

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

A. S. ROUSE,
15 & 16, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, LONDON, E.C.

1896.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
"THE BEGINNING"	1
"UNTO US"	7
THE THRESHING-FLOOR OF ORNAN	12
FORGIVENESS AND LIBERTY	15
THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN	20, 49, 75
NAZARITESHIP	29
"AFTER HIM"	36
PHARISAISM AND SADDUCEEISM	41
SAMSON	57
GRACE AND GOVERNMENT	64
"CHRIST . . . BECAME POOR"	72
A NAZARITE'S SNARES	85
GALILEE AND JERUSALEM	92
GREEN PASTURES	96
"WHOLESAME WORDS, EVEN THE WORDS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST"	103
LIGHT AND SALVATION	113
STILLNESS OF FAITH	120
SONGS OF DEGREES	124, 184
FULNESS OF JOY	133
THE CONSECRATION OF THE LEVITES	141
"NO SHEPHERD"	148
A SCRIPTURE STUDY	155, 181
A ROYAL FUGITIVE'S RESOURCE	169
CHRIST IN GETHSEMANE	175
PAUL, PHILEMON, AND ONESIMUS	197
ANTAGONISM	203
THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM AFTER THE GLORY	207
"YE REBELS"	210
FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND WITH THE SON	216, 231
THE PASSOVER AND THE CLOUD	225
LIBERATION AND SEPARATION	239, 262

	PAGE
"MY NEW NAME"	253
LIGHTS IN THE WORLD	259
EVIL THOUGHTS UNBIDDEN AND HATED	275
ON DAVID'S SIDE	281
"YE IN ME, AND I IN YOU"	288
DEVOTED OR BACKSLIDING: WHICH?	293
THE BEARING OF ROMANS VI.	299
THE KEY TO THE PSALMS	302
"WE SPEND OUR YEARS AS A TALE"	309
THE EXERCISE OF GIFTS	314
"KNOWING THE TIME"	318
THE GREETINGS OF A GLOWING HEART	324
POETRY—	
PERFECTION—WHERE?	24
THE UNFOLDINGS OF GRACE IN REDEMPTION	47
SHELTERED	79
JESUS ONLY	106
"HIS NAME . . . JESUS"	132
"ARISE, LET US GO HENCE"	163
THE HOLIEST	192
"IN TIME OF NEED"	219
THE GOOD SHEPHERD	246
JESUS	272
BLESSER, BLESSED, AND BLESSING	303
"SURELY I COME QUICKLY"	332
SCRIPTURE NOTES—	
25, 52, 79, 107, 138, 164, 193, 220, 248, 277, 304, 328.	
FRAGMENTS—	
40, 63, 78, 95, 102, 105, 183, 191, 196, 209, 215, 258, 276, 280, 301, 313, 317.	

THE CHRISTIAN FRIEND.

“THE BEGINNING.”

COLOSSIANS i. 18.

As there is ever, more or less, a degree of shadow and sadness connected with the end of the year, so there is generally a measure of brightness and hopeful expectation at its commencement. The mistakes, failures, and disappointments of the past have, so the natural man thinks, been left behind, and the exultant hope of a brighter and more successful experience dawns upon his mind. He forgets the striking observation of the wise man: “That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.” Man may forget his past in the busy rush of his daily life; but God never does, for He has proclaimed that every man shall be judged according to his works. All, therefore, are accountable to Him, and hence it is written, “As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Romans xiv. 11, 12.)

Remembering this, living indeed in the constant recollection of it, in view of our manifestation before the judgment-seat of Christ, we desire to call attention to a new commencement, which not only has no dis-

appointments in store, but which also introduces us to the prospect of an eternal day of unclouded joy. This new beginning is CHRIST, Christ in resurrection, Christ as the Firstborn from the dead. To understand this, some consideration must be given to the last descriptive term—the firstborn from the dead. Death is thus pointed out as the close of the old period, and resurrection as the beginning of the new order of things. Death was the consequence of sin; and the cross of Christ, inasmuch as He glorified God there, by enduring all that God's glory required on account of sin—all the judgment due to what we were and what we had done—was really the termination of God's trial of man under responsibility. The first man came to an end there, under the just judgment of God. Until this is seen, there can be no proper apprehension of the significance of the resurrection of Christ.

