . This could be no other than the eternal state, telling of a scene without and a scene within which answer to all that God is, a scene which is in fact the consummation of the new creation.

The first heaven and the first earth are thus for ever displaced;\* and it is specially noted that there was no more sea. This fact may have a twofold significance. The first and most prominent thought is, since the sea interposes a barrier to intercourse, that there will be then no more separation. Then, as we remember the symbolic meaning of earth and sea in this book, and that the earth speaks of ordered government, and the sea of insubject and unorganized masses of people or nations, it teaches, that every part of the new earth will be in ordered subjection to, and under the governmental control of, God. All will be the perfect expression of His own will; and then will be fulfilled that far-reaching petition in the prayer the Lord taught His disciples, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." It was so done by our Lord Himself; but in

\* In fact, as we learn from Peter, they will be destroyed by fire. (2 Peter iii. 10-12.)

these "new and blessed scenes," it will be also so done by every one among all the countless throng of the redeemed.

Another event is now introduced: "*And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*" (v. 2.) It may be necessary to point out at once, for the sake of those who have not hitherto considered the subject, that the scene in verse 10 of this chapter is prior, by the thousand years, to this in verse 2. This will be more fully explained when verses 9 and 10 are reached; but it may be said now, that in verse 10 John sees the "holy city, Jerusalem" (as it should be read) in her millennial glory, and in relation to the millennial earth; whereas in verse 2, the millennial kingdom has for ever passed away, and the "holy city" is seen descending from the position occupied during the kingdom, to take up her appointed place on the new earth, of which verse 1 speaks. It is the "holy city," holy according to the nature of God (compare Eph. i. 4); and it is "new Jerusalem," not the old described in the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul speaks of it in Galatians as "Jerusalem which is above," and as "our mother."\* It cannot be doubted, moreover, that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews refers to the same city, when he describes Abraham as looking "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Chap. xi. 10; see also v. 16.) It is thus a figure of the Church, the Church as seen from the next verse, as the tabernacle of God, God's habitation through the Spirit, as known even now. (Eph. ii. 22.) Three things are predicated of her: her origin is "from

\* So it should be read, and not "the mother of us all."

God"; she comes "out of heaven," she is heavenly in her character;\* and she is "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The marriage of the Lamb has long since taken place, and then His wife made herself ready; but notwithstanding the centuries that have elapsed she is still seen arrayed in all her bridal beauty, as much without blemish or wrinkle, and as holy, as on the day of her presentation to her glorious Spouse.

Together with her descent to the new earth, John hears "*a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, [and be] their God.*" (v. 3.) There are then three things; the tabernacle, the men, and the relationship which God sustains towards the one and the other. The tabernacle is the holy city; and the holy city, as already explained, is the Church; and inasmuch as it is God's tabernacle, it is presented to us as His dwelling-place. The reason for the use of the term tabernacle will be afterwards seen. Then there are men, and these are all the saved from Adam down to the first coming of the Lord, and all the saved from the rapture of the saints, as described in 1 Thess. iv., until the close of the thousand years; and these have the blessed position of being God's people, of having God with them, and having God as their God. They are not, as the Church, the dwelling-place of God, but their place and blessing are as perfect in their relationship as are the Church's in hers. There are differences which God in His sovereignty has been

\* Compare 2 Cor. v. 1, 2, as to the resurrection body, the body believers will receive in the resurrection.

pleased to make, but all these are but illustrative of His own perfections and grace; and all the redeemed, whatever their special relationships, will be eternally blessed, according to God's thought, in the several positions in which by His grace they are found.

There is a special reason for the use of the word tabernacle in this place. The tabernacle was God's first dwelling-place on earth amongst His people Israel, after their redemption out of Egypt. "Let them make me a sanctuary," He said to Moses, "that I may dwell among them." (Exodus xxv. 8.)\* The tabernacle was erected, and, as we find in the first chapters of Numbers, the tribes were arranged round about it, Jehovah's dwelling-place forming the centre of the encampment. While still in the wilderness, giving instructions concerning their conduct when His people should be in the land, Jehovah gave this promise, a promise conditional upon their obedience. "And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." (Lev. xxvi. 11, 12.) This promise, owing to Israel's transgressions, was never entirely fulfilled; and hence it is repeated (for God never allows His purpose to be frustrated) through Ezekiel, and applied to the time of Messiah's kingdom during the millennium: "My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore." (Ezek. xxxvii.

\* We do not cite Exodus xv. 2, as there is considerable doubt as to the exact reading. The first thought of the sanctuary came from Jehovah Himself.

27, 28.) Coming to our scripture, we have the reproduction of almost the same words, only now not in the form of promise, but as a statement of fact and accomplishment. Connecting the three scriptures, therefore, we learn that it was ever God's thought to surround Himself with His redeemed people; also, that His tabernacle was a figure of the Church as His habitation through the Spirit; and, finally, that the encampment in the wilderness, and the sanctuary during Messiah's glorious reign—which He Himself will build (Zech. vi. 12, 13), even as He is now building the Church (Matt. xvi.)—are but foreshadowings of the eternal state, as portrayed in this scripture.

In the next place John describes the eternal consolations of the redeemed: "*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*" (v. 4.) Speaking exactly, this language applies to the "men" of verse 3. The church forming the tabernacle is not in view save as the dwelling-place of God, but as such in the enjoyment of her own special blessedness. Two things may be noted in this description. It is God who wipes away all tears from their eyes. The tears recall the sorrows of the pilgrim life; and now God Himself, in His infinite grace and tenderness, wipes them away from their eyes—a figure of the eternal consolation ministered to them by God Himself. Then, secondly, death, and all the trials, pains, and griefs associated with human life in this world are gone, for ever abolished. Sin has now been taken away (John i. 29, Heb. ix. 26)—the final result of the death of Christ on the cross; and hence death, together with all the

other bitter fruits of sin, is removed from the scene, swallowed up in the victorious scene of life. It is not the positive side of eternal blessedness, but the negative. But where is the heart which is not relieved at the glorious prospect of freedom for ever, in the immediate enjoyment of the presence of God, from all the burdens that often bow us to the dust while treading the sands of the wilderness?

The last clause of verse 4 may be considered in connection with what follows: "*And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.*" (v. 5.) In 2 Cor. v. 17 we read, "If any man be in Christ, [there is] a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."\* The correspondence between these scriptures cannot be unobserved. The difference is, that in 2 Cor. v. the old things have passed away, and all things have become new *for faith*, whereas in our scripture the change is actually wrought, the former things having disappeared for ever. In 2 Cor. v. all who are in Christ belong to the new creation; they are by faith introduced into this sphere—the sphere where Christ is as its Head, Centre, and Glory. In Revelation the old creation has for ever passed out of existence, and only the new remains. We wait for the latter; but it must not be forgotten that it is the privilege of the believer to anticipate this glorious scene—yea, even now to dwell in it—as well as to expatiate amidst its blessedness, inasmuch as in Christ he belongs to and is himself a part of it.

Thereon we read, "*And He said unto me, Write; for*

\* Some prefer the reading, "New things have come." The authorities are divided.

*these words are true and faithful.*" (v. 5.) This command must, we judge, be regarded as accomplished before the record of the following words: "*And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*" (v. 6.) "It is done" may refer to the conclusion of the revelation, the natural close after the exhibition of the eternal state. It is the completion of the scene, followed by the solemn affirmation of the eternity of God. He is the commencement of all existence, and He is the end; and all duration is embraced in the two terms, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Grace still flows out; but the question is sometimes raised, Can there be still thirsty souls in eternity? This is to miss the significance of the announcement. If the words, "It is done," close the eternal scene opened out to our view, we have in addition a solemn setting forth of God's ways in grace and in judgment while this eternal state is in prospect. There are, in fact, three principles of His actings in regard to man. The first is before us: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." God is a giver (compare John iv. 10-14), and He will give to every thirsty soul; and He will give him not only of the water of life, but of the fountain itself; for the announcement is made in view of the full issue of receiving it, viz., eternal satisfaction and blessedness. And, lastly, He will give it freely, gratuitously—without money, and without price. Truly our God is the God of grace!

We have next, "*He that overcometh shall inherit all [rather, these] things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*" (v. 7.) All God's people must be

overcomers, for they are passing through a hostile world, and are exposed to all the arts and malice of a powerful adversary. We have a glimpse of a faithful remnant in conflict in a former chapter, and of them it is said, "They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." (Chap. xii. 11.) As to the world, John writes, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John v. 4, etc.) In these two scriptures are given the means of victory; and in the passage before us we have encouragement ministered, while engaged in the conflict. First, the overcomer shall inherit these things, all these forms of eternal blessing unrolled before our eyes; and, moreover, God will condescend to enter into relationship with him: "I will be his God, and he shall be my son," and this, as it is again the final issue of the wilderness path, in its full apprehension and enjoyment. Such will be the eternal tie existing, according to the good pleasure of His will, between God and him that overcometh. Finally, the various classes are enumerated, in their moral aspects, who will not only be for ever excluded from this blessed and eternal portion, but also whose part will be "*in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*" (v. 8.) The devil, the beast, and the false prophet have already found their doom in this place, where they "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (chap. xx. 10); and now we learn that all such as are depicted here will have their eternal home in the same prison of hopeless woe. How awful the contrast to the state portrayed in verses 3, 4!



## SCRIPTURE NOTES.

## I.

## PHILIPPIANS ii. 1.

It can scarcely be doubted that the reference in this scripture is to the ministration to the apostle's "wants" by the saints, through Epaphroditus. (See v. 25, and chap. iv. 18.) The apostle felt their kindness deeply; but so completely was he lost in the desires of Christ for His people, that the only true joy they could give him was to exhibit Christ in their mutual relationships. It is thus that their own ministration to him, interpreted in its spiritual significance, becomes the ground of his appeal. Thus: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ," as I have found through your gift; "if any comfort of love," as you have caused me to experience; "if any fellowship of the Spirit," as you have shown there is; "if any bowels and mercies," as have been expressed in your tender consideration for me, "fulfil ye my joy," etc. While fully sensible of their love, his true joy was in their spiritual welfare; and he thus reminds them that nothing could so delight his heart as the exhibition of the several things he here enjoins. And what are these? Oneness of mind, lowliness, and forgetfulness of self. (vv. 2-4.) It may be of interest to point out, that these three verses are introductory to the wonderful passage that follows. As summing up his desires for these beloved saints he says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus;" and he proceeds to trace the path of Christ from the highest height, where He subsisted in the form of God, to the lowest depth, where "He humbled Himself," and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." As has been well remarked, "As God He emptied Himself, and as Man He humbled

Himself"; and all this blessed unfolding of the example of Christ is brought out to teach what kind of spirit or mind should be cherished by the saints!

## II.

## 2 CORINTHIANS VI. 1.

Two things require explanation in this scripture. The reader will perceive that the words "with Him" have been introduced by the translators to make out, as they thought, the sense. This addition is very questionable. The apostle and his associates in service were fellow-workmen, and so wrought together; but they were God's servants, His workmen, engaged in His work; and while the secret of all true service is fellowship with God, the enjoyment of His mind as to it, it is going too far to say exactly that they were "workers together with God." The same mistake has doubtless been made in the first epistle (chapter iii. 9), and it is important to point it out, so as to preserve the exact thought of the Spirit of God. The second thing relates to the precise meaning of "receiving the grace of God in vain." Is it possible, it has been asked, for a Christian to receive the grace of God in vain? The question loses sight of the fact that God takes men up on the ground of their profession. The first epistle, for example, was written not only to "the church of God which is at Corinth," but also to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's." This designation will most certainly include all who professed to be Christians, without having anything to say as to their reality. Being on Christian ground, they are addressed as Christians. When therefore the apostle, having unfolded the wondrous subject of the ministry of reconciliation which had been committed to him, and to those labouring with him, beseeches the Corinthians not to receive

the grace of God in vain, we understand it as a solemn warning against the possibility of their having contented themselves with a mere profession. Grace had been brought to them in the ministry of reconciliation, and they had professed to receive it; but if it had not wrought in their hearts and consciences in the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, they had received it in vain. For this reason the apostle cites a passage, spoken in the first place to Messiah, and applies it to the day of grace; and thereon he founds the appeal (for it is that), "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." He would have them to remember the character of "the accepted time," and to avail themselves of the grace which marked it while the opportunity was vouchsafed. It is really a word for the conscience.

## III.

## NUMBERS x. 1-9.

It is quite true that a different word is used for blowing an alarm with the silver trumpets from that employed to blow, either for the convocation of the assembly, or for the gathering together of the princes. The former would seem to indicate a louder and more lengthened blast, broken up, perhaps, into short and persistent sounds. That the trumpet-call signifies testimony can scarcely be doubted. It is thus the testimony of God that gathers His people out from the world, and draws them together, as well as leads them forward in their journey through the wilderness. (*v.* 2.) None but the sons of Aaron, the priests, it is to be remarked, were permitted to blow with the trumpets; for those who raise God's testimony must enjoy freedom of access into His presence, and be in communion with His mind. This is beautifully illustrated in Nehemiah iv. 18, "And he that sounded the trumpet was by me";

close to his leader, to catch the guidance of his eye, and to hear the word of command. It is not enough, indeed, to give forth a testimony, even if divine; but the testimony rendered must be received from God for the moment, and hence the necessity for the qualification of abiding communion. The two other occasions for the use of the trumpets are in verses 9, 10, the significance of which may easily be gathered by the attentive reader. The testimony of God persistently sounded forth in the presence of the enemy, who would oppress God's people, brings God in for deliverance; and the trumpets must never cease to be blown "in the days of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months . . . over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God." Whenever God's people were gathered together, whatever the character of the assembly, there should always be a testimony rendered, in communion with His own heart, to the death of His beloved Son, as the foundation of all their blessing. So now, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show [announce] the Lord's death until He come." God's trumpet is thus still sounded in the assemblies of His saints. The trumpets, it may be added, were to be of silver, and to be made "of a whole piece."\* (v. 2.) Silver in Scripture is often significant of redemption; but it is also "the type of the immutable steadfastness of God's purposes and ways in the wilderness." While, therefore, all testimony is based upon redemption, it partakes of the unchangeable character and thoughts of God Himself, and hence it can never fail of accomplishment. (Compare Joshua xxiii. 13, 14.)

\* The rendering "of a whole piece shalt thou make them" is questionable. It should be rather, as in the *Revised Version*, "of beaten work"; or, as others, "of beaten silver."

## ROMANS AND COLOSSIANS.

PAUL, in the epistle to the Romans, does not enter on the ground of the new creation, but treats of man on this earth as a responsible being, only in one word as an abstract doctrine showing him as he will be, and that only personally: "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." Here alone (chapter viii.) *purpose* comes in, but only as to the state of individuals. God's sovereignty is asserted in chapter ix., but only to give God title to let in the Gentiles in contrast with a national election claimed by the Jews.

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But the purposes of God, or the new creation which is in purpose, are not in view. Man is a responsible creature in this world, dealt with as such, though in the end glorified. This responsibility is met by the work of Christ and the coincident fact of having life in Him. With this the great fact of present Christianity is recognised—the Holy Ghost down here. By this we know that we are in Christ, but as down here. It is the believer's state down here in virtue of the Holy Ghost coming here. He sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts, but all this is my state down here, not the new creation. Its being so indeed gives it such value, though from other scriptures I know all this involves a part in the new creation.

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The epistle meets the whole question of our personal relationship to God. First, Christ is a propitiation through faith in His blood, and being risen again, the ground of

our justification is shown to be perfect, and being justified by faith we have peace with God. God imputes no sin to the believer, Christ having been delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. Then, from chapter v. 12, the apostle takes up our state. Adam, by his disobedience, has brought all connected with him into the condition of sinners; Christ, by His obedience, all connected with Him into that of righteousness.

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But we have this righteousness by having part in His death; the having part in it is the very profession of Christianity. Thus deliverance from the state and power of sin is by death, and our death is in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. But if we are alive in Christ, and Christ is in us (chapter viii.), it is Christ who is risen and even is glorified after having died. Such a Christ being our life, we are esteemed dead; for He who is our life, our true *I*, has died, and this is valid and effectual for faith. But being alive in Christ is not all; but we are alive in Him who was crucified, and we have died with Him, and this frees from the old man and the law. Thus we are baptised to Christ's death, buried with Him by baptism unto death, but called upon, therefore, only to walk in newness of life, for we are here in this creation as to our place.

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A living Christ is our life here; but we are not looked at as raised up with Him. It is still the same responsible man, but all sins put away, one who will be like Christ in resurrection, who is not to serve sin; it will not have dominion over him; it is not to reign in his mortal body, for there he yet is, but being set free to yield himself to God as alive from the dead,

and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God; freed from sin by Christ being our life, and sin in the flesh condemned in Christ, a sacrifice for sin, and we, He having died, reckoning ourselves dead.

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The epistle to the Colossians goes farther. The believer, indeed, is not seen, as in Ephesians, sitting in heavenly places in Christ. A hope is laid up for him in heaven, and he is to set his affection on things above, where Christ sits at God's right hand, not on things on the earth. But he is not only dead with Christ; he is also risen with Him; he is dead, and his life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ appears he will appear with Him.

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It is important to notice that the death is always the same, for it is Christ's death. Death there was death. He died, and therein died to sin once. That death, ours by faith, is the only death spoken of. His death as a Person who had been alive in this world *was* His death to sin. We are dead with Him in Colossians, dead with Him in Romans. It is death to sin, in Him, and in us; only He had none, and we do not literally die but appropriate His death through grace.

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But in Colossians we are looked at as having lived in sins. (Chapter ii. 12, iii. 7.) This coincides with Romans. But (chapter ii. 12, iii. 1) we are also risen with Him, and we are also viewed as having been dead in sins (chapter ii. 13), which so far coincides with Ephesians, only it does not go so far—not seating us in heavenly places, nor, as I have said, developing the doctrine of the body nor the purpose of God. But

the being risen with Christ takes the believer himself into a new state. It is not merely life in Christ. Christ having come down and borne his sins, coming into his place of death, the sins having been put away and forgiven, he is raised with Him, and thus enters on a new sphere of existence. He has done with all the elements or principles of this world; he is not to walk as one alive in this world subject to ordinances, as in a religion suited to the flesh, but to have his affections (mind) on things above, where Christ sits; he is dead, and his life is hid there, for Christ is his life, though he be not sitting there as yet himself. Hence he has put off the old man and put on the new, and this is renewed in knowledge—has his knowledge according to a wholly new sphere of existence, after the image of Him that created him.

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In Colossians we are not spoken of as dead to sin nor law, but ourselves as dead and risen; that is, more definitely associated with Christ in the matter. It looks onward, and not backward, as Romans does. The death is always Christ's own death, but in Romans it is viewed as delivering us, as in this world, from sin in the flesh and from law; in Colossians as associating us with Christ in death and resurrection. We are not dead *to* anything in Colossians as living here, though by Christ, but have died from one system and begun (*νέος*) another. We are not alive in the world, nor manifested, nor sitting in heavenly places. Our life is hid above with Christ, and our hearts and hopes are to follow after.\*

\* The above valuable helps to the understanding of the difference between Romans and Colossians are extracted from an article in vol. xxiii., "Collected Writings of J. N. D.," commencing with p. 524. (Ed.)



## THE FOUNTAIN OF THE WATER OF LIFE.

“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”—REV. **xxi.** 6.

It is blessed to know that every desire produced in us by the Holy Ghost will be eternally satisfied. I do not mean that our hearts are not satisfied already, for through grace we are called to full joy already in communion with the Father and Son; but I should wish if possible to consider this passage, comparing it with one or two other parts of the Word, for the encouragement of our souls.

The subject has been already spoken of, but being so full of blessing, may well be considered again and again.

I suppose that few will doubt that the Lord is awakening us to learn and enter into the moral value of the truths of Christianity at this time. He would have our hearts in the conscious enjoyment of eternal things. The things which are unseen are eternal. In this part of the Word the eternal state is brought before us by the Holy Ghost, and the stability of a new and eternal order of things clearly taught. There shall be no more sea, no fluctuating instability, and God Himself shall wipe away all tears, and there shall be no more death nor sorrow.

I do not wish to dilate upon this, but merely to call attention to the fact that the eternal state is here depicted by the Holy Ghost. Alas! how many people have looked upon heaven as a kind of ultimate haven

after a stormy life, and nothing more. What vague and almost pagan dreams of a future Paradise in Christendom, as some old heathen might imagine the happy isles of the blest. A celebrated picture of the "Plains of Heaven" is a kind of specimen of the idea of what celestial blessing is in man's imagination. But many true believers do not go very much further; and we have all looked too much at heaven as a kind of terminal refuge where all trouble shall have ended. I do not mean that it is not so, but I wish to call attention to this most wonderful promise as to the *fountain* of the water of life in connection with eternity.

There is not one single desire or thought about Christ in us that shall not be satisfied throughout eternity, and our eternal joy shall be to drink at this fountain. He Himself is the eternal source of our joy and happiness. You will say that we drink of the water of life already. Yes, most certainly, and of that I hope to say a word. But perhaps it would be well to think of the expression *fountain*, and I might be able to give an illustration from natural things.

I recollect many years ago a very hot summer at Malta, and the water becoming very scarce and bad. There are very few springs in the island, and the rain-water has to be collected in tanks, and becomes putrid and worthless in the hot months. I remember having walked a long way with a friend, and, being parched with thirst, coming to a place in the north of the island called Ayin Tofficha, where to our surprise and delight we found a spring of water bubbling up from the rocks. We drank without interruption till all our thirst was quenched, and remarked that this

(drinking at a source) was a very different thing from buying glasses of water in Valetta.

If my illustration serves my present purpose I shall be satisfied. We shall drink for ever at the *source* of the water of life. Oh, beloved brethren, do we enter into this a little? Is not God Himself awakening us, so that we might not be content to know that we are on the way to His rest, blessed though that be, but that all the new desires of the new creature shall be eternally satisfied in Christ Himself, and that we shall drink throughout eternity of that ever-flowing Source?

But to notice for a moment that of which I said I would speak—that we drink already of the water of life. I should like very briefly to turn to two well-known scriptures. I freely confess that they are so blessedly profound that I almost fear to say anything upon them, but through the Lord's mercy I would call attention to them. The first is in John iv. 10-14, where the *giving* God in His grace bestows the living water. The blessed Son of God would give the living water, nay, gave it, to the poor Samaritan woman. He has given it to us also, and there is in us a source of water springing up into everlasting life. Our hearts have been satisfied no doubt. We shall not thirst again as those of the world do (oh, may it be practically true!), and the new desires of the new creature spring up towards Him, the new blessed Object of our souls, and are satisfied in Him and nowhere else. You will say that one must not separate the Holy Spirit's action in us from this active springing up to everlasting life. No, my dear friends, it is just exactly what I do not wish to do. Wonderful and blessed thing—a well

(source) of water springing up in the power of the Holy Ghost!

This is then clear, that we have drunk already of the water of life, and that we drink of it, and that our joy is full already, if we walk with God. "We write unto you these things that your joy may be full."

Our attention has been called lately to what communion with the Father and Son means. May we be truly in the enjoyment of it! But this does not in any way lessen the force of the word *fountain* (source) in Revelation xxi. 6. If we have tasted already of the water of life, if the truth of John iv. is not merely a doctrine but a living reality, if the new desires are felt, new affections produced in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and flowing forth towards the Son who has revealed to us the Father—if, I say, these things be realised, the promise to drink eternally of the fountain of the water of life becomes increasingly precious, for we shall drink of that eternal source beyond all time and dispensation, and never shall there be any distance between us and the Father's heart, fully known in the Son. Eternal bliss!

The other passage to which I wish to allude is John vii. 37-39. It has been much spoken of. There is the coming to Christ and *drinking*, and then the flowing forth of testimony in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a question here of the glorifying of Jesus, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost consequent upon this.

I once read a very striking account of the Dead Sea by an Asiatic traveller, in which he mentioned the fact that in that scene of desolation, where all verdure is destroyed by the salt and bitumen of asphaltites, in that dreary waste a rivulet runs down from Callirshoë

on the side of Bashan, a fresh, bright spring in the midst of the salt desert; and where this brook runs there is a belt of green—palms, oleanders, and other plants—a picture of what the Christian should be in the desert of this world.

But my object now is not to dwell on the fact of testimony, blessed though it be, but to notice that here too we find the drinking mentioned first of all, the reception of the glorious Jesus, as the Holy Ghost revealed Him at Pentecost, before the Feast of Tabernacles be celebrated.

We know then the glorified Lord. Our life is hid with Christ in God, and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory.

Beloved brethren, are our hearts really seeking the things that are above? our eyes really fixed on the things (invisible but to faith) that are eternal? We shall have no other source of joy during eternity than Him, who has declared the Father's name to us, and is the glorious centre of His eternal counsels.

E. L. B.

## THE PERSON OF THE LORD.

*(Concluded.)*

BUT there was more than the revelation of His Person and the exercise of His power. I turn to another case, Luke vii., the Pharisee and the sinner. Here we have not the rejected state of man, and free grace rising above it all, but actual degrading sin in contrast with human righteousness—a legal condition as man stands in it, and what this blessed One was for sinners. Three hearts—man as he stands in his own

righteousness—God's in Man—and the poor and degraded sinner touched by grace and won, in a certain sense unconsciously (*i.e.*, with no dogmatical knowledge), by what was manifested in the Lord, what He was in blessed love first, then forgiveness. The legal man thought to judge, by human competency, if the Lord, this Preacher going about the country, were really a prophet; but he judged according to human righteousness—what man should be for God, but only in an outward way; his own heart, God's heart and light, and even this poor woman's heart unknown—light and love, light and conscience, and love in the heart, *i.e.*, God alike wholly unknown. God was in His house, in light, as He showed, and love, and he never found it out—despised Him, had no civilities or courtesies for Him, and judged from his own heart; while He was not like it He could be no prophet. Here self-righteousness, divine grace, and sin come together in fullest juxtaposition and contrast, and divine light which makes all things manifest too, and that in the Person of the lowly Preacher, the Son of God. The Pharisee is wholly blind, says he sees, judges from his own heart, and sees neither the manifestation of God in Christ, nor the work of grace in the woman. Light and love are alike wholly foreign to him.

