

THE

CHRISTIAN FRIEND

And Instructor.

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

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

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

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

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THE CHRISTIAN FRIEND.

“ALL THINGS ARE BECOME NEW.”

THIS statement of the apostle is made in connection with the believer's new place in Christ. “If any man be in Christ, [he is] a new creature,” or more exactly, [there is] a new creation, a new sphere, outside of the old creation, where old things have passed away, for faith, and all things are become new.*

Every man is either in Adam or in Christ. If unconverted he is still under Adam's headship, is in the flesh, and is consequently on that ground before God: he is, in one word, of that class of whom the apostle has written, “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” And again, though here it is more, though not wholly, a question of the resurrection, “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy.” (1 Cor. xv. 48.) An unbeliever therefore is linked with Adam, partakes of the fallen Adam's life and nature, belongs to the creation of which Adam was constituted head, and is thus seen, as to his standing or ground, as being in Adam. (See 1 Cor. xv. 22.) Remaining in that position, inasmuch as he is guilty and lost, he is subject

* Some read, “New things have come”; but the meaning in either case is the same.

to both death and judgment, as everywhere set forth in the word of God. (See, for example, Hebrews ix. 27; Romans v., xii. 21.)

A believer, on the other hand, is not in Adam, but in Christ. Not only has Christ borne the sins of them that trust in Him, but in His death on the cross God has also dealt with the whole principle of sin, the "old man," and "condemned sin in the flesh. The believer's sins are therefore taken away; he is cleansed from all his guilt in the precious blood of Christ; and he is, moreover, associated with Christ's death, and in this way his link with Adam is, for God and faith, destroyed. But Christ has not only died, He is also risen; and as risen out of death, in resurrection power, He is the believer's life. "In that He died, He died unto sin once: in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise," says the apostle, "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God [we give the true rendering] *in Christ Jesus.*" God thus sees all His people as in Christ; and faith also reckons that they are alive unto God in Him. They are no longer in the flesh, but they are in the Spirit, seeing that they have the indwelling Spirit of God. They are not in the flesh; they are in Christ. (Rom. viii. 1-9.)

But, as we have read, if any man is in Christ there is a new creation. There is little doubt that "in Christ" in this scripture goes farther than the same expression in Romans, where, though the life we possess in Christ is that of the new creation, the new creation itself is not revealed, for the reason that we are not there said to be risen with Christ. This truth is

unfolded in the Colossians; and it is in this epistle that Christ is said to be "the Beginning, the First-born from the dead." (Chap. i. 18.) That is, as the cross of Christ was the judicial end of the first man, so the resurrection of Christ—Christ as the risen Man—was God's new beginning according to His eternal counsels. He was ever the object of His counsels; and having glorified God concerning the sins and sin of Adam and his race, the first and responsible man, He in His own person, in His resurrection and glorified condition, is *the Beginning*; *the beginning*, because God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren. As another scripture says, He is the beginning of the creation of God (Rev. iii. 14); that is, of God's new creation.

If this presentation of the truth is understood, the meaning of our scripture will be the more readily apprehended. For it is easily seen that not only has Christ risen in a new condition, but also that, by His resurrection and ascension, He has passed, as man, into a new sphere, where everything is according to God. But the believer is in Him there; and as he comprehends this by faith, he understands that being in Christ there is a new creation, a new creation of which Christ is the head and pattern, and that by faith he himself has already passed into it, into a sphere outside of the old altogether, where indeed old things have passed away, and where (for faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen) all things have become new.

It will be helpful if we now refer to another scripture. In Revelation xxi. we read, "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things have passed away." (v. 4.) Admittedly this scripture—from verses 1 to 7—opens out to us the eternal state; and we learn that all that characterized this creation, in consequence of the entrance of sin (Rom. v. 12), death, sorrow, crying, and pain will have for ever passed away, together with the first heaven and the first earth. Thereupon "He that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." As in 2 Corinthians v., old things have passed away, and new things have come, though now in actuality; for faith is now lost in sight, and the things faith had received and embraced are now abundantly realised.

The connection between the two scriptures is too apparent to be missed. Christ as the Beginning is already in the heavenlies, and the Church also as seen in the purpose of God; and every individual saint will be conformed to the image of God's Son. When this takes place all therefore is new—the scene within and the scene without. The saints and the scene alike are the expression of that new creation of which 2 Cor. v. 17 speaks. Hence it is, since the purposes of God are now all accomplished, that the tabernacle of God (and this is the holy city, new Jerusalem, which, divine in its origin and heavenly as to character, is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband) can be "with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God."

As reference has been made to it, we may turn for a moment to Ephesians ii. In verses 1 to 3 our past state and condition are vividly depicted. All alike, Jew or Gentile, are viewed as dead in sins. Christ, moreover, is presented, not in this epistle as dying for our sins, though He did make atonement on His way down to the place where we lay, but as Himself dead, and in grace alongside, as it were, those who were dead in sins. It is all death therefore, and, by consequence, the end of everything—save judgment—for man. But God is then introduced as rich in mercy; and, for the great love wherewith He loved us, coming into the domain of death, and, acting from His own heart, He quickened us together with Christ, "according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies." (Chap. i. 19, 20.) It is here we behold God commencing, according to His eternal counsels, to make all things new; so that the new creation began when He quickened us together with Christ. From verses 5 to 10 it is wholly a new creation scene; and hence it is that we read of the display of the Church in glory, in the ages to come, as the manifestation of the exceeding riches of God's grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

In Ephesians ii. the whole Church is seen as perfect. In Christ Jesus she is already seated in the heavenlies, for it is the accomplishment of purpose or counsels. In 2 Cor. v. it is individual. It is, If any man be in Christ, [there is] a new creation. We enter individually therefore by faith upon this new sphere to which we belong, where Christ is, and where we ourselves are *in*

Him, when we have learned the blessed lesson (and this, according to the teaching of Romans, must be learned experimentally) that we are no longer in Adam, but in Christ. May the Lord Himself lead us into it, that while rejoicing in the new place which is already ours in Christ, we may, as long as we are in the wilderness, learn to walk according to the rule of the new creation. (Gal. vi. 14-16.) But this will involve for us the constant acceptance, nay, the application, of death upon all that we are, as well as upon the scene around. Hence it was that the apostle wrote, "Far be the thought that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom (or, wherein) the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a *new creation.*" (Gal. vi. 14, 15.)

THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN OPENED ;

OR, "PROVE ME NOW HEREWITH."

MAL. iii. 10.

THE Christian lives by the day, for his to-morrow is the coming of the Lord. See Gal. ii. 20—"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God." I know that God is enough for me to-day, and if I should be left here for other days my experience in them will only be the same. And I am content that it should be thus with me: anything else tends to distraction, and this God does not want me to have. (1 Peter v. 7.)

Now, in Malachi iii. 10, you are not asked to prove God for to-morrow. You do not know that you may have a to-morrow on earth. But you are asked to prove Him just for to-day, "Prove me NOW herewith." And what is the result? Why there is such a wave of blessing from Him that "there is not room enough to receive it." And mark, it is blessing from God. How inclined we are to think at once of temporal wants to be supplied and of present relief as to *them*. But this scripture may be, and often is, fulfilled when there is no temporal change. The greatest of all God's blessings to-day is not found in temporal ease and relief, but in spiritual; or what means that wonderful passage, "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ"? (Eph. i.)

But this exhortation of Mal. iii. 10 has *no limit*. And I think I can almost hear some burdened believer say, "Ah! is this so? Then I must take courage. If blessing is to be had thus cheaply and without limit then *I* may surely come." Yes, my friend, it is even so, you may come, and coming to Him thus you shall be filled. "He *fillet*h the hungry with good things." The only requisite in *your* coming is, that *you* hunger.

Let us turn then for a moment to this Scripture, for though it is contained in the Old Testament, the same truth is fully unfolded also in the New, as we shall see. God was ever the God to meet His people's needs, and in this He stands alone and knows no change, and He (who giveth bread to all things) gives His people "bread from heaven."

Whatever you need at this moment God is sufficient for. I would press upon you to lose no time to avail yourself of this wondrous *fact*. God has the *power*, and

He also has the *will*, to fill your soul to overflowing. But do you ask, "How am I to begin?" Then begin thus: Give to God what He claims from *you*. Never mind others, or their *thoughts*. Everything you possess belongs to God, and you are only a steward. But while many readily own this in a general way, it is not all that we have to consider. God has a particular claim also beyond this. He claims a *place* in your every-day calculations—and not *any* place, nor a *second* place, but the *first* place. That is what we have here. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house." It is no particular quantity of your time, intellect, or money. You may give Him a large portion of these in a legal spirit, thinking you may then use the rest for yourself, and yet be far, far away from the blessing. No, it is not this. To give God His *place* is more to Him than giving Him any *portion*. The tithes are His. Abraham gave these to Melchizedek. God claims them as His right. The meaning is, that God must have the first place. Not your wants, nor the wants or interests of your family, but first God Himself in everything. We read, "Abraham gave Him tithes [*not of some, but* OF ALL." These then are the terms. Place is greater than portion. God will not accept a second place at your hands, and to offer Him one as Israel did is only to rob Him. Think of this. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings."

Give God His place. I delight to think that these are the *only* terms of the blessing, because they are so simple that the most ignorant one cannot fail to understand them. And then such is His heart (with whom

you have to do) that He will "open the windows of heaven, and pour you out such a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." And notice that He says, "Prove me *now*"—it is not to-morrow, it is *now*—it is to-day. God always deals with the *present*. "*To-day*," "*now*"—these are words with which He seeks to draw souls to Himself, and are not you one of them? for I address believers. You *have* come to Him; but Peter says, "To whom *coming*." (1 Peter ii. 4.) Have you any lack to-day?—a care, an anxiety, a want—only *one*? Come to Him, then; give Him His place. Think of Him first, and not of the matter in hand, and you shall prove His faithfulness to His word.

I turn now to one or two passages of the New Testament, in order to trace there the same teaching as we have in Malachi. In doing so I ask, Why is it that there are not more souls—Christians—living day by day in the joy of their heavenly portion? I leave the heart of each reader to answer the question.

How often things not wrong in themselves come in and God gets a second place in our calculations. But in Luke xiv. I read, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." These are solemn words, and may God send them home with divine authority into our souls. Could He speak to us of anything nearer or dearer on earth than these? Will you put them, *are* you putting them, in *His* place? Are you putting them before God? If so, my reader, is it a matter of wonder with you why it is that *you* know so little of these "windows of heaven" being opened upon you?

“Will a man rob God?” Will he do it with impunity? Alas! no. *We* know that “God is not mocked,” and we had read it; “for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” (Gal. vi. 7.)

I turn to one passage more. “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.” (Acts xxiv. 16.) You notice God is put first. I must seek first to be right with Him. I then trace the life of the blessed servant of God, and I may listen to his experience of what God did for him as a man walking down here—how the “windows of heaven” were opened upon him. Listen to him before the tribunal of the king. Would he change places with Agrippa that day? Ah! no. What does he say? “I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether *such as I am.*” He *knew* the “windows of heaven” were opened upon him, and so great was the blessing, that there was even enough for *all* who heard him that day.

Writer and reader, let us ask each other, Are we both living in this atmosphere? To do this there must be *no reserves*. Paul could say, in the full joy of his heart, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” It mattered little to him what his path was down here; he had kept nothing back from *God*. May the Lord exercise us as to this. The secret of our lack is often some little *reserve* that we keep for ourselves. May we each be willing and desirous of saying what Paul said in Acts xxiv. 16, so that *we* may know, in a *spiritual* sense, something of this opening upon us of these “windows of heaven.” Amen.

H. C. A.

INSIDE THE VEIL, OUTSIDE THE CAMP.

THERE are two things which characterize a Christian in contrast to a Jew; his place before God is inside the veil, and as to this world it is outside the camp. The Jew's place in this world was inside the camp, but he never went inside the veil. It was an intermediate position, between that of the Gentile world outside all the privileges of God's people, and that of Christians who are brought into the place of greatest nearness to God inside the veil, that is, into His immediate presence, in heaven itself. The tabernacle was the figure of the heavenly things to which the believer now belongs. What characterizes the holiest is that all things are of God, and Christ fills the place. There was the shekinah glory, and everything was pure gold, the symbol of divine righteousness.

"God's righteousness with glory bright,
Which with its radiance fills that sphere."

There was the ark, with the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod, and the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, and the golden censer from which arose the fragrance of the sweet incense; all of which things speak of Christ, His glory, His work, His present service, His personal excellencies. But nothing of sin and nothing of the natural man could ever enter there.*

* Under the Jewish economy the natural man was recognized and had a standing before God. Man in the flesh was then before God, the object of His dealings. But the way into the holiest was not made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing; and man never could and never did enter in. Aaron alone had the title of access.

Consequently the way was never opened until Christ had died, when the first man was condemned and set aside for ever. It is important to remark, that in His death not only were our sins atoned for, so that God might be able to say righteously, "Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more;" but in His death also, God, having sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh for ever, so that we might know that we are delivered from the Adam race, the race of those who were conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, and who, as born of woman, were altogether unclean and totally unfit for the presence of God. It is not only true that our sins shut us out from the presence of God, but we also were shut out as unclean in nature, belonging to a sinful race. Therefore our bodies needed to be washed with pure water; we needed to be cleansed from our sinful state. Now water is in Scripture the symbol of death. Nothing but death, Christ's death, could cleanse us. Out of His pierced side came forth both blood and water. In the consecration of the priests, and in the cleansing of the leper, they were bathed in each case in water. We have, as it were, passed through death in Christ dying for us, and that in the sight of God has ended our life and state in Adam; it is judged and gone in His death. It is not in any way improved, the Adam life is not washed, but the believer is washed, he is freed from his former condition; and, being made partaker of a new nature, the nature of Christ, the second Man, he is identified with Christ as his life; and in this life he lives before God, and thus viewed he is clean every whit. It is by the

Word that the truth of this is brought home to the soul, and so the Word morally cleanses the believer, creating in him a new nature, new springs of life, tastes, and desires which are according to God, and so separating him from the manner of life which characterizes the natural man.

The Sanctifier and the sanctified ones are all of one; they are of one kind, of one nature. (Heb. ii. 11.) It is because we are thus of His kind, His nature, that He is not ashamed to call us brethren. As priests we belong to the house of the great High Priest—thus through the death of Christ we are made fit for the presence of God. We belong to a new race, of which Christ, the great High Priest, is the head and source. This He became in resurrection, and in this way we have been made meet for the holiest. The way has been initiated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. It was needful not only that He should become flesh, but also that He should die; the veil must be rent to open the way for us into the holiest. When we are in the holiest we are in spirit outside that which is of man naturally, and outside all that belongs to this world. We are not occupied with our sins, ourselves, or our circumstances; we are in a sphere where none of these things can enter. If I am occupied with myself I am not in the holiest, though of course every saint has a title to be there, boldness to enter in; but to be actually there is another matter. When I am there, instead of being occupied with my sins and myself, I am occupied with Christ, with God Himself; here all things are of God, and Christ is everything. Consequently I am there as a worshipper: the more I am

occupied with God, knowing Him according to the revelation He has given of Himself, the more I bless Him for what He is; and the more I see of the personal glory of Jesus, and am occupied with what He has done for me, and His present ministry, the more my heart is drawn out in praise. We could not, therefore, be in the holiest without praising and worshipping God. This is what delights the heart of God; such is His love that nothing satisfies Him but having His people in His own presence, and perfectly free and happy there to enjoy Himself. We are brought into this inside place of communion, we belong to this place, we are at home there. The Jew never got inside and never will; this is a privilege God's grace has reserved for Christians.

But then, if as to God and heaven our place is inside, in relation to this world our place is outside, and that whether we look at the world religiously or politically. We are associated with Christ in the place of reproach. Here we have no abiding city, no settled place; but we seek the coming one. The camp and the earthly city rejected Christ—He suffered without the gate. The camp represents a worldly system of religion, adapted to the natural man. It was originally ordained of God, and suited to man in the flesh; that is the condition in which God found him at that time. It did not require a new nature or spiritual power to worship God according to this system of worldly religion; it consisted in hearing, seeing, and doing that which could be appreciated by the natural senses. But as in the case of the golden calf the camp rejected God, so that Moses had to pitch the tabernacle *outside* the camp, and they that sought the Lord went *out* unto

it, so in a later day the camp rejected God in the person of Jesus, who suffered without the gate. God has therefore rejected the camp; that is, the whole system of Judaism which had originally been ordained by Him. In it God's mind was not satisfied, His will was not accomplished; it did not enable man to draw nigh to God, but rather proved the utter impossibility of the natural man approaching God according to His pleasure.

There is in our time what answers to the camp. That is, men have imitated that which God once ordained; they have adapted religion to the capabilities and tastes of the natural man, with the object of teaching man in the flesh to worship and serve God. It is a worldly system; that is, it is adapted to man as alive in the world, and adopts worldly means, all that tends, as they say, to make religion attractive to the young. For example, music, imposing ritual, services of song, theatrical performances, bazaars, "pleasant evenings," &c. It follows as a matter of necessity that if the natural man—that is, man in his unconverted state—is to be a worshipper, religion must be adapted to his capacities and tastes. But all this is the very opposite of Christianity, in which man in the flesh has been utterly condemned and rejected in the cross as sinful, unprofitable, incapable. (John xii. 31; Rom. vi. 6; Gal. vi. 14.) The believer accepts this for himself, and thus puts off the old man. (Gal. ii. 20.) Instead of adapting religion to the flesh, or bringing in or allowing what is of the flesh in the service of God, he acknowledges that he has put off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Instead of taking the ground of being alive as a

natural man in the world he confesses that he is dead with Christ, and risen with Him.

Thus we see that what answers to the camp to-day, though professing the name of Christ, really rejects the cross, and Christ as He is now known by Christians, that is, as crucified in the flesh, and as a risen Man living in a new condition, the beginning of a new creation, the Head of a heavenly people. Consequently the place for all faithful saints is to go forth outside this whole system of worldly religion to Christ, who is outside it, and to bear the reproach still connected with a true confession of His name. It is quite impossible for anyone who is identified with this worldly religion, to enjoy the privilege of the saint's heavenly place within the veil—the two things are totally incompatible. We have seen that the way into the holiest is through the veil, that is, His flesh, or, in other words, the death of Christ, which condemns and shuts out everything of the natural man. Therefore that which corresponds to the enjoyment of our heavenly privilege inside the veil, is taking our place down here outside the camp, in fellowship with a rejected Christ. The two positions are so intimately associated that one cannot be known without the other. A saint who does not accept the place of reproach outside the camp, does not enjoy the privilege of being inside the veil, although he knows that he has the title to enter in.

There is another truth to be considered here in connection with the city. A city in scripture represents a political centre or system. Jerusalem, which was properly the centre of God's government on the earth, rejected and crucified the Lord Jesus, so that now there is no political system on the earth which is owned of

God. The world as a political system is judged of God. (John xii. 31; xvi. 11.) The devil is the head of it, the usurper is still in power. (John xiv. 30; 1 John v. 9.) Instead of the earthly Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem is the centre of God's government, and the place where the believer has his place and portion. We are come to the heavenly Jerusalem. (Heb. xii. 22.) Our commonwealth (that is, the associations of our life) is in *heaven*. (Phil. iii. 20.) Here we have no continuing city, we have no settled dwelling-place on earth, but we have one in heaven. We are seated in the heavenly places in Christ, we look for the coming city, the heavenly Jerusalem, to be displayed another day as the centre of God's government. Thus, if we think of the world religiously or politically, Christ's place, and ours as Christians, is outside it. F. H. B.

WATCH AND WORK.

MATTHEW xxv. 1-30.

THERE is a principle in each of these parables of the kingdom of heaven which it is most important that we should hold together in our souls. They are watchfulness and workfulness, if it may be permitted to coin a word to express faithful diligence.

From each of these parables it is evident that all is not right in the kingdom of heaven during the Lord's absence. There are five unwise virgins as well as five wise ones. There is a wicked and slothful servant as well as good and faithful ones. And this fact serves to show us the character of the kingdom of heaven. That it is the sphere of profession, and not simply of

true and loyal subjects and servants. True as it is that "the householder sowed good seed in his field," "his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat." (Matthew xiii. 24, 25.) This brings before us the present mixed condition of the kingdom, and how it came about. (See also *vv.* 36-43.)

Now the moral of the first parable of Matthew xxv. is contained in verse 13, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." In both parables the Lord is absent. In the first the possibility of His return at any moment is contemplated. In the second His protracted absence is regarded as possible. "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a *far* country." (*v.* 14.) "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh." (*v.* 19.)

In the first it does not say "ye know neither the year nor the month," nor even "ye know not the week"; but "ye know neither the *day* nor the *hour* wherein the Son of man cometh." His return may be at any moment; and so the importance of the injunction, "Watch therefore!" How blessed the promise to the watchers in Luke xii. "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." This is one of the most precious promises in Scripture. Let us see to it that we do not miss obtaining the immense privilege and honour. It will be a great thing to serve Him in the coming glory of the kingdom. "His servants shall serve Him." (Rev. xxii. 3.) But what will it be for Him to gird Himself, make us sit down to meat, and

for Him to come forth and serve us? Blessed Master, never weary of serving us!

We have been permitted to begin another year; but long before its end the night of watching may be over, and He whom we look for have come. Let us then be on the watch. As a Christian coastguard said, "I often, when on my beat at night, watch for the morning star, while all the world is asleep."

On the other hand there may still be a little space left for serving our absent Lord. "Let us the precious hours redeem." And this is where the second parable of Matthew xxv. is so useful as a stimulus to our laggard hearts. What is looked for is not the restless activity of the flesh,—there never was such a day for that as the present,—but diligent fidelity in what has been committed to our charge to use for our Lord.

In another gospel we read, "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work." (Mark xiii. 34.) Every man has had his work apportioned. Do we each know what our work is? and are we doing it faithfully? I believe numbers of God's children have never been exercised as to what their own individual work really is. The Master never contemplated idlers. "Slothful servant" (Matt. xxv. 26) is the condemnation of the wicked servant. The mere professed servant, who was all the time doing nothing with his master's goods. There is none to whom the Master has not given something to do for Him. "To *every* man his work." This is not necessarily preaching or any great public form of service. It is equally the quiet unseen service in the house, training

children, visiting the sick, ministering to the needy—the thousand forms of serving the Lord.

And here in our parable there are talents committed to each. Not merely the gift of an evangelist, pastor, or teacher; but anything, I take it, which we might employ for Christ. Abilities, time, money, &c. And, as has often been noticed, the praise is not “good and successful,” but “Well done, good and *faithful* servant.”

Oh to be using what He has committed to our charge with faithful diligence! What a stimulus it should be to us (though not the object of our service; He Himself is that) the thought of hearing His well done, and entering into *the joy of our Lord*. Then will be the day to reckon up results, and to rejoice, not with trembling, as now, but to share our Lord's joy in the result of faithful service.

“Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

The Lord give us to hold these two together, to watch and work till He come. W. G. B.

THE NEW CREATION.

2 COR. v. 13-21.

It is blessed to see in this chapter how the thought of *God* comes out in the new creation. In this aspect man is gone, as to his sins and responsibility, dead in them. The judgment of the first Adam is complete. The old thing is entirely gone. It is a new creation now, and in this new creation I find God instead of man. Even Christ Himself, as known after the flesh, is known

no more. True, He was, when down here, the hope and expectation of faith as coming into the world; but the apostle only knows Him now as having died for all, and as having been glorified—all under death, whether Jew or Gentile, and Christ no more known after the flesh (that is, as come after the hopes of man in it); but Head of a new creation, where all things are of God, and in which we have been made in Him the righteousness of God. God has manifested Himself in the second Man, and wrought atonement in His death, and now we are the righteousness of God in Him.

In the first creation we see man and his responsibility. In the new creation, all things are of God, and man is reconciled by Jesus Christ unto Himself. We want to have the power of this in our souls, to live as belonging to the new creation, as reconciled by God to Himself, all that belonged to the old creation for ever gone to faith. "Old things are passed away; behold, all are become new."

We see how the apostle walked in the power of this in verse 13. "Whether," he says, "we be beside ourselves, it is to God." That is, if he were beyond the influences that belong to him as a man, it was not an excitement that belongs to those influences, it was because he was absorbed in God. It is what is called ecstasy. When his spirit was free to rise above present services to what he was in Christ, he was lost in God, carried out beyond himself. If he were sober, if he had to weigh difficulties—come down into the sober estimate of what was before him—it was God in love working in him. His thought was entirely for others in that love. This was his daily life; as to himself transported with God; and when he did think about

things down here, all his thoughts were for others. It was the love of Christ that constrained him, and he looked upon all around in connection with the death of Christ. It was no longer a living Messiah in the flesh with promises for Israel. All this was over. Christ had died, and he judged that Christ would not have gone into death if men had not been there. The whole history of Adam's race is closed in death. If they had not all been dead, Christ would not have been found in death. Why have gone down there if others were not lying there? And therefore those who from among these lived, were now to live not to themselves, but to Christ, who died for them, and rose again. Thus, if he met an unconverted man, he would not think of him as an old acquaintance, and know him as such. He would look upon him as one that was dead, and needed to be saved by the death of Christ. Or if the person was a Christian, it would be just the same. He would not know him after the flesh according to an old acquaintance with him; he would look upon him as one alive with Christ, and his one thought would be that Christ might be glorified in him. Even Christ Himself was not to be known any more in connection with this creation. He had died to it, and if any man is in Christ, he is of the new creation, where old things are passed away, and all things are become new, and all things are of God. Man is looked upon as dead, and God brings in a new creation.

We have the same aspect of truth, when in verse 19 he speaks of Christ coming in the flesh. It is not looked upon as fulfilling promises to Israel, but God revealing Himself in grace to the world. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing

their trespasses unto them." This was the aspect of Christ's first coming, in which the apostle thought of Him. We know He came to His own, and was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers. All this is blessedly true; but here we have God in Man come here, and the apostle sees neither Jew nor Gentile. If God were in Christ, He acts towards the *world*. To what portion of it can you confine Him, if it be a question of God displaying Himself in grace in the world? For the same reason, when he speaks of the love of Christ, he judges all to be dead, and sees neither Jew nor Gentile, but a new creation, in which God counts every man that is in Christ.

We know that Christ is God as to the glory of His divine person, but the apostle is speaking here historically; and therefore when he looks upon the Lord Jesus living in the world, he sees God in Him acting in overtures of grace to the world. God *was* in Christ; that is the great fact, that God has been here as the Reconciler, and man would not be reconciled. Does the apostle say that God is reconciling us? No; but that God *has* reconciled us by Jesus Christ unto Himself, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation to the world; specially, no doubt, the apostles, but in their measure true of all. Man would not have God when He came, and therefore He had to make Christ sin, to work atonement for us, and now He is at God's right hand, in whom we become the righteousness of God. The apostle does not say to the Corinthians, Be "ye" reconciled, for they *were* reconciled; but Christ being in heaven, having gone there through death in working out atonement for us, and His presence there

being necessary to complete all in glory, He must have ambassadors to carry out His work of reconciliation here; so the apostle says, when he preaches—that is the gospel to sinners—“We pray in Christ’s stead, be reconciled to God.” That is what he had to say to men as Christ’s ambassador. How far are we living thus? Living in the power of God’s new creation, judging the whole thing belonging to the first creation as gone to faith, and entering into the blessedness of our place in Christ, in the power of an ungrieved Spirit. Exercised for others, that the life of Christ may have power in their walk and ways; judging evil practically in our own path through the world, but yet having our souls so full of our blessedness in Christ, of what it is to be reconciled to God, that directly opportunity arises, our hearts burst forth in praises to God, and ever go forth after others still dead in their sins. That this may be so practically, we must bring the death of Christ to judge everything in ourselves, and in our ways. As the apostle says, “Always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” (2 Cor. iv. 10.) If we do not daily and hourly bring everything under the sentence of Christ’s death, and judge everything by it, the Spirit will be grieved in us, and, instead of filling us with the joy of our portion in Christ, He will cause the light of Christ to awaken us to the judgment of ourselves, and of our ways.

May the Lord give us to walk in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, bringing everything into subjection to Christ, that we may know what the apostle goes on to say, “Death worketh in us, but life in you.” In thus bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus,

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

May the Lord give us thus to live! And may He grant us, especially in a day like this, to judge of men as Paul did, so that whatever the boast of human nature may be, we may see that all are dead, because Christ died for all in grace—for the highest act of grace and love is the proof of it—and that the only living ones are they that live to Him who died for them and rose again, while in our own souls we enter into His new creation. We may have to go down to babes, and feed them with milk, and not with strong meat; but may we ourselves live in the light of this new creation, where all things are of God. We must pass through exercise, and be tried and tested to learn what is in our hearts, and to have our senses exercised to discern good and evil. This is all needful and profitable, but then there is our distinct place in Christ as part of the new creation, where instead of having the first man responsible to God, we have God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself in grace, and making Christ sin for us, to bring us into the new creation, where all things are of God, and where man is before God in divine righteousness, and, as to his enjoyment, finding himself lost in God. It is God, and not man. It is what God is to man, and the blessedness of man being with God: God revealed in Christ; but nevertheless God revealed, and man made the righteousness of God, a part of God's new creation.

J. N. D.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

LUKE ix. 34.

It is scarcely doubtful that the fear of the disciples is in reference to Moses and Elias entering the cloud. Grammatically it is plain; and there is nothing in the sense, we judge, against this interpretation. This is peculiar to Luke, as he unfolds in this particular what answers to the Father's house. Altogether it is a wonderful scene. Jesus transfigured; or, as it is in this gospel, "His countenance became different," and as so changed He is seen as the centre of the glory of the kingdom. Moses and Elias—the one having died, the other having been "caught up" without dying—are associated with Him in the glory; while the disciples, the saints on earth, behold the displayed glory of Christ, and of those with Him. The cloud—the Shekinah—the symbol, as ever in the past, of God's presence, His dwelling-place, so to speak, overshadowed the disciples, but Moses and Elias entered into it—at home in the presence of God. In days of old, Jehovah spake to Moses out of the cloud, now both he and Elias have the liberty and privilege of entrance into the place where God dwelt. It is there, moreover, they enjoy communion with the Father concerning His beloved Son; for it was out of the cloud the voice came, "This is my beloved Son: hear Him." This voice was for the instruction of the disciples (of the saints for ever), correcting the folly of Peter in desiring

to build his three tabernacles, and so putting Moses and Elias on a level with their Lord. Thereby the absolute and supreme authority of Christ over His own, and here especially in the kingdom, is established once and for all. Into the manifold instructions, however, and applications of this scripture, we must leave the reader to enter for himself, having answered the question on verse 34. One profitable lesson may, perhaps, be indicated. It is only as we dwell in the Father's house—and this is our blessed privilege even now—that we can share in the Father's delight in His beloved Son. It is the scene, in fact, where fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, is to be enjoyed.

II.

2 COR. x. 5.

"BRINGING into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" does not refer, as the context plainly shows, to the apostle's own thoughts, but rather to those of his adversaries, who were seeking at Corinth to corrupt the truth of Christianity. There were two forms of opposition with which the apostle had to contend: first, that springing from Judaizing teachers; and, secondly, that connected with philosophy—both of which were alike antagonistic to the truth. (See Col. ii.) It is to the latter, we apprehend, the apostle chiefly alludes in this scripture. His opponents, taking advantage of his absence, had sought to undermine his authority and influence, and had insinuated, among other things, that he "walked according to the flesh." (v. 2.) To this he replied by saying, "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after [according to] the flesh." There is the

widest difference possible between walking "in" the flesh, that is, in the body (compare Galatians ii. 20), and "according to" the flesh, for this latter would mean to be governed by it. The apostle gives the reason for his distinction. "The weapons of our warfare," he says, "are not carnal [fleshly], but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds"—seats of the enemy's power, like Jericho of old in its typical significance. He then avows the object of his warfare, which was to cast down "imagerings," the "reasonings," as the word is, of man's corrupt mind, in short, philosophy; and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, as man's intellect and fancied wisdom are ever doing, looking down with scarce concealed pity on those who receive the revelation God has been pleased to make in His word; and lastly, in his holy warfare, bringing into captivity every thought, from whatever quarter it may come, every activity of man's mind, to the obedience of Christ. Whether reasonings, high things, or thoughts—all alike are regarded as opposed to the knowledge of God, and hostile to Christ; and Paul, as a true soldier, sought to overcome them all, to reduce them into captivity to the authority of Christ. Not that any of these could serve Christ—that would be impossible; but his aim was to compel them by force and power, with his mighty weapons, to acknowledge the supremacy of his Lord and Master, and to place them as helpless captives at His feet.

CHRIST AS IDENTIFIED WITH HIS PEOPLE.

“PSALM xxiv. closes the whole series of Psalms (commencing with Psalm xvi.) which speak of the association of Christ with the excellent—the saints that are in the earth. We have in it Christ in the path of life with the saints; Christ in the path of righteousness in the midst of an evil world; Christ suffering, the centre of all Israel’s history, and the Object of Jehovah’s interest when identified with Israel; Christ suffering as Witness to the truth, Object of the remnant’s thoughts and affections; Christ suffering as forsaken of God; Christ taking personally the path in which the sheep had to walk, and so unfolding to them the care of Jehovah, though Himself the true Shepherd; and Christ, when all own Jacob and the God of Jacob, entering into the temple as the triumphant Jehovah, the Lord of hosts. Though the blessed One be largely a pattern for us in much of this, yet the true effect on the piety of the heart is wrought in seeing Himself truly Man, treading the path before our eyes, and engaging every affection of the soul in the contemplation of it.” Let us follow briefly this concise and beautiful summary of this cluster of Messianic Psalms.

In Psalm xvi., then, we have “Christ in the path of life with the saints”; for He is here presented to us as the dependent and obedient Man, as the Man of faith. This is seen in the first verse, where He cries, “Preserve me, O God; for in Thee do I put my trust.” It is the aspect seen in the Hebrews, where it says of Him,

“Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God”; for we are permitted to trace His pathway through life, up to and through death, and on to the right hand of God, where there are pleasures for evermore. There is thus a remarkable correspondence with Philippians i, where the Christian is seen, in the person of Paul, in life, in the prospect of death, and after death with Christ, which, as he tells us, is very much better than life.

Passing to the next psalm, we behold “Christ in the path of righteousness in the midst of an evil world.” It therefore commences, “Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.” In this path Christ found all His resources in God, in His word, in His strength, in His lovingkindness, and in His protection. What a lesson for His people as they also are passing through an evil scene, having their lot cast in the perilous times! The apostle Peter is much concerned with the path of God’s people as suffering for righteousness. It is striking to observe that the issue of the path is according to its character. “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.” Verses 7 and 11 bring in the remnant in their association, through grace, with Christ.

In the next place (Psalm xviii.) Christ is seen as “suffering, the centre of all Israel’s history, and the Object of Jehovah’s interest when identified with Israel.” The superscription will explain the occasion.

of the psalm, and at the same time show how the Spirit of God has taken up the sufferings of David, and his deliverance from all his enemies, to shadow out the greater sufferings of David's Son, and His deliverance from the strivings of the people, preparatory to His being established as the Head of the nations in His universal sway over the earth. The details may easily be gleaned, from which it will be seen that Christ here experienced the sorrows of death, and that His sufferings in this connection become the "centre" of deliverance of His people, from Egypt onwards to their establishment in blessing in a future day, as stated in the last verse. "Great deliverance giveth He to His king; and showeth mercy to His anointed, to David, and to His seed for evermore."

Christ is not seen in Psalm xix., where God's two witnesses, that of creation, and that of His word, as embodied in the law, are described as presented to man in responsibility, together with the estimate formed of them by the godly in Israel. It is in Psalms xx. xxi. that we have "Christ suffering as witness to the truth, object of the remnant's thoughts and affections." Christ here, therefore, is God's third witness to man, following, as He did, upon the two previous testimonies of creation and the law. The first of these is found in Romans i.; the second in chapters ii. and iii.; and the apostle brings in the third—Christ—in chapter x., and connects it in a very special way with that of creation. (See verse 18.) The connection between Psalms xx. and xxi. is very beautiful. Christ, as the object of the remnant's affections, is the subject of their prayers in xx. 1-5, and the answer is recorded in xxi. 2-6. They

rejoice, moreover, in His salvation—deliverance, and they participate in the consequent blessing. The last verse of Psalm xx. is remarkable, as the remnant cry equally to Jehovah and the King, thus showing that they know that the King is Jehovah. They are also taught that it is in resurrection (xxi. 4) that He receives the kingdom, and that it is with resurrection power He will subdue all His enemies. (Compare 1 Cor. xv. 24–28; Philippians iii. 20, 21.)

That Psalm xxii. sets forth “Christ as forsaken of God” is known to every child of God, inasmuch as it contains the very words that were uttered by the Lord when in His agony on the cross. Man is in the scene, both Jew and Gentile, but only as the blind instrument for the accomplishment of the divine will. It is from God’s hand that the Lord takes the cup. “Thou hast brought me,” He says, “into the dust of death.” (v. 15.) And just because He suffers here from the hand of God, and is forsaken, we have atonement in this psalm; whereas in Psalm lxix., for example, where He suffers from man’s hand, His death (while every aspect is included in His one act of death) is rather that of a martyr. This explains the widely-different consequences described as flowing from His death in these two psalms. In the latter, where the Lord suffers from man in his wickedness, pure and unmitigated judgment is the result; whereas in the former, where atonement is found, grace and blessing flow out in ever-widening circles, until the ends of the earth are reached. (See verses 22, 25, 27.)

All are familiar with the precious Psalm (xxiii.) that speaks of our Shepherd's care. It is in this we view "Christ taking personally the path in which the sheep had to walk, and so unfolding to them the care of Jehovah, though Himself the true Shepherd." For in truth He was, in the place which He so graciously took, as dependent on God as His people. And He took this place and trod this path that He might, for all time to come, be the perfect example for every sheep and lamb of His flock. The psalm is so beautiful because, in addition to all the love and care which it reveals, it teaches so plainly that all the blessings—rest, refreshment, restoration, guidance, the rod and the staff, the table, the anointing, the goodness and mercy, &c., of which it speaks, flow from what the Lord is to His people. It is thus because He is our Shepherd that we shall not want. It is He who maketh us to lie down, &c. This is very blessed.

Lastly, in Psalm xxiv., we are permitted to behold "Christ, when all own Jacob, and the God of Jacob, entering into the temple as the triumphant Jehovah, the Lord of hosts." We have in this psalm the full result, as far as the earth is concerned, of the work of atonement wrought out and finished in Psalm xxii. It is divided into two parts. There is, first, universal blessing—"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." And in connection with this, in reply to the question, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" &c., the moral characteristics of those that seek after God, and after Jacob as the people of God, are given. The door is thus opened to all the world in the age to come, in the millennial kingdom. Secondly, He who is seen

as forsaken of God in Psalm xxii., and as the Shepherd in Psalm xxiii. leading and ministering to His flock, is now presented as the King of glory, as Jehovah mighty in battle, Jehovah of hosts, returning from His victory, and entering in through the unfolded gates, and the opened everlasting doors, to dwell with His people on His own loved hill of Zion, and in the holy place. (v. 3.) The result for Him therefore of His own work of redemption is, that He can now in resurrection take possession of the "gates of Zion" in the mountain of His holiness, and surround Himself there with His redeemed.

There can be, it may be added, no more blessed occupation than in tracing out every detail of the path of our blessed Lord in His work for, and association with, His people. It keeps Himself before the soul; and as we ponder upon the tenderness, the lowliness and meekness, the grace and love, exhibited by Him at every step, we look adoringly upward to Him as glorified at the right hand of God, and we say, The Jesus whose pathway we have followed on earth is the Jesus we behold. Blessed be His name!

THE FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

NEXT in privilege to the Bride is the *friend of the Bridegroom*, and this honour was happily enjoyed by John the Baptist. He it was who stood and heard the Bridegroom's voice, and whose joy, therefore, was fulfilled. He held a high position, did this honoured forerunner of the Lord; but he held it with rare and becoming grace. More than a prophet, because he beheld the face of Him to whom the prophets had only borne a distant

testimony, he declined even to accept a prophet's name. Yet none before enjoyed such an honour as did this dear servant of Christ, and martyr to the truth.

Without referring to the record given by the three earlier evangelists, let us trace his history as presented to us in the gospel of his namesake, John the apostle.

In chapter i., after reading that he was a man sent of God to bear witness to the "*Light*," or, again, to the "*Word become flesh*," we find him surrounded by priests and Levites of Jerusalem, who came to ask who he was. His fame had spread. The Jews of that city had heard his name, and desired to obtain his self-confession. And how favourable the opportunity now afforded for self-exaltation! How easy to gratify the taste of these interviewers by a little self-assertion! But John was proof. Indeed, one of the most striking features in this remarkable man of God was his humility—his evident and lovely self-unconsciousness. He seems to have lived so thoroughly under the spell of his Master's work and glory, that self-interest had practically no place within him.

Hence we find that he confessed, "*I am not the Christ.*"

Then, "Art thou Elias?"

"*I am not.*"

Lastly, "Art thou a [marg.] prophet?"

"*No.*"

Answers short and decisive, and gradually shortening from five monosyllables to three, and from three to one; just as though he had no pleasure in the matter, and hastened to close it.

"What sayest thou of thyself?" again they questioned, thus affording a fuller field for self-commendation.

He made answer, "*I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness,*" &c.

He says not, "*I am one crying*"; but, "*I am the voice of one crying*"; only a voice—a passing sound that fades away on the breeze—a thing the least permanent, and the most transitory. Happy sensibility! for while the voice vanishes, and leaves no form behind, yet the effect produced is proportionate to the value of the words spoken. "*My words,*" said a greater than John, "*shall never pass away,*" though He who spoke them was "cut off from the land of the living." Hence John could report himself as only "*a voice*"; but that voice uttered truths that shall endure when time has passed away.

And the first great truth thus declared is, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*"

The second: "*The same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.*"

The third: "*This is the Son of God.*"

And the fourth: "*Looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!*"

The first presents the results of His atonement in its complete magnitude. He is God's Lamb, and the world's sin-bearer. The second shows the present value of that mighty work; for "He baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" all who believe, as on Pentecost. The third gives us His personal glory as "*Son of God.*" And the fourth draws attention to that walk—that perfect life—the seeing which elicited the spontaneous exclamation, "*Behold the Lamb of God!*" His very ways announced Him.

Four wondrous and imperishable truths are these, though the tongue that proclaimed them be silent in the grave. Happy voice that could give form to such glorious

facts to be preserved for ever in the sacred page! That was all John sought to do, and he did it. He wrought no miracle to authenticate his words, no mighty sign to attest his mission. He only spoke; but his words contained their own evidence of Christ-honouring wisdom.

Passing on now to chapter iii. we see another instance of this wisdom.

A question "about purifying" had arisen between some of His disciples and the Jews. How it was settled we are not told; but it formed an occasion for the latter to come to him and tell him that "*He that was with thee beyond Jordan . . . baptizeth, and all men come to Him.*" Their object was evidently to raise in his breast a spirit of jealousy. They informed him, in substance, that the tide of his popularity was running toward his Master, and that he himself was being deserted.

How subtle! Was not the sound of their master's feet behind them? Was not this a direct shaft of Satan? And have not mutual jealousies injured hosts of God's servants to their shame and His dishonour?

But again this man of God was proof. First he replies that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. Heaven's free gift is man's only grace—as heaven bestows so is the servant honoured, for he has nothing of his own.

Further he says, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" His star must sink before that resplendent orb; and for the tide to set in any other direction would but contravene the decree of God. "*He must increase*" was the sustaining power of John's testimony, as of all others to whom God's ways are precious.

Again he adds, "*He that cometh from heaven is above*

all," and thence had the Master come freighted too with all that He had heard and seen there. What mere earthly servant could testify as He? His place was unique.

And lastly he states, "*The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand.*" Given all things as to no one else; for, as Son, He was worthy of such investiture, and fitted for such honour.

Consequently, "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.*" To honour the Son by simple faith, and please Him by heartfelt confidence, is nothing short of everlasting life, community of mind with the Father, and, therefore, perfect blessing; whereas, "*He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.*" A contrast appalling indeed, but necessary. There is no *via media*.

And with this solemn statement closes the testimony of John the Baptist—a testimony replete with the glory of Him whose faithful messenger he was. What a chain of golden links we have thus traced out—

1st. The Lamb of God, the sin-bearer.

2nd. The Baptizer with the Holy Ghost.

3rd. The Son of God.

4th. The Lamb of God, as He walked on earth.

5th. He must increase.

6th. He that cometh from heaven is above all.

7th. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand.

8th. The believer in the Son possessing everlasting life, and the unbeliever exposed to the wrath of God.

This was John's witness, as presented to us in the fourth gospel.

Now let us see a double witness rendered to John in this same gospel.

First, in chapter v. 35, the Lord says of him, "*He was a burning and a shining light,*" for He could estimate aright the life of his forerunner. That light not only shone, it burned. He was no "reed shaken by the wind." His life was one of power and effect, because it had one absorbing object—one grand purpose. His joy was in the joy of the Bridegroom, his pleasure was the exaltation of Christ. Hence he burned, not with zeal only, but in the condemnation of all that opposed his Master's advancement. He had, therefore, to suffer.

Second, men said of him, "*John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.*" (Chap. x. 41.)

What an enviable record! pronounced too by enemies. "All things that John spake of this man were true!" Yes; he had no miracle to endorse his sayings, no ostensible favours were heaped upon him, but all he had said of Jesus was true—all those seven or eight statements above recorded, and many besides, here now admitted as true. What greater honour could a servant of Christ desire than that his testimony to his Master be true?

The voice that uttered "the things" had passed away, but the things, yes, the "*all things that he spake,*" had remained. The vessel had been broken, but its treasure endured. The star had sunk beneath its horizon, but a greater Light had filled the sphere. John had decreased, but Christ had increased. The Bridegroom had the bride, and in this the Bridegroom's friend rejoiced. That was enough for this true-hearted, self-concealing, Christ-exalting servant of God.

May the fair example he has left behind be more a model for ourselves.

J. W. S.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

THE epistle to the Colossians, as many are aware, occupies a position in the development of Christian doctrine between those to the Romans and Ephesians. In the former the great question of the responsibility of man to God is dealt with, whether he is regarded as a sinner without law, or as a sinner with added transgressions under law. The righteousness of God in justifying and saving those who believe in Jesus—whether Jew or Gentile—is declared, together with the bearing of Christ's death and resurrection on such, in setting them free, according to the reckoning of faith, from their sinful state in a liberty and relationship of which the Spirit of God is the power. Though the hope of glory is spoken of and rejoiced in, and the purpose of God to have the saints in that glory—conformed to the image of His Son—is touched upon, yet the doctrine of the epistle refers to man (whether guilty and lost, or believing) looked at in his individual path upon the earth.

The epistle to the Ephesians opens out the counsels of God in connection with Christ in the heavenlies, where He is seated at the right hand of God. The mystery of God's will to head up every thing in heaven and earth in the Christ—the man of His own purpose and counsel is made known to the saints. They have been sealed with the Holy Ghost to have their inheritance in these counsels, of which He is the Earnest, and they have, besides being sons before the Father, a

peculiar relationship to Christ as His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. Hence we do not find, as in Romans, the bearing of the death and resurrection of Christ upon the condition of the responsible man upon the earth, but the power which wrought in Christ in raising Him from the dead, and seating Him in the heavenly places, is shewn to be towards believers, as well as in them, both for the accomplishment of these counsels and for their present enjoyment of them. Christ being in the heavenly places, believers are seen as made to sit there *in Him*.

We may consider then a believer either looked at as upon earth justified from guilt, and in liberty from his sinful state and self before God through the death and resurrection of Christ, and set upon his path through the wilderness, but with the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of adoption and the power for walking there with God, while looking to be conformed to the image of His Son; or we may look at him as blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ, a member of the body which is united to Him—quickened, raised, and seated in the heavenly places in Him.

But the epistle to the Colossians takes a middle place in bringing out the practical bearing of the truth in Romans, as to the death and resurrection of Christ on the state of the Christians, so that, while still in this world, they may enter into the effect of being associated with the Christ who has died and gone out of the world, and thus find their interest in things above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, though they are actually on earth. It also brings to bear upon the Christian the truth in Ephesians, that believers are quickened together with Christ, not, as in that epistle, to

bring into the place of the saints as seated in the heavenlies in Christ, but to show how fully the believer while still on earth is clear of all that *in which he once lived*, because *Christ* is his life—a life hidden indeed with Christ in God, but when Christ his life is manifested, he will be manifested with Him in glory. The bearing of this upon Christians is, that as members of the body they *derive everything* from the Head, so that, having received Christ, they may walk in Him according to a new order, knit together in love, and thus practically set forth Christ before appearing in glory with Him. All this we may hope more fully to enter into as the Lord may enable as we consider the epistle, together with other truths therein bearing upon the Christian state.