Together with the disappearance of the first man from the eye of God, the world in which he had lived came under judgment, and its prince was cast out. There was thus, if we may so speak, a clean sweep, the ending up of everything. The first man and his world came under a common doom. But this only gave the occasion for the revelation of the eternal counsels of God. Before the foundation of the world, God, in the sovereignty of His grace, had chosen a people in Christ, that they should be holy, and without blame before Him in love; and the foundation for the accomplishment of these counsels was laid in the death and resurrection of Christ. His death was the end of the responsible man's history in the flesh; His resurrection, while it was the display of His victorious

power over sin, death, and Satan, was also the commencement of that new creation, of which He is the centre and the glory, and in which all things are made new, as suited to His condition as the Second Man who is out of heaven.

It must not be forgotten that Christ, in incarnation, *was* the Second Man; and it is only as we remember this that we can understand the language of John, who speaks of Him as "from the beginning," this "beginning" dating from His introduction into this world. But while He was the Second Man, when He became flesh and dwelt among us, He was not in the condition of the Second Man until after His resurrection. In His life here, He was in the form of a servant, in fashion as a man, "in the likeness of sinful flesh"; in resurrection this was all changed, and now, for the first time, God's eternal thought for man in redemption was realized and set forth. It is on this account that He is termed "the beginning" in our scripture; and the words, "the Firstborn from the dead" are added to mark the fact that He became this in resurrection. The similar expression in Rev. iii. 14, "the beginning of the creation of God," differs only in this, that here our attention is directed rather to the nature and character of the new creation, as seen in a risen and glorified Christ.

One word must be said as to the context in Colossians. Immediately after describing our blessed Lord as the Firstborn from the dead, it proceeds, "That in all things He might have the pre-eminence." The apostle had already spoken of Him as the first-born of every

creature, or "before all creation," and he explains that this place belongs to Him in virtue of His creatorship: "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." If, that is, the Creator Himself steps, so to speak, into His own creation, He must, of necessity, take the first place, and this is one of the glories of His supremacy. Then, on introducing us into the new circle of the Church, we are also reminded that He has the first place in it, for He who is the head of His body, the Church, is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. Thus, wherever Christ is, whether regarded as connected with the first creation or the new, He is first—in the absolute pre-eminence of His personal and acquired glories.

But the point to be pressed at this moment is, that if God now dates everything (we speak reverently) from the resurrection of Christ, so must we, if we would be in communion with His mind. Think for one moment of the unspeakable significance of this truth. All men are in a state of spiritual death; and Christians are, by the grace of God, associated with the death of Christ, so that it can be said of them, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." There is only one Man, therefore, before the eyes of God, only one in life, the Life itself, and this is He who is the Firstborn from the dead. That it is He who is our life is also blessedly true; but *it is He* who

is this, and He is our life in resurrection. He is consequently our new beginning, and, so regarded, His resurrection will be invested with new light and power for our souls. Entering into this, we shall not be occupied with our birth into this world, or with times and seasons, but everything for us will be associated with Christ as risen out of death and glorified.

All will admit the truth of this as doctrine; but what we want is to be in the power of the truth. After a new language is learned, many continue to think in their own, and to translate their thoughts into the new as required. Many Christians are like this. They live the old life, notwithstanding they profess to have died with Christ, and endeavour to use the new life, life in a risen Christ, as the vehicle for the expression of their old thoughts, feelings, and affections. What wonder that constant failure marks their path? that their Christian lives are characterized by sorrow and disappointment? New wine must, as our Lord teaches, be put into new bottles. The old life must be refused, and grace must be sought to always bear about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. Possessing Christ, we then have to learn, that *we* came to an end before God in His cross, and that our true life is Himself who is the Firstborn from the dead. Then we shall indeed apprehend that He, the risen One, is also *our* beginning.