The Lord shows fully that He is the light that makes all manifest, knows what is in the Pharisee's heart, knows the woman's sins, and what the Pharisee was thinking of Him and her. But more. His grace—the grace that was in Him—had attracted the heart of this poor sinful woman. Her need was great, her shame great, her sin deplorable, to no human eye could she turn that would not scorn her but One, and that

was God; there her heart found confidence. The more she was distressed and brought low, the more was her comfort in finding that heart; there, in that mercy, her shame could hide itself, for it was grace to her, scorn was not there. But all this, through grace, had won her to hate and own her sin. It was the meeting-point of sin and grace, confession of a convicted heart through confidence in goodness in Jesus; sin seen, and God seen, and because God was seen in love. Divine sight was there, not blindness, divine love had brought in divine light, so that God and sin in self were both known, and God trusted, and a guileless heart produced because grace was trusted. How deep a work to bring a soul to God, and have sin judged and God known! And then Christ was all—she thought little of Simon and his guests—save One. Jesus was there, and that absorbed her. She was delivered from her shame even as to all the rest, but not her shame before God. Then a silent heart wept, and washed His feet with her tears. There was boldness in her confidence, yet lowliness and thanksgiving in the boldness. She kissed His feet too, and spent what she had of precious ointment on Him. Then, as He had occupied that heart with Himself in grace, He occupies Himself with that heart—He has done with Simon and the rest—to such a heart He must give peace. But first He takes her part in that which shows not only that He knew Simon's heart and all about it; but there was that of which Simon knew nothing—besides blindness as to His Person—forgiveness. God, happily for her, knew all her sins and had forgiven them—wondrous revelation! The grace that revealed love and goodness had brought forgiveness with it—relief, full and perfect

from God—when sin had confounded the soul before God, it was seen as sin because God was seen and in grace, the grace could tell that it was all gone—before God forgiven.

The Person of Christ had drawn—she loved much. The grace of God in Christ had forgiven. Of that, of God, Pharisaism knows nothing. The Lord takes up the woman's case in presence of the Pharisee's contempt, and shows what he was—what she was—what God was—what He was in Himself. Then He occupies Himself with the woman alone, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; their remarks do not arrest Him—"Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." He had sounded the Pharisee's heart, sounded and brought to light her's—revealed God's, and conferred forgiveness. Confession of sin and forgiveness of sin (and that is the cross for us) are the meeting-place of the sinner in truth and God in love. Here again we have God revealed in a Man, but specially in respect of sin.

In the first place He does not come to judge, but He is simply with adversaries, and is simply in result "I am." In the woman of Samaria, He is rejected of the Jews, and grace flows out giving life, going up to eternal life above, bringing to the Father—God known as a Spirit—and this by grace going out where promise gave no salvation, and no claim to righteousness but sin and need.

In the Syro-Phœnician, where faith comes, grace rises where grace is gone above all barriers. God is revealed to faith, and must be above them all, must be what He is in grace, cannot deny Himself, and faith pierces through all barriers, urged by need to appeal to what God is in Himself in grace, and He cannot be



what He is, or be kept in by the barriers when that was reached, though He was there in One serving as sent where promise was; still God was there.

Luke vii. goes deeper, and Light is there—Pharisaism and sin brought fully to light; the utter and deplorable blindness of Pharisaism manifested what man in self-righteousness is—no perception of God at all, nor of anything in Him. Then to the sinner a deep, true perception of what He was as grace meeting need, and hence brought to God according to the power of His presence, and the grace of His nature, He being known, humbled fully before Him, but brought to Him according to what He was, the bond of the heart with Him formed, with Him known, and forgiveness, peace, and salvation received. It is deeper, because it goes into the full moral question of the state of man with God—light in the heart and soul of man as he was.

The case of the palsied man in Matthew ix. is somewhat different. It is not God revealed in His nature of goodness, what He is in Christ for men; it is relative—Jehovah of Psalm ciii., manifested in Israel, His ways in Israel in grace, but relative; what He was, of course, but according to promise and prophecy.

I do not again enter into the full bringing out of the three hearts in Luke vii. 36 to end, the Pharisee's, the sinner's looking to Christ, and, blessed be His grace and name, God's own heart already spoken of; light and love were there, neither the least known to Simon—he was blind, thinking he saw. Christ, in whom it is revealed, is the subject of our adoration. I only notice now, "Thy faith hath saved thee." How God owns, as that which He sees in the heart of the poor convicted

believer, what He has wrought! Tears and repentance were there, true love to the Saviour, excellent fruits of faith, but faith by grace gave her Christ; hence faith saved her—God's work in the heart, by which Christ was seen and appreciated. Her heart was thus shown, what God indeed had wrought in it, but in it; but then it was what it was that fixed it wholly on another; it was not objectively itself nor reflectively—it knew Christ only. It produced lovely fruits, most lovely, which the Lord owns; but it saved, because it saw Christ only. But what is lovely here, that Christ owns, attaches value to what was in her heart, wrought there surely, but was in it; its action on Him as its object gives us to see divine appreciation of the state of the heart thus having Him for its object. He does not say, "Grace has saved thee," though true. "My work, my blood-shedding, has saved thee"—that would have been speaking of something in God, of His own work; but He speaks to her of divine value for something in the heart of the poor woman. This is unspeakable goodness, divine tenderness and favour. If it be a wonderful picture in presence of Pharisaism, we have to leave the Pharisaism to itself, as the Lord did, and see the Lord owning what was of God in the heart that turned to Him. The poor, desolate, and lonely woman could go away and say, "I have His approbation on what is in my soul"—the comfort of His approbation, yet thinking of Him still, not of herself; for thinking of approbation, a father's approbation, is not thinking of what is approved, or of self. Faith had saved her, and she could go in peace. She had it from Christ, and her faith in His Person gave divine weight and grace to His words.

J. N. D.

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

## CHAPTER XXI. 9-21.

GREAT mistakes have been made by many expositors, on this portion of scripture, from failing to perceive that the first part of the chapter presents the eternal state, and that here the Spirit of God takes us back to a description of the heavenly city in relation to the thousand years. From chapter xix. 11 to chapter xxi. 8, as before shown, we have a consecutive narrative of events, from the appearing of Christ to the introduction of the state of eternal blessedness, wherein God is all in all. Then, commencing with xxi. 9, a new section begins, the object of which is to set forth the glories of the bride, the Lamb's wife, the holy city, as the metropolis, the heavenly seat of administration, of the earth, during the millennial period. This will become clear to the reader as we pursue the details here given.

John thus introduces the last section of the book: "*And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.*" (v. 9.) It was one of these seven angels who had shown John the judgment of Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. The parallel, or rather contrast, is designed. Babylon had claimed, but falsely, to be the bride of Christ. The angel had exhibited her in her true character, and the judgment from God with which she should be finally overwhelmed. (Chap. xvii.) Consequent upon her destruction the marriage of the

Lamb took place in heaven (chap. xix. 1-8), and now the true bride, the Lamb's wife, is shown in all her beauty—the expression of the thoughts of God, as Babylon had been the expression of the thoughts of man. To view Babylon, John was transported in the spirit into the wilderness—a scene of moral drought and desolation; to behold the holy city Jerusalem\* he was carried away in the spirit to a great and high mountain. As Moses surveyed the promised inheritance from Pisgah, so John is permitted to behold the fulfilment of promise and prophecy, in this glorious city, from the lofty eminence on which he was placed by the angel. Thence he saw her "*descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.*" (vv. 10, 11.)

Three features are marked; it was divine in its origin, and heavenly in its character; it had also the glory of God. As another has written: "It might be of God and earthy. It might be heavenly and angelic. It was neither; it was divine in origin and heavenly in nature and character. It was clothed with divine-glory; it must be as founded on Christ's work." We learn from 2 Cor. v. that all these features are true also of the individual believer, in respect of His resurrection body. It could not indeed be otherwise, inasmuch as the result for the whole Church is but the collective expression of what is the result for the saint of the work of redemption. Let it also be remembered, that while the glory, the actual glory, is yet future, the Church is now as divine in origin, and

\* The correct reading is probably, "The holy city, Jerusalem," and not, as in our version, "That great city, the holy Jerusalem."

as heavenly in nature, as she will ever be. To understand this is indispensable for the faithful occupation of her place on earth as God's witness, and for her preservation from the contaminations of the world around. It is owing, alas! to the forgetfulness of this blessed truth, that she has sought and found (we speak of the whole Church), like Pergamos of old, a home in the place where Satan dwelleth.

Her light, or her shining, was moreover like a jasper stone; and hence proceeds, as may be gathered from the significance of the jasper in chapter iv. 3, from the glory of God. (Compare Isaiah lx. 1.) The word translated light, or shining, is that found in Philippians ii. 15, as applied to believers—"among whom [a crooked and perverse generation] ye shine [or rather, appear] as lights in the world." It is the word used of the heavenly luminaries; and we therefore learn that what believers should be now morally, the holy Jerusalem will be actually in the coming age; and that all the light in testimony that proceeds now, whether from the saints or the whole Church, comes from the same divine source as the "shining" of the holy city in the future day of glory. (Compare 2 Cor. iv. 6.) And the "shining" of the holy city will be like a jasper stone, clear as crystal, transparent and unclouded, and it will illumine the earth with its bright, blessed, and perfect rays. But while the natural eye will be able to perceive it, the heart, even as now, will need to be divinely open to receive, and bow to its blessed testimony.

We pass now to another feature: "*And had a wall great and high, [and] had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on*

*the east three gates ; on the north three gates ; on the south three gates ; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."* (vv. 12-15.)

Before dwelling on the significance of the wall it may be well to call attention to the recurrence of the number twelve in this description. It has the fixed meaning in Scripture of the perfection of governmental administration in man, that is, in Christ, and this in connection with Israel. Hence there were twelve tribes, and twelve apostles, both mentioned here, and both connected in the words of our Lord 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.) This at once explains the force of the number twelve, and, at the same time, the character of the holy city as here presented ; that the church, the Lamb's wife, is displayed, not in her intimate relationships to Christ, as seen in Paul's epistles, but rather in connection with the government of the earth in the hands of Christ during the thousand years. Blessed and perfect as all is, as thus exhibited, it yet does not present to us the more intimate joys and affections of the Father's house, nor our highest associations with Christ in heavenly blessedness, as, for example, set forth in the promise to the overcomer in Philadelphia. And yet, who, that is acquainted, in any measure, with Christian literature and hymnology, can doubt that the "golden city" occupies a larger place in the minds of saints than the Father's house.

The symbolic meaning of the wall will be security ;

and this is assured, as may be seen in *v.* 18, by the fact that "the building of the wall of it was of jasper"—that is, the glory of God. Clothed with, she is also protected by, the divine glory, even as Isaiah speaks, "The glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward." All that God is, and all that God is in display, is the wall round about the New Jerusalem. But, as we may see further on, the wall not only encloses and secures the holy city, but it also excludes all evil; for "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." (*v.* 27; compare chapter xxii. 15.)

In the wall there are twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and written thereon the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. The gate of a city in Scripture was always the place of judgment, and inasmuch as there are twelve here, three on every side, it will denote the perfectness of the administration of justice in the government of that day. The kingdom character of this administration is denoted by the names of the twelve tribes on the gates, and indicating also, perhaps, at the same time, that it is through Israel as a centre that the administration in government will be conducted. Twelve angels are stationed at the gates: in the dispensations previous to Christianity they were God's providential agents in His governmental order; but they are now "the willing door-keepers of the great city," which will be the heavenly metropolis of Messiah's glorious kingdom. They are therefore subordinate, in the purposes of God, to the glorified saints of which the heavenly city is formed. There were, moreover, twelve foundations to the wall, the character of which

is declared by the fact that they contained the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; for, as we read in Ephesians, those who are the fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, "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." (Chap. ii. 19-21.) But the mention of the twelve apostles of the Lamb shows again that the church is not here "presented as the bride, though it be the bride, the Lamb's wife. It is not in the Pauline character of nearness of blessing to Christ. It is the assembly as founded at Jerusalem under the twelve—the organised seat of heavenly power, the new and now heavenly capital of God's government."

In the next place the city and the gates and the wall are measured. (vv. 15-17.) The meaning of this symbolic act has already been explained in chapter xi. There is a difference, however, to be noted in the measuring rods. There it was "a reed like unto a rod"; here it is "a golden reed." In both cases the measuring betokens owning on the part of God, with the added idea of appropriation. The thing measured is according to His mind, and He thereby owns it to be so, and claims it as His; while the measuring rod being golden will testify that it is in righteousness He thus stamps the city, its wall and gates, with His approval. The result of the measurement is given. "*The city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.*" Like the holiest in the tabernacle and the temple, it is a cube, twelve



thousand furlongs on every side—the symbol of finite perfection. That it is a given perfection needs scarcely be said, inasmuch as it had its origin in the counsels of God, and owes its existence to the death and resurrection of Christ. In all its perfection and beauty, the heavenly city is the expression of the grace of God.

The measurement of the wall is an hundred and forty-four cubits, twelve times twelve; so that in every detail the governmental character of the city is exhibited, and seen as divinely perfect.

Following upon the measurement, the composition of the various parts of the city is given. That of the wall has been anticipated; it was of jasper, the symbol of the glory of God. Happy city to be surrounded with, and guarded by, the divine glory! And such will be the lot of the holy Jerusalem. "*The foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones.*" (v. 19.) The names of the stones are then given, beginning with the jasper and ending with the amethyst. The list may be compared with the twelve precious stones on the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus xxviii.); and it will be observed that the jasper, which comes first in our scripture, is the last on the high-priestly breastplate. There may be the significance in this, that whereas the Church begins with the glory, in the person of the Head, it lies at the end for Israel. To speak generally, "the precious stones," as has been well said, "or varied displays of God's nature, who is light, in connection with the creature (seen in creation, Ezekiel xxviii.; in grace in the high priest's breastplate), now shone in permanent glory, and adorned the foundations of the city." Morally they exhibit, therefore, the history of souls—

as creatures, then as subjects of grace, taken up and put upon the heart of Christ, and finally seen displayed in all His various beauties in the glory.

“*The twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl.*” (v. 21.) The symbolic force of the pearl may be gleaned from the parable in Matthew xiii.—where the Church is seen under the emblem of a “pearl of great price,” the preciousness and beauty of which led the merchantman (Christ) to sell all that he had, and to purchase it. The pearl speaks, therefore, of what is attractive to the heart of Christ—a beauty which, as seen in the counsels of God, ravished Him, so that He loved the Church and gave Himself for it. (See Ephesians v. 25–27.) And every gate of the holy city shone with this resplendent beauty, the fruit and issue of Christ’s love and His redemption work.

E. D.

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#### EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.

SOULS, dear ——, are enabled to make so short a journey in these days. It used to be an age to pass from death unto life, but now 'tis a journey accomplished in haste. And really this is more according to the New Testament model. Zaccheus and the thief, the Samaritan and Peter and Matthew, took but little time to travel that road. But it is comforting, however, to see other cases, souls finding their way more gradually step by step. The spirit of Nathaniel may have been under the shade of the fig-tree for years; we cannot say. Lydia may have been in “the place where prayer was wont to be made” for years; we cannot say. Cornelius may have had his feasts and his religious services and his legal fears about his soul

and his gracious almsgiving for years ; we cannot say. But we do see the slow-heartedness and creeping progress of Nicodemus. And yet he has surely reached Jesus at the end, and all the time was on the road, as they did who took a short cut as it were across the fields.

There was conviction and uneasiness in his soul I believe when he first came to the Lord. It was not a *commanding* affection I grant you. Had it been so it would have shaped his approach to Jesus very differently from what we find it was. And he left Him much perhaps as he came, only as one who had heard things to startle him, and give him such musings that either he must entertain them or have no more to say to Jesus. (John iii.) And I believe he did entertain them. He continued uneasy, and did not stifle conviction, so that on the next occasion he pleads for righteousness, and is so far an advocate of the Lord. (John vii.)

But this is slow work, and this slowness is not to his honour. The fear of man was still over him. The affections that drew him to the Lord were not *commanding* yet. Had they been so, he would not have been standing for Him in the council of enemies, but he would have joined himself with His disciples. Indeed we never find him in their company ; a bad sign. Cords and bands must be weak that do not draw that way. Still the thing is *real* with him, and he who once stole by night to the Lord, now stands up for His rights, as one accused, in the face of his enemies.

There is, however, a difference between an *advocate* and a *disciple* of Christianity. I may eloquently plead

for truth, or learnedly write for it, and yet be personally a stranger to it. Nicodemus had not yet learned Christ as sinners learn a Saviour. But does he not come to this at last? He reaches the cross. Surely a good symptom. Surely the best place he could be in. I can scarcely say when I see him there, and the very apostles themselves fled and gone, that the last shall be first. I know not that I can say that—that now the timid Joseph, and the slow-hearted Nicodemus, are before and beyond the earnest Peter and the loving John. I know not, again I say, that I can say that. But Joseph and Nicodemus are in the best place on the face of the whole earth at that moment. There was not a single act that could have been performed by faith, more in season with that moment, than the taking down the body from the cross. It was owning the crucified One in the face of the world, and fulfilling, though they may not have known it, the words of the prophet, "With the rich in His death."

The place too is the place where the sinner properly first meets his Saviour. He looks to Him whom his sins had pierced. He is now a sinner looking to be saved, and not a pupil looking to be taught, as at first, and he has new thoughts of Jesus now. He could not now have said, "We know thou art a Teacher come from God," true as that is; he must reach Him as a Saviour ere he can learn of Him as a Teacher.

Does he not make the journey from darkness to light, from death unto life? Surely he does, slow-paced traveller as he was. Ah! there is comfort in tracking the path of such an one amid the brilliant footprints of the Samaritan, and of the adulteress, of Andrew and Philip, and the blind beggar. J. G. B.

## SCRIPTURE NOTES.

## I.

JOHN vii. 16, 17.

THE Jews, accustomed to listen to the rabbis, were astonished that Jesus, an illiterate Man from their point of view, could teach as He did. But His doctrine was of the Father, not human. The means of understanding it was a state of soul answering to such a mission; the desire to do the Father's will would recognise the word which came from Him. The moral state of the soul, the single eye, is the means of receiving, of intelligently discerning, the doctrine that came from the Father; the conscience is open, the heart quite ready to receive the truth. Many things in the teaching may go beyond the knowledge possessed by such a soul; but the teaching answers to its needs; it bears to it the impress of truth, of holiness; it suits God; there is not self-seeking. The good of souls is sought, the conscience is sounded, however dealing in grace. Now there is a conscience in all men, and here the desire to obey is supposed. Such a man discerns that which is of God when God speaks. It is not reasoning which convinces the mind; reasoning never convinces the will, but the desire being there, it is God who adapts Himself in His teaching to the wants and to the heart of man.

J. N. D.

## II.

JOHN vii. 37, 38.

WHETHER there is any allusion in verse 37 to the custom of fetching water in a golden vessel from the pool of Siloam in the several days of the feast of tabernacles, and then pouring it out into another vessel on

the altar, it is impossible to say. Nor need we be concerned to ascertain; for it is with the truth signified in this blessed invitation of our Lord that we have to do. It is clear, from verse 39, that the invitation is anticipatory; that is, that it looks on beyond the cross to the time when the Lord should be glorified on high; for it is from thence the Holy Ghost has been given to believers. (See chap. xiv. 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7.) And living water represents life in the power of the Holy Ghost, life therefore in Christ. And hence it brings those who possess it into a new scene, into the place where Christ is. To quote the words of another, "It is well that we should call attention to three operations of the Spirit of God. In chap. iii. we are born of the Spirit; in chap. iv. it is a fountain springing up to everlasting life. Here (in chap. vii.) the new man enters into the enjoyment of things not seen, of things heavenly and eternal. When they fill the heart, when the heart, drinking of that which is in Jesus, is satisfied, then these things overflow, and refresh thirsty souls. Heavenly affections meet souls, showing what it is that revives a soul without God, which groans without knowing, perhaps, what is wanting. The words of Jesus were truly some of these waters." But it is necessary to mark the two actions indicated. First, the thirsty soul *comes* to Christ, drinks, and is satisfied. To "drink" is, of course, a figure in relation to the symbol, water. In this gospel man is seen as dead rather than guilty (chap. v. 24, 25), as without spiritual life. It is Christ therefore as risen out of death in the power of life, and as glorified, who alone can meet his need. Hence His cry, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." And coming, he passes out of death into life, himself now, by the gift of the Spirit, in a new state and con-

dition, and belonging to the sphere "of things heavenly and eternal," into which he will be actually introduced when the Lord comes to receive him unto Himself, that "where He is, he may be also." (Chap. xiv.) Secondly, there is *believing*. "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water." Believing here, it should be well observed, is not like "coming," once and for all, but it is faith in continuous activity, as the condition for the outflow of the rivers of living water. It is the same in chap. xiv., where we read, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." (v. 12.) In other words, it is not simply a believer, but a believer in whom faith in Christ is in present exercise, of whom these things are said. This is of the first importance; for it reveals to us first of all the qualification for being a channel of blessing to others, viz., that we must be in living connection, through faith, with Christ as the fountain—and, together with this, it enables us to discover the secret of all power in service. (Compare Matthew xxi. 21; Luke xvii. 5, 6, &c.) It is a wonderful thing to reflect upon, that the rivers of living water that first flowed forth from Christ may now flow, and will flow, from His people who live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

### III.

#### PHILIPPIANS iii. 12-15.

THE apparent contradiction in these verses springs from mistranslation. "Perfect" in verse 12 should be "perfected"; and this means, as the context shows, conformity to Christ, in body, as well as morally, at the resurrection from among the dead. (v. 11.) Then,

when the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall change the body of our humiliation (our vile body), that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory (His glorious body), according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself (*vv.* 20, 21), we shall be in our "perfected" condition; and it is to this the apostle refers when he says, "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfected." But when he says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" (*v.* 15), the meaning is quite different. "Perfect" here is that translated in Heb. v. 14 as "full age"; and this, in fact, is, in its general use, its proper signification. In other words, it implies mature Christians; those, according to the teaching of this chapter, who know Christ in glory, and the power of His resurrection; and accept nothing less than conformity to Christ, as so revealed, as the goal of the Christian, as the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. To recognize this involves the acceptance of God's judgment upon the first man in the cross of Christ, and his utter displacement for faith, by the second Man, the glorified Christ; and also of the fact, that Christ glorified is the commencement of God's new order of things, after the pattern of which God is now working, according to His eternal purpose, to conform the redeemed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. The "perfect," therefore, are those who accept, and are in the power of, the full truth of Christianity. This chapter, it may be said, presents to us the present effect, in the person of Paul, of the knowledge of this truth, of having Christ in glory as his alone object, while pressing toward the mark, with all the energy thus begotten in his soul, for the prize set before him, viz., conformity to a glorious Christ.

E. D.



## GLEANINGS FROM RUTH.

MANY applications are often made of the details of this beautiful book; but before these can be rightly made, it is necessary to ascertain its place and significance according to the mind of God. There are two ways in which it may be viewed—as actual history, and what is prefigured by the history; that is, there are lessons to be gleaned from the actual facts, and from the conduct of the persons recorded; and there is also much instruction to be gathered from the typical meaning of the facts and persons, in their relation to Christ and His people.

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In regard to the actual facts of the book, it is a perfect contrast to the book of Judges. The last five chapters of this book reveal the utter corruption into which Israel as a people had fallen, through the abuse of God's grace in bringing them out of Egypt, and in putting them into the possession of Canaan. Successive revivals, through deliverers and judges, had been vouchsafed to them in the mercy of their God, but as soon as the pressure was removed, and the personal influence of the judge was gone, they immediately relapsed into forgetfulness of God, and even into idolatry. Their moral state is summed up in one pregnant sentence: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

It is therefore with immense relief that we follow on to the book of Ruth, and discover that in the midst of all the moral failure of the people there were those who with humility of mind and simplicity of faith served the God of their fathers. It is as if treading the sands of some barren, arid wilderness, we came suddenly upon flowers of exquisite beauty and rare fragrance. This contrast is heightened if it is borne in mind that Micah's priest (Judges xvii.) and the Levite's concubine both belonged to the place—Bethlehem-judah—where Elimelech, Naomi, and Boaz dwelt. The light is but the more intense from the density of the surrounding darkness.

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There is another feature to be observed. We learn that God was working, through all the failure of His people in view of Messiah, that Christ was ever His object, and hence that all these actings and personages that invite our attention are but prophetic intimations of the true Deliverer of Israel. For here in Boaz and Ruth we are introduced to the direct line of His ancestry; and from the fact of a poor widowed Moabite stranger being exalted to share in this blessed privilege, we learn how entirely all is of grace, and that, while God had been pleased to bind Himself by the two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for Him to lie, it was yet in the exercise of pure and sovereign grace that He had made, and that He was now performing, his promise, ordering everything after the counsel of His own will. And most conspicuously it was grace which raised up poor Ruth out of the dust, and lifted her from the dunghill, to set her among princes.

As to the typical teaching of the book, it is scarcely doubtful that Naomi prefigures the Jewish nation. The name of her husband was Elimelech, which means, "my God, the King," or, "to whom God is King." In consequence of a famine (we need to remember that it is by famine God frequently tests His people) Elimelech and Naomi, with their two sons, had gone to sojourn in the country of Moab—abandoning the land of promise and blessing. There Elimelech died, and Naomi became a widow. She, as setting forth the nation, had lost her relationship with God the King, and was thus bereft and desolate. So completely was this the case that her two sons, forgetful of their lineage, married Moabitish wives; but both died, and Naomi was doubly widowed, so that Naomi—"my delight," God's delight indeed—became Mara, "bitterness," "for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." If God's people forget Him, He remembers them, and in various ways deals with them to bring them back to Himself. (See Hosea ii. 6-23.)

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Ruth, though a Moabitess, is plainly a type of the Jewish remnant which will, in the last days, be brought back into blessing. On Naomi's return to the land, for she had heard how the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread, Ruth persisted, in the face of Naomi's entreaties, in accompanying her, but Orpah having kissed her mother-in-law went back to her own country. Into the touching details of this scene we need not enter—their various applications are obvious. The language of Ruth is, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall

be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." She thus fully identified herself with Naomi, Naomi's people, and Naomi's God.

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The question may occur to some minds as to how it is possible for a Moabitess to represent the remnant of Israel. It must be remembered then, that, later on, God, on account of His people's sin and apostasy, gave them the name, wrote the sentence upon them, of Lo-ammi (not my people). (Hosea i. 8, 9.) They have thus forfeited all claim, and their restoration and blessing will consequently be as entirely a work of grace and mercy as the salvation of the Gentiles in the present accepted time. (See Rom. xi.) Ruth, therefore, as a poor Gentile, destitute of all claim, is brought in as a typical figure to represent the fact that God, in the unbounded riches of His grace, will in a future day, in virtue of the death of Christ, restore His people, who had forfeited everything by their disobedience. What they had lost under responsibility He will give back (and how much more!) in pursuance of His own purposes of grace.