But before proceeding with the details of the epistle, it may be well for us as Christians to pause and enquire what is the character of our own lives. There are many now, thank God, who are clear as to forgiveness and deliverance by the cross and death and resurrection of Christ. They have learnt it from Romans. They are equally clear, and would insist strongly upon the blessings which are theirs *in Christ*—theirs now through sovereign grace, and to be fully entered upon in glory. If it be so with us, what then is the character of our lives? Is it merely a pious, godly life amidst the circumstances of our every-day path, or has the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ so brought us to His side of death, that we realise that we have died with Him to the elements of the world, and as risen with Him are in association with things above, and seek the things that are there—our life being there because quickened together with Him?

CHAPTER I.

The first point we may notice is the character given to the Colossian believers by the apostle in his salutation to them—"Holy and faithful brethren in Christ." (New translation.) This at once shows that the object of the epistle is not to set those he addresses upon Christian ground—they are looked at as truly on it. He then gives a reason for his thanks and prayer to God for them—"Having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love which ye have towards all the saints." This may seem a small thing to say. One might ask, Is this peculiar to the Colossians? Does not every saint believe in Christ, and love those that are His? We may reply by asking another question, Does it characterise every Christian? Does it characterise us? It involves this, not merely that we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, but that He is the blessed abiding object of our faith, and that the saints are the circle amongst whom love now finds its exercise.

"With Him is all our business now,
And those that are His own."

The Colossians were thus characterised, and we are thus led to the consideration of an important feature in the manner of the communication of truth to the saints, for the moral state of soul is of great moment. Here we see that they had received the gospel, not merely as securing *their* eternal interests, but it had been fruitful in producing that state of soul in which *Christ and His interests* had their place in faith and love. The mind of the Spirit in the apostle could take up this state of soul, and connect it with heaven, giving thanks on their behalf for the hope laid up for

them there; for he saw that if they had not this before them, there would be a tendency to turn round to the things upon earth, and to be affected by them religiously, for the flesh would take up worldly principles and try to use them religiously. Therefore, while acknowledging the faith and love which the gospel had already produced, he brings before them the hope which was laid up for them in the heavens. It is not merely that we shall be there, nor is it that *we* have put all *our* interests into the hand of Christ, and that all our happiness and joy He will take care of in heaven, but Christ Himself in glory is our hope, and *God* has treasured up our all in Him in the heavens, and we are to enjoy it now as hope.

In verse 6 we have a contrast to Israel which will further help us in apprehending the special line of teaching in this epistle. Of old God had been seeking fruit in the vineyard wherein He had planted the vine which He brought out of Egypt. Had it been possible for man in the flesh to bring forth fruit for God, it would have been found in Israel—a vineyard guarded and tended by God. But Isaiah v. 4, Matt. xxi. 34–39, Luke xiii. 6, all teach us that it was impossible. Now, the gospel is preached in all the world. It goes out, therefore, to Gentiles, and was bringing forth fruit in them, and growing; but fruit could not now be connected with earthly hopes, as in Israel, but with heavenly; and the fruit thus borne would manifest this heavenly character, though borne down here, for fruit-bearing is upon earth. Its character would be the display of the new and heavenly Man in the saints. Now that Christ has been lifted up out of the earth and is in glory, the gospel goes out *into all the world* to

produce this new and heavenly fruit for God from those who belong to heaven because their hope is laid up for them there. In John xv. we see this new order of fruit-bearing upon earth displacing Israel. Christ and His own are in the closest association; and fruit was henceforth to be brought *to the Father* by abiding in Him. And in Exodus xxix. 33, 35, the pomegranates were upon the skirts (that nearest the earth) of the robe of heavenly blue, between the golden bells. The testimony of divine righteousness comes out from the holy place, *now* that the High Priest has entered in, and the sound is heard there. Fruit is produced in connection with such a testimony in us; but it is seen as belonging to Christ Himself in His heavenly character. Fruit of righteousness by Jesus Christ unto glory and praise of God. When He comes out Israel will blossom and bud, and fill the earth with fruit; but it will still be true, for them as for us, "From me is thy fruit found."

We shall further see that the moral state of the soul has much to do with the character of a heavenly Christ being produced in the saints, by noticing how the apostle reverts to what he had heard of these Colossians. (v. 9.) He had heard of their faith and love through Epaphras, who had also declared to him their love in the Spirit. They did not know Paul after the flesh; and, therefore, towards him it was entirely affection produced by the Spirit of God. All this leads him to pray for them, and to ask that they might be *filled* with the full knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Now such a prayer shows us that believers are here for the will of God. God has laid up a hope for them in heaven—Christ is that hope,

and to be with Him and like Him—but they are not yet gone to where their hope is; they are still here. What for? For God's will. That is what Christ was here for; and to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, would be to walk as He walked. But we have not now, as was once given to Israel, a book of statutes and precepts. No doubt the will of God is found in His word; but we cannot know it apart from a state of soul formed in wisdom and spiritual understanding. If we need "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Ephes. i. 17) to enter into all that is connected with the glorified Man in heaven, we need also spiritual understanding to enable us to see how Christ ever did the will of God, and pleased His Father, so that we may walk worthy of the Lord. It is not to do some great thing; but just what He would have us do. It may be to be quiet and patient, if that would be pleasing to the Lord in us. "In every good work *bearing fruit.*" A good work may be the daily occupation, only let us bear fruit in it; and yet for this it needs that state of soul which understands what the will of the Lord is, and walks in it worthy of Him. "Growing by the full knowledge of God." It is in Christ that God has been fully revealed and made known; and here we see how intimately the knowledge of His will is connected with the knowledge of Himself. Surely God's will is, that Christ should be set forth in the walk of His people; and growth is promoted as we learn how He ever did those things which pleased His Father, even as He said, "I know Him; for I am from Him, and He sent me." (John vii. 29.)

T. H. R.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

INTRODUCTION.

BEFORE entering upon a consideration of the contents of this book, it is needful to call attention, however briefly, to its special and peculiar character. At the very commencement mention is made of the fact that Nebuchadnezzar had already besieged Jerusalem, and that the Lord had given Jehoiakim king of Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God, etc.; and thereon we read that some of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes, were captives in Babylon. These facts when rightly understood open out to us the significance of the whole book. Until now God's throne had been at Jerusalem; He dwelt between the cherubim; and Israel (we speak of the nation as seen in the purpose of God) was consequently the centre of God's ways in the government of the whole earth. (See Deut. xxxii. 7-9.) Israel, as this same scripture tells us, occupied a special position of favour and blessing, "for the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." Because of this position of blessing and privilege the nation had special responsibilities. The principle is announced by the prophet: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos iii. 2.) Their responsibility was according to their light, and because they were Jehovah's people; for as such they were His witnesses (Isaiah xliii. 8-13), and Jerusalem was His candlestick in the midst of the nations.

When, therefore, Israel became worse than even the surrounding nations, and the king of Judah made the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen (2 Chron. xxxiii. 9), the Lord, after many warnings and much long-suffering (2 Chron. xxxvi. 14-20), executed the judgment which He had threatened, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, who burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly palaces thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon. (2 Chron. xxxvi. 19-28.) The dominion of the earth was henceforward committed to the king of Babylon (see Daniel ii. 37, 38), and it is in the midst of this new order of things, as a true remnant and seed preserved of God, that Daniel and his companions are found in the first chapter of our prophet.

This position of the remnant in Babylon, subject to the Gentile power and dominion, affords the key for the interpretation of the book. For the visions, vouchsafed to the kings, concern the Gentile powers themselves, in their successive order, development, and, what may be termed, their moral phases, going on to complete apostasy; and those granted to the prophet deal with the same subject, but, as going down to the end, in the accomplishment of God's purposes concerning His beloved people, more in their bearing upon this issue. The pleasant land thus finally becomes the centre round which all the Gentile activities and designs gather; and the curtain is lifted to reveal the future of the chosen nation, in its pathway, because of its sins and iniquities, and most of all

because of its crowning sin in the rejection of Messiah, through unequalled and unheard of sorrow and trouble (chap. xii. 1) on to the enjoyment of its purposed blessing according to the thoughts of God.

All this will be more distinctly seen as we pursue our studies ; but it may now be pointed out that the book is divided into two equal parts, viz., chaps. i. to vi. forming the first, and chaps. vii. to xii. the second part. The first part is made up wholly of the visions and actings of the Gentile monarchs and their subordinate authorities. Daniel and his companions appear on the scene as having the mind of God, and as faithful to Him amid all the seductions and opposition by which they were surrounded. Daniel, like Joseph in Egypt, is first brought to the notice of the king as an interpreter of the king's dreams ; and also, like Joseph, he is, as a consequence, taken into the king's favour, and exalted to the seat of government. Having obtained from the king the association of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, with himself in his exaltation, they become the objects of the envy and enmity of the princes. The details will be found in their place ; but the two things are interwoven, the character of the Gentile powers, and the place, the suffering condition, and the final deliverance of the remnant from under the Gentile persecuting dominion. The second part of the book, commencing with chapter vii., contains the prophetic visions, with their interpretations, received by Daniel ; and they embrace the course, character, and destiny of the Gentile empires, which followed consecutively after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Their various actings are described, and especially of the third and fourth in relation to

the Holy Land and the Jewish people; and we have, moreover, the special revelation made to Daniel of the seventy weeks, as indication of the period in which God's purposes for His earthly people will be accomplished.

Finally, in the long vista of the future opened up by the prophet, the Gentile governments are displaced by the Son of man to whom there is given "dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." It is in connection with His coming to establish His kingdom that Daniel is told: "At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Chapter xii. 1.) At His first coming He was cut off (ix. 26), and had nothing; but though He was rejected and crucified by "His own" people, He yet, according to the counsels of God, died for that nation; and it is on the foundation of that efficacious sacrifice that God, after He has punished them for their sins in His righteous government, will act in the future for the restoration of His beloved, but guilty, people. Isaiah can thus cry, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." (Chap. xl. 1, 2.) The book of Daniel reaches in prophetic vision to this point; but it does not go beyond. For the establishment and the glory of the kingdom other prophets must be consulted. What we have in Daniel is, as we have already indicated, the course and character of the Gentile

powers, from the destruction of Jerusalem on to the appearing of Christ, together with the position of the remnant, and the sufferings of the Jewish people, while the Gentiles possess the dominion, until at last God, in His faithfulness, in pursuance of His purposes, interposes, and, for His own glory, works for the rescue and blessing of His elect earthly people. This blessed consummation is yet future, and though our calling and portion are heavenly, and our hope is the coming of the Lord to receive us unto Himself, and to introduce us into the Father's house, it is yet of the utmost importance that we should understand the nature of "the times of the Gentiles," and embrace in our thoughts the whole circle of God's revealed interests. It is to aid in this object that we desire to commend to our readers the earnest study of this part of the inspired volume.

MY PLACE TAKEN BY CHRIST,

ONCE ON EARTH IN DEATH, AND NOW IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE IN HEAVEN.

"Here have we no continuing city."—HEBREWS xiii.

THERE are only two places in God's account. First, there was my birth place, for I was "born in sin and shapen in iniquity," and as there I was under *the judgment of God*, from which I could never have extricated myself. I myself was born as man of the family of Adam, as to which see Hebrews ix. 27. And then, secondly, there is my "*new-birth*" place, the place of the prodigal son in the "Father's house." (Luke xv.)

"The Lord has taken both places for me," a believer can say. His wounds as "the Lamb that was slain" bear witness in heaven of how completely He stood in my place, and bore all the weight of God's judgment

against me the sinner. And now He has taken my future place for me, and He *holds it* until He shall put me into it. "I go to prepare a place for you"—"Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

And this latter place faith inhabits even now, and thus it is that faith always says it has "no place here." (See Heb. xi. 14-16.) But *there*—

"There all's unsullied light,
Our hearts let in its rays;
And heavenly light makes all things bright,
Seen in that blissful gaze."

The wilderness was no *place* for God's people. He took them out of one place (Egypt)—"the house of bondage"—to set them down in another place (Canaan)—"a land flowing with milk and honey." The wilderness is all change, a moving, changing pilgrim scene. God's place is marked by no change but *rest*—He speaks of it as "HIS *rest*." (Heb. iv.)

There are only two places. He took my place and gives me His. "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am." He *holds it* for me *now*, and is coming to take me into it; and as surely as He has taken our past place for us, so surely has He also taken our future place for us, the only place that will suit His heart. It is with Himself. As He said to the thief, "With Me"; so now He says of each of us, "So shall we ever be *with* the Lord." With Him; for since He took the place of judgment (where we could *not* be with Him) He claims* the full right now to have us with Him. None in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, can dispute that right. (Romans viii. 31.)

H. C. A.

* John xvii. 24. "I desire" is, I think, stronger than "I will."

THE NEW MAN AND THE HOLY GHOST.

EPHESIANS iv. 17—v. 2.

THIS exhortation is upon the basis of the new creation. We find in it the new man created after God in righteousness and truth of holiness (*new* in the sense of never having existed before), and it also takes account of the possession of the Holy Spirit. It is full of energy and power; and this can be understood by the fact of the Holy Spirit of God being in the saints, and in an ungrieved state. They are exhorted (*v.* 30) not to grieve Him.

The state of the Gentiles at the beginning of the passage is very terrible. It is not merely their horrible practices, as in Romans i., but the moral state of their heart and mind. It has very often been pointed out that the blindness of the heart is the cause of the darkening of the understanding. Some of the brightest and most powerful Gentile intellects give sad proof of being thus darkened. Strangers to the life of God—that life which we see in Jesus, God manifest in the flesh—they have nothing in common with it. Here it is the state of the Gentile walk generally—the understanding clouded because of the affections being utterly wrong, and the result in verse 19.

But the saints are on an entirely new footing; the *ye* is emphatic in verse 20. There is the putting off of the old man, and putting on of the new. It is not merely a change of practice (that we shall see in what follows), but there is a thorough setting aside of the old corrupt man; the fresh spirit of the mind, and

putting on of the new man (new *καινόν*) created after God in righteousness and holiness of truth. It is no modification or "better ways," as people say, but a new creation; and we have taken this place.

Now comes out the character of righteousness and holiness in all the excellent energy of the Holy Ghost, and that not only in the putting away of evil, but in the production of positive good. It requires the power of the Spirit to speak truth one to another, on the ground of being members one of another; the present power of the Holy Ghost for entering into and answering to the truths of the one body is but little understood. This is really the unity of the Spirit; not merely the bare fact that there is one Spirit, but His power known in the one body.

Verse 26 refers to righteous anger. The new man rebukes iniquity; but again, what power is needed here! It is the reverse of indifference to evil; righteous wrath is called out by certain expressions of evil. One cannot be silent; but what danger of going too far! How often it has ended in sin, through our not being under the full control of the Holy Spirit! The Christian ends his day with an unchafed mind! I recollect once asking an aged Christian how he had been able to live so long, having been so frequently unjustly attacked; and his reply was that for forty-five years he had been able daily to leave everything with the Lord in deep repose of mind, notwithstanding the indignation often called forth by so much iniquity. Occasion is thus taken away from the enemy, who has often taken advantage of a chafed spirit. We find in all this part of the Word the Holy Ghost in the saints, and Satan in the children of disobedience.

Verse 28 has often been spoken of as showing the true energy of Christianity. The thief becomes a giver; and not only a giver who gives of his abundance, but one who labours to acquire the means of giving to others. What a wonderful transformation! It required spiritual energy in Paul to sit up making tents for his own needs and for those of others; and he had not been a thief before his conversion. The Holy Ghost alone can produce positive virtues, and true devotedness, the very contrary of what had preceded.

Then (v. 29) it is not only that corrupt communication is stopped, but positive good, edification according to the need. Not only good language, but good *for the occasion*; and this evidently supposes the Holy Spirit's power. We have often said things, in themselves good, that were not needed for the occasion; as I recollect to have seen a philanthropist giving away food and medicines (excellent in themselves) without regard to the state of the recipients.

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed for the day of redemption.” This is fully in keeping with our subject, and may we walk thus till the end of our course on earth!

Verses 31, 32, and v. 1, 2 go together, and as we have had righteousness, holiness, and truth, so now we find love and grace. It is not merely that bitterness and wrath, etc., are to be put away, with all malice (there is nothing malicious in the new man), but love practically shown, with the imitation of two divine models, in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a most wonderful passage.

To be kind and compassionate to one another, even as God hath forgiven us in Christ! The manner in

which the prodigal was received has been much spoken of, and, with the memory of His forgiveness ever fresh, we are exhorted to imitate God. (It is no sign of progress to have forgotten the forgiveness of one's sins, but quite the contrary.) To be imitators of God, as dear children, is the very highest aspect of grace, and can anything be more surprising than this company of beloved children walking thus, with such a model, in the midst of a world like ours? "And walk in love, as Christ hath loved us," etc. There is another aspect of a divine model. Our blessed Lord in all His life down here showed the same untiring interest, the same love, to His own to the very end, when He gave Himself for us, a perfect Holocaust, to God. If we really have Him before us, and His patient ways with His disciples, though they often showed so little interest in Him (John xvi. 5, 6), we shall walk in love, seeking to maintain our happy relations with the beloved children of God. This is the real imitation of Jesus Christ.

We have thus the new man, and the Holy Ghost a new power—righteousness, truth, holiness, and love made good in a walk conspicuous for its beauty, "not as the other Gentiles"; a new man, divine strength, and a divine model. May the Lord give us to walk thus!

E. L. B.

THE more intimately we know the Scriptures, the more simple and distinct is the truth that, though Son of Man, Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

GOD'S TABERNACLES AND THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

PSALM LXXXIV.

WHAT answers now for the Christian to the "tabernacles," in the fullest sense of the term, is the Father's house. God has His habitation through the Spirit on earth, and many instructive applications might be made from this psalm to it; but never until the Father's house is reached shall we enter upon the perfect blessedness of the eternal occupation of praise. It is then the anti-typical significance of the tabernacles, with the added thought of relationship, revealed only in Christianity, which is to be kept in view in our meditations on this beautiful psalm.

Let it then be observed, first of all, that the essential thing for us, while passing through the wilderness, is to have our hearts on the Father's house. This is, in fact, the key to the psalm, as it commences with the words, "How amiable," how *beloved* (as the word is) "are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" It is indeed an immense thing for the soul to know that it does not belong to this scene, but to the place where Christ is—in the Father's house, and consequently to have the heart already there. This indeed is the blessed secret of being morally outside of everything by which we are surrounded here. Stopping short at the benefits we receive through the work of Christ, and not pressing on to the joy of knowing Him by whom the work has been accomplished, the heart will scarcely ever

travel outside of this world. But when we follow Christ to the place where He has gone, meditate upon, delight in, and adore Him there, our hearts will constantly turn to Him as their one and only satisfying portion.

As a consequence, we shall desire to be where Christ is. As the psalmist proceeds, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." God dwelt there, and the Psalmist longed to be where He was; not to obtain relief from the sorrows of the wilderness, or even to enter upon the joys and blessings that filled the place, but simply because the living God dwelt there. So now the soul that knows Christ most intimately desires to be where He is, in order to be with Himself. Like Paul, he desires to depart, if death be in prospect, to be with Christ, assured that, if absent from the body, he will be present with the Lord. And this is in accordance with the Lord's own mind; for when promising to return for His own, He said the object was, "That where I am, ye may be also"; and again, when speaking to the Father, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." It could not be otherwise than that if Christ possesses our hearts, we should long to be with Him where He is.

Entering into this, the blessedness of dwelling in the house is at once apprehended. (*v.* 4.). It is ever true that we live in spirit where our hearts' objects are. So that dwelling by faith in the Father's house is entirely a question of the affections. It is so, as we have seen, in this psalm. First, the heart is on the tabernacles;

then there is the desire to be where the living God is; and next we have the blessedness of dwelling in the house. Does any one enquire, What is it to dwell in spirit in the Father's house? It is the mind, the mind of the new man, the thoughts, the desires, and the affections being continually there, ever reverting to the place where the Father is, and where His beloved Son is. Remark, moreover, that those who dwell in the house have but one occupation, and that is praise—inconstant praise. As we read of the singers in the temple, "They were employed in that work day and night." (1 Chron. ix. 33.)

To have our hearts in the Father's house makes this world a desert, and ourselves pilgrims and strangers in it. But there is blessedness also in this, if, as will surely be the case, our strength is in God, and the "ways," the ways to the house above, are in our hearts. For the soul that has already found its true object and rest is a chastened soul; it has ceased from self-occupation, after many a weary trial and experience; and it has learnt that it has no strength save in Christ. It is a dependent soul, and as such cherishes the "ways" that lead to the possession and realization of all its hopes and desires. But there will be exercises while treading the ways; yea, such a soul will find the scene through which it is passing to be the valley of Baca—of weeping. Weeping must endure through the moral night of this world, and even the sower must sow in tears. There will be exercises innumerable; but sorrowful as these must be, they will become a well—a well-spring of life; for "by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of the spirit."

Moreover, the rain, God's blessed and fertilizing rain, will also descend and fill the pools. He will bless the tearful pilgrim by the ministrations of His Spirit within, and from above He will bestow heavenly blessings.

Although the journey of the pilgrims lies through the valley of Baca, they will yet go from strength to strength. This does not mean that they will acquire an increase of strength in themselves, but that, at every step of their wilderness-path, they will learn ever more fully their own utter weakness, and together with this, that their strength is in the Lord. An increased realization of dependence must bring increased strength; only it must always be remembered that the strength is never in us—never in us as a fund on which we can draw, but always in the Lord, and only to be received moment by moment according to the need. This is the blessed lesson the Lord taught Paul when He said to him, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." Supported thus by divine strength, every pilgrim "in Zion appeareth before God." Not one can ever perish by the way. Every child, through whatever trials he may be passing, must reach the Father's house.

"Let cares, like a wild deluge, come]
 And storms of sorrow fall;
 Yet I shall safely reach my home,
 My God, my heaven, my all."

Under the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ, in the enjoyment of heavenly relationship to the Father, in association with Christ, no power on earth nor in hell can hinder a saint from reaching his eternal home.

We learn also, that as praise is the occupation of those that dwell in God's house, so prayer will characterise the pilgrim in the wilderness. In truth, a dependent soul is ever a praying one; but if he prays, he presents not himself, but Christ, as the only efficacious ground on which he can expect the answer to his cries. "Behold, O God," he says, "our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed." How blessed to be sheltered in Christ, to present Him as our security, and to pray that God would look upon the glorious face of His anointed! Yea, it is in the Beloved that we are accepted, and to know it gives boldness and confidence. Next, the praying saint pours out the delights of his own heart in the contemplation of the courts of the Lord. "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in [sit at the threshold of] the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Liberty to look in upon the joys of the Father's house were infinitely preferable to all the pleasures to be found in the abodes of worldlings. And nothing so weans the heart from present things, or so strengthens for the pilgrim path, as the anticipation of the blessedness of our Father's house.

All is based upon three things. First, what God is in Himself. He is a sun and a shield. He is the source of life and light to His people. In His rays of glory as concentrated and displayed in Christ as seated at God's right hand, in Christ glorified, is the fountain of life, and in His light we see light. Secondly, He will give grace and glory. He will give grace for all the journey. We can never be in circumstances of any kind—of trial, sorrow, or temptation—for which His grace will

not be sufficient. And remark, that He will *give* it; and thus, as in Hebrews iv., we have only to come boldly to the throne of grace to receive (not obtain) it. As James also says, He giveth more grace—ever more; for it is grace upon grace out of His inexhaustible fullness, like wave flowing in after wave, one succeeding the other, from the bosom of the ocean. What a provision! Then, too, He will give glory at the end, and the very same glory which He Himself has received of the Father. (John xvii. 22.) Lastly, in His present government, He will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly. Many things the Lord is compelled to withhold from us because of our practical condition; and hence, as we learn here, our capacity of reception is made dependent upon our walk. It is ever in His heart to bestow good things upon us, and hence we need to be exercised to maintain an upright walk, that there may be no hindrance to our reception of His gifts of blessing. (See Psalm lxxxi. 13-16.)

The last verse is almost a burst of adoring wonder; for it is after the consideration of all the details of the blessedness connected with Jehovah's tabernacles, and their effect upon the soul, that the psalmist overflows with admiration in the presence of such ineffable grace, and tells out the emotions of his heart in this one word, "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." And surely we, with more light, and even larger blessing, according to the fuller revelation God has been pleased to make of Himself in Christ, can endorse this utterance of the psalmist with our hearty **AMEN.**

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

CHAPTER i. 10-19.

WE have seen that growth is by the full knowledge of God, and that in Christ we have the full revelation of Him. No doubt this full knowledge is acquired by the Word—not learned therefrom in a dogmatic way so that it is mere knowledge, but the truth is recognised, acknowledged in the soul, and thus God is known; the truth becomes morally part of ourselves, and we grow thereby (compare 2 Peter i. 2-8), and are fruitful in the pathway here. For this pathway we need special strength, because it is a pathway upon earth which takes its character from the place where Christ is, where the hope is laid up for us. It consequently lies in the midst of *His* interests here, which are morally outside of this world, though the objects of them are in it; for in Colossians the saints are not looked at as united to Christ, and made to sit in the heavenly places in Him, but as Christ's body upon earth. Hence we need strength suited to the place in which we are viewed. In Eph. iii. 16 it is in the *inner* man that the saint is strengthened *by the Spirit*, so that he may apprehend the whole range of that glory of which Christ is the centre and the fulness; but here *all* power comes from *the Lord*, who is in the place of power and glory at the right hand of God, while we are in the place of waiting and patience until we appear with Him in glory.

Let us remark also that the being empowered with all power is not to do some great thing,

but for patience and longsuffering with joyfulness while in the pathway of His will here; and also that it is according to the might of that glory where we know the Lord is already set, that we have the support, in order to enable us to shew out the character of Christ where He is not. Now the shewing out of this character flows from the place of acceptance and privilege in which the Father's love has set us, "giving thanks to the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." No doubt we thank Him for the many mercies which come to us day by day: even the hairs of our head are numbered, but this is for another portion—that of the saints in light. The Father's love has *fitted us* for it. It is not so much the portion itself as the Spirit brings it out in Eph. i. 3-6, which is before us, though being in the light it is necessarily according to God's holy nature, but that *we have been fitted* for it. It is this that the apostle presses, as also the deliverance which is ours from the authority of darkness. When the inheritance is actually entered upon by the saints, all the powers of darkness will have been chased away by the glorious kingdom of Christ, and creation itself be delivered from the bondage of corruption. Redemption has taken us out from the sphere of the power of darkness. The Father's love has been manifested in this deliverance, and in translating us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

Note here, again, that the apostle does not open out to the Colossians what their portion was as sons in the Father's love, but he presses upon them that they had been delivered and had been translated. No doubt it was the then heathen world which is specially looked

at here as the place where the darkness of Satan's kingdom held sway; and from this power of heathen darkness they had been delivered and transported at once, not into a system of Jewish ordinances which was of this world, but into the kingdom of the Son while He is sitting upon the Father's throne. When He takes His own kingdom as Son of Man He will clear it of all that offends and does iniquity, and the righteous will then shine forth in the heavenly part of the kingdom—the kingdom of the Father. Now the Son is sitting on the Father's throne, and we know that the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hands. Hence this heavenly part of the kingdom into which the saints are translated is stamped with the character of the Father's love to the Son. It is a holy scene of love rather than of power, though every thing is given to the Son (compare Gen. xxiv. 36), and the Father's grace has given us our portion in it. The authority of darkness which holds men is not now that of heathendom; Satan's sway is exercised in other ways, and deliverance is needed from a Christianised world; for the kingdom of God's dear Son is as much outside the Christianised world as the heathen world. In Him we have the redemption which brings into a new and holy scene of light and love, and the past history of sins is left behind by the forgiveness of all. In that scene Christ is everything. The apostle therefore now brings out the glory of His person. He is the image of the invisible God.

There had been a creation where the first Adam, created in the image of God, was set over the works of God's hands. Satan gained the mastery over the first man, and the image was defaced by sin, and the creature

subjected to vanity and corruption. The Colossians had been under the authority of the darkness by which Satan held sway in a corrupted creation; but though the rights of the Creator had been invaded, and His image defaced in His creature, all is made good in Him who, by the very glory of His person, could be and is the image of the invisible God. The Creator Himself has stepped into the ranks of creation by being born into it as a man. Consequently He takes the highest place of dignity in it, for "excellency of dignity and excellency of power" are the portion of the firstborn. (Comp. Gen. xlix. 3; Ps. lxxxix. 27.) It was always in the mind of God to display Himself to intelligent creatures whom He had made; but in supreme Godhead glory He dwelt in light that no creature, however exalted, could approach. An image in moral likeness to Himself was the only means of this display, and in Genesis i. 26 we have the first intimation that man was the being in whom this image was to be seen. Adam was but the figure of Him who was to come. Here is the marvellous fact that the Creator has taken His place in the creation He made. In Him the holy intelligences in the heavens see their Creator. His wonderful works they had seen in creation, and they shouted for joy as it sprang into being; but Himself they can only see in a man, in Him who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. The creation too which He made is characterised and exists in the power of His own person as creator. There are things on earth and things in the heavens, visible and invisible. In the mind of God, both in earth and heaven, thrones and dominions and principalities and powers were to have their place. Their source was in

the wondrous person of the Son who became man, nor was one to exist independently of Him. All were created by Him and for Him, and all subsist in the power of His person. He made it then that He might take His place in it, and this He has done by being born into it as a man, that He might display God in the varied glories that attach to His person. What a glorious Person, and what a glorious state of things on earth and in heaven, will subsist when He who is the image of the invisible God fills it with the glory of which He is the fulness and display.

Now when He is manifested in this place of excellency and dignity, we shall be manifested with Him in glory. This gives the saints a very special place with Himself, but in order to have them with Him in the displayed glory of the second man there must be a new beginning altogether. He is the Head of the body, the assembly, the firstborn out from the dead. The beginning for the assembly was resurrection; it derives entirely from Him the origin and source in resurrection power of a heavenly company who, as His body, are to be the complement of His glory. This is a new pre-eminence acquired by passing through death that He might bring in a new glory in resurrection. As of old, He had been the fountain of creation glories. It is in this pre-eminence of resurrection glory that He fully takes the place of the image of the invisible God. All that can be ever known of God is revealed in His person, for all the fulness was pleased to dwell in Him.

THE more you make of Christ, the more precious He becomes to the soul, the more you will enjoy His presence and company.

THE MYSTERY.

THE truth of the mystery includes four things: 1st, the revelation of God's counsel concerning Christ as the second Man; 2nd, the relation of the Church to Him as His body and bride; 3rd, the nature of this union; 4th, what the Head is to the body, and to each individual member. In other words, it is the unfolding of the glory of the Head, the grace which has set the Church in relation to Him in that glory, and what the Head is to the body for its present maintenance while on earth.

In the end of the Epistle to the Romans the apostle first mentions the mystery, but does not unfold it. In that epistle the Spirit of God has given that which must precede the knowledge of the mystery—that is, the gospel. Until the gospel is known in its fulness, a soul cannot truly appreciate the truth of the mystery. Paul was a minister of the gospel, and also a minister of the mystery. (Col. i. 23–29.) In the former ministry we get that which meets the need of a sinner, and reveals what God is in grace for man. When it is apprehended by faith, the soul is brought to God in peace and liberty, assured that every question as to sin was settled once and for ever to the satisfaction of God at the cross. The believer is reconciled to God, and is brought into the relationship of a son, knowing God as Father. Being accepted in the Beloved, and having the Spirit of adoption, he enjoys this relationship, crying, Abba, Father. Thus the conscience and heart are perfectly set free, the soul is at home in the presence of God,

and needs no more to be occupied with itself and its needs. Such an one is free indeed, and being thus delivered from all his fears and cares, is in a condition to be occupied with what is outside the range of his own necessities. He can now be engaged with the glories of Christ, and God's counsels and purposes concerning Christ, and for His glory. So then, when the truth in the Epistle to the Romans is really known, the saint is prepared to go on to the apprehension of the mystery. This we get developed in the epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians.

First of all, we get in Ephesians i. the purpose of God concerning Christ as the second Man, the man of God's purpose (Psalm viii.), and the power which has already wrought in Him. In Ephesians i. 10 we learn that God, according to His own good pleasure, has purposed, in the administration of the fulness of the times (that is, in the millennial age), to bring everything in heaven and upon earth under the headship of Christ as the second Man. If the question be asked, "What is man?" the Spirit of God at once turns, not to the first man, not to one of Adam's race, but to Him who is the second Man, the One in whom all the purposes of God centre. It is wonderful to see that God's purpose gives *man* this place of universal headship over all creation, and puts everything in heaven as well as on the earth under His dominion. And Christ will take this place, not simply in His divine right as Son of God, but in His acquired glory as Son of man; for God's purpose was that the church should co-inherit with Him, which would have been impossible if He did not take the place as man. We get in verse 11, "In whom we have obtained an inheritance." We do not yet see

the full accomplishment of this purpose of God, but we do see the earnest and guarantee of it in the power which has already wrought in Christ, in raising Him from the dead, and setting Him even now at God's right hand in the heavenly places, far above every principality and authority and power and dominion, and every name named, not only in this age, but also in that to come, "and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body." We do not yet see all things put under Him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, exalted to His place, and crowned with glory and honour. He is manifestly the One whom God delights to honour. How should the knowledge of this preserve us from all we find in the world around us, where Christ is rejected, and where we see man exalting himself in every way, man glorying in man! The principle of the world is, "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself." We know that this exaltation of man will find its full development in the manifestation of "the man of sin," who will exalt himself above all that is called God, and will be destroyed in the judgment of that day, when all the pride of man will be brought low, and when the Lord alone will be exalted.

2. In the next place we learn in the revelation of the mystery how God, in His most wonderful purpose and grace, has associated believers of the present dispensation with Christ, in this place of honour and glory, as His body and His bride. In this place, when risen and exalted, He is given to be head over all things *to the church*, which is His body. It does not say head *over* the church, but head over all things *to* the

church. Surely nothing could more fully display the riches of God's grace than that He should be pleased to associate the church (that is, all saints from Pentecost until the Lord comes) with Christ, the Man of His purpose, His own blessed Son, the One in whom is all His pleasure. Yet so it is. Every believer indwelt by the Spirit is united to Christ, the living Head, as a member of His body, and is regarded by the Lord as a part of Himself. The church is thus the fulness of Him who filleth all in all, the fulness of the mystic Man, the subject of God's purpose—that is, Christ the Head and the church His body making *the* Christ, as it says in 1 Cor. xii. 12, one perfect man according to God's counsel, which will be manifested as such in the day of glory. This is the force of the expression, "His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

The first intimation of this great truth came out in connection with Saul's conversion. The Lord, speaking from heaven, said to Saul, who was persecuting His saints, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?" Though the Lord was in heaven, His body was on earth. The words he addressed to Saul expressed the perfect oneness, the union which existed between the Lord in heaven and the saints on earth. Saul learnt that in persecuting the saints he was persecuting the body of Christ, that the Lord regards every saint, however feeble he may be, as a member of Himself. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is *the Christ*, for by one Spirit are we all baptized into *one body* . . . and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.) The Christ

in this passage includes Christ and the church, making the one mystic man. Nothing like the figure of the body could express the most intimate union which exists between Christ and His people, and the character of the love and interest and care the Lord has toward and in His people. No man ever yet hated his *own flesh*; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as also Christ the assembly, for we are members of His body. (Eph. v. 29, 30.) As a member of the body of Christ, every saint is a partaker of the joy and blessing and glory of the Head. "We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in *Christ*," *i.e.*, we are blessed in being made partakers with Christ in all that God the Father has given to Him—our hope, therefore, is the full realization of this with Him in glory.

The Spirit is the *bond* and *power* of this union. "We have all been made to drink of the one Spirit." As we walk in the Spirit this union becomes a practical reality; thus we have the mind of the Head, we are governed by the will of the Head, we are sustained by the power of the Head, we are nourished from the Head. Those thus walking keep the unity of the Spirit, and so become visibly one company, thinking the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, and thus giving forth one united testimony to Christ.

3. It is of the first importance to consider the *nature* of this union. Some have taught that Christ by incarnation united Himself with men, that is, men in the flesh, and so exalted and dignified the human race. Others have supposed that man such as he is by nature could be united to Christ in resurrection. Both of these things would be utterly impossible; it would

involve the union of holiness and sin, it would be an incongruous union. The true nature of our union with Christ comes out in the epistle to the Colossians, where we see that we must be of His life and nature in order to be united to Him. As natural men alive in this world we have died with Christ; in the status and condition of the natural man we have ceased to exist. "Ye are dead." Circumcised with the circumcision, not done with hands, we have put off the body of the flesh. It was impossible for Christ to take sinful flesh into union with Himself, and it was impossible to change the flesh; therefore there was nothing else to be done but to put it off as that which God has repudiated and judged in the cross. In Colossians it is not only *sin* in the flesh which is judged, but the flesh itself, with all its pretensions to wisdom and religiousness and natural powers and will. All that man naturally glories in, all is set aside in the death of Christ as being utterly unprofitable to God. In Christ risen we see man according to God. He is the only man whom God acknowledges—in resurrection He is the beginning of a new race, of a new creation. The believer is alive now in the life of the risen Man. "Christ is our life," and in this life he is identified with Christ as risen. Being risen with Christ, I have left behind the life and condition of the first man; and being identified with Christ risen, I am of that new race, of the new creation of which He is the beginning and Head, and I belong to His place above.

The soul accepting this, the truth as it is in Jesus has put off the old man (Adam) and put on the new man (Christ); he has repudiated what is of himself as a natural man, he finds his all in Christ. "Christ

is all and in all." It is, therefore, in the new man and, on resurrection ground, that I am united to Christ; I am quickened together with Him and risen with Him. The figure which exemplifies the nature of this union is Adam and Eve. Adam fell into a deep sleep, the figure of Christ's death, and God took out of his side a rib, out of which he formed the woman, and when Adam awoke presented her to him as his wife. Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." She was fit to be his wife because she was of his own nature; she was taken out of himself, she was his own flesh. No one can understand the mystery who does not see that the saint is a part of Christ—that what he is before God as a saint he has entirely derived from the second man, the last Adam; he is bone of His bones, and flesh of His flesh. What was derived from the first Adam, the sinful man, could not be united to Christ. It was not until Christ had borne the judgment of the first man—and so terminated that man as far as His saints are concerned—and had taken His place in resurrection that He became the Head of the body. (Eph. i. 19-23; Col. i. 18.)

What a wonderful organization the church would be if it were walking in the power of this union—if each member were walking in faith, holding the Head, a company on earth maintained in the power of the Head, and governed by the will of the Head, and expressing the mind of the Head. Were this so, that which was part of the Lord's intention as to the church would have been fulfilled; viz., that His body should represent Him, and exhibit His moral beauties in the

place where He has been rejected. And if the church as a whole has failed as to this, this does not diminish our responsibility and privilege. It is in proportion as each one is holding the Head, that he is able in his own sphere to exhibit the mind and maintain the glory of the Head. Holding the Head would imply the acknowledgment of the Lord in this relationship, deferring to Him in everything, seeking His mind, being subject to His will, and being dependent upon His power. This involves the repudiation of all that is of man, the practical application of the truth that we have put off the body of the flesh, and that Christ is all.

4. In Colossians we get what the Head is to the body, as in Ephesians we get what the body is to the Head. "In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"—all that God is, is revealed and presented to us, and is for us in Christ our living Head. What a wonderful thought for our hearts to be occupied with! In Him, who is our Head, dwells all the fulness of the Godhead! What can we need more, save faith, to draw from these inexhaustible resources? Surely the man of this world, with his intellect, wisdom, or religion, can add nothing to the one who is filled up in Christ! Such an one is independent of philosophy and ritualism, and if holding the Head is proof against its seduction. It is no wonder, when the apostle recognised the dangers that threatened the saints, that he should so earnestly desire that they should be fully assured of the truth of the mystery of God, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In Christ we not only have everything which makes us complete as to our standing before God, but also everything which we need for our life and service here. We want to

learn more of the fulness we have in the Head, and by faith to draw out of His fulness all we need to live the life of faith, and to represent Him in this world. "We are the circumcision who worship God in [or by] the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have *no confidence in the flesh.*" As we learn experimentally the weakness and worthlessness of all that is of the flesh, so we appreciate the fact that we are filled up in Christ, that Christ is all. "From which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." All the supply for the body comes down from the Head. See also Eph. iv. 15, 16. Before we can walk as those who are holding the Head, and can practically appropriate the fulness that is in the Head, we must have learnt what it is to put off the body of the flesh by the death of Christ.

It is not here a question of what is in itself evil: there is sin in the flesh, but there is much beside. There is in the flesh, or in the natural man, what we might glory in; certainly no one would glory in sin. In Phil. iii. Paul speaks of what he had in the flesh in which as a man he could glory. There is the will and energy and strength of the flesh; there are the emotions, feelings, and sentiments of the flesh—that which can be acted upon by a natural religion. But all that is of the natural man has been tried and found wanting, and proved to be unprofitable to God, and all has been judged in the cross; and, in receiving the testimony of God to Christ and His death, the believer accepts this judgment of the flesh, and of all that belongs to it, and so puts off the body of the flesh. He repudiates all that springs from the flesh, and lives by faith of the Son of

God ; he is subject to the will of the Head ; he has the mind of the Head ; he receives grace and power from the Head ; and so the life which is in the Head is exhibited in the members of the body—"Christ lives in me." If this were so with each member, we should all be united together practically, as having one mind, that is, the mind of Christ ; we should act in perfect harmony as governed by one will—the will of the Head ; we should have common interests as being one body in Christ, and seeking only His interests. In order to this, there must be the daily application to ourselves of the truth of the cross, "Always bearing about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body"—the mortifying of our members on the earth.

We see then in Colossians that the aspect of the mystery presented is not so much what we are in Christ, but Christ *in us* as life, and the practical results of this: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye *in Him*: rooted and built up in Him." Philosophy and human religion can only cultivate and develop the flesh ; they cannot reveal Christ and what we have in Him, nor form Christ in us, which is the practical object of Christianity. We see too how the church derives everything from Christ, and is thus independent of all that is of man.

May God grant to us not only that we may understand the truth of the mystery, but that we may more fully realize by faith, and in the power of the Spirit, our union with Christ. We know that every believer is united by the Spirit to Christ the Head, but how little we understand and realize this union!

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

● CHAPTER i. 1-7.

WHATEVER the state of things on the earth God never leaves Himself without a witness. He may punish His people on account of their unfaithfulness and sins, and He may permit them to be carried into captivity, and to be enslaved under the power of their enemies, and yet, in the midst of the darkness by which they are surrounded, He will rekindle the torch of His truth, in testimony to Himself and to His faithfulness, and as encouragement to those who cleave or turn to Him in their sorrows. He will moreover cause those whom He has used to chastise His people to know that His people are still the objects of His care and love; and that they themselves, however seemingly exalted and mighty, are subject and accountable to Him.

The first three verses of our chapter are the introduction to the book, and they explain how it had come to pass that Daniel and his companions are found in connection with the court of the king of Babylon. The reference, as may be easily seen by turning to the historical accounts in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, is to the first siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. In Chronicles, after the mention of the accession of Jehoiakim to the throne, through the instrumentality of Necho, king of Egypt, it says, "Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the Lord to

Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon." (2 Chron. xxxvi. 6, 7.) But neither here, nor in Kings, is it mentioned that there were other captives at this time, and it is quite possible that this short introductory statement includes, in its purport, the subsequent actings of the king of Babylon until Jerusalem was destroyed, and the princes, the mighty men of valour, together with the mass of the people, had been deported to Babylon. (See 2 Kings xxiv. 12-16, xxv. 1-21.) It is therefore the general position which is here defined. The Lord had given Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, and so completely had He abandoned His house in Jerusalem, that He permitted the sacred vessels of the temple, profaned as they had been by the sins of the kings of Judah, to be carried into the land of Shinar,* to the house of Nebuchadnezzar's God. God's candlestick at Jerusalem was thus for the time removed; and it was judicially removed, because it had ceased to give forth divine light for guidance and blessing amid the moral darkness of this world.

In the next paragraph (*vv.* 3-7) the remnant, or its representation, is introduced. After that Hezekiah had received the embassy from the king of Babylon, and, gratified by the attention thus shown to him, had exhibited to them all the treasures of his kingdom, Isaiah was sent to Hezekiah with this message: "Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shall beget, shall they take away;

* For the significance of this statement the reader should consult Zechariah v.

and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." (Isaiah xxxix. 5-7.) The opening verses of our chapter reveal the fulfilment of Isaiah's prediction; but what we desire to call attention to is, that, in fulfilling His own word in judgment, God remembered mercy, for it is out of these very descendants of Hezekiah that He raised up witnesses for Himself in the midst of Babylon's idolatrous corruptions.

In permitting Nebuchadnezzar to carry them away as captives, God was accomplishing His own purpose; but Nebuchadnezzar, having obtained power over them, sought to make them serve his will. The consequence was, that a conflict immediately arose between the thoughts of God and the thoughts of the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar desired to adorn his palace with those of his captives "in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans." (*v.* 4.) The world is ever ready to make the people of God its servants, and to derive light from their knowledge; but it cannot tolerate them, if they maintain fidelity to their God in obedience to His word, and in a holy separation from evil. The king, therefore, would have these captives fed with his own meat, and to drink of his own wine, that, nourished from his resources for three years, they might at the end thereof stand in his presence. (*v.* 5.) He would have them, in one word, to cease being Jews, and to become Chaldeans; and to mingle with their new religion the light they had received from the oracles of God. Such is the origin of philosophy even in Christian times—that

philosophy, against which Paul earnestly warns us as being "after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Col. ii. 8.)

It is in connection with this command of Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are brought into prominence. (*v.* 6.) Their very names, when understood, proclaimed to whom they belonged,* and the character of their God; and the prince of the eunuchs, instinctively feeling that such names would not suit his master's court, gave them others, all of which were more or less connected with Babylon's idols. (*v.* 7.)

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

1 SAMUEL xxv. 31; LUKE xxiii. 42, 43.

A VERY striking parallel may be drawn between Abigail and the malefactor. Abigail's prayer is, "When the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord"—that is, when David should sit upon the throne of Israel—"then remember thine handmaid." The malefactor prayed, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." David answered the petition of Abigail at once, and accepted her person, and, immediately on the death of Nabal, espoused her as his wife; thus making her his companion in rejection, while waiting for the kingdom. In like manner the Lord went far beyond the expectation of the crucified thief, and said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in

* Daniel means "God's judge"; Hananiah, "whom Jehovah graciously gave"; Mishael, "who (is) as God"; and Azariah, "whom Jehovah aids."

Paradise." Hereafter he should share in the glory of the kingdom, would be, indeed, one of the countless multitude who will be displayed in glory with our blessed Lord at His appearing and kingdom; but meanwhile the Lord would have him with Himself in Paradise, where he would wait with Christ for the time which his soul had desired. In both cases, therefore, the response to the prayer went far beyond the requests. And such is grace—divine grace—which loves to go beyond our desires, and to bless according to the heart of the Giver rather than according to the expressed need. As an illustration of the way in which Paul had comprehended this truth, it may be noticed that he prayed that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would grant to the Ephesian saints, *according to the riches of His glory*, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, &c. What an encouragement to open our mouths wide in prayer!

II.

JOHN xv. 5.

It is, of course, true that we can do nothing "without" Christ; but taking the sentence in this way by itself it scarcely conveys the force of the Lord's words. The context makes all plain: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." So in the previous verse: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." If a branch, therefore, is severed from the tree, it is necessarily fruitless; and, in like manner, if a believer does not

abide in Christ, is spiritually disconnected from Him, he will bear no fruit. No doubt the Lord here distinguishes absolutely two classes; those who abide in Him, as those who are really in vital connection with Himself; and those who abide not in Him, as in verse 6, as those who, without life, are only connected with Him by profession. Still it is permissible to point out that even a really converted soul will be fruitless unless found abiding in Christ. What abiding in Him signifies may be gathered from the comparison He employs. A branch is absolutely dependent on the vine, and lives of the vine's life. It is the sap that flows out from the vine into the branch that causes it to bear fruit. So also a believer is fruitful when he is in the maintenance of entire dependence upon Christ, and when He is living of His life, when Christ in him, as his life, flows out through him in his daily walk and ways in service and testimony. If, therefore, anything comes between Christ and his soul, interrupts his dependence, and he is thus "without"* Christ, he can do nothing.

III.