It may be further remarked that Christ, as so presented to us, is the Pattern and Model of all the

redeemed. As before remarked, in Christ risen and glorified we behold God's eternal thought for all His redeemed; and His servant, Paul, has taught us that God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son, "that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren." Nothing short of this would correspond with His purpose, or satisfy His heart. Our Lord Himself speaks of the same thing when He says, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." The truth of what He is as the glorified Man, although ever the Eternal Son, is the means, brought home to the soul in the power of the Holy Ghost, of bringing us into growing moral conformity to Him now, and into His likeness actually when our bodies also partake of the efficacy of redemption. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." What a prospect is thus opened out before the eye of faith! And what an unfolding of the grace of our God, in that He has thus purposed to have us ever before Himself, in eternal association with His beloved Son, and in perfect conformity to His image!

"There Christ, the centre of the throng,
Shall in His glory shine;
But not an eye those hosts among
But sees His glory Thine."

It is, therefore, a great cardinal truth of Scripture, that Christ is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead. And what comfort it ministers to our souls to recall the fact that He is the beginning, God's new beginning, as victorious over death, and in a scene out-

side of and beyond death! We may now anticipate its consummation; for if any man be in Christ [there is] a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new; and it is but a very little while until the time when God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of His people; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Together with this, the divine proclamation will be made from the eternal throne, "Behold, I make all things new." Blessed is he who, with an assured interest through faith in the efficacy of the finished work of Christ, can look forward with certainty to the perpetual enjoyment of this perfect state with all God's redeemed!

"UNTO US."

THERE are two remarkable events, recorded in Scripture, which took place in connection with the ministry of the Word of God.

One is that of a young man, named Eutychus, falling from the third loft, during the preaching of the Apostle Paul, and who was taken up dead; and the other is, the sudden death of a prince in Israel, named Pelatiah, which occurred at the time Ezekiel was prophesying against the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (Acts xx. 9-12; Ezekiel xi.) In the case of the former we find that God interposed in mercy, and the Apostle was used to restore him to life again, and, when he presented him alive, the friends "were not a little comforted." No such power, however, was employed in behalf of the latter. On the other hand, when the prophet saw that the prince

was dead, he fell down upon his face, and cried with a loud voice, "Ah, Lord God! wilt Thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?"

The preaching of the apostle on the occasion referred to, was a means of testing the endurance of his audience, for he "continued his speech until midnight." (v. 7.) And the slumbering state of Eutyclus, which resulted in his fall, showed how unequal he was to the occasion, and while exposing himself before all present, he sustained a loss which he never recovered. Through the tender mercy of God he recovered his life, but the portion of Paul's ministry, which he lost while he was sleeping, he never recovered. And who knows but that the *last* part was the *best* on that memorable night and very special occasion?

We are not to suppose that the failure of Eutyclus, and the fall which attended it, is without an equivalent, and that there are none of the same class of persons to be found in the vast assemblies of professing Christians in the present day. The test is the Word of God, and the preacher, who is bold enough to apply the same, by presenting to his hearers the apostle's doctrine of the heavenly calling, and the heavenly association of the Church with Christ, will see if it does not reveal a state of soul answering to what was seen in the case of Eutyclus. At the same time, it will serve as a demonstration of the fact that his followers have increased to a multitude.

It is to be feared we have each contributed towards the spirit of slumber, and of general indifference, which now prevails among the professing people of God, with regard to those heavenly truths so peculiar to the teaching of the Apostle Paul. That kind of

preaching, indeed, is preferred which justifies the Christian in "making the best of both worlds," and even in making more of the present one than of that to come, while he has the opportunity: while the ministry which would lead us into the present enjoyment of our heavenly portion, and hold the heart in occupation with things above, "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," is either slighted or refused. It is, therefore, a great mercy when the authority of the word is acknowledged, and the Master's voice is heard, saying, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. v.) May each slumbering heart be awakened by the loud, long, and loving appeal of our ever-living Lord, "Awake, awake!" and thus receive more light, and have more enjoyment of the apostle's doctrine of the heavenly calling, instead of contenting ourselves with knowing our eternal security in Christ, and with having heaven in prospect merely, and its joys in anticipation only.

It is needful to distinguish between waywardness of heart, accompanied with ignorance, as is often the case, and rebelliousness of will, which rises in opposition to God. These two things apply, in principle, to the persons referred to above, and account for the compassion which was shown to one, and not to the other. The death of Pelatiah must be viewed, therefore, rather as a visitation from God, who showed His indignation toward one who was both "wise in his own conceit," and guilty of the two-fold sin of withstanding God's messenger, and misleading His people. And the appeal of the prophet on that solemn occasion, was the means of disclosing the fact that

God had a controversy not only with the prince, but also with some of His people, whose hearts were lifted up with pride, and who treated their brethren, who were under discipline, with contempt. The Lord replied to the prophet as follows :

"Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord: *unto us* is this land given in possession. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." (Ezekiel xi. 14-16.)