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Boaz, who is the instrument of blessing, the kinsman redeemer, is a type of the risen Christ. The name means, "In him is strength"; and it was he, on the failure of the nearest kinsman, who had the power of redemption. It was not possible for the nearer kinsman, who represents the law, to redeem the inheritance; for, as the apostle has written, if the inheritance

be of the law it is no more of promise, and Ruth, as typifying the remnant, must receive everything as the gift of pure grace. Boaz, therefore, on whom there was no claim, though a kinsman, stepped in, and, acting from his own heart of love and grace, bought the land and espoused Ruth to "raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance." "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth."

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Read in this light, every action recorded in the book is full of interest and instruction. The first verse of chapter ii. introduces Boaz, the kinsman of Naomi's husband, as a mighty man of wealth. It is in him that all blessing is centred whether for Naomi or Ruth. Need urges Ruth to go and glean ears of corn. It is always through our needs that we are led to Christ. Guided by unseen power, it was "her hap to light on a part of the field belonging to Boaz." She at once found favour in his eyes, for he knew all her past history; and he encouraged her heart by saying, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." (Chap. ii. 12.) Grace marked all his dealings with her (*vv.* 14-17), and she returned to Naomi laden with the firstfruits of her blessing.

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Naomi perceived the import of the attitude of Boaz, and Ruth, as instructed by her, "kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law." (ii. 23.) Furthermore, taught by Naomi, she, last of all, cast herself unreservedly upon

the kindness and grace of Boaz, pleading but this one thing—"Thou art a near kinsman"; and truly Christ, though risen and glorified, was the seed of David according to the flesh. Such a plea could not be refused, and Boaz at once responded by promising all she had sought. He gave her, moreover, the earnest of the full blessing in the six measures of barley, and finally, as pointed out, redeemed the inheritance, and took Ruth to be his wife.

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It may be noticed also, that when Ruth bare a son, the neighbours said, there is a son born to Naomi. So Christ was reckoned as born to the nation, as Isaiah speaks, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (chap. ix. 6); and as the psalmist says, "The Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this Man was born there" (in Zion). (Psalm lxxxvii. 6.)

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## THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

### CHAPTER i.

THE first great point which the Spirit of God establishes in this epistle is, that the gospel of Christ as preached by the apostle Paul had neither been received by him from man, nor is it in its character according to man. The law was addressed to man in the state and condition in which he had been set as a creature responsible to God in this world. Had it been possible for him to keep it, it would have established him in his present status as alive in this earth. The gospel proposes something totally different; it comes to us to

*take us out of this present evil world* by associating us in resurrection with the blessed Saviour who gave Himself for our sins. The gospel (not being after man) proposes no amelioration or bettering of our present sinful condition. This is always a difficulty until we understand the grace of God; because the very sense of our own sinfulness, and that righteousness and holiness befit the presence of God, tend to produce in us the effort (and the more honest we are and sensitive as to the claims of God on us, the greater the effort) to try and be what we think we ought to be for Him. Hence Judaism, or the Jew's religion, as it is here called, in which Paul once excelled, always commends itself to man, because he seeks thereby to improve his present condition, and the more he becomes a proficient in it, as Paul did, the more it ties him to that condition in the pride which pleases self, but in which he cannot find the satisfaction he seeks.

Now God has brought in a wholly new state for man, outside of this present evil world, by raising the precious Saviour who died for our sins out of that death which is also the judgment of God on the old and sinful state, and the end of it before Him. Paul's apostleship was connected with this new condition into which the gospel entrusted to him introduces the believer. He is careful to establish his apostleship. He was not merely a servant of the Lord teaching certain doctrines which he had learnt from others, however true they might be; but what he preached he had received by revelation, and the gospel was entrusted to him by divine commission. He had not been sent out by the other apostles to preach truths communicated to them, or of which they were witnesses as having

accompanied with the Lord on earth, but his commission was from Jesus Christ Himself after He had been received up into the glory of God. Hence his apostolic office was immediately connected with that glory where man in Him now had a place. He had received it from Christ in glory, but also from God the Father, who in raising Him from the dead had thereby established His own glory and righteousness in connection with man.

It is this direct commission which enabled the apostle to use such strong language as this: "If any preach unto you another gospel . . . let him be accursed." To preach another would not be mere disagreement with Paul, but setting aside what had been divinely committed to him by the glorified Man, and by God the Father who raised Him from the dead. We need not wonder that the apostle marvels that the Galatians had so soon removed from Him that called them in the grace of Christ, and were accepting Judaising teachers who perverted Christ's gospel. These teachers were seeking to please men, but were troublers of the saints. But Paul did not use persuasion which would adapt itself to man so as to conciliate or please him. Had he done so he would not have been the servant of that Christ whom man had put to death and rejected, and whom God had glorified. It was God, whose gospel it was, that he desired to satisfy in the service entrusted to him, so that the pure, fresh stream of the truth of the gospel might not fail in his hands, nor its rich and precious grace be frustrated.

It is interesting to note the kind of person to whom the revelation of this gospel was made, and also what is



the subject of it. Paul was a proficient in Judaism, and in whatever measure it had profited him according to the flesh, just so much had it set him in direct opposition to God, and to that which God was now forming outside of Judaism and the religion of the flesh—His assembly. He had persecuted the church of God beyond measure and wasted it. Thus Paul was in his own person the exemplification of man's hostility to that gospel which substituted another Man—the once crucified but now glorified Saviour—for the man who had profited most by Judaism. He was convicted of being the greatest opposer of Christ. Such an one it seemed good to God to call. From the earliest moment of his history he had been marked off by God as an elect vessel in whom He would put the revelation of His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. At the moment when called by grace the vessel was filled with the pride and self-esteem of one who was striving to be blameless in character, but hating Christ. Then and there the light of the glorified Man, the Son of God, shone in and filled the vessel; and in that light Paul saw that he, the chief of legalists, was the chief of sinners. The greater the legalism the more intense the opposition to Jesus, but the light which shone in revealed in him the peerless person of Jesus, the Son of God.

“Oh Man! God's Man! Thou peerless Man!

Jesus my Lord! God's Son!

Perfection's perfect in its height,

But found in Thee alone.”

Mark here, it is not merely revelation *to* a person, however blessed that might be; such had been given to Peter. The Lord distinctly announced, in Matt. xvi. 17, that the Father had revealed *to* Peter the person of

Jesus as the Son of the living God, but with Paul it went farther; it was a light that shone in and displaced the man whose status was flesh and blood, and brought into Paul the revelation of another Man who was not after flesh and blood at all—a glorified Man—the Christ who henceforth lived in him. The revelation to Peter was of the same character, in that it was not of flesh and blood, but of the Father. But as only made to him it had no displacing power; and immediately after Peter had made such a beautiful confession, the Lord had to say to him, “Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that *be of men*.” We know that this fuller revelation *in* a man could not be made until the ground for it had been established by the passing away morally in the cross of the first and sinful man under the judgment of death, so that another Man might take his place, and the believer be characterised by such a revelation.

Hence the gospel which Paul was divinely commissioned to preach was not merely the announcement of certain truths; it was concerning the person who had been revealed in him. The Jesus who had appeared to him in heavenly glory he preached as the Son of God; and the gospel came to the Gentiles in the power of the revelation made to him, so that they might be brought into the light of the glory of God, where flesh is seen to be utterly bad and condemned, but in which there is for man life, righteousness, and glory. Paul having received such a revelation, had not dimmed it by conferring with flesh and blood. Flesh and blood could not have any part either in revealing it or helping it. The second Man is the heavenly Man, and now in glory is outside the domain of flesh and blood, and

hence we are to bear the image of the heavenly One in a kingdom which flesh and blood cannot inherit. The gospel which has brought us the knowledge of forgiveness of sins, has brought also the revelation of the Son of God in us, and thus places us in connection already with another kingdom; for "as is the heavenly One, such also are the heavenly ones"; while it takes us morally out of the world, for "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

For more than 1800 years the Holy Ghost has been down here as the witness of the glory of Christ, and in opposition to His testimony has been the working of Satan to turn the eyes of the saints, as of old with the Galatians, back to Judaism in some form. It is still the danger of to-day, because the old "I" is reinstated thereby, instead of being reckoned as crucified with Christ, and the new and heavenly Man whose image we are to bear becoming the Object before us.

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

It only remains to notice that it was three years after the revelation that the apostle went up to Jerusalem and made the acquaintance of Peter and James. What had passed between the Lord and himself qualified him without any reference to the other apostles to preach the faith which once he destroyed. In the wisdom of the ways of God the gospel preached by Paul went forth from Antioch to the Gentiles, linking them with no other centre than the heavenly glory where Christ is.

T. H. R.

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

## CHAPTER XXI. 22-27.

MOREOVER, "*The street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.*" The street represents the place wherein men walk, and it was of pure gold, divine righteousness, righteousness as suited to God's nature, as befitted the place where He dwells, even as in the tabernacle and the temple, all inside the holy place and the holiest was overlaid with gold. But the gold here is pure, and as transparent glass, speaking of fixed and accomplished holiness—a purity answering to the nature of God Himself, and, blessed be His name, a purity that could never more be defiled.

Up to verse 21 we have had the nature, character, and composition of the holy city, but so far there has been no reference to its inhabitants. The reason for this is that the saints themselves form this heavenly structure, though, as will be seen in the next chapter, they are briefly introduced to set forth the nature of their eternal blessedness. But even here their existence is implied, as, for instance, in the first verse of this scripture: "*And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*" (v. 22.) For as soon as the absence of any temple is stated, the thought is necessarily brought in of saints enjoying the presence of God without let or hindrance. A temple, whatever the privileges of access and worship connected with it, speaks of distance between God and the worshipper, as was the case in the temple of the kingdom. Jehovah indeed dwells in it, between the cherubim over the mercy-seat; but the

worshippers remained outside while the priest was burning incense in the holy place. (See Luke i. 10.) When therefore we read that there was no temple in the heavenly Jerusalem, but that the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it, we at once understand that all distance is abolished, and that the presence of God and the Lamb, filling the whole city, is enjoyed by all in the full measure of its display. It could not be otherwise, seeing that all the saints forming the city are there, according to the purpose of God in divine righteousness, conformed to the image of His Son. The fact of there being no temple is thus the expression of the perfect blessedness of the redeemed, all of whom are now holy and without blame before God in love. (Ephes. i. 4.)

It will, however, be observed, that the highest blessedness of the saint is not indicated; for the names of God here given are those found in the Old Testament—Jehovah-Elohim, Shaddai; all that God is, as so revealed, now made good in government in relation to the earth. This at once explains why these names are employed, inasmuch as the holy city is here connected with the government of the earth in and through the Lamb during the millennium. That the redeemed enjoy another relationship, into which they have been brought by the revelation of the Father in the Son, is known from other scriptures; but this character of blessedness is confined to the saints who compose the Church, and consequently will not be known in the age to come. On this account it is that the Lord God Almighty is found in this scripture; but the Lamb is also introduced as the One in whom this state of blessedness has been secured, and in whom God has been revealed, and His character made good, first in the cross, and now in the

kingdom, the epoch before us in His righteous government. A comparison of this statement, that there is no temple in the heavenly city, with Rev. vii. 15, abundantly confirms the interpretation that the blessing of the Gentile multitude is earthly and not heavenly.

The presence of God and the Lamb fills the scene, and thus it is that John adds, "*And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light [the lamp] thereof.*" (v. 23.) Created light, as we learn from Genesis i., is for earth; but after Adam's fall the only light morally, even for the earth, was what came from the revelation of God. The Psalmist thus wrote, "With Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light we shall see light" (Psalm xxxvi. 9); and when the Lord was down here on the earth He said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John ix. 5.) Where God is fully revealed therefore there could be no need of created light; and "the glory of God" is but the expression for the display of all that God is as revealed in redemption before His redeemed. The statement in connection with this, "And the Lamb is the lamp thereof," is most significant. Does it mean that while the glory of God illumines the whole city the Lamb is the medium of its display? Stephen saw through the opened heavens the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and here the glory of God and the Lamb are the beatific source of all the light that illumines and forms the blessedness of the holy city.

The next three verses are important as affording a distinct clue to the interpretation of the whole vision. Many expositors see nothing here but a description of the blessedness of the eternal state, and this view is generally adopted by popular preachers. But these

verses show beyond contradiction that the heavenly city is here presented in connection with the millennial earth; for there are no "nations" in eternity, and no "kings of the earth" to bring their glory and honour into (unto) it. If this had been observed the mistake would have been avoided, and a valuable key would have been acquired to the understanding of the dispensations. We may therefore call attention to the force of these verses: "*And the nations of them which are saved\* shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.*" (vv. 24-26.) Although the words, "Of them that are saved," must be omitted, the meaning will be unaltered, seeing that the nations existing during the millennial kingdom will be those that have been spared in the judgments connected with the day of the Lord, introduced at the appearing of Christ. These nations recognize that the glory of God which streams down from the holy city is for their blessing and guidance, and they accordingly walk by it. Morally the light which proceeds, however imperfectly, from the Church in this age is the only light the world possesses; and this fact will help the reader to understand the statement before us. To borrow language, "The city enjoys the direct light within; the world [that is, the nations], the transmitted light of glory." (Compare John xvii. 22, 23.) The kings of the earth, moreover, bring their glory and honour into (unto) it.† If we translate

\* The words, "Of them which are saved," have been inserted without sufficient authority.

† As to the earthly city in the day of its glory Isaiah lx. may be read with advantage, as similar expressions are there found. The periods will coincide.

eis, unto, instead of into, the meaning will be that the kings of the earth will recognize "the heavens and the heavenly kingdom" to be the source of the authority under which they are placed, and of the beneficent blessings they enjoy under the sway of the King of kings, and Lord of lords; and they will bring of their wealth, like the Queen of Sheba, when she came to Jerusalem, as offerings in token of their submissive homage. In what way these offerings will be presented is not revealed; but it is clear from many scriptures that a connection will be maintained between the heavenly capital and the earthly kingdom.

Following upon this, we are told that the gates of the city will be perpetually open, and that there will be no night. The significance of this may be best explained by a contrast. After Nehemiah had built the walls of Jerusalem, we read, "Now it came to pass when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, that I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: . . . . . And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them." (Nehemiah vii. 1-37.) During the night, and even while there was the least trace of darkness on the scene, the gates were to be kept closed, lest evil with evil men, who ever love darkness rather than light, should steal in and corrupt the city. With the same object later on, Nehemiah, when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, "commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath"; for there were servants of the enemy always on the alert to enter unawares to seduce



the Jews to violate the sabbath day. In the light of this contrast we learn then, when we are told that there will be no night in the heavenly city, that there will be the absence of all evil, and hence that the gates will never be shut. As typically in the days of Solomon, there will be "neither adversary nor evil occurrent"; and thus it is not only that evil is for ever excluded, but there is also the impossibility of its ever finding entrance into that holy and blessed scene.

In *v.* 26, it would seem to be the repetition of the statement in *v.* 24, which has already been considered. There is however a difference. In *v.* 24, it is the kings of the earth who bring *their* glory and honour, whereas in *v.* 26, it is the glory and honour of the nations that are brought. The same distinction is observed in the millennial kingdom, when it says, speaking of the honour to be rendered to the Messiah, "All kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him." (Psalm lxxii. 11.) Both the monarchs and their peoples will be of one mind, and will respectively own that the "heavens do rule," and will offer their willing homage to the King of kings in His glorious heavenly capital. *Now* kings and nations serve and exalt themselves; but *then*, as we read in Zechariah, "every one that is left of all the nations that came up against Jerusalem, shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles"; and it may well be on these occasions that sovereigns and their subjects will present their glory and honour to the heavenly Jerusalem, thus owning their allegiance, and rendering their tribute to the exalted King of kings, and Lord of lords!

Next, we are told, "*And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh*

abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (v. 27.) No doubt must be left upon the character or qualifications of those who shall enter into this city of pure gold; and hence it is put in two ways, negatively and positively, the disqualification being given in the first place, and then the absolute and indefeasible title. No one with the guilt of sin still on him, for it is sin in its manifold forms and expressions that defiles; no one who possesses an evil nature, for it is sin in the flesh which, breaking out, works abomination; and no one who is morally of the seed of Satan, who is a liar, and the father of it (John viii. 44), will ever pass through those gates of pearl. As the apostle has written, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.) So too, in the next chapter of our book, it is said, "Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." (v. 15.) Those only who are written in the Lamb's book of life will have the privilege of entry, even as all whose names will not be found written in the book of life will, at the session of the great white throne, be cast into the lake of fire. (xx. 15.) This, it will be at once observed, is only the title; but there will be a moral qualification answering to the title, as stated in the next chapter: "Blessed are they that have washed their robes,\* that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (v. 14.) It must

\*This is the right reading, and is accepted by the *Revised Version*.

necessarily be so, for the inhabitants of the holy city must themselves be holy, according to the nature of its Builder and Maker; but the title only is here given to remind us that it is due alone to grace, God's blessed and sovereign grace, that any will find themselves within these gates. It is moreover the Lamb's book of life; and this teaches us that if believers were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, these purposes of grace could only be accomplished in and through the death and resurrection of Christ—of Him who as the Lamb of God is the taker away of the sin of the world.

E. D.

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## THE DESIRES OF OUR SAVIOUR GOD.

1 TIM. ii. 4.

How wondrously these few words express the *breadth* of God's heart—of "God our *Saviour*, who will have *all* men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth!" The breadth of His heart, and the extent of His desire for all men in the present time. In passing I would just observe that the word here translated "will"—"who *will* have all men to be saved," &c.—signifies desire, wish, in the original, and not determination or decree. Were it the latter none could escape being saved. It is a different word from that used in verse 8, which has more the force of prescribe, or decree.

How far above and beyond the thoughts in the narrow heart of man, who would limit God's grace to a select few! How different to our way of dealing also! We would shew favour to those who have shewn favour to us. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in

that, while we were yet *sinner*s, Christ died for us." It was "*when we were enemies we were reconciled to God.*" Surely we have reason to say, "His thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither are His ways as our ways."

It is not my object, however, to enlarge on the first part of this verse, but I would just ask, ere leaving it, How far is my reader's heart in accord with the heart of God our Saviour? How far has your heart stretched out to the breadth of His desire toward all men? And if you are in real, downright earnest in seeking in your sphere and measure to testify to the unsaved of our Saviour God's desire towards them; and to bear witness to the testimony which has gone forth, 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?" Every soul saved is, as it were, another tick of the great clock, on the dial plate of which the hand of grace is moving slowly round, to complete the present hour of John v. 25. And then the other hour of John v. 28, 29 will begin. May our Saviour God awaken His saints to whole-hearted earnestness in this matter, for

Time is short!  
Eternity is long!  
Christ is coming!  
Death is active!  
Souls are perishing!  
The harvest plenteous!  
The labourers few!  
The wages high!

But though I thus speak, for I feel the need of such a word of exhortation myself, my object is more to call attention to 1 Timothy ii. 4. We may regard this as a distinct desire on God's part, though insepar-

ably connected with the first. People must be first saved, and *know* it, before the heart is free to receive "the knowledge of the truth." So long as the conscience is at unrest, there can be no right condition of soul to make progress in the knowledge of the truth. And yet how many, alas! rest satisfied with salvation. That is what their hearts had been set upon, safety for themselves, without desiring to enter into God's wish for them, that they might "come unto the knowledge of the truth." Yes, even among those who get so far as the knowledge of salvation. And one has grave reason to fear that the vast majority of God's people rest satisfied with far less than this. They have touched, as it were, the hem of Christ's garment with a trembling faith, without waiting to hear those words of comfort and assurance from His blessed lips, "Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in *peace*."

No, to be saved is not all. Nor to be earnest and active in the salvation of others either, blessed as both are. In the weighty words of another, "If I am really working for Christ I am getting from Christ, and growing up into Him. Sitting at His feet is the natural portion of my soul. Whenever you find anyone serving without sitting at His feet, you may be assured they are Martha-like. When any are sitting at His feet, hearing His word, they will not be behind in true and pleasing service. If you begin with serving (as many do now-a-days), you will never sit at His feet; whereas if you begin with sitting, you will soon serve wisely, well, and acceptably. The serving quiets the conscience, and the sitting is overlooked and neglected. The enemy gains an advantage, for it is at the sitting the conscience is more enlightened, and the pleasure and mind of the

master are better known ; and hence there is damage done and loss sustained by the soul when service pre-occupies one to the exclusion of sitting at his feet, or when it is *most* prominent. I never met with anyone making service prominent who knew what it was to sit at His feet ; but, thank God, I know indefatigable workers who enjoy sitting at His feet above any service, and it is clear that they who sit most at His feet must be most competent to serve, and most in His confidence, which, after all, is *the clue* to all efficient service."

We find in this very chapter (v. 7) that Paul was "ordained a preacher and a *teacher* of the Gentiles." It was not only God's desire for "all men to be saved," but "to come unto the knowledge of the truth" as well. So the apostle both *preached* the gospel and *taught* the truth.

The Epistle to the Romans supplies us with an admirable illustration of the last. Although its subject is "the Gospel of God," it was not written to unbelievers, but "to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints" (Rom. i. 7), and that "to the end ye may be established." (v. ii.) Established in what? In the truth of the gospel. And therefore the apostle unfolds for them the gospel, in which "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith." (v. 17.)

But as if he would say you must not suppose you know all now, at the end of his letter, the apostle just hints at the existence of another revelation of the greatest importance. This he gives in a kind of postscript, when he had twice already brought the epistle to a close with the usual benediction. As if it were a necessary addendum. He was a minister of the Church as well as of the gospel (Col. i. 23-25 ; Eph. iii. 2-11), and though his letter was more occupied with the last, he would

not omit the first or disconnect it from the gospel. He would thus awaken a kind of holy inquisitiveness as to what this further truth might be. And accompanied, as the brief reference is, with such a force of authority—the strongest assertion of authority that I know of in scripture—“According to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith,” it was calculated to awaken in their souls a zealous enquiry after this truth, which is here only suggested, in order that they might yield to it the obedience of faith. (Rom. xvi. 25, 26.)

We see in this passage too a confirmation of what we have already had in 1 Tim. ii. 4, viz., that God would have “all men come to the knowledge of the truth” as well as to be saved. It was not a favoured few that God had in His mind, but “*all* men,” that “the revelation of the mystery” might be “made known to *all* nations for the obedience of faith.” Alas! alas! how few of those who are saved have yielded it the obedience of faith, not to speak of “all nations.” How few of the saved in these days have even concerned themselves to enquire, “What is this wondrous mystery which has been made manifest according to the commandment of the everlasting God for the obedience of faith?” And even of those who have a measure of knowledge about it, how few, alas! are seeking to walk in the power and practical effect of it.

In closing I would seek to press on my reader's conscience how far you are yielding this truth the obedience of faith? And if saved, are you seeking to make progress in “the knowledge of the truth,” the second desire of God our Saviour for all men? And not only to make progress yourself, but to live it out and to make it known to others?

W. G. B.

## SCRIPTURE NOTES.

## I.

1 COR. xv. 45-49.

SCRIPTURE is more exact in its use of language than most suppose. It would, for example, be a great mistake to conclude that the two terms in this passage—"the last Adam," and the "second Man"—are employed interchangeably as meaning one and the same thing. There is indeed a most significant difference. The "last Adam," as applied to our blessed Lord, points Him out as the Head of a new, *the* new race, in contrast with the first Adam as the head of the sinful race of men. This is developed in connection with the truth of the resurrection, and the condition of the resurrection body, and for this reason: It was not until after Adam had fallen that he became the head of a race of mortal men; and it was not until after His resurrection, although He was in His incarnation the Man of God's counsels, that our Lord became the Head of the new race. Therein too lies the significance of the contrast in verse 45, "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam a quickening Spirit." But this leads on to the difference shown in verse 47 between the first man and the second Man. The term "second Man" relates to the condition into which the new race will be ultimately brought; whereas, as we have seen, the last Adam has to do with headship. We say, "The condition into which the new race will be ultimately brought"; but this requires further explanation. The last Adam, although He ever quickened



as the Son of God in all ages, is a quickening Spirit, and hence quickens after His own order, or according to His new condition, as the Second Man. The consequence is, that the life believers possess now is heavenly in its character; and it ensures, or rather the Lord Himself ensures, for those on whom He bestows life, the resurrection of the body after the pattern of His own glorified body. (See John vi. 40.) "As is the heavenly"—as Christ is as the heavenly Man—"such are they also that are heavenly," those who are of His race and order; and hence the apostle proceeds, "As we have borne the image of the earthy"—of the first man, who is of the earth, earthy—"we shall also," in resurrection, "bear the image of the heavenly," of Christ in His glorified body. (See Philippians iii. 20, 21.) It is a great thing for the soul to apprehend what is involved in these terms, both as to Christ Himself and as to those that are His. It is only thus that we can learn how completely we are dis severed from the first man, his condition and his home, and how that, as to the present character of our true life, as to our hopes and our future condition, we are a heavenly people. To understand what Christ is as the last Adam and the second Man is to understand what Christianity is, and what Christians are, and will be, according to God's eternal counsels.

## II.

2 COR. ii. 14-17.

THERE is no question that verse 14 should run, "Now thanks be unto God, who always leads us in triumph" (not "causeth us to triumph") "in Christ," etc. From

the context it is to be gathered that the apostle had been somewhat interrupted in his labours by the state of things at Corinth. "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart" he had written to them, "with many tears," concerning the sin in their midst, and had sent the letter by the hand of Titus. In the meanwhile, he had gone to Troas to preach the gospel, and had hoped to meet Titus there; but not finding him, Paul, although a door was opened to him of the Lord, had no rest in his spirit, could not settle down to his work, because of his anxiety for tidings from the Corinthian assembly. He accordingly left Troas and went to Macedonia, where he was comforted by the coming of Titus, and by the tidings which he brought. (Chap. vii. 6, 7.) But the "thought of having left Troas affected him, for, in fact, it is a serious thing, and painful to the heart, to miss an opportunity of preaching Christ, and the more so when people are disposed to receive Him, or, at least, to hear of Him." It is in this state of mind that Paul finds his consolation in the fact that, whatever his own failures in service, he could yet thank God, who always led him and his companions in triumph in Christ, and made manifest the savour of His knowledge in every place. God had His way, and accomplished His purposes in the apostle's preaching wherever he went; Christ was everywhere proclaimed, and the savour of His knowledge thus went forth continually. In what follows, Paul alludes to the ancient triumphal processions after successful campaigns. The conqueror's chariot was followed by the captives taken in the war, and the aromatic perfumes burnt in honour of the successful general were a savour of life unto life to those who might be spared, and of death unto death to those who

might be doomed to execution. The application is easy, "For we" (as led of God in triumph), says the apostle, "are unto God a sweet savour of Christ," that is, in preaching Christ, "in them that are saved and in them that perish." The proclamation of the gospel delights the heart of God; and this sweet odour, which goes up so acceptably to Him, becomes to those who receive the gospel and are saved, "the savour of life unto life; but to those that refuse it, those that perish, "the savour of death unto death." Fragrant, therefore, as the setting forth of Christ in the gospel is to the heart of God, it is yet a solemn thing when considered in the light of its tremendous issues for those to whom it is preached. It is this which leads the apostle to exclaim, "And who is sufficient for these things?" The answer to this question is found in the next chapter. (v. 5.)