1 PETER ii. 4, 5.

THE question as to whether "coming" to Christ, in verse 4, refers to our first coming to Him as the Saviour, can be best answered by a consideration of the context, and of the character of the truth presented in the passage. The words, "to whom coming," follow, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," and this connection supposes, we judge, that those who "come" already know the Lord. And then it is to be observed

* In his French version, J. N. D. translates, "Séparés de moi."

that the "coming" is not to Him as Saviour, or as Lord, but to Him as a foundation, a Living Stone, as the foundation of the spiritual house which is composed of those who have become "living stones" through faith in Him, the Son of the living God, who, as risen out of death in the power of resurrection, is the rock on which, according to His word to Peter, He builds His church. (Matthew xvi. 16-18.) In support of this interpretation, the meaning of the word "coming" may be remarked. It is the word often used in the Hebrews (see, for example, chapters iv. 18; vii. 25, &c.), and signifies "approach." It is quite true that it is only by contact with Him who is a living stone, that believers become living stones; only it must be remembered that the apostle is presenting to those, who had once been Jews what is now God's house, and who are now God's priests, in contrast with the temple and the priests of a dispensation which had for Christians for ever passed away. This explains the reason of Peter's solitary allusion to the church in the aspect of the house; and it shows, at the same time, the vast importance of understanding the truth of our being living stones, and what it is to be built up on Him who is the Living Stone, "a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

THE night of this world is the absence of the Sun of Righteousness.

THE waking soul sees in the horizon the Morning Star, the dawn along its edge, and waits for day.

THE DIVINE SHOULDERS.

WHENEVER used symbolically in Scripture, the term "shoulder" signifies strength. Isaiah thus, speaking of the birth of the Messiah, says, "The government shall be upon His shoulder" (chapter ix. 6); that is, the Messiah will maintain His righteous government in divine power according to all that He is as "The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Two or three illustrations of this significance of the divine shoulders in relation to the people of God will be both instructive and profitable.

Take first the instance in Luke xv., where, if used in the parable of the lost sheep, the application can be to no other than the Good Shepherd. When the lost sheep is found, the Shepherd, who is also the Owner, "layeth it on His shoulders, rejoicing." It may be questioned whether the twofold joy in this parable, the joy of finding as well as the joy of reception, has been sufficiently prominent. But the point now to be noticed is, that the moment He, who came to seek and to save that which is lost, has succeeded in His quest, He, in the joy of His heart, lays it on "His own" shoulders, for He has found His lost sheep. This surely sets forth the fact that He, who in His unutterable love gave His life for the sheep, undertakes for them in all their pilgrim journey; that all that He is, is engaged to carry them through, every step of the way, until the home is reached; that they are borne up and

along in all their journey by divine power. How blessed it is to remember it! There are seasons when we are oppressed with the sense of our feebleness, or deterred by the display of the enemy's power around and against us. In this parable the Lord supplies us with the antidote to all our fears. He reminds us that He has laid us on His own shoulders, and that He would have us repose there in the sense of perfect security.

Of a similar nature is the comfort ministered by Jehovah Himself to His people, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." (Chapter xlvi. 3, 4.) It is the same precious truth, that from the infancy of Israel, when God called His son out of Egypt, He bore and He carried him. The additional thought of deliverance here given, moreover, greatly enhances the blessed instruction, inasmuch as it reminds us of the perils of the path and the opposition of the enemy. But what of this if we are borne and carried on the divine shoulders, and delivered by God's almighty strength? If at all in the enjoyment of this assurance, we can confidently say with the apostle, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" This then is the truth as to all our pathway, from the time we were first found until we stand within the portals of the Father's house—that we are carried on the shoulders of Omnipotence.

Another striking exemplification of it may yet be cited. In "the blessing, wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death," he said of Benjamin, "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him; *and the Lord* shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders." (Deut. xxxiii. 12.) What a home for the feeble saint! There safety and protection may be continually enjoyed, and enjoyed by him as the object of divine affections, as the beloved of the Lord. Benjamin was the beloved of the Lord, and he dwelt in the place of eternal strength; John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, reposed on the breast of his Lord, in the place of everlasting love, and the One on whose bosom he leaned was He who upheld all things by the word of His *power*. Well might we be lost in adoring wonder as we contemplate this blessed place of rest, which God in His grace has provided for the feeblest of His own!

So far the divine shoulders are rather for the wilderness journey; but turning now to the book of Exodus, another aspect will be discovered. In the directions given for the holy garments of glory and beauty for Aaron, it was commanded that the names of the children of Israel should be engraven on two onyx stones, and that these two stones were to be put upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel; "and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial." (Chap. xxviii. 9-12.) It will be remembered that the names were also to be engraved upon the twelve precious stones of the breast-plate; but our

attention may now be confined, in pursuance of our subject, to the teaching connected with their being placed on the shoulders of the high priest.

The fundamental idea of the high priest is, that he acted as the representative of the people before God, but as their representative in virtue of propitiation. Thus Christ entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption; He entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. (Hebrews ix. 12-24.) If then we interpret the typical fact mentioned, we learn that our blessed Lord, as the great high Priest, bears up His people—in virtue of His sacrifice—before God with divine strength, that He maintains them there according to His own claims in all the perfection and power of His own acceptability to God. This is easily comprehended, however wonderful it may seem, when it is borne in mind that Christ in this character is a representative Person, and that consequently His claim to be there is also our claim. What an unfailing encouragement is thus ministered to us in all our felt weakness! Let us then ever look up to Him who has condescended to take up this office on our behalf, and continually remind ourselves that He has also placed us on His own shoulders in heaven.

It is most likely, when the bride in the Canticles says, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm" (chap. viii. 6), that reference is made to the twofold presentation of the people before God by the high priest; for there is the same combination of heart and shoulders, as is found so frequently in the

Scripture. One or two examples may create a desire to enter more fully into the subject. What are the everlasting arms, which are underneath God's people (Deut. xxxiii. 27), but the union of almighty strength and infinite love for their sustainment and protection? When moreover the apostle cries, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ"? what does he mean but that there is not a single creature in the universe with sufficient strength to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?

We see, then, that all that God is, whether considered in the aspect of His might or His love, yea, in all His various attributes, is engaged on behalf of His people for their safety, for their protection and succour, while passing through the wilderness; that our blessed Lord undertakes for them all through their journey, Himself carrying us, even as Jehovah carried Israel of old; and that, in addition to bearing us up and onward until He has brought us home, He is unremittingly engaged in presenting us before God encompassed with the various beauties of the precious stones, emblems of His own perfections and excellencies, with all the strength of His own undying love. Whether therefore the wilderness path or our representative place in heaven is considered, the teaching of the divine shoulders is full of consolation and encouragement.

No testimony, no preaching, no teaching, even if the matter of it be all right, is right teaching, when the soul is not first filled for itself from God.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

CHAPTER i. 8-21.

THE question now raised for Daniel and his companions was, whether for the sake of the world's favour and advancement, they would yield to the king's command. The answer had already been given: "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." (*v.* 8.) As a Jew, obedient to the word of God, it was impossible for Daniel to eat the food of the Gentiles. Both the fat and the blood of those animals which were permitted to be eaten, were forbidden; and it was only of the clean beasts and birds that a Jew was allowed to partake. (See Leviticus vii. 22-27, chaps. xi. xxii.) Unless, therefore, Daniel and his companions were prepared to surrender their faith, and to renounce the word of their God, they could not accept the royal provision. And there is another instruction—if an application may be made to ourselves. The food of the world, that in which man as man, alienated from God as he is, finds his strength and sustenance, is ever destructive of the spiritual life of the Christian; and if he would be a true Nazarite, and walk in the path of holy separation unto God, he must ever turn aside from the wine, the joys of earth. The apostle thus writes, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." (Ephes. v. 18.) In the attitude of Daniel we

have then an example for all believers ; and the closer it is followed, the more will they enjoy the conscious favour and blessing of God ; and as morally dead to things here, they will the more fully realize their true portion in Christ, in the place where He is.

We now read, as explanatory of what follows, that "God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs." (v. 9.) Again we are reminded of the similar case of Joseph. Sold into Egypt, becoming an inmate of Potiphar's house, "he found grace" in his master's sight. But, like Daniel, refusing the world's food and wine, he, unlike Daniel, was cast into prison, where the Lord also "gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison." When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Hence it was that the prince of eunuchs, notwithstanding his fear of his lord the king, and the possible danger to his own life, granted through Melzar the request of Daniel, that he and his companions might be tested for ten days with pulse to eat and water to drink, instead of the king's food and wine. God was with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and hence it was that, at the end of the ten days, "their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." (v. 15.) God had sustained and prospered His servants in their path of fidelity to His will, in keeping themselves undefiled amid the Babylonish seductions and corruptions by which they were surrounded. Even Melzar could not gainsay that they had flourished on their simple regimen, and henceforward he gave them pulse.

The reflection may be permitted, that there are many

of the people of God who can walk in the narrow path of devoted discipleship as long as they are in the enjoyment of the fellowship of saints, and in the midst of happy spiritual influences. But it is sometimes seen that such, when transported into a worldly circle, are apt to fall in with the practices and habits of their new society, and thus to lose their distinctness of walk, even if their testimony be not altogether extinguished. It is therefore full of refreshment and encouragement to ponder the spectacle presented by these four children of Judah. Deprived of all the privileges of the temple, the temple itself destroyed, themselves captives at the mercy of a heathen monarch, plied, too, with every sort of alluring temptation, they maintained the Nazarites' place of true separation through obedience to the word of God. Doubtless it was the faith and energy of Daniel that acted on his companions, and led them to follow him in the path of God's will; but if so, the others were willing to follow, and all four present a striking proof of the all-sufficiency of God's grace to sustain His servants in the most unfavourable circumstances that could possibly be imagined.

The significant statement follows: "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." (*v.* 17.) "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant." This principle ever abides; and it is seen in all dispensations. It is first laid down by God Himself in the familiar words, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? . . . For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice

and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." (Genesis xviii. 17-19.) It appears also in the prayer of the apostle Paul for the Colossians, "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." (Col. i. 9.) It is abundantly plain, in other words, that God gave these four "children" knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom because of their separation in heart and life from the defiling evils around. It is indeed ever true, that the nearer we are practically to the Lord, the more fully He communicates to us of His mind; and remark, that it is not only what is generally understood as "His mind," but it is in all learning and wisdom. The students of modern days, even Christian students, are too often betrayed into the thought, that for the acquisition of human "learning and wisdom" they are dependent upon their own industry and power. The consequence is, that the years of their student-life are often marked by spiritual declension, if not open backsliding. The example of the four "children" might well teach another lesson.*

At the close of the verse Daniel is singled out from his fellows; for we are told, undoubtedly in view of his special work and mission, that he had understanding in all visions and dreams. Thereby, too, we are taught, that in all the circumstances and experiences through which God leads His people, He is forming them as vessels for His service. On the human side it was a calamity that had befallen Daniel; on God's side, as is plainly

* The well-known saying of Luther, although he referred to the Scriptures, might be profitably recalled in this connection, "To have prayed well is to study well."

revealed, this seeming calamity was but the instrumentality which He had chosen to form Daniel for his mission to carry God's testimony into the court of the mighty Gentile monarch—God's testimony concerning the powers which He had allowed to supersede His own direct government of the earth through Israel, and Jerusalem as His dwelling-place and throne. But it is faith alone that can rise up beyond all secondary causes, and connect everything with the hand of God, and at the same time peacefully rest in Him, assured of His infinite wisdom and love, and that the issue of all events will be according to His own perfect will.

The next three verses (18-20) give the result before the king of the training to which the four children, as well as the others selected, had been subjected. All alike were brought into the royal presence, and Nebuchadnezzar himself examined the students of his college: he "communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore they stood before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." (*v.v.* 19, 20.) They might have each thus adopted the language of the Psalmist: "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." (Psalm cxix. 98-100.) Would that the lesson might be laid to heart by all the young Christians of the present day!

The chapter closes with the remark, that "Daniel

continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus." He lived, therefore, to see the fall of the colossal empire of which Nebuchadnezzar was the monarch; he served under Darius the Mede, and witnessed the advent of Cyrus, of whom Isaiah had prophesied more than one hundred and fifty years before (see Isaiah xlv. 28, xlv. 1-3, etc.) as he who should be instrumental in the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple. It should, however, be observed that this last verse is only a general statement that Daniel lived to see the accession of Cyrus; for in chap. x. 1 we find that he received special revelations from God "in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia." How far he may have survived that date is not mentioned; but the one given makes it certain that he lived to a good old age, exceeding, at any rate, the limits of threescore years and ten.

"THOU ART THE SAME!"

HEBREWS I

THERE can be no change in a divine Person. Though all creatures are liable to change, and there be variation in everything around us, there is One who is the same,* the Eternal Self-existing One, and He is presented to us in a most wonderful manner in this passage.

I wish briefly to trace the glory of our Lord, as presented to us in this chapter; by no means to pretend to unfold this part of the word, but to call attention to the unchanging nature of Him who alone can say, "I am," the eternal Jehovah, our blessed Lord Jesus.

* Compare Deut. xxxii. 39: "I am He." This is a true title of the self-existent God.

The passage begins with eternity (that is, begins by speaking of the past ages), passes right through time, and ends with eternity again, when the created firmament shall have been folded up as a vesture by Him who created it; but He remains the same.

We cannot imagine eternity; and He who never had a beginning, and who dwells in inaccessible light, is far beyond our ken. Though He has been pleased to reveal Himself to us as Father, as to the Deity itself it is far beyond us. God is God, whatever people may say, and we receive by faith the revelation of His eternal being. We remember the answer given by a poor preacher at Cambridge, at the beginning of this century, to some young mathematicians who asked him for a definition of eternity. He replied that he did not feel able to give one; but in return asked them, What would be the length of a pendulum which, instead of marking seconds, should vibrate only once in a century? This of course could be calculated, but we should be as far from apprehending eternity as ever.

Much has been said of the divine glory shining in the first four verses of Hebrews i. The Son has appeared, has spoken, and has set Himself down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having made by Himself the purification of sins. The Creator and Sustainer* of the universe has appeared and spoken, and gone up on high.

Let us briefly follow the wonderful order of the passages quoted by the Holy Spirit, in which the Son's

* "Upholding all things by the word of His power." I believe it is important, and has been carefully insisted upon, that there is as *constant an exercise of force* needed in what people call general laws (gravitation, &c.) as in the calling forth of the worlds out of nothing.

glory is traced through time; that is, through scenes which vary and differ from one another as far as possible, but through which the glory of the divine Person, who is ever the Same, shines with unchanging lustre.

In the fifth verse the second Psalm is quoted, and we have our blessed Lord's entry into this world; and I believe that the second quotation in this fifth verse (1 Chronicles xvii. 13) refers to His most blessed path upon earth. The subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews differs no doubt from that of the Gospel of John, but we may compare with adoration the account given to us of Jesus in this world, unknown to the world that He had made, misunderstood even by His own, and often alone; then we may enter with reverence into the meaning of the words, "I will be to Him for Father, and He shall be to me for Son." It is the *character* here of His most holy obedient walk, and I believe we may compare for the spirit of it 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18, where Jehovah-Shaddai promises to be for Father to those who are separate from evil, and that they shall be to Him for sons and daughters.

Thus we see the blessed Lord, in His humble path upon earth, always the same, surrounded by infidelity, selfishness, and false religion, walking thus with Him who said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The sixth verse carries us further; for none can doubt that, as to its full accomplishment, it is still future. No doubt in Luke ii. the whole heavenly host adored the babe in Bethlehem, but the ninety-seventh and following Psalms speak of the introduction of the First-born into the world, when the kingdom shall be set

up: it is the habitable world (the *οικουμένη*). I would in passing ask my readers if they study the Psalms. Nothing could be more glorious than the manner in which the majesty of the Lord is presented from Psalm xcvi. to Psalm ciii., the circle of His glory becoming wider and wider as He advances (the First-born brought into the habitable earth). To use a feeble illustration, I have seen the whole range of the Alps illuminated by the rising sun. First, the central peaks catching the deep crimson light, then mountain after mountain receiving the glow, and finally the whole country crowned with splendour. So in these Psalms the Jews are called, then the Gentiles, then the whole earth is brought into blessing; all the angels of God adore Him. How different the scene to that in which He walked in deep humility, taking the lowest place of all! Yes, indeed; but He is the same.

The 8th and 9th verses bring us into the kingdom itself, and the millennial reign. The forty-fifth Psalm reveals to us the King reigning in righteousness and peace, Jerusalem blessed and clothed in regal splendour, and the faithful associated with Him who is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Oh, wondrous grace that could bring men into such an association! But is there any change here in Him? None. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The same divine glory, which faith saw when He was humbled upon earth, is seen in Him when He reigns in peace and power—when the King's daughter, all glorious within, stands at the head of the rejoicing earth.

And now we come to the end of the millennium; and the quotation from the hundred and second Psalm needs to be carefully considered. It is well known that

in this magnificent passage there is a dialogue, and that Jehovah answers to Him who descended even to the sufferings of the cross. In the 24th verse of the Psalm, the answer is given to Him who could speak as He did from the midst of His sufferings, and here we have the divine testimony to His deity: "Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." Here then again we look into eternity; the course of time shall run out, the kingdom be delivered up, the very heavens folded up by the Almighty hand that spread them out, and it is said of Him who shall change them, "Thou art the same."

The Holy Spirit directs us to Him seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, in the thirteenth verse; and may our hearts be kept in true stability by the One who changes not; the Same here in rejection, the Same in millennial glory; the Same upon the cross, the Same in the folding up of the firmament; Jesus Christ, the Same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever! E. L. B.

LET us beware in ordinary things of the first step that would separate us from *inward holiness*. Devotedness is inward. It is a secret between His servant and Himself, though the external effects are seen by others. The believer may be called upon to deny himself for the service of his Saviour in things that are not bad in themselves, but this act is accomplished *inwardly*.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

CHAPTER i. 19-27.

THIS truth leads to the development of another aspect of the great scheme in which the glory of Christ as the image of the invisible God is to be displayed. Not only were the things on earth and things in heaven created by Him, but sin having entered by the fall, reconciliation must be effected before the created earth and heavens can be the scene of displayed glory according to the mind of God. In Israel God had foreshadowed His purpose for the glory of Christ, in a tabernacle which was the pattern of things in the heavens, and which was anointed to be the sphere of the administration of the anointed priest in his garments of glory and beauty. The priesthood broke down on the very first day of its exercise (Lev. x.), so that Aaron was never allowed to enter into the Holiest in his high-priestly garments. It was after this break down that the day of atonement or reconciliation was introduced. (Lev. xvi.) Nothing ever did or could stand on the ground of creature responsibility. We have seen Adam, created in the image of God, lending his ear to Satan, and instead of representing God, gone from Him and fallen. Here we see the priests failing entirely as to the holiness that became the house of God.

It is no longer, then, the question of creating a world, or forming a sphere for the display of glory, but of reconciling where sin has entered and defiled. This

reconciliation has two aspects. The creation must be cleared of the defilement of sin, so that God can have rest in His own creation, and man must be brought back to God, according to the righteousness as well as the holy love of His own blessed nature. None could effect this but that One in whom the Godhead fulness was pleased to dwell. Therein lay the value of that work of expiation of which the blood of His cross was the witness. In Him, who shed that blood as Man, Godhead fulness dwelt. Hence God has been glorified perfectly in respect of sin, and peace has been made. The blood which was carried into the holiest on the day of atonement was for the eye of God, it was to satisfy the righteousness and holiness of God. When that was accomplished, then it was applied to the tabernacle and its vessels. Thus reconciliation was effected in the holiest where the priest stood as representing a people to be reconciled, and the patterns of things in the heavens were reconciled on the ground that God had been perfectly glorified. It is on the basis of this reconciliation that God will be all in all in a new heaven and new earth which will be filled by Christ with redemption glory. The millennium, when Christ will appear in glory and we appear with Him, will be the time of bringing in this power of reconciliation for the things on earth and things in heaven. But Christians do not wait for that day, they have been reconciled. You "now hath He reconciled," says the apostle, "in the body of His flesh through death." We are brought to God; not merely cleared from all charge, but according to the delight of His own holy nature. By means of the death of Christ the flesh, where sin acted, has been left behind for faith. Christ having

gone through death, now lives before God in a new and glorious state where flesh has no place. Reconciliation, then, brings those, once alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, to God according to that new state in which Christ now lives to Him.

Let us note here again that the apostle does not open out to the Colossians the spiritual blessings with which the saints are blessed in Christ as he does to the Ephesians; but insists on the present reconciliation, by death, of the person of the believer, in order to his being presented holy, unblameable, and irreproachable in His sight. But here an "if" is introduced, not to cast a doubt upon the reconciliation—there is no flaw there, for all has been effected according to Godhead fulness. Presentation in glory is now in question, and none of us have yet come to that moment. Hence there is the possibility that with some it may have been profession only, anon with joy receiving the word and having no root. It was the tendency which the apostle saw in the Colossians to be beguiled by the philosophic or religious elements of the world, which led him to warn them to abide in faith, and not to be moved away from the hope of the gospel, that is, as we have seen, Christ Himself in glory. The sense of our own nothingness, but of the fulness that there is in Christ, can alone keep us cleaving to Him with the ardent desire that He may present us in glory according to the reconciliation to the Godhead fulness which is ours in Him.

It is well to remember that a special feature in this epistle is, that Gentiles only are addressed. There are other epistles of Paul to Gentiles as that to the Romans, but in it the Jew is taken up as well as the Gentile, and it is shewn that whatever distinction there might

be as to outward privilege, before God there was no difference. Both were guilty before Him, and both are reckoned righteous on the principle of faith. In Ephesians also the Jew is regarded as outwardly near, and the Gentile far off, but both dead in sins, and both reconciled to God in one body by the cross. In our epistle the Gentile only is contemplated, and the gospel is shown to be world-wide—preached in the whole creation which is under heaven. The effect had been to deliver Gentiles from the darkness of heathendom, and to connect them immediately with a glorified Christ. They were not intermediately connected with a system of ordinances to regulate the flesh, for the Father had made them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and they had been at once transferred into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love. It was of *such a gospel* that Paul became minister, and there was a danger lest the Colossians should not abide grounded and settled in the faith of it. The flesh likes to be religious, and to try and take a half-way place between the grossness of natural darkness and the full reconciliation to God in the light, which has been accomplished for the believer in the body of Christ's flesh through death. The Jew was the man in whom the true worth of religious flesh had been manifested, and the apostle leaves him out of consideration, and thus the character of the gospel of which he was minister becomes more apparent.

Side by side with the ministry of the gospel which brought such a deliverance to an outcast Gentile, and made him an heir of glory with Christ, Paul had received another ministry—that of the assembly as the body of Christ. He develops the character of this

ministry in a remarkable way. He was no longer preaching the gospel as he had been, but was a prisoner in bonds. In his active service in the gospel he had known much of the sufferings of Christ. In 2 Cor. xi. 23-27, he details the sufferings he passed through as a minister of Christ. There were other sufferings of Christ which were left for His servant to fill up in his flesh—afflictions “for His body’s sake, which is the Church.” It was specially on behalf of Gentiles the apostle was suffering, therefore he says, I “*now rejoice in my sufferings for you.*”

Let us seek to trace these afflictions of Christ which Paul was filling up in his flesh. In the active service of love, in the midst of Israel, the blessed Lord found sorrows as He felt for the misery which sin had brought upon them. And as he preached Jehovah’s righteousness, and declared His faithfulness and salvation in the great congregation, not concealing His mercy and truth, He found the added sorrows of determined opposition from the people to whom He came in love. For His love they were His adversaries. Now Paul, as we have seen, had shared in his measure in these sufferings, finding in his own countrymen the bitterest opposition to the gospel of grace. But our Lord spoke to His disciples of *other* sufferings: “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, *and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles* to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him: and the third day He shall rise again.” (Matt. xx. 18, 19.) Let it be noted that these are sufferings from the hand of man, and Paul was permitted to taste these afflictions also. He had gone to Jerusalem

with alms and offerings for his nation ; there the Jews laid hands upon him, and he also fell into the hands of the Gentiles, the Jews urging them to put him to death. In their hands he was then in bonds, and not in the active ministry of the gospel.

But further, rejected by Israel, the Lord had called His own sheep, and led them out of the Jewish fold into His own company. He then spoke of other sheep whom He must bring, that there might be one flock and one Shepherd. (John x.) Marvellous ways of wisdom and love shine out in the finding of these Gentile sheep. As of old, Joseph, sent by his father to see after the welfare of his brethren, was sold to the Gentiles after his brethren had counselled to put him to death, and thus carried with him among the Gentiles the secret of the wisdom and power of God ; so Christ, of whom Joseph was but a figure, in being delivered up to the Gentiles and by them crucified, found the door opened to Him by the determinate counsel of God, as well as by the act of His being put to death, to go among the Gentiles, and by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to find those other sheep which had been given to him of the Father.

Thus the counsels of the Father were fulfilled, that His Son in being rejected by Israel, the beloved nation, and so for the time having to give up as Messiah the people of His earthly glory and love, should have from among the Gentiles those who should be not merely part of His flock, but who should have part in the peculiar relationship to Himself of His body—and His body is the assembly. We thus see that there were peculiar sufferings through which Christ went in order to possess the church. We do not speak here of atone-

ment, when His holy soul was made an offering for sin—that is the alone foundation for sinners to be brought into any relationship with Himself—but of giving up everything which belonged to Him as a living Messiah, on account of the hatred and rejection of His own, and tasting death in all that it was to Him as a perfect Man, crucified by Gentile dogs, in order that He might possess the church which He loved, and for which He gave Himself.

Now Paul, in a peculiar way, understood this love of Christ to the church. He was himself an Israelite, ardently loving his own nation, desiring their salvation, and willing, had it been possible, to be accursed for them. He too was suffering for his love to his nation, being, by their malice, in bonds among the Gentiles. In all this he was entering into the sufferings of Christ for the assembly, and through these afflictions he learned in a special way what a place it held in the affections of Christ as His body. He desired that the Colossians, as Gentiles, might understand this ministry, given to him *for them*, to complete the word of God. It is the revelation of the assembly's relation to Christ which completes the circle of glories which the Word unfolds as belonging to Him. Many of those glories had been revealed in promise and prophesy, but this had remained hidden in God, a mystery *now made manifest to His saints*. It will be found also that the making manifest the mystery not only completes the word in the sense of revealing *all* that God has counselled for the glory of Christ, but that it fills out all previous revelation, supplying to it, as the keystone to an arch, a fulness which had been hidden before—even as the church is the fulness of Him in whom all previous revelation has

its fulfilment. We have only to take such a passage as Psalm viii. 5, 6—and see the fulness given to it in Ephesians i. 22—to understand this. Other passages might be adduced, as Isaiah xlix. 8, compared with 2 Corinthians vi. 2, from which we learn that in the declaration of Christ—being heard in an accepted time, and succoured in a day of salvation (that is in resurrection), and then kept of Jehovah to be a covenant to Israel to establish the land and to cause to inherit the desolate heritages—was hidden the truth of the church being in the same acceptance and salvation as Christ Himself. Who could have known that the salvation and acceptance of Gentiles was contained in that verse until the revelation of the mystery? But what a wondrous place it gives the assembly as united to Christ, and it is the truth concerning this mystery which the Spirit here shows to be so important for the saints to know. God willed to make it known. He would make known the wealth of its glory amongst hitherto outcast Gentiles—the glory of the heavenly and exalted Man in whose Person all the fulness dwells; a glory of which the assembly is to be the vessel of display to eternal ages. As a living Messiah He would have been the glory of His people Israel upon earth (Luke ii. 32), had they received Him. He will yet be so in an open manifested glory which will fill the earth, when all nations will call Him blessed, or rather, blessings; but the mystery, in its Colossian aspect, is that a *heavenly and glorious* Christ was among these Gentile believers, not blessing them as men on earth, but in them—their life—a life therefore which belonged to heaven, as it was hidden there in Him. *Christ* was in them the hope of the glory revealed in the mystery.

Nothing *practically* can exceed the importance of this aspect of the mystery (though it does not rise to the height of the truth concerning it unfolded in Ephesians, where the body is seen united to the Head in heaven), because the saints are here viewed as upon earth, though risen with Christ (ch. ii.), and there was a danger of their regarding themselves as alive in the world (ii. 20). Now Paul wanted the saints to have this hope of glory before them. The fulness of the Person of Christ constituted its wealth, and this glorious Person he preached, "warning *every* man and teaching *every* man in all wisdom," for he desired that Christ in glory might be the object of *each*. The wisdom with which he laboured was the result of the revelation of the purpose of God as to Christ, and the church as His body; and the end that he might present every man perfect in Christ.

The mystery then is not only that the assembly is His body united to Him in heaven, the fulness of Him that fills all in all (Eph. i. 23); but conversely that His body is the assembly. (Col. i. 24.) The body of the heavenly Christ is the assembly upon earth. These are the two sides of the mystery. The assembly derives everything from the fulness of the Head; human wisdom or religion can add nothing to it, and the toil and conflict of the apostle as the energy of Christ wrought in him was that each saint might know and arrive at this perfection in Christ. T. H. R.

WE must drink for ourselves that rivers may flow. Indeed all else dries up the soul. "That thy profiting may appear" says the apostle. Ministry is only fresh, good, and powerful, when it is the soul's own portion first with God.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

PSALM xxxvii. 3-6.

WHATEVER the differences in the translation of this scripture the meaning is but little affected. It is scarcely to be questioned that verse 3 should be rendered as follows: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on faithfulness." The *Revised Version* has "*follow* after faithfulness," but their alternative rendering in the margin shows that the translators had no foundation for the idea of "following," and hence that they were seeking to expound rather than to translate. If the context is studied, the wonderful appropriateness of the word "feed" will at once be discovered. The application of the Psalm is to the remnant in the last days (see *vv.* 9, 11, 22, 29, etc.; and especially compare *v.* 11 with *Matt.* v. 5); and the exhortations in verses 1, 7, 8 are given for the encouragement of the feeble few who, in the time of Jacob's trouble, will be surrounded by evil of every kind. To the outward eye the wicked and the persecutors are in prosperity, and work out their own will without let or hindrance. The temptation therefore would be to flee, to seek an asylum outside of the borders of the land where evil was, to all appearances, triumphant. No, says the Spirit of God, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on faithfulness"—on God's faithfulness, in the assurance that He would not forget His tried and oppressed people; and that He

would in His own time deal with their oppressors. (See *vv.* 12-15, 17-22.) We would also do well to remember this injunction when cast down on account of the prevalence of corruption and evil. Then there is another question as to the connection between verses 3 and 4. In our translation verse 4 is a separate, even if consequent, exhortation. Some take it as immediately connected with verse 3, in this way: "Feed on faithfulness, and delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." There is no doubt that the one that "pastures upon" the faithfulness of God will soon come to delight himself in the Lord, and that then his inmost desires or petitions will be granted; for when the Lord Himself is the object before us, and when He is enshrined in our affections, His own desires are produced in our souls. Taken either way, as it stands in our Bibles, or as now suggested, verse 4 contains most blessed instruction. It is also thought that a similar intimate connection exists between verses 5, 6. If indeed a comma be substituted for the fullstop at the end of verse 5, this is at once apparent. The way of this persecuted remnant might seem to be hemmed in, hedged up, on every hand, and what is to be their resource? To commit it to, to "roll it off" upon, the Lord, and trust in Him. Leave it all in His hands; for "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way." Trust in Him, and He will bring it to pass; and He will also vindicate His oppressed people before the very eyes of their enemies: "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." Well might the Psalmist proceed, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him;" for, as

we learn from all the dealings of God with His saints, they that put their trust in Him will never be confounded. We may thus at all times, in all trials and difficulties, simply trust, and simply rest!

II.

ROMANS viii. 29; PHILIPPIANS iii. 21.

It is not without significance that the word translated in the first of these two scriptures as "conformed" is not found elsewhere, except in Philippians. In Romans we are said to be predestinated by God to be "conformed" to the image of His Son; that is, plainly, to the image of His Son as glorified at His own right hand as Man, because, it adds, "that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." We are thus introduced to the full result of the counsels of God. The first man having been for ever set aside in judgment by the cross, Christ, as risen and glorified, is, as the second Man, the Head and Pattern of a new race, to whom all the redeemed will be conformed; and amongst the redeemed, as His brethren, He will be throughout eternity the Firstborn. In Philippians it is a question of the body. The apostle speaks of the bodies which we now have as bodies of humiliation, witnesses as they are of the consequences of sin, both in present suffering, and as being mortal and corruptible. But when the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall come, He will change, or transform, our body of humiliation into conformity with, or so that it will be conformed to, His body of glory. His glorified body is thus the model of the glorified bodies of all His people. The first scripture includes more than the

second, pointing to the blessed truth John speaks of, that when we see Him "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Another form of the word is found also in Philippians iii., rendered there, "being made conformable to His death," as Stephen was, for example, inasmuch as like Christ he died as a martyr; for it is only in this aspect of the death of Christ that it is possible for any of His servants to be made conformable to it. Nowhere else in the New Testament is this word used. The Spirit of God has reserved it for these cases, and He thereby teaches us the singular and wonderful character of the grace of God, which has displayed the prospect before our eyes of being conformed to the image of His Son, and of our mortal bodies being changed so as to be conformed to the glorified body of Christ. The effect of this prospect on the soul of Paul was thus expressed: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto" (or, if in any way I might arrive at) "the resurrection of" (or, from among) "the dead." May the same effect be produced on our souls!

AN angel can serve God in this world. Little would it concern him in what way, provided that way was God's; but to associate himself with its interests as forming a part of it—to ally himself with those who are governed by the motives that influence the men of this world, so that a common conduct would show that one and the other acted according to its principles—would be, to those heavenly beings, to lose their character and position.

ON READING THE SCRIPTURES.

FROM very familiarity with the letter of the word of God there arises the special danger of its neglect. Many can recall the time when the Bible was to them an almost unknown book, but afterwards when, as dispensational and church truth was opened out to them by chosen instruments, they turned to its pages with ever-increasing zest and delight. At that time other books lost their interest; worldly subjects and themes no longer retained their hold; for, the Scriptures becoming their constant daily companion, the thoughts of God filled and absorbed the soul. When that was the case the language of Job no longer seemed extravagant: "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." (Chap. xxiii. 12.)

The question we desire to press, in this connection, is, Whether the Bible is studied now with the same eagerness? It is a question pre-eminently for believers at the present moment; not only for those who have been recently converted, but for all; for it really concerns the spiritual welfare of every child of God. There is indeed no spiritual growth without it, as Peter reminds us when he says, after dealing with the condition of soul requisite for it, "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" [up to salvation*]; and as Paul teaches when

* These additional words are found in the best MSS.

he writes to Timothy, "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy ii. 15.)

Now there are three ways in which it is possible to read the word of God. It may be read from a sense of duty; it may be resorted to for help, succour, or guidance; and it may be read from delight in Him, whose word it is, and whose precious treasures of grace and blessing it unfolds. These three methods mark for some different stages of spiritual life; that is to say, they began by reading from a sense of obligation, they proceeded in due time to reading for help and teaching, and finally they read because they realised that God's words were "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Psalm xix. 10.) This last method, as many have found, is the only true way of Bible study, for the soul that so ponders upon the revelation which God has been pleased to make of Himself, is in communion with His own mind, and in the power of the Holy Ghost.

There is a possibility, however, as hinted at the commencement, of receding from this point after it has been reached. This is only to say that there are many backsliders, for to lose heart for the word of God is a clear and unmistakable sign of a bad state of soul. This is oftentimes concealed by the pernicious habit of attempting to feed upon the truth discovered and prized in former years. There is nothing more

humbling or hardening than the, by no means uncommon, habit of reproducing on all possible occasions the precious things gleaned and treasured up through the exercises and studies of the past. To boast of past blessings is often to confess that we have nothing to tell of God's present activity and power. What is communicated must be newly received from the Lord, if we are to be channels of blessing. It is, "He that believeth on Me"; he who is in the present activity of faith in the risen and glorified Christ, and who is thus ever drawing supplies from the inexhaustible Fountain, who becomes the channel of the rivers of living water. (John vii. 38.)

What, then, it may well be enquired, will assist to enable us to read the Scriptures with delight? Above all, let it be distinctly said, to sit at the feet of Jesus, like Mary, and to hear, as we read, His word. The word indeed should never be separated from the Person of Him who speaks. Two illustrations of this may be offered. In Hebrews iv. the apostle, writing concerning the action of the living and powerful word, adds, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (v. 13.) He identifies in this way what is spoken with the divine Speaker. When the Jews, moreover, asked our blessed Lord, "Who art Thou?" He replied, as often and truly rendered, "Altogether that which I have spoken unto you." (John viii. 25.) By this He signified that what He said and taught perfectly expressed Himself, contained the unfolding of what He was. Remembering this when we read His words, we not only hear Him

speak to us, but through what He speaks He discovers Himself to our souls.

Nothing so keeps us in dependence, while we read, as the sense of being in the presence of God in order to receive divine communications. This therefore is of primary importance. In addition to this, it greatly helps if we read the Scriptures regularly and systematically. The more we read, the more we desire to read; and if nothing is allowed to interfere with the seasons set apart for this purpose, the reading will soon become as much a necessity as our daily food. A well-known servant of the Lord made it a point never to read less than two chapters the first thing in the morning. Remarking upon his habit, he said, "You may deem me legal, but I cannot do without my two chapters!" Many have discovered, on the other hand, that when they have left their reading to favourable opportunities they soon found how little time was left at their disposal. Even our blessed Lord, speaking through the prophet, says, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, 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 learned" [learner]. (Isaiah l. 4.) Thus His ear was opened to hear every morning what Jehovah might communicate; and in this blessed attitude of learning and dependence He is our example.

These two things indeed—dependence and learning—are always connected. This is strikingly exemplified in the action of our blessed Lord towards His disciples after His resurrection. After reminding them that all

things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Himself, He opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures (Luke xxiv.); just as we read, in after days, He opened the heart of Lydia to attend unto the things which were spoken of Paul. (Acts xvi. 14.) Whether, therefore, for power of understanding, or for power of reception, we are entirely dependent on Him; and it is in proportion as this is realized, that He acts in us by the Holy Spirit to enable us to apprehend "the things concerning Himself" which are revealed in God's word. (See John xvi. 13-15.)

It will be a further assistance, if it is pointed out that Christ Himself is the key of the whole Bible. For He is the object of all God's purposes, whether in respect of the earthly or the heavenly people; and He is, moreover, the centre of all God's ways. It is, therefore, around Him that all the facts of revelation gather, and to Him that all type and prophecy look, and for the reason that for the administration of the fulness of times it is God's sovereign pleasure and purpose to head up all things in the Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. If Christ, therefore, and the glory of Christ, be not before the soul in our scriptural studies, we shall not profit because we should not be in communion with the mind of God. Leave out Christ, and the Bible becomes a dead letter, and provocative of criticism and controversy at every turn; bring in Christ, and the Book is instinct with life and power, a living unity, because it reveals a living Person, and the reader is filled with adoration and praise.

THE LAODICEAN SNARE.

THE last phase of the Church's history as the vessel of testimony on earth is depicted in the address to the church at Laodicea. (Rev. iii.) This I believe is rapidly developing at the present time, and it is in this development that the greatest amount of religious activity is at present exhibited. In its full manifestation it will lead to the Lord rejecting the Church as His candlestick on earth, true believers being taken to glory when He comes. While there is at this moment in the professing church that which answers to Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia, yet there is no special activity connected with these phases of the Church's condition. On the other hand, the Laodicean state is rapidly developing on all hands. That which is producing this condition is the effort to Christianize the natural man, to accredit in a religious way what is of man. Under the name of Christ, and under the profession of Christianity, there is the practical denial of all that is vitally Christian. What is of man is accredited, and Christ is practically shut out. It is not open apostacy, the giving up of the profession of Christianity, nor is it loving devotedness to Christ; it is neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm. "There is no zeal for Christ, no hatred of sin; but a mild, self-complacent toleration of all, and of all things, and connected therewith the substitution of humanity for Christ."

In this condition of things man's utter ruin and lost estate are being denied, and consequently the eternal judgment of God upon sin is also denied.

God's claims as to sin and the necessity of the work of atonement are ignored. Man is supposed to be already in relationship with God, all men alike are said to be His children, and therefore the need of new birth, of a life derived from the last Adam, is explained away, and made to signify simply an outward change in character, a reformation of the old man. Not seeing that man as of the first creation is utterly ruined and lost, the necessity of a new creation is ignored. The creation of God, of which Christ is the beginning, is the new creation. The first creation has been marred by sin, so that it can no longer be owned by God. The glory of the person of Christ is lost sight of, and He is spoken of merely as one of the best of men, and so held up as an example which the natural man should admire and imitate. Thus, by cultivating all that is supposed to be good in man, he may make himself acceptable to God. By the adoption of means which act upon, cultivate, and develop what is humanly good in man in a religious way, man in the flesh is magnified, and Christ is only used as a means to this end. The cross, in which is expressed the judgment and end of the first man in the sight of God, is altogether rejected. There is much congratulation at the increased light of the nineteenth century, and at the progress made, and the results obtained in winning the masses, and in improving and Christianizing men, and the boast is, We are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. Yet with all this the Lord declares that there is the lack of all that can be accounted riches in a divine sense, of all those divine realities which the believer possesses in Christ. His judgment of such is, that they are poor, and miserable, and blind,

and naked, wherefore He counsels them to buy of *Him* that which alone can truly make rich toward God and for eternity.

In this Laodicean state there is the absence of the divine righteousness in which alone man can stand before God, and which is only possessed in Christ, and is entirely independent of all that is in man. There is also wanting the true character of Christ, which is the only practical righteousness in which the saint should appear before men, and which should hide the shame of his nakedness. There may be an imitation of Christ, in human righteousness, benevolence, goodness, &c., but it is an imitation, it is not the real thing, it is not Christ, but what is of man. And, lastly, there is the lack of the power of spiritual discernment, which is the Spirit of Christ. It is only by the Spirit that we can perceive divine things; the natural man understandeth not the things of God, but the spiritual man discerneth all things. Lacking these essential characteristics of a Christian, whatever else men may possess, in the sight of God they are poor, miserable, blind, and naked; and how solemn to think of the many professing Christians who will be found naked in the day of judgment! On the other hand, the believer who has Christ, and knows what He is made to him of God, whatever else he may lack, is rich, possessing all things.

I believe the cause of the state of things we have considered, is the neglect of the truth of the epistle to the Colossians, which was written specially for the church of the Laodiceans as well as for the Colossians. (Col. ii. 1, iv. 16.) This epistle is what is needed in a particular way at the present time, when we are in special danger

on account of the prevalence and activity of these Laodicean principles; it is the great preservative and remedy for them if known in divine power.*

What the saint wants is to know Christ better, to be rooted and built up *in Him*, to walk *in Him*, to grow up *to Him* in all things, to rejoice *in Him*, until each one is presented perfect *in Him*, and thus to learn more how *Christ is everything*. If this be so we shall not fall into the Laodicean snare, we shall be preserved from the spirit of that which accredits man, seeks to build up man, and pretends to present man perfect before God, and from all the teaching and commandments of men which tend to satisfy the flesh, so that men may say, we are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.† If Christ is revealed in our hearts, He will displace all that is of man.

May God grant that so it may be increasingly, and that Christ, living in us, may be magnified in our bodies. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

* To appreciate the address to the Laodiceans, and to understand the state therein described, it should be studied in connection with the epistle to the Colossians. In the latter we learn what is the true Christian state. In the former we get the contrast to this in every respect; it is the description of a non-Christian state under the profession of Christianity, though doubtless true Christians are found associated with it. The Lord is outside, yet calls to individual believers to hear His voice, and open the door to Him, and says, moreover, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten."

† All that is of God for man is centred in Christ. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete (or filled up) in Him." He is the Head of the body, and it is in holding the Head that we receive the needed supplies—all the body is ministered to from the Head. Nothing of man can contribute to one who is filled up in Christ. In any measure in which we accredit what is of man by appealing to what is of man, or by adopting what is of man in a religious way, so far we are not holding the Head. In proportion as we give place to what is of man in divine things we detract from the glory of Christ, who is everything for the saint, and we are so far contaminated with the spirit of Laodicea.

WHAT IS MAN ?

HEBREWS ii. 5-18.

WE need to be subject to the Word to understand in any measure what the counsels of God and their fulfilment really are. If the first chapter of the Hebrews gives us our blessed Lord's eternal Godhead, and His divine glory manifested here upon earth, and hereafter in the kingdom and in the endless ages, the second chapter presents to us that of the Son of man.

This is not intended to be an exposition of the passage, but merely a few brief remarks.

The question here is: "What is man?" and it is answered in so striking a manner that we at once perceive that the one who asks the question is the only one who can answer it. (See verses 6-8.) If we listen to anything but a divine answer to this question, we shall be in danger of being led astray, even by such men as Job; worse still if we listen to such an answer as that of the accomplished deist, who could say that the proper study of mankind is man. The answer here bursts upon us with extraordinary beauty: "Crowned with glory and honour . . . all things put under his feet." God's counsels have been fulfilled so far that the Son of man is crowned with glory and honour, and occupies the place of holding universal sway, although we see not yet all things put under Him.

I have been much in countries where angels are looked upon as the highest and brightest of beings, next to God; but we shall find here that they must

give place to the glory of man, according to God's counsels. In the first chapter, our Lord's divine glory is seen to be infinitely superior to that of angels; but here it is as man that we see Him, and He is not alone, for associated with Him are many sons whom God is bringing to glory, redeemed men, who are to share with Him all that He has, as man, according to God's counsels. Do we really believe, beloved brethren, that our place and calling is far higher than that of angels? All the poetic dreams of seraphs and of an imagined heavenly hierarchy disappear, and we receive by faith the revelation that the world to come is put under man, that is, under the most glorious Son of man, and those who are with Him.

If we have a calling and hope superior to that of angels, we shall not be debasing ourselves in the meantime with the things of this world. He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one. It has often been remarked that there are in this passage four reasons for our blessed Lord's suffering, and that the first is that of the glory of God. (v. 10.) He has been made perfect as the Captain of our salvation by sufferings, for He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one.

"All of one *what?*" I recollect this question being asked of an old servant of God, who replied: "You must not add anything to this profound and abstract expression; to add anything would weaken it, just as (to make an illustration) if you added anything to a pure argent escutcheon in heraldry, you would diminish its value."* It is manhood according to God's counsels;

* He quoted the phrase: *Additio probat minorem*; that is, any addition will shew less value.

He that sanctifieth (Christ), and we that are sanctified, set aside entirely from this world, are all of one. The Holy Ghost sometimes gives us immense statements of the kind, that we may apprehend the extent of the position that we occupy according to God's counsels.

But our hearts are lifted up in praise to Him who did not take up (take by the hand to help) angels, but the seed of Abraham. He suffered to bring us out of the degradation in which we were—the three other reasons for His suffering, besides that for God's glory, are to destroy Satan's power (verse 14); to atone for sins (verse 17); and to succour those tempted (verse 18)—and to bring us through everything as men redeemed, and all "of one" with Him. The very start of the race for us is glorious, for the Lord is not ashamed to call us brethren (verse 12), and surely the next passage quoted, (verse 13) refers to His own blessed place of dependence when He was here, and in which we are now, and I have no doubt that we shall know the *full* blessed force of "Behold Me, and the children which God hath given me," when Jesus shall present us, with our very bodies changed and made like unto His glorious body, to God, in heaven itself.

We are able thus to understand the answer to the question: "What is man?" for although we see not yet all things put under Him, yet we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; we are associated with Him; He is not ashamed to call us brethren, and the foundation upon which we stand is that of the redemption accomplished by Him at the cost of His infinite sufferings. Death has been tasted for everything, and Satan's power destroyed, and the

Captain of our salvation leads us through the wilderness in a manner worthy of the God who formed these glorious counsels as to the Son of man, and those associated with Him.

We cannot plead weakness or difficulties of the way as an excuse for not entering into God's thoughts about the Glorious Man of His counsels. The very difficulties become an occasion of calling forth the active intercession of the Lord as High Priest, and this not only (as we selfishly imagine) to help us, as a present thing, out of our difficulties, but to keep us in the sense of our place in the presence of the God of glory, the Author of the deep and wondrous counsel of setting man at the head of the universe—the answer to the question, "What is man?"

In the eighth Psalm, the glory of Jehovah, our Lord, is set above the heavens. In the New Testament the heavenly places are filled with glorified men, and the blank left is filled up (seen only in a glimpse in the Old Testament, in Daniel's nocturnal vision, where the saints of the heavenly places come with the supremely glorious Son of man to take the kingdom); the blank, I mean, that is left in the eighth Psalm where Jesus' glory as the Son of man is set above the heavens.