Much had been done, no doubt, by the house of Israel, to merit the displeasure of God, as was witnessed by their scattered condition; but instead of justifying their brethren in despising them, in the abundance of His mercy, God showed His readiness to defend them; and He exposed the pride which prompted the inhabitants of Jerusalem to say, "Get you far from the Lord: *unto us is this land given in possession.*" Not only did God assure His servant that He would preserve His scattered and unfaithful people, but He also revealed to him that the time was coming when they would be gathered together in their own land, and have "one heart" and a new spirit, and they would be His people, and He would be their God.

We sometimes learn the greatness of our sins, as well as the nature of our blessings, by means of contrast. Compare, for example, the contemptuous

expression of the inhabitants of Jerusalem with the confession of the humble-minded remnant, "*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory.*" (Psalm cxv. 11.) The omission of the word "NOT" proved that the inhabitants of Jerusalem were guilty not only of despising their brethren, but also of claiming undue honour for themselves, instead of attributing it unto God, from whom it comes, and to whom all glory is due.

The sin of which we are speaking, is not confined to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to Old Testament times. It has beset the people of God in all ages, and was repeated by the disciples of Christ, whose self-importance betrayed itself on a certain occasion, when they saw one doing what they ought to have been able to do, but could not, through lack of prayer and fasting. And John, addressing the Lord, said: "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not *us*." But the Lord replied, "Forbid him not! for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can speak lightly of Me. For he that is not against *us* is on our part." (Mark ix. 38-40.) This reply not only declares His faithfulness in reproving His people for their pride, but also proclaims His grace in claiming all that love His name, and own His authority.

May we all learn a lesson from the three utterances—"us," "unto us," and "not unto us"—and prove the sufficiency of the grace of God in preserving us from the sin of self-exaltation; and, instead of despising our brethren, let us seek, by means of the same grace, to esteem others more highly than ourselves, and say, "The Lord be magnified."

H. H.

THE THRESHING-FLOOR OF ORNAN.

1 CHRONICLES xxi.

IT is blessed to know that when Satan stands up against Israel, against Job, or against anyone else, he will certainly end by defeating his own object, and by causing the grace of God to abound through His blessed intervention. Such was the case in 1 Chronicles xxi., where the arch-enemy instigated David to number the people, and thus to commit the gross sin of independent action, of counting upon physical strength rather than upon the Lord.

We have sometimes seen analogous presumption, attended always by fatal consequences, when the number and apparent flourishing state of Christians have been boasted of. Even Joab (who was a shrewd man, and could apprehend clearly the outward interests of Israel) endeavoured to dissuade David from this step; but, alas! a worse person than Joab had got possession of David's mind for the moment, and the numbering took place.

The king, however, acted rightly in falling into the hand of Jehovah; and the prompt judgment that fell on the people was checked by the Lord's mercy. We seem to see David in his anxiety, and the terrible form of the angel with the sword stretched out over Jerusalem. There was a pause in the progress of God's wrath, and the king seemed at once to understand that the moment had come for supplication. With all his failures, David had the heart of a shepherd of Israel, and his prayer is very touching: let the

sword's point be turned towards him and his father's house, but averted from the poor sheep of the holy city.

And now comes the wonderful part of the narrative. The true confession is accepted, and the command given to go up and erect an altar to Jehovah in the threshing-floor of Ornan, the Jebusite.

This altar now forms our subject, and we should study its place and import. It became the very site of the centre of God's house; for Solomon, when he built the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, began there, where the Lord had appeared to David, his father, in the threshing-floor of Ornan, the Jebusite.