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IN Luke xvii. the Lord teaches that there is to be no limit to our forgiveness of an erring brother. But faith is required for the exercise of forgiveness, and the smallest degree of faith—even as a grain of mustard seed—will remove the greatest difficulty out of the way of the one who will tread in this blessed path. Walking, however, in it, we are ever to remember—for we are wholly dependent on grace, and ever fall short of our perfect Example—that we are unprofitable servants.

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## HIS NAME.

PRAISE the peerless name of Jesus,  
 Sing of Him for evermore ;  
 Praise the precious name of Jesus,  
 Tell its value o'er and o'er.  
 Jesus Christ is God's salvation ;  
 All who live through Jesus' name  
 Were in death and condemnation,  
 Heirs of Adam's sin and shame.  
 'T is through Thy death, Lord Jesus,  
 Faith can life eternal claim.

Precious blood, the blood of Jesus,  
 Did for all my sins atone ;  
 Sprinkled blood, the blood of Jesus,  
 Speaks for ever from the throne ;  
 Telling how His life was given,  
 And that He who once was dead,  
 Son of man, God's Son from heaven,  
 Is the Saviour as He said.  
 Oh, precious blood of Jesus,  
 For a world of sinners shed !

At this name supreme of "Jesus"  
 "Every knee," God saith, "shall bow."  
 Lord of all, 't is this same Jesus  
 Whom the world refuses now.  
 Every eye shall gaze upon Him,  
 Every tongue confess His name ;  
 Every glory centres on Him  
 Wronged of men and put to shame.  
 None other name than Jesus,  
 God, His Father, doth proclaim.

Praise the peerless name of Jesus,  
 Tell of Him for evermore ;  
 See Him in God's glory—Jesus,  
 Who the weight of judgment bore.  
 In the cross, Thy death, Lord Jesus,  
 God required what is past.  
 Thou art Alpha and Omega ;  
 Thou art First, and Thou art Last.  
 Now in "the man Christ Jesus"  
 All God's counsel standeth fast.

## THE POWER OF FAITH.

A BELIEVER is generally supposed to be one who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation; one, in fact, who is in the enjoyment of the forgiveness of sins, and is on the ground of redemption. And so far this is true; but if we go no further we lose sight of what is his characteristic, as expressed indeed in the word believer; viz., faith. A believer therefore is one who walks by faith, who lives by faith, so that faith marks the whole of his existence.

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This may be clearly seen from a few scriptural examples. When the man brought his son, who had a dumb spirit, to the Lord Jesus, he said, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." To this appeal the Lord replied, "If thou canst believe, [the "if thou canst" is "if thou canst believe"] "all things are possible to him that believeth." (Mark ix. 22, 23.) Without a doubt the Lord points out here the present power of faith when in activity—not only belief in Himself for present succour and blessing, although that was included in His words, but also the faith that could avail itself of all that was in Christ for every exigency that might arise in the path. For in the very next chapter we read, "With God all things are possible" (chap. x. 27), so that—and herein is the marvel—whatever is possible with God is possible for faith.

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Another instance may be gleaned from the next gospel. The Lord had been teaching His disciples as to

how they were to act towards a brother who might trespass against them. If he trespassed against any one of them seven times in a day, and seven times in a day were to turn again, saying, "I repent," he was to be forgiven. The response of the apostles—for they felt the difficulty—was, "Lord, increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." (Luke xvii. 3-6; compare Matt. xxi. 21, 22.) As plainly in this instance we have the power of faith indicated for the path of service, the sovereign instrumentality, only to be used in realised dependence as Matthew xxi. 22 teaches, whereby all obstacles in the Christian path may be conquered, either by being removed, by being nullified, or by being made subservient to the object in view.

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Recent reference has been made in these pages to some examples of the same kind in John's gospel. Another may be cited of a different kind—"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (Chap. vi. 35.) A moment's consideration will show that the believing in the last clause is not once and for all as if it taught that whoever believed in the Lord Jesus should never thirst. Alas! we all know that there are many believers—indeed, real believers—who know little of what it is not to thirst, for the simple reason that they are still seeking satisfaction at the springs of earth, having never yet learned that it is a dry and thirsty land *where no water is*. The lesson therefore is that where faith in a glorified Christ is in constant

activity, appropriating what He is according to the need of the soul, there thirst shall in no wise be known.

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Barnabas likewise may be adduced as an illustration of the subject.\* When the gospel was first preached to the Gentiles† the hand of the Lord was with the preachers, and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. On tidings of this striking work reaching the assembly at Jerusalem they sent forth Barnabas, evidently to inspect and report. When he arrived on the scene, and had seen the grace of God, he rose above all his Jewish predilections and prejudices, and, heartily accepting the work as of God, he joined in helping to minister to the new converts. And the spirit of God gives the following reason: "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost *and of faith.*" (Acts xi. 20-24.) We gather two things—that he was controlled by the Spirit, and that faith being in lively exercise he embraced the truth of God's purposes of blessing for the Gentile; and thus it was that he detected that the work he had come to examine was a genuine work of grace. In other words, he was at this moment in the current of the mind of God, because he had faith.

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Passing by many other cases that will readily occur to the reader we may refer to the familiar examples given in Hebrews xi. There will be no need, however, to dwell upon those which are given in detail, from

\* The case of Stephen, as given in Acts vi. 8, is omitted, because the correct reading would seem to be "full of grace" instead of "full of faith."

† The word in our version, "Grecians," should be, according to the best authorities, "Greeks."

Abel down to Rahab the harlot; it will suffice to recall the remarkable summary given by the apostle. After saying that the time would fail him to tell of all the mighty men of faith who had appeared on the scene, he proceeds to show what they had been enabled to accomplish: "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens," &c. (*vv.* 32-34.) Comment upon this marvellous catalogue of the exploits of faith is superfluous; for the mere enumeration of what these saints of old accomplished through faith in God carries with it its own instruction, and a solemn admonition for a generation which knows so little how to walk in the same steps.

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It may be remarked, however, that a knowledge of the truth does not bestow faith. On the other hand, if the truth known is not held in faith through the power of the Holy Ghost, it will exercise no sanctifying influence whatever upon the soul. What hinders faith is holding the truth apart from Him whom the truth reveals. When it comes to us as the revelation of God (see John viii. 25) faith is produced in our hearts by Him whom it unfolds, and our whole lives are governed by it. For it ought ever to be remembered that God Himself as revealed in Christ through the Word is faith's only foundation.

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This is seen in the case of Peter. "Lord," he said, "if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.



And He said, Come." Peter had therefore the Lord as his object, and the Lord's word on which to rest, and this was enough to enable him to walk on the water to go to Jesus; and it was only when he was tempted to judge by the sight of his eyes, and was afraid, that he began to sink. Though invisible to mortal eye, and, according to human judgment, a foolish presumption, there is nothing so real or so secure as the foundation of faith, and nothing so divinely wise as the exercise of faith, because it simply takes God at His word, or counts upon Him according to the revelation which He has been pleased to make of Himself in Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour. In a day of unbelief may the Lord grant that many among His people may be distinguished by faith!

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### NOTES ON 1 JOHN V. 6-13.

WE get three things in this scripture. (1) Christ presented in His death, as meeting and removing every thing on our side that was obnoxious to God, all that would have prevented the exercise of His grace toward us, and all that would have hindered our being before Him as the happy recipients of His grace.

(2) What God the Father has given us in His Son, as the One who has come out of death and ascended as Son of man up where He was before with the Father, thus opening a door for us into all that the grace of the Father had purposed for us in Him from eternity.

(3) The presence of the Holy Spirit in us, the witness of this grace to us, and making it good to us, so that we have the conscious knowledge and enjoyment of what the Father has given us in His Son.

It is impossible for anyone to enjoy eternal life in the Son, unless the conscience is in perfect peace before God, in the knowledge that every question as to sin has been met according to the glory of God, and to His entire satisfaction, and for ever removed out of His sight, so that He has for ever done with it as regards the believer.

Now there are two ways in which the conscience must take account of sin. First, as guilt, in connection with what I have *done*: "All have sinned," and all alike are guilty before God. Secondly, in connection with what *I am*, my *state*, as born of Adam, in a nature characterized by sin: "By one man's disobedience the many were constituted sinners." "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." The truth of this must be learnt experimentally. The discovery of it in the presence of God is what leads a man to exclaim, "Behold, I am vile," and to abhor himself. It is a painful discovery to find that there is not any spring of good in me. I am altogether sinful and utterly weak, so that the more I try to improve myself the worse I seem to be; and the more I look for some good in or of myself the more I am discouraged at finding *none*. Such is my state as a child of Adam, alive to sin, but dead toward God, nothing in me that in any way answers to God, no power to receive or understand, or enjoy anything of God; a state of spiritual death through sin and in sin. The answer to these two aspects of sin which my conscience takes account of—that is my guilt, and my state—is found in the blood and water that came from the pierced side of a dead Christ. The blood and the water express the virtue of His death. It justifies

and it cleanses. The blood in making atonement, or expiation according to the just claims of God, has laid the basis of all blessing for sinful man. The effect applied to the individual believer is justifying, and judicial cleansing from every sin, being "justified by His blood," &c. (Rom. v. 9.) "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John i. 7.) The water is a symbol of death, as that which alone can cleanse a sinful man. It is not simply cleansing from my sins, but from the whole state of sin in which I was by nature. I am cleansed, not the old man made clean, which is impossible. The old man is condemned, put to death in Christ dying for me, and I am alive to God in Christ, in the life of the last Adam, and thus I am clean. Thus for *faith* Christ's death is the end of all that I was as born of Adam, the end of my history as a natural man, and in Christ risen I have begun a new life altogether. This is the beginning of my history as a saint, in a *new creation*, old things having passed away, and all things having become new. I have put off the old man, and put on the new, where Christ is all. This is not what I find experimentally in myself, but what is true for faith in Christ.

But we must consider more what is signified by the water; that is, cleansing by death. We have it set forth in type in the cleansing of Naaman the leper. Leprosy was a disease that was deeper than the skin. It was in the blood. It affected the whole life of the man, and therefore was utterly beyond the power of man, as the king of Israel said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" In this the leprosy

was a true type of sin, not in its outward manifestation, but as that which characterizes the very nature of man and vitiates his whole being, working death in him. When Naaman came to the prophet, he told him to wash in Jordan seven times, and he would be clean. There must be the complete application of death to the whole man—nothing less than death could cleanse him. Typically he must go through death to enter upon a new life out of death. He washed and was clean.

Now remark that when he went into the river Jordan he was *a leper*; but when he came out of Jordan he was not a leper. After dipping seven times in Jordan his flesh came again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. Though he retained his individuality, his state was changed. The old man, the leper, was left behind in Jordan. He was typically a new man. It was in figure a new creation. So it is with the believer through faith in Christ. My personality remains, but my state is changed; so that my personality, instead of being identified with sin and with the first Adam, is now identified with Christ. For faith the old man, the sinful man, is condemned and left behind in the cross, and I am a new man in Christ. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.)

We get the water as a type of the cleansing power of death in connection with the consecration of the priests and the cleansing of the leper. The priest, when first consecrated, was bathed all over in water. This was never repeated; but whenever he went to minister in the holy place he washed his hands and feet. To this probably the Lord alluded when He said

to Peter, "He that is washed" (or bathed) "needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." The believer is cleansed once and for ever as to his person, but needs daily cleansing as to his walk down here. This is practical sanctification through the Word through faith, and in virtue of the work of Christ. The heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the body washed with pure water. (Heb. x. 22.) The conscience is purged, and the person is clean. Thus it is that the Lord can say of every believer that he is clean every whit—he is perfectly clean in the sight of God and in a new life. Thus the water is the answer to that which the conscience takes account of as to sin in me; that is, my sinful state. I am cleared from it by the death of Christ. This does not alter the experimental fact that I have still sin remaining in me. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." But in the sight of God I am no longer identified with sin, I am not now on that ground as to my relationship with God. I am nevertheless responsible for its activity, and if it act, in thought, word, or deed, I have to judge myself for allowing it; that is, I judge in myself what God has already judged for me in Christ's death. When I understand the blood and water, I see how every question as to sin has been for ever settled to the glory of God, and my conscience is in perfect and unbroken peace before God.

Now I am free to enjoy what God in His grace has been pleased to give me in His Son; that is, eternal life. Christ as a man in this world, walking in the unclouded light of His Father's love, ever dwelling in the bosom of the Father, and outside of everything of man and

this world, enjoying the fullest communion with the Father, was the expression of this heavenly life. It is a life characterized by the knowledge of the Father. The Father manifested Himself in this relationship in connection with Christ as a man. It need scarcely be added that the Son was ever in this relationship from eternity, but now it has been manifested in connection with manhood. Only until His death He was alone in this life. He could not share it with others. But having died and accomplished redemption, He is no longer alone. He says, "Go to *my brethren*, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." His brethren are one with Him in this blessed life; and, moreover, He communicates life from Himself in the power of the Spirit, which enables us to enjoy the relationship in which we are one with Him. We can, therefore, say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." This life is connected with a divine and eternal order of things, outside of everything of the natural man and this world; so that we enjoy it by faith now, until we are with the Son in the Father's house, when we shall see face to face, and know even as we are known. This life is given to us in the Son, revealed as a risen Man out of death, having left death and sin, and all that came in by it behind for ever. The Spirit is the witness that He is risen and glorified. The Spirit could not be given till Jesus was glorified. Clearly having life in Him puts me on resurrection ground beyond sin; and all that pertained to my state as a sinful man, death and judgment, are left behind. But more, it puts me in the Son's place and relationship and acceptance before God His Father. "*As He is*, so

are we in this world." "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye *in me*, and I in you." Where this is known, we understand the meaning of the Lord's word, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John viii. 36.) We are in the house as sons. It is impossible that God could have conferred greater grace upon us. He could not do more than give us the Son's place and portion before Himself for ever.

"He that believeth hath the witness in himself." God the Father has not only thus blessed us, but He has given us His Spirit to make the truth of it all good in our hearts for our present enjoyment, that we might not only know as a doctrine or fact that we have eternal life, but that we might have the inward consciousness of it. We know it as that which by the Spirit we enjoy; we realize the blessedness of this life; we not only have this life, but we *live* this life by faith, and in communion with the Father and the Son. The Spirit is the power of this life. If the Spirit is ungrieved He occupies us not with our own feelings or with any experience wrought in us, but with the things of the Father and the Son, with that which feeds and sustains this life. He conducts us into the actual enjoyment of heavenly things in communion with the Father and with the Son. He reveals to us the Father's delight in the Son, His purposes for the glory of His Son, His love to us in the Son. He leads us to participate with the Son in His joys, in His knowledge of the Father; makes us conscious how we are one with Him in His place and relationship with the Father, as object of the Father's love, and heir of all that the Father has given to Him. He leads our hearts onward to the time when

we shall be with Him in the Father's house, and when moreover we shall be manifested with Him in glory as the sons of God, when the world will know that the Father has loved us as He has loved the Son. Thus by the Spirit the life is formed and sustained in us.

May God grant that we may all thus go on to know more and more of this blessed life in the actual living of it, knowing the Son better and His joys in His own place.

F. H. B.

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## GALATIANS II.

IN this chapter Paul speaks of his second visit to Jerusalem. The occasion of his going there is given in Acts xv. Judaising teachers were saying that unless the Gentiles were circumcised according to the custom of Moses they could not be saved. This produced a commotion among the brethren, and no small discussion on the part of Barnabas and Paul, with those who were thus troubling the saints. Finally it was arranged that Paul and Barnabas should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders there about this question. It was the wisdom of God that these Judaising teachers should be silenced in the very centre and stronghold of Judaism. But if we see from the record of this visit in the Acts the necessity of this question being gone into and settled at Jerusalem, from the chapter before us we learn how fully Paul was supported by God in maintaining the truth of the gospel *committed to him*. He had received it by revelation, and by revelation he went up to Jerusalem and put before those who were there the gospel which he preached (privately to those of reputation), while they communicated nothing to



him; and the three pillars of the assembly at Jerusalem acknowledged the special grace given to him by giving to himself and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. Two points were established by this visit: First, that the Gentiles were not to be brought under the yoke of bondage; so that, secondly, the truth of the gospel as Paul preached it might abide with them, that they might be free in the liberty wherewith Christ had freed them.

It is remarkable that the three apostles who speak of being born again are the three pillars of the Jewish assembly here mentioned. The Jews were a people already in relationship with God, being the children of the covenant made with the fathers. To them specially the Spirit of God speaks of an entirely new beginning in man; even a Jew must be born again. (John iii. 7.) Now the Gentiles were afar off, strangers to the covenants of promise and without God in the world. There was no question of their alienation and distance: even Christ, according to the flesh, did not come to them. He could only be presented to them in death as the propitiation for their sins, and when lifted up out of the earth to draw all men to Him. Reconciliation to God was by the death of Christ, but the Christ who died to sin once, being raised from the dead, now lives to God in a new condition of life for man, and Paul therefore can speak of the believer as alive to God in a wholly new way—as a man “out of dead alive.” (Note to New Translation, Rom. vi. 13.) No doubt new birth, though not directly spoken of, is included in this doctrine of Paul’s, but the truth of being alive in Christ Jesus goes further than a new beginning by God in the soul. Indeed, Paul’s gospel carries us beyond the truth of a man morally alive out of death,

blessed as that is, for the millennial saints will be brought into the experience of such a state, as Ps. cxvi. and other scriptures show; but now there is also an altogether *new man*, the result of Jew and Gentile being quickened together with Christ out of death, and formed in Himself into one new man. We cannot underrate the importance of a new and holy nature capable of divine affections being communicated to the soul; but in order to the freedom of that nature which, as it loves Him that begat, loves also him that is begotten of Him, it was necessary that the middle wall of partition should be taken away, and thus all enmity be done away between Jew and Gentile. This was effected in the death of Christ, and now in Christ there is a new man before God, and holy and blessed affections can have their play—bowels of mercies, graciousness, humbleness, meekness, &c.; for there is neither Jew nor Gentile, no distinction of race or nation, no conflicting interests to hinder, but Christ is all, and in all. The revelation of the Son of God in Paul had discovered to him, strict Jew as he was, that Judaism was ended in the cross, and in his own soul a new man, the risen and glorified Saviour—the Son of God, was now known. That One Paul preached in the blessed and glorious liberty in which every one in whom the grace of God works is associated with Himself.

At Jerusalem then Paul maintained the truth of the gospel entrusted to him, which presented a Saviour in glory. In that light Jerusalem and Judaism were nothing; while by it Jew and Gentile were shown to be brought into the fulness of blessing in Christ Jesus. Afterwards, at Antioch, he had to withstand Peter to the face because he walked not according to

the truth of the gospel, by reviving the distinction between Jew and Gentile, and so practically going back to the ground of what man is in the flesh. On that ground he and Peter were "Jews by nature," and the believers at Antioch "sinners of the Gentiles." But both Peter and Paul had given up legalism to be justified by the faith of Christ. Law could not justify the flesh; it could only condemn it. They had abandoned law for Christ; for justification has been established in Christ now that He is risen from the dead, not in law. The apostle is not speaking here of the work which justifies, but contends that justification does not, could not, belong to the state of things connected with law, but to that which has been established in Christ. Now if Peter was right in reviving Judaism, he had been wrong in using the liberty which was in Christ to eat with Gentiles, and Christ was the minister of sin. That could not be, and Paul's boldness in withstanding Peter was necessary. He now shows how mightily the truth of the gospel he preached affected himself. Peter, in withdrawing himself from the Gentiles through fear of man, had not been dominated by the truth, and was building again the things he had destroyed, for, in order to be justified, he had given up Judaism for Christ, and yet was reviving it again. "I," says Paul emphatically, "through law have died to law, that I may live to God." The law had been death to him, for it discovered in him the sin which, taking occasion by the commandment, slew him. He had hoped for life by it, and found death; but being thus dead through the law, he had, as having believed in Christ, died to it. By death he had passed out of the state connected with law, that he might live to God.

Let us not be mistaken as to the force of this last expression. It does not mean a man still in that old and sinful state to which the law was addressed, trying to live *for* God, but that just as Christ, who once came under law, had died out of that condition among men into which He had entered by grace, and in which He was on the cross made sin, and now lives *to* God in a life which has nothing to say to law or sin (for "in that He liveth, He liveth unto God"), so it is the privilege of the believer to reckon himself as dead to sin and law, and alive to God in Christ Jesus. What words can unfold the deep blessedness expressed in the words, "He liveth unto God." In the energy and power of that life "to God" Paul knew his freedom from law.

It is sometimes helpful to see the dawning of the elements of a truth in the Old Testament. For thirteen years Hagar and Ishmael had been in Abram's house. Ishmael was the fruit of the flesh struggling to obtain the promise of God, a figure of man under law—and during that period Abram had to live with Hagar and Ishmael. Then (Gen. xvii.) in the sovereignty of love and grace the Lord appeared to him, and said unto him, "I am the Almighty God; walk BEFORE ME." Here He was not undertaking or promising to do anything for Abram, but putting him *before Himself*, revealed as the all-sufficient One; for the word almighty carries with it not only the idea of omnipotence but of sufficiency. God suffices, we may reverently say, for Himself. No creature can. He alone does. What a full and eternal fountain of blessing in Himself was contained in the revelation of His name! And what sovereignty of grace in putting Abram *before Himself*, to walk there with an undis-

tracted heart! Abram's path from henceforth lay in a new region into which he had been introduced—the all-sufficiency of the almighty God.

But in our epistle we have more than the elements of such a wonderful place. We have the development of the truth, by which we see a man like Paul empowered to enter into and enjoy it. He was alive in the nature proper to such a place. As to law, by which he formerly sought to regulate his life in the flesh, through it he had died that he might live to God, but how could he, having sinful flesh, live in this blessed life? Not only had the law been the means of death to him, but upon the cross Christ had suffered the judgment of God upon the sin in the flesh which law found out and condemned. Paul accepted this judgment fully—the judgment of *himself* in the cross. "I am crucified with Christ," he says; but then in the power of life, Christ having been raised out of all the death and judgment, "He liveth unto God," and therefore Paul adds, "Nevertheless I live; yet not *I*, but *Christ* liveth in me." It was by Christ living in him that he lived to God. The old "I" was not reckoned to be alive, it had been crucified with Christ, and the new "I" was Christ, who lived in him in the power of a life which belongs to the state where Christ liveth to God. Other passages show in what a full and blessed way Paul through grace knew the effect of Christ living in him. "If I be beside myself" (or rather outside myself), he says, "it is *to* God." Again, "The love of Christ constraineth [has hold of] us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but *unto Him*

*which died for them, and rose again.*" Thus we see the character of this life. He further adds, "But in that I now live in flesh"—for in a certain sense living to God had nothing to do with flesh at all—"I live by faith." Perhaps the time when he most realised what it is to live to God was the moment when, as a man in Christ, he had been caught up into Paradise, and could not tell whether he was in the body or not, but actually he still lived in flesh, and therefore he had to live as in flesh by faith. He had to walk in the path of daily service as appointed by the Lord, whether preaching the Gospel or making tents, but the motives were not found in the circumstances of his daily path; his springs of action in them were outside that which is seen—he lived by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him. Thus in the ordinary details of his life here he walked in faith; no doubt the revelation of the Son of God in him greatly strengthened that faith, still it was faith in the blessed Person who was both its source and object—the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him.

"I do not frustrate," says Paul, "the grace of God." There is nothing we are so afraid of as grace. We are such poor little creatures that we are afraid to trust its immensity. Then we are afraid of its claims, for it must necessarily appropriate us to itself according to its immensity for its own eternal purposes. Righteousness has been established in the very glory of God as an answer to the death of Christ. If righteousness could come by law then Christ had died in vain or for nothing. But His death was according to divine purpose, and in the deepest grace to sinful man. The grace which gave Him to die for us has given to us in Him life, righteousness, and glory.

T. H. R.

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

## CHAPTER xxii. 1-5.

THE subject of the heavenly city is continued in this chapter; but, as the reader will notice, there is a distinct feature here introduced, and this is shown by the words with which it commences, "And he shewed me." We pass, indeed, now more especially to what characterizes the interior of the city, both in relation to its inhabitants and to the nations on the millennial earth.

John thus proceeds, "*And he shewed me a pure\* river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*" (v. 1.) The tabernacle in the wilderness was made, as we are distinctly told, after the pattern of heavenly things; and it would seem that the earthly Jerusalem also, in the coming day of her glory, will in some respects be the counterpart of the heavenly city. We thus read, in Psalm xlvi., "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High." (v. 4.) And so too Ezekiel speaks of the waters that will issue "out from under the threshold of the house eastward"; and that the waters became a river; and he further says, "And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live . . . and every thing shall live whither the river cometh." (Chapter xlvii. 1-9.) In both cases, therefore, it is a river of water of life; only, it must be

\* This word should probably be omitted, as it is not found in the best MSS.

remembered, that in the heavenly Jerusalem it is vivifying and refreshing rather than life-giving, inasmuch as all there are in the possession and enjoyment of eternal life. It proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb, and it will thus represent the blessed streams of grace, of life in the power of the Holy Ghost, which will for ever flow out from God and the Lamb, in the "heavenly kingdom," to gladden the hearts of the redeemed in glory. This river is secured for them through the eternal government of God, on the ground of accomplished redemption; for this would seem to be the purport of the words, "Proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

In connection with this river of the water of life it is added, "*In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve fruits,\* and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*" (v. 2.) A similar feature is also described by Ezekiel as marking the earthly city, "And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." (Chapter xlvii. 12.)

The tree of life in the holy city is, of course, a symbol, a symbol which immediately carries us back to Eden, and which as plainly speaks of Christ. Both

\* The words "manner of" are omitted because they misrepresent the fact stated. It is not twelve manner of fruits, but, as the succeeding clause shows, twelve fruits, one crop gathered every month, a figure of perpetual fruitfulness.



the trees in Paradise indeed, that of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree of responsibility, as it is sometimes termed, and the tree of life, find their answer and conciliation in Christ; for it was He who took up and settled for ever, according to the claims of God's glory, the question of man's responsibility on the cross, and then, as risen out of death, became the tree of life for all His people; of life, it may be added, in a new condition, as shown out in Christ's own risen state in glory.