The danger for us is to forget that it *became Him* (the God of these wondrous counsels) thus to carry out His stupendous plan. It is not merely that we are men redeemed and being led to heaven, but being led according to the glory of God. Even in this world a man of great power and means would carry out a vast design in a manner worthy of himself. Thus Solomon, in bringing Jerusalem up to its state of beauty and earthly glory, accomplished it in a manner worthy of

the powerful and wise king. This is a mere illustration ; silver was quite a base metal in Solomon's time, and, alas! the gold soon got changed into brass in Rehoboam's time. But if Solomon carried out his plans in a regal way, what must be the accomplishment of the counsels of the God of glory ?

This is the true answer to the question. It became Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, to make the leader of the salvation of the sanctified ones, perfect through sufferings. God is thus leading us to glory in a manner worthy of His own stupendous counsels, and we can make no excuse for not entering into them, for the very One who has laid the foundation, at the cost of infinite suffering, for their accomplishment, is leading us on, redeemed as we are, to the highest heaven, the climax of all our hopes.

The Eternal Son became Man in order that God's counsels should thus be accomplished ; the enemy's power is broken, and Jesus himself is at the right hand of the Majesty on high to keep our hearts and minds in the full sense and enjoyment of our nearness to God.

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of man, that thou visitest Him? Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honour. . . O, Jehovah, our Lord, how great is Thy name in all the earth!" Surely we, the saints of the heavenly places, can break into still higher praise, in extolling the glory of His grace wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved!

E. L. B.

IF the ascended Christ is to fill all things with redemption glory, the whole universe will be an eternal witness to His exaltation as the answer of God to His work on the cross.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

CHAPTER ii.

THE apostle desires the Colossian believers to know how great the conflict was which he had, specially for those who, like themselves, had not seen his face in the flesh. Among these last *we* may take our place as those who have never had direct apostolic care. While he combated the efforts of the enemy to bring in among the saints something that was not simply Christ, he desired that their hearts might be cheered, being closely drawn together in love. Selfishness has no place in the mystery. Every saint is but an item of the whole—the body of Christ in which the new man is displayed by means of every member. This union in love would enable them to enter into all the wealth of the full assurance of understanding, into the full knowledge of the mystery of God. Whilst a babe in Christ has the unction by which he knows all things, and thus there is provision for the need of the weakest saint in the absence of direct apostolic care, yet we see here how full assurance of understanding is connected with the practical carrying out in love of the relationship to each other in which we are set as members of the body of Christ. As items in the assembly, we lose the sense of being individuals having to walk in the path marked out for each by the will of God, and find ourselves component parts of that body which is the object of Christ's love, and for which He gave Himself. We understand the headship of Christ to the body, and the place which the assembly has in

the vast plan of God for eternal glory, of which Christ its Head is the centre. In this vast plan, the mystery of God, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It must be so if Christ is the centre, for He is the wisdom of God. In showing them that the deepest thoughts of God were hidden in the mystery, the apostle guards them from being deluded by the persuasive speech of those who would supplement Christ by elements of the world—elements which the fleshly mind would readily accept.

Let us recall here the two subjects which the apostle brings forward to prevent the Colossians, who were not really full-grown or established Christians, from being drawn aside by false teachers. First, the person of Christ in all His pre-eminence—in whom all the fulness was pleased to dwell. "Whom we preach," says Paul. Secondly, the special apostolic ministry committed to him for making known the mystery as that which completed the word of God. Here then is fulness which excludes all thought of any addition to it. The fulness in the person of Christ, and the fulness of the revelation by the word of God of all His thoughts and counsels in that person. What riches are possessed by the assembly in the intelligence of the mystery—"Christ in you." Paul's conflict was that they might have the full assurance of understanding as to it. He was absent in flesh, but with these Colossians in spirit, rejoicing and beholding *their order*. Let us pause here. The assembly is not a mere assemblage of believers. It is the body of Christ. It is the place where Christ is reproduced in the members of His body—"Christ in you"; and here it is that we need to be established so that there should be firmness of faith in

Him. In John xiv. the Lord speaks to His disciples of a day when He would be to them an object of faith, but when by the Spirit's power they would see Him. In that day they would know that He was in the Father, and, He adds, "Ye in me and *I in you.*" When He was upon earth He added to the first clause (v. 10), "*And the Father in Me.*" Now He is the object of faith, and no longer manifesting the Father here. Christ, who has gone to the Father, gives us to know our place in Him before the Father, and *He is in us.* The assembly as the body of Christ is the place where this great truth should be seen in its order.

We have spoken of the assembly as the place where the new order should be manifested. It is in all the saints that the new man is displayed. Now the Colossians were not instructed in the mystery, and hence the apostle's conflict for them; but there was this new order among them, they had received the Christ, Jesus the Lord. That is a great thing, for all else flows from it, so their walk should be in the power of what *He is.* It is not a walk such as might have been seen in a godly Jew, nor mere uprightness of character. Here everything is *Christ*; they had been rooted *in Him*, the building up was *in Him*, with assurance in the faith as they had been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Nor let us slight this admonition; the soul filled with the sense of who Christ is must necessarily give thanks. The sense of what is in the Father's heart to us calls forth the exhortation to give thanks in chapter i., and here it is what we have in Christ.

Thus seeking to establish them in Christ, Paul warns them against being carried off that firm ground, and

against being made a prey by false teachers, who brought in the elements of that sphere where the first man's wisdom and traditions flourish. So, in later days, John warns young and unestablished Christians against seducing teachers, by urging that what they had heard from the beginning concerning Christ, through apostolic testimony, should abide in them. It is not enough for us to say "I have believed in Christ;" we must go on to know the Christ in whom we have believed. (2 Tim. i. 12.) Man and his world are not after Christ. There is another, a glorified Man now before God, and though only known spiritually, and not after the flesh, yet a real, veritable Man, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells *bodily*. What a marvellous and yet blessed truth. In eternal counsels the Son undertook to do the will of God in a body prepared for Him. That will has been accomplished on earth, and now we look up into heaven and see the blessed man there in whom all the Godhead fulness dwells. What can there be outside of Him? All the fulness is in Him, and we are filled full in Him. In Ephesians, the assembly is the fulness of Christ; but this fulness is derived from Him, for the saints are filled full in Him. That is what is taught us in this epistle, and though it is only the whole body into which the fulness of the Head could be filled, yet each individual member of that body is also complete in Him.

We have seen that the Colossian believers are not addressed as seated in the heavenly places in Christ. They were not, so to speak, at home in their souls in the sphere of God's purposed glory in Christ, those heavenly regions where Christ is already seated at God's right hand. Therefore the apostle thanks God, in

chapter i., that *there is* a hope laid up for them in heaven; the Father's love, too, had made them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. He has been pressing upon them that they belonged to that sphere, though actually in this world. He laboured to *present* every man perfect in Christ. Now, though angelic beings are there, Christ is the One who fills that world of glory—the blessed Man who has reconciled us by death, so that morally we are no longer of man's world, but belong to that scene where Christ is everything. The work done to bring us there was according to the Godhead fulness which dwells in Him, and now He is there, in whom that fulness dwells. We, as men, were made a little lower than the angels, and He, in grace, took this place, but we look up and see a Man, who is the head of all angelic rule and authority. We cannot derive anything from angels, exalted beings as they are, for we are complete in Him who is their Head. We are complete in Him before God—belonging to heaven—and those in whom, as being the fulness of the glorified man, His body, He will be eternally displayed.

But more, it is in Him, and in Him only, that we have that which separates us from earth and attaches us to heaven, otherwise it would be a hopeless struggle to be heavenly. Circumcision as an ordinance was but an element of the world. In its reality in Christ it is morally, and for faith, the putting off the body of the flesh, in which man lives in the scene around us called the world. As a sign, it separated a people from all others to God, as the seal of faith, and appropriated them for *His* promised blessing. The reality of our separation from the world of flesh to the heavenly

purpose of God has been effected in the cutting off of Christ upon the cross; that is where by circumcision, made without hands, the putting off the body of the flesh, is realised. Man, according to the flesh, is set aside in the death of Christ. If we turn to the figure (Gen. xvii.), circumcision came in with the promise of Isaac, and Abraham fell on his face and laughed in believing joy, and then *the self-same day* was circumcised and all his house. Here it is the person of Christ, no longer a promise, but known in glory, in us as life, the hope of glory, and we complete in Him, which the apostle brings before us, and then shews us the putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ, so that the hindrance to our enjoying Him as a heavenly Christ is removed. Gilgal experience (Josh. iv. 2-9) is not Marah (bitter) experience. (Ex. xv. 23.) At Marah, the tree (that is the cross) sweetened the bitter waters, which made the flesh murmur, by being put into them. At Gilgal, we realize having done with the flesh and the world where the flesh found its gratification—the reproach of Egypt rolled away—so that we are free to eat the food of Canaan, for us a heavenly Christ. With Abraham holy laughter and circumcision were in the self-same day. May we so know Christ and our being complete in Him, that we may have the sense that the “putting off” only sets us free to enjoy Himself.

IF Christ is to be everything practically to us, we must be nothing. It is only therefore when we accept death upon all that we are, and are thus free from ourselves and the world, that He becomes the absorbing object of our souls.

MARK'S PREFACE; OR, THE SERVANT-SON.

THERE is something very striking in the first thirteen verses which form what may be called the introduction to the gospel by Mark. They contain a rapid, but remarkably concentrated, testimony to Christ Himself. There is no genealogy, no account of His birth, no visits of wise men, nor of shepherds.

The evangelist enters at once on his line of ministry. His opening words are, "*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*" That gospel displacing, as it were, the law, and starting in all the freshness of its own peculiar message. But he announces this Christ as *Son of God*—a title in itself striking, when we get to see that Jesus is presented by this writer as *Servant*. It is the *Servant-Son*! The *SON* assumes the lowly "form of a servant." He preaches, teaches, heals, and labours; but He who deigns to do so is, at the same time, *Son of God*! Precious combination! For, it may be asked, who can serve as a son can? An alien toils for his wages, and has no personal interest in his work; but a son feels that his father's interests and his own are the same. It is a common and equal partnership. Profit and loss are borne equally. Self-interest is practically disallowed, and it may be truly said the *SON* "seeketh not His own glory, but the glory of Him that sent Him."

Jesus is thus presented as the *Servant-Son*, and thus this gospel begins.

Now, prophets had foretold the advent of the Lord (Jehovah), whose ways were to be made straight, and

before whose face a messenger was to come. This was John the Baptist—sent before His face, according to the prophet Malachi; to prepare the way of the Lord, according to Isaiah. First then we have the combined testimony of these two prophets, who unitedly bear witness to the fact of the Lord's coming. And their words are taken up by John Baptist, who applies them to the mightier than he, who should come after him, the latchet of whose shoe he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose. This was Jesus. "He shall baptize you," said John, "with the Holy Ghost."

Now, John was highly popular. He was a rigid and thorough reformer of religious and moral abuses, and was held in great and proper esteem by the people. All the land of Judæa and they of Jerusalem accepted his baptism, and owned him as a prophet. His place of testimony was none the less outside and removed from the religious centre, and, while baptizing and preaching the advent of the kingdom, he earnestly insisted on the supreme dignity of the *Mightier* than he.

This is noteworthy in our gospel. The testimony of John is rendered not so much against the state of the leaders of the people (as in Matthew iii.), as to the Lord Himself. Hence, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost," (omitting "*and fire*"). It is grace for the people rather than judgment. Nor do we read of the axe being laid to the root of trees, nor of the floor being purged. Our evangelist is thus engaged with John's positive witness to Christ rather than his work of reforming the evils that existed amongst the people. For just as the two prophets quoted had predicted the coming of the Lord, so now John declares the fulfilment of their prediction in Jesus Christ.

In those days came Jesus from Nazareth, and was baptized of John ; the heavens were opened, and the Spirit, like a dove, descended upon Him. What a wonderful event ! Never before had the heavens been opened on a man—that Man being the object of heaven's well-merited notice, and the Spirit descended upon Him. This too is a special testimony to the Servant-Son.

And there came a voice from heaven saying, "*Thou art my beloved Son, in whom [or in Thee] I am well pleased.*" Were such words ever heard before ? Never was man addressed in such terms. The relationship was new, for the law did not dream of conferring the dignity of sonship on even the best of its subjects. But here we have the Son beloved. Never before could God speak of man as having afforded Him good pleasure. But here the Father addresses the Son as the man of His pleasure. He holds a distinct place—does this lowly Nazarene. He stands in perfect distinctness from all beside, a distinctness that connects itself with His person, and that marks Him off from the children of Adam.

This again is a further and most wonderful testimony to Him.

Finally, driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, He is tempted of Satan. What a fact ! What an experience for the Son in manhood to be confronted with the enemy who, alas ! had been so successful with his temptations hitherto ; who had won so easy a victory in the garden ; who had been permitted to strip Job of all ; and who had led David to an act of disobedience, the effects of which were arrested at Araunah's threshing-floor. Now these two are together in the wilderness Jesus was tempted of Satan. Notice the two person-

alities; the One was no less real and actual than the other, and how different!

But the tempter, heretofore victorious, is defeated, and that too in the place of his power—the wilderness. The details of the temptation are omitted here. We have simply the fact; yet that suffices. For the testimony is all to the person of Christ, apart, as it were, from historic details. But we read, “He was with the wild beasts” (a point unnoticed by the other evangelists), in order to tell us that even they could recognize in Him their Creator and Lord, whose disarmed servants they were. This in itself is a testimony.

“And the angels came and ministered unto Him.” Had they not done so before? No doubt they had, but never when He, their Master and Lord, had, as now, been in circumstances of temptation and humility. This was to them a service of a new and grateful kind. Ravens might have waited on an Elijah morning and evening with his daily sustenance. Quails and manna might have fed the hungry hosts in the desert, but now the angels of heaven attend upon their suffering Lord. Happy ministry! He “was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death.” He was found in manhood “in the form of a servant,” and now these sinless beings find peculiar pleasure in ministering to One who, claiming their homage, had, in lowly grace and matchless love to man, taken an inferior place. Well may we add—“Which things the angels desire to look into.” They serve Him and then disappear, whilst He comes forth from that point to take His place of tender, patient, faithful service to man. Blessed Servant-Son!

Thus angels contribute to the testimony. Hence, in this brief introduction we have a sevenfold witness. We have prophets, John, the Spirit like a dove, the Father, Satan, wild beasts, and finally angels—all speaking, in different ways, of the glory of Him whose gospel is thus prefaced by His servant Mark.

J. W. S.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

HEBREWS x. 22.

IF the reference in the expression, "Our bodies washed with pure water," is to the washing of the priests at their consecration (Exodus xxix. 4), the teaching of this passage is very simple and significant. Washing with water is a symbol for the application of the word in the power of the Holy Ghost, bringing in death upon the natural man and his thoughts, and producing what is wholly new, according to God. The result is the new birth, or rather to be born of God. This conclusion is sustained by the fact that when our blessed Lord says, in John xiii., "He that is *washed* needeth not save to wash his feet," He uses the same word as in this scripture. The heart "sprinkled from an evil conscience" speaks of the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ, which, when known through faith, as based upon God's testimony, gives no more conscience of sins. These two things together—being born of God, and "no more conscience of sins"—form the absolute qualification of a worshipper. No one who is without these has any title to enter into the presence

of God. But this scripture speaks of another thing, viz., of a practical condition corresponding with the qualification or title. Hence the apostle says, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." A true heart is one that has been fully exposed in the light of God's presence, one therefore that has no reserves from God, no concealments, and nothing consciously left unjudged; and "full assurance of faith" is the rest of soul which follows upon confidence in God's grace and love. It is indeed only as we are established in grace that we can possess the true heart; for the more we know of grace, the more open-hearted our confession, and the more thorough our self-judgment. The instruction of the whole passage is, that if we would enjoy the liberty and power of worshipping in the Holiest, our moral condition must correspond with our title. We may really be born of God, and may know that God does not impute guilt to the believer, and yet we may not be able to draw near because we lack the true heart and full assurance of faith.

II.

1 JOHN i. 7.

It is continually asked whether "walking in the light" is expressive of our standing, or of our practical condition. Because of the word "walk," it is supposed by many that it must refer to the believer's daily walk. Two or three considerations, drawn from the passage and its context, will elicit its true significance. It is evident then, in the first place, that "walking in darkness" in verse 6 is an absolute contrast with walking in the light in verse 7; and that both expressions flow from the declaration in verse 5, "that God is light,

and in Him is no darkness at all." Bearing this in mind, it will be at once seen that "walking in the light" covers all who are introduced into the sphere of the revelation of what God is in Christ; that it includes therefore, in other words, all Christians; and hence that "walking in darkness" comprises all who are outside this sphere—all who are unconverted, all who do not possess eternal life. It must ever be remembered that for John there are only two spheres—light and darkness; just as we read in the gospel, "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." It should be remarked, moreover, that it is "walking in the light" "*as He (God) is in the light;*" not *according* to the light, which would indicate our practical walk, but "in the light as He is in the light," which cannot mean other than the circle or sphere in which God in His nature, His holiness, is absolutely revealed. All therefore are either in the light or in the darkness. Why, then, it may be enquired, is the word "walk" employed? *Because it is never supposed in Scripture that the practical condition of the believer will be otherwise than in accordance with his standing.* The greatest possible damage is done to souls in insisting upon standing irrespective of state; and, therefore, if John speaks of our walking in the light as God is the light, he assumes that we shall live, and move, and have our being in this circle. The following words will explain this still further: "It is not 'if we walk according to the light' that is the practical consequence in this world, even when we are not directly enjoying communion, but we walk in the light when we walk with God fully revealed to soul and conscience. It is a real thing in life, we walk, but [it is] more than

walking according to light. It is a walking in the presence of a fully-revealed God, the conscience, and spiritual judgment, and apprehension being in the light as He is—what God is, perfectly seen, and everything by it, and all clear as it is in light and for the soul. If we walk thus with God inwardly, all is judged inwardly, and our life is only the expression of the working of God in power in the life which we have of Him, of Christ in us (wisdom and power).”* It is also in this sphere, and only there, that Christian fellowship is enjoyed. This is readily understood, because outside of it is darkness—where God is not. Lastly, we are reminded of the foundation of this blessedness, the abiding efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, which cleanseth from all sin, from the defilement of every sin, and which has thus made it possible for us to be in the light, as God is in the light, in peace, confidence, and liberty. It is, therefore, no question here of the application of the blood, but simply one of its perfect and abiding efficacy. To speak of the continuous application of the blood, as is often done, is to miss the teaching of this scripture, and to contradict some of the plainest statements of the Word, as, for example, in Hebrews x. 1-18. But after unfolding to us the wondrous place in the light into which we are brought before God, and the truth that it is only in that circle we can have fellowship one with another, it is very blessed to be reminded of the source of the cleansing, which enables us to occupy our place.

* *Notes and Comments*, part xix., p. 270.

CHRIST was God in this world come to win back the confidence of man's heart to God.

AT THE FEET OF JESUS.

To be at the feet of Jesus is the commencement, continuation, and fruition of all blessing. And beyond this, as being our only suited place, to be there is to give joy to the heart of Christ Himself. Two or three illustrations from the gospels will explain and enforce the above statements.

Take first the woman "who was a sinner," of whom we read in Luke vii. Two things led her into the presence of Christ. First, there was the heavy burden of guilt which was lying upon her soul. On this side of the case it might be said that she was driven to Christ by her needs; and it is ever true that it is only through our needs that we learn what Christ is. But just because she was weighted with such a burden of shame and sorrow, she was drawn to Christ by the attractions of His grace, and this is the special aspect presented in the narrative. She had learned in some way what He was for poor sinners like herself, that there was no heart in all the world which could understand her need, or on which she could rest, but His; and the effect was that she was irresistibly drawn to His feet.

Standing there behind Him, she lavished upon Him all her heart's affection—affection wrought surely by grace in the power of the Holy Spirit. She "brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and

kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment." The Lord Himself has interpreted for us the meaning of her action. Defending her from Simon's reproach, He said, "She loved much." A true penitent, as shown by her tears (and she wept doubtless because she had been made to feel her moral unsuitability to His holy presence), her heart had responded to Him and to His grace with a love that could only express itself in her tears, in her kissing His feet, and anointing them with her precious ointment.

She was absorbed in her heart's object, and hence, though others were present, she saw no man save Jesus only; for He was all her hope and all her desire. The Lord could not be insensible to her devotedness, which was the offspring of faith working by love. He therefore interposed at once to shield her from Simon's reproach; and with what manifest delight, while contrasting her attentions with Simon's neglect, He described what she had done! The lesson for the Pharisee was, "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Blessed testimony to a poor despised woman—a testimony which reveals at the same time that what the Lord prizes, as beyond all price, is a heart devoted to Himself.

Two distinct blessings were found by this weeping penitent at the feet of Jesus. She received the authoritative forgiveness of her sins, and, the faith which attached her to the Person of Christ being acknowledged as the means of her salvation, she was sent away with the unspeakable possession of everlasting peace. If,

moreover, she had gratified her own affections, she had also been permitted to render joy to the heart of Christ. And Simon? Still loveless, he was unforgiven, blind, and in darkness, outside the blessed circle of light and love into which the object of his reproach had been drawn.

Passing now to chapter x. of the same gospel, we are introduced to Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus and hearing His word. Both her attitude and her action are significant. The woman who was a sinner stood at the feet of Jesus, for as yet she was not in the enjoyment of forgiveness and peace. Mary, on the other hand, sat; a sign that every question concerning the state of her soul had been settled, and consequently that she was at rest. Like the man out of whom the Lord had expelled the demons, she was sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in her right mind. That is, we take our place at the feet of Jesus first of all as penitents, and we continue there as His servants and disciples.

But she was not only sitting in peace before the Lord; she was also hearing His word. It is this feature that marks the difference so distinctly between her and her sister. Martha was governed in what she was doing by her own inclination. She was ministering to the Lord in the way *she* deemed suitable, according to her own thoughts of what was required. Mary desired to learn the Lord's mind, to be formed by His word, to act according to the Lord's own thoughts, and to be well-pleasing to Him. She thus chose the good part which should not be taken from her, for she was in communion with the mind of Him at whose feet she sat.

It should be very distinctly observed that the place Mary occupied should characterise every believer. If the penitent found it the place of blessing, it is the place of blessing likewise for the saint. What a revolution would be made in the lives of many of us if we were continually engaged as Mary was! Morally outside of the world and its restlessness, and undistracted by its manifold and discordant voices, overshadowed by the presence of Jesus, at home in it, with what joy we should look up into His face to catch the intimations of His will. Like Himself, we should seek to have our ears wakened morning by morning to hear as the learner. (Isaiah l. 4.) Then we should enter upon the blessed experience of the bride when she says, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste"; and we should have no mean anticipation of the blessedness of heaven as expressed in the words, "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads."

If now we turn to the gospel of John (chap. xii.), we shall meet with another instance of being at the feet of Jesus. The same Mary who sat at His feet and heard His word, took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. The one who had sat at His feet, heard His word, and received those divine communications which revealed Himself to her soul, is here seen as a worshipper. When the King sitteth at His table, says the bride, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. It is ever so, and it was so with Mary. It was,

in fact, the disclosure of Christ to her soul, and her divinely-given apprehension of who and what He was that made her a worshipper. She too was absorbed with the One whose beauty and perfections had dawned upon her, and her heart overflowed with adoration. She therefore brought her costliest treasure, and poured it out at His feet.

The gratefulness of her act to the heart of Christ is shown in two ways. The house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Its precious fragrance spread throughout (we speak of its typical import) all the habitation of God. Secondly, the Lord expressed His appreciation of her act, as done in communion with His own mind. "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this." Mary alone, as far as revealed, had entered into the truth of the Lord's rejection and death; and, in truth, it was her communion with Him in His rejection that qualified her to be a worshipper. She shared, in her measure, in God's delight in the One who was about to be crucified.

Worship is eternal; that is to say, it will never cease. To be at the feet of Jesus as a penitent, or as a learner belongs to the present time; but to be at His feet as worshippers will characterise the redeemed for ever. Our highest exaltation, moreover, is connected with our occupancy of this place. As another has written: "When the elders, crowned and seated around the throne in heaven, leave their thrones and fall upon their faces before God, they are in a higher position when they seize and estimate His glory than when displayed in their own." What infinite grace then is it which

permits us even now to anticipate this blessedness by being, even while on earth, at the feet of our adorable Lord as worshippers! And the more habitually we are at His feet as hearers of His word, the more constantly will our souls be drawn forth in praise and adoration.

CHRIST AS SON OVER THE HOUSE OF GOD.

HEBREWS iii. 1-6.

It has often been pointed out to us that there is a peculiar glory and position of our Lord in the sixth verse of this passage of Scripture—that of Son over the house of God.

The Holy Spirit, in the first verse, calls attention to two offices of Christ which depend upon the glories of chapters i. and ii., the apostleship upon His divine words spoken on earth (chapter i.), and the high priesthood upon His perfect humanity (for the Word became flesh), so wonderfully presented to us in chapter ii.

“Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.” It may be said that this is for converted and professing Jews, and that this is the force of “*our*.” This is true, but the passage has its full force for us, and it is well for us to pause and consider these two glories of our Lord. In the day in which we live, it is a lamentable fact that Christendom is settled down as a vast earthly system; it is no longer the Holy Ghost calling to converted Jews to come out of the camp (Judaism), but rather awakening Christians to the true meaning of Christianity, and to that of the heavenly calling; hence the passage has a peculiar interest to

all those who call themselves Christians. What is Christianity? Partakers of a heavenly calling are exhorted to consider the Apostle and High Priest in heaven. How many sincere souls repeat the "Apostles" Creed, and firmly believe in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, without knowing the import of His present position! And how many mere professors admit that He is ascended above all heavens and seated on high, and fervently wish that He may remain there and leave them to enjoy this world! They hope that the day "when He shall come, to be their judge," may be far distant!

But God is awakening souls, and the grand fact of the heavenly calling is not a mere theory with every one, through God's grace. He has awakened, and is awakening His saints to the great truth of their vocation, and to the presence of the Lord at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and to the significance of this. "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession." The glories of the heavenly Christ throw completely into the shade those of an earthly religion, and it was by contemplating by faith the Apostle and High Priest in heaven that the Jews who had believed were brought out from the tangible and visible things of a worldly sanctuary, so difficult to leave.

It is a most important exhortation in the present day, for one cannot really consider the Lord in these two characters without giving up the form of earthly religion into which, alas! Christendom has subsided. An earthly authority, a priesthood with its source down here, are two immense facts in that which calls itself the "Church," and the whole of this is set aside when our blessed Lord is known as the Apostle, now in

heaven, but having the authority of His own divine Person (God has spoken in the Son) and as the High Priest, perfect Man in the presence of God in the highest heaven, to sustain our souls there as we cross the wilderness. This when truly understood will bring a believer out of all earthly ritual; he will come out of the whole region of altars made after a worldly pattern, and of priestly vestments of whatever shape, to own the sole authority of Christ and His priesthood as pertaining to heaven.

This brings us to the third glory of our blessed Lord, as Son over the house of God.

Moses is brought forward as a faithful servant, and in the interesting character of servant *in the house of God*. It is difficult to find a faithful servant, and Moses had a peculiar place and was faithful in it. But there is One whose glory is infinitely superior, and who occupies the place, not of servant in the house, but of *Son over the house of God*.

And what is the house of God? No doubt in a general sense it is the universe itself, and we have the Son, by whose energy the universe was created (verses 3, 4), over the whole structure which He Himself built. "He who built all things is God." In a certain sense, God deigns to dwell in the universe, and this has been clearly and well stated by another.

But *the house of God* has another and more intimate signification: "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." The believing Jews are called out of Judaism, and coming forth as a godly remnant, from earthly to heavenly things (with a Messiah no longer down here, but in the highest glory above) form the house of God.

It is needless to say that the passage has its full application to us who were Gentiles; we are brought into these same blessed privileges, and we consider Christ Jesus as Apostle and High Priest, and have to do with Him as Son over the house of God.

It becomes a real practical question for us, for it is a question of obedience to the Son whilst we are here upon earth. If we have understood that the glorious Person of the chapter has made the purification of sins by Himself, that He alone has divine authority, and at the same time full compassion for us as the perfect Man of chapter ii., we can enter with joy and adoration into the meaning of His position as Son over the house of God. "He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses." Is it not perfectly beautiful—that is, the manner in which the Holy Ghost draws our attention to the divine and human glory of this one all-glorious Person? We are truly encouraged to hold fast the confidence and the joy of the hope to the end; for if we have been taught not to believe in human infallibility, and to reject an earthly priesthood, we have the infallible authority of the Son's word, His heavenly, untiring Priesthood, and with joy and thanksgiving we look up to Him—who created all things as God, and who became man and was made perfect through sufferings—who is Son over God's house.

May we shew, in all our difficulties, that our trust is in Him, and may we own His authority in everything.

E. L. B.

HAD I to perform the smallest act, as that through which I needed to get completeness before God, it would be a denial of the perfectness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE EYE OF A BELIEVER:

EITHER OPENED IN FAITH, OR CLOSED IN THE BLINDNESS
OF BABYLON.

HEB. ii. 9 ; JER. lii. 11.

THE language of faith is, "We see Jesus." Unless faith is in activity it is not always our language. Some, and doubtless Christians among them, are exhorted, "Anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see," and others are warned against spiritual blindness, thus, "He that lacketh these things *is blind*, and cannot see afar off." (Rev. iii. 18 ; 2 Peter i. 9.)

To "see Jesus" according to this language is to have found (while yet here on earth) an object of entrancing worth. The heart then sees nothing here to attract it. Its attractions are found in Him, and where He is. "We look not at the things which are *seen*, but at the things which are *not seen*," and, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory."

Had anyone asked the apostle Paul, "Paul, what are you looking at day by day, thus going on, and not fainting?" "We see Jesus," would have been the only reply. Since it makes so much difference in our every-day life, since so much is gained by those who can with truth join the apostle in this every-day experience, and since there is a great lack in our hearts * when we cannot, may the Lord, in these few lines, draw afresh our attention to the blessedness of him who, threading his way

* Nothing that we have down here will ever satisfy the HEART.

along here, can, in the deep joy of his soul say, "We see Jesus."

First it is necessary to clear the matter, and to see that there *are* two classes of saints, *i.e.* those who are, and with truth, saying this, and those who are not able to do so. Unless we admit this we shall be hardly honest with ourselves. We shall be always misapplying truth, by losing those passages which are applicable to us; while seeking to apply to ourselves those which are not. "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb. v. 13, 14.) This distinguishes the two classes sufficiently.

If we refer first to God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the power of Pharaoh, because the things written of them were types of us, and were "written for our admonition" (1 Cor. x. 11), we see that when once delivered from Egypt and its ruler, they never again fell under the power of that enemy. The word was, "Ye shall see them again no more for ever." Yet as we trace their history we find them in captivity again in Babylon. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." (Psalm cxxxvii. 1.)

What is the difference between Egypt and Babylon?

It is an interesting question to study, but I think the truth of one remark will be admitted by all, *i.e.* that the "world" is before us in both. And it appears to me that Egypt represents the enemy in his oppression and our slavery (before redemption is known), and that Babylon is the enemy in the aspect of the ease and

comfort of things here after redemption. Both show efforts put forth to detain the people of God outside the region of their own proper blessing. That which first caused trouble to God's people in the land was "the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment." Achan coveted these, and hid them in his tent. Hence the weakness of the people, and their inability to take possession of all that God had brought them unto, and provided for them. Oppression or ease are both used as the instruments of the enemy against God's people, though at different times.

If the language of the heart be not "We see Jesus," it is because the spiritual eyesight is gone. "Having eyes" we "see not." And the first thing the enemy—the devil—seeks to do, when he has captured and brought to Babylon one of the Lord's people, is to put out his eyes. So Samson found, when, having gone down to the world and was captured, his eyes were put out, and he had to "grind in the prison-house of Gaza." One who in the power of the Spirit of God would have been mighty, is only seen as a poor blind prisoner, making sport for the Philistines. And what a sad picture we have also in Zedekiah, a prisoner in Babylon, and *blind*. And thus, adds the Spirit, he remained "till the day of his death." (Jer. lii. 10, 11.)

God's people Israel were carried away captive to Babylon because of their sins, but the old Babylon is only a picture of the reality, the moral Babylon, which exists now, and goes onward until in its history we reach Rev. xvii. (ecclesiastical) and xviii. (civil), and in both its final overthrow and judgment from God. "Let us make *us* a name" (Gen. xi. 4), is the key to the understanding of the mystic meaning of Babylon. We

find it all through its typical history: man independent of God. Thus Nebuchadnezzar brings before us the same teaching. "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" It is all the exaltation of man: "I have built," "by *my* power," "for the honour of *my* majesty." Now God will exalt Christ. *His* given name is "above every name." How opposed to the principle of Babylon. "Let us make *us* a name"; though this is man's effort from the cradle to the grave. Thou "hast kept my word, and hast not denied MY NAME." Is that the commendation which we covet?

A person, whose language is Gen. xi. 4, is morally blind to all God's counsel, and to His one purpose, viz., to exalt Christ. His eyes are put out as completely as though he had none, and they are put out because he is occupied with things seen, for it is either with us all occupation with the *first* man or with the *second*, so that if it is not Christ it is self, and I am morally in Babylon, a poor blind prisoner, even if one of God's people. The eye cannot hastily accommodate itself to gaze upon light, if it has for long looked upon darkness, and so it is with those who are captives in Babylon. Put Christ and His interests before them, heavenly things "where Christ sitteth" (Col. iii.), and they cannot see; put self and self-interest before them, viz., earthly advancement, and there is at once a clear comprehension of all the attractions of the scheme. When the *heart* is occupied with things here, the spiritual eye is put out.

It does great damage to our souls in divine things if we say "we see Jesus," merely because we know

that we should have no other object, and because all orthodox Christians, whom we know, say so. It fosters vanity, and it is only on the surface after all. Is it true of *me* that I see Jesus? That is the question. If I do, if I see Him *at all*, He must become the all-absorbing object of my life. It was ever thus with His simple followers—His disciples: "We have found Him . . . come and see," said Philip. "Come, see a Man," said the woman of Samaria. "This is my beloved Son," said the voice of the Father, "hear Him," and thereafter they "saw no man," save Jesus only. If the Lord is not thus seen I may have life; but can it be ignored that a man may *live* and yet be *blind*? If blind, it is the beauties of the HEAVENLY ONE that have no attractions for the soul. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun" (Eccles. xi. 7), and to see that the eye is in me, and that the Sun is Christ, is bringing home these things very close to us. In a former dark day of apostacy and ruin (Mal. iv. 2), (and on the verge of a similar hour we also stand to-day), the comfort was that the Sun would arise. "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in His wings." Alas! if the eye does not see HIM, of what avail is all that we do see? Faith is the telescope which brings the Lord nigh, and the Spirit of God applies that telescope. Gazing upon Him, the language of the *heart*, and thence of the *lip*, is, "We see Jesus."

How then does Satan put out the eyes? It is by occupying us wholly with things down here on earth. I do not think for one moment that they are necessarily *wrong* things. Of course they may be, but a man may be engrossed in what is perfectly lawful, and thus

become spiritually blind. An excuse made by one was, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Was he to ignore this relationship, which God had distinctly formed for man's blessing? No; but since Christ has come to bring into *heavenly* blessings, these earthly ones were not to rob the soul of them (nor were they to be put before them), and this was, and is, their tendency. Hence the Lord says in the same chapter, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." He touches here the greatest earthly blessings, and shows that they may be a real hindrance; for a disciple follows Christ from earth to heaven NOW (and not when he dies merely), and we cannot be truly His disciples here unless we come into this scene from the place whence HE came. "As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." (John xvii. 18.)

One thing more we find to be true only when the eye is opened in faith. I see that I am in the midst of strength, and I do not therefore count my enemies to be of much worth. If I am not in faith I see only the enemy. When the young man's eyes were opened in 2 Kings vi. 17, he saw "horses of fire and chariots of fire round about Elisha." The host of the enemy lay encamped around the man of God, and apparently every avenue of escape was closed. But nearer to him still, and *between him and them*, was the host of God. Likewise a host is encamped against us. The devil seeks by every artifice to drive us off heavenly ground, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers

of the darkness of this world." But having through grace accepted the heavenly position, as the prophet said, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them." We are thus "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

The Lord give us earnestly to desire that the eye shall be ever open in faith, and not closed in the blindness of Babylon.

H. C. A.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

CHAPTER ii. 12-25.

HAVING shown that the Colossians had the *reality*, which always goes farther than the figure, of the Jewish ordinance, he turns to the Christian ordinance of baptism to show that in it they were dead, buried, and gone out of the place of subjection to ordinances. He does not, as in Romans, enter into the bearing of what was professed *in it*—having part in Christ's death—but goes on *from that point*: "*Having been buried with Him in baptism.*" He does this in order to shew what the real place of Christians is, as having "faith in the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." The Colossians are addressed as holy and faithful brethren; the outcome of baptism for such was that they had been co-raised with Him. Christ had gone into death and been raised out of it, and thus a new state for man had been made known in Him, a risen man out of death. We are not actually in this resurrection state, but as having faith in the operation of God who raised Him, we are for faith co-raised with Him. Baptism then is introduced in Colossians not merely to show the bearing

of the death of Christ upon our old state, but as the door through which, by faith in God's operation, we are in association with Him who is in a new and resurrection state. In Romans it is connected with "justification from sin." Justification frees me. Here it is connected with "complete in Him," and it is administratively the way out of the old through faith into the new state which in its nature belongs to heaven. Therefore the apostle adds, "And you, being dead in offences and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him." The resurrection state had been revealed in Christ during the forty days He was seen of the disciples—a state which belonged to heaven though He was still upon earth. The whole state and status of man in the flesh had been left behind in death. Faith entered into what was revealed in Him; for death in all its overwhelming power over man had been annulled, and life and incorruptibility had been brought to light in Him who was quickened out of death. None could follow Him until He had gone through death; now by faith we can, for the enemy is as still as a stone. We are quickened together with Him. Here the real condition of the Colossians before the gospel came to them is laid bare. In their souls they were utterly dead towards God in offences, and with no outward seemliness of religion in the flesh; but God had made them alive with Christ; they were quickened in their souls after His order, and this involves the quickening of the body so that they might bear the image of the heavenly.

But quickened together with Christ is new creation, not merely a resurrection status brought to us while on earth. It is the sovereign act of God in view of His own counsels in connection with the second Man in glory,

though the Colossians only had the glory in hope. In Ephesians the mighty power of God for the accomplishment of His counsels is seen in raising Christ out of death and seating Him at His own right hand, and *His work* is looked at in its entirety as quickening dead sinners together with Christ, raising them, and making them sit in the heavenlies in Him. Thus "raising" here is after "quickening," and is in connection with being made to sit in the heavenly places. In Colossians "raised with Him" comes before quickening is spoken of. It is the status of one upon earth entered upon (as having been buried in baptism), through faith in God's operation in raising Christ. The believer has been brought to Christ's side of death, and the God of grace has quickened him together with Christ so that he may live in the order of Him who has been raised out of death. Consequently his living associations are where Christ is. Christ is his life, the past state of death in sins is behind, all the offences being freely forgiven.

Then the system of ordinances to which the Jews had set their hand, and being in force against them, so far from helping them, is declared to be actually hostile to them—it was but the proof of their guilt. (Rom. iii.) Their obligation to it had been cancelled. God had taken it out of the way by affixing it to the cross. Christendom, by baptismal and confirmation vows, is setting its hand afresh to that which God has taken out of the way by the cross, and in which the obligation was discharged. Besides the hostility of the legal system, there were the spiritual powers of evil, for there is the opposition of these authorities of the darkness of this world. Now all this power of evil had come against Christ, not only privately, as in the

temptation in the wilderness, but publicly on the cross. There the question between God and Satan was settled, and in the thing wherein they dealt proudly He was above them. The power of the enemy, which would prevent the saints from entering into the purposes of God, has been led in triumph in the cross. It has there been rolled back as Jordan of old, so that no hostile powers are seen, and the fullest deliverance is known in association with Christ. The ascension of Christ, and the full result in the saints being seated in the heavenlies in Him, is not developed, but what has been effected in His cross, so that we are in company with Him, and not in the presence of the power of the enemy. The way into the heavenly places then has been opened, and the power of the enemy laid low. Quickened together with Christ, and cut off from the world and its elements, they belonged to an entirely new order of things. No one had a right to question them as to observances, which were only a shadow of things to come. They are called "things to come" because this new order is not actually set up, but the substance of all that was shadowed is "of Christ." It does not say that the body or substance is Christ, but "of Christ." Christ is not merely the *fulfilment* of a shadow, for the substance of all that was shadowed had its *origin* as well as fulfilment in Him; and so it is written, "Jehovah possessed me [not "in," but] the *beginning* of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting." He is the Alpha and Omega of the ways of God. In the new order of things, both in earth and heaven, everything morally is of Him, even as He made it, and it will be filled with His fulness. Now they were filled full in this blessed

Person; they too derived everything from Him. He and all that is of Him was their prize. Would they be robbed of this by any one who of his own will took lower ground in apparent humility, worshipping angels, which was really an intrusion into unseen things, when Christ Himself was the image of the invisible God. Such an one was vainly puffed up by the mind of his flesh, and was not holding the Head, from whom believers derived everything, as His body. It is this truth of the body deriving from the Head which enables us to understand the only organization in the assembly which is of God; and as we individually are holding the Head, we act upon it. The life of the Head is in each member of the body; and every member is necessary, for the whole body is ministered to and united together by the various joints and bands. It receives the supply of grace from the Head through all the members. Only thus does it increase with the increase of God. We thus see that the gathering together of the assembly is on the ground of the body, and that through all the members there is the communication of the grace which flows from the Head for the increase of the body.

The apostle has shewn the position into which believers are brought through having Christ as their life. This being so, His having been put to death in flesh, raised by the operation of God, and now living to God after a new order, must necessarily put them morally and before God outside of all that which He is outside of—the whole system of things moral and religious in which man naturally lives. It must also connect them with another system which is according to God, and which derives everything from Christ as Head.

He is Head in virtue of the glory of His person, the One in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, the second Man now in a resurrection and glorified state. Believers on earth are His body, which grows with *divine* increase, as ministered to and nourished from the Head. He now shews, in verse 20, the inconsistency on their part of subjecting themselves to ordinances that belonged to the old system which had come to an end in the cross and death of Christ. Having Him as life, they had died *with Him* from the rudiments of the world. If it be so, how could they be morally alive in it so as to be prescribed to by men as to corruptible things which perished in the using? It was allowing that the life in Christ risen could be connected with *things that perish*. Having Him as life, they had died with Him to the system of ordinances. To submit to them might have the repute of wisdom, but it was not subjection to Him from whom all fulness of life and blessing flowed. It was a self-imposed worship of beings, into whose ranks they had no right to intrude, together with apparent humility and austerity towards the body which should receive honour as belonging to God who made it. It filled the flesh with satisfaction.

T. H. R.

A GOOD conscience is only conscious of what the pure heart should be in the presence of God, having an entire, unclouded, confidence (faith unfeigned) in God—"That your faith and hope might be in God." If I fail, I fly back to God; if I am weak, I fly back to God with faith unfeigned in Him, as the One who has delivered me, counting upon God, as the One who is for me, to bring me back to my place.

REST FOR THE WEARY.

MATT. xi. 27-30.

JESUS knew man, the world, the generation that had enjoyed the greatest advantages of all that were in the world. There was no place for the foot to rest on in the miry slough of that which had departed from God. In the midst of a world of evil Jesus remained the sole revealer of the Father, the source of all good. Whom does He call? What does He bestow on those who come? Only source of blessing and revealer of the Father, He calls all those who are weary and heavy laden. Perhaps they did not know the spring of all misery; namely, separation from God—*sin*. He knew, and He alone could heal them. If it was the sense of sin which burdened them, so much the better. Every way the world no longer satisfied their hearts; they were miserable, and therefore the objects of the heart of Jesus. Moreover, He would give them rest. He does not here explain by what means; He simply announces the fact. The love of the Father, which in grace, in the person of the Son, sought out the wretched, would bestow rest (not merely alleviation or sympathy, but rest) on every one that came to Jesus. It was the perfect revelation of the Father's name to the heart of those who needed it, and that by the Son—peace, peace with God. They had but to come to Christ. He undertook all, and gave rest. But there is a second element in *rest*. There is more than peace through the knowledge of the Father in Jesus, and

more than that is needed; for even when the soul is perfectly at peace with God, this world presents many causes of trouble to the heart. In these cases it is a question of submission or of self-will. Christ, in the consciousness of His rejection, in the deep sorrow caused by the unbelief of the cities in which He had wrought so many miracles, had just manifested the most entire submission to His Father, and had found therein perfect rest to His soul. To this He calls all that heard Him, all that felt the need of rest to their own souls. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me"; that is to say, the yoke of entire submission to His Father's will, learning of Him how to meet the troubles of life; for He was "meek and lowly in heart," content to be in the lowest place at the will of His God. In fact nothing can overthrow one who is there. It is the place of perfect rest to the heart. J. N. D.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

JOB ii. 3.

THE last clause of this scripture refers to the fact that Satan is the accuser before God of His people. There is another intimation of this anti-priestly activity of Satan in the Old Testament. When Joshua the high priest was standing before the angel of the Lord, Satan was standing at his right hand to resist him. (Zech. iii. 1.) Our Lord also reveals to Peter that Satan desired to have him and his fellow-disciples that he might sift them as wheat (Luke xxii. 31); and we learn from the

book of Revelation that he will carry on his wicked work of accusation until a loud voice in heaven is heard to say, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." (Chap. xii. 10.) When therefore Jehovah says to Satan concerning Job, "He holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause," He alludes to Satan's accusations against His servant. To understand this malicious activity of Satan two things must be remembered. Through the efficacy of the work of Christ, through His death and resurrection, the people of God have a perfect standing, and hence, as to this, God can righteously say that He does not behold iniquity in Jacob, nor see perverseness in Israel. But, secondly, it is true that, notwithstanding this perfect standing and acceptance, God's people often fall into sin. It is this fact which constitutes the basis of Satan's accusation. Thus in the scripture which speaks of his resisting Joshua the high priest, the latter, as representing the remnant, is said to be clothed with filthy garments, for in truth this was the practical condition of Israel at that moment. The question raised by Satan then was, How could God righteously favour a people so defiled? The answer was, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Grace had wrought, had chosen Jerusalem, plucked it, on the ground of the sacrifice, out of the fire of judgment, and it could therefore cause Joshua's iniquity to pass from him, and clothe him with a change of raiment. It should be added that Satan is never allowed to touch

a child of God, as in the cases of Job and Peter, unless there is some hidden evil unjudged. Thus in Job there was confidence in his own integrity and righteousness; in Peter there was confidence in his own affection for the Lord. The sifting of Satan did but bring this to light, and thus lead to self-judgment. While therefore his object was to destroy, he, being in the hands of God, did but unwittingly become the instrument of blessing to their souls. If Satan therefore seeks to move God to destroy his people, and if he obtains permission to do his worst upon them, the only effect is, as with Job, to prepare them for fuller blessing. On the other hand, if we assiduously practise self-judgment in the presence of God, Satan will never be allowed to sift us.

II.

ROMANS x. 4.

Apart from preconceived opinions the force of this scripture is readily perceived. It means exactly what it says, as may be easily gathered from the context, that Christ is the end, or termination, of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; that is, He has for ever done away with it as a means of righteousness before God. It is quite true that the word "end" has sometimes the significance of "object," or the end in view, as for example in James: "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord"—the end of the Lord in His dealings with His servant, bringing out the fact that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. But the word is used in the former sense in Romans; inasmuch as the contrast drawn in the preceding verses is between God's righteousness, to which the Jew would not

submit, and human righteousness, which he was vainly seeking to work out through the law. And then, after the statement that Christ had set aside the law as the means of righteousness, the apostle proceeds to show that righteousness which is on the principle of faith has superseded the principle of law which is expressed in the words, "The man which doeth those things shall live by them." It need scarcely be added, that no one ever succeeded in obtaining righteousness by works (Rom. iii. 19, 20), for by the law came the knowledge of sin. (Chap. vii. 7.) It was the perfect standard of God's requirement from man in the flesh, but the application of it only served to bring out the evil of man's heart. (Chap. v. 20.) It should also be understood, that even if a perfect human righteousness could be obtained it would not now avail. The glory of God is now the absolute standard (chap. iii. 23), and nothing short of God's righteousness is sufficient to meet it. Hence the apostle says in another place that God hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made (become) the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. v. 21.) What unspeakable grace therefore that we become the possessors of the righteousness of God, not by works, but by faith! Who would not then desire, with the apostle, to "be found in Him [Christ], not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Philip. iii. 9.)

III.

ROMANS xv. 12, 13.