The ground had to be bought at full price; and I have no doubt that the great sum mentioned in Chronicles, instead of clashing with the account given in 2 Samuel, is a beautiful figure of that grace which could give all. The ground was given, indeed, by Ornan, but may we not see, in the immense price paid for the standing ground of the altar, a shadow of the infinite price paid that justice might be satisfied, and an immutable basis be established for worship and blessing? The first grand act of the returned remnant from Babylon, was to get the altar upon its bases. (Ezra iii. 3.) Six hundred shekels of gold may seem a heavy price; but burnt offerings are not to be offered for nothing. What a question, too, might we ask in passing: "How much did it cost to get *our* altar into its right place before God?"

Then come two immense facts. First of all, the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings are fully accepted by Jehovah, who answers by fire from heaven; and secondly, the sword of the minister of justice is sheathed. (Verses 26, 27.)

Surely now we are come unto Mount Zion. We can stand with sure feet upon the threshing-floor of Ornan, which is now become a solid platform of grace. Approving fire from heaven consumes the offerings, and all judicial terrors are at an end. The terrible symbolic sword has disappeared, put up into its sheath, and all is joy and happy worship on the threshing-floor of Ornan. What a change from the 20th verse, where those who were on that very floor hid themselves in fear before the messenger of death!

But this is not all; David sacrificed there. (verse 28.) It is in this very spot that relationship is renewed between Jehovah and Israel. The house of the Lord should be built there; that house that should be "exceeding magnificent," of fame and glory throughout all countries. Sovereign grace had acted, had chosen Mount Zion (see Psalm lxxviii.), but this grace had been made good through righteousness, through the full satisfaction of all God's dues; and in the very spot where the enemy would have delighted to see the carnage of God's people, the terrible glaive was sheathed, and access opened to Jehovah, in His own courts, in perfect blessing.

The high place in Gibeon, where the tabernacle of the Lord was, must now disappear. Fear was still connected with the tabernacle (see verses 29, 30); and may we not see here the passing away of that which was a legal institution, to make way for that full grace which should establish the altar of burnt-offering on a divine and permanent basis? David says (1 Chronicles xxii. 1): "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel."

It becomes the very centre of the work for the

construction of Jehovah's house (see the following verses); and here we may stop, only to praise Him, who could reveal Himself in the magnificence of grace.

Happy are they who have known the true value of the threshing-floor of Ornan, the Jebusite!

E. L. B.

FORGIVENESS AND LIBERTY.

THERE is a deliverance, a liberty wherewith Christ makes us free, which is other than forgiveness and the joy that may accompany it, and which is often felt to be experimentally a mightier change than the first discovery of mercy, and conversion to God. The Epistle to the Romans treats distinctly of these two things. First, propitiation and forgiveness of sins—justification from all the first Adam produces—through Christ's being delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification, and the blessed grace which has thus given us a portion with God, and given us to joy in Him. This closes with chapter v. 11.

Then comes the state of the sinner by one man's disobedience, *what we are and where we are*, not guilt from what we have done. We are in the flesh. The quickening power of God does not deliver. It works the desire of holiness, and shews us the necessity of it; but the flesh works still. To this the law, which requires righteousness from us, directly applies. The remedy for this is not the same as for guilt and sins, though it be *still Christ's death*. There it was Christ bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, making propitiation, purging us from them before God. But

the remedy for the power of sin in us, our state as in the flesh before God, *is taking us out of it, our having been crucified with Christ.* We have part in righteousness by having part in death. If we have part in death, we shall not live on. We are, by the Holy Ghost given to us, *in Christ, not in the flesh.* It is a new state and place, not the forgiveness of the sins of the old; as Israel not only escaped judgment by the blood on their door-posts, when God was a judge, but were wholly out of Egypt at the Red Sea, where God was a deliverer. So we are not only secured from judgment, but out of the flesh, sin, and the world, when through the work of Christ we have received the Spirit through faith. We are not only born again, but have put off the old man, have been crucified with Christ, are dead; our life is hid with Christ in God. *The Christ* who has become my life—the new I which lives to God and to Him only—*has died*, and I reckon myself dead. It is a mistake to say, when we are emptied of self, we can thus live. It is as alive from the dead that we yield ourselves to God as truly free. The doctrine of this is in Romans vi.; the practical process by which we arrive at it is in chapter vii., a humbling process, as it always is (though it may be modified by the knowledge of forgiveness), under law the first husband, where a state is required which we are not in. The flesh is not subject to the law of God, nor can be. We discover then our state, what the flesh is, not guilt. “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing”; then through divine teaching that it is not I, but sin that dwells in me; *but then that it is too strong for me, that I am captive to the law of sin in my members.*