The tree of life then, in the heavenly Jerusalem, is Christ in glory, and Christ in glory as the life of the redeemed; and we are thus reminded that in the glorified state, even as here, the saints do not possess life independently of Christ. This is the record that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son, and this will be eternally true. The character of the heavenly life, the proper portion of the saints of God, will thus remain the same, only in our perfected condition, as entirely conformed to Christ, it will be enjoyed to the full, without let or hindrance of any kind. We shall then know what it is, in full measure, (to borrow the language of the bride) to sit down under His shadow with great delight, and find that His fruit is sweet to our taste.

The leaves of the tree will be for the healing of the nations. This statement very plainly teaches that the heavenly city sustains, during the millennial period, a relationship to the earth, and that the nations will receive of the healing virtues of the Tree of Life. As has been written by another, "Only the glorified ever ate the fruit of constant growth; but what was manifested and displayed without, as the leaves of a

tree, was blessing to those on earth." In some way, therefore—in what way is not revealed—grace, either mediately or immediately, will flow out from the assembly in glory. What an insight is thus afforded into the heart of God! And what an expansion is given to the conception of "the riches of His grace" even outside of the assembly!

The next three verses go together: "*And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.*" (vv. 3-5.) Everything being constituted in the holy city according to God's righteousness, there could be no more curse; for God will repose in the whole scene with infinite delight, for all His people, through the riches of His grace, will be there according to His own mind. Curse belongs to a state of sin and transgression, and that now has for ever passed away. The reason, however, here given is in the fact of the throne of God and of the Lamb being in it, in its absolute supremacy and recognition, and thus securing in its perfect government a state according to God. God's holiness as expressed in His throne will be the eternal guarantee of the happiness of the redeemed, even as His love, and that of the Lamb, will be their eternal and satisfying portion.

It is for this reason that we pass at once in our scripture to the positive character of the blessedness of the redeemed, the inhabitants of the heavenly city. When considering the eternal state, as described in

chap. xxi. 1-7, we pointed out that there it was the negative side of this blessedness which was prominent, that is, it was rather the absence of the evils that afflict us here, that was indicated ;\* but here it is the positive side, what we shall do, enjoy, and be. The first thing noted is, "His servants shall serve Him." As often in John's writings the Father and the Son—here God and the Lamb—are so completely one in his mind that he does not pause to distinguish. Hence here it is "His" servants, although he had just spoken of God and the Lamb. Here then at last His servants shall serve Him. They had by His grace done it here, though very imperfectly, even according to their own standard. Unprofitable servants they had been, even when they had laboured to the utmost; for mixed motives had often contended within their hearts. But now at length, when Christ will completely possess and control their hearts, when no other object but Himself will ever be before their souls, when His will shall find in them a full and complete response, and when they themselves will not have a thought, desire, or interest outside of His own, then they will serve Him perfectly according to *His* standard, for in all their obedience and activity they will be the perfect expression of His own most blessed mind.

They shall moreover see His face. We read of Moses that the Lord spake unto him face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend; and, on the other hand, David commanded respecting Absalom, "Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face." To see the Lamb's face in glory therefore betokens intimacy of

\* We refer to *v.* 4; in the fact that the new Jerusalem becomes the tabernacle of God is a very positive aspect of the blessedness of the redeemed.

approach and the enjoyment of His presence, a place of nearness as well as of honour and blessing. This of itself tells of the saints' perfected condition, even as John writes, "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." This character of blessedness has been well expressed in the following lines:

"For ever to behold Him shine,  
 For evermore to call Him mine,  
     And see Him still before me;  
 For ever on His face to gaze,  
 And meet the full assembled rays,  
 While all His beauty He displays  
     To all His saints in glory."

Also, His name will be in their foreheads. The primary thought in this characteristic feature is that of ownership; as it is likewise in the case of the followers of antichrist in chap. xiii. But there is also another thing indicated. Name, as constantly in scripture, is the expression of what a person is; and so interpreted here it will signify that full likeness to Christ will be told out on every brow, that all His redeemed will be the reflection of Himself, in accordance with the purpose of God that they should be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

It is repeated in the following verse (5th) that there shall be no night there, for all evil has been for ever done away, and together with it the darkness which is its moral symbol. Nor will the glorified need either light of the lamp, or of sun, either artificial or created light, for the Lord God (Jehovah Elohim) giveth them light. In this state and condition there could not be a single want which the presence of their God does not

meet. They now know, what we so feebly apprehend while in the wilderness, His all-sufficiency, that He alone is the source of all their blessedness, that with Him is the fountain of life, and in His light they see light.

Lastly, it is said, they shall reign for ever and ever. During the thousand years they will reign with Christ; but, as we know from 1 Cor. xv., at the close of that period Christ will deliver up His mediatorial kingdom "to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." (vv. 24-28.) It is evident therefore that the words "reign for ever and ever" cannot refer to the association of the saints with Christ in the glories of His millennial sway; but that they point rather to the eternal kingdom of God, and to the exaltation of saints as belonging to Christ, as being the Lamb's wife, in its administration throughout "the ages of the ages."

This forms the conclusion of the description of the new Jerusalem, and, in fact, of the whole book. There are warnings added, and special intimations of the relationship of Christ to the assembly, and of the Church's suited attitude, and of what produces it, while awaiting the Lord's return; and these form the solemn close to these solemn communications which the Lord has made for the guidance and instruction of His people, whose lot is cast in dark and difficult days. The consideration of these must however be reserved for our concluding chapters.

## SCRIPTURE NOTE.

## I.

JOHN vi. 53-56.

It is impossible in the limits of a "Scripture note" to give anything like an exposition of this significant scripture. The utmost that can be done, is to indicate a few points to help the reader to study it for himself. The first thing of importance to note, is the character of the death of Christ here, and in the gospel generally. He is not seen here as dying for our sins, although every aspect is included in His one act of death, but rather as bearing the judgment due to what we were as men in the flesh. In one word, it is the brazen serpent aspect (chapter iii.); that is, the condemnation of sin in the flesh; and hence it is the judicial end of the first man, inasmuch as God passed judgment in the cross upon all that man was. Secondly, as corresponding with this character of the cross, man is not seen in this gospel as alive in his sins, as for example in the epistle to the Romans, but as dead, without one movement of life towards God, as morally dead, as in 2 Cor. v. 14, Eph. ii. and Col. ii. 13. This is distinctly taught in John v. 24, 25. Thirdly, "the flesh of the Son of man," and "His blood" can only refer to His death; for the two things could not exist in separation excepting in death. The contention—sacramentarian contention—that the Lord's Supper is referred to, ignores the plainest teaching of the chapter. That the Lord's Supper looks back to, and is the commemoration of,

His death is true; and that the flesh and blood of the Son of man speak of His death is also true; but the two things must not be confounded. The meaning of eating, it may be noted in the next place, is identification with, appropriation of, and so assimilation. It is "to acknowledge, realize, feed upon His death—to identify ourselves with it before God, participating in it by faith." The last point to be mentioned is, that verse 53 should run, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk His blood, ye have no life in you." Thereafter "eat," as rendered, is in the present tense. That is, verse 53 refers to the first appropriation of the death of Christ, as the way of life for dead souls, and the following verses speak of the continuous feeding upon that death in their several connections. A few words may be added upon the blessings specified. On the first, that of receiving life, we call attention to the following language: "In receiving by faith Christ's death as the absolute condemnation of that which I am, I have part in the efficacy of that which He has done. Sin has been before God, and has disappeared before His eyes in the death of Christ, who, however, had not known it. I say to myself, That is I. I eat it; I place myself there by the operation of the Spirit of God, not that I believe that it is for me personally, but I recognize what His death signified, and I place myself in it by faith in Him. There, where I was, in death spiritually, by sin and disobedience, Christ entered in grace and by obedience, for the glory of His Father, in order that God might be glorified. I recognise my state in His death, but according to the perfect grace of God, according to which He took my place there;

for it is in this that we know love, that He laid down His life for us. Now, if one died for all, then were all dead. By faith and repentance I recognise myself there, and I have eternal life.”\*

Hence it is the Lord proceeds to say that he that eats His flesh and drinks His blood has eternal life; having eternal life the soul feeds upon His death constantly, for only thus can it maintain its new condition morally in having passed out of death into life, and be in the enjoyment of the assurance of resurrection at the last day. Already living in the new scene to which eternal life belongs, it awaits its perfected condition in resurrection. Further, the one who thus eats dwells in Christ in abiding communion, and Christ in him as the source of his power while still down here. And finally; “As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by [by reason of] the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by [by reason of] me.” It is not now eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, but eating, feeding upon, Christ Himself, and upon Christ Himself in the place where He is, in His glorified state. Down here, as sent of the living Father, He lived “by reason of what the Father was and His living,” and now he that feeds upon Christ lives by reason of what Christ is, for He is our life, and because He lives, we *shall* live also. “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” We live, therefore, in Him before the Father, and by reason of what He is, and hence it is as we feed upon Him that we really enjoy the life which is inseparable from Himself.

\* *Collective Writings of J. N. D.*, vol. xxxiii. pp. 292-3.



## “MARROW AND FATNESS.”

PSALM lxi.

A COMPARISON is sometimes instituted between this and the 84th Psalm. The difference is, that in the latter it is rather the tabernacles—the house—which are the object of the Psalmist's desire, whereas here it is God Himself, God as He has been pleased to make Himself known to the soul. The tabernacles, of course, are only beloved (amiable) because they are the dwelling-place of God, and because of the blessedness flowing from His worship, “for a day in thy courts is better than a thousand”; still in our psalm God alone is the object—God in all that He is as the soul's satisfying portion. And there is nothing beyond this, even in the New Testament, except it be connected with the revelation of the Father, and relationship with Him as such, known and enjoyed through the Spirit of adoption.

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The superscription of the psalm gives its position. It is a psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah, when therefore he was cast out from the privileges of Israel, and debarred from all access to God, as dwelling in the midst of His people. He became in this way the type and the mouthpiece of the remnant of a later day, cast out of Jerusalem, while the city is given up to the power and rule of wickedness. The correspondence of this position with that of the Christian is on this very account only the more marked. He too is in the wilderness, and longs after God, as revealed in Christ, in the place where He

dwells. Substitute heaven for Jerusalem, and the believer now can with a fuller and deeper meaning adopt the language of this psalm.

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The first two verses give the subject of the psalm, and are the foundation of all that follows. The soul has been made to realise that it is a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. How long it often takes us to learn that this is the character of the scene through which we are passing! But the lesson must be apprehended (and God, by His various discipline, is ever seeking to enforce it upon us) if we would know, in any measure, what God is in Himself—that He alone, beyond all the blessings He bestows, is the portion of our inheritance and of our cup. (See Psalm xvi. 5.) It is in proportion as we surrender everything here, and accept death upon all that might attract and enchain us, that we discover what boundless resources we have in God Himself; while it is also true that the power for refusal of things here comes from knowing what we have in Christ. But the moment the soul can write "no water" upon this scene, it is set free to enjoy God. If it can truly say, "I have nothing here," God will immediately step in and say, "Now I will be everything to you."

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Understanding this, the language of verse 1 will be at once explained: "O God, thou art my God." Faith is in exercise as seen in its appropriating power—*my* God; so that the utterance of this one word "my" becomes the doorway into all the blessedness that follows. Thereon there are 'seeking,' 'thirsting,' and 'longing'—words which all tell of intensity of desire

after Him, who has become the soul's absorbing object. And all this longing desire is "to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary." The recollection of past displays of God's power and glory in His dwelling-place inflamed his desire for further manifestations. It is ever so. The more we know, the more we have apprehended, the more we desire to know. We have seen God's power and glory displayed in the exaltation of Christ at His right hand. Christ there is both the power and the glory of God, and we are permitted to behold it. And when we do really behold it, the desire is to behold it again. In other words, five minutes thus spent in occupation with Christ will produce in us the desire for ten; and so we should increase in longing of soul after Him, whose glory has thus been revealed to us without a veil, until nothing short of being with Him where He is would satisfy us.

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Now the effects of having God as the alone portion of the soul are given. They are introduced in *vv.* 3 and 7 by the word "because." The first, then, is, "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." This is exceedingly beautiful. "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." The Psalmist had "lost" his life here; there was *no* water, no springs of life in the dry and thirsty land through which he passed as a pilgrim; but he had found that God's lovingkindness, God known in grace, was *better* than life. Praise, perpetual praise, was thus produced. Until indeed we are brought to understand the revelation of God in grace, we cannot be in the liberty of soul for praise and

adoration. His soul moreover would be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. A worshipping, a praiseful soul is always a satisfied soul; for it is only when it is satisfied that it overflows in praise. Hence the Psalmist repeats that he will continue to praise, and even by night. Songs in the night, when all else was still, should mark him, as well as praise by day. He might have truly said—

"Each thought of thee doth constant yield  
Unchanging fresh delight."

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Another consequence is introduced in *v.* 7: "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." The principle is—the more we learn of God the more confidently we trust in Him. The Psalmist had experienced again and again that the Lord was his helper, and now he will rejoice only in the shadow of His wings. When, for example, he fled from Absalom his son, there were many, he tells us, who said, "There is no help for him in God." But turning to God, he said, "Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head"; and the Lord justified his confidence, smote all his enemies upon the cheekbone, and made His servant confess, "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord." Well therefore might he say, "The Lord has been my help," and that, on this account, his trust should be in the shadow of God's wings; the wings that overspread the mercy-seat upon the ark—His throne and dwelling-place; His sanctuary. How blessed for the soul to trust and to rejoice alone in God's sure protection and care! Let every experience of His succour then but lead us to more restful confidence in Him.

In the next verse he gives us the practical result of these blessed experiences: "My soul followeth hard after Thee." It is the attraction of the knowledge of God and His lovingkindness which makes him a devoted disciple, and draws him irresistibly onward, because it produces all the deep desires which he expresses in the first verse. This is the secret of real consecration, and of holiness of walk. It is the truth of Philippians iii., where the apostle, absorbed in the contemplation of a glorified Christ, says, "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." So here the Psalmist, having seen God in the sanctuary, is filled with the ardent desire to see His power and His glory, and is thus drawn on to follow hard after Him. Such is the effect of the revelation of God to his soul, but if he follows hard after God he is upheld in this path by God's right hand. Observe how completely the power is from God. It is God's power that draws onward, and it is God's power that upholds. We need to learn the lesson, that, knowing our own utter weakness, we may cease to expect anything from ourselves, and may look for everything from God.

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The last three verses present a sad contrast. If it is the remnant in this Psalm, it is yet the Spirit of Christ speaking through them, and hence it is, "Those that seek my soul to destroy it shall go into the lower parts of the earth." The enemies of Christ and of His people must, when the kingdom is established in righteousness, be smitten with judgment. But the King, God's King, the Messiah, shall rejoice in God. His delight shall be in God Himself. It is probably a contrast to verse 1.

There it is longing after God ; here God, so to speak, is possessed, and found to be the eternal source of joyful blessedness. We speak thus by way of application, because if we take the King to be Christ, He always rejoiced in God. Every one, moreover, that "sweareth by Him" shall glory ; for He will bring all His followers to share with Him in His own exaltation and blessing. "But the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped"; for, as we read in another Psalm, "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight" (Psalm ci. 7); and, as we also learn from another scripture, "Who-soever loveth and maketh a lie," will be for ever excluded from the blessedness of the holy city, new Jerusalem. (Rev. xxii. 15.)

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## FAITH AND PATIENCE.

HEBREWS xi. 32-xii. 3.

AT the end of the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews we are associated with those who walked by faith in old times, though it be blessedly true that some better thing is provided of God for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Those who walk by faith in the midst of a world where all is conducted on the principle of sight (as I once saw in a book of political economy, "with a view to make the best possible use of the resources of this planet"), must not expect to be understood or appreciated here, but the reverse. If it be true that our treasure is in heaven, that we belong to a heavenly ascended Christ, and that we have our part in the

heavenly city, all our *resources* are in quite a different sphere to that of sight. Yes, we belong to another world, and not to this infidel system in which we are but as pilgrims, and which believes more in man and man's resources than in Christ.

The better thing provided for us, and which distinguishes us from the Old Testament saints, is fully brought out in the Hebrews, for the first chapter shows us at once the heavens opened, and the divine glory of Him who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and the second chapter, the wondrous perfect humanity of Him now risen from the dead, who is not ashamed to call us brethren, and the stupendous fact that He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one! We belong to a heavenly Christ; we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour: well may we sing, *Gloria in excelsis!* (Glory in the highest!)

No doubt the illustrious band of witnesses were not in the Christian position, but they could not come to perfection without us, more favoured as we are. They could not see what we see; they could not understand John xx., for they were not in it; but I wish to insist upon the principle of faith, common to them and to us. Perfection refers to the glorified Christ and the state of things connected with Him (compare chapter vi. 1); there is no perfectibility of the human race by any human or earthly means. This is important, for people are boasting now in the world of bringing man to perfection, and I saw a statement not long ago that the human race had accomplished two-sevenths of a perfection. Even were this true (and nothing could be more false), the remaining five-sevenths are very far off indeed!

No; perfection is alone to be found now in the glorified Man at God's right hand. May God give us to enter into His thoughts about it.

But let us just notice the path of faith. I say that the Holy Spirit, whilst insisting on the better thing for us, identifies us with the noble army of believers, and it is a good thing to study their walk.

At the end of the eleventh chapter a company of poor, weak, despised people triumphed over all the powers and forces of the world—lions, fire, sword, and the rest; and overcame by faith all the obstacles along the path that led to a city that hath foundations. Faith is not imagination. A poet may *imagine* heaven, as may be seen, for example, in many a poem; but this is mere fiction, has no existence. Faith knows what is *real*. A real glorified Jesus; a real city, whose builder and maker is God. Faith puts us in living connection with a real, living Lord, who has triumphed over death. The Old Testament saints saw afar off the celestial city; they knew the living God, and what was the effect? Do we enter into this? Oh, how ill this world used them! (I have thought sometimes that Pharaoh was a student of political economy, from his theory of suppression of the Hebrew population.) If we had to be wandering, clad in goatskins and sheepskins, instead of broadcloth; and to sleep in caves and dens of the earth, instead of going quietly to bed—should we appreciate the honour? "*Of whom the world was not worthy.*" Well, we belong to the company of faith. I have sometimes thought that a little persecution might do us no harm, though it be not the time for it now. We see the things that are invisible, we belong to Christ in heaven, and there is not one single



thing here to help us in the walk of faith; all must come from above.

The twelfth chapter begins with practical exhortation for us, and here *patience* comes in. Laying aside every weight is one thing; sin is another. Many things that are not sin are weights; this has often been spoken of. The prize is too glorious, the race too serious, to be carrying weight. Far be it from me to speak against any family ties, and duties, and daily work, but *weight* is rather taking upon oneself what is a hindrance to the race to the heavenly goal, to the glory. I once knew a Christian who built a house in such massive style that he was asked by another, "Have you built that domicile for the millennium?" His heart was but too evidently in the bricks and mortar; and this, or any other thing that impedes us in the race, is weight.

"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Christian patience is not a mere natural phlegmatic quality, it must not be confounded with this. Some people naturally have not enough spirit to be impatient, but when a naturally ardent, impatient man shows all patience, as the converted Saul of Tarsus, we may be sure that he has learnt of Him who is meek and lowly of heart. We can afford to wait; we shall soon be with Jesus, and like Him for ever.

"Looking off unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith"; what a blessed thing to contemplate, the One perfect model! Many had walked by faith, but the blessed Lord is the author and finisher of it. He fulfilled the perfect career of faith in lowly grace, from the beginning to the end. In this epistle it has been remarked that our blessed Lord throws everything and every one else far into the shade. May we look off

from everything else unto Him! "For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." I think that in the gospels the Pharisees were the great opponents of Christ, attacking Him on religious grounds, seeking to entangle Him in His words, in order to crush Him by gainsaying and contradiction. Perhaps, in the present state of Christendom, if we are faithful, in our little measure, to an unseen heavenly Christ, we may taste a little of similar opposition. It is not the day for Smithfield fires and dungeons; but it is impossible that there be not opposition if we are faithful to Christ and to our calling. We have need of faith and patience; and may we consider Him, lest we be weary and faint in our minds!

E. L. B.

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### GALATIANS III.

Two subjects are specially before us in this chapter. First, that in contrast to law and flesh these Galatians had received the Spirit of God; for as law characterised Judaism, so does the Holy Spirit characterise Christianity. Secondly, that every blessing came to them according to grace on the principle of faith, and is known and enjoyed by the power of the Spirit.

Christ had been plainly set before the eyes of the Galatians—*crucified*. It was not the Saviour on earth preaching glad tidings and going about doing good; as such He had been rejected and slain. It was Christ crucified—such a truth spoke plainly of the sin of man under the law, for the Jews used the law to kill the Holy and Just One. They said, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die." How then go back to

Judaism? But if it spoke plainly of the sin of man having been fully consummated, it told also of the love of Him who had been crucified, in giving *Himself* for our sins. It told also of the believer once under death and condemnation being set free, in that Christ had gone into death and borne the judgment and condemnation. Moreover justification, life, promise, adoption, the inheritance, were all connected with the gospel, which portrayed before the eyes of the Galatians Christ crucified. How senseless to go back to that religion of the flesh which had crucified Him! Let us mark this well, that we can never turn back to the old "I" in any way without turning back to the flesh which crucified Christ.

The Galatians had received the Spirit of God. On what ground? Had He been given as the seal of a state attained by works of law, or because they believed the gospel which witnessed to them of Christ? Assuredly the latter. The apostle shows how intimately this great characteristic of Christianity, the presence and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, is connected with the principle of faith. The Spirit of God has come, now that the Christ, who was crucified to bear the judgment which lay upon man, has been raised from the dead and glorified on high. It is there that He is the Object of faith, as He said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." (John xiv. 1.) The Holy Ghost testifies that there is another Man before God, and is the power by which we enter into and enjoy what is ours in that precious Christ in whom we believe. The Galatians had begun in the Spirit. Were they going to be made perfect in the flesh? Christ crucified is the answer to any expectation from self and flesh. Perfection is alone

in the glorified Man, whom the flesh refused and hated.

The apostle cannot unfold this glorious theme to the Galatians, senseless as they were, for the ministry they needed was rather rebuking by the Spirit the flesh, to which they were turning back for perfection; but he shows that the ministry of the Spirit among them, in a power too that wrought miraculously above the effects of sin, was carried on in connection with the report of the gospel which they had received by faith. He then carries them back to a time before the law, when God had given to Abraham the first intimation of the blessing which should come to the Gentiles—"In thee shall all nations be blessed." It was to Abraham that God took the revealed place of a God of blessing when men universally had departed from Him into idolatry. "I will bless thee . . . and thou shalt be a blessing"; and in the God who called him to inherit a blessing Abraham believed. Thus the ground of blessing by sovereign grace is established on the principle of faith, and on the same principle the one believing is accounted righteous, the effort of the flesh to attain to righteousness being worse than useless. Before the law Abraham had been accounted righteous when he believed in God, and the gospel before announced to him the blessing to come to the Gentiles. Believing Abraham and all who are of the like principle of faith are blessed together. Believers are the true sons of Abraham.

The apostle now contrasts law and faith, showing that, instead of blessing, curse came by law; life and justification by faith. This indeed was according to Scripture, for it stated that "the just shall live by

faith." With regard to law it propounded a different principle—"The man that doeth them shall live in them." Moreover Scripture pronounced a curse on every one who did not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them. The law thus left those who were of it under the curse, for it gave no power to fulfil its demands. But Christ had been hung upon the tree and redemption accomplished. Two results flowed from this redemption—the curse had been borne for those who were under it, and the way had been opened for the blessing of Abraham to come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, the precious Saviour who had been crucified for both Jew and Gentile, so that through faith both might receive the peculiar blessing of Christianity, the promise of the Spirit.

Let us for a moment consider this peculiar Christian blessing in connection with that which follows in the chapter, viz., the contrast between law and promise. The apostle shows that the promise of blessing made to Abraham—of which he was the depositary, but which in its extent went out to all the families of the earth—had been unconditionally made by God. Now all God's dealings with Israel had proved that man according to the flesh was unable either to enter into, or hold, or enjoy, the promises of God. He must be born again either to perceive or enter into the kingdom of *God*. A Jew should have learned the necessity of this from Deut. xxix. 2-4. The signs and wonders wrought by Moses of old brought with them no spiritual perception; and when Christ was presented to Israel as the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, He was among them as the Light of life, which the darkness of the natural

heart could not comprehend. His own received Him not, and forfeited, by rejecting Him, all claim to the promises. The Yea and Amen of every promise is in Christ alone: man can neither receive nor hold them. Further, the things of God *knoweth* no man but the Spirit of God; hence in order to the knowledge and enjoyment of the things of God—and all these come to us in the way of sovereign grace and promise—it was necessary that believers, and such are the true sons of Abraham, should receive the Spirit which is of God, that they might know the things which have been freely *given* us of God. When the Lord told Abraham to lift up his eyes and survey the extent of the inheritance which He then gave to him (Gen. xiii. 14), He added, "Arise and walk through the land in the length of it and the breadth of it." We are not told that Abraham ever made this intimate acquaintance with the possessions given him, but the Spirit is now given to so strengthen us in the inner man that we may be able to know and comprehend the vast extent of the glory which centres in Christ, and the love of Christ which is ours, though it passes knowledge. It is by the Spirit alone we know the things which are given to us of God and our relationship to the Giver. How great the blessing of Christians in having received the promise of the Spirit! The Galatians were slighting the gift; and we may say His power and presence are but little known by Christians now.

But if the promises of God could only be known by the Spirit, we have also seen that man after the flesh was not in the state or condition in which they could be established. They are Yea and Amen in Christ, the Son of God, declared to be so in power by the resurrec-

tion from the dead. In Him, the risen One, they are established for the glory of God by us. Hence God's original covenant of blessing according to the promise made to Abraham (Gen. xii. 18) He confirmed to Isaac (Gen. xxii. 18) after he had been taken from off the altar; that is, "received in a figure from the dead." (Heb. xi.) Isaac was a type of Christ, as it says in our chapter (v. 16), "And to thy seed, which is Christ." It is characteristic of faith that it not only sets its Amen to the word and promises of God, but bows in the intelligency which belongs alone to faith to God's way of bringing them about.