It sometimes happens that the connection of a scripture is obscured in a translation. It is so in this

case. The last clause of verse 12 should be rendered, "In Him shall the Gentiles *hope*." Then, as based upon this, the apostle prays, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." But this will be better understood if attention is given to the whole paragraph. In verses 8, 9, Paul points out the difference of the ground on which the Jews and Gentiles originally stood, arising from the fact that God had made promises to the Jew, but not to the Gentile. He therefore says that "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the *truth* of God, to confirm the promises [made] unto the fathers." The presentation of Christ indeed to the Jews was in pursuance of the promises as to the Messiah given through the prophets. It is therefore, we apprehend, during His earthly sojourn that Christ was a "minister of the circumcision"; for after He was rejected and crucified, the Jew must, if saved, come in like the Gentiles, on the ground of mercy. (See Romans xi. 31, 32.) While however there were no promises to the Gentiles, there were prophetic intimations that they would be brought in to share in the grace of the gospel; and the apostle cites, in proof of this, scriptures from the law (Deut.), the Psalms, and the prophets (Isaiah). But brought in, they would have to "glorify God for His mercy," as they had been lost sinners, and destitute of all claim. Mercy and truth thus met together (Psalm lxxxv. 10) in Christ, in His death on the cross, and the foundation was thereby laid on the ground of which God could righteously save both Jews and Gentiles. His truth had been vindicated in sending His beloved Son into the world, and in presenting Him to the Jews as their Messiah, and His mercy has been

exhibited in setting forth Jesus as a propitiation through faith in His blood for the salvation of all, whether Jews or Gentiles, justifying them freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Now, it is in connection with the quotation from Isaiah (*v.* 12) that the word hope is introduced; and this, as we have seen, gives occasion to the prayer in verse 13. The apostle speaks of the God of hope, a large and significant expression; for it is He alone that can produce hope in the hearts of any, even as He Himself is the alone object of hope in accomplishing all the blessing which He has purposed for the Gentiles. And it is the apostle's desire that the saints should be in a practical condition answering to the object of their hope; and hence he prays that the God of hope would fill them with all joy and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope in the power of the Holy Ghost. The expressions should be noted, "*Filled with all joy,*" &c., and this manifestly the apostle regards as the saints' normal condition. True it is only in the power of an ungrieved Spirit that the effect of this will be seen, *abounding* in hope; but the maintenance through watchfulness and self-judgment of the Spirit ungrieved within us, is the requisite of all apprehension and growth in the Christian life. It is well to read such scriptures, and to enquire as we read them whether we in any measure possess the blessings of which they speak.

UNLESS I find more pleasure in the company of the saints than in any other company in the world, I cannot be in the mind of Christ; for He said of the saints, and the excellent of the earth, In them is all my delight.

PAUL AS A PATTERN.

FEW can doubt that in the apostle Paul is presented the closest approximation to the example of Christ that has ever been seen in this world. Two things, as we judge, clearly prove this. First, the fact that he is frequently led of the Holy Spirit to refer to the character of his walk and example among the saints (Acts xx. 18-35, Phil. iii. 17, 1 Thess. ii. 10, &c.); and, secondly, in that he could say in the power of the same Spirit, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." (2 Tim. ii. 10.) Short, therefore, of making expiation for sins, which none but He who was God as well as man could do, the apostle was animated by the same spirit and objects, and trod in the same steps as his blessed Master. The epistle to the Philippians, in which we have Christian experience in the power of the Spirit developed, and as exhibited in Paul who could say, "To me to live is Christ," points to the same conclusion.

The first aspect in which Paul is seen as a pattern is in his conversion. There were conversions before his, as all know; but in one sense he is the first convert, for, until he himself had his eyes opened, and was turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, no details of the change wrought are given. And, speaking of it himself, he says, after telling us that he was the chief of sinners, "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first [or, as

some render, "the first"*] Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." (1 Tim. i. 16.) Those who bowed to Peter's testimony in Jerusalem were truly converted; but they represent rather the elect remnant from among the Jewish nation, and hence the call of Saul of Tarsus is regarded as the new start, the inauguration, as it were, of the economy of grace.

There are several features in his conversion which make him a pattern or model. First, it was Christ who sought him, not he who sought Christ. When on his way to Damascus he was filled with enmity to Jesus of Nazareth, and all the energy of his resolute will was directed to the end of destroying the name of Christ from off the earth. Christ went out from the glory itself to meet His persecutor, and by His grace subdued him at His feet. This was in accordance with the truth of the gospel, in which God is seeking sinners. (Compare John iv. 23, Luke xv. 4-8.) Saul, moreover, as already mentioned, though a most religious man, and blameless, as touching the righteousness which is in the law, was the chief of sinners. It was on this account that he could say that in him the Lord Jesus had shown forth all (or, "the whole") longsuffering as a pattern to all who should afterwards believe. In this aspect, therefore, as a pattern convert, he is an immense encouragement to every poor convicted sinner upon the face of the earth—an encouragement to trust in the heart of Christ, whose longsuffering, while the day of grace continues, can never be exhausted.

* It would seem, if we take it as "the first," that the reference is to himself as "the first" of sinners in the previous verse.

As a Christian also Paul was a pattern. It is not meant that he was always, and in everything, a perfect example. Christ alone is that; He alone was the leader and completer of faith. It is still true that Paul, although he sometimes failed (and his failures are recorded), is pointed out by the Spirit of God as one to be imitated by the people of God. Some examples may be adduced—references to which were made at the commencement. "Brethren," he says, "be followers [imitators] together of me," and he also tells them to mark those who walked "so as ye have us for an ensample." Then he gives two things that characterised him: his conversation, all his interests or life-associations were in heaven, and from thence he was looking for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the goal of all his hopes, inasmuch as then he, in body as well as in soul, would be entirely conformed to the image of Him for whom He waited.

Once again, writing to the Thessalonians, Paul says, "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." (1 Thess. ii. 10.) What a record of the life of a Christian, and made, too, under the eye of God, and before the eyes of men! It takes in, if we understand rightly, three spheres—as "holily" will refer to his walk with God, "justly" to his relationships with his fellow-believers, and "unblameably" to his conduct still in respect of believers, but including perhaps the sphere of the world as the source of contamination. Writing likewise to Timothy, he says, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience," etc.

(2 Timothy iii. 10.) And this statement is important for another reason—as showing that Paul's teaching was the instrumental means by which the Spirit of God produced all this blessed fruit in this elect vessel of His testimony. Other references of the same kind will occur to the reader, and he may abundantly profit by their examination.

As a servant, too, Paul is a model. Take, for example, his address to the elders of Ephesus. Speaking to them of his service amongst them, he says, "Ye know, from the first day after that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears . . . and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house." And again, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts xx. 18-20, 27, &c.) To show how closely he trod in the footsteps of his perfect Master, as to his service, we may cite a few words from Psalm xl. The Lord Himself is the speaker: "I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation: I have not concealed Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth from the great congregation." What a reproduction of the fidelity of the Lord's own service in His servant Paul! And it needs to be studied by every one who seeks to serve acceptably in the power of the Holy Ghost.

One more reference may be made. In 1 Thessalonians we read, "Our gospel came not unto you in

word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." (Chap. i. 5.) The point to be observed is that the life, the walk, of the apostle corresponded with, yea, was the embodiment of, his teaching. And surely this is the mark of a perfect servant! Nothing is sadder indeed than the contrariety often witnessed between the testimony and the life of a witness; and nothing humbles a servant more deeply in the dust before God than the consciousness of how poorly he presents in his own conduct the truths he proclaims. But here was one who could call to his converts' remembrance the character of his conversation when labouring in their midst. The power of the Holy Ghost was thus as much displayed in his everyday life as in his proclamation of the gospel of God's grace. This explains to us why the Holy Spirit led the apostle to dwell so often, and so fully, upon the character of his life and ministry. (See 1 Cor. i. 12, vi. 3-10, xi. 5-29, &c.) It is that we might all be stirred up to seek grace to tread, in our several measures, in the same blessed path of entire devotedness to Christ.

It may, however, be replied that Paul was a chosen vessel, and that as such he received singular and special strength for his walk and service. This is undoubtedly true, as also that he had pre-eminent gifts, received extraordinary revelations when caught up into paradise, and had peculiar responsibilities. But let it be, at the same time, insisted upon that Christ is as all-sufficient for us in our several positions as He was for Paul. When He said to His servant, "My grace is sufficient

for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness," He announced the secret of sustainment and power for every one of His servants. We possess, moreover, the same indwelling Spirit; so that the only thing wanting on our parts is Paul's realized dependence, Paul's singleness of eye, and Paul's concentration and purpose of heart. May the Lord Himself come in and produce these things in our souls, that He may be more abundantly glorified in our ways and service!

THE MAN OF FAITH AND THE DEVIL: THEIR FIRST ENCOUNTER.

See MATTHEW iv. 1-11: GENESIS xii. 10.

"LOVE not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." Here we have in few words the opposition which we have to meet. No sooner have you started in the path of *faith* than you have to meet Satan with all the attractions of *sight*. You become an object of importance to the enemy, who knows that there is only that scene of faith and this scene of sight for man, and of this latter he is the "prince." I do not think that we can too much insist on this fact with young Christians, nor that older ones would suffer much by reminding one another more often than they do of the same thing. You will have to face the devil if you have started on the path of faith, and the devil, remember, with all the power and attractions of *the world* at his back.

To illustrate it we will take the two greatest examples

of faith contained in the word of God, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ ("God over all, blessed for ever," yet a man of faith walking down here), and Abraham, the "father of the faithful"—the friend of God. In both cases (as I believe in all cases) the world is presented to each in order to destroy the testimony of a man of faith, *i.e.* of one whose path is opposed to sight, and to all its attractions.

We should remember that Satan's object, if we have fairly started on the path of faith, is to silence us as living witnesses of the sufficiency of God in every exigency of the path, and also (that others may not be delivered) to weaken us. This is his object. He cannot touch the fact that we are the Lord's; he can, however, spoil us as to our testimony and enjoyment of this fact. He does not deny that we are men of faith; he will seek, however, that we shall not *walk* by faith.

The enemy's object is always to frustrate God's purpose. It is directed against Christ, who is the object of that purpose, and as a part of that purpose (for what is there on earth that is for Christ but Christians?) you have to meet it. When the Lord was on earth He had to meet this enemy armed with all the power and attractions of the world, before He entered on His public ministry; and I think we shall find that we too have to meet him. That is, Christ had first to "bind the strong man" before He could "spoil his goods." We find the same enemy in the history of Abram. Abram is called as a man of faith to take up his abode on new ground—God's witness on the earth. The devil says, "I will spoil all that." A famine arises in Canaan, and Abram goes down to Egypt; he turns to a human *resource*, and Egypt is only and always a type of this world.

Now let us glance a moment at the results in each case. In the case of our blessed Lord it was a triumph over all that the enemy presented to allure Him out of the path of dependence on God. Thus He was set for God in this world, and it was true of Him onward, "I have set the Lord *always* before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." (Psalm xvi.) In Abram's case, as we know, he was overcome. He yielded to the attack of the enemy, but as to both it was the same. The attack was, "Provide for the necessities of the *body*, *i.e.* for yourself in this scene, and don't say that you are not of it." And why should we look at all this and the results in each case? It is because *we* must meet this enemy, as every man of faith has had to meet him, and, yielding to him, our usefulness as God's witnesses is gone. Oh may we seek to impress it upon each other, that it is how we acquit ourselves in this first encounter that will stamp us! Unless there is recovery I shall bear the impress of defeat ever after as I go through this scene. Through grace there was recovery in the case of Abram. (See Genesis xiii. 1.) But look at the lost time. There was no communion with the Lord—no altar in Egypt—and this is just what Satan wants; for you may *say* what you will—claim that you are a man of faith, and know and teach that Canaan is the right place—so long as you give up heavenly ground, and are not found occupying it for God *yourself*.

The Lord hungered, and Abram hungered, and the devil was at hand with all the resources of the world for each, and apparently just at the moment of need. But remember there are two scenes, two regions, and *only two*, and you even, as to the needs of your body

here (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20), belong to the region of faith, and not to that of sight.

As to this world it is a moral wreck, but natural things remain. Thus it comes before us in John's Gospel and Epistles. The devil has full control of it. He was constituted and accepted as the "prince of this world" on the rejection of Christ. The world then, this moral ruin, Satan presides over, using it all to defeat, if he can, God's purposes for the saints. It is to *them* he approaches, and as a friend. He offers to bestow upon the saints anything that they will accept here, and he holds it all in his hand. He uses the outward to affect the inward, *i.e.* the state of the soul.

But let us look behind the offered bait. What is his object? As you receive from the hands of Satan anything here, you lose *morally*. You lose your ability to be here for God. It is written—and with this may we defeat him—"A *gift* doth blind the eyes of the wise" (Deut. xvi.), and he that "will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James iv. 4).

With a threefold effort Satan comes. (1 John ii. 16.) He comes with "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes," or "the pride of life," and the object he has in thus coming to every saint who enters on the path of faith is to nullify his testimony. But he must be met before you can go through this world, where he reigns, and rob him of his prey. His attractions must be overcome by me first, ere I can be useful in delivering others from the snare. A man of faith must refuse the devil's supplies, or he ceases to walk by faith. He must refuse the world's honours—"I will promote thee to great honour" (see Numbers xxii. 17)—if he would have the "honour that cometh from God only." (John v. 44.)

It is not difficult to account for the weakness which exists, and the inability to deliver from worldliness which is found in the ministry of some who have the truth, and are real children of God themselves. If I have fallen, and am living in the attractions or honours or supplies of Satan myself, how can I deliver others? How can *my* walk then be characterized, as so many have been in the past, as the steady, onward, triumphant walk through an adverse scene of a "man of faith"? Never having overcome Satan individually when he comes with all the power of the world, explains why the power and ministry of so many is practically NIL. It is not that they are not Christians. I am not in any doubt of that; but what is manifest is that as to the *world*—this moral scene of evil—they are not conquerors, and are not clear of it. Hence the Spirit of God does not support their testimony, and there is little result. Many a Christian labourer would not only leave his mark for God *in this world*, but would also leave it *on the Church of God*, where now there is nothing of note in his testimony, had he not gone down to Egypt when Satan met him. He responded to the attractions presented, and his usefulness to others on God's behalf was, and is, practically at an end.

But while we can heartily thank God that recovery from this state is possible, before we speak of it, I would dwell a little on another thing.

Very often there is great activity among those who have *not overcome the worldly attractions and snares of Satan*. They are active in *preaching the gospel*. They preach, and it might be argued that God blesses their preaching by conversions. But note this—their converts as a class do not overcome the world. They are

like their fathers, and the work bears the stamp of the workman. But all this is below the mark. The full Gospel, *i.e.* "CHRIST, is preached," and the new man does not tolerate this evil moral system called the world. The Son delivers from it (John viii. 36), and the evangelist connects souls with HEAVEN. "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel." (Col. i. 5.) This is clear; the gospel does not improve the man to leave him morally in this scene, though he may be an improved citizen, or husband, or father while in it. The gospel starts him to walk through it as only a *delivered* man can walk through it—to walk a conqueror unmoved by the empty and paltry follies of Satan, which he sees all around him. As to this see 2 Corinthians ii. 14. Such was the path of a man of faith down here.

I now turn to the fact that recovery from Egypt is possible. "And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had." (Gen. xiii. 1.) This was a second great day in the history of Abram. The first was when he went forth from Ur of the Chaldees. He was not made by this second act a man of faith. He was a man of faith before, but Satan was refused and overcome thereby, and Abram was constituted afresh God's witness on the earth. He was again a witness that a man of faith could give up "his country, his kindred, and his father's house," and now *more*, even all the supplies of Egypt, to walk by faith with God. This is an honour much to be desired for every believer; it was not a little thing. Earthly ties counted nothing—the *country* counted nothing—no fresh country do his feet yet tread—a pilgrim and stranger on the earth,

with God as his all-sufficient and only resource; such was Abram.

It is to such, viz., to those who have given up Egypt, and not to the general company of believers, that God reveals His mind. Lot is a picture of the general company, yet a true believer without doubt. (2 Peter ii. 7, 8.) Concerning all His purposes with respect to the promised SEED (Isaac,—as a type of Christ) God instructs not Lot but Abram, now. (See ch. xiii. 14, 15, 16.) This is what we want. We want to know more of communion with the Father, as to all His purposes for and concerning the SON. Typically, Abram got it, and then when afterward Lot accepts the world and is captured by it Abram is, as the recovered man, in the *place* where God can use him to deliver his brother from the toils of the enemy. "And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot." Here is an instance of what we ought to know more about. Sodom was just as much a picture of the world as Egypt. It was the *honour* of the place, not a famine, that had caught Lot and made him a resident there. What we should covet is, to so let faith control us that we can be used of God to deliver our brethren from such associations, through having overcome the enemy in these very things ourselves. Abram, while yet in Egypt had given up pilgrimage and could not have delivered Lot from this trouble into which he had got by also giving it up, and that he had is proved by his association with the king of Sodom.

But another thing must be said. Lot is rescued, but though again in the place of testimony (and manifestly God *had* started him afresh) yet he clung to the world still. He is in marked contrast thus to Abraham.

Abram learnt by his failure and overcame, Lot did not, and though not involved in the judgment of the world (Sodom), Lot had, so to speak, to be dragged out of it. He was saved "so as by fire." And though a "righteous" man, and (when the truth of the awfulness of the time came) one who went out in testimony to others about it, what was his testimony worth? What effect had it on his own household? "He seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law." Such was the little effect produced by the testimony of a "righteous man" who was not separated from the principles and walk and ways of the world, and we have not far to go to find a testimony which produces a similar effect—a "righteous soul vexed from day to day"—and his testimony ineffectual because unsupported by God's power.

The Lord give to us now to face this matter calmly, and since it is for God, boldly. I may be a Christian, but do I love the world? It is the "young men" *i.e.*, those who have *advanced* in the divine life and who are no longer babes, that are warned against the world, because Satan is using it against them. The love of the Father is contrasted with the love of the world. Don't say it is impossible for those who are "of God" and *real* to love it. "Demas hath forsaken me," said Paul, "having loved this present world." Was there no danger of it in those whom John addressed? Was Lot not real and were not John's "young men" real? We are all "unprofitable servants" no doubt, but what hinders us in our testimony to-day if it is not the world? May the Lord give us, *with Him* and in prayer for light, to face this grave defect for His name's sake. Amen.

RESTORATION AND COMMUNION.*

I SUPPOSE there is no better test of the extent of our rest in Christ, and sense of what He is in Himself, than seclusion from everything else, and every one else. One learns in a sleepless night how much real resource and company one has in Him. Alas! we turn to Him more as we would to natural food, to support and revive us, than to the One "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." "I live, yet not I; but Christ liveth in me."

It is not that I can engage in my own pursuits and interests, and, when exhausted (like a labouring man seeking his meals and then rest), turn then to Christ to supply with heavenly cheer and strength. It is quite true that He does do this; but the soul will find that His ministry to it is very different when it turns to Him after being soiled with the care, and business, and plans of this life; and when it turns to Him for re-invigoration and repose, after it has been trying and seeking, however feebly, to live out Christ in every relation of life, and as one exhausted and oppressed with inability, turning to Him as the source of life and strength. Plainly the former lives two lives, the latter only one. The former probably would argue that there are duties and engagements devolving on him among men, which he was bound to attend to sedulously. This I do not deny; but if they cannot bring Christ into them, if they cannot make Him companion and

* This paper, taken from an old publication, is assigned to J. G. B.—if truly the style is different from many of his writings.

Lord in them, it is plain that they live where He does not, or rather, where He is shut out. Hence they must live a life of their own. I am then at my own disposal, not at the Lord's. In the latter case, I am entirely at His disposal, feeling that I am His, sensible continually how feeble I am; but always insisting that this is my only true course—to be His.

It is not that I give this or that to Him. He is before me in everything. If I talk or arrange for my family (alas! how little one knows it), He is the One present who is first to be considered, how He would like things to be, &c., and they are determined accordingly. I think you will find there is a great difference in the way the former and latter receive from Christ; and in the seclusion and loneliness of solitude we at ordinary times discover who has been prominent with us, *Himself* or *ourselves*.

Hence, in God's wisdom and love, prolonged times of seclusion are imposed on us, in order to expose to us, and teach us, the extent of our satisfaction *in*, and occupation *with*, Christ Himself. If I wander into my own plans and arrangements here, and to my duties where Christ is left out, I shall find, on turning to Him, that there is delay to enjoyment of Him. The light is clearing the clouds away before the entrancing scenery is disclosed. I may and do feel that I am divinely dealt with, and this is a cheer to a *wandering* heart, though certainly not to a devoted one. The devoted one seeks to know something more of Him, and this is not imparted to the one only enjoying *restoration*. I do not say that restoration is not most blessed—it is so; but it is nothing in comparison to the communication of His own mind, which is made to

the devoted one, and which *he* seeks. True, the restored one enjoys the power of the light in freeing him from all uncleanness; but the devoted one passes into the region where He is not a stranger, and looks and listens for His voice, and hence grows in the knowledge of Him. Seclusion continually leads the soul into this; and often has it to bless the Lord for such a time, when it has begun to learn such nearness to Christ, and tasted, to the great joy of the heart, the greatness of His resources.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

* CHAPTER iii. 1-16.

WE have had the glory of the person of Christ before us (chapter i. 15-19); the reconciliation He has effected, in virtue of which all things in heaven and earth will be brought back to the fulness which is in Him, and by which we are now brought to God through His death. (Chap. i. 20, 21.) His headship of the body (chap. i. 18), and the saints complete in Him; the blessed Man in glory, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily (chap. ii. 10); also their deliverance by His death and resurrection from the present system of this world. Christ too was in them, the hope of glory. This carried them in hope to the moment when everything in earth and heaven will be filled with the power and presence of Christ. This waits for His manifestation, when the saints will be manifested in glory with Him, but He is already sitting at the right hand of God. Every glory for earth or heaven is of Him, and all *now* is gathered up where He is. It is from thence that Christ will

come forth in power to make good every purpose of God. The first act of the power which will subdue all things to Himself, will be to change our bodies of humiliation and fashion them like His body of glory. *Out of heaven* He comes as Saviour to fashion in resurrection glory a people for the heavens. Moreover, in order to Jehovah's name being excellent in all the earth, His glory has been set above the heavens—*there* Christ is sitting. The groaning creation also waits for the manifestation of the sons of God in order to be delivered from the bondage of corruption. It is from thence the Redeemer will come to Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. The Stone set at nought by the builders has become the head of the corner. He will yet be acknowledged in the place of exaltation, and as coming forth from thence it will be said, "Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord." It will be as when Moses and Aaron came forth from the tabernacle and blessed the people. (Leviticus ix. 23.) But we know Him *now* while He is inside. He is there as having glorified God and the Father upon earth. All things are now put into His hands, and He will yet accomplish all the counsels of God from that place of power and glory. Do we then wonder at being exhorted to seek the things above where Christ is sitting? This exhortation is founded on the teaching of chapter ii. 12. For those who are risen with Christ, the "things upon earth" are the "things behind." (Phil. iii. 13.) Dead with Him, our proper life is in that sphere where Christ lives to God. He *is* our life, and necessarily our life must be where He *is*—a hidden life of which the world knows nothing.

The apostle further says, "Have your mind on things

above." We are not merely to seek them, but as associated with Christ, and He being our life, they can be the home of our mind and affections. Would to God we all knew more of this while not actually in them. How it would magnify the precious Saviour who has opened the way through death for us to make *His things* the objects of our desire, and the home of our thoughts and mind. It is only in this way that we become acquainted with them. If we look at the things upon earth, though created good, they are now morally characterized by what is of the first man. The things above are characterised by Him who not only created them, but has taken His place in them as Man, all the fulness dwelling in Him bodily. Once He came into the midst of the things upon earth, and there was not a consequence of sin which He did not meet even to death itself. "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Matt. xi. 5.) It might have been as the days of heaven upon earth had they not been offended in Him. Rejected from the earth, He has died, and is now sitting at God's right hand, and there, in the place of glory and power, every blessing and honour and glory which centres in Him, whether for heaven or earth, is now gathered up awaiting the day of His manifestation.

"Ye are dead," says the apostle, for so the Spirit of God regards the believer according to the teaching of chapter ii., "and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." The contrast here is between the hidden place of our life now, and the manifestation in glory when all that is of Christ, our

life, will shine forth in us, as we actually come forth with Him from the midst of the things above, which now we seek and have our mind and affections in them. It is in the power of this hidden life that we can mortify our members upon earth. There is corruption in the world through lust—corruption which will bring the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Once the Colossians lived in the things of this corruption, and walked in them. Now their life and affections were in another scene, and they are called upon to mortify the members upon earth. Then there is behaviour in word and work which arises from the violent passions of men. This is to be put off also, and falsehood is to have no place with those who as saints have put off the old man with his deeds. Let us note here that it is not a mere question of right and wrong which is involved. We often like to raise this question, and so retain the old man. But as associated with Christ, and having Him as our life, *the old man with his deeds* has been put off, and the new man has been put on. It is a new subjective state which has been brought in by the resurrection of Christ, the old man having been set aside in His death. Adam, who was made in the image of God, by reaching up to be as God, fell, and acquired the knowledge of good and evil, but not the knowledge of God, or what was suited to God. But the new man is renewed *unto full knowledge*, after the image of Him that created him, that is, after Christ. In Him every question of good and evil as it is before God has been solved, so that every thing can be known in a new and divine way. All is known according to Christ, He being the image after which the new man is created.

Here then all the distinctions of race, creed, or

station, which obtained with the old man, are unknown, for Christ is everything. In the new man, brought in by resurrection, all is renewed according to *His* image. Christ, too, is *in* every one, as the life in a power by which all His traits are developed in the saints. Consequently the Colossians are exhorted "as the elect of God, holy and beloved." That is how Christ is spoken of. He is God's Elect (Isaiah xlii. 1), the Holy (Psalm lxxxix. 19) and Beloved One. (Matthew iii. 17.) Such is the character of the Christian as having put on Christ, and as such he is to put on all those traits of the new man, which are of Him—compassions, graciousness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance of one another; forgiving each other, if there be any cause of complaint, Christ being the pattern after which it is to be done: "As Christ forgave you," freely and graciously, "so also do ye." Then love is to be put on as that in which all these qualities are united together in a perfectness which flows from God's own blessed nature. These traits of Christ come out in men, for they belong to the new man; but it is the divine nature, love, which links all together in a perfection which is according to that nature. Thus we read, in 1 John iv. 12, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." The peace of Christ is to preside in our hearts. No doubt it is divine, the peace of God; but as it was seen in Christ, the peace in which He ever dwelt, and in which He moved amidst every circumstance that tended to try the spirit. A very man, He ever dwelt in the repose of His Father's love. He was never "moved to haste" by the oppositions of men, nor by the want of understanding, and the unbelief of His own. At the moment of His rejection He could say, "I thank Thee,

Father," and invite any weary heart to come and share the repose of His meek and lowly heart. We have been called to this peace of Christ in one body; for it is in the peaceful affections of Christ with which saints walk towards each other, that the unity to which they have been called for the manifestation of Christ in them is displayed. So far from there being elements of disturbance, we thus become those who are grateful, and full of thanksgiving in the sense of the favour of the God of peace and love.

In addition the apostle adds, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." It is here called the word of Christ because it is the word by which we acquire the knowledge, and are formed in the habits, tastes, and affections of the new man. The word of Christ is thus the revelation to us of what He is, for it is after His image that the new man is created; and dwelling in us richly, it produces communion in the inner life of the soul with all that is revealed of Christ in the word. "In all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another." We may here refer to chapter i. 28 for this same expression, "in all wisdom." It is how Paul admonished and taught. We know that Christ is the wisdom of God, and He is made to us wisdom. (1 Cor. i. 24, 30.) The word of Christ, revealing Him as the centre of all the counsels and glory of God, gives us the knowledge of a wisdom hidden indeed from this world, but ordained before the world for our glory. As entering into these unseen things of wisdom, we are to teach and admonish one another, that so we may help in forming each other after the image of Christ. Another effect of the word of Christ dwelling in us will be the heart expressing itself with grace to the Lord in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.

“THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER.”

To explain the expression, “Her sins are forgiven, for she loved much,” we must distinguish between grace revealed in the person of Jesus and the pardon He announced to those whom the grace had reached. The Lord is able to make this pardon known. He reveals it to the poor woman. But it was that which she had seen in Jesus Himself which, by grace, melted her heart, and produced the love she had to Him—the seeing what He was for sinners like herself. She thinks only of Him; He has taken possession of her heart, so as to shut out other influences. Hearing that He is there, she goes into the house of this proud man, without thinking of anything but the fact that Jesus is there. His presence answered or prevented every question. She saw what He was for a sinner, and that the most wretched and disgraced found a resource in Him. She felt her sins in the way that this perfect grace, which opens the heart and wins confidence, causes them to be felt; and she loved much. Grace in Christ had produced its effect. She loved because of His love. This is the reason that the Lord says, “Her sins are forgiven, because she loved much.” It was not that her love was meritorious for this, but that God revealed the glorious fact that the sins—be they ever so numerous and abominable—of one whose heart was turned to God were fully pardoned. There are many whose hearts are turned to God, and who love Jesus, that do not know this. Jesus pronounces on their case

with authority, sends them away in peace. It is a revelation, an answer, to the wants and affections produced in the heart made penitent by grace revealed in the person of Christ.

If God manifests Himself in this world, and with such love, He must needs set aside in the heart every other consideration. And thus, without being aware of it, this poor woman was the only one who acted suitably in those circumstances; for she appreciated the all-importance of the One who was there. A Saviour-God being present, of what importance was Simon and his house? Jesus caused all else to be forgotten. Let us remember this.

The beginning of man's fall was loss of confidence in God, by the seducing suggestion of Satan that God had kept back what would make man like God. Confidence in God lost, man seeks, in the exercise of his own will, to make himself happy; lusts, sin, transgression follow. Christ is God in infinite love, winning back the confidence of man's heart to God. Removal of guilt, and power to live to God, are another thing, and found in their own place through Christ, as pardon comes in its place here. But the poor woman, through grace, had felt that there was one heart that she could trust if none else, but that was God's.

God is light, and God is love. These are the two essential names of God, and in every true case of conversion both are found. In the cross they meet. Sin is brought fully into the light, but in that by which love is fully known. So in the heart light reveals sin; that is, God as light does, but the light is there by perfect love. The God who shows the sins is there in perfect love to do it. Christ was this in this world.

Revealing Himself, He must be both; so Christ was love in the world, but the light of it. So in the heart. The love through grace gives confidence, and thus the light is gladly let in; and in the confidence in the love, and seeing self in the light, the heart has wholly met God's heart. So with this poor woman. This is where the heart of man and God always and alone meet. The Pharisee had neither. Pitch dark, neither love nor light was there. He had God manifest in the flesh in his house, and saw nothing, only settled that He was not a prophet. It is a wondrous scene to see these three hearts—man's, as such, resting on false human righteousness, God's, and the poor sinner's, fully meeting it as God did hers. Who was the child of wisdom? for it is a commentary on that expression.

And note, though Christ had said nothing of it, but bowed to the slight, yet He was not insensible to the neglect, which had not met Him with the common courtesies of life. To Simon He was a poor preacher, whose pretensions he could judge, certainly not a prophet; for the poor woman, God in love, and bringing her heart into unison with His as to her sins and as to herself, for love was trusted in. Note, too, this clinging to Jesus is where true light is found; as it was also here that the fruitful revelation of the gospel was made to Mary Magdalene as to the highest privilege of saints. (John xx.)

Two effects follow upon the apprehension of grace as revealed in Christ. First, it gives liberty in coming into the presence of God; and, secondly, it produces energy in self-judgment. A sign of being in the sense of grace is when, on every occasion of failure, God is justified and self is condemned.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

COL. i. 18.

THE expression, "that in all things He might have the pre-eminence," refers to the two spheres of the glory of Christ, of which mention has just been made; viz., creation and the assembly; and it simply means that it is God's purpose that Christ should have the "first place," the absolute supremacy, in both. The proper glory of the person of Christ, or rather of the Son, is the special subject of this epistle; and, in addition, His acquired glory through His death and resurrection is unfolded. Thus the moment the apostle touches redemption in the words, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins," he proceeds to say, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature" (or, "before all creation"). And we learn that He takes the pre-eminence in creation (He who was "before all things," eternally existent as the Son) on the ground of being Himself the Creator. If all things, whatever their degree or glory, were created by Him and for Him, and if all things subsist in Him, by the very rights of His own person He must have the place of supremacy in all the circles of created existences. But there is another sphere—a sphere outside of creation—which has been revealed in connection with the counsels of God in redemption; viz., that of the assembly, as the body of Christ. Of this we learn that He is head. For if God has brought the first man, Adam, to his

judicial end in the cross, Christ in resurrection is the "beginning," God's commencement of His new order in the person of the Second Man. It is true that He *was* the Second Man in incarnation, but He was not in the condition of the Second Man until he was risen and glorified; and hence it is that He, as glorified, is presented as the model to which all the redeemed are to be conformed. He is, moreover, "the beginning" as the "firstborn from the dead"; and it is as such also that He has become the Head of the body, the church, of which believers have been, through grace, made members in virtue of the indwelling Spirit. In this circle also Christ must therefore be necessarily supreme; and happy is it for us when we practically and habitually acknowledge His pre-eminence in "all things." The following remarks may be further helpful: "One of these pre-eminences depends on His divine rights as Creator, the other on His work and on the power displayed in His humanity in the act of resurrection. He holds all as Man and all by divine glory; but in some sort it may be said that one part of His glory depends on His divinity, the other on His victory as Man."

II.

MATTHEW vii. 13, 14.

While the main subject of the Lord's discourse on the mount pertains to the kingdom (see chap. v., 3, 10, 19, 20, etc.), much of it, and indeed all its moral principles, will abide for all time. Thus the "strait gate" and the "broad" way are true of every dispensation—up to the reign of Christ during the thousand years. For man being what he is, alienated from God, is ever in opposition to the truth, to God's testimony however

presented. The terrors of the law, as well as the attractions of grace, only serve him for an occasion to find fault with, and to condemn, the messenger. (Luke vii. 31-34.) The consequences are twofold; first, the mass travel in the broad road (for all the influences of this world favour the enmity of their own hearts), which leadeth to destruction; and, secondly, the few who are wrought upon by the grace of God, and have their eyes opened to their state and need, find that both the gate, and "the way" which leadeth unto life, are strait and narrow. Repentance and faith constitute the entrance (the gate), and God's will, the Lord Himself indeed, is the way of life. Every Christian should know that the closer he keeps to Christ, the more faithfully he treads in His footsteps, the narrower is his path; whereas the multitude, following only the bent of their own desires and inclinations, roam and wander without restriction. Bearing this in mind, it is easy to interpret the Lord's figurative language.

III.

ROMANS xiv. 20; 1 COR. viii. 10, 11.

Both of these scriptures present the same truth, and bring out in a very striking way the solemn responsibility of guarding the consciences of our brethren. It is impossible, as we all know, to "destroy" a child of God, for none can pluck even the feeblest out of His hands. On our side, however, we may, by our conduct, do our best to destroy a saint, and we might even succeed in doing so, were it not for the preventing and sustaining grace of God as the fruit of His faithful and unchanging love. Hence, when the apostle says, "For meat destroy not the work of God," he speaks

of what has been aptly termed "the bearing of the act," *i.e.*, the tendency of our action is to cause, as said in Corinthians, our weak brother to perish, one for whom Christ died. And the addition of the last clause shows out, in the most forcible manner, the character of indifference to the peril of a weak believer. Christ died for him in order to save him, whereas one who would act, as here described, because of his superior knowledge, would, for the sake of maintaining his own liberty, exhibit the most culpable carelessness of his brother's eternal welfare. It may be added, not as interpretation, but as offering a further consideration, that, while we cannot cause a brother to perish, we may destroy him morally, and consequently his testimony in this world. Both passages are, with the context, very instructive, and their teaching should be much heeded in the mixed state of things in which we are found.

THE SCRIPTURES.—The Scriptures have a living source, and living power has pervaded their composition; hence their infiniteness of bearing, and the impossibility of separating any one part from its connection with the whole, because one God is the living centre from which all flows; one Christ, the living centre round which all its truth circles, and to which it refers, though in various glory; and one Spirit, the divine sap which carries its power from its source in God to the minutest branches of the all-united truth, testifying of the glory, the grace, and the truth of Him whom God sets forth as the Object and Centre and Head of all that is in connection with Himself, of Him who is withal God over all, blessed for evermore.

J. N. D.

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE.

1 KINGS xvii.

THE energy of the Spirit of God is often most strikingly displayed in the times of darkest spiritual corruption. It was so in the case of Elijah. At the close of the preceding chapter the awful state of things in connection with the reign of Ahab is briefly presented: "Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." Not only did he continue in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, but he also went and married a heathen wife; and thereon he adopted the worship of Baal. Full-blown apostasy is therefore seen in Ahab.

Man may shut God out of his thoughts, but he cannot hide himself from God's eyes. We thus learn, at the very commencement of chap. xvii., that God had already lifted His arm to chastise His guilty people, and that His servant went to announce the coming judgment to the apostate king. "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Israel, under the leadership of Ahab and Jezebel, had forsaken the fountain of living waters, and now they should learn, not only that the cisterns, the broken cisterns, which they had hewn for themselves, could hold no water, but also that all the natural sources of life should be dried up under the judgment of God.

There is no previous mention of Elijah. God had prepared His servant in secret for His work, and then, at the needed moment, he appeared upon the scene. It is always so in the great crises of the history of God's people. When it seems to the eye of unbelief that there is none to guide them any more, none to take them by the hand, and that their condition is hopeless because the enemy has come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord thrusts forth some chosen vessel to raise a standard against the advancing power of the foe. Gideon, Jephthah, Samuel, and David, as well as many more, will be remembered as exemplifications of this principle—a principle which ministers encouragement and hope to believers in every age when cast down and despondent because of prevailing corruptions.

One thing we are permitted to gather from another scripture of Elijah's previous history. It is that he was a man who walked with God, and was therefore characterised by spiritual power, while maintaining this place of dependence and communion. We thus read in the epistle of James that "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." (Chap. v. 17.) There is not a word of this in our chapter; and this accounts for the peculiar introduction of the prophet to our notice. It is not said that he was sent by Jehovah with the message to the king, nor even that he was a prophet; but "Elijah the Tishbite [who was], of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab." With the light afforded by James we may perceive that he had been brought into the knowledge of God's mind

through his own exercises of soul, and that he could, on this account, in the assured confidence of his prayers having been heard, proclaim with certainty what was coming upon Israel. If his office was an exalted one, his spiritual condition suited him for it.

Bearing this in mind, the terms of his announcement become all the more significant. It is not, as before noticed, "Thus saith the Lord," but, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand." Ahab and his people might refuse the God of their fathers, and choose their own idols; but for faith, and hence for Elijah, Jehovah was still the Lord God of Israel. If the people believed not, God was still faithful, and Elijah reposed on the rock of God's unchanging love and covenant. There is however more: "As the Lord God of Israel *liveth*." Dead idols had usurped His place, and Ahab and Israel were acting as if Jehovah were like unto the gods they had made for themselves. In contrast with this, He was for Elijah the living God. And it is a grand thing for the soul when this simple truth has its true place and power.

The position and service of Elijah are strikingly set forth by the succeeding words—"before whom I stand." From many other scriptures we learn that to stand before another is to place oneself at the other's disposal, to occupy, in fact, the position of a servant. We read, for example, of Gehazi, that, after he had followed Naaman, and obtained from him the talents of silver and the changes of raiment, he went in and "stood before" his master, thus resuming his place of service. Elijah

in like manner was characterised by standing before the Lord God of Israel, waiting ever there to do His bidding, even as the angels who do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word. And let it be remembered, that Elijah was as much the servant when silently waiting for the indication of his Master's will, as when executing His commissions. As has been written, "They also serve who stand and wait." Blessed position and attitude, for therein are contained the two great principles of the Christian life, viz., dependence and obedience.

It should also be noticed that the announcement, that there should not be dew nor rain, is connected with the word of Elijah; "but," he added, "according to my word." If Elijah possessed the mind of Jehovah, and communicated it in the power of the Holy Ghost, God would vindicate His own name, and the truth of His servant, by using the one who had proclaimed the judgment to foretell the return of blessing. This is exceedingly beautiful; and it shows, at the same time, how careful the Lord is, in His precious grace, to sustain His servants who go forth in His name to do His bidding. Elijah had pledged the name of the Lord God of Israel, as the living God, to the certain fulfilment of his announcement; and hence Elijah must be the channel through which the cessation of judgment would be revealed. It is the identification of Jehovah with His servant, so that, as the Lord said to His disciples, "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me." This is unspeakable grace on the Lord's part, and a surpassing privilege and responsibility for the servant.

Whenever God publicly chastises His people, even those that are apart from the sins that have occasioned the discipline share its governmental consequences. Elijah is thus subject to the deprivations which followed upon the drought as well as Ahab. There is however an immense difference. God was against Ahab, and He therefore would cause the king to feel the unmitigated effects of the judicial rod; on the other hand God was for Elijah, and He would consequently sustain His servant, and meet his needs by the ministrations of His favour outside of His own governmental order. This principle is stated in one of the Psalms, "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine." (Psalm xxxiii. 18, 19.) And this principle is notably exemplified in the case of Elijah—as seen in the following incidents in our chapter.

First, however, it may be remarked, that as soon as Elijah's work was, for the moment, done, he is immediately withdrawn from public notice. "The word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan." The servant has no importance in himself, nor must he have any in the eyes of others, saving in so far as he is the representative of his Master. When therefore Elijah's special mission was accomplished, he was immediately withdrawn, that, in quiet and retirement, he might again stand before the Lord God of Israel, until he should be sent forth on another errand. Happy it is for the servant who thus understands his place, who seeks nothing for

himself, who endeavours at all times to hide himself behind the One who sends him, and who never courts notice or favour on his own account. A true servant ever seeks to attract the attention of those to whom he is sent, not to himself, but to his Master.

There was probably a twofold object in sending Elijah to hide himself by the brook Cherith. The first was that he might apprehend that the source of all strength for service lay in his being alone with God. The times were difficult, and immense spiritual energy would be needed for his arduous service in the midst of an apostate people. It was therefore absolutely necessary that he should have to do with God in the secret of his own soul, learning what he himself was, and then what God was in all His boundless resources for those who trusted in Him. Secondly, he was to learn his entire dependence on his Master. By the brook of Cherith he was cut off from all visible sources of natural sustainment, and the Lord God of Israel would, by feeding him through the ravens, teach him that He Himself was enough for him in all circumstances. But, as ever, the Lord taught His servant by degrees—as he was able to bear it; for at the beginning there was water in the brook. Then “it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.” The Lord will now prove Elijah by a severer test; but we must reserve this for another occasion, remarking only that the all-sufficiency of God is ever more fully known, in proportion as we learn that this world is a dry and thirsty land where *no* water is.

HEAVENLY THINGS ARE NOT NEW,
AND THE "PRESENT TRUTH" IS OF "HEAVENLY THINGS."

JOHN iii. 31, 32.

THESE things may be new to us, for there is always a tendency with us to go backward and to grasp at "earthly things"—not the world, but the portion of an earthly people. God has both the earthly and the heavenly company. We read of "things new and old" (Matt. xiii.)—the earthly things are the "old" things, the "new" things are the "heavenly things." (John iii. 12.) In this last passage we see heavenly things first referred to by the Lord who came to bring them, and to bring *into* them. They began to be made known eighteen hundred years ago. None could speak of them, none unfold them, save He who came down *from* heaven. "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not [*i.e.*, of the new birth as a necessity—a *must be*—for the kingdom], how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" "What He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth; and no man receiveth His testimony." "I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father."

Truth to be descriptive of, or edifying to, saints *now*, MUST BE HEAVENLY; that is, from Christ and of Christ, as the "HEAVENLY ONE" to the "heavenly ones." (1 Cor. xv. 48.) It was all at first in Him, and then made good to men on earth from Him by the descent and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. It is a new and satisfying portion. "Whosoever drinketh of the water

that I shall give him shall never thirst." It is in us by the Spirit. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." But it is also a continuous communication from the source—Christ. Things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," things which have not "entered into the heart of man"—these God hath "revealed unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.) These things the apostle communicated, *i.e.*, "spiritual things by spiritual means," and all these for the saints.

It is not Jacob's well now. No refreshment either for man or for God can come from thence, and the waterpot may well be left empty. It is Christ Himself, and only Christ, and what is heavenly; and all worship now is founded on this. The Father is seeking worshippers, but those *whom the Son has filled*. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

The Spirit was not given until Jesus was glorified. (John vii.) When He came He testified of Christ, the "Heavenly One"—"He shall testify of Me." He was the power of all divine knowledge in the believer. "At that day [the day of the Spirit's presence on earth] ye shall *know* that I am in my Father, and ye in Me; and I in you." (John xiv.) The Truth is the portion of the saints to-day, and it is of the heavenly One, and they to be descriptive of it must also be heavenly. We must not only come out in heavenly dress, but from heavenly associations; and we shall do this only when, by the Spirit, we have our communion "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (1 John i. 3.) Thank God, this is our portion.

H. C. A.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

CHAPTER iii. 17-iv.

THE seventeenth verse is a verse of liberty to us as having put on the new man where Christ is everything—liberty, if the heart is a place

“Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone.”

Do all things “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Not only is Christ everything, but in everyone. Thus He becomes the spring and motive of our words and actions. In John xvi. 23, 28 the Lord seeks to carry the hearts of His disciples to the Father with whom the name of the Son is everything. It is there with the Father that we learn the power and value of that name. We learn *to appreciate it as being dear to the Father. We ask of the Father in that name because it is the centre around which all the Father’s glory circles. Thus we learn its value and the privilege of doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. The day is coming when every knee will have to bow to that name, but before the dawning of that day, if we understand the Father’s thoughts about it, and how He delights to glorify it, it will be our joy and privilege, in some little measure, to let our actions and words tell that the Father has taught us to appreciate it, and we shall give “thanks to God and the Father by Him.”

In the exhortations which follow, the apostle takes lower ground than in those addressed to the Ephesians.

There, in dwelling upon the relationship of husband and wife, the conduct of each toward the other is to be the reflection of what the church is to Christ, and Christ to the church. It is well for us to remember that the great mystery of Christ and the church was ever in the counsel of God, and that the relationship of husband and wife was originally formed according to this great thought of His mind. Adam was the figure of Him that was to come, and in the formation of Eve and the bringing her to Adam we have the foreshadowing of the great mystery in the mind of God. In our epistle the conduct of the wife, as subject to the husband, is put upon the ground of what is proper and becoming in the Lord, whose name was the watchword for everything. Husbands are told to love their wives, and not to be bitter against them. This latter is in contrast to Adam. Love would shelter and take the blame for a wife rather than let a bitter spirit lay the blame upon her. "She gave me of the tree," said Adam, "and I did eat." This is the deed of the old man, the new man is renewed after the image of Christ, and He loved the church and gave Himself for it.

Children are to obey their parents *in all things*. The case is not supposed of a child, if need so arise, having to obey God rather than man. Here it is the *principle* of unhesitating submission to the authority of parents, an authority which is of God, and to be recognised as well pleasing in the Lord. In Ephesians the righteousness of the obedience is brought forward—here its moral beauty and good pleasure. Fathers are to be no hindrance to the development of this beautiful characteristic in their children by provoking or irritating them.

Again we see the principle of obedience to be exhibited by servants, or rather slaves, or bondservants. They are to obey *in all things*. According to the flesh they had masters, and there might be the temptation to please man outwardly ; but the fear of God would lead them to recognise another Master, even the Lord. They would thus serve their earthly masters in simplicity of heart, doing everything, as we say, "with heart and soul," in the consciousness that they would receive from the Lord whom they served the reward of the inheritance.* But the wrong doer, be he who he may, would receive back again his wrong doing. Masters were therefore to be just to their slaves, as those having a Master in heaven. It will be noticed that those relationships are enlarged upon here, in which the principle of subjection and obedience is the prominent feature. The moral beauty of the new man can be shewn in these relationships (even the one where man, once made in the image and likeness of God, has fallen to the position of a slave) in direct contrast to the selfwill and disobedience which characterise the old man.