This is clearly not the Christian state at all, but a renewed soul under law. It does not say that the flesh is in me, but that I am captive to it, sold under sin. I am there, though it be not I, and cannot get out. But this is my state under the first husband, law. Death dissolves this bond. I have died in Christ, I have been crucified with Him, and power in the life of the risen Christ is now my portion, the flesh reckoned dead, and I alive *to God* in Christ. Consequently it is not when brought to be empty of self I am filled with the Spirit, but when brought to *find self or flesh wholly evil and that I cannot get rid of it or get the victory over it.* When I have learned that I have no strength as well as that I am ungodly (a point much harder to learn and more humbling), then I find I am delivered, having died in Christ to *sin*, and the *flesh*, and the *law* withal. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, Christ risen, *hath made me free from the law of sin and death.* I am not a slave or captive, but free. What the law could not do, being weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin (a sacrifice for sin), has condemned sin in the flesh—not forgiven it. But when it was condemned, death was; so that, while condemnation has been carried out in Christ, it is for faith dead since He is, and now the power of life in Him risen is that in which I live, dead to sin and alive to God, not in Adam or flesh at all, but in Christ.

Now being wholly free I can yield myself to God as one alive from the dead. I reckon myself dead as regards the flesh and *alive in Christ only.* I am not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God, given on cleansing by the blood, dwell in me; and if Christ

be in me, the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Thus there is not any reason for ever having an evil thought even. Sin has no dominion over me. I am not a debtor to the flesh; and, being set free in the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, I am able (for Christ's power is there) to hold the flesh for dead. There is no reason why one single thought in my mind should come from the flesh, or from anything but the life of Christ which is in me in the power of the Spirit. There is no excuse if such do arise.

There are two elements in this state; having put off the old man and put on the new, which *after* God is created in righteousness and true holiness; and having the Holy Ghost dwelling in me. Hence God's way of acting is my measure of good, Christ (God manifest in a man) being the expression and model of this. I have *perfect liberty in divine favour, loved as Christ was loved, and knowing it*; and I may, and ought to be, occupied with what is revealed in Him, my affections being engaged there, and I filled with the Spirit.

But as this is a state of dependence, diligent seeking of grace alone can keep us thus, and, in fact, in many things we all offend. But my normal state is not grieving the Spirit, and so in God's presence, being able *to think of Him and not of self*. *No state here* is the object of the saint. He is not alive in the world, and he looks, having this life, to be conformed to Christ in glory, and if he thinks of himself at all it is only to judge himself. But I believe—in complete deliverance from the law of sin which is in our members—that I am called to be filled with the Spirit, which would not allow thoughts from the flesh

to arise in the mind, nor anything that would soil the conscience, but would make us live in the atmosphere of the divine presence. The practical realizing this is by always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; and then God helps us by delivering us to death by trial, that this may be fully made good. (2 Cor. iv.)

I allow therefore no captivity to sin, no dominion of it. This, even when hopeless of getting the victory, we find to be ours in Christ; and there all has to come from the Spirit, and all is fulness of joy with God. But this is carried out, first by knowing, when helpless *as to victory over the flesh, that we have died in Christ*, and then by always bearing about His dying, death still working in us, that the life only of Christ may be manifested.

“So that ye cannot do the things that ye would” is utterly false in Galatians v. It should be “*in order that ye may not do,*” &c.

But there is complete deliverance from the whole power of sin—we reckoning ourselves dead—and undistracted enjoyment of divine favour in the relationship in which Christ is. The only normal state of the Christian, then, is unclouded fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and the uninterrupted manifestation of the life of Christ in his body, and when in God's presence not having to think of sin in himself, but freedom to think of God and what He is. He is divinely free through and in Christ. But he has no thought of a present state of perfection or of purity (only the Spirit is ungrieved, and has not to make him think of himself); *for his only owned state is conformity to Christ in glory*, God having

wrought him for that selfsame thing, in virtue of which he purifies himself as He is pure; and if he does think of himself, he has the consciousness of his not being like Christ as he would, but is glad to have to think of Christ only. But purifying himself is not consciousness that he is pure. His conversation is in heaven, his motives there, and hence necessarily, if he thinks of himself, the consciousness of shortcoming, though he be not troubled by any present thought of sin, but is able to think of Christ. A return to think of himself is for him already failure. J. N. D.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

CHAP. iv. 20; v. 1-5.