We cannot read carefully the history of Abraham's journey to mount Moriah to offer up Isaac without seeing that he went there in company with the mind of God. Deep and painful as was the trial during those three days, we may surely say that Abraham was conscious that God was working out His own great plan of blessing. If God was about to take his beloved Isaac from him in the flesh, he would be given back to him in resurrection. Abraham took the journey in the company of the God of resurrection. He accounted that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. Hence, when on the third day *he saw the place* there is no trembling, but the calm certainty of faith. "Abide," he says to his young men, "ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and *come again* to you." Abraham and Isaac would both return to them in the power of the God of resurrection. Another utterance shows yet again that Abraham entered in some measure into the secret of God's wonderful plan. "My son," he replied to Isaac, "God will provide *Himself* a lamb." In order to the carrying out of His own purpose in

redemption, God must have a Lamb *for Himself*. No doubt *we* need a sacrifice; but there was also the need of His own glory in accomplishing the promises confirmed in Christ, the risen Saviour, the one seed of Abraham.

“Wherefore then the law?” now asks the apostle; and note we have here a divine reason for its being brought in. It was not against the previous promises, nor was it introduced to give life, otherwise righteousness would have been by the law. It was brought in provisionally until the seed came to whom God had made the promise; that is, Christ, now raised from the dead, in order that the character of sin might be shown by actual transgressions of the law. The manner in which it was ordained was quite different from the giving of the promise. This depended on God *alone*, both as to gift and performance. The law given through angels could only go on between a sinful people and God by means of mediation. Not only was it first given into the hands of Moses for them, but, in answer to his mediation when it was broken, Jehovah took the ground of longsuffering mercy to a people still kept under its obligation, yet with the assurance that, however great His longsuffering, He would by no means clear the guilty. The law then served to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin by offences abounding under it; and Scripture, by proof after proof, has shown that all are under sin. But so far from being against the promises of God, the law guarded the Jews who were under it—shut them up from other nations, kept them in tutelage up to Christ in order to their being then justified on the principle of faith. But the moment the principle of faith has



come in, not only is the promise given to *all who believe*, but the office of the law as a schoolmaster is over—those under it were so no longer (compare chap. iv. 2-5), and Gentiles, by faith in Christ Jesus, were God's sons. Hence, to go back to Judaism was to leave the acknowledged place of sonship, and to take the place of minors under a schoolmaster.

But that could not be. The Galatians had been baptized unto Christ; and the apostle here shows the bearing of the ordinance, that in it they had put on Christ; and that was giving up all distinction of the flesh, for in Christ there was neither Jew nor Greek, for all are one in Christ Jesus. If they were then of Christ, they were Abraham's seed, the true seed of faith—not of flesh and law, as mere Jews were—and heirs according to the promise which had been made to him and confirmed in the seed, Christ raised from the dead.

We have to note here for our own instruction that the apostle, having to maintain the foundation truths of Christianity, and to establish the Galatians in them, goes back to the introductory ordinance, to show that in it the door was opened into Christianity, whether for Jew or Gentile, and Christ put on; for the question is not whether it was real with them or not—that was the ground they had taken; and owing to their state, he has to insist with them on the very elements of this new place, rather than lead them on into the fulness of their portion.

T. H. R.

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WE want the heavenly calling to give power to take up the cross; and it is in proportion as we are dead to things here, that the heavenly things are realised.

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

## CHAPTER xxii. 6-15.

THE prophetic character of these communications is shown in every possible way. In chapter xix., as we have seen, John is told, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"; and here again the angel, who was sent to signify unto John the things that must shortly come to pass (chap. i. 1), says, "I am of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book." (v. 9.) It is needful to bear this in mind, in order to understand the nature of the book, and the application of the revelations made. It is because this has been forgotten, together with the fact that the church is not the subject of prophecy, that so many mistakes have been made in the interpretation of the apocalyptic visions. These closing warnings and admonitions are therefore of great importance, as affording abundant confirmation of the view taken in this exposition, that the whole of the book after chapter iii. is yet future; and as demonstrating the untenability of what is termed the "historical" view, viz., of regarding all the visions up to chapter xix. as already fulfilled in past historical events, and of the consequent contention, that we have now only to wait for the appearing of our Lord as described in chapter xix. 11. This theory could not be accepted by those who understand the true character of the church as the body of Christ, and of the church's hope as given by the apostle Paul in 1 Thess. iv. 15-18. These know that the church's immediate prospect is

the coming of the Lord to receive His people, and that the judgments and woes revealed in this book (whatever premonitions of these there may have been in past ages) cannot be visited upon this poor world, until the church has been rapt away from the scene, and is on high with the Lord. To miss this distinction is to lose the true nature of the dispensations, and especially of the church period, which embraces the time from Pentecost until the coming of the Lord.

We may now with greater intelligence pass to the consideration of this portion. The exhibition of the holy city, and the blessedness of its inhabitants having been concluded, the angel solemnly affirms the truth of his communications: "*These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets\* sent His angel to shew unto His servants the things which must shortly be done.*" Three things in this short statement confirm the view already given. The names "Lord God," Jehovah Elohim, carry us necessarily back to the Old Testament ground of prophecy; and the reason is, that the faithful remnant of this book, after the church is gone, will be Jewish, under law, and sustained by Jewish hopes. It is, indeed, the remnant, so often found in the Psalms, looking for the advent of their glorious Messiah, and the restoration and blessing of Zion. The same conclusion is indicated by the term "the holy prophets," and still more strikingly, if we adopt the reading mentioned, "the spirits of the prophets"; and lastly, it is expressly stated that things made known are those "which must shortly be done."

The following verse presents a point of great interest:

\* A preferable reading would seem to be "of the spirits of the prophets."

"Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." (v. 7.) The angel speaks in verse 6; and now the Lord Himself, it being His own testimony, speaks through the lips of the angel. This transition from the prophet to Him, whose angel (messenger) the prophet was, is often found in the Old Testament. A striking illustration of this is found in Zechariah xi., where Jehovah takes up the word His servant was uttering, and so distinctly, that He says, "If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." (v. 12.) So here the Lord Himself, His communications now drawing to a close, announces His speedy return; not, if our interpretation is correct, His return for the Church, but His return to the earth. For this annunciation, as we understand it, is made for the cheer and the encouragement of the suffering remnant in the period between the rapture of the saints and the Lord's appearing, during the period therefore of Jacob's trouble, and of "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Chapter iii. 10.) And it is evidently made in view of the fearful temptations and seductions which will then beset the saints, to surrender their testimony; for it is added, "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." It is this that will delight the heart of the Lord, not achieving great things or rendering splendid service, but simply keeping His word, His word for that time. "Keeping" here is observing, carrying out, and this involves another sense of the word, viz., "treasuring up," and even another, "holding fast"; for it is not until the Word has been treasured up in the heart, and

retained there, that it moulds the life, and is thus observed. And it may easily be perceived what an immense encouragement this message will prove to those who will be hemmed in on every side by the powers of darkness. To be assured that the Lord's eye is upon them, and that He is speedily coming for their relief and deliverance, and that what He desires and approves, beyond all, is their fidelity to His word, will be an unceasing source of sustainment and consolation to their souls. In principle, it is scarcely necessary to say, His word is applicable to saints now, although the special announcement for them is lower down in the chapter. The fact of His coming quickly is true for both the one and the other, and of His approbation, during His absence, for those who keep His sayings.

In the next place, the effect on John's mind of these divine revelations is given. "*And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See [thou do it not]: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*" (vv. 8, 9.) Once before John had been so overwhelmed by the visions opened out before his soul that he fell down to worship the angel (chap. xix. 10), and it might occasion surprise that he should do again what was then prohibited; but it must be remembered, as has been pointed out, that the Lord Himself had spoken in person through the angel, and the apostle might have been so absorbed with this one voice, "Behold, I come quickly," as to forget for the moment the medium, the angel, through whom He had spoken. But even if so, it could not be

permitted; and the angel seizes the opportunity to declare his own true character, and to enforce the truth that worship is due alone to God. It is only the more wonderful, with this on record, that the worship of angels crept so early into the Church, long indeed before the writing of this book. (See Col. ii.) It is possible therefore that the mistake of John, twice made, is recorded for the purpose of condemning a prevalent practice, as also with the view of affording the plain instruction that no beings, however exalted, must ever be allowed to intrude between God and the souls of His people. Well would it have been for the Church if this lesson had been remembered.

The angel now gives the closing words of his message: "*And He saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*" (vv. 10, 11.) Some of the communications made to John were not to be divulged. When, for example, the seven thunders uttered their voices, and he was about to write, a voice came to him from heaven, saying, "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." (Chap. x.) Here, on the other hand, all that he saw and heard was to be recorded for the instruction of the saints down to the end; and for the reason that the time was not exactly "at hand," but "near."\* In the prophetic view everything was closing up, and the end was fast approaching. It was for this reason important that all should be

\* The word is *ἐγγύς*, as in Philippians iv. 5, translated there also, in our version "at hand," but it really means "near," or "nigh."

warned; and hence the solemn cry of verse 11. When the end arrived, and the prophetic eye already discerned it, the state of souls would be for ever fixed and unalterable. The unjust and the filthy must remain so, for nevermore would they have the opportunity of passing out of their sinful condition; and so, in like manner, the righteous and the holy would for ever retain the blessed characters they had through grace received. Would that this divine warning, still proceeding from this page of the written word, might rouse the careless and the indifferent on every hand, and constrain them before the final close of the day of grace, to humble themselves before God, with true repentance, and with faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Himself interposes, and speaks again in His own person in the next two verses—“*And,\* behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*” (v. 13, 14.) As the warning in verse 11, so this second proclamation of the Lord’s speedy coming is in view of the end. And it is made with a twofold object—to encourage His servants, and to warn the wicked of the rapid approach of judgment. The former, however, we apprehend, is the predominant thought in the announcement from the mention of His reward being with Him. Even this is, however, capable of a twofold construction, and the idea of recompense to the wicked, in the judgment of the living at the appearing of the Lord, must not be excluded. In the first annunciation of His coming quickly (v. 7), the Lord points out wherein the

\* The word “and” should be omitted.

blessedness of His people would be found while waiting ; here He encourages them with the prospect of recompence, reminding them that the day was swiftly coming when every work done for Him, every act and word done and spoken for Him, should be abundantly rewarded. What unspeakable grace ! First, He Himself produces in the hearts of His people what is according to His mind ; then He enables them to bear witness for Him amid the moral darkness of this world ; and finally He imputes to them, and recompenses what His own grace has wrought. Blessed for ever be His name !

Who it is that announces that He is coming quickly is now declared, and declared as its solemn affirmation and certainty. He is the One who was before anything had its existence, who will be after all created things in this scene shall have passed away, and exists through all time and eternity, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all existence, the eternally self-existent One, who comprehends all being in Himself, for it is in Him that all live and move and have their being. The last two titles are found in Isaiah : " Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts ; I am the first and I am the last ; and beside me there is no God." (Chapter xliv. 6.) No terms therefore could more distinctly convey the truth of the Person of our blessed Lord, or more clearly assert His true and proper Deity. And the significance of this, coming immediately after the promise of His coming, will, when their eyes have been opened, be at once understood by the tried and persecuted remnant of the last days. They will learn from it that the Messiah, for whose advent



they long, is Jehovah Elohim, their Lord and their God.

It may be doubted whether verses 14, 15 are spoken by the Lord Himself; they would seem rather to be a parenthesis, in which the Spirit of God calls our attention to the essential qualification for admission to the holy city, and to the moral character of those who are for ever excluded from its portals; and He does this in prospect of the speedy coming of the Alpha and Omega, which has just been proclaimed. He says, "*Blessed are they that do His commandments,\* that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*" (vv. 14, 15.) Accepting the reading, "wash their robes," in the place of "do His commandments," our attention is once more, and for the last time, directed to the value of the precious blood of Christ; for, with chapter vii. 14 in recollection, none can doubt that this is the only mode of cleansing. The book thus commences (chap. i. 5) and ends with a testimony to the efficacy of the blood of Christ. The fact then is here emphasized, that none but those who have washed their robes will be entitled to the fruit of the tree of life, and to entrance within the holy city. All who enter must thus be blood-bought and blood-washed. There is danger in this day of this truth being ignored or denied; and it is well therefore to observe the prominence given to it in these closing words of inspiration.

And what a contrast is presented in the succeeding

\* Few now question that we should rather read, "Blessed are they that wash their robes."

verse. Doubtless many a reader, even if unconverted, would object to be included in any of the classes specified. Let such an one, however, reflect that the very first word used ("dogs") comprehends all that are unclean, and that, according to the teaching of scripture, all who are not under the value of the blood of Christ before God *are* unclean. Whatever therefore any one may claim to be, on the ground of moral character, he has no qualification for entrance through the gates into the city, unless he has first washed his robes in the blood of Christ. E. D.

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## SCRIPTURE NOTES.

### I.

#### PSALM cxviii. 14.

WHETHER this scripture is a quotation from Exodus xv. 2, or whether it is a repetition only of the same words, it is impossible to say. The point to be observed is their beautiful applicability to Israel's new deliverance, a deliverance as wonderful and complete as when they were brought out of Egypt and through the Red Sea by their Redeemer God. It is the voice of the remnant in this Psalm, and of the remnant now brought through their final trials into blessing, looking back upon their past circumstances and celebrating their deliverance. The Lord Himself gives the key to its interpretation in the allusion He makes to the Psalm in Matthew xxiii. 39. The first four verses take up the well-known chorus of Israel's praise, and the fifth gives the occasion of the rehearsal of the enduring character of the Lord's mercy, "I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord

answered me, and set me in a large place." The distress had been caused, will be caused, if taken in its prophetic form, by the nations who will be gathered against Jerusalem, as we read in Zechariah, in the last days. Israel's case will then be hopeless to man's eye, and would be hopeless but for the intervention of Jehovah, "The Lord helped me." (v. 13.) Hence the burst of praise, as in days of yore, when standing on the banks of the Red Sea, "The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation." Two or three other interesting features may be noticed. Suffering as they will from the hands of man, they yet recognise it as chastening from the Lord (v. 18, compare Heb. xii.), and the effect of the chastening is to open their lips in praise in the Lord's house. (vv. 19-21.) Moreover, they connect their deliverance with the once rejected, but now glorious Messiah: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes," etc. (vv. 22-24.) The reader will find the study of the whole Psalm both interesting and profitable.

## II.

### HOSEA ix. 15.

No language could more forcibly depict the moral corruption into which Israel had fallen than the words, "All their wickedness is in Gilgal." Gilgal, it will be remembered, was the place where the twelve stones taken out of Jordan were set up, the place of circumcision, after Israel had crossed the Jordan (Joshua v.); the place, too, where their camp was pitched, and to which they had to return after every battle. It was

significant therefore in every way of death to the flesh, of the end of the first man, speaking now of its Christian meaning; for it was there that the truth of the Jordan was made good practically, just as that of the Red Sea was realised at Marah. Here then it was that Israel, forgetful of the import of Gilgal in their history, practised their iniquities in connection probably with idolatry, giving rein to, instead of circumcising, the flesh in all its inclinations and lusts. It was this which led the prophet to say, "All their wickedness is in Gilgal." Another illustration of the same kind is found in chapter iv.: "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The Lord liveth." (v. 15.) We refer now only to the use of the word Bethaven. There was a city of that name lying to the east of Bethel; but on several grounds, it is clear, we judge, that the Spirit of God uses the name here for Bethel. The reason is most solemn. The meaning of "Bethel" is the house of God (see Genesis xxviii.); but it was in this very place that Jeroboam set one of his golden calves (1 Kings xii.), and thereby seduced Israel into apostasy. (Compare Amos vii. 10-13.) It could therefore be no longer truly called "the house of God," and hence it is termed by the prophet Bethaven, "the house of vanity." The leaders of Israel were thus linking their idolatrous rites with the very places which ought to have reminded them of God, of His grace, and His claims. This aggravated in every way their iniquity. The application to our own day is as easy as sorrowful.

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## JONATHAN AND HIS ARMOUR-BEARER.

I SAMUEL xiv.

AMID the moral desolation, presented by the state of Israel and of Saul, at this moment, the "lovely flower" of faith, as exhibited in Jonathan and his exploits, cannot but excite our admiration. It is evident indeed that the Spirit of God loves to linger over the details of Jonathan's faith, and hence it is that we are permitted to follow him and his armour-bearer step by step in their successful expedition against the enemies of God and His people.

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In the previous chapter nothing can be more humbling than the confusion, distress, and utter impotence of Saul and Israel. The only exception there to the general condition is Jonathan, who "smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba."\* But this victory vouchsafed to Jonathan served to show that God was still with His people, if those in responsibility did but know how to count on His presence and succour. And yet the lesson was wholly lost on Saul. Exalting himself through the achievement of his son, he "blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews [not Israel, but the Hebrews] hear." The rumour consequently went forth that Saul, not Jonathan but Saul, "had smitten a garrison of the Philistines."

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Not knowing how to profit by it, the fruits of the victory only served to humble still more both Saul and

\* The question has sometimes been raised whether this is not the same circumstance which is unfolded at length in chapter xiv. The careful reader, however, will perceive that there are too many differences in names of places, etc., to make this probable.

his people. The Philistines assembled in force, and the people, God's people, having only the leader of their own choice, not God's leader, sought to hide themselves, wherever they could, from the face of the enemy; while others, called here "Hebrews" by the Spirit of God, left the land of promise, and went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Even those who were with Saul in Gilgal followed him trembling. What a spectacle!

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Saul falls still more deeply, unable to stand the test to which he was being exposed. He knew that divine guidance and blessing were with the prophet, but unable quietly to wait on God, and, governed by his circumstances and fears, he sought to bring God in by a self-willed act of devotion. As if the offering of a sacrifice could be a substitute in the time of need for confidence in, and waiting on, the Lord. The prophet came on the scene, rebuked the foolish king, and announced that his kingdom had been forfeited through his disobedience. The rest of the chapter shows us Israel despoiled by the Philistines, and even dependent upon them for means to sharpen their shares, their coulter, their axes, and their mattocks. To the outward eye they were unarmed and defenceless, at the mercy of the foe.

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It is precisely in these circumstances that faith obtains its brightest victories; and this is the lesson of the contrast between chapters xiii. and xiv. Counting on the reader to pursue the details, a few points only in illustration will be adduced. Remark, then, first of all, that faith acts from itself, does not consider difficulties, nor seek the counsel and aid of others. Only to his

armour-bearer, who had fellowship with his master in faith, does he communicate his purpose. He told not his father (*v.* 1); and the people knew not that Jonathan was gone. (*v.* 3.) The path of faith is utter folly to the natural man; and to discuss what faith proposes with those who have no confidence in the Lord, is to lose faith, and to ensure defeat.

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The sure sign of a man of faith is seen in the fact that Jonathan had God's own estimate of the Philistines. Does he regard them as powerful enemies? They were powerful as long as Israel did not lean on Jehovah for strength; but to Jonathan they were the "uncircumcised." David in like manner looked upon Goliath as "this uncircumcised Philistine." Oh, what a difference it makes when we view things according to God! Observe, moreover, that Jonathan's confidence is entirely in the Lord. "It may be," he says, "that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." With the Lord on his side, with the Lord, indeed, working in and through His servant, it was no longer a question of what Jonathan and his armour-bearer were, but what Jehovah of hosts was as against the Philistines. Faith thus brings God in, and measures the foe by what God is.

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How rare a thing is hearty fellowship in the enterprises of faith! Jonathan enjoyed this priceless blessing in the person of his armour-bearer, who replied to his master: "Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold I am with thee according to thy heart." To such a soul faith can disclose all its thoughts, and

accordingly Jonathan communicates his modes of procedure to his armour-bearer. He discerned as divinely taught, that if the enemy in the folly of self-confidence invited them up, it would be a sign that the Lord had delivered the Philistines into their hand; for faith in God learns the mind of God at every step, and knows, therefore, how to meet every difficulty.

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Remark, also, that self finds no place where faith in God is in vigorous activity. The two things indeed are incompatible. On the men of the garrison, therefore, inviting Jonathan and his armour-bearer up, Jonathan said to him, "Come up after me; for the Lord hath delivered them"—not into *our* hands, but—"into the hand of Israel." Faith wages its conflicts for no selfish interests or ends, but for the glory of God on behalf of His people; for, whatever their state, it identifies itself with them because they are God's people. Jonathan's object was thus the deliverance of Israel, for he had felt the reproach of their condition, and in anticipating the victory, he will ascribe it to the interposition of God to deliver His people. He and his armour-bearer might be the vessels of the deliverance, but God's object in it, as through grace it was also theirs, was the blessing of Israel.

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The victory was assured before the battle commenced; for Jonathan, according to the true estimate of the people after the battle was won, "wrought with God." (v. 45.) The Philistines were consequently powerless, and they fell "before Jonathan; and his armour-bearer slew after him." But if Jonathan wrought with God, God wrought also with His servant, for He sent a "trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the



people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling." The battle was the Lord's; faith recognised it, and the Lord Himself secured the issue. There was no restraint to Him, as Jonathan had confessed, to save by many or by few (*v.* 6); but whether with many or few, it is always His own right hand and His holy arm that gets to Himself the victory.

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The remainder of the chapter is simply the record of the folly of the natural man as seen in the seeking to fight the Lord's battles. Saul exhibits his incompetency at every step, has neither faith nor wisdom, and only hinders where he desired to help; for he thought of vengeance on *his* enemies, and not on the enemies of God and Israel. He thus marred, in his fleshly zeal, the full success of the day, and would even have put Jonathan to death, the conspicuous vessel of the deliverance wrought, because in ignorance of the curse his father had pronounced, he had put forth his rod and eaten of the honey that lay in his path, while in pursuit of the foe. "And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day." Such was the true verdict of the people, for it is endorsed by the Spirit of God. We thus learn that faith is always confident, always wise, and always does the right thing; and that unbelief is always afraid, always foolish, and that if it tries to do the right thing, it will always do it in the wrong way. These two things are exemplified in Jonathan and Saul.

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

## CHAPTER xxii. 16-21.

AFTER the parenthesis of verses 14, 15, the Lord Himself resumes His address to John, if it be not rather a new commencement, forming a solemn appendix and conclusion to the whole book. He says: "*I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, [and] the bright and\* morning star.*" (v. 16.)

The One who had just spoken of Himself as the Alpha and Omega now introduces Himself as, "I Jesus"; and the full force of this is only apprehended when it is observed that the "I" is emphatic. It is "*I Jesus*"; that is, "*I*," the One known on earth as Jesus; Jesus of Nazareth, *I am He* who has sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches; it is I who am the beginning and the end, the first and the last. It is the assertion therefore, as will also be seen in what follows, of the Deity of Him who, as down here, and as glorified on High, was, and is, known as Jesus. (See Phil. ii. 10.) This emphatic I is carried on in the succeeding clause: *I* that is, *I Jesus*, am the root and offspring of David, etc.

This twofold character of presentation must now be considered: (1) *As the root and the offspring of David.* This is the character in which He will be the source of blessing to the earth, through making good all that God is, as revealed in righteousness, in government. For it

\* This word ["and"] is not found in some important MSS., and, if omitted, the passage will read, "The bright morning star."

is as Son of David that He will reign; but He who, as born into this world, was of the seed of David, was also He from whom David sprang, for He was also David's Lord. He who comes to establish His kingdom is thus also Jehovah; and hence we read, "Say among the heathen that Jehovah reigneth"; and again, "Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before Jehovah: for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth." (Psalm xcvi. 10-13.) (2) *As the bright [and] morning star.* It is as such that Christ presents Himself to the church as her special portion, while waiting for His return. It is the third time that He is so named; and it will aid the reader if we briefly consider the previous passages in which this title is found. In 2 Peter we read: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy" (the word of prophecy made more sure, or confirmed), "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." (i. 19.) The day star in this scripture is really the morning star, as Peter uses the word which always designates it—its proper appellation, whereas in Revelation the term employed points rather to the time of its appearance. It was no part of Peter's commission to unfold the truth of the church, nor consequently that of the coming of Christ for His people. For him it was ever the appearing of our Lord in glory as introductory to the kingdom; and it is of this he speaks when he describes the glory, the majesty, of our Lord on the mount of transfiguration. Still he was aware of another glory, as the herald of the kingdom, which our Lord possessed as the morning star, and which

would cheer the hearts of the saints, while awaiting the Lord's glorious appearing. The morning star shone, if but on the edge of the night, and as the presage of the day. Passing on to Revelation ii., we find that the Lord, in encouraging the overcomer, says, "And I will give him the morning star." The morning star shines in the heavens while the world is buried in slumbers; but the lonely watcher is cheered with its bright and silvery rays, for it tells him that the night will soon wane, and that the sun will soon arise and introduce the day. But the believer knows something more, when he is occupied with Christ as the morning star, even that before Christ ascends the heavens, and rises upon the world as the Sun of Righteousness, he, and all the saints, will be caught up in the clouds to meet Him in the air, to be with Him, before His return in glory. When the Lord thus says to the overcomer in Thyatira, "I will give him the morning star," it means that he shall possess Christ in this character, with the promise of association with Him in heavenly glory, as his sustainment and cheer amid the night of corruption that had set in among the professing people of God.

So, in our scripture,\* Jesus discovers Himself to the church in this aspect of His heavenly beauty, to attract her heart to Himself, to remind her that her period of waiting will soon be over, and to assure her that He is waiting, as she also is waiting, for the moment when He will present her for ever to Himself. To know Christ, then, as the bright morning star, the church, and individual believers, must be watchers; and just in

\* The addition of the word "bright" will probably mean that, for the waiting soul, His shining will be all the brighter as the darkness deepens around.

proportion as this position is maintained, will be the joy of occupation with Him in this character.

In the next verse the effect of this presentation of Christ is given: "*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*" The connection with the previous verse is of the most intimate kind. It is in fact the disclosure of Christ to the assembly as the bright morning star, that awakens her affections, and produces in the power of the Spirit her longing desire for His return. This were not possible, unless her relationship with a heavenly Christ had been previously known and enjoyed; but assured of her union with Him, and of her own eternal portion in His love, even while still in the wilderness, the moment she perceives Him, as so presented, the holy ardour of her affection breaks forth in the cry, "Come." Nothing could more distinctly show that the church is not of earth, but of heaven—heavenly in origin, and heavenly in character; and nothing could more plainly reveal that the secret of waiting, waiting with desire for the coming of the Lord, is entirely a question of heart. Where the treasure is, the heart will be also; and that Christ is the treasure of the bride is seen here in the intensity of her utterance of the word "Come."