The apostle does not speak to them of the conflict with the spiritual powers of evil in the heavenly places, and exhort them to take the whole armour of God. They were not consciously on the ground which has to be maintained in such a conflict, but he exhorts them

* With regard to slaves, it is interesting to see that both in eating the passover (Exodus xiii. 44), or the food that belonged to the priestly household (Leviticus xxii. 11), while no foreigner or *hired* servant might eat of either, the servant bought with money, *i.e.* a slave, might eat of both. He shared in the portion of the household. We are now bought with a price, and are, though once foreigners, of the household of God.

to perseverance in prayer, and to watch in the same with thanksgiving. This last admonition shews that it is to be the habit of the soul, not occasional—a habit which brings our souls to have to do with God continually. It is an immense thing to be conscious that we have the privilege of going to Him about everything, and more especially about the interests of our Lord Jesus Christ and those that are His. This is a privilege to be enjoyed by all. Some may not be able to teach or preach. Some of us too may not be consciously on the ground where we need to take the whole armour of God so as to stand on the battle-field as the Lord's host; but the apostle's desire for the prayers of the Colossians, that a door of utterance might be opened to him for making manifest the mystery of the gospel, shews us that they could use this privilege of persevering prayer on behalf of one who was in the forefront of a conflict where human energy had no place. Prayer would bring in the power of God, and as the extent of the privilege is known, so will it be in thanksgiving. May the Lord give us to persevere in prayer and watchfulness.

Besides this inner circle of the interest of Christ, there are those without. They were to walk in wisdom towards them. This was to be their general bearing, but they were to seize any opportunity (which is the true sense of "redeeming the time") which might be given them, through circumstances or otherwise, in order to use it on Christ's behalf towards those still characterised as "without"; but *always* the speech is to be with grace, yet not grace in laxity, but seasoned with an inward preserving power (for we are to have salt in ourselves, Mark ix. 50) which will keep us from being affected by the evil around, and enable us by an inward

consciousness to answer every man graciously and holily.

Though the apostle was personally unknown to the Colossians, yet he counts upon their love to him, and their interest in his welfare, so that they would desire to know as to it. Tychicus would declare it to them, and at the same time he would learn about their estate, and encourage their hearts. It is sweet to trace this love in the Spirit between the apostle and those he had never yet seen, and the intimate affections which flow from a common identification with the interests of Christ. Some whom the apostle mentions were probably unknown as yet to the Colossians, but they were fellow-workers with the apostle unto the kingdom of God.

Epaphras on the contrary was one of them, and knowing them well, laboured fervently for them in prayer—a blessed service—that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. If we look back to chap. i. 9 we see how these prayers of Epaphras accord with the apostle's own desire for them; and these passages indicate to us how deeply both these servants of Christ desired that the saints might both know and stand complete in the knowledge of the full range of the will and pleasure of God, in which the mystery has such a wonderful and pre-eminent place.

We now come to the interesting connection of this assembly with that of Laodicea, and the bearing of the truth of this epistle on those who at that time were apparently gathered together there in the house of Nymphas. The desire of the apostle, that when this epistle had been read among the saints at Colosse, they should cause it to be read also in the assembly at Laodicea, shews us that this inspired charge was a

provision of the Spirit of God to meet the need of both assemblies. Later on (Rev. iii. 14-22) the Spirit records Christ's judgment of the state of the Laodicean assembly. It was heartless as to Christ, self-satisfied, while it derived nothing from Him, for He was outside of it. Such was the rapid development of evil. The truth brought out in this epistle as to the fulness of the Head, and the saints complete in Him, together with the knowledge of that side of the mystery which constitutes the wealth of its glory among the Gentiles, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," is that which the Spirit has given to preserve the saints from falling into the Laodicean state. This state is rapidly advancing. On all hands the glory of man is sought, the name of Christ is not given up in actual apostasy, but it is only used with many to advance the selfishness and pride of the first man. No glory can there be for the saints but that of which Christ is the hope. Christ in us as life, and thus all derived from Him, will alone keep us in touch with that hope. The truth of this epistle is that the saints are complete in Christ, the old man put off, not embellished and glorified, and that Christ is everything. The gospel *began* with the memorial of a woman's appreciation of a Saviour who died out of this world. The story of this appreciation was to go out with the glad tidings of Christ. (Matt. xxvi. 13.) It is the *last* phase of a fallen church, that, without giving up His name, there is complete indifference to Himself, and to the fulness that is in Him.

The Colossians were also to read an epistle to be passed on to them from Laodicea. What this epistle was we are not told. As it does not say an epistle *to* the Laodiceans, but one they would receive *from*

Laodicea, it might have been one of Paul's epistles which we have, though the name is not given, sent to the Laodiceans to read, and then to be passed on to the Colossians. If it were one which has not been preserved to us, then we know it was one written specially for that time, but not given by the Spirit for the church generally in all ages.

In closing these remarks the writer would earnestly press on every reader the necessity at the present moment of being grounded in the truth of this epistle, in order to be preserved from the snares both of ritualism and rationalism—a system of ordinances on the one hand, and of philosophy and vain deceit on the other. We have been cut off from everything of the flesh by the death of Christ. He is our life; no glory for us here; for we look to appear with Him in glory. Meanwhile the new man has been put on, that the saints collectively may express Christ according to the full knowledge into which they have been renewed.

T. H. R.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

CHAPTER ii. 1-30.

It is evident that the real subject of the first part of this book commences with this chapter. Chapter i. is prefatory and introductory, giving, so to speak, the situation, and displaying a view of the various actors in the following events, together with their relative positions, while behind all God is clearly revealed as working all things after the counsel of His own will. However supreme man may seem to be, as, for instance, Nebuchadnezzar in his dominion, it is always to be

remembered that God never surrenders the reins of government. He may control directly or indirectly, but He does control the smallest as well as the greatest events that happen on the earth. It was thus by no chance that Nebuchadnezzar "dreamed dreams" in the second year of his reign, "wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him" (v. 1.) The like thing had happened, it will be recalled, to Pharaoh, and it was used to bring Joseph to the notice and succour of the king, and to be the means, in God's hand, of constituting him ruler over all the land of Egypt, and was thus no mean type of the rejection and exaltation of Christ in His earthly glory. In a similar way the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar were the occasion for the introduction of Daniel to the king, and of his exaltation as ruler over the whole province of Babylon.

But man must ever come to the end of his own resources before he is made willing to turn to God for aid and direction. The king had ascertained for himself that in all matters of wisdom and understanding the "four children" were ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm; and yet he did not in his perplexity turn to them for help and counsel. For we read, "Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to show the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king." All the wise men of his realm, men of knowledge and experience, all the philosophers and scientists of the day, were thus assembled to listen to the commands of Nebuchadnezzar. The king's request was simple: he had forgotten his dream, and he desired them to tell him what it was that he had dreamed, and

then to give its interpretation. Pity might be felt for these men of wisdom, in being subjected to such an ordeal, did we not remember that the professors of the occult sciences of that day claimed to be able to reveal secrets, and to penetrate into regions hidden from mortal eyes; and, secondly, that the whole thing was designed of God to bring to nought, in the eyes of this absolute monarch, the wisdom of the wise, to take them in their own craftiness, and thus to pour contempt upon all the pride of man. Their reply was, "Tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation."

An interpretation might easily be given, one which, if it concerned future events, might pass unchallenged, for until the time for it to be realised came no one could say whether it was true or false. The purpose of God, therefore, to expose the vanity of their pretended skill and knowledge, would not thus have been accomplished. The king would not be pacified by their answer; and, on being further urged by alternate promises of reward and threatenings, they were driven to confess, "There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." (*vv.* 10, 11.)

The issue raised was thus decided, and the wise men themselves were compelled, in no dubious language, to own their incompetency to reveal the king's secret, and to declare at the same time that the knowledge required of them lay outside the domain of man altogether, that the "gods" alone possessed it.

On the side of man the answer was not so unreasonable; but Nebuchadnezzar, absolute and imperious monarch as he was, would not suffer the contradiction of his wishes; and, enraged, he commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. "And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain."

Man's extremity is God's opportunity. Daniel had not been summoned with the astrologers before the king; but, being included in the public reckoning among the "wise men," he was amenable to the king's decree. This brought him into notice, and into contact with the officer charged with its execution. It was God's purpose to bring His witness, in the person of Daniel, before Nebuchadnezzar; and the king's forgetfulness of his dream, and his anger at the failure of his wise men to tell him what it was, were only the instrumentalities for its accomplishment.

On learning from Arioch the cause of the king's anger, and of the decree that had gone forth, "Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation." (v. 16.) What, it may be enquired, led Daniel to suppose that this secret would be communicated to him? The answer is, Confidence in God, and the assurance that, as His glory was concerned in the matter, as well as the safety of those who had, through His grace, maintained their faith and hope in Him amid all the seductions of the Babylonian court, He would not fail to interpose for their rescue in this hour of peril. It was, in truth, a supreme moment—a moment when all the wisdom of the world had confessed its failure. If, therefore, Daniel could reveal the king's

secret, God would be publicly magnified before the whole realm.

Daniel's next step was to go to his house, and make "the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." (*vv.* 17, 18.) Counting upon God, Daniel associated his companions with himself in his supplications. It is the first instance of united prayer recorded in scripture; and the fact that these children of the captivity resorted to it, discovers to us the secret of their holy and separate walk. Dependence on God in secret is the means of all power in life and testimony, and, it may be added, of courage in the presence of man and of Satan's power. These four, on their knees at such a moment before the God of heaven, present a wondrous spectacle. They were but aliens in a strange land, expatriated for the sins of their nation; and now they were doomed to a speedy death, unless the forgotten dream could be recalled and interpreted. But they knew with whom they had to do, the One who had said in their own Scriptures, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Psalm l. 15); and hence they waited and pleaded before Him "concerning this secret." Nor was their confidence in vain: God heard their cry, and the secret was revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. (*v.* 19.)

It will be remarked that they pray to the God of *heaven*. In Israel He was known as the Lord of all the earth (Exodus viii. 22; Joshua iii. 11; 2 Kings v. 15); for indeed He dwelt, and had His throne in the midst

of His people. But now it was otherwise; for He had removed His throne from Jerusalem, and committed the sovereignty of the earth to Nebuchadnezzar (*vv.* 37, 38); and hence it was with a true understanding of their own position in relation to God, that the "four children" addressed Him as the God of heaven. The time will come when He will once more resume the title of the God of the earth, and it is His claims as such that will form the subject of testimony on the part of the two witnesses in the book of Revelation.*

The heart of Daniel was filled with thanksgiving at the revelation to him of the king's secret; and the character of his piety, the state of his soul, is seen in that he turned immediately to God with thanksgiving and praise. When blessings are communicated there is often a tendency to fall at once to their enjoyment instead of tracing them back, as Daniel did, to the heart of God. Verse 19 gives the general fact of his having blessed God; and then we have, in *vv.* 20-23, the exact words in which his thanksgiving was rendered. First, he ascribes blessing to the name of God for ever and ever. The praise he offers he desires to be eternal, "from eternity to eternity," as the due of Him who had been pleased to reveal Himself to His people. He then assigns a reason—"Wisdom and might are His." A simple utterance, but how profound! For if wisdom and might are God's (compare *Rev.* v. 12), they are nowhere else to be found, and it is in vain to turn for them to any but God. Next, he ascribes to God universal sovereignty. "He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings, and setteth up kings." The potentates of the earth may claim to exercise

* The true reading in *Rev.* xi. 4 is "the *Lord* of the earth."

absolute power ; and men by the force of arms, or even by political movements, may depose monarchs and establish governments ; but neither the power nor the wisdom is theirs, they are but the blind-instruments of the divine will. Once recognize with Daniel the sovereignty of God, and, whatever the character of the times in which we live, or the menacing aspect of public affairs, we may rest in perfect peace, knowing, as Nebuchadnezzar came to confess, that God "doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." (Chap. iv. 35.) Moreover, Daniel says, "He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding." This principle is everywhere affirmed, that there must be a state of soul to receive from God. The apostle thus prayed, that the Colossians might be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. In like manner we learn from these words of Daniel, that to be divinely wise, wise after God's thoughts (and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom), is the condition of receiving wisdom. To him that hath shall be given, and this is what Daniel confesses, whether in respect of wisdom or understanding. He therefore proceeds, "He revealeth the deep and secret things ; He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him"; for He is a God of omniscience, and all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (See Ps. cxxxix.) After this celebration of what God is, in His wisdom, power, and sovereignty, Daniel offers his thanksgivings for the special mercy he had received. And in doing so he passes from the address, "God of heaven," to the more intimate title, "God of my fathers,"

for the God his fathers had known, and who had succoured them out of their distresses, is the One who had appeared on his own behalf, and he thanks and praises Him accordingly, and as the One who had now given him "wisdom and might." It is beautiful to notice, lastly, how he associates his companions with himself. "Thou," he says, "hast made known unto me now what *we* desired of Thee: for Thou hast now made known unto *us* the king's matter." Together they had sought the help of their God; and Daniel in full identification with his brethren acknowledges that the answer they had received was God's response to their united cry.

At once "Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation." (v. 24.) Arioch complied "in haste" with Daniel's request; and "the king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?" The answer of Daniel is given in three parts; first, his explanation of the source and object of the revelation of the secret; secondly, the dream itself; and lastly its interpretation. In this chapter we shall only consider the first part, noting briefly its various points. Daniel commences, in evident communion with the mind of God, by declaring the impotence of human wisdom, in accordance with the words of another prophet, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Writing thus, as led of the Holy Spirit, the sentence of death upon the wisdom of the world, Daniel proceeds

to declare the source of the vision. "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets," and this was Daniel's God, and he delighted to exalt Him in the presence of this absolute and idolatrous king. He then announces the object of the dream in respect of Nebuchadnezzar; it was to make known to him what should be in the latter days. (*vv.* 28, 29.) Finally, he disclaims any merit for himself; he was nothing but the vessel of the king's secret. God had His people in view, the faithful remnant to which Daniel belonged, in revealing the dream; and He also purposed that the king should know the thoughts of his heart. Daniel thus kept himself in the background, a sure sign of his moral preparedness to bear testimony for God. The nearer we are to God, the more we lose sight of ourselves, and the better we are able to apprehend and to communicate His mind.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

2 COR. iv. 10-12.

THE question whether the "we" in this scripture refers only to the apostles or to all Christians is plainly answered by verse 12. The whole chapter, in fact, concerns the apostolic ministry, and the various experiences through which God brought His servants, in order that only Christ might flow out from them, both in life and service. Hence it is that Paul says, "We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." (*vv.* 11, 12.) It was thus the application of death to all that Paul was, that nothing

of himself might be expressed in his ministry, that he might preach not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and himself the servant of the saints, for Jesus' sake. (v. 5.) It was with this object in view that the Lord suffered him to be troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down, that, while sustaining His servant under all these trials, He might roll in death upon him in all these manifold forms. Paul understood the end of the Lord in his tribulations, and he could thus say, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (v. 10.)

Such is the exact *interpretation* of this scripture; only it has to be added, that in principle it is applicable to believers generally. In other words, while this chapter treats primarily of the service and experience of the apostle, it is yet true that God deals with all His people in a similar manner, seeking to bring death in upon them in different ways, in order that Christ might be manifested through their bodies in this world. He uses for this purpose all our sorrows, disappointments, and tribulations; acting in His wisdom through our circumstances to break down our wills, to repress what is of man, of the flesh and nature, that Christ may be unhinderedly expressed. God produces in this way His most perfect music out of broken instruments. In chapter v. 1 the "we" does include all believers, because the apostle there passes over into the sphere of common Christian knowledge. The subject thus introduced—the resurrection body—makes this abundantly evident. The word translated in verse 10 (chap. iv.) "the dying" of the Lord Jesus, is undoubtedly peculiar, and is sometimes more accurately rendered, "putting to death."

The reason for the use of this word here can be easily discerned. That to which death has to be morally applied in the believer is never actually dead, and hence the need of its constant application, always bearing it about in the body. "Putting to death" brings this thought into prominence, reminding us that unless all that we are is unceasingly kept under the power of death the manifestation of the life of Jesus will be obscured. Altogether the truth conveyed in this scripture is of the utmost importance, and cannot be neglected, if we desire, like the apostle, to cherish the earnest expectation and hope that Christ may be magnified in our bodies, while we are sojourning in this world.

II.

JOHN xvii. 26.

The fundamental characteristic of John's gospel is the revelation of the Father in and through His beloved Son. (See chapters i. 18, viii. 19, xiv. 9, 10.) In this scripture, therefore, in these closing words of the Lord's address to the Father, He says, "I have declared" (made known) "unto them Thy name." The presentation of the Father in Himself had been complete; and yet He adds, "and will declare it," referring, doubtless, to the ministry of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth (chap. xiv. 26, xvi. 13, 15), not as in any way supplementing the revelation already made, but rather as enabling His own to apprehend what had been manifested, and thus to have it made good in their souls. For, as we are taught in other scriptures, the Father cannot be really known, nor relationship with Him enjoyed, except by the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (Rom. viii. 15, 16.) The object of

the declaration of the Father's name, as here given, is, "that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Not only were His disciples, after they had apprehended the revelation of the Father's name, to know that they were the objects of the Father's heart, but His love, in the full measure in which it was enjoyed by the Son Himself, when here in this world, should also be *in* them, and in them because He, the Son, would be in them. As we read in chapter xiv., "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and *I in you.*" (v. 20.) He in us will bring in, according to the truth of this gospel, when He is rightly known, the revelation of the Father, and He becomes therefore the channel through which the Father's love—"the love wherewith Thou hast loved me"—flows into our souls for our present portion and enjoyment, while waiting for our translation to the Father's house.

III.

MATTHEW xxv. 1-13.

In the consideration of this scripture, it is above all necessary to point out the place it occupies. The whole passage from chapter xxiv. 31 to xxv. 30 is parenthetical, and gives the state of things that will spring up during the Lord's absence, and how He will deal with it on His return. We have thus, first, the servants who are entrusted with the care of the household, and with whom He will deal, "when He cometh," according to their conduct. Next, we find the ten virgins, introduced as a similitude of the kingdom of heaven, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom; and lastly, we have the comparison of "a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and

delivered unto them his goods," to use for their Master until He should come back, and take account of their stewardship. It is not the church, as will be noted, in any one of the three cases. The first gives rather the servant in the special aspect—answering to pastors and teachers; the second will include all profession, for it is "the kingdom of heaven"; and the third will likewise indicate all who profess to own Christ as Lord, but in the aspect of stewards. The goal to which the first and third classes look, placed as they are under responsibility to their absent Lord, is His appearing. In the second—the virgins—it is otherwise; the words at the end of *v.* 13, "wherein the Son of man cometh," should, according to the best authorities, be omitted. To those who know the true hope of the church, this will occasion no surprise, for, as they have learnt from other scriptures, the coming of Christ as Bridegroom is when He returns for His people, and hence before He comes with them. Entering into the significance of these statements, the parable of the virgins is not difficult to interpret. The character in which Christ is represented as returning is, then, the first thing to observe. In the next place it should be remarked that the ten virgins "went forth" to meet the Bridegroom. This the Jewish remnant who will be found on earth after the church is gone will never do. They will never be exhorted indeed to go forth without the camp unto Christ, bearing His reproach. Note also, that all ten virgins are alike in respect of having taken their lamps, and this fact justifies the observation already made, that under these ten virgins all professors are embraced; and it is clearly taught in the epistles that professors, equally with true Christians, are on the ground of waiting for Christ. This position is bound

up with the confession of the name of Christ as Lord. The figure of virgins sets forth the moral character suited to those who profess to have gone forth to meet the Bridegroom: it speaks of purity, freedom from defilement or contamination from things around. On the Bridegroom's side, it is affection; on the virgins, the suited character for the One who has made them the object of His heart. The difference between the wise and foolish virgins is absolute, as shown by the fact that the latter "took no oil with them," and could not obtain any before the Bridegroom came. The wise, as well as the foolish, had "slumbered and slept," while the Bridegroom tarried; only when the cry was raised, "Behold the Bridegroom . . . go ye out to meet Him," they possessed the oil wherewith to trim their lamps; and thus being ready, through grace, they "went in with Him to the marriage." The foolish, on the other hand, lacking the essential qualification, the oil, never having been born of God, and never having received the Holy Ghost, could not prepare themselves, and were consequently, notwithstanding their entreaties, forever excluded from the Bridegroom's presence and feast. That the parable is so constructed as to have a wider bearing than on the present period of grace is quite possible, but that its true significance for Christendom is, that those who have not obtained the "oil" before the return of our blessed Lord will forever be shut out from His blessed presence, we cannot for one moment doubt. For all who are in this solemn position, professing the name of Christ, and yet unregenerate, the day of grace will be forever closed when the Bridegroom cometh. Hence the importance of the concluding lesson, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour."

THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH.

1 KINGS xvii. 8-24.

AFTER the brook Cherith had dried up, Elijah was sent away to new scenes, outside of the limits of Israel, to learn new lessons of God's grace and power. "The word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." The correspondence and contrast in the life of our blessed Lord will not fail to be remembered. After He had passed judgment upon the moral condition of the blind leaders of the blind, He "went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon," and there, having exposed the real state of the heart of man, as seen in His professing people, He revealed the heart of God to a poor Canaanitish woman who was destitute of all claim upon His goodness and mercy. (Matt. xv.) Elijah was sent to the same region to be sustained, and also to become the channel of God's grace, and even of resurrection power.

Two things may be noticed in the command he received. We learn everywhere in the Scriptures, that when God's people fall into a backslidden condition, and refuse His testimony, He turns, as it were, to those who are outside, and exhibits there the sovereignty of His grace. The Lord Himself reminded His hearers in the synagogue of Nazareth of this fact, and cited in support of it this very case of the widow of Zarephath, as well as that of Naaman the Syrian. (See also Acts xiii. 46.) So it was with Elijah. Israel would not

listen to his message, and Jehovah sent him for a season to one who was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of promise. But in the very service, on which he was sent, his own faith was tested. A widow is expressive in scripture of one who is desolate and without resources, and it was to such an one Elijah had to go for support, that he might learn the lesson for himself, to qualify him for his future work, that, when all created streams are dried up, the fulness of God remains immutable.

An unfailing mark of a true servant is obedience. When Elijah was bidden to hide himself by the brook Cherith, "he went and did according unto the word of the Lord," and now, commanded to go to Zarephath, "he arose and went to Zarephath." This simple and unquestioning obedience justified his statement that he "stood" before the Lord God of Israel. The very term servant implies subjection to the will of another; and on this very account we have the presentation of the Perfect Servant in Him who came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. And it should never be forgotten that obedience is the sign of power. If asked to specify the greatest display of power in Elijah's service, many would refer to the scene on mount Carmel, wherein he challenged the priests of Baal to prove the existence of their god, and, when on their failure, after Jehovah had vindicated His servant by sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, he commanded them all to be put to death. But true spiritual power, silent and constant, is far more conclusively demonstrated to the spiritual eye by obedience to the will of God.

Arriving at Zarephath, he was instantly brought into contact with the poor widow who was to be his hostess. There she was, by the gate of the city, "gathering of sticks." The faith of Elijah perceived no difficulty, either in her appearance, or in the evident poverty of her circumstances. He knew that she had been commanded to sustain him, and therefore, resting on the sure word of Jehovah, he requested that she would fetch him a little water in a vessel, that he might drink. As she was going to fetch the water, he added another request: "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand." This second requirement was used to elicit the condition in which this poor widow was found. She concealed nothing: "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die." She had thus come to the end of all her resources, and for her and her son there was only the prospect of death; and yet it was to this destitute widow that Elijah was sent for sustainment.

Whenever God commands He bestows the power for obedience, if we can receive it. So in the case of this poor widow; and hence her own state of soul is the first thing brought to light. Her obedience and confidence in God and His word are to be tested. Thus, notwithstanding her declaration of utter poverty, Elijah said, "Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son." How hard and unreasonable such a request would have

seemed to the natural mind; one that unbelief might have said ought never to be preferred. But He who made it, in the person of His servant, sustained the widow's faith with a sure word of promise: "For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." If all things are possible with God, all things are also possible to him that believeth; and accordingly the widow, trusting in God (the mark of a "widow indeed"), "went and did according to the saying of Elijah."

The statement follows: "And she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by Elijah." Several points in these words are worthy of attention. The first is, that, if God commanded the widow to sustain Elijah, He Himself supplied her with the means of doing it. The second is a consequence of the first, viz., that in using what we have for the Lord our means are multiplied. Can any give to the Lord without reaping an abundant recompense? Another is, that, instead of the son being mentioned, it is now "her house," illustrating God's ways of grace with His people in blessing their households through the heads. Thus if Obed-edom received the ark into his house, the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household. (2 Sam. vi. 11.) In like manner, if Elijah dwelt with the widow, her house shared in the blessing. Lastly, God will magnify His own faithfulness. His word had promised, and according to His word the blessing came—the word which He spake by Elijah.

That there is a typical import in the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil few will doubt. The former will point to Christ and the latter to the Holy Spirit. And the lesson is twofold. First, we are taught that all our needs are abundantly supplied in Christ and the Holy Ghost, as long as faith is in activity. The widow believed the word of the prophet, and she went, in the obedience of faith, and did according to the saying of Elijah. As a consequence it was that "she, and he, and her house, did eat many days." To understand this is of the utmost importance. Christ is all-sufficient in our deepest needs, and yet, even though we have the Holy Spirit, we cannot avail ourselves of the resources we have in Him apart from faith. Secondly, we learn that, cut off from the ordinary ministrations of blessing (the rain being withheld, see Amos iv. 7, 8), and isolated from all Christian fellowship, the Lord will prove Himself enough for us in the power of the Holy Ghost. There may be both dearth and drought, but it is the privilege of the believer to satisfy himself at the sources of blessing, to find that all his springs are in the Lord Himself.

A new experience, and one fraught with still larger blessing, was in store for this pious widow. She had received succour and deliverance through the visit and sojourn of Elijah, but she was now to learn, in a still deeper way, the nature of the One who had so graciously cared for her. Death—death which is the end of all human hopes—came into her household. Her only son, the light and joy of her life, like the son of the widow of Nain, fell sick and died, and she was bereft and desolate. If the sword entered into her soul, it

was yet in mercy, for through it, in the very poignancy of her grief, she learnt what she was in the presence of God (*v.* 18); and therein she was prepared for further blessing. For until we come to the end of self, we cannot apprehend what God is for us in grace.

The moment the lesson concerning herself was learnt God came in, and, through Elijah, and in answer to his prayer, raised the widow's son to life again, and the prophet "delivered him unto his mother." (Compare Luke vii. 15.) The Lord thus revealed Himself to her soul as the God of resurrection, thereby establishing her in the truth, and confirming her faith, by causing her to rest upon a foundation, which, because it is beyond death, is for ever immutable. The effect was to demonstrate, beyond all doubt, the character of Elijah as a man of God, and the certainty of the word of the Lord as spoken by him. (*v.* 24.) So also our blessed Lord Himself was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. i. 4), and thereby, moreover, His word was confirmed. (Luke xxiv. 6-8.)

THE DEW ;

OR, THE LORD'S BLESSING UPON HIS PEOPLE, AND THEY A
BLESSING TO OTHERS.

"I will be as the dew unto Israel."—HOSEA xiv. 5.

How great is the contrast between the crashing thunder-storm and the gentle dew! The former has its place and does its useful work; but how much sweeter it is to think of the quietness of the latter! As the

lightnings flash, the thunders roll, and all nature quivers, the soul is solemnly impressed with the power and majesty of God. But as we walk in the early summer morning, feeling the freshness and smelling the fragrance which are the result of the dew, the mind turns to dwell upon the goodness of God, and His un-failing compassions.

The prophet of God stood upon mount Horeb in the day of his deep depression. (1 Kings xix.) A great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks. The bosom of the earth heaved under the power of the hand of God. The flames of consuming fire burst forth and ravaged the face of nature. The wind, the earthquake, and the fire were all in deep consonance with the spirit of the prophet, for he dwelt upon the sins of the people, his own heartless rejection at their hand, and he looked for the judgment of God. And now he beheld the signs of Jehovah's power to vindicate His own cause and to assert His own majesty. Yet there was a deeper lesson for this beloved man of God to learn. These were the servants of Jehovah's might, but He Himself was not in them. Rending, upheaving, and devouring can never set forth the nature of God; they never can express the thoughts of His heart. Judgment He must perform, though it be His strange work; yet behind it all He says, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you . . . thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jer. xxix. 11.) The end, which is ever before God, is the blessing of His people in peace and love, the expression of His own nature.

After the fire there was a still, small voice, which caused the prophet to wrap his face in his mantle.

The storm clears the atmosphere, as one may speak, so that the voice of God, in the stillness and sweetness of peace and love, may be distinctly heard.

Turning to the prophecy of Hosea, who does not tremble before the devouring judgments of God? "Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them." God knows how to care for His own glory, how to assert His own majesty, and how to bring His people to the sense of the solemn fact that it is with Him they have to do.

Yet is He the God of peace. The agents of His power do His bidding, and that which is contrary to His own nature and to the blessing of His people is destroyed, but to the end that we may rest for ever in all that He is in infinite love, and that He may rest in the joy of His own beloved ones. So we hear the still small voice in Hosea xiv. The very One who has said, "I will be unto them as a lion," now says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel." He has His people before Him in a true condition of soul, repentant and dependent on His mercy, and all His love can flow forth in its freeness and fulness.

The moral principles exhibited in this belong to us as well as to Israel. In the history of our souls we can look back to the moment when we trembled before the judgments of God. We needed to learn what sin is in the sight of God. The law of the fiery mountain of Sinai impressed upon our souls the majesty of the God against whom we had sinned, and there seemed no

escape from perdition. But oh, what was it to us to learn that the violence of the storm we dreaded had spent itself on the holy head of Him from whose lips we heard the still small voice of the love of God! "Come unto Me," said He, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The majesty of God has been vindicated, His holiness maintained, His nature declared, in the cross of Calvary, and all His love flows forth. The very One who has glorified Him with respect to sin is the very One who leads us into the affections of the Father's heart, that there we may rest for ever in the circle of His own joys.

"A woman in the city, which was a sinner" (Luke vii. 37), may, in part, illustrate it for us. It may be that in spirit she had stood beneath the fiery mount, and had trembled as she heard John recalling the people to a sense of their responsibility toward God, a responsibility in which they had so deeply failed. Unlike the children of the market-place (*v.* 32), she wept abundantly. Yet the resting-place for her poor broken heart was found in the grace of the person of Jesus. Her whole soul was melted at His feet, and poured its fulness upon them, as she bathed and kissed and anointed them.

The proud Pharisee might discuss in his cold heart who and what this preacher might be; to her thirsty soul His very presence in infinite grace was as the dew of heaven. And the sweetness and fragrance, as the result of the dew, turned back to Himself, as the refreshment of His own heart in the midst of a cold, heartless world, which could excuse its neglect of Him by the plea that such grace comported not with the holiness of God.

Mary of Bethany may further illustrate it for us. (Luke x.) She chose the good part which should not be taken away from her. What was this good part? Surely it was the company of her blessed Lord. Her poor sister might be careful and troubled about many things; to her the presence of Jesus was everything. She sat at His feet and heard His word. She could appreciate the blessedness of which He had spoken when privately to His disciples He said, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." (v. 23.) The delight of the Father's heart was before her, and He, by His blessed communications, was leading her to that heart which He so perfectly knew, and in the love of which He ever rested. Moses might publish the name of Jehovah, but here was the Revealer of the Father; he might ascribe greatness to God, but here was the Unfolder of His love. Surely His doctrine dropped as the rain, His speech distilled as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. (Deut. xxxii. 2.)

Again we see her in John xii. She had passed through the night of darkest sorrow which is recorded in chapter xi. But the light broke through the dark clouds, the light of a morn beyond the shadows of death, a resurrection-morn, and His own presence was more to her than the most copious dew of heaven. She had seen His tears in the depth of her grief, she had heard the deep groan of His spirit, the holy vessel of divine thoughts and feelings in the midst of death and all its sorrow, and He had manifested before her His own glory as the Son of God, the One who had in Himself the power of life, beyond all the power of death. It was the fragrance, resulting from all He was

to her, that refreshed His own soul in that solemn hour. His death was decided upon by His enemies, He was not understood by His disciples, but Mary before them all took the very precious ointment and poured it on Him. The whole house was filled with its odour, but it was for Him that the spikenard sent forth the smell thereof. (Cant. i. 12.)

Beloved reader, let us now consider it. Amid all the religiousness of our day, and with it, alas! the cold inattention to Christ, have we found our home at His feet? Attracted by the infinite grace of His person, do we love to be in His presence, finding that He is as the dew to our souls? Have we permitted Him to lead us by His blessed communications, made good to us in the power of the Holy Ghost, to the very depths of the Father's heart? Have even our dark nights of sorrow been the occasion for the further unfolding of all that He is, so that under the dark shadows have been found the sweet droppings of His love? May the Lord grant us to abide with Him, that we may prove in fullest measure the blessedness of His presence; that He Himself is indeed as the dew to us!

“And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.” (Micah v. 7.)

This shall be true in the day when Jehovah shall be as the dew to Israel. The blessing which He confers upon them in the sweetness and power of His own presence with them, will flow forth in a similar way to the nations. It is not that they will be the source of it, they shall be “as a dew *from the Lord.*” But it will

flow forth in grace, without awaiting the call for it from the nations—"that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men."

How frequently, with those around us, are we like Elijah, for the storm is in full consonance with our angry spirit. Then even we ourselves would thunder if we could. Even a James and a John would desire to command fire to come down from heaven. (Luke ix.) Assuredly in such moments we know not what manner of spirit we are of. It is not that God is indifferent to sin, but He has His own time and way of judging it, and we may often have to wait. We may, alas! have to mark those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, and to avoid them. Other similar things may be our painful duty in seeking to maintain the holiness which becomes God's house. But we must never forget that God is "the God of peace." If we separate from evil, it is that we may have the enjoyment of His presence in all its abundant blessedness; and as we have that enjoyment we shall surely be the means of refreshment and blessing, of like character, to others.

How sweet to think of the dew as a figure of the refreshment we may be to others! It is not conspicuous; it does not call attention to itself; but it is there, and its presence is known by the effect produced. In dwelling upon the figure the mind is recalled to some who have been known, who were neither great preachers, nor eloquent teachers, nor conspicuous workers, but it was impossible to be in their presence without feeling the sweetness and fragrance of the very presence of Christ. Why was this? Because without thinking of the effect upon others their own souls were in the

enjoyment of His presence who is as the dew to His own.

May not Philemon of Colosse have been such an one? Of his preaching, teaching, or work we know nothing; but Paul, in his exquisite letter to him, said, "We have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother." Phil. 7. How sweet is this! How ashamed we are before it! Alas, we can criticise our brethren, we can find fault, we can shew that things are not as they should be, while our souls are as dry as Gideon's fleece upon the wet threshing-floor. But oh, that God of His grace would grant us to be steeped in the precious dew of His own presence, that we may in turn be as a dew from the Lord to others; that while there be no slackness in the public work of the Lord we may be as those who refresh the bowels of the saints!

And let us mark how independent is the character of grace. The rain and dew tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men. God acts spontaneously from His own heart in bestowing His gracious blessing, and those who drink into His grace act as from Him without waiting first to see signs of worthiness. We are often ready to exclaim, "If our brethren loved us a little more——!" or, "If we could only see some return for our love——!" Ah, that is not it. If only we were a little more in the sense of God's infinite love and grace to us, we should be more as a dew from Him to others, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.

May He grant it for His name's sake!

J. R.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

CHAPTER ii. 30-49.

AFTER Daniel had explained to the king the source and object of the revelation of his secret, he proceeded to recall the dream and to give the interpretation. The language he employed in describing the dream was as simple as it was grand. "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible." (v. 31.) The details will come before us in considering the interpretation; but it may be remarked at once, that while the image represents the times of the Gentiles, from Nebuchadnezzar's day until the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, it is yet one image, and the image of a man. It is thus, as has been strikingly observed by another, a representation of "the man of the earth" (see Psalm x. 18), and the man of the earth, it may be added, as expressed in government—in all the various phases, as will afterwards be seen, of his corrupt heart and unbridled will. Man is never indeed fully revealed until all restraints are removed, and he has the liberty, as well as the inclination, to gratify his own lusts. (See 2 Thess. ii. 6-12.) The image, while one complete image, is yet divided, as to its composition, into four parts: the head of fine gold; his breast and arms of silver; his belly and his thighs of brass; and his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. There is, therefore, deterioration from the head to the feet, as seen in the figurative employment of the different metals. Finally, the

image was smitten by a stone "cut out without hands," and all its several parts were "broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (*vv.* 34, 35.)

Such was the dream; and the prophet's authentic interpretation follows. The head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar. (*v.* 38.) Of all the kingdoms that are to span the interval between the destruction of Jerusalem, and during the time that Jerusalem will be trodden under foot of the Gentiles, that of Babylon was pre-eminent. The reason is here given. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was a direct gift from God. As Daniel said: "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory." This could not be said of any of the three successive kingdoms. They come upon the scene in a providential manner, as permitted of God, for the government of the earth, and according to His ordering; but their respective heads were in no sense the direct depositaries of power, as was Nebuchadnezzar. He was nearest God in this external sense, and his responsibility was consequently all the greater.

The character of his kingdom, as described by Daniel, was remarkable. He was a king of kings—the supreme monarch, by God's appointment, over all the kings of the earth, for God had given him "a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory"—all of which were wonderful words as setting forth the majesty and excellency of his position and dominion. Nor was his authority confined to men; for "wheresoever the

children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all." (v. 38.) A comparison has sometimes been drawn between the place occupied by Adam as head of this creation, and that here given to the king of Babylon; and it has been well said: "Although more limited, it is a dominion characterized by the same features as that of Adam. It differs in that men are placed under his power; it is more limited, for the sea is not included in his sovereignty, but it reaches to every place where the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven exist."* Taking these various features into consideration, it is easily comprehended that Nebuchadnezzar should be set forth as the head of gold.†

The next two kingdoms, as denoted by the silver and the brass, are passed over, with the slightest mention, in the interpretation; but in another part of the book they are plainly stated to be the Medo-Persian and Greek kingdoms. (Chapter viii. 20, 21.) The fourth kingdom is described more at large; and happily there is no difficulty in its identification, as all prophetic expositors agree that it is that of Rome—the four kingdoms being thus, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome; and these, as will be seen, are to occupy the whole period of the times of the Gentiles.

The features of the fourth kingdom, as delineated by Daniel, must be briefly considered. Before this is done, however, its duration must be indicated. It continues

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, by J. N. Darby, vol. ii., p. 415. New Edition.

† It must be observed that it is not only Nebuchadnezzar personally that is figured by the head of gold, for the successors of his own line until Belshazzar are included.

plainly until the kingdom of Christ is established (v. 44); and hence, to understand this, other scriptures have to be consulted. Historically, the Roman empire succeeded that of Greece, and "strong as iron" it broke in pieces and subdued all things. Its might for the time seemed to be irresistible, and it established its dominion throughout the greater part of the then known world. All this is matter of history, but the question arises, If this Roman empire is to be found in existence on the eve of the appearing of Christ, where is it now, and whence is it again to emerge into view? It is in the book of Revelation that the answer to this question is found. That the outward form of this kingdom has disappeared is only too apparent; to human eyes it is, in fact, non-existent. In God's eyes it is but hidden for the moment, and waiting to spring forth and to astonish the world by its reappearance. The angel thus said to John, in interpreting the "mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns," "the seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." (Rev. xvii. 9-11.) And more precisely still. "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." (v. 8.) Two things are taught in these scriptures, firstly, that the "beast"

is regarded as the continuation of that which formerly existed; and, secondly, that while "of the seven," he reappears after an interval of apparent non-existence. Now this "beast" represents the head of the revived Roman empire in the last days; and his origin and characteristics, as well as the source of his throne and authority, are depicted in Rev. xiii. 1-8; and if verse 2 in this scripture be compared with Daniel vii. 3-6, it will also be seen that this beast is the successor of the three previous kingdoms, and that, as such, he combines all their moral features, as portrayed under the leopard, the lion, and the bear.

The fourth kingdom therefore, the kingdom in power when our blessed Lord was here on the earth, and by whose authority, in the person of Pilate, He was adjudged to be crucified, is that which will once more be established, and which will continue until smitten by the stone cut out without hands.

In *vv.* 41-43 Daniel calls attention to a source of weakness in what was otherwise as "strong as iron": "And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." We see no reason to doubt a very common interpretation of the clay, that it represents the mingling of popular, democratic forms with absolute government, the combination

of absolutism with the popular will, which, as they are incongruous elements, can never be thoroughly welded together, and must, in the very attempt at union, become a source of weakness.

Another idea is given in verse 43, thus explained by another: " 'The seed of men' is, I think, something outside of that which characterises the proper strength of the kingdom. . . . It appears to me that the Barbaric or Teutonic element is probably here pointed out as added to that which originally constituted the Roman empire." *

That the ten toes are also symbolical may be gathered from chapter vii., and also from Rev. xvii.; but as they are not explained here the subject may be left until chapter vii. is reached, merely remarking that they set forth the ten kingdoms which, federated together under one imperial head, represent the final form of the Roman empire.

It will now be understood that, under this image, the various forms of the world-power are sketched from the days of Nebuchadnezzar down to the time when the Lord will come, and when He will take His sovereignty over the whole earth, and reign for ever and ever. The chart of this world's history, onward to the close, thus lies open before the eye of God; men may agitate, devise, form and overturn governments, as they think, in their own power, and according to their own will; but prophecy teaches that they can only act within the limits of the divine will for the accomplishment of what

* Those who desire to pursue the historical investigation of this statement will find ample accounts of the effect of the irruption of the Goths into Italy, and of the capture of the imperial city, in GIBBON'S *Roman Empire*, and other works.

has been purposed. We see, moreover, that human governments, whatever the efforts of sincere, though misguided men, must deteriorate until at length, as we are distinctly told in the Apocalypse, Satan will be the source and sustainer of the last form of earthly rule. It is well for us, therefore, when we survey the future as taught of the Spirit of God, to seek grace to maintain the place of separation outside of all the alarms and confusions of the world, while waiting for the Lord's return.

OUR WARFARE.

WHAT is the difference between the fighting in the wilderness and the fighting in Canaan as applied to us?

In the wilderness I say I am going on to rest, to Canaan, or to occupy heavenly ground. Here I have to meet Amalek and Balaam, who seek to stop me in my pilgrim course, the one by active opposition, the other by seduction.

In Canaan I say that I "*am come*" (Deut. xxvi. 3) into the blessing, and I take the ground and character (the armour) of a heavenly man on earth. Then I have to meet all the power of the devil, who will contest this matter with me. I have to meet his wiles or his darts; but then it is as "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." It is not a question of *my* ability to meet the enemy. The conflict in heavenly places (which we should know now) is between Christ and Satan. I am there for Christ. In the wilderness the struggle is with Satan using the flesh, in the land the flesh is ignored. It does not cross Jordan.

H. C. A.

THE REST OF GOD.

HEBREWS iv. ; REV. xxi. 22—xxii. 5.

It is a happy thing for the saints when they begin to understand what is meant by entering into God's rest.

We are in a world of sin and misery, and whichever way we look we behold the sad effects of the work of the enemy. For nearly six thousand years—ever since Eve, the mother of us all, ate the fatal fruit—disease and death have been destroying everything upon earth; nor is the moral effect of sin less conspicuous. Violence and corruption have been irrepressible, and no panacea has been found for either temporal or spiritual disorder.

I well remember standing in a chemist's shop in France, and the owner of it saying to me: "There is no preparation amidst the numerous bottles and phials that you see, which is not a reflection of some grievous malady!"

The point before us is this—that we, believers, are on our way to the rest of God. In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is no question of the relief of the conscience, and of assured pardon and justification (these things are understood), but of a people called with a heavenly calling (many sons being led to glory), who are upon their way to God's rest. God shall rest when all trace of evil shall have been done away, and His saints shall enter into this repose.

I say this, beloved friends, because we are apt to think merely of our own escape from a world of sin and sorrow (and who would not rather be in glory than at B——?), and to limit the passage to *our* deliverance

from the present state of things, whereas the important subject of which we are speaking is the rest of God. I recollect a brother, a weaver by trade, who sincerely wished for rest, because the silk was so bad and the pay so scarce. He is not the only example, but the passage before us treats of quite a different matter.

It is not merely that sin has brought with it temporal distress, disease, and suffering, but we are in a world where there is no rest. We recollect the words of one, now with the Lord, who spoke of the fretting nature of sin; and the sad, restless condition of man without God becomes every day more evident to any one who lives for some time in this world. God cannot rest in the midst of such a state of things, and we find in John v., when the Pharisees accused our blessed Lord of working upon the Sabbath-day, that He asserts that His Father worketh hitherto, and that He worketh. (See John v. 17.) Neither the Father nor the Son could be inactive, where there was sorrow to be taken away, or the effects of sin to be alleviated; and—oh, blessed assurance!—neither demons nor men can prevent the blessed work of God!

But it shall not be always thus. The time shall come when God Himself shall rest; when He shall have gathered all His own, in housed security, into His presence (one single speck of sin would destroy the rest of God), and when He shall rest in His love.

There remaineth a rest (sabbatism) for the people of God; and if this be blessedly true for Israel in the millennium, it is true in a far brighter and higher way for Christians, who are called to heavenly glory, and whose citizenship is on high.

For we, who have believed, do enter (that is, we *are*

entering) into His rest. We are not there yet, but are on our way to it; there is no uncertainty as to arriving, but we are not yet in it. We might compare it to a number of persons, bidden to a feast in a splendid upper chamber, and ascending the staircase to it: they are entering in.

The rest after creation had been destroyed by the serpent's deceit in Paradise; Israel's rest in Palestine has never really taken place, and there *remains* a rest for the people of God—that rest where He Himself shall repose in the midst of the redeemed.

This takes us at once further than any such selfish thought as wishing to escape from present evil; for we are called to use all diligence in working now in communion with the God who cannot be inactive where there is evil to be met, and where we ourselves are found—pilgrims travelling on to glory—as *working*, bringing into this troubled scene the resources and grace of the glorified Jesus. Thus a Christian, instead of taking his colour from the circumstances around him, brings into them blessing and power from quite another scene, and is thus found to be answering to the thoughts of God, who is actively working for the blessing of men in this poor world.

In this sense we have not yet rested from our works, but we are encouraged to give all diligence to them, as seeing before us the certain and glorious repose of the people of God, when they shall have entered into *His* rest. There is nothing in our labour in common with modern philanthropy (true philanthropy is from God to man, Titus iii. 4) which seeks to make use of all the means it can find in this planet; but it is the active service of love in a scene of misery where God cannot

be inactive, and in this we are certain to find opposition from the enemy, and severe labour.

The two things at the end of the chapter are so connected with the passage by the Holy Spirit that we must notice them. The word of God (*vv.* 12, 13) is applied so as to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. No humanly-fashioned blade of steel could divide the "joints and marrow," nor could any human word judge between that which is natural and that which is spiritual; we are thus brought into God's very presence, and motives are laid bare; we have to do with *Him*. Again, the priesthood of Christ, who is Himself above the heavens, sustains us and keeps us in the power of the things above, so that we are prevented from giving way to temptation, having full and free access to the throne of grace.

How serious and glorious a thing then our service and our work becomes, as we go on to the rest of God!

I have read a few verses in the Revelation in order to make the contrast between the 'present state of things, and the rest to come, the more striking. Now, all our service is accompanied by labour and effort; for we have to resist the enemy outside, and to walk under the power of the word of God (knowing the priesthood of Christ) as to our own souls. But *then!* each time we read this passage our heart glows with anticipated liberty and joy in unrestrained service, yet perfect repose—no painful labour. "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face" etc.

No doubt we have here a description of the heavenly city during the millennium, but the point before us of the absence of evil, and of free hearts in the presence God and the Lamb, will be readily understood. The

street of transparent glass has been much spoken of; that is, we shall walk upon that which is absolutely pure. *Now* we have to be very careful where we place our feet, and to be diligent in walk, so as not to become defiled. All is worship (chap. xxi. 22) there; *now* there must be diligence, for the enemy endeavours to rob us of sustained worship. The glory of God lightens the city, and the Lamb is its light, and there is no night there; we cannot in our present state bear continuous light. I recollect whilst in Norway a long time ago, being annoyed at there being "no night," for it was near the time of the summer solstice. All this helps us to understand the difference between the condition of things during our pilgrimage, whilst we are labouring in this scene of sorrow, and the state of the holy Jerusalem, where all toil shall be at an end, where shall be uninterrupted light, joy, and peace, and where no sin can enter to defile.