THERE is another test applied at the beginning of this passage, for it is an easy thing to say that one loves God; but the proof of it will be seen in the love shown to one's brother.

It is a happy thing in the present day, when so much is said about loving God, to have the simple tests given to us in John's Epistle. John, by the Holy Spirit, will be satisfied with nothing but the real, true divine life; no mere profession or declaration will suffice, the genuine metal only will stand the test. Thus John's Epistle, if it be the most abstract, is at the same time the most practical; there must be the testing of all that claims to be the divine life. In this case it is very simple, it is divine love showing itself in action to visible brethren here. One need not be astonished that this heartless world sent such a teacher to Patmos.

Again, I think we should notice the importance of

the commandment (verse 21) amongst Christians, for another apostle found in practice that the more he loved, the less he was loved.

And now comes a very important part of the epistle; we may notice two things, not to be confounded, in the first part of the fifth chapter (that is, in verses 1-5).

1. What "begotten of God" means.

2. The victory over the world.

1. The first verse begins with the well-known characteristic phrase in John's writings—"Every one that believes, etc.," "Every one that loves, etc." There has been a work of God in the soul of the believer; it is hard, no doubt, for man to admit that all good comes from God, and that He alone begins the good work in us. Yet, so it is; and when there is a simple faith in the person of Jesus (believing that Jesus is the Christ), there has been a profound operation in the soul. One begotten of God loves Him who has begotten him; and loves, too, all those who are thus born of God.

I suppose we can all remember the first feelings of love to those who are born of God; I can recollect a distinct feeling of hatred to Christians, and the change when the very ones that I had disliked became dear to me. But how do we know that we love God's children? Here again we have one of the tests, which make everything plain. It is by *obedience* that we know that we love the children of God: "When we love God and keep His commandments." This, again, is of great importance, for we often hear that love is wanting (it is too true), and that we ought to have wider principles, and seek to go with all who profess themselves Christians, in a broad and liberal way. All this specious liberality

is worth nothing, for there can be no real love but in obedience; and it would be no love to identify ourselves with what is not according to God's commandments, on the plea of large-heartedness.

Painful as it may be, we may be obliged sometimes, out of very love, to steer clear of what may seem very plausible, and of many enterprises in which Christians are engaged. This may seem very narrow, but obedience is better than sacrifices. Again, please to observe that these plausible theories of love (or, rather, indulgence) will not stand the test of God's word, any more than the enterprises to which I have alluded will receive His approval.

This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous. It is not a heavy yoke lying upon a stiff unsubject neck, but a new nature that obeys from an inner principle of joyful submission to the divine will; His commandments are not heavy and arbitrary; it is not service of the kind of brick-making under the Pharaohs, but a delightful path to one born of God, the path trodden by Jesus Himself, the path of obedience to Him whom we love because He first loved us.

May we know it more and more!

2. But now comes the second part of our subject; the victory over the world by the supreme Object of faith, Jesus, the *Son of God*.

Notice now, in verse 5, that it is not said of the victor merely that he believes that Jesus is the Christ, but that he believes that He is the Son of God. The victory over the world is a moral victory, but to be really superior to all the influences of this huge Vanity Fair, we need to be walking by faith in One

who is supreme, whose glory eclipses all that the world can offer, and whose power is at our disposal. Our faith must be in exercise, if we are really to overcome the world, and so the fourth verse teaches us.

We might notice, I think, as an illustration of this passage, the well-known account of Peter's walking on the water, in Matthew xiv. All depended upon the supreme power of Him who walked upon the water, and when at length the disciples received Him into the ship, they said, as they worshipped Him, "Of a truth Thou art the Son of God!" To overcome all the contrary influences of the world—to walk upon the water—all this required faith in the Son of God.

Another passage, too, might help us here; the ninth of John, where the blind man was given to see the glory of the Son of God, and to worship Him and follow Him outside the power of the hostile Sanhedrim. I wish to notice that, on both of these occasions, our Lord is presented to us as Son of God; and it is in this aspect that He is presented to us here as being the supreme Object of our faith.