It is however the Spirit *and* the bride who say, Come; that is, the cry is produced by the Spirit in the church. She raises it, but it is He who has called it forth; and we are thus permitted to see, in this place, the church as the vessel, the willing vessel of the Holy Ghost; for it is He who directs her gaze upward to the bright morning Star, and constrains the expression of the desire for

His coming. It follows that this is the normal attitude of the assembly. Moreover, everyone that heareth is invited to join in the entreating appeal. This should include every believer; for the attitude of the church should be that of the saints individually. Wherever therefore this cry is raised, every child of God, however defective his knowledge of the truth, is urged to turn his face upward to Christ, as the morning star, and to say, Come. Would that it might be so; for it would be the sign of a blessed revival, making ready a people prepared for the Lord. The Spirit in the assembly directs her attention, in the next place, to every thirsty soul, to all who are in spiritual anxiety, and longing for satisfaction; and as herself possessed of the living water, and possessing it, as the representative of Christ on earth, she invites every poor thirsty one to come, to come, drink and to be satisfied, even as the Lord cried in days of old, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." (John vii. 37.) Still more widely must her invitations go forth, or she would not be the true exponent of grace, of the heart of God; not a single soul on the face of the earth must be omitted; and hence she cries, lastly, "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

We have thus here, as often observed, the whole circle of the church's affections, and, it may be added, of these affections in their divine order. Christ Himself occupies the first and supreme place; believers individually come next; then thirsty souls are cared for; and finally sinners are invited. To borrow words: "The church can look up and say to the bridegroom, Come; she can look down or around her, and say to the thirsty soul, Come, yea, to whosoever will, Come and drink of

the water of life freely. It is a most lovely picture of her whole position."

The integrity of these divine communications is now solemnly guarded and affirmed: "*For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book\* of life, and out of the holy city, and [from] the things which are written in this book.*" †

The importance of these revelations could not have been more jealously protected. In chapter i. it is said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy of this book"; and now in conclusion the Lord Himself testifies to every one that heareth the book read, that the most fearful judgments shall fall upon the man that shall add, and so corrupt by adding, to what has been communicated; and, in like manner, if any man shall take away from it, he shall suffer the penalty of exclusion both from the tree of life and from the holy city. (Compare Deut. iv. 2, xii. 32.) The word of God is perfect, and to attempt to amend it, whether by addition or diminution, is not only to betray the folly of the human mind, but also to expose the one who attempts to do so to the just judgment of God. Rationalism, in its many forms, is thus at once, and for ever, condemned. And, while

\* There is scarcely a doubt that "tree" should be here substituted for "book."

† If the word "and" be omitted in the last clause, as also the inserted word "from," the true reading will be, "the things which are written in this book"—the reference being to the tree of life, and the holy city. (vv. 18-19.)

fully admitting that these warning words apply to the book of Revelation, it is yet not a little significant that they occur at the close of the canon of inspiration. As God placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life, so He who is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, sets His flaming two-edged sword, which also turns every way, to guard against any assault upon the perfection of His sure and holy word.

One word more, and His testimony is completed: "*He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.*" Such is the last announcement of our blessed Lord; and it is a solemn affirmation of His speedy return. True that nearly two centuries have elapsed since these words were uttered; but this fact increases rather than diminishes their importance. They warn the church for all time that her proper attitude is that of hope and expectation, and encourage her by the assurance that the consummation of her blessedness is at hand. That she has forgotten her bright and blessed hope is only too patent; but the Lord is now seeking in many ways, and with increased urgency, to recall her to her true portion. The cry, "Behold the Bridegroom," raised many years ago, and then, alas! for a time, almost silenced, is again being sounded forth from many revived hearts. Let His people therefore both watch and pray, pray while they watch, that many who are now buried in sleep may be awakened to the enjoyment of the same blessed hope, so that it may be apparent to all that they are waiting for God's Son from heaven. And let those who are especially connected with the testimony, in these last days, be themselves so under



the power of the expectation of Christ, that they may proclaim continually, as the Lord's messengers, these blessed words of consolation, "Surely I come quickly."

John responds to this closing declaration, "*Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus*" \* (v. 20.) When the Lord's coming in the clouds, at His public appearing for judgment, is proclaimed in chapter i., John also says, "Even so, Amen." It betokens not only a heart in subjection to Christ, but one also in communion with His mind and object. What Christ announces, John accepts as the expression of His perfect will. But there is more than this in our scripture; it is the delighted answer of His own heart to the prospect of soon seeing the Lord face to face, and of being for ever with Him. In the attitude therefore of John, as here given, is seen what should be the attitude of every believer, and what will be the attitude when Christ Himself possesses the heart's affections. We may well therefore challenge ourselves, when we read these words of the apostle, as to whether they express our own feelings and desires. It is surpassingly beautiful to behold, at the very end of the Scriptures, the attitude of Christ in relation to the church, and the attitude of the saint in relation to Christ, as so produced.

The apostle himself, as led by the Holy Spirit, concludes his work and mission with the message, "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. † Amen.*" ‡ Adopting the emendation, "with all the saints," what an insight is thus afforded, as the book of

\* In some Bibles, it would seem, from the punctuation, as if the "Amen" were spoken by the Lord. It is, we judge, uttered by John.

† Or rather, as many authorities prove, "be with all the saints."

‡ The "Amen" is omitted by some as an ecclesiastical addition.

inspiration closes, into the heart of Christ, indeed into the heart of God. All His saints are remembered, and it is His desire that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with them. May the hearts of God's beloved people be increasingly enlarged to apprehend and enjoy it! And may the hearts of the readers, and of the writer of these lines, never move in a narrower circle than that of God's own affections! E. D.

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### FRAGMENT OF LETTER.

“. . . I was struck a few days since by a sight of the disciples and their Lord in the matter of feeding the multitude. It gave me to see the two great objects in close and full contrast—man and God, the heart that we carry, and the heart of Jesus.

“In Matthew xiv. the motion begins with the disciples, but it is to *dismiss* the multitude rather than to feed them. ‘Send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.’ This was a wretched motion of their heart. It was, as we say, one word for the multitude and two for themselves; for they wanted to be left alone, and felt the intrusion of the people. (See Mark vi.) There was something both of hypocrisy and cold-heartedness in this motion. It was a wretched sample of the common selfishness.

“The Lord's heart was different. He at once speaks of feeding them on the spot, and not of sending them away. And how blessed when our hearts are rebuked by His, beloved, when the dark ground of our selfishness only after this manner sets off the brightness of His grace and love. We ought to delight in that light which, while it rebukes us, brings Him in, and leaves His reflection with us.

“*But the disciples are angry.* They have but a few loaves and fishes. How could they spread a table for such a multitude? Here was a further disclosure of their naughty hearts. There was no *faith* there, as there was no *love* there. They knew of nothing but the palpable provision of their basket—loaves and fishes. They did not calculate on having Christ Himself in the midst of them. And this Jesus silently rebukes. ‘Bring them hither to Me’; as if to intimate, You have more in your company than loaves and fishes; you have the God of the desert, who once fed your fathers there forty years. And He then proved that His arm was not shortened that it could not save, but spread a table in the wilderness again. Here was man and God. Here was the heart we carry and the heart of Jesus. But Jesus does not upbraid them. He lets their own reins chasten them, giving them another witness of Himself in treading the waves as He had fed the people.

“In the next chapter, Matthew xv., on the like occasion, the motion begins with Him, and not with them, as before. But, oh, how different! How differently does the heart of Christ enter the scene of human need from what their heart had entered it. ‘I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat. If I shall send them away they will faint by the way, for divers of them come from far.’ It is not with Him as with them, ‘Send the multitude away’; but, ‘I have compassion on the multitude.’ He shows how *minutely* He had acquainted Himself with their sorrow, taking notice of the time they had been with Him, of the journey they had to take, and of the distance they had come. (See Mark vii. 2, 3.)

“There is something *perfect* in all this minuteness.

But there is nothing to correspond with it in the hearts of the disciples. They are wanting towards their fellows and towards their Lord. They have no answer for this motion on the part of their Master but that which sadly betrayed their heart in contrast with His. The recollection of the late feeding of the multitude seems to have entirely departed. They are only again full of the impossibility of feeding so *many* with so slender a provision as they had. Would we have believed it, dear brother, that they could so soon have forgotten the lesson of the previous chapter, and that too under the very same circumstances? We might say they could not have forgotten it. But it appears to have left them altogether, so indifferent is the heart of man to the display of the glory of God, and so careless to the cry and need of the sorrow around.

“We look at the two objects—man and God, the heart we carry and the heart of Jesus. We are to be humbled by the one and comforted by the other. The contrast is perfect, as these occasions of feeding the multitude show us. But it is happy to see that the heart of Christ is not wearied out by what it again and again got from man and in man. He did not give up His disciples after such discoveries as these; but on He went with them in patient love even to the end, though such occasions may let us see what a coarse and opposing material He had to do with.

“Be sure, beloved, you do not know *one* of these lessons without the *other*. Learn what man is, that you may be humbled; learn what God is, that you may be comforted. But I only speak by way of common edification and communion with you; for it is easier to *teach* the lessons of God than to *learn* them, as I know.

J. G. B.”

## THE WAY OF GOD.

“O God, Thy way is in the sanctuary. . . . Thy way is in the sea.”

PSALM lxxvii. 13, 19.

THE end of the seventy-seventh psalm is full of interest to our souls, for we find there the way of God in two different aspects. It is a happy thing when one finds out where God's way lies, for it is one of rest and peace amidst so much to perplex and trouble the saint as he goes on through the world to glory.

Indeed the writer of this psalm had gone through great exercise and perplexity, and had found no good in looking into his own heart (*v.* 6); but a great change had taken place in his soul in the tenth verse in looking up to the Most High, and remembering the works of Jah. Now, the Christian does not merely enjoy the revelation of the millennial titles of God, or of His absolute deity (Jah), blessed though they be, but the full and intimate relationship with the Father. Bearing this in mind—that is, that we are Christians and not Jews—we may look at the principles which follow, as to God's way. May we, first of all, be truly in the enjoyment of the Father's love. (John xvii. 5.)

The first thing to notice is in the thirteenth verse, where we find that God's way is in the sanctuary. A perplexed saint (if he remain too long in his perplexity) is sure to look too low, and to become more troubled. The similarity between this verse and the seventeenth of the seventy-third psalm has been already pointed out; then again, there was great perplexity until the soul went into the sanctuary of God. Who can under-

stand why God should allow the wicked to prosper, or the state of things around us in this world? Job's three friends made elaborate and erroneous speeches on the ways of God, till finally Job himself (who was not in the sanctuary) lost patience; and many philosophers of the same type have moralized since upon good and evil, and providential dealings, getting further away from the mark each time they moralize.

"O God, thy way is in the sanctuary": our hearts must be above the earth to understand God's way, and our minds also. It is when we freely enter into the sanctuary, and make known our requests with supplication and thanksgiving, that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. The sanctuary is high above all trouble. I once received a letter from an old servant of Christ, now with Him, in which he spoke of the bad weather in a springtime in North Germany, saying that "the swallows had all gone away in despair; but higher up the weather is fine and bright, and it is there that our hearts should be!" A little true prayer, and waiting upon God in the holiest, is infinitely better than any attempt at explaining His way.

"God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform."

God has given us more light than poor Cowper had, although we have not made very good use of it; and the free entrance by faith into the sanctuary makes everything clear. We can wait God's time, whilst we depend upon Him.

But there is another side to this. God's way (*v.* 19) is in the sea, and His paths in the great waters. Thunder, lightning, storm, and rain precede this verse,

and the earth itself shakes. We should very much like to go quietly on to glory without foul weather, but this can never be; it is in the very midst of the storm and pathless sea that the way of God lies.

This was once literally accomplished when the disciples, toiling in rowing, were making but little headway upon the lake of Gennesareth, and beheld the Son of God walking upon the waves in the midst of the darkness. It is in the very midst of the great waters now that the way of God is known, there where no footprints are left, and faith knows this way. It is not by Moses and Aaron (verse 20) that God is now leading His people, but by the Holy Spirit Himself (Romans viii. 14); and if we are thus led, we can go on quietly through the storm, walking in that way which is impracticable but to faith, but in which God is with us.

Thus if we are walking in God's way, our very path is a succession of miracles; we go on through the storm, through the deep waters, as sure-footed as though we were walking over a lawn. I suppose always that faith is truly in exercise.

There is something exceedingly beautiful in these two things, and our hearts are cheered as we think of the glory of Jesus in the Father's presence, and we enter there by faith. Doubt and perplexity vanish in the calm splendour of the sanctuary, and everything becomes plain. Then with renewed confidence we can go on through the winds and waves, finding in the very violence of the storm the way of God—of Him who has brought us to Himself, and made Himself known to us in such a way that we can implicitly trust Him amid the roaring of the tempest. May He give us to walk thus to His glory!

E. L. B.

## GALATIANS IV.

WE have seen that the Galatian believers, having been baptised to Christ, are regarded as in the place of sons and in possession of the privileges of Christianity. They had put on Christ; and, as another has said, He is "the only measure of their relationship with God." There had been a former relationship for the Jews under law, and this made a difference between them and the Gentiles; but Christ had died, and was now risen and glorified, and Christianity takes its start from the fact that God has been glorified in Christ, and hence that Christ is in the glory of God. He is the Object of faith. It is worse than useless to go back to that which attempts at best to tutor and keep in order the old man, when already there is another Man glorified in God. Christ then has entered as man into a new place for man, but He has reached it through death; and as baptised to His death, the believer reaches Christ through death; but it is Christ in resurrection, out of the death where our old man was crucified with Christ. But having reached Christ, there is altogether another relationship for the believer—Christ's relationship as Son with the Father; hence in Christianity the believer is admitted to and enjoys the acknowledged place of sonship.

Now, however much a believing Jew, before Christ had come, might have looked forward to His coming, and to inherit the promises through Him, he was as to his position like a minor, one not yet of full age, under guardians and stewards, and thus in bondage under the



*principles of the world.* It is important to note how the Spirit of God designates Judaism now that the substance, of which its ordinances were but the shadows, had come ; for in truth the observances under the law were enjoined on man in his present fallen condition. They could no longer point to Christ when Christ was come, nor could righteousness be found in them, for that is found in the One who had gone to the Father. Whether raising the question of righteousness, or pointing to Christ, these ordinances of a fleshly religion had been supplanted, and they remained a mere shell, which a natural fallen man could gratify his self-importance by observing, but they were but the elements of this present world wherein man is departed from God. They had been ordained of God for a time, and during that time for a purpose, as we read elsewhere, "Imposed until the time of setting things right." (Heb. ix. 10, New Trans.) Then God sent forth His Son. Into the scene of death and ruin, wherein man universally was, God sent His Son—He came of a woman. To those that were under law, held in bondage there, even if as believers they had brighter hopes, God sent His Son, for He came under law. "We know," said the Jews, "that God spake to Moses," and they would use the divine commission of Moses to refuse the Son of God. But here is the great fact, that when the fulness of the time was come **GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON.** And why ? Because He would have believers as sons before Him. Sonship could not be known until the Son of God came ; but now that He has come, He has redeemed those who were under law in the state of tutelage and childhood, that they might henceforth be in the place of sons. Into this place they never entered, nor into the knowledge of the Father's

counsels of glory concerning His own dear Son, while they still differed nothing from servants under law; nor can a believer now *enjoy* the relationship of a son if in the history of his soul he is still on Jewish ground. What a momentous change in the position of saints was made by God sending forth His Son!

But this great fact had its bearing upon Gentiles who heretofore were in nowise in relationship with God. They too *received* sonship; for it is the gift of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. It was entirely of the grace of God to give these alienated Gentiles faith in Christ, and so bring them as sons to Himself; and now, because they were sons, God *had sent forth the Spirit of His Son* into their hearts, as well as into the hearts of those redeemed from under law, crying, Abba, Father. Let us well consider that it was in the mind of God to have sons before Him and not servants. He sent forth His Son in order that He might have sons; but then it is not a mere name or position, for He has also sent forth the Spirit of *His Son* into our hearts, that we might know and enjoy the relationship. The Holy Spirit cries in the heart of the believer the very same words used by "His Son," when upon earth—"Abba, Father." (Mark xiv. 36.) What marvellous grace, and yet what a blessed reality that the Holy Spirit, by whom the body prepared for Jesus was formed—"that holy thing"—and by whom He was anointed, so that John could bear witness that He was the Son of God, thus cries in the believer's heart! It is God who has sent forth the Spirit of His Son. It is God who has made us both sons and heirs.

Sonship then is liberty, whether for Jew or Gentile. The latter had been in bondage "to them which by nature

are no gods," and to turn to Judaism, though it might appear better than the grossness of idolatry, was to renew their bondage to weak and beggarly elements, for so the apostle calls the observances of Judaism. They had known God—God acting in grace to them by His own Son; but more, they were known of God—known as sons and heirs. How then turn back to what was but another form of this world's religion, for such was Judaism since the cross. Paul had put before them these wonderful actings of God in His own grace, but surely his labour was in vain if they turned back to these dim shadows from the glorious light of the gospel of His Son. "Be as I am," he says. Once he had been a proficient in the Jewish religion, now he was free from it. Christ had made him free. "I am as ye are." The once proud Jew was on the same footing of grace as a Gentile Galatian. Grace had made them one in Christ. Paul would not allow that it was an injury for a Gentile to claim him as on the same ground. Peter had winced under it, and would not be as a Gentile when certain came from James. How hard it is for poor flesh to be nothing in the presence of grace!

Then follows a tenderness of pleading, as to his ministry in weakness among them, such as only a heart filled with the constraining power of the love of Christ could use; for there were others who were desirous to exclude the Galatians from Paul, whose ministry had once brought such blessedness to them, and thus to acquire influence over them in order to bring them again under law. Surely it did not need the wisdom of Solomon, which detected the deep interest of a mother in her child, for these Galatians to discern what a place they held in the ardent affections of Christ's apostle, as

he says, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." The other Judaizing teachers zealously affected them, not well, for they were leading them back to the weak and poor elements of the world, while the ministry of the Spirit by the apostle was to form Christ in them. There is no power in the law to form the Christian state; that is done by the Spirit's writing Christ upon the fleshy tables of the heart. The apostle desired to be present with them, but how should he then speak to them, for he stood in doubt of them? Could he speak to them as on Christian ground? or must he alter his manner of address to them as those needing to be brought there? It is not every converted soul that is in faith in the true Christian position, that is, "of Christ" (iii. 29), nor can such a position be enjoyed apart from the corresponding state. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Rom. viii. 9.) It does not say he is not converted—he may be, and still in bondage under law, but while in that state, he is not "of Christ." The true Christian state is Christ formed in us by the Spirit of God, who is therefore called the Spirit of Christ. This is not the renovating, or correcting by law of the old man, but the bringing in of another. The Christian position is, that I am no longer of Adam but of Christ, for our old man has been crucified with Christ. The Christian state is, that Christ is formed in me by the Spirit of God. The old "I" is displaced by Christ.

This great truth had been foreshadowed in the Old Testament. Abraham had two sons. The one, Ishmael, born of Hagar according to the flesh; the other, Isaac, through promise. Hagar was a figure of the covenant from Sinai, that is, of the effort of the flesh by works of

law to obtain the promise of God. Jerusalem, the then centre of Jewish religion, and her children still in bondage under the first covenant, were represented by Hagar and Ishmael. But Jerusalem on earth had been set aside by God (see Hosea ii. 2, and Matt. xxiii. 38), and the city of God now is Jerusalem above. All Christians were children of the heavenly city. The 27th verse only shews that when it will be again said to Jerusalem on earth, "Thy Maker is thy husband," and when she will rejoice in millennial days, she will then count Christians who have come in during the days of her desolation as her children; for from her, after all, came forth all the blessings of the gospel, even as Christ according to the flesh came of Israel. But during the days when she has no husband and is desolate, to go back to her is to go back to that which God has for the time rejected and set aside. If Isaac, the child of promise, is brought into the house, Ishmael must go out. The child of holy laughter—the laughter of faith—must displace the child of bondage and flesh, and this is Christianity. There Christ is everything. The Lord intimated early in His ministry that the new wine which He brought could not be put into the old bottle of Judaism, and in John's gospel it is apparent that He supersedes in His own person everything in which a Jew could boast.

One of the great efforts of the enemy is to lend *éclat* to the elements of this world by the name of Christ, but the one must displace the other. Isaac must displace Ishmael, and taking the Galatians on the ground of Christianity the apostle insists that they were not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. It will be noticed that he does not speak to them of the truth of the

assembly as a new creation in Christ, nor of its special relationship to him, for they needed to have Christ formed in them, and to know their liberty in Christ.

“Christ has set us free in freedom.” (New Trans.) This is not the liberty of the flesh, for *Christ* has done it. The freedom which the Christian enjoys is *His* freedom. The believer has not to attain it, but to stand fast in it. To be entangled in a yoke of bondage is to give up Christ’s liberty. To circumcise the flesh is to admit that one is in the flesh and not in Christ, for we cannot mingle the two. To be circumcised was to bring upon themselves the whole claim of the law, and to be deprived of profit from Christ, for they were then seeking for justification by law. It was giving up grace. It is well to be clear as to this, for nothing is more specious than the doctrine that we are indeed pardoned through the work of Christ, but that the flesh is to be kept in order by legal effort. This is only to give a place to the flesh, and to gratify it by being occupied with it, but by the same sacrifice of Christ wherein atonement for our guilt was made, God condemned sin in the flesh, and now justification and liberty are in Christ raised from the dead. “*Christ has set us free in freedom.*”

T. H. R.

## SCRIPTURE NOTES.

### I.

#### PSALM cxxvii. 2.

A QUESTION of translation has been raised on the last clause of this verse. It is contended by some that it should be rendered, “So He giveth His beloved *in* sleep.” The word “in” however is not in the original; and out of some nine or ten versions consulted, almost

all give the sentence as it stands in our version. Accepting this, then, as correct, we have to ascertain its meaning. The contrast drawn is manifestly between dependence on one's own energy and strength, and rest in the Lord. The first verse makes this clear. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," &c. This truth is enforced in verse 2, the psalmist urging the vanity of seeking to attain the proposed end by human energy. He teaches, in short, that the Lord gives to His beloved what others seek after by their own persevering efforts and carefulness. You, he says, hope by striving and anxious labour, to reach your haven; the Lord bestows rest, as gift and blessing, upon His people. We do not therefore think that "sleep" necessarily means natural sleep; but rather that it is a figure for peace or repose of mind or soul. And what a blessed lesson to learn, that peace can only be enjoyed as the Lord's gift. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." Another point may be noticed. The Psalm is attributed to Solomon; the "for" in the title being more properly rendered "of"—that is, "A song of degrees of Solomon." This may explain to us the introduction of the "house" and the "city." Solomon had learnt the lesson, in building the temple, that his work would be in vain, unless the Lord built it; and so also, as regarded the security of Jerusalem, that it would never be safe except the Lord kept it. This, moreover, has another application. The remnant of the last days is found in all these "songs of degrees," and they are thus prophetic. When restored to their own land, they will see the temple being built in unbelief, and the city guarded by an apparently irresistible force of human power. As instructed by this Psalm, they

will be comforted by the knowledge that "they labour in vain that build" the temple; for the true temple will be built by the Lord Himself (Zech. vi. 12); and also that all the human precautions for the safety of the city will be utterly in vain, because they will be taken without the Lord. Into the obvious applications to ourselves we need not enter, further than to remark, that all rest of heart, freedom from anxiety, blessing upon the work of our hands—all these things are connected with dependence on the Lord.

## II.

### COLOSSIANS iv. 2.

THE word here rendered "continue" is more accurately given by others as "persevere." The same word is found in connection with prayer in Acts i. 14 and Romans xii. 12. (Compare also its use in Acts ii. 42-46.) It means that we all are to apply ourselves diligently to, to persist in, prayer, whatever the difficulties or the obstacles in the way. There is a reason, as well as a needs-be, for the exhortation; for whenever a soul, in the realization of its dependence, desires to wait on God in prayer, hindrances to it, raised doubtless by Satan, will be sure to abound; and, on the other hand, such is our natural slothfulness that nothing but purpose of heart, inwrought by the Spirit of God, will overcome it. Epaphras, named later on in the chapter, may be well cited as an example of this spirit—one who, as the apostle says, was "always labouring fervently" ("combating earnestly") for the Colossian believers in prayer, that they might "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Would that many such intercessors for the saints might be raised up in these last days. To "watch in the same with thanksgiving" will mean that we are to be careful not to forget to praise as well as pray, not to allow the responses of God in His grace to our cries to pass by without the expression of our gratitude.



## TIMES AND SEASONS.

1 THESS. v: 1-11.

FOR the believer there is no future on earth. It may be the Lord's will that His people should continue to testify for Him down here; but if even so, their one hope and expectation is His return, and He would have them count on no future save that of being for ever with Him. In the world, they are not of it; they are the subjects of a heavenly calling; and as pilgrims and strangers here, they look onward to the enjoyment of their heavenly inheritance in Christ. (Ephes. i. 11-14.)

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The times and seasons, therefore, of which the apostle writes, have, in their rapid revolutions, but little significance for the saints of God—save indeed to give increasing emphasis to the Lord's own announcement, "Surely I come quickly." It is well to remind ourselves of this, that we may seek grace to be kept from the feelings and influences of the world around, and to be living, in the power of the Spirit, as the children of light, and the children of the day, altogether beyond the moral darkness of this scene. The connection of our scripture will explain these remarks. "By the word of the Lord" the apostle had instructed the Thessalonian believers as to the true character of the Lord's return. Correcting the mistake into which they had fallen, He taught them that the Lord Himself would descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of

God; and that then the dead in Christ would rise first, and the living saints, who remained until this event, would be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: "and so," he adds, "shall we ever be with the Lord."

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Such is the future of the saints, and they were, even while waiting, to anticipate no other. There was thus, as the apostle says, no need to write of the times and seasons; for they knew perfectly "that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." If it be seen that chapter iv. 15-18 is a parenthesis, this statement of the apostle will be more readily apprehended. It had been a matter of common knowledge that God would bring the saints who slept in Jesus with Christ at His appearing (for it is to this Paul refers in chapter iv. 14); but they had not hitherto known of the rapture of the saints at the Lord's coming, as described in *vv.* 15-17. The first verse of chapter v. connects itself thus with iv. 14; and the apostle then proceeds to speak of the day of the Lord—that day which will be introduced by His appearing.

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How solemn the twofold aspect of this day! On the world it will burst as suddenly and unexpectedly as a thief in the night. Nourishing their hearts, under the delusion of Satan, with thoughts of peace and safety, counting on the stability of things around, sudden destruction will come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; *and they shall not escape.* How contrary to the world's reckoning upon progress, order, and security! Would that the solemn warning might be

laid to heart by every unconverted soul! On the other side there is no fear for the believer in this prospect, for the simple reason that he is not in darkness, and that he is morally of the day that will then be commenced. He belongs to the light, the expression of the holiness of God (1 John i. 7), which while it forms the eternal security and blessedness of the saint, will be a consuming fire of judgment for the unbeliever.