The water of life, and the tree whose fruits are constantly renewed, (how much more blessed to eat of the fruit, as the heavenly company will, than merely to have the benign influence of the healing leaves!) speak to us of the unhindered power of the Spirit, and of the fulness of joy and blessing. For *now* we must be diligent, so that our souls be fed upon Christ and strengthened, and the enemy will constantly seek to prevent our joy and progress; but then, though surely all delight shall be found in Christ and nowhere else, there shall be that peaceful enjoyment of Him, that partaking of the ever-ripening fruit, with no evil to disturb. The curse taken away, there shall be such nearness to the Lord in serving Him, that the very anticipation of it fills our hearts with joy; for at the

present all our service is accomplished with difficulty, and, indeed, no true service can now be done for the Lord without suffering; but *then* we shall serve according to our heart's desire, and blessed it is to think of the activity of that day, when He shall be served without any hindrance. I have briefly noticed these things, as contrasting with the present labour, and diligent working to enter into God's rest. As to our consciences, they are purified for ever, and our hearts are satisfied, but we are still on our way to the glory, and there can be no resting in the sense of Hebrews iv. 9, until we have entered into the rest of God.

Blessed, unspeakable privilege to have been called to serve such a God, and to enter into His rest! May He give us to understand this more fully! E. L. B.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

1 CORINTHIANS vii. 31.

It is only here and in chapter ix. 18 that the word translated "abuse" is found. It is one legitimate rendering of its classical use, but one which, when the Christian's relationship to the world, as well as the apostle's argument, is understood, could not possibly be accepted. It is much to be feared that a great deal of worldliness has been allowed under the cover of this mistake. Another meaning, given even in the dictionaries, is far more appropriate here; viz., "to do what one likes with" a thing, or "to exercise absolute power over." The Christian is in the world, but not of it; and, as the apostle reminds us, "The fashion of this world passeth away." We neither belong to the world, nor does it belong to us; and our time in it is short, for we

are waiting for the Lord to return to take us out of it, and to have us for ever with Himself. As strangers therefore, in this transitory scene, we are not to use the world as something we possess, "disposing of it as our own" property, but only as far as it may be necessary to us while existent in the midst of it, or as it is needed by us as the Lord's servants. In chapter ix. the apostle uses the word in quite another connection. Speaking of the necessity laid upon him to preach the gospel, he says, "What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel." To give the words of another, "The apostle, as sent of the Lord, had a right to be supported; but he did not use this right. It would not have been an abuse (had he done so); but he did not use it for himself, as a thing he possessed. He weighed the effect as to Christ's glory." He did not thus use the right as belonging to himself, only as it affected his service, and for the glory of his Master. These two examples make the force of the word very plain, and entirely set aside the construction which many attempt to put upon it in chapter vii., that we may use the world as much as we will, as long as we do so in moderation.

II.

1 CHRONICLES xviii. 1, 2.

It is in the connection, we apprehend, that the significance of this scripture lies; and the lesson taught is, that spiritual power ever follows upon communion with the mind of God. In chapter xvii. David had desired to build a house for the Lord; but while the thought of his heart was acceptable to God, he was not permitted to proceed with his purpose. In the touching com-

munication he received from the Lord, through Nathan the prophet, the future of *his* house, and throne, and of God's kingdom on earth (see *v.* 14) was unfolded. The effect was to produce in David's heart God's own thoughts and desires; and he "came and sat before the Lord," and after thanksgiving and praise he poured out the desires, thus begotten, in prayer and supplication. (*vv.* 23-27.) It is a striking illustration of the prayer of communion of which our Lord speaks, when He says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John xv. 7.) Right with God, possessed by His thoughts, in communion with His mind, David could go forth in spiritual power for conflict. Hence it says, "*Now after this* it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them," etc. Saul, it will be remembered, while he could smite the Ammonites and the Amalekites, was ever afraid of, powerless before, the Philistines, the enemies of God's people, within their own territory. In the light of our scripture this is at once understood. Saul never had the Lord's mind, and consequently was weak and unarmed. It is the assurance of being in the Lord's mind and path that gives courage (see Joshua i.); and David, having now this assurance, went forth conquering and to conquer. No foe could stand before him as long as he was kept in this condition of soul. Surely there is most forcible instruction in all this for every servant of the Lord. Want of power in dealing with souls, in rescuing them from Satan's snares, and for their restoration, as well as lack of power in preaching the Word and in prayer, may all be traced back to being out of communion with the mind of God.

ELIJAH AND OBADIAH.

1 KINGS xviii. 1-16.

It is necessary once again to turn to the epistle of James in order to understand the significance of the command which Elijah here received. In a former paper we saw that the rain had been withholden in answer to the prophet's prayer; and we now learn that he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. "A man subject to like passions as we are," he yet had such power with God that both judgment and blessing were sent in response to his cry. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"; but this can only be the outcome and result of long previous exercises of soul, of much secret communion, and of a close walk with God. All are not called to be Elijahs, but all may seek grace to become diligent in prayer and intercession.

Nearly three years had elapsed since Elijah had announced to Ahab the coming drought; and at the same time he had told the king that there should be neither dew nor rain "but according to my word." This explains the command in verse 1 of our chapter, "Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth." No loophole should be left for the apostate king to escape from the conclusion that the God who had inflicted the chastisement upon him and his people, was He who at length intervened for their succour. Elijah therefore must first see Ahab; and

God in this way would uphold His servant and vindicate His word. Whenever, indeed, God entrusts a message to His servants, He so fully identifies Himself with them that, as the Lord Jesus said, "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me." (John xiii. 20.) John could thus, as His servant, say, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us." (1 John iv. 6.)

An unfailing mark of a true servant is unquestioning obedience. Elijah had, at the word of the Lord, sojourned by the brook Cherith, and then at Zarephath; and now, acting under the same authority, he comes out of his solitude to "shew himself" to the guilty monarch of Israel. This explained to us, a parenthesis, extending from the middle of verse 2 to the end of verse 6, interrupts the narrative; and the object of the parenthetical passage is the introduction to our notice of Obadiah and of his position. The curtain is, so to speak, lifted to show us, first, the sufferings of Samaria through the famine, and, then, the measures taken by Ahab to save, if possible, some of his cattle. But it is to Obadiah that our attention is mainly directed, in order to impress upon us some solemn lessons.

The first thing mentioned is that Obadiah was the governor of Ahab's house; and then, in a parenthesis within the parenthesis, the Spirit of God turns aside to describe Obadiah and the service he had rendered to a hundred of the Lord's prophets in the moment of their peril, when Jezebel, in her idolatrous zeal, sought their destruction. Wherefore is this account given? Evidently that we might know that he was really a

servant of Jehovah—one, as his very name signifies, who worshipped the Lord. It is true that he himself tells the fact to Elijah, and also speaks of his meritorious service to the prophets; but had we not divine and authentic testimony borne to him, we might have thought that it was impossible for one who “feared the Lord greatly” to occupy such a post in the house of the apostate and idolatrous monarch. We might have concluded that he was only a professor; and in truth it is a bad sign when we have to appeal to the past to prove what we are, and when we have to seek to convince others that we are believers. Alas! Obadiah is a type of that large class who, while truly Christians, are yet found in positions of ease and influence in the world, a type of those who delude themselves with the thought that they can use their position to favour the people of God. They, like Obadiah, have not yet learned that there can be no communion between light and darkness, and no concord between Christ and Belial. (2 Cor. vi. 14–18.)

It was while searching for grass, in obedience to Ahab's command, in order to preserve the horses and mules, that Elijah met him. (v. 7.) Obadiah knew the prophet, and, as if troubled at the encounter, fell on his face, and said, “Art thou that my lord Elijah?” He exhibited no signs of gladness in seeing Jehovah's faithful messenger, one who also feared the Lord greatly, and proved it in holy obedience. Fear rather seems to have possessed his soul, as if he anticipated warning or rebuke. Elijah, moreover, did not betray any pleasure in meeting one who had not bowed his knees to Baal. Was this because the associations of Obadiah,

and his lack of separation, had destroyed his testimony? Be this as it may, there was certainly no warmth in Elijah's greeting, but rather coldness and reserve; for he contented himself with answering Obadiah's question in the affirmative, and with commanding him to go and tell his lord that he, the prophet, had come. The command was couched in words given him by the Spirit of God, and hence it was designedly that he said of Ahab to Obadiah, "*thy* lord." What severer rebuke could have been administered? For what had one who feared the Lord from his youth (*v.* 12), to do in the house of a king who had become an apostate and an open enemy of Jehovah? The incongruity is at once perceived when it is remembered that, while Jehovah's prophet was proscribed and sought after with unconcealed and determined enmity (*v.* 10), Obadiah enjoyed the confidence and the favour of the persecutor.

Obadiah's reply (*vv.* 9-14) reveals to us his state of soul. Having through his inconsistency of walk lost confidence in God, and obtained, at the same time, a bad conscience, he is filled with abject fear—with the fear of the consequences of delivering Elijah's simple message. Three times over he expresses his apprehension that Ahab would surely slay him. He therefore pleaded with Elijah to excuse him from so perilous a mission; and he adduces a threefold argument in support of his plea. First, however, he enquires wherein he has sinned that Elijah should thus seek to deliver him into the hands of Ahab to be slain. A strange question surely as coming from the governor of the king's house. Did it spring from his fear of being now publicly identified with Elijah as Jehovah's prophet?

Obadiah then proceeded with his reasons. The first was his master's known hostility to Elijah, and he reveals the fact, in connection with it, that for a long time past Ahab had been seeking the prophet, even sending messengers to all the surrounding kingdoms and nations to discover where he was concealed. Ahab's object, as Obadiah well knew, was to put the faithful messenger of Jehovah to death, to rid himself of this true and incorruptible witness; and knowing nothing now of the secret of Elijah's strength, Obadiah was afraid for himself, and marvelled at the prophet's temerity. Then, secondly, he was apprehensive lest he should seem to be a liar to Ahab, as he would if the Spirit of God rapt away the prophet while he was doing his errand to the king; and then, when "he cannot find thee, he shall slay me." Lastly, Obadiah reminds Elijah that he also is a servant of Jehovah, and he recounts his good deeds in the past as a reason why his life should not be endangered. "And now," he said to the prophet, notwithstanding all this, "thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me."

It is very humbling to read all this eloquence, the object of which was only to secure himself from danger, and to prove that he must not be judged of by his circumstances. He seems to admit that present appearances were against him, but there was a deed in the past that would incontestably testify to his character. In other words self, and self alone, was the burden of his speech. Of zeal for the Lord God of Israel in a day of ruin and apostasy there was none; nor was there even a trace of confidence in the protection of

Him whom he professed to serve. That he feared Jehovah, we know on the authority of the Holy Ghost; but he seems to have feared Ahab even more. The secret of it all lay in the fact that he was in a false position, and consequently had a divided heart; and nothing so completely enervates the soul as the endeavour to reconcile the service of God with the service of the world. Altogether it is a sad and pitiable spectacle, and one which contains a solemn warning against the attempt to subordinate the claims of God to those of man. How often is it forgotten that we cannot serve God and mammon!

Elijah did not reply to the arguments of poor, trembling Obadiah; but in so far pacified his fears by the assurance that, "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew my self unto him [Ahab] to-day." (v. 15.) These were solemn words, and meant to be solemn for the conscience of Obadiah. Before whom did *he* stand? Before Ahab, as every word he had uttered abundantly testified; but to Elijah, who stood before Jehovah, Ahab was nothing but the enemy of God. What a contrast is thus presented between these two servants of Jehovah! And what a condemnation upon Obadiah's whole position do Elijah's words imply! Whether Obadiah felt this we are not told; but he was silenced, and went and told Ahab the message of the prophet. The lesson of the narrative is surely that which is rehearsed by Paul, and to which allusion has been made, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye

shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18); or again, that enunciated by our Lord, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." (Matt. xii. 30.) For when it becomes a question between God and Satan, even neutrality is unfaithfulness, and to be identified in any way, as Obadiah was, with the followers of Satan, is to take the ground of open hostility to God.

INTIMACY WITH THE LORD.

NOTES OF A LECTURE, REVISED.

LUKE v. 4-11, x. 38-42; JOHN xii. 1-8, xx. 14-18;

REV. xxii. 14-18.

WHAT I desire to bring before you is the way in which the Lord draws our hearts to Himself. I do not speak of how the conscience is set at rest. I trust every one here is at rest, through the work of Christ, as to all questions of sin and judgment. But it is possible to know the work of the Lord, and greatly rejoice in it, and yet never really to have touched His company. These scriptures show how the Lord values our company, our affections, our love. In Peter we get the way the soul is first set at ease in the company of the Lord. If a poor man received a great benefit from a nobleman, he would better enjoy his gift than his company. This feeling needs to be removed. While we only appreciate the *grace* of the Lord in having paid our debts, how little we know His *love*. There is a difference between grace and love. We can enjoy grace a great way off, but to enjoy love there must be nearness; we must be in the company of the one who

loves us. When the Lord came from heaven He did not come into the midst of angels, but of men, in order to find companions for eternal glory. Peter had already known the Lord, but now it dawned on him who the One was whom he knew. He learnt by the miraculous draught of fishes that Christ was the Lord of earth and heaven, who could command the fish to come into his net. When we apprehend in some measure the person of the Lord, we wonder that He should want to bring such as we are into His own company. We see the attraction that was in His person. Peter says, "Depart from me"; yet he was attracted to Him all the while. We get now the grace of the Lord. Now, notwithstanding our sense of disparity, He sets us at ease in His presence. He says, "Fear not." Peter is set at ease with the Lord. It is not only to believe what He has done for us on the cross, but how He would take away every suggestion of fear, and make us at home in His company. Have we learnt this?

" Oh ever homeless stranger,
Thus dearest friend to me,
An outcast in a manger,
That Thou mightst with us be."

We with Him, and He with us. We shall be with Him for ever, but do we know His company now?

Chapter x. 38. We have an advance here. In chapter v. the Lord had come down in grace to minister to man, and Peter is drawn into His company. Now we are in another scene. We find here the Lord on His way to suffer. (Chap. ix. 51.) "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." (Chap. x. 38.) "*As they went, He came to a certain village.*" After the

Mount of Transfiguration, where Moses and Elias spake to Him of His decease, He was on His way to death, He was passing out of the world. On the way "Martha received Him into her house." She had not the sense of the path the Lord was taking, that He was not staying in this world, so she invites Him into her house, and seeks to entertain Him with her things. She did value His company, but she would like to entertain Him with her things. She did not understand what was before the Lord at this time, and she was cumbered about much serving. She was making the Lord *her* guest. Mary was *the Lord's* guest, and He was entertaining her with His things. Martha served Him, I doubt not, to the best of her ability, with her house, her means, her time, her labour. Mary is in the company of the Lord. Martha wants the Lord in her company, to bring the Lord to her side of things. Mary goes to the Lord's side. Do we know a little of that? He has this object in bringing us to His company, to bring us to His side of things. The Lord did use what was Peter's, his boat, but this is more. He wants to bring us to the path that Mary chose. Martha blamed her for idleness. The Lord says, "Mary hath chosen that good part." What is the good part? It is the Lord's things. It cannot be taken away. We might be using our wealth for the Lord, and it might all be taken away; but if I get to His side of things, and let Him open out that to me, so that I become His guest and He entertains me with His things, it is a good part that cannot be taken away. See where we are brought to in getting into the company of the Lord. Our part is to let Him take us up to His place, let Him be the entertainer, so to

speak. Let Him open to us all that He can tell us of His things.

Turn now to John xii. 1-8, and you will find an advance again. The Lord has reached Jerusalem, and His circumstances are greatly altered. Three things come out in the first part of this chapter. They represent three different states of soul. It was most grateful to the heart of the Lord to turn aside to Bethany, and to find those who would appreciate Him. There will be a moment in the history of the earth when the rejected One will know a people who will gladly receive and welcome Him. This is foreshadowed here in Martha. Ours is to go out of the scene with Him, but He will come back to earthly things again. Lazarus is there. He represents the nation of Israel brought back again to life in this world. It is not here the resurrection that puts in heavenly glory, but that which brings back to life in this world, as it is said of Israel, "Thy dead men shall live." It will be a wonderful thing when the remnant receives Him, and the nation is brought back as from death. But we have a third thing. In Mary we have one who already in spirit had gone to the Lord's side of things. And she still represents that to us, as seen in verse 3. That is her service. Judas, as one who had companied with the Lord, represents apostate Christianity. He represents those who have had to do with Christianity and its blessings, and yet who will turn and give up Christianity and apostatise from Christ. Only two men are called in scripture "The son of perdition"—Judas and anti-Christ. Judas was about to sell Christ; he had not the smallest appreciation of Him. Only think how people may have all the love and grace of Christ put

before them, and yet not appreciate Christ. They may do good to men, and yet not have one atom of appreciation of Christ. How very much even Christians are tainted with this spirit of the world! Mary stands out beautifully; she represents the affections of the true Church. Where do her affections go? She has a sense, taught of God doubtless, that Christ is going out of the world. "Well," she says, "my heart goes out with Him." The most precious thing she has got she pours on Him for His burial. Christ interpreted it so. The same with His disciples. (Chap. xvii. 6.) The Lord puts His interpretation on their poor little affections. So here with the devotedness of Mary. I do not say she understood the meaning of her act; but a kind of instinct in her apprehended the danger that awaited Him, and she appreciated Him the more; but the Lord understands, and puts the full meaning on it: "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this." If drawn into His company, where do our affections go? Are we free from the spirit of the world that can have all the grace of Christ before it, and yet withhold from Him? The Lord give us to understand how He lays hold of our hearts to draw us into His company, and have us go outside this world to where He has gone!

Chap. xx. Now the Lord has come out of death in resurrection. In Mary Magdalene we have one greatly attached to Him. He had cast out from her seven devils. She is mentioned elsewhere as following Him, and ministering to Him of her substance. She seeks Him in death, but in very deep affection. She thought she had lost Him. When we have lost a friend we find out how much we love him. Now Mary's affections

came out in this way. She is inconsolable; the one thing she wants is Himself, though it be in death, His body. It has been called ignorant affection. Would to God we had more of it! He must be first; we often want to put our love first. George Herbert puts it thus:

“As when the heart says, sighing to be approved,
Oh, that I could love! God writeth—*Loved.*”

Do not say, “Oh, that *I* could love!” Be occupied with His love, and love because He loves. Mary loved Him, and she is the one to whom the Lord first appears. She knows the intimacy of John x.—an inward intimacy. The Spirit of God alone can teach it. He saith unto her, “Mary.” She is a figure of the Church learning Him in resurrection. At first she is in the place of the Jewish remnant. She thought she had got Him back *here* again; she springs forward as much as to say, “I have got Him back.” “No,” says the Lord, “touch me not.” He is conducting her out of the place of the Jewish remnant into the place of the Church. “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God”; I am going to that scene there. “Go and tell my brethren”—they were to be with Him where He is. He brings us to His side of things before the Father, into the affections that He knows with the Father. Surely that is deep and blessed intimacy! If you have been conducted along this line, if you know the Lord now in resurrection and in ascension, you will be prepared for the last, and that is the next thing, His coming again.

Turn now to Revelation xxii. Here, at the close of the book, the person of the Lord shines out. Through the book He has been revealed in many and various

characters as Jehovah, the First and the Last, the One clad in a priestly garment, as a warrior, a Lamb, as One in angelic guise. Spiritual perceptions may say in many cases, I see the Lord in these varied characters; but when we come to this last chapter, all at once the sweet words break in, "I, Jesus." It is as when the disciples were in the storm. "They were afraid." But He said unto them, "*It is I*; be not afraid. Then they willingly received Him into the ship." It is the person of the Lord there brought out. So here, at the close of the book, "I Jesus . . . I am the root and the offspring of David." That is what He is for the earth; the Sun of righteousness will arise; the remnant will receive and know the Lord. He is presented in two characters here, "the root and the offspring of David"—that is the guarantee of all blessing for the earth—"the bright and Morning Star." That is a heavenly Christ, the portion of the Church. It is the peculiar character of the Church's relationship to Christ. She belongs to Christ while He is in heaven, she knows Him there. The Jews will not know Him till He comes back to earth. His relationship will be renewed with them on earth. Abraham saw Christ's day on earth; but his faith penetrated even farther, he looked for "a city which hath foundations," &c., that is, the Church. Abraham will see the glory of Christ reflected in the Church, but there will be no company of saints, but the Church will ever be in relationship with Christ while He is absent. "The Morning Star" is a heavenly Christ, and that is our portion to know Him thus. When the day breaks it will be Christ shining on earth. The Morning Star does not belong to the day. The Church belongs entirely to heaven,

we have our own peculiar portion in association with a heavenly Christ. It is the privilege of the Church here to respond for both, the earth and the heavens. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." All the administration of heavenly glory to the earth will be by the Bride. The Church must go into heavenly glory before the earth can get its blessing. "I Jesus." Do you say, "I know Him"? You may not understand all connected with His person, you may not appreciate all; but can you say, "I know Him"? Immediately "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come." If I know what is to be found in the company of Christ, to have tasted His love in the smallest way, I must surely know a little what it is to desire His coming. I do not doubt there are many hindrances; but the Lord is expressing His affection in the words, "I come quickly," and He counts on a response from His Church. The Spirit utters it in the Bride, "Come, Lord Jesus." Then, though I may not be able to enter fully and intelligently into the proper affections of the Bride to the heavenly Bridegroom, yet I hear what is said—this challenge of the Lord—introducing Himself to our notice, "I Jesus," and the response of the Spirit and Bride—"do I hear it?" "Let him that *heareth* say, "Come." This is what the Lord is doing, bringing His own person before His beloved saints, conducting them to intimacy with Himself. The response will be, "Come!" It does not hinder service, for we shall surely all the more invite thirsty souls. "Let him that is athirst, Come." The Lord lead our hearts more into it for His name's sake!

T. H. R.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL.*

CHAP. ii. 44-49.

PASSING now to verse 44, we learn that "in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever"; and this is given, as Daniel expressly says, as the explanation of the stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, smiting the image upon his feet, and breaking them to pieces. The expression, "in the days of these kings," is to be noted, especially as following on verse 43, as giving the fact, elsewhere formally stated, that the last kingdom of the four will be subdivided into ten kingdoms; and this also marks the time when the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will displace, first destroy and then displace, the last form of the Roman empire. This kingdom set up from heaven is the kingdom of Christ (see Daniel vii. 1-14); and its first act will be to break the "image" in pieces, and then, when formally established in power by Christ Himself, it will enlarge itself, until it fills the whole earth; and it will have no successor, for it will stand for ever.

In concluding his interpretation, Daniel added two things—first, he repeated that the great God had made known to the king what should come to pass hereafter; and, secondly, he assures the king of the certainty

* This concluding paragraph of chap. ii. was inadvertently omitted last month.

both of the dream and of its interpretation. As befitted a divine messenger, he was confident of the truth of his message. It is precisely in this particular that a revelation from God differs from what is of man. All that is outside of the Bible, all that presumes to come into competition with it, and challenges the ears of men, is but a sea, an unformed mass of opinions and reasonings. How welcome therefore to the soul, wearied in its quest after some stable foundation on which to rest in view of death and eternity, is the immutable basis laid for faith in the infallible Scriptures. Daniel's message concerned time alone (although it reached onward to the close of all God's ways in government on the earth); but knowing the source whence it came, he could authoritatively announce that what he had spoken would be surely fulfilled.

And Nebuchadnezzar, idolator though he was, acknowledged, was constrained to acknowledge, the power of the word. He "fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret." (*vv.* 46, 47.) There was no escape for the king from this conclusion. He only had the dream, and having had it, he only could test Daniel's claim for God to reveal secrets; and hence, when his secret was revealed, the conclusion was irresistible that Daniel's God was above all gods. The confession indeed was remarkable, admitting as it did the supremacy of God in heaven and on earth, and also what amounted to His omniscience. Far, however, as it went, neither his

conscience nor his heart appears to have been reached. It was but the bowing of his mind to the evidence offered, just as those in the days of our Lord who believed in His name when they saw the miracles which He did. (John ii. 23.) His action, in yielding homage to Daniel and in commanding an oblation to be offered to him, as well as his subsequent conduct, is the proof of this; even though for the moment he proclaimed in the presence of his court the sovereignty of Daniel's God in heaven and on earth.

Lastly, Nebuchadnezzar "made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon." (v. 48.) Like Pharaoh, the king felt that "a man in whom the Spirit of God" was (Genesis xli. 38), would be a valuable assistant in government; and he consequently promoted him to great honour. Daniel had neither sought nor asked anything for himself; but now that he was exalted, he "requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king."

In such a way, when the sentence of death had gone forth against them, did God rescue His servants, and, working out His own purposes in testimony and blessing, bring them forth in the full light of the day. They were of the captivity of Judah; but now they are made to occupy the most prominent places in Babylon, for the king exalted them above all his courtiers and nobles in the direction of public affairs while Daniel himself was in a still higher position, for he "sat in the gate of the king."

THE ASSEMBLY, VIEWED AS GOD'S TEMPLE.

THE first intimation we have in sacred scripture of the assembly is in Matt. xvi. It was when Christ had been rejected on earth that He spoke of building His assembly. This shews that it is something outside the earthly order of things. It is a new company, wholly distinct from anything which had previously existed. Israel is no longer the object of His interest and care on the earth. He is not now building up the nation, though He will do this another day; and He will build the earthly temple when the time comes. But now these things are in abeyance, and He is building His assembly. The assembly, therefore, is the present object of Christ's interest and care on the earth.

The company is formed of those who, in the time of His rejection, have been taught by the revelation of the Father to confess Him as the Son of the living God, and who consequently know Him in His divine supremacy over the whole power of evil. It is a company outside of, and distinct from, the world, but a company still on the earth for Christ. If we do not apprehend the fact that Christ is rejected from the earth, and that we are associated with Him in His rejection, we cannot understand the nature of His assembly. It is an out-of-the-world position. It is a precious truth, that while Christ is rejected by the world He has a company on the earth, a sphere where His supremacy is owned.

This true confession of Christ is the result, as we have seen, of a divine revelation to the soul; it is outside what can be apprehended by flesh and blood. The reception of this revelation constitutes the believer a living stone. He is formed by it. A stone is a part of the rock, and is therefore of the same nature as the rock. The believer is thus a part of Christ—he is of the nature of the Living Stone. The assembly is therefore a *divine* structure. Christ builds it, and builds that which is of Himself. This shuts out all that is of the natural man, all that is merely flesh and blood, which has no place in Christ's assembly.

It is important to remark that, from the point of view from which the assembly is regarded in Matt. xvi., *Christ Himself*, revealed as the Son of the living God, declared such by resurrection of the dead, is the foundation on which the Church is built. He has gone through death, vanquished the power of Satan, and in resurrection is manifested as supreme over all the power of evil. Therefore neither the gates of Hades nor any power of evil can prevail against what is built upon this foundation.

We must also remark that He is here the builder. There is nothing said about human instrumentality, and there can be no imperfection in the work; only living stones are built into this structure. Nor can there be, from this point of view, a living stone not built into its place, or the work of the Builder would be incomplete. It is a divine structure composed of divine material, built by a divine Builder on a divine foundation; all is perfect and abiding, beyond the power of Satan. It does not depend upon the work of human builders. Every saint is a part of this structure.

But it is of all importance that this revelation of Christ as Son of the living God, and the nature of what He is building, should be so inwrought into the souls of saints that they may apprehend their true place in His assembly; that what is of Christ should be so formed in the soul, by the Spirit's ministry, that saints should be so built up in Christ that they may be, as it were, actually incorporated into what Christ is building. Then it would not be a gathering together by the acceptance of certain doctrinal statements of what is ecclesiastically right ground, but it would become impossible for one who knew his place as part of this divine structure to connect himself with any merely human organization, or to accredit what is the result of the will of man and mere human energy.

To refuse what is of man, and to maintain only what is of Christ, to be identified with Him and what He is doing, will bring us into conflict with the whole power of evil here. How could we face this if we do not know Him as Son of the living God? It is not simply knowing Him as my Saviour, though this is of all importance to begin with. I could not go into battle if there were any question as to my own personal security and blessing. I must begin with knowing Him as my Saviour in resurrection, and then I go on to make acquaintance with Him as Son of the living God. It is not merely that I know that He is the Son of the living God, as a part of true doctrine, but that I have come to Him. I know Him as such; I know Him in His supremacy over the whole power of evil in this world. Then I am prepared to meet all that is opposed to Christ and to His assembly, because it is a matter of going on only in His power.

This structure grows unto a holy temple. (See Eph. ii. 20, 21.) When it is complete it will be for heaven, the heavenly temple. The idea conveyed in the temple is the place of God's immediate presence, the place of light and holiness, the place where God makes known His mind, where the living oracles of God are.

In the Greek there are two words which are translated temple. The one signifies the whole buildings of the temple, including the court, where the people approached God as far as they could. This is the word always used when it speaks of the Lord, during His presence on earth, going into the temple; the other word signifies the innermost temple, the holy place and the most holy, where only the priests entered. The Lord not being a priest on earth never went into the temple in this sense. It is the latter word which is used when the Church is spoken of as the temple of God; it is that which answers to the holy place and the most holy.

The Church will be God's eternal dwelling-place, where His glory will dwell, as well as the place where He will ever manifest Himself, and thus the sphere from which the light will shine forth for the universe. (Eph. iii. 21.) 1 Peter ii. 5 speaks of the Church in this aspect of a spiritual house, being built up and composed of living stones.

Such is the structure which Christ is building. Nothing can destroy it; the gates of Hades cannot prevail against it. In spite of all the opposition of Satan it goes on growing still, and will eventually be complete, every stone in its place, and set up in glory.

But Scripture also shows that the assembly has a

present status on earth, as the last verse of Eph. ii. states, "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." We see the same thing when the Church is viewed as the body of Christ. In Eph. i. 22, 23 the Church, which is "His body," takes in the whole company of the redeemed during this present period from Pentecost till the time when the Lord comes again. But in Eph. iv. 4 it says, "There is one body." Here the body is viewed as a present existing thing, including all the saints living at any given time on the earth during this present period.

So also as to the temple, the apostle could say to the assembly at Corinth, "Ye are the temple of God." That is, the assembly is viewed as having that character and status now on earth. It is the place where God's presence is found in a special way; where He dwells, and where His mind is made known. It is the place where the light is. Man as such cannot enter this sphere. Man's will, man's ways, man's energy, man's voice, are all shut out, or at least should be. It is God's place, God's assembly. Here we are on holy ground.

Moreover, not only has the assembly generally this character, but the company of saints in any locality is so viewed. The assembly has not only a present status on earth, but it has a local status. The company at Corinth were addressed as God's temple. That is, the local assembly should be a true representative of the assembly of God, so that whatever characterizes the assembly of God generally should characterize the local assembly, or any company which locally represents that assembly. We see also in 1 Cor. xii. 27

how the apostle applies to the local assembly what is true of the assembly generally. Addressing the local company at Corinth he says, "Ye are the body of Christ." In several places the local company is addressed as "the *assembly of God*." Thus, "The assembly of God which is at Corinth," &c.; but we never read of *assemblies* of God in one place.

And even in the present time of the ruin of the Church as a responsible body on earth (broken up and divided as we see it everywhere, and more and more when the whole company in a locality can no longer be found coming together into one place to eat the Lord's supper, as in 1 Cor. xi. 20), there may be found a company so divinely gathered as to *represent* the assembly of God. That is, wherever two or three are really gathered to Christ's name in the truth of the assembly of God, there Christ is in the midst, and that as Son over the house of God, and they enjoy the privileges which accompany His presence, and exercise the responsibilities of the assembly of God in maintaining the holiness which becomes God's house. So there is still a spot on earth for Christ, a place where He is owned in His supremacy, where He is always welcome, where His rule is acknowledged, and where His name is honoured and worshipped. The responsibility of the two or three so gathered is to keep a clean place for Him, and to care for His interests. This is exceedingly precious.

Thus, while acknowledging the present ruin of the assembly, and realizing too that we are a part of it, it is of all importance to maintain that a few, who in faith are gathered in the truth of the assembly of God, form part of a new structure, composed of new material. That is,

souls formed by the revelation of Christ as Son of the living God, while they cannot claim to be the assembly, yet in the sight of God truly represent it; they enjoy the privileges of the temple of God, God's presence, in the person of the Son, shedding abroad His light and blessing among them. As another has said, "The great privileges conferred on the assembly, the habitation of God, are vouchsafed to them." And at the same time they seek to carry out the responsibilities of the assembly in maintaining that which becomes the presence of Him who is holy and true.

In John xx. we have an expression of the assembly, the disciples separated from the world, gathered together as a distinct company, and Christ coming into their midst, speaking peace to them, and manifesting Himself to them in the power of life which had vanquished death. This is the inside circle where Christ carries on His present ministry to His own, who are now identified with Him in His deliverance and victory, and who, being made partakers of His blessing, are able now to join in His praises. Declaring the Father's name to His brethren, He leads us into the enjoyment of our association with Himself before His God and Father, and thus tunes our hearts to sing with Him—"In the midst of the assembly will I sing praise unto Thee." Here is where His presence is to be found in the present day. As of old, those who sought Jehovah went up to the temple in Jerusalem, so now those who seek the Lord go up to that separated company which, being divinely gathered, represent His assembly, where He is in the midst of those gathered to His name. All saints belong to God's temple; they form a part of it, and in one sense God

always dwells in His house, by the Spirit; that is, in the assembly builded together as a habitation for God in the Spirit, but it is among those truly gathered that His presence is manifested and realized in a special way. So that when going up to the assembly we enter into the spirit of the words of the Psalmist, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." (Ps. cxxii. 1.) There may be many imitations of this divine gathering, but the true company will be distinguished by freshness and vigour, the light and blessing of God will be found among them, because Christ is there, and His presence and power are realities for faith. This, for a spiritual person, serves to distinguish the true thing from the counterfeit.

When gathered in assembly we feel that we are on divine and heavenly ground, and this should produce the reverence and godly fear that becomes those who serve God in His temple, without in any way hindering the boldness and liberty which we as saints and priests are privileged to enjoy there.

The assembly being the place of light, evil will surely be manifested, unless there be that which hinders the manifestation of the presence and power of the Lord. If, as is sometimes the case, evil exist undetected for months or years, it shows that the company are not walking in the faith of the Lord's presence among them; the company is in a bad state, as well as the guilty individual. The Lord's presence if manifested must detect evil. Moreover, the assembly being the place of holiness, it becomes too the place of judgment if evil be brought in. Judgment begins from the house of God. This we see at Corinth, for this cause many

were weak and sickly among them, and many slept. God's hand was upon them in judgment, because instead of judging themselves they were allowing sin, and bringing it into the assembly of God, defiling the place of His presence. If not yet judging the world, He does judge His people, and especially among those who profess to be gathered on the ground of His assembly. As the apostle shows in 1 Cor. xi., it is present judgment exercised on the bodies of the saints, not in their souls, not future judgment with the world. When we are judged we are chastened of the Lord that we may not be condemned with the world. These are solemn realities; and while on the one hand the assembly is the place of privilege and blessing on earth, where we realize the Lord's presence and enjoy His ministry, yet, on the other hand, it is the most solemn position, calling for the continual exercise of godly fear, of self-judgment, and of dependence upon God. Holiness becomes God's house for ever.

It is to be feared that many of those who profess to be divinely gathered, have a very inadequate sense of the importance and reality of the assembly, especially when viewed as God's temple. Men reverence a building set apart for what they call the worship of God, and which they call the house of God. How much more should we respect the company where Christ is in the midst, His assembly.

F. H. B.

THE sign of walking in the Spirit is when Christ is paramount in our thoughts and affections; when, in a word, He is practically everything to the soul.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

1 JOHN ii. 24, 25,

IF there is reference in the words, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning," to chapter i. 1, 2, the meaning of what follows becomes apparent. "That which we have seen and heard" (chap. i. 3), was "that which was from the beginning"; and this, says the apostle, "declare we unto you"; and now he adds in our scripture, "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain [abide] in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." Combining this with chapter i. 1-3, we learn that receiving what the apostles declared was the means of introducing into fellowship with them, and that their fellowship was with the Father and with the Son; and, further, that if what they had heard from the beginning through the apostles should abide in them, they should abide in the Son and in the Father. But what is abiding in the Son and in the Father? The answer is given in verse 25: "And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life." For the *consequence* of abiding in the Son and in the Father 'is fellowship (1 John i. 3), and fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, is the enjoyment of eternal life. The point is so important that it may be illustrated from chapter vi. of John's gospel. In verse 54 we read, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life," etc., that is, the one who continually feeds upon the death of Christ, accepting thus God's judgment in the cross of Christ upon all that man is, appropriating it by faith, identifying himself with, and in this way becoming morally assimilated to it, is the one who has, possesses, enjoys, eternal life.

Another thing is found in verse 56. There it is, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth [abideth] in me, and I in him." Now to abide in Christ imports the maintenance of absolute dependence on Him and living of His life. (See John xv. 4-6.) But if Christ is my life, if by feeding continuously on His death I refuse my own life, and He lives in and through me, I am necessarily in communion with Him; His thoughts, desires, objects, interests, and joys are mine—I am lost in Him, and I am thus brought, inasmuch as He is the revealer of the Father, into the blessed circle of fellowship with the Son and with the Father. Thus, we cite the words again to show the connection, "this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life." We will not pursue the subject further in this "note," although, if further questions or objections reach us, we will gladly, if the Lord will, recur to it.

II.

JOHN xvii. 11, 20-23. (THE THREE UNITIES.)

BOTH instruction and blessing may be found in the perusal of, and meditation on, the following remarks upon the above scriptures. "We have, first, the absolute and essential unity of the Father and the Son, which makes them One in all that they are essentially, and [in] what flows from it. Then, mutuality of being in one another, the source and object of joy and blessing in an ineffable way. Thirdly, display—the Father in the Son. (Compare John xiv.) To the first answers the whole absorbed mind and action of the disciples in the power of the Holy Ghost; to the second, that into which all were brought by the Holy Ghost; to the third, the perfect display of glory in all the saints—Christ (in whom the Father was) in them, and here no difference—all appear loved as (*καθως*) Christ was loved."

ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL.

1 KINGS xviii. 17-36.

A COMPLETE section is given in this chapter, and it is necessary to perceive this in order to understand the significance of this striking scene. In the first verse Elijah is told to go and show himself to Ahab, "and," the Lord added, "I will send rain upon the earth." In the last verse but one we read that "there was a great rain." It is clear therefore that all the intervening circumstances have reference to what the Lord was about to do; and the connection is, as we apprehend, that judgment is visited upon the false god (Baal) and his prophets, before the restoration of blessing. Indeed, Obadiah, Ahab, and the prophets of Baal are all passed under review and dealt with, in their several degrees of guilt, before the Lord sent down again the rain from heaven.

If God be for us, who can be against us? is an abiding truth for the soul; it is one easily repeated, but not so easily acted upon, unless faith is in present activity. It was, however, fully exemplified in the bearing and conduct of Elijah as recorded in this chapter. He thus, in the consciousness of being sent from Jehovah, and of having Jehovah with him and for him, courageously faced the monarch, who for long had been diligently seeking his life. And it is to be remarked that Ahab was evidently awed by the presence of the man he hated. All he could bring

himself to say was, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Ahab knew that Elijah was the servant of Jehovah. Why therefore did he prefer this charge? For the same reason, doubtless, that many at Antioch would deem Paul a troubler, when he withstood Peter to the face, and refused to surrender the truth of grace; and for the same reason that many still are called troublers when they decline to depart from the word of God, while others are tempted to do so to secure tranquillity.

The answer of the prophet much deserves to be weighed in the presence of God: "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." Yes, the troublers of the people of God are those who set aside the word of God through their traditions, customs, and human regulations; not those who esteem obedience as better than sacrifice, and hearing the voice of the Lord as better than the fat of rams. On Ahab's principle Luther was a troubler of the Church, and many others, who have gone even beyond Luther in contending for the supremacy and all-sufficiency of the Scriptures; but in God's sight they were, like Elijah, His faithful servants—those who, amid surrounding corruptions, feared the Lord, and cared for the honour of His name. It is always necessary to maintain fellowship with God; but it is not necessary to walk with His people, unless they also are in unison with His mind.

Ahab's submissiveness in summoning Baal's prophets at the command of Elijah shows how completely he was overmastered by divine constraint. Against his will, he was made the instrument for the accomplishment of God's purpose. Jehovah thus made the wrath of man to praise Him. The prophets of Baal were therefore assembled upon mount Carmel, and there was to be decided the solemn issue as to whether Jehovah or Baal was God. There was everything in the scene to strike the imagination, and to fill the mind with awe. On the one side a solitary man, a true Nazarite, alone and unaided; on the other four hundred and fifty of Baal's prophets, backed up by the presence of the king and all the influence of the kingdom. It was the Spirit of God leading Elijah to face the whole power and energy of Satan in the very home and seat of Satan's power.

The people of Israel were also there; and they must be first made to understand the nature of the conflict, and the question to be decided. It would almost seem that some of them had been the subjects of exercise and searchings of heart, for Elijah's first words were, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" But whatever their secret thoughts, they were silent before the prophet's appeal to declare themselves either for Jehovah or Baal. Thereupon Elijah proposed a test. The prophets of Baal on the one side, and Elijah on the other, should prepare a bullock for sacrifice, "lay it on wood, and put no fire under," the idolaters should call on the name of their gods, and the prophet "on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire,

let him be God." It was impossible to refuse a test capable of such easy verification, and accordingly the people answered, "It is well spoken."

It was a solemn moment, a great crisis in the prophet's history; for he had staked all, the existence of Jehovah Himself, as well as his own mission, upon the short and simple test which he had proposed. But strengthened by faith, confident in the power and faithfulness of the One in whose name he was acting, he instantly called upon Baal's prophets to proceed with their sacrifice. Having taken their bullock and dressed it, they called upon Baal from morning to noon to interpose and vindicate his claims. "But there was no voice, nor any that answered." More energy, they thought, as in all false worship, was demanded on their part; and they leaped upon the altar that was made. Elijah mocked them (for he knew that gods made with men's hands were only vanity), and by his taunts and irony provoked them to desperation, so that they cut themselves with knives and lancets "till the blood gushed out upon them." It was all in vain, for although they continued their "prophesying" until the time of the evening sacrifice, "there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."

It was now Elijah's turn; and let the reader ponder deeply every step in this wondrous scene. First of all he called the people unto him, for he would have them to examine his acts for themselves, and make it impossible for them to doubt the reality of Jehovah's interposition. Next he repaired and built the altar of

the Lord, and with twelve stones he included all the tribes of Israel in the representation before God; and then, after making a trench about the altar and preparing the sacrifice, he commanded the people to drench it thrice with water; and they did it so copiously that "the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water." Who that beheld what was done could for one moment doubt that only divine power could cause the sacrifice to be consumed with fire? The prophets of Baal had cried and prayed to their god in vain; it remained to be seen whether Elijah's intercessions would be equally unavailing, and for this the people waited.

The time when the prophet drew near should be remarked. It was the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; and this fact proclaimed that Elijah rested, not in his own services or prayers, but in the value of the burnt-offering (significant of the sacrifice of Christ) for the token which he craved. Observe, moreover, his pleas. He addresses Jehovah as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel; and his desire is that it might be known that day that Jehovah, spite of His people's apostasy, was God in Israel, and that he was His servant and had done these things at Jehovah's word; and in one last petition he poured out his zeal for the Lord, and his yearning for the people's restoration. The Lord heard and answered the supplication of His servant, and "the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench."

The proof that Jehovah was God was irresistible, and the effect was overwhelming. As one man the people, when they saw it, fell on their faces and confessed, "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God." Thus wrought upon by the visible display of Jehovah's power, they were ready instruments to Elijah's hand for the execution of judgment upon the idolatrous prophets. "Take the prophets of Baal," commanded Elijah, and "let not one of them escape." The people obeyed his word, and "they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there." God had risen, in response to the prayer of His servant, and His enemies were scattered.

Ahab had been a spectator of God's vindication of His own name, and of the mission of the prophet. Though a crowned king he was as powerless to protect his servants as the meanest of his subjects. What he felt and thought is not revealed. Elijah was the manifest vessel of power in the scene, and Ahab, if not awe-stricken, was yet constrained to obey the prophet's word: "Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain." The name of Jehovah had been exalted in Israel through judgment, and He could therefore now satisfy His own heart in the restoration of blessing.

THE essential qualification of a servant is to be in communion with the mind and heart of God as to His people, also as to the message to be delivered, and, lastly, as to the object of the message—the glory of His beloved Son.

WISDOM, NOT OF THIS WORLD.

I CORINTHIANS ii. 6.

THERE are two great lines of truth in the Bible :

1. The fall of Adam and ruin of all his family ; and the way Christ has met this ruin.

2. The counsels of God in the last Adam, in Christ, before ever the first Adam was formed out of clay and set in Eden.

Many believers have some understanding of the first of these two subjects, though in many cases it be but imperfect. To enter into the second is more rare, though it be the simple and blessed privilege of every child of God.

We find in the first chapters of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, in the very clearest language, a distinction made between Christians who are described as carnal and as children (iii. 1), and those who are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, no longer children, but perfect (ii. 6) in the sense of being grown up, and apprehending the second thing of which I have spoken, with which indeed perfection is always connected in Scripture.

The Corinthians were carnal, and their conduct but too plainly shewed it. I believe that we but little enter into the state of things at Corinth—lawsuits, boisterous feasting and impropriety at the Lord's table, not to speak of worse disorders ; and should any proof be needed of their childishness, I think that their very way of employing the gifts which God had given so

richly to them would prove it. They were using gifts of tongues, prophecy, etc., merely to make a display in the assembly; for it is but too evident that show rather than edification was their object. (Chap. xiv.)

The apostle, in dealing with all this, could only treat it in one way, and that is expressed in the beginning of the second chapter: he did not judge it well to know anything amongst the Corinthians but Jesus Christ, and *Him* crucified. This is very emphatic, and signifies the judgment and end of the first man at the cross, so that should any pretension to wisdom or glory be made upon his part, Christ crucified is preached to shew the utter vanity of such boasting. All was ended at the cross.

It is a serious thing to be living at a time when all that man, as a child of Adam, can do, and has done, is made so much of. What the world calls "light" (*i.e.*, the natural powers and intellect of man) God calls "darkness," and if we are to understand God's word we must take His expressions as He uses them. His categories are quite different to man's. We are all eminently Corinthian naturally, and as fond of applause, of the world, and of good living, etc., as were the Greeks of the sensual town of the Isthmus.

But in the sixth verse the apostle is speaking of wisdom, not of this world, nor of its rulers, who come to nought; and he himself speaks it among the perfect. I trust that all who read this understand what *perfection* means. It is no perfecting of the race of Adam, of which we have just been speaking, but the perfection of the glorified Christ, the centre of all God's glorious and eternal counsels; that is perfection, and there is no other. I saw, about three years ago, a book supposed

to be very wise (what the world calls *wise* God calls *foolish*), in which it was stated that the human race had made progress to perfection, and, taking unity to represent perfection, supposed that mankind had progressed two-sevenths of the way to it. But the other five-sevenths? Ah! the whole theory is utterly wrong and false, and in keeping with the erroneous and arrogant spirit of the age, which supposes man to be perfectible, instead of hopelessly lost, and away from God.

Perfection then is connected with the glorious Christ, and nothing can be added to His glory; and the wisdom which is preached amongst the perfect is not of this world, but that hidden wisdom which God had predetermined before the ages for our glory. All the combined wisdom of the chiefs of this world is worth nothing before God; and the chiefs themselves, after turning the world upside down, and doing more harm than good, disappear from the scene and come to naught. Napoleon himself regretted that one day his exploits would but fill half a page of general history; and where are Julius Cæsar and Alexander now?

But this hidden wisdom of God, no longer hidden to us, to whom He has revealed it by His word, these glorious counsels are now known in the Lord of glory, in whom we are chosen according to God's sovereign will. If there be no more wisdom upon this planet (and indeed the world fully demonstrated the absence of it in crucifying Jesus) we can look up to the third heaven, where He is displayed in all His glory, and humbly thank God that He has made Him unto us wisdom. As God's scheme of glory unrolls itself before our eyes, and we are led by the Spirit to know the thoughts of His heart, so do we see the infinite

difference between *His* wisdom as displayed in the all-glorious Christ, and that which is called wisdom by men upon earth.

The things which are outside of the five senses, and which belong to an entirely different sphere to that which the world calls beautiful, are revealed to us who have received the Holy Ghost, who never tires of leading our souls into the enjoyment and reality of the glory of Christ; and it is here that we learn God's wisdom, as we see the fruit of the divine plan. His counsels are so far accomplished in that Christ is glorified, and we ourselves are in Him; and, as we wait for the glorification of our bodies, enabled by the Holy Ghost to enter in spirit into the glorious heavenly scene, we can be independent of all that the world may call beautiful.

The princes of this age know nothing of the wisdom of God, and never has their folly been so fully displayed as when they crucified Jesus, the only One who could have established the kingdom. I recollect an example of secular folly in the way in which it was proposed to dispose of Palestine in an European council. The wise of the earth make their plans, but the Lord has made His beforehand. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (Psalm ii.) And this, when the time comes, will not a little disconcert the profound combinations of the worldly wise.