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If this is the happy portion of God's people, in contrast with the lot of those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, their lives should be in moral correspondence with it. If they belong to the day, and are not in darkness, they are not to sleep, as do others (*v.* 6), but are to watch and be sober. In their walk and ways they are to be morally distinguished from those whose conduct befits the night to which they belong.

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The two aspects of the exhortation are to be remarked. Both are exemplified, if by contrast, in the parable of the virgins. There we see how the wise and foolish alike, forgetful of the blessed hope that first filled their souls when they went forth to meet the Bridegroom, came under the influence of passing things, and all slumbered and slept. They lost, that is, the expectation of their returning Lord, and settled down in things around, in careless oblivion of their once cherished hope, and of their own virgin character. And what of ourselves? Are we sleeping, even with the truth upon our lips? Let our hearts answer as in the presence of God.

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But it is not only that we are not to sleep, but we are to watch and be sober. We are to watch, as also in the parable, because we know not the day nor the hour, and thus as always expecting the Bridegroom; and while watching, and indeed in order to it, we are to maintain "that sober clearness of mind resulting from exemption from false influences," as those who are not intoxicated with "wine," and who are governed and formed by the truth in the power of the Holy Ghost. It may be questioned whether these characteristics are found in any large number of Christians; and hence the advantage of judging ourselves in the light of this exhortation. That the Lord is at hand is the testimony of Scripture; but if we know it our lives should proclaim it as distinctly and as loudly as those of the believers in Thessalonica. (Chapter i. 6-10.)

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The exhortation is still further enforced by the reminder that sleep and drunkenness mark the night; for men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. If therefore we are of the day, let us be sober, "putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the hope of salvation." The reader will not fail to remark the conjunction of faith, love, and hope, as found moreover in chapter i. 3. Two things may be observed: the "putting on" is clothing ourselves *inwardly*, and consequently faith, love, and hope are to be the features of our spiritual life, the expressions of the activity of the divine nature in us, as the result of the power of an ungrieved Spirit. Faith and love, moreover, are to form our breastplate, giving us courage and confidence in the presence of the enemy;

and as an helmet we are to "put on" the hope of salvation. Salvation is here used in its full and complete sense, including the resurrection of the body, and being for ever with the Lord; and it is this which God has appointed us to obtain by our Lord Jesus Christ. In this assurance we may be fearless (for it is an helmet which no weapon of the enemy can penetrate) in the midst of whatever dangers we may have to encounter.

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How the Spirit of God loves to carry us back to the death of Christ as the foundation of all our blessing! He here reminds us that the object of the death of Christ for us was, that, whether we wake (or, are watching) or sleep, that is, whether we are down here when He returns, or whether we shall have departed to be with Him before His coming, "we should live together with Him." This is the full fruition of all our blessedness, as those who have been chosen for salvation, living together with Christ. It is the eternal state. And in this prospect the apostle bids these believers to comfort themselves together, and to edify one another, even as, he is happy to add, "ye also do."

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No one can read the above exhortations without observing the importance which Paul, as led by the Spirit, attaches to a practical condition of soul in correspondence with the truth professed and held. Indeed, if the truth revealed and known produces no, or but little, effect upon the walk, it can only issue in our condemnation and chastening. We need, therefore, often to challenge ourselves, especially at a moment

when the heavenly character of Christianity, and the bright and blessed hope of the coming of the Lord, are once more being energetically proclaimed. Faith, love, and hope, as we have seen, will distinguish the soul that apprehends these things; and, to give the language of another, "faith and love naturally connect us with God, revealed as He is in Jesus as the principle of communion; so that we walk with confidence in Him. His presence gives us strength. By faith He is the glorious object before our eyes. By love He dwells in us, and we realise what He is. Hope fixes our eyes especially on Christ, who is coming to bring us into the enjoyment of glory with Himself." A walk thus characterized will exalt and commend Christ, inasmuch as it will be expressed in unworldliness, in real separation of heart and life, in true devotedness, and in those girded loins and burning lights which are seen in all who are waiting for their Lord.

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#### GALATIANS V. 5-VI.

IN verse 5 we see how the Spirit of God and faith are linked together as characterising the Christian. "For we," says the apostle, speaking for Christians, "through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." The believer is not waiting for righteousness, for the ministry of the gospel in which he has believed is a ministry of righteousness from the glory where Christ is. In Him God has been perfectly glorified in respect of sin, so that He who was made sin for us is now in the glory of God in righteousness, and the Spirit of God

has come from that glory into which Christ has entered, to reveal to us His present position in righteousness before God; and consequently that "of God He is made unto us... righteousness." Hence the Christian is not waiting for righteousness, for Christ in glory—the righteousness of God (for God has been glorified in Him) is the object of his faith. Christ then is his righteousness, and the Spirit, who is the seal of faith in Christ, is the earnest of that glory which is the hope of righteousness. We are to be with Christ and like Him, and the Spirit has come to unfold to us the glory where Christ is, and to make us know that we belong to it as being in Him the righteousness of God. Therefore by the Spirit on the principle of faith, for we are not yet there, the believer waits in hope to be conformed to Christ in glory. Circumcision was but a mark in the flesh distinguishing a Jew from a Gentile; hence a Jew could boast in it as connecting him with the promises of God in a fleshly way (though there might be a deeper signification spiritually) according to the word, "My covenant shall be in your flesh." (Gen. xvii. 13.) *In Christ Jesus* it had no force at all; there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision there. The true power is faith, which carries the soul into the new circle of the interests of Christ, and operates there in the power of love. Instead of the energising power of love, circumcision only brought in separation between saints.

No wonder that the apostle was deeply affected by the state of the Galatians. In verse 7 he leaves his subject, as it were, to speak personally to them of how they had been hindered in their *obedience to the truth*. They had been running well, and their turning aside

through the persuasion of false teachers was not of Him that called them. We may be sure that *insubjection of soul to the truth* lies at the root when saints are hindered from going on with the truth. The call of God carries the soul along in the faith of it. And here we learn the mischievous effects of indifference to the truth. Insubjection to the truth leads to indifference. It might seem a small matter to allow a doctrine which gave the flesh a place under the pretext of keeping it in order, but "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." We have only to look at the state of Christendom to see how the leaven then working among the Galatians has well-nigh leavened the whole lump by the revival of the first man and the denial of the cross as God's judgment upon him. Faith alone knows that the first man has been rejected, and looks for everything in Christ as the accepted Man in the glory of God.

But the apostle turns to the Lord with confidence of heart about them. As in Psalm cxvi. 10, 11, he might have said with the Psalmist, "I was greatly afflicted. I said in my haste" (that is, distress of spirit), "all men are liars." Among men no one is to be trusted, but the Lord is the source of confidence when even the saints are turned aside, and to the Lord he looks that these Galatians would be none "otherwise minded" (Comp. Phil. iii. 15), for to run well we must have the hope of righteousness, Christ in glory, before us, while those who troubled them should bear their judgment, whoever they were. What a difference there is between a troubler of the saints and one who, like Paul, suffered persecution on their behalf, so that the truth of the gospel might be theirs! If Paul had preached circumcision, and so given man a place, both the preacher and



the preaching would have been tolerated, and the offence of the cross would have ceased. There is nothing at which the natural man stumbles like the doctrine of the cross, which judges and sets aside man in his best estate, and for this Paul was persecuted. Then, with a covert allusion to circumcision, he adds, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you."

In resuming the subject of the liberty unto which they had been called, he has to warn them that the flesh would take occasion by it. Liberty is not license for the flesh, but freedom from the law of sin in it. It is freedom to serve one another in love. Thus and thus only the law, if they turned to law, was fulfilled, not by putting themselves under it, but by the love which was the effect of the presence of the Spirit of God; for "the fruit of the Spirit is love." They had, by turning back to Judaism and circumcision, given a place to the flesh; what wonder then if it had come out in biting and devouring one another as to questions about which the flesh could strive? The flesh in us is proud, vain-glorious, and self-sufficient, easily finding fault with each other; while love serves in the desire that every saint may be in the power of that grace which makes no demand upon us, but ministers everything to us.

The remedy then for the working of the flesh is not in seeking to regulate it by law, but in freedom from it by walking in the Spirit. Deliverance from sin and from law is found in the death of Christ; while liberty is known by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus setting us free from the law of sin and death. And here we see that the state of the Galatians leads the apostle to speak of an action of the Spirit in us which

is not, so to speak, His proper work and testimony. He came to testify of and to glorify the Lord Jesus, and as the anointing and seal by which we know our part in and enjoy all that He testifies to. But here He is spoken of as lusting against the flesh, so that we should not do the things which otherwise we would. We learn too that the flesh in us is so bad that it lusts against the Spirit. Mark here, that the Spirit does not help the flesh; nay, Spirit and flesh are contrary to each other. The flesh, indeed, is in the Christian; but he is not a debtor to it, but to walk in the Spirit, and so the desires of the flesh are not fulfilled. We need not dwell on the works of the flesh, they are well known; but the fruits of the Spirit we may well recount: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. What are these graces but the fruit of the Spirit forming Christ in the believer? Against them there is no law. What need of repression when the character of Christ is brought out in the Christian by the Spirit of God? But more, they that are of Christ have crucified the flesh with its affections and desires. It does not say they ought to crucify it, but they *have done* so. We could not be of Christ save on the ground of the judgment of the first man in His cross. There sin in the flesh has been condemned; and as of Christ, by whom all the judgment was borne, the believer has accepted this condemnation, so that he *has* thus in faith crucified the flesh, and has not got to do it by effort. The believer then lives in the Spirit. There is no life in the flesh morally before God or for faith, though actually we still live in flesh. But the Spirit of God could not be the power of life, and the law the

rule of walk. The ordering of the Christian's conduct must be in conformity to Christ in the power of the Spirit by which he lives. The last verse of this chapter shows us that elements of discord were among them, notwithstanding their attempt after perfection in the flesh by means of law.

How very different from vain-glory is true spirituality (chap. vi. 1) in a saint! The spiritual man, conscious of his own liability to be tempted, in meekness seeks the restoration of one who has been overtaken in a fault. Another has said that hard words against evil are no sign of our own spirituality. Proud Pharisaism would bind legal burdens on others; while the fruit of the Spirit is seen in bearing them, and thus letting Christ's law be fulfilled. Did He not take the weight of all our responsibilities and sorrows upon Himself? These practical exhortations of the apostle show how the Judaism to which they were turning had given a place to the working of the flesh to the exclusion of true spirituality. A man thinking himself to be something when he is nothing is self-deception. The testing time for each one's work will surely come; therefore the spiritual man, according to the exhortation to Timothy, would seek to present himself approved to God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. In love we may carry one another's burden, but in respect of the approval of work and service we are alone; each must carry his own burden. Still, the one ministered to has the privilege of fellowship with the one who ministers the word, in all good things.

We have seen that these Galatians in their desire for law were not getting on so very well after all, and that the flesh so far from being subjected by law was

working in them. We need not wonder then at the exhortation of the apostle: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." Let us remember that they that are of Christ have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. To go back to law is to revive that which has been crucified. It is allowed to be alive, and consequently is there to sow to; and so surely as this is done, so surely will corruption be reaped. It is a solemn word—"God is not mocked." Sooner or later God will have it out with us if we have been sowing to our own flesh. Many a barque as it nears the haven, instead of having an abundant entrance ministered to it, is seen shattered and dismantled, as it learns under the hand of God the corruption which belongs to the allowed workings of the flesh. Faith carries us from self to Christ; but allowance of the flesh would take us back to self and self-indulgence. The promises of God were sovereignly connected with Jacob; yet, knowing this, Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his venison. Isaac sowed to his own flesh, and would actually have blessed a profane man had he not been prevented by God, who allowed him to be deceived. "But he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap everlasting life." Not only hereafter will all that is heavenly be entered upon in that bright and blessed scene where all is pervaded by the Spirit, but by the Spirit's power "the heavenly door" is opened, so that we should have present enjoyment of the place where Christ is now. There is the sowing time and the reaping time; each has its own season, and the reaping time will surely come.

Let us not faint then, for now is the season or opportunity for well-doing towards all men, but specially to those who are dear to Christ, the special circle of his interest, here called "the household of faith." Israel once had been the household of God, and the Galatians were in danger of going back to that circle; but the true children of Abraham were *all* who were "of faith," and so were blessed with believing Abraham.

That the apostle should have written so large an epistle *with his own hand* shews the intense importance of the subject, and his care that what was written to them should thus have in their eyes all the weight of apostolic authority. He then points out the real object of those who were urging the necessity of circumcision. They wished to make a fair appearance in the flesh. The cross of Christ is the judgment by God of man in the flesh. These Judaizing teachers endeavoured to make that prepossessing which God has condemned. No one knew better than Paul that the robe of a circumcised Pharisee, however seemly to men, and they would glory in it, could not cover the true character of the flesh—the cross alone can meet that—but to bring that to bear upon the seemliness of the flesh as well as on its vileness only entailed persecution. This Paul also well knew. As a blameless Pharisee he had been the bitterest opposer of Christ and persecutor of the saints, and now that he walked in the light of the glorified Christ who had been revealed in him, he experienced the same determined opposition from those who gloried in the flesh. But mark how Paul now gloried in the cross. He does not say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, *by which I am saved*"—no Christian but will do that;

but can we say with Paul, "Through whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"? A man upon a cross is a shameful thing to the world, and Christ had been there. It was the world's estimate of Christ to put Him there, and Paul accepted such an estimate for himself by the world—it was crucified to him, and he to it. He was outside the system of this world by the cross of Christ, while circumcision sought to make a fair appearance for man in it. In Christ Jesus it is new creation; neither circumcision nor uncircumcision can have place there, they are distinctions between man and his fellow in the flesh, but in Christ old things have passed away, and the new have come. We are not actually in them, but there is an ordering of ourselves in walk and ways according to this rule. It is bringing into our conduct here the standard or rule of what is new in Christ. To such, peace and mercy, and on the *Israel of God*—not Israel according to the flesh, but that Israel which He could own.

As to anything further, the persecutions which the apostle had endured shewed plainly for whom he suffered and to whom he belonged. No one would move him from his allegiance to the One whose brands he bore. But there was no comfort for him in these sorrows which he has as to the Galatians, there is a reserve towards them, and he sends them no salutations, but concludes with the desire that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ might be with their spirit. May the Lord keep our spirits in the sense of His grace, so that we may not be conscious of any reserve towards us because we are removed from Him that called us in the grace of Christ.

T. H. R.

## ASSOCIATION WITH CHRIST IN DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

COLOSSIANS ii. 20—iii. 17.

IN the Epistle to the Colossians we have death and resurrection with Christ, and these two truths are insisted upon in chapters ii. 20—iii. 4.

It is not merely an exhortation to avoid worldliness, but the fact of being in an entirely new position by death with Christ, so that the apostle can say, "Why, *as though living in the world*, are ye subject to ordinances?" It is an immense thing for a saint to understand what death with Christ is, as this epistle presents it. I think some one has said, that in this part of the word of God the saint is looked at as being just on the Canaan brink of the Jordan—dead and risen with Christ, and having the country before him, so that he can already *seek* the things that are above. The ark (Christ) remained in the bed of the Jordan whilst Israel passed over to the right bank. Here we must stop, for the Epistle to the Colossians does not look upon us as seated in the heavenly places.

"If ye be dead with Christ . . . why are ye subject to ordinances?" &c. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." It is very evident that there is *nothing* here on earth that can nourish our souls, not one single thing. Christ is hidden in God. He is our life, and the day shall come when He (and we with Him) shall be manifested in glory. But till then He is hidden, and no one upon earth can see Him who is our life, though men will soon see the fruits of

communion with Him in our walk. *Seek* the things that are above, and *think* of these things, not of the things on the earth. It is not merely the world in its gross form here, but "the things on the earth." There is a difference. In evangelical Christendom you are told to give up the world in the form of balls, billiards, theatres, etc., and the conception of what the world is has been falsified; but here it is the earth; the heart and thoughts are outside of the whole thing. We have a fairer vista than the world can present—the affections set on Christ in glory.

I wish especially to notice the exhortations that follow, from verse 5–17. Let us note that they are founded upon our death and resurrection with Christ.

"Mortify therefore," &c., is the practical work in the soul of one who is dead with Christ. It has nothing to do with monkish maceration. I read once, in the life of Ignatius Loyola, that towards the end of his time he regretted having destroyed his health in early rude penances, and that he confessed that it had not changed his heart. Poor Ignatius! He is not the only one that has gone off on a wrong tack. You cannot reduce the old man any more than you can compress water. God has made an end of him at the cross; but the members are in us, those deep roots of evil that are to be mortified, and can be mortified *because we are dead with Christ*. A man who is delivered will have much exercise, but of a very different kind to that of one who is trying by monastic process to bring down the old man. I recollect an old saint once saying that he did not object to blows being given, provided they were *interior*; that is, true exercise in communion with the Lord.

It has been remarked that, from verses 5–17, there is an ascending order, beginning with the practical morti-



fication of the members that are upon the earth, the judgment of very bad things, and ending with the practice of very good things, doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks by Him to God the Father. Nothing could be higher than this, in our conduct as risen men upon earth.

Verse 8 goes rather higher than the gross iniquity of verse 5, and in verses 9 and 10 we have the putting off of the old man, and putting on of the new man, who is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. Notice the expression *new* in this epistle; it is *νέος*, fresh, young. In the Epistle to the Ephesians it is *καινός*, that which has not existed before. This distinction is very important, because in the Epistle to the Ephesians the great point is the new creation in speaking of the new man; whilst here, in the Epistle to the Colossians, it is the freshness of the life—Christ our life. The difference too as to image and likeness (it is rather *likeness* in Ephesians iv. 24) has been already pointed out by another. It is always Christ before us in the Colossians. (Compare chap. i. 15.)

“Christ is all, and in all”; may we ever be learning what this means. One sole blessed object before us, and one life (Christ) in all. There can be no Teutonic or Celtic modes of thought, &c., in the Church of God. Germans, Italians, French, English vanish here. Oh, that we entered into it a little more!

Verse 12, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God,” &c. Notice the manner of wearing the new garments—these beautiful graces of the following verses: “As the elect of God, holy and beloved.” God has given us to know our full blessing and position in His unchanging favour, and we are to put on the new robes in a becoming manner. God has given us this most blessed position;

we are His chosen ones, His beloved ones, separated from the world, and now to put on the robes in a manner worthy of Him. These blessed graces are not what the quarrelsome and fighting world admires—mercies, kindness, humbleness, &c., but it is Christ that is seen here, as all through the epistle, and we are to forgive as Christ forgave. Shall we ever forget the manner in which Christ forgave us when He first met us, laden as we were with sins? Never, throughout eternity! But this should influence our conduct now.

Then love, the bond of perfectness, above all; and the peace of Christ is to preside in our hearts. It is blessed to think that we are called to this in one body. It is not merely a question of our individual difficulties, but being called to know Christ's own peace, which nothing can trouble, in one body. For a moment we see this in the prayer offered up from the upper chamber in Jerusalem, where with one voice the newly-born assembly expressed full confidence in the Lord, and His peace presided in the hearts of the saints in the face of all the tumult in Jerusalem: the thankfulness flows naturally from this.

Then comes the word of Christ dwelling richly in us, and the teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom with a spirit of worship, singing with grace in the heart to God. This is very blessed, the Holy Spirit depicts the state of the saints when there is healthy action, and then comes the service, for as the Levites were given to Aaron after redemption, so we have been given to Christ, so as to do and say *everything* in His name to the glory of God the Father.

May death and resurrection not be mere dogma for us; but may we thus answer to the exhortations of this most blessed portion of the Word!

E. L. B.

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

### CONCLUSION.

BEFORE closing our study of this book, it may be helpful to the general reader, in his further examination, to present a brief outline of its contents. After the introduction and salutation (chap. i. 1-6), the announcement of what is really the subject of the book, the appearing of our Lord in glory, as Judge of all the earth, together with the affirmation of its certainty as bound up in the revelation of all that He is as the eternally self-existent One, we have the vision, vouchsafed to John, of Jesus Christ, as Son of man, walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, surveying, judging, and pronouncing upon their condition as estimated by Him whose eyes "were as a flame of fire."

In this connection is found the key to the book, in the threefold division, which the Lord Himself communicated to John, when He commanded him to "write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (after these). (Chapter i. 19.) The things which John had seen comprise the vision of the first chapter; "the things which are" relate to the church period as set forth prophetically in the letters to the seven churches (chapters ii. iii.); and "the things which shall be after these" refer to the events which will take place, after the church has been rapt away from this scene, preparatory to, and including, the returning of the Lord

with His saints, the destruction of hostile powers, the millennial kingdom, the great white throne, and the eternal state; in fact, all that is recorded in chapters iv.—xxii.

In chapters ii. iii. we find a prophetic outline of the church period, the public course of Christianity as seen in this world, mingled with instructions, warnings, and encouragements for the saints of God in every age.

Chapters iv. v. have a special character as introductory to what follows. In chapter i., John was in the isle of Patmos; in chapter iv., he not only sees a door opened in heaven, but he is called up thither, that from thence, the place of the church now, the only true place of vision, he might view "the things which must be after these." God as Creator, in covenant with creation, with the twenty-four elders on thrones, surrounding His throne, the seven Spirits of God, tokens of judgment proceeding out of the throne, the sea of glass before, and the living creatures around the throne offering their perpetual praise, accompanied by the worship of the elders—such are the subjects of the chapter. But it is Jehovah as Creator that is celebrated. (v. 11.) In chapter v. the song is that of redemption, in which, according to their respective positions, all created things unite; and it is called forth by the introduction of the Lamb "as it had been slain," who alone, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, had prevailed to open the book of God's counsels as to the earth, and to loose the seals thereof, unfold those counsels, and in their accomplishment make good all that God is in government on the earth.

The opening of the seals is then detailed. (Chapter

vi. 1-17.) After the first six there is a pause, and in chapter vii. a remnant from the twelve tribes of Israel is sealed for preservation through the judgments which are about to follow, and a multitude of Gentiles are seen as destined to be brought through the great tribulation, and to occupy a special place of blessing before the throne of God, and to serve Him day and night in His temple, while He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them, and they themselves will be under the special shepherd care of the Lamb, and in the enjoyment of divine consolations. After this interval the seventh seal is opened, and is followed by the seven trumpets. (Chapters viii. 2-xi. 18.) But between the sixth and seventh trumpets the episode is introduced of the "mighty angel," with a little book in His hand, and taking possession of the sea and the earth, as He utters the solemn oath, that there should be no further delay (chapter x.); and also of the measurement of the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein, together with the testimony and the death and resurrection of the two witnesses. (Chapter xi.) The seventh trumpet ushers in the end, and the world sovereignty "of our Lord and His Christ."

There are, it will be remarked, seven seals and seven trumpets. The distinction between them would seem to be that made by our blessed Lord, in Matthew xxiv., between the "beginning of sorrows" and the "tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." The first six seals introduce, therefore, preliminary judgments: these ended, there is a pause in heaven before the severer judgments, heralded by the trumpets, and which issue in the establishment of the world-kingdom of Christ.

Before the "seven angels, having the seven last plagues," appear, several distinct, though related, subjects are interposed, in order to unfold the causes and the object of God in thus dealing in judgment with the earth and its oppressors. In chapter xii. there is "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." Hence we have the vision of the "woman, clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (*v.* 1)—Israel, as seen in the purpose of God, and of the birth of the "Man child," whom the dragon seeks to devour, but who is caught up to God and His throne. War in heaven follows, and Satan and his angels are cast out into the earth, to the joy of heaven, and to the sorrow of the earth. (*v.* 12.) This event is celebrated in heaven as the earnest of the end and the establishment of the "kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ." (*v.* 10.) Satan, cast out of heaven, turns all his enmity against the woman and her seed, but they are preserved by God's providential care. In chapter xiii. Satan's two great instruments for the execution of his designs appear upon the scene. The first beast, the head of the revived Roman empire, who receives from the dragon "his power, and his seat, and great authority"; and the second beast (*v.* 11), the antichrist, who acts as prophet to the first beast, and "causes the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." (*v.* 12.)

Coming to chapter xiv. the curtain is lifted, and the Jewish remnant, the 144,000, are seen with the Lamb

on mount Sion. The issue of their suffering path is exhibited before they have passed through the time of Jacob's trouble. This scene of light and blessedness is succeeded by three angels with their several proclamations: the first preaching the everlasting gospel; the second announcing the fall of Babylon; and the third proclaiming the penalty for those who should worship the beast and his image, or receive the mark of his name. (*v.* 11.) Then, after the revelation from heaven concerning the blessedness of those who should die in the Lord "from henceforth," we have the harvest and vintage judgments. Chapter xv. opens with another sign in heaven, "seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God." (*v.* 1.) But before these angels empty their golden vials, the blessed dead, referred to in chapter xiv. 13, are seen in heaven, standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, and singing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb. (*vv.* 2-4.) The vials are then poured out. The reader must refer to the exposition to learn their character; but attention may again be called to two things: first, the similarity of the judgments, if intensified, to those connected with the trumpets; and to the fact that they must be, to a large extent, inasmuch as the trumpets, equally with the vials, reach to the end, contemporaneous with the trumpets.

From chapter xvii. 1 to xix. 4 we have the description and the judgment of Babylon, together with its consequences on earth. The contrariety between the mind of man and the mind of God is forcibly depicted in the universal lamentation on earth, and in the burst of joy in heaven, over the destruction of the "great city Babylon." (xviii. 9-20.)

The rest of the book is easily deciphered. There is direct sequence in the events recorded in chap. xix. 5-xxi. 8. First, the marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven; then He comes forth on a white horse, followed by the armies which were in heaven on white horses, to victorious judgment. It is chapter i. 7 in fulfilment. His enemies, led by the beast and the false prophet, are taken and destroyed, and the two leaders are cast alive into the lake burning with fire and brimstone (xix. 20, 21); Satan is thrown, bound, for a thousand years, into the bottomless pit; those who had been martyred, and those who had resisted the seductions and the power of the beast and the false prophet, are added to the first resurrection, "and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (vv. 4, 5.) At the close of this period Satan is loosed, and man is put to his final test. The nations are deceived, and gather themselves together once more against the Christ of God, only to be consumed with divine fire, while Satan is consigned to his eternal doom in the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are. (vv. 7-10.) The great white throne follows, with the judgment of all the wicked dead, and forms the close of all God's ways with man. Next we have the new heavens and the new earth, and the tabernacle of God with men—in one word, the eternal state. (xxi. 1-9.) Following upon this, we are led back to view the glories of the heavenly city in relation to the millennial earth (xxi. 9-xxii. 1-5); and then the book closes with warnings, encouragements, and exhortations, and is sealed by the announcement, "Surely I come quickly." May the reader and writer be able to respond with John, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." E. D.