But the wisdom, which is now revealed to us, belongs to a heavenly order of things, and has nothing in common with the present age; and the great desire of the apostle was, that the beloved saints of God should enter into and enjoy that which God has given them in

Christ. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. We have received the Spirit which is of God, not the spirit of the world, and we are capacitated to receive and to know the things that are freely given to us of God.

There is nothing of the natural man in all this. It is distinctly said of him that he receiveth not the things of God; there must be a work of God before anything can be received, and then the very words for communicating God's thoughts, the wisdom that is not of this world, are chosen by the Holy Ghost; spiritual things are communicated by spiritual means.

Nothing could be more important at the present moment; for the views on inspiration in Christendom are daily becoming more loose just as man is growing louder in his pretensions as to progress, science, and intelligence. We have received and receive those things which are far beyond the ken of man's mind, and God has been pleased to communicate them to us in His own way, choosing the very words by which to make known His thoughts to us; and it behoves us to give all attention to the language of His inspired word, at this present epoch of the world's history, when man's right to dictate and to explain is so strongly insisted upon.

May we, then, be not only free from the gross evil of the world in a negative way, but so truly happy in the positive enjoyment of the "things of the Spirit of God," where the glorious Christ is all, according to God's wisdom, that we may be formed by the Holy Ghost, spiritual, and thus above the highest pleasures that time and sense can offer.

May the judgment and end of the first man at the

cross be, not a mere theory for us, but a blessed fact; and may our hearts and minds rest satisfied in that wisdom of God which is not of this world—satisfied with His Christ, and growing in the knowledge of Him!

E. L. B.

WHAT IS THERE ALWAYS FOR ME IN CHRIST?

ANSWER: THE AFFECTIONS OF HIS HEART, AND THE POWER OF HIS ARM.

(Read JOHN xi.)

THESE are both in Him, for me and for every Christian. These never alter, they are *always* there. 1st. I have *the affections of His heart* for me. 2nd. I have *the power of His arm* on my behalf.

He is increasingly displaying to me the affections of His heart. Had we the eyes to see, the ears to hear, the heart to understand, the thousand proofs of the affections that change not, fresh themes for joy and praise would appear in our daily path. The love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, is not an inactive principle. Oh, no! Love *must* act towards its object, and it does. What we require is the anointed eye to see it.

We should never in our meditations separate these two thoughts, the thought of "the affections of His heart" from that of "the power of His arm." We may not see the power of His arm displayed on our behalf in this or in that difficulty, *but we know it is there*. We may be totally unable to trace "the affections of His heart" in this or in that dealing of His hand, but,

none the less, the affection exists there in all its magnificent grandeur. I am called on earth to delight myself day by day in both; in the unchanging "affections of His heart," and in the untiring "power of His arm." Such is the Christian calling. How great, how complete!

But we *may* think of the one apart from the other; and so Satan may be busily trying to make us miserable by leading us to question the affections of His heart, because we do not understand these dealings of His hand. Alas, such hearts have we, and so easily affected for evil, that this is no difficult task to him.

Thus we find it in John xi. The onlooker (yet himself blind) might say, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" "He has the power, where is His affection?" It is one who does not know Him who reasons thus. But in this hour of trial are not His own also very low in *their* estimate of Him? His love, His power, where were they? "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." As if to say, "Lord, you did not interfere, nor come to us while he lived; your power and love might have stayed the work of death, and now by this time he stinketh." But all this is unbelief, and as such He rebukes it. "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe *thou* shouldst see the glory of God?"

His *love* was unchanged! "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus," "Behold, how He loved him!" Nothing could change that. And His *power* was the same too, though "He abode two days still in the same place where He was." Oh for the faith which,

rising above these *seen* and passing changes of this world, can calmly rest itself above the horizon of unbelief!

JESUS IS THE SAME! Come what may, His love *to me* is the same, His power for me is as great as the love which (at present) sees that it is better to wait than to display itself.

But He displays *both* when He comes; and if He waits to do this, then surely I can wait. "Blessed are they that have *not seen*, and yet have believed"; this is what comes out in John. I am in faith now *with Him*. "Part with me" is the portion of the believer now. All is our true and assured present portion, *i.e.* "His love" and "His power"; but they are only true to "*faith*." "Ye believe in God," He said, "believe also in me." He would have us quietly enjoying our portion. "Lazarus, come forth!" proved His power as it proved WHO He was. Again, "Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him." (xii. 2.) This proved His love, which *must have its object near itself*. It is "Jesus the Son of God" who is before us here. Faith knows Him, and in Him it rests. We have a great High Priest that is passed *through* the heavens, "Jesus the Son of God." And the dealings of His hand are all "for the glory of God, that the SON OF GOD might be glorified thereby." Faith *cannot* separate the "affections of His heart" from "the power of His arm," but He is all for us, and He who is so, is "Jesus the Son of God."

May the Lord teach us more about these things, and lead us into them through our subjection to the Spirit in us.

H. C. A.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

CHAPTER iii.

IN chapter ii. the image which Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his night-dreams shadowed out, according to Daniel's authoritative interpretation, the whole course of the times of the Gentiles. It is therefore a general picture, but a picture so distinct in its outline, that no one who gives himself earnestly to study the subject can possibly mistake its import. He that runs may read the character of the kingdoms that bridge the space between the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the appearing of Christ in glory. After this general outline, our attention is called, by the Spirit of God, to what may be termed the moral characteristics of the Gentile powers, chiefly as displayed in Babylon; but, though displayed there, the several features are typical or representative of what will be seen throughout the whole duration of the Gentile sovereignty. In other words, we are now permitted to see the use which the Gentiles will make of the power entrusted to them in responsibility. This is abruptly brought before us in the opening verse of this chapter: "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was three-score cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon." (*v.* 1.)

Such is man. Nebuchadnezzar had learnt from Daniel, if he had not known before, that the God of heaven had given him his universal kingdom, and

he had confessed that "Daniel's God was a God of gods and a Lord of kings," and yet he will use his absolute power to have a god of his own, to assert his own will over the consciences of his subjects throughout his vast dominions, and thus usurp for himself the place and authority that belonged alone to the God of heaven. That is, he used the power that God gave him to deny God and to put himself in the place of God, although this feature is subsequently expressed in a still more distinct form.

Such conduct would be wholly inexplicable were we not acquainted with the subtle motives that animate and govern the human heart, and did we not remember that we ourselves have often used the blessings vouchsafed of God for our own profit and exaltation. In truth, Nebuchadnezzar might have had strong inducements to the course delineated in this chapter. His empire must have been an immense conglomerate, composed of numberless tongues (see *vv.* 4-8) and religions, all of which would tend, politically speaking, to disturb the peace of his realm.* If, therefore, his heterogeneous dominions could be welded together by a common religion, his empire would be consolidated and the welfare of his subjects promoted. Whatever his thoughts, such was the course he adopted, and he made the magnificent image which he determined should serve as the deity for "all the people, the nations, and the languages" that were subject to his authority. †

* The difficulties often springing up in the government of India from the difference of religion will afford an illustration of this.

† It has often been suggested that the image of his dreams formed the pattern for his idol. It is certainly remarkable that the one followed so closely upon the other, and that, as the head of the one that symbolised his own kingdom was of gold, he should make his

The image erected, all the governing authorities and officials of his realm were summoned to Babylon, to be present at "the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up"; and they were all obedient to the royal command. Assembled "before the image," the decree was proclaimed by an herald—"To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." (*vv.* 4-6.)

ENCOURAGEMENT IN EVIL TIMES.

Read 2 KINGS xxii. xxiii.

I.

THE history of Josiah has an important bearing upon our own times. Inasmuch as his days were very similar to ours, the same principles which guided him are just what we need. Did he live in a day of departure from God? So do we. Was his day characterised by weakness and decay? So is ours. Had he to contend against evil amongst those who professed to be the people of God? So have we. But, notwithstanding all, he acted for God. Those words, "he acted for God,"

idol of gold. There might have been a connection in his mind between the two, but the wonder is, as already seen, that the impressions made upon his mind by the revelation of his secret, and by the interpretation Daniel gave him, could have been so soon effaced. We all know, however, how transient the deepest feelings are where there is no positive work of the Holy Ghost in the soul.

seem to describe his whole course. It is true he was at the last inconsistent with this when he went unscathed against the Egyptian king; but apart from this his life was unblemished. "Why was darkness allowed to come before his sun had well set?" we may ask. Because that sun had shone so brilliantly from its earliest rise without a cloud, and God often judges of an offence according to the character of the one by whom it is committed. Moses is an example of this. The sin of Moses might have been passed by in meaner men, but in his case God must notice it.

In Josiah we have a fine example. He is conspicuous for intelligent zeal, unswerving faithfulness, and ardent devotion. He found himself in difficult times, everything seemed out of course, but his aim was to please God. This is why he succeeded, and it is the only way in which we can succeed. What was the condition of things around him? Such as ought to have filled the people of God with shame. He found the house of God neglected; so little regard was there for the word of God that it was entirely lost sight of, and as an inevitable consequence everything was in a state of decline. But by his holy activity he completely changed the face of things. Where did he commence? He commenced at the right place; viz., at the house of God. He put God's interests where they always should be put—*first*. And then other changes followed. While the house was being repaired the book of the law was discovered. Thus an immense gain accrued from this single-hearted devotedness. It must have afforded sweet comfort to Josiah, and it also directed him how to put down the evil around, and how to reinstate the worship of the true God in its own proper place.

And the climax was reached when the passover was kept, a passover such as had not been observed within living memory.

Thus very briefly we have sketched the achievements of Josiah. But what about our own day? Are we not confronted with somewhat similar difficulties to those against which Josiah had to contend? Can we venture to think, much less say, that all that passes current as Christianity, all that is taught publicly in its name, is in strict harmony with divine revelation? No one who understands and appreciates that revelation can think so. Things are decidedly out of course. Let the enormities of the "church" of Rome, let the ritualistic practices of other communities, and let the false doctrine propagated by representatives of every sect, bear witness. Some will say, "What are we to do?" I believe we must do precisely what Josiah did. He cared for the interests of God. It is true there is no longer a visible temple; but there is something else, something equally important and equally dear to God. There is the church, composed of all true believers, which Christ loved and for which He gave Himself. Chosen by God the Father, redeemed by God the Son, and sanctified by God the Holy Ghost. We know that many who belong to the church have long since gone to be with the Lord, but there are others still on earth, members of Christ's body. Shall they not be dear to us? Shall we not seek their interest? Truly we can say, "They shall prosper that love thee."

There is another point in which we shall do well to imitate Josiah. When he found the word of God he obeyed it. It was only a small portion he had compared with what we possess. Ours is a greater responsibility

and a greater privilege, and our only safety as well as our only happiness are to be found in strict adherence to its commands, wherever such a course may lead us. Scripture must be our only guide, whether as to individual conduct, ecclesiastical position, or anything else.

We have already noticed that Josiah began at the right place, and that the word of God was his guide. Before going a little more into detail, we may briefly notice one or two additional points. One is, he did not carry out his own ideas. He simply went back to what existed at the beginning, without attempting to introduce anything new.

Another fact worthy of attention is, he began young. This was much to his credit. He was only eighteen when he took an active part in caring for the interests of God.

And, lastly, he feared God, but he evidently had no fear of man. May the God of all grace lead us to be likeminded, and may the example of Josiah be made a blessing to us while we proceed to follow the narrative a little more closely.

The first important record in the history of Josiah is the mention of his zeal in repairing the house of the Lord. (2 Kings xxii. 3-5.) And indeed no one could be said to be true to God to whom the temple of Jehovah was not an object of deepest concern, for God had connected His name with it. That temple no longer exists, but may we be led to see what has taken its place, in order that we may discover how necessary it is for us to care for God's present interests.

Before the Lord Jesus left this world it is recorded,

“Having loved *His own* which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” And in His prayer to the Father He said, “I am glorified in them,” and asked that they all might be one. May these desires of our blessed Lord find an echo in our hearts. “His own” distinguishes them from the rest of the world, and if anyone asked, “How am I to care for God’s interests now?” we should reply, “Care for Christ’s own.” When Saul of Tarsus was going to Damascus to persecute the followers of Jesus, he was arrested by these words, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” The Lord Jesus spoke on behalf of His hunted and suffering disciples. And He says, “Why persecutest thou *Me?*” This not only proved the means of the apostle’s conversion, but revealed a wonderful truth to him; viz., that these very people, so despised and hated by him, formed the body of Christ here on earth; while he learnt also that they were united to Christ as Head in glory. Thenceforth to this once persecuting and injurious person, as he describes himself, every member of that body became dearer than his own life. Oh that this truth were instilled into every heart, and kept vividly before our minds! It should be so even in this day of confusion. Things, it is true, are not as they were in the apostle’s day, but we do well to remember that in spite of human failure, and in spite of declension on the part of Christians, divine principles ever remain the same. You may think that the tone of everything being so low is a reason for lowering the standard. Not so. We must never lower God’s standard to a human level. The truth that all believers are members of the body of Christ still remains unchanged. Christ has not ceased to be the Head in heaven, nor

to love those that are "His own." Let us learn a lesson from the example of Josiah. Times had sadly changed in his day. Things were not the same as they were under Solomon's reign. The kingdom was divided. The glory had departed. That splendid temple, that had once been the pride of the nation, was in a state of dilapidation. But did Josiah sit with folded arms, and say, "Nothing can be done, things must remain as they are"? No; he began by repairing the breach in the house. So let it be with us to-day. There are breaches enough amongst the people of God, do not let us make them any wider. Let us seek their good; let us promote fellowship; let us flee from anything and everything that would keep Christians apart; let us endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Thus we see that God's people should be in our eye *to-day* what in his day the temple was to Josiah.

We must pass on now to another important event in the history of this God-fearing king—the finding of the book of the law. (Chap. xxii. 8.) That it had been lost was a sad reflection upon Israel's condition. But the word of God finds no attractiveness in the eyes of the wicked, and we can well understand it was not wanted in the days of Manasseh and Amon. These predecessors of Josiah were wicked kings, and no doubt were glad to have the law of the Lord forgotten. For "the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. iv. 12.) Such it proved to be to Josiah. "And it came to pass, when the king had

heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes." How appropriate! how becoming on the part of Josiah! What was not expressed by such an act? See him with rent clothes! It speaks volumes. There is no need to enlarge, for actions speak louder than words. We commend him to present-day critics, who, alas! rend the Bible instead of their clothes. They may learn a wholesome lesson if they will but behold him; and if once its power be felt in the same way, they will never want to criticize the Bible again. The attitude of Josiah is the only attitude that becomes us in the presence of God's word. If we treat it as an ordinary book, an ordinary book it will remain to us; if we sit in judgment upon it, its hidden treasures will never be disclosed to us, it yields its spoil only to those who read it reverently and with prayer.

The moment it was read to him he recognized its authority. King as he was, he owned God's word supreme, and bowed to it. He did not debate as to whether after all it was the inspired Word, nor did he say, "We must examine its contents, and get proper evidence as to its genuineness." He was in a right state of soul, and it spoke to him with its own divine authority. It was true it had long been laid aside and forgotten, but the moment it is listened to with an attentive ear, it is at once felt that there is no diminution of its power. This was true in Josiah's day, it was proved true also at the Reformation, and is equally true in our own day. At the Reformation it was the word of God which overthrew the papal power, and emancipated many a precious soul from its deadly thralldom. Then, as in Josiah's day, it had been

long neglected, but it had only to be taken up again to prove that its edge was as keen as ever, and its power undiminished. And it is just the same now. It can gain the same victories. It is all that is needed. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. . . . the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." (Psalm xix. 7-11.)

R. E.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

MATTHEW ix. 13; xii. 7.

As a general principle it may be said, before considering this citation from Hosea, that a believer of any dispensation should be the expression of God as revealed in that dispensation. For example, the standard for a Jewish saint was Jehovah as made known in that economy, whereas the standard for a Christian is God as revealed in Christ. (See Ephesians v. 1-13, Colossians iii. 10-13.) To bear this in mind will aid in the understanding of the prophet's words. Both Ephraim and Judah (chapters v. vi.) had sadly corrupted themselves, and yet at the same time they would seem to have been punctilious in the observance of their

sacrificial ceremonies, as if attention to outward forms could commend them to God's favour. "Therefore," says the prophet, speaking in Jehovah's name, "have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth . . . for I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." (Chapter vi. 5, 6.) That is, character and state—the character and state produced by the knowledge of Jehovah as a God of mercy—were of more avail before God than outward observances, these last being utterly valueless unless they were the indication of a spiritual condition. (Compare Micah vi. 6–8.) Turning now to Matthew's Gospel, it is very interesting to note the Lord's application of this Scripture. The Pharisees condemned Him for eating with publicans and sinners. In vindicating His action, the Lord convicted them of ignorance of the heart of God. "Go ye," He said, "and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Priding themselves upon being the people of God, the objects of His exclusive favour, and the guardians of His word, the Lord shows that they had utterly misconceived the character of the God in whom they boasted; that they had read in vain the many scriptures which contained the pre-intimations of His grace and mercy toward poor sinners, and consequently that in their self-righteousness they were utterly misrepresenting God. In chapter xii. the application of the Scripture, while bringing out the same truth, is slightly different. Here the Pharisees, in their censorious spirit, condemned the disciples for plucking the ears of corn upon the Sabbath-day. After citing examples from the Scriptures which

should have opened their eyes to perceive the claims of the One whom they had presumed to assail, and should have convinced them of their unscriptural folly, the Lord added, "But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." The point here again is that the hearts of these censors of the disciples were in utter contrariety to the heart of God. Cased in their self-righteousness, not a ray of God's blessed mercy or grace had ever penetrated their souls, and hence they judged everyone round about them by their own thoughts instead of by the thoughts of God. Alas! how easy it is for ourselves, who live in the full light of the day of grace, to fall into the same mistake, and to forget that we are called to be the exponents of God's heart of grace in the midst of His professing people, and before an evil world.

II.

MATTHEW xviii. 15-17.

A QUESTION is put as to whether this scripture has a present application. The answer is found, we judge, in the fact of the introduction of the church in chapter xvi. 18. At the close of chapter xii., the Lord in figure breaks His links with Israel after the flesh; in chapter xiii. the sower goes forth to sow, and the result is the kingdom of heaven presented in several aspects; in chapter xiv. the actual work of rejection commences with the execution of John the Baptist; in chapter xv. Christ passes judgment morally upon the heads of the Jewish nation; and this is followed, before the display of the glory of the kingdom in chapter xvii.,

by the revelation to Peter of the truth of the Person of Christ, and the announcement—"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In these words the Lord views the church in its perfection, from, as we might say, the divine side; and consequently the term "My church" must not be narrowed, as it includes every believer of this period, from Pentecost on to the Lord's coming. Coming now to chapter xviii., the word "church," the same as in chapter xvi., has yet its own significance, as may be seen from the direction, "Tell it unto the church." To explain this, it may be recalled that the Lord often used language which could only be fully understood after the gift of the Holy Ghost. So here; and when we examine the epistles we find that a local gathering of saints is also called the church (see among many other passages, Romans xvi. 4, 5, 16), and that such local gatherings are regarded as expressions of the whole church of God on earth. With this apostolic instruction we have no hesitation in interpreting "church," in Matt. xviii. 17, as a local assembly to which discipline is entrusted to be exercised in the Lord's name by the power of the Holy Ghost. But it is enquired, if the Lord had not, when using these words, the millennial congregation in contemplation? Admitting to the full the dispensational character of this gospel, that the primary application of divine words does not exhaust their meaning, and that divine principles abide through all dispensations, we cannot doubt, speaking for ourselves, that the instruction which our blessed Lord here gives belongs above all to the church period. It is further asked, however, if Col.

iii. 13 does not supersede the teaching of Matt. xviii. 15-17, and also that of Luke xvii. 3, 4. Examining the last passage named, we find that the forgiveness of a brother's sinning against us is to be unlimited, but that the pronouncement of the forgiveness is to be made on confession, on his saying, "I repent." Turning to Colossians, we shall see that it is quite another aspect of the subject: "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel ["complaint"] against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Here there is not a word, as will be at once seen, of confession or of the bestowment of forgiveness; in fact, the passage deals entirely with the state of soul which should be cherished by us when we have matters of complaint against our brethren. It teaches, in other words, that however our brother may sin against us, we are always to hold him in our souls as forgiven. Luke goes further, and shows that it is on confession we are to express our forgiveness; and hence it is by the combination of the two scriptures we get the full truth of the subject. In support of this interpretation, it may be added, that what is enjoined on us is a transcript of God's own conduct towards us when we fall into sin. His heart never changes towards His people, but it is only on confession of their sins that they receive forgiveness. (1 John i. 9.) What has been said on Matt. xviii. 15-17 will also afford the key for the interpretation of verses 18-20; but we hope to return to this on another occasion.

As there is no object worth living for but Christ, so likewise no ministry will abide except a ministry of Christ.

THE THREE EXPERIENCES OF CHRIST AS SEEN IN PSALMS XXI.-XXIII.

AND OUR CONNECTION WITH THEM.

THESE three psalms give us three experiences of the Lord. First, when glorified; second, when on the cross; third, as a Man walking on the earth. Into the first experience of Psalm xxii. (the cross) we can never enter. We can never know the experience of His holy soul when "made sin" and "forsaken of God"; but into the experiences of Psalms xxi. and xxiii. we should, through His grace, and in our measure, *enter now*. His death was to bring us into this communion which He Himself knew both on earth and since His death, and it is effected in us by the presence of the Holy Ghost, maintaining the soul in the present reality of having "*part with*" Him. As He said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no *part with* me." (John xiii. 8.) Into the joy of both of these Psalms it is then the privilege of a believer to enter, but it will be "in part"—for we know nothing yet as we ought to know—we know in part.

The order in which the experiences are entered into by the soul now is, I take it, as presented to us here. That is, you have the experience of Psalm xxi. before you get that of Psalm xxiii. There is in Psalm xxi. the blessedness and joy of a new order of things—a new sphere into which the soul has entered by faith, and it is only then, as I see it, that though yet in "the valley of the shadow of death"—this world—you can know what it is to walk there, and "fear no evil," for

evil is rampant all round. Yet nothing can equal the calmness and confidence in God which faith gives—green pastures, still waters, paths of righteousness, a cup running over, such is the experience of the soul day by day and continuously. We may look at each psalm alone a little.

Psalm xxi. The cross is here past, and CHRIST GLORIFIED is before us; it is His own personal experience as out of the judgment and in all the joy, an experience into which by grace we too can enter. He is glorying in God's salvation "He asked life of Thee, [Jehovah] and Thou gavest it Him, even length of days for ever and ever." It is clear here that death is past, life is His; that is, He is glorified. "His glory is great in Thy salvation." (Here we see where He is.) "Honour and majesty hast Thou laid upon Him." Then follows one of the few passages in scripture where the Lord's present experience is related, an experience with which the Holy Ghost fills the soul of a believer in worship, because we have "part with Him." (John xiii.) What is it? "Thou hast made Him *most blessed* for ever: Thou hast made Him *exceeding glad* with Thy countenance." Does not the soul already know something of this? HE is "exceeding glad." Once a "Man of sorrows," He is now the "Man of joy." We talk of the happiness of heaven. My delight is that there is One there whose joy is, and ever will be, beyond that of everyone else. Christ is there, and He is "anointed with the oil of gladness"; and though joy is the very atmosphere there, in which every heart is filled, He is anointed "with the oil of gladness" ABOVE HIS FELLOWS. (Heb. i.)

After this, in this psalm He executes judgment and justice on His enemies, preparatory to the millennial

reign. "Thine hand shall find out all Thine enemies: Thy right hand shall find out those that hate Thee." Then comes the millennium in the last verse, "Be Thou exalted, Lord, in Thine own strength: so will we sing and praise Thy power." As we are kept and led by the Spirit, through grace, in the experience of this Psalm (xxi.), we shall have also the experience of Psalm xxiii. I think too that the order in which they come is important, and that the experience of them must be learnt in that order in the soul, and it cannot be reversed.

Psalm xxiii. Here the Lord is the speaker, but He is speaking as a man on earth. The "valley of the shadow of death" is around Him. He "fears no evil" there. Jehovah is His shepherd. He *does* not want, and He never *will* want. On the contrary, He is in the midst of *fulness*. "Green pastures" and "still waters," the "prepared table" and the "head anointed" with oil, testify of it, and He can only say, "My cup runneth over." Are not these the experiences of the saints, through the "great salvation"? Have not the saints "part with" Him where He is? (Psalm xxi.) And do they not know His path in all its blessed experiences day by day—His, who was a perfect Man upon the earth? (Psalm xxiii.) One thing presses upon me, no one can deny that *the victory is won*. Psalm xxii. brings Him who won it into the midst of the assembly, as the mighty Victor to sing praises there. (See verses 25, 26.) May we in spirit and in the Spirit follow Him whose glory is great in God's "salvation." May there be that subjection to the Spirit in us, that these things may dwell in us as the truth, and the joy of the Lord be, as it ought to be, in reality, "our strength." H. C. A.

ENCOURAGEMENT IN EVIL TIMES.

II.

WHEN Josiah heard what the book of the law contained he said, "Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, *to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.*" Notice he enquired not only for himself, but *for the people and for all Judah.* He recognised what seems to be often overlooked, that God's word is applicable to everyone; and also that all God has written is of equal importance in its place, and equally to be obeyed. Josiah remembered this. The word of God spoke to him as king on his throne, but it equally addressed the humblest of his subjects. It was for "the people and for all Judah." And so likewise they were all equally responsible to hear and to obey it. It is the same with ourselves. There is no part we can leave out, no command we can be permitted to disobey, no truth we can be allowed to treat with indifference.

Dear reader, we would affectionately ask you if you accept the Scriptures intact? If there be any part you slur over, or are afraid to turn to, depend upon it there must be something wrong in your soul that requires searching out and putting right. Let it be done at once, for you cannot afford to be deprived of a single truth God has revealed, or even of a single letter of His word.

Many, alas! to-day are teaching that part of the Bible is God's word, and part is not. They do not see that by such a proceeding they destroy the whole. It reveals their ignorance. Like some unskilful workmen, who, pulling away from a building what they think unnecessary, unacquainted with its structure, they reduce it to a heap of ruins. This is the result of man's meddling with divine revelation, as far as those who might otherwise get profit from it are concerned; though, thank God, it cannot be so as regards the word itself. Beloved reader, do not listen to their learned ignorance. When left alone, they will in course of time contradict themselves, and overthrow their own theories; we need not trouble to do it. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Let our concern be to read it more diligently, to value it more highly, to penetrate further into its sacred precincts, and tread with more reverent step; then shall we find it no barren field, but one which, if we only dig deep enough, will yield us infinite and untold reward. Do we read the word of God enough? Do we even read it as we used to do? Any falling-off here would be disastrous to our spiritual life. Appetite for food is a sure sign of a healthy body, and if a person lose his taste for food we become anxious about him; and shall we be less anxious for our souls? If the word of God does not seem so attractive as of yore, the reason is not to be found in the Bible, but in ourselves. No wonder, then, if our souls are in a low spiritual condition. It could not be otherwise. We shall have little joy in ourselves, and nothing to communicate to others, if we treat the Scriptures after that fashion. But if we give up our best time to the

prayerful study of the word, if we come to it when we are fresh, we shall never be disappointed, but able to rejoice as one that findeth great spoil. We feel we cannot urge upon our readers too forcibly that daily study of God's word is absolutely essential to their spiritual growth and prosperity. Oh for more of the spirit of the Psalmist when he says, "O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day." And again, "I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Thy commandments." And once more, "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in Thy word." (Psalm cxix. 97, 131, 148.)

We must briefly glance at another important event in this remarkable reign—we allude to the keeping of the passover. (Ch. xxiii. 21-23.) Such a passover had not been kept since the days of Joshua. Now this proves that if we are only faithful to God, He will display His power on our behalf. "Them that honour me I will honour" was certainly illustrated in Josiah's case. Think of how low the nation had sunk, and then consider that a passover was kept which surpassed anything that had been known, even when the nation was at the height of its glory. How encouraging to us! Well may we in this day "cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart."

The passover was the remembrance of Israel's deliverance on the night of judgment. It was the beginning of their history as a nation "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." (Ex. xii. 2.) On that memorable night they were sheltered by blood. This and this alone kept out of their homes the destroying angel who entered the homes of the

Egyptians. The blood that sheltered them was provided by the slain lamb, type of Christ, and was placed upon the door posts of the houses according to directions given by God. And while the destroying angel passed over, the Israelites within fed upon the lamb, roast with fire. They were reminded of this in keeping the passover. In memory they went back to that never-to-be-forgotten night, and as they thought of it, and recalled their preservation and deliverance, what but deep thankfulness to God would fill their hearts to overflowing?

Thus we have arrived at this interesting point in our narrative. It was indeed a triumphant moment, but we need to be reminded of three things that led to such an achievement. First, the house of the Lord had been thought of; second, the word of the Lord had been obeyed; and, lastly, all that was evil had been put away. (Read 2 Kings xxiii. 4-20.) And has not all this a voice to us? Is it not incumbent upon us to act in the same way? Indeed it is. For us the Lord's supper has taken the place of the passover, but can we just as we please, and how we please, according to *any* fashion, remember the Lord in His death? We have said that three things preceded the keeping of the passover in Josiah's day, and we can safely say, that without these, however solemnly it might have been observed, in God's eyes it would have been worthless. The three indispensable requisites were these, and we repeat them: The house of the Lord had been thought of, the word of the Lord had been obeyed, and evil had been put away. Dear reader, are you perfectly satisfied that all this has been provided for, when and where you eat the Lord's supper? Do not, we beseech you, be

deceived by your own feelings, or by your surroundings, but, oh! we would entreat you to judge everything in the light of God's Word; accept the example of Josiah as your guide, and act accordingly.

How few partake of the Lord's supper according to the simplicity in which it is presented in 1 Cor. xi. Nothing is said there about who is to administer it. "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you," says the apostle, and then, in a few simple words, instructs the church at Corinth how it was to be observed. We look in vain for any priestly intervention. The fact is, all who have the right to partake of this ordinance are priests. So much that we see around us to-day connected with this memorial supper is without divine authority, but would not you like to remember the One who died for you according to the manner originally intended? What could be more sweet than meeting with other Christians, members of Christ's body, with the object of remembering Him who loved us and gave Himself, and in entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit for guidance? To think of Him who bore all our sorrows, as well as all our sins; who endured the opposition and hatred of man—scorned, reviled, crowned with a crown of thorns, yet so perfect amidst it all; and all this sorrow heaped upon Him at the very moment when He was about to bear the heaviest burden of all as the sin-bearer. For He endured the wrath of God as well as the enmity of man.

“ Oh what a load was Thine to bear
Alone in that dark hour!
Our sins in all their terror there,
God's wrath and Satan's power.”

May it be our happy privilege, apart from human tradition and evil association (and everything is evil which is contrary to God's word), to remember in simplicity our Lord Jesus Christ "till He come."

And finally may we be stimulated by Josiah's example. He was a "burning and a shining light." May we be willing to walk in that light as it shines upon us to-day from the distant past. There were three great achievements which marked his reign; viz., the house of the Lord was restored, the word of the Lord was exalted, and the passover was properly observed. We may thus learn in closing—

1. How much can be accomplished by one man, where there is a single eye and a devoted heart.

2. That whole hearted service for God is our resource in dark and evil days. It is ever open to us to please Him, and He is still the rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.

3. That if we put God's interests first, such an aim will never end in failure. At least we shall have this testimony, that we pleased God. And lastly, that simple obedience to God's word should be our chief concern. Such a course may not always seem to command the greatest success in the eyes of *men*, but in the end it will be found to have most promoted the glory of *God*.

Does not Josiah's life illustrate and enforce these principles? His times were just as difficult as our own, yet how much was done! And we may be sure, if we adopt the same principles, we shall certainly arrive at similar results. And think of the commendation he received. "Like unto him was there no king before him, *that turned to the Lord with all*

his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, *according to all the law of Moses*; neither after him arose there any like him." (Chap. xxiii. 25.) This was in a dark day, a day when there was very little zeal for the Lord, and it only made Josiah's character shine with greater lustre. And in our day, when the professing church is neither cold nor hot, what we pre-eminently need is to be whole hearted for the Lord.

R. E.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

CHAPTER iii. 7-30.

THE decree would be easily understood: it was simple and brief, and the penalty was plain. Nor was there much, according to human thoughts, required. An act of prostration before the king's idol at the appointed moment, and the whole thing was over. But the decree needs a little examination. It was, as before observed, the intrusion of man's will into God's domain. Obedience to the powers that be, as may be hereafter more fully explained, is a sacred duty; but obedience to the powers that be can only be rendered within the circle of their own lawful authority. If they step out of this circle, as the rulers in Jerusalem did when they commanded the apostles not to teach or to preach in the name of Jesus, they must be told, as Peter and John answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Absolute monarch, therefore, as Nebuchadnezzar was, he stepped outside of his own domain, and claimed for himself what was due to God alone, when he issued his decree.

Another thing may be remarked. The signal for

the worship of the image was the outburst of all kinds of music from the finest band in all the king's dominions. If religious feelings did not exist, they must be produced by the sweet and sensuous sounds of harmony. How subtle the wiles of Satan! for we have really here the history of all religious music. It appeals to nature, and begets natural emotions; but in these the Spirit of God has no part, for they that worship God "must worship Him in spirit and in truth." All these expedients do therefore but deceive souls by their enjoyment of what is natural; and at the same time they both shut out God and conceal the spiritual condition of the professed worshippers.

There was practically entire unanimity in obedience to the king's command. Three only, as far as is recorded, refused to comply with his decree. These were brought to the notice of the king by certain Chaldeans, who "came near, and accused the Jews." (v. 8.) After reciting the king's decree, with the accompanying penalty for disobedience, they proceeded: "There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (v. 12.) If the accusation was subtle, and couched in the form most likely to arouse the anger of the king, its motive is very apparent. Jealousy is written plainly upon it. "There are certain Jews"—men of an alien race, belonging to a hostile nation, who were brought here as captives, and whom thou hast promoted over the heads of thine own loyal subjects—it is these who have set themselves up in opposition to thy royal command.

Hatred is scarcely less concealed, for, before charging them with refusing to worship the king's image, they say, "They serve not thy gods." The king knew this well from Daniel, and had, notwithstanding, appointed them to their posts of honour; but the Chaldeans could not brook the servants of the true God being thus exalted, and at length the opportunity had arrived for them to express the enmity of their hearts in the accusation they now made. Happy was it for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego that no charge could be brought against them excepting, as afterwards in the case of Daniel, concerning the law of their God.

If, however, the manner of the accusation were dictated by jealousy and hatred, it was well calculated to appeal to the conscience of Nebuchadnezzar. The mention of his promotion of the three Jews would, it might be supposed, surely recall to the king's mind that eventful day when Daniel had unfolded the king's secret and its meaning, together with the confession which Daniel's words had extorted from his lips. But if so, all was forgotten in his "rage and fury" at the men who had dared to disregard his absolute and imperious will. The knowledge which God had communicated to Daniel had, in a certain sense, ministered to the king's desire, whereas now faithfulness to God crossed his will, and taught him that there were some who believed, and acted on their belief, that God was, to use the king's own words, "a God of gods, and a Lord of kings." This was insufferable to the insensate and irritated monarch, and he commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego should be brought. "Then they brought these men before the king." (v. 13.)

Morally speaking, it was a most impressive scene.

On the one hand there was Nebuchadnezzar, the mightiest monarch the world had ever seen, surrounded with all the pomp and magnificence of his court and realm; and on the other, three men of a despised race, whatever the position they occupied at that moment in the government. And the question about to be raised was this: Who is the master of men's consciences, God or man? Nebuchadnezzar himself raised it. First, he asked them if the accusation were true, and it will be observed that he travels outside his own decree in accepting the additional charge—that they did not serve the king's gods—which the Chaldeans had brought. Next, he gives them a further opportunity of proving their loyalty when the band of music should once more break out in exciting strains. If then “ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” (v. 15.) Lastly, carried beyond all bounds by his rage, he dared to challenge the interposition of anyone superior to himself, and thereby to assert his own omnipotence; for he added, “Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” This was in truth a gage of battle, and the conflict now commenced was between Nebuchadnezzar and God.

The answer of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, quiet and subdued in tone, is sublime in the confidence in God and in His power which it breathes, and in the calm courage it expresses in their determination to dare all and endure all rather than be unfaithful to their God. They say, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.* If it be so,

* Some translate, “It is not necessary to answer thee on this subject.”

our God whom we serve^t is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (*vv.* 16-18.) As wisdom, divine wisdom, was found to be with the remnant in the previous chapter, so now faithfulness, indomitable faithfulness, to God is exhibited. Grace gave to them both the one and the other, for it was God who had taken up His servants to display, through them, His own wisdom and power.

But this answer of the three children of Judah to Nebuchadnezzar must be examined to understand its full import. First, then, they declared that they were not careful, or that it was not necessary, to reply to the king in "this matter," meaning, undoubtedly, that as the king had defied God, it was He alone who could deal with him, and that they fully counted on His interposition to rebuke the king's arrogant and profane presumption, and to vindicate His own name and supremacy. They then proceeded calmly to confess their faith in the power of their God to deliver them should the king carry out his threat of casting them into the furnace, and their confidence that He would deliver them out of the hand of the king. They added, moreover, that should He not deliver them, their determination was fixed not to yield to the king's commands. They knew whom they had believed, and that He was able to preserve them from the king's fury; but if it were His will, they were ready to die as martyrs for His name's sake. As another has observed, their faith and obedience were as absolute as the will of the king.

This attitude of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego defines with exactitude, as already remarked, the true position of the believer in relation to the powers that be. Everywhere in the New Testament submission to these is enjoined, and such is to be the path of the Christian in the midst of political agitations and confusions. He is neither to raise questions, nor to examine the lawfulness of constituted authorities. It is enough for him that they are in power, and he pursues his way in peace as he renders the required obedience. But if these authorities, whether they be emperors, kings, or magistrates, travel outside of their own province, as Nebuchadnezzar did, and seek to substitute their will for the word of God, and to impose that will on the consciences of their subjects—putting themselves, in fact, in the place of God—then, in very faithfulness to God, like these three children of the captivity, the believer is bound to disobey at whatever cost. The limit of his obedience to kings is obedience to God in obeying the king. The moment he is called upon to disobey God by yielding to a monarch's demands, he must, if he would retain a good conscience towards God, refuse the demanded subjection, even at the cost of life. Such was the ground taken in this conflict between Nebuchadnezzar and these three subjects of his realm.

This was a new thing to this master of the world. Absolute in authority over all the kingdoms of the earth, was he to be flatly and publicly disobeyed by three Jews—members of a nation which he had conquered? Such a thing could not for one moment be tolerated, and hence he was "full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abed-nego"; and "he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace."

A public example must be made of the danger of rebellion to the king's commands, and a salutary impression produced on all the representatives of the government. In some measure, one can understand the wrath of this arbitrary monarch. He had devised an expedient for securing the unity of the various races of his dominions, and it seemed likely to be successful. Not a hand or foot was moved against the project, when suddenly three Jews, and these the special objects of the king's favour, are brought before him and charged with resisting his commands.* His entire scheme was thus imperilled, and hence the ungovernable passion with which he ordered the rebels to his authority to the cruellest doom that could possibly be devised.

His commands were instantly obeyed, and "because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego." What was human life to this wilful, raging king? But God will teach him by the very contrast, that what is death to His enemies cannot injure those who are under His protection. (Compare Exodus xiv.; Mark xvi. 18.) "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego fell down bound

* Many speculations have been offered upon the fact of Daniel's absence from this scene. That he did not surrender his faith, that he was as faithful as his companions, is attested by his subsequent history. Why he does not appear in this chapter is not revealed.

into the midst of the burning fiery furnace"—and, their confidence in God being vindicated, they were not destroyed. The men who had cast them into the furnace were overpowered and killed by the scorching flames; but they themselves in the midst of the furnace were unharmed. Their God *was* able to deliver them. There was another thing to fill the mind of the king with astonishment. And he "rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." (*vv.* 24, 25.) Two miracles thus amazed the eyes of the king: the fact of his intended victims being loose and unhurt, and the presence with them of a supernatural Companion, whom he designates as "like the Son of God."* Not that he understood his own speech; but we may conclude that the Spirit of God, as often in the Scriptures, controlled his speech, and made him proclaim the truth. Isaiah, speaking in the name of Jehovah, had said of Israel, "When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; . . . when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (*chap.* xliii. 2); and this promise was now fulfilled to this believing remnant, as it will be to the remnant of a future day, of which these three children were a type. Jehovah was with His faithful servants in the furnace to sustain, to comfort, and to secure

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them from harm. Before the very eyes of the king, who had impotently and impiously dared Him to deliver out of his hand, He appears, and, shielding His servants from the power of the flames, vindicates their confidence in Him, and their fidelity to His name. Has He not also said to us, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"? So that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Hebrews xiii. 5, 6.)

Nebuchadnezzar had provoked the conflict in challenging the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. God came in, and silently exhibited His power before the furious king; and the king is conquered! Forgetful of everything else now but the spectacle before his eyes, insensible even to his own public humiliation, he, confessing his defeat, with his whole mien and aspect changed, advanced "to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire." (v. 26.)

It is to be remarked that it is not said that anyone besides Nebuchadnezzar saw the divine Companion of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. His eyes were for the moment opened to see what was naturally invisible, that he might learn his own folly in entering upon a conflict with the God of heaven. What patience and longsuffering on the part of God, in the presence of the weak profanity of one of His own creatures! Happy is it for man, for us all, that He never allows His purposes to be frustrated by our daring presumption and rebellion.

The king's command was now obeyed, and these

“servants of the most high God” came forth; and the truth of their preservation—the miracle wrought—was verified by “the princes, governors, and captains, and the king’s counsellors,” who were “gathered together,” it would seem, to examine into the truth of this miraculous preservation; and they “saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.” (v. 27.) The deliverance was total and complete, for the fire had only been allowed to burn their bonds: at least they were seen, notwithstanding they had been bound, walking in liberty in the company of their Deliverer and Preserver. Overwhelmed by the undeniable character of the evidence offered, and owning his own impotence and defeat before such a God, Nebuchadnezzar said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.” (v. 28.) He thus paid honour to God, who had rescued His servants from the king’s wrath, and he justified those who, in fidelity to “their own God,” had refused to worship the image which he himself had set up. He made a decree, moreover, “That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.” (v. 29.)

All the king’s thoughts and projects were thus utterly set at nought. The image he had made had been publicly refused, and as publicly declared to be a false

god. Nebuchadnezzar himself was constrained to confess the impotence of himself and his god, and to proclaim throughout his empire that there was no god like the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. His magnificent assembly had been in vain as far as his own purposes were concerned. Obsequious subjects came from all parts of his dominions to accept and to worship the king's idol; and lo! even before they dispersed, a trumpet-tongued testimony was raised to the supremacy of the most High God. God vindicated His own name, and the faith of His servants, before all the notabilities of the realm.

One thing more is recorded: "Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon." (*v.* 30.) The victory vouchsafed was complete; for not only did God frustrate the designs of the king, but also those of the jealous and malignant enemies of His servants. They had thought to compass the destruction of these faithful men; but the issue was their further promotion and exaltation.

So far the record is historical; but is it only historical? To suppose so would be to miss the main object of the narrative. The actual facts took place; but these actual facts were chosen to set forth what will take place in the last days. As the first Gentile empire became idolatrous so will also the last, as we may learn from *Rev.* xiii., and as God's faithful remnant was the object of enmity and persecution under the king of Babylon, so will it be again under the last head of the Roman empire. (See *Rev.* xii. 13-17; xiii. 6-8, 15, etc.) But, as we read in this same book, Daniel's people, however hot the furnace into which they shall at that time be cast, "shall be

delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Satan may be allowed to rage, and to sift the people of God, but not a hair of their heads can fall without God's permission. The history therefore of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego is full of encouragement—especially for the Jewish remnant in the last days, but also for the saints of God in every age when surrounded by the fires of persecution; when Satan, as a roaring lion, is seeking whom he may devour. And the lesson is written large: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.)

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

1 THESS. i. 9; REV. xxii. 3.

THE words "serve" in these scriptures are entirely different. In the first it signifies to serve as bondsmen or slaves, because the will of God had now become the only law of the lives of these believers. In the second scripture it means rather to serve as worshippers; and hence the same word is used frequently in the Epistle to the Hebrews of the priestly service in the tabernacle (see chaps. viii. 5.; xiii. 10, etc.), and generally also of the worshippers (chaps. ix. 9.; x. 2, etc.) The contrast indicated is strikingly shown in Heb. ix. 14, where "to serve the living God," almost the very phrase found in 1 Thess. i., will mean to serve as worshippers, and not, as there, to serve as bondsmen. The reason of the difference is that, while in Thessalonians the absolute claims of God upon believers are intended to be conveyed, in Hebrews it is a question of

access; of the enjoyment of the privilege of approach into the holiest. Thus in our lives in this world we are not our own, we are God's servants, bondsmen; but when it becomes a question of coming into His presence, then we are worshippers. Consequently when it says, in Revelation xxii., His servants ("bondsmen") shall *serve* Him, it is as worshippers they serve, inasmuch as they are in His immediate presence, for they see His face. The variations in the use of the word are very interesting, but, generally speaking, the distinction mentioned is always maintained. There are two other words for service in the New Testament. One of these is often rendered "ministry." (See Rom. xii. 7; 1 Peter iv. 11.) It is this word which the blessed Lord uses of Himself, when He says of the servants ("bondsmen") whom He shall find watching on His return, "Verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and *serve* them." The term "deacons" comes from this word, and Paul uses this form of it of himself and Apollos in 1 Cor. iii. 5. In the usage of this word there seems to be the general thought of ministering on behalf of Christ to the needs of others, whether through the word, or in any other way. As applied to Himself in Luke xii., it evidently is ministering to the joy of His people in glory, and this confirms what has been said. There is yet another word, and one accurately distinguished from bondsmen in John xviii. 18, where we read "servants" ("bondsmen") and *officers*. This term Paul also uses of Apollos and himself in 1 Cor. iv. 1; and it is also employed when John is spoken of as being *minister* to Paul and Barnabas. (Acts xiii. 5.) There is perhaps the thought of office and official duties embodied in this word. We

need not further pursue the subject, as enough has been said to show how amply it repays the diligent reader of the Bible to search into its minutest details. There are mines of gold in almost every page, which, if explored under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will enrich the devout investigator for all eternity.

II.

GALATIANS vi. 6.

THE meaning of this scripture lies on the surface, when once the significance of the term "communicate" is apprehended. Two examples of its use will suffice. In Romans xii. 13 it is found in the exhortation— "*distributing* to the necessity of saints"; and in 1 Timothy vi. 18, it appears under the form of "*willing to communicate.*" These examples render its interpretation very easy in Gal. vi. 6, as the reader will at once perceive if he carefully study their context. What the apostle enjoins is, then, that the one who is taught in the word should share his "good things" with the teacher; that is, in other words, that the taught should exercise the privilege of ministering to the temporal needs of the teacher. The apostle affirms the same principle, in another aspect, when he says, "If the Gentiles have been made partakers of their [the Jewish saints] spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things." (Rom. xv. 27.) It is for the reader, not for the writer, to say whether the obligation is widely acknowledged.

III.

1 PETER iv. 10, 11.

A VERY complete presentation of the character of all true service is found in this scripture. Its various features may be briefly indicated. We learn, first, that

"the gift" is received from God, and consequently that His people are as stewards responsible to Him for its use. Grace bestows the gift, and the exercise of it is to be an expression of grace. It should be remarked in this connection that the gifts of which Peter speaks are more general than those which Christ, as the ascended Head, "gave . . . unto men." (Ephesians iv. 8-11.) This may be seen from verse 10, and it seems to point to the fact that all believers, as in Romans xii. 4-8, have some special function, some distinct place to fill, or some service to be rendered. Then, secondly, passing by for the moment the first example given, the "ability," or rather the strength, for the service is also divinely given. Human energy and natural abilities have therefore no place in the Lord's service nor in any thing to which we are called of God. Thirdly, the object to be kept in view is, "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The source of the gift, as well as the object of its exercise, is God Himself, while the strength to meet our responsibility as stewards is also given to us of God. How completely therefore man is displaced in our path as servants. The time is coming when God will be all in all. (1 Cor. xv. 28.) It is our privilege to anticipate this time while serving down here according to His will. Moreover, if called upon to "speak," we are to speak as oracles (not *the* oracles) of God; that is, as those who have learnt His mind, and hence as channels for the expression of His thoughts and not of our own; for "he that speaketh of himself (*from* himself, originating his own thoughts) seeketh his own glory," and thus could not have the end before his soul that God in all things might be glorified.