It is very interesting, thus to compare the first verse with the fifth of this chapter: in the first instance, we have the fact of being begotten of God, and love towards all those who form part of the divine family; in the second, a further development of the Christian position and superiority over the world. A believer sees and knows by faith the Son of God, who has overcome the world, and whose power and glory are infinitely above all that is visible; neither the menaces of Satan on the one hand, nor his attractions on the other, can turn him aside from the straight path.

If the eye be truly fixed upon Jesus, one can walk upon a boisterous sea ; or walk between heaps of treasure, without looking either to the right hand or to the left.

E. L. B.

PERFECTION—WHERE ?

“PERFECTION !” Here to find it
 On earth we seek in vain.
 Death stamps earth’s scenes—the fairest,
 None here perfection gain.
 “In me,” earth says, “it is not,
 Nor in the depths below.”
 ’Tis vain on earth to seek it ;
 Then whither shall we go ?

At God’s right-hand in heaven
 Sits Jesus, on the Throne ;
 The blessèd Man, Christ Jesus,
 The only Perfect One.
 His feet once trod this desert,
 Mid suffering, shame, and woe.
 God found in Him His pleasure,
 Who loved His will to do.

Perfect His life—each footstep
 Marks out His peerless worth.
 As incense sweet ascending,
 Was Jesus’ life on earth.
 Then, as the Spotless Victim,
 He gave Himself to die,
 By that One Perfect Offering
 To God to bring us nigh.

* * * *

Perfection of perfection,
 O Jesus, Lord, art Thou !
 The chiefest mid ten thousand,
 With glory crownèd now.

Upon Thy brow, Lord Jesus—
 Once crowned with cruel thorns,
 We joy to see the glory
 That now that brow adorns.

Soon all shall bow before Thee,
 Thy matchless worth to own ;
 Soon every eye shall see Thee
 Exalted on Thy Throne.
 But, oh ! what joy, blest Saviour,
 To gaze upon Thy face ;
 With Thee : Thy joy for ever,
 Blest trophies of Thy grace !

Thy deep perfection ever
 Still learning more and more,
 Eternity disclosing
 That deep exhaustless store—
 The preciousness and beauty
 That's treasured, Lord, in Thee—
 Perfection of perfection !
 We wait Thy face to see !

E. E. N.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

ROMANS vi. 6, etc.

It is sometimes difficult to give the exact force of the word rendered "destroyed" in this scripture. It is of very frequent occurrence in the New Testament, being found some twenty-eight times, and in each case the context must be considered. Generally speaking, it signifies to make void, cancel, set aside, abrogate, annul, or abolish. In Luke xiii. 7, it is given as "cumbering," or as elsewhere more accurately trans-

lated, "Why does it also *render* the ground *useless?*" In Romans iii. 3 it is, "Shall their unbelief *make* the faith of God *without effect?*" In verse 31 of the same chapter it is translated to "make void." Having called attention to its general usage, we may now consider its force in some important connections. To those acquainted with the truth it will be apparent, at once, that "destroyed" is too strong a word in Romans vi. 6. Taking the "body of sin" to mean, as is often done, sin in its totality, sin as the evil principle which characterizes, or is active, in the flesh—in man's fallen nature; and understanding that it came up, in the cross of Christ, for unsparing judgment, so that it has gone for ever from before the eye of God, and from the eye of faith, it yet could not be said to be destroyed for the simple reason that it continues to exist in the believer. (See Romans vii. 25.) Accordingly, in the *Revised Version*, we find substituted, "done away," and, more accurately, in the *New Translation*, "annulled." That is to say, the teaching of the scripture is that our old man has been crucified with Christ, in order that the power, or the claims, of the body of sin might be abrogated, set aside, or annulled, for the believer, so that he might be no longer enslaved to it. The same remarks will almost exactly apply to Hebrews ii. 14; for, as we well know, Satan has not been "destroyed," but his claims upon the believer have for ever been nullified, or abolished, through the death of Christ. Through the just judgment of God, the devil has acquired rights over fallen man, and he consequently wields the power of death over every unconverted soul; but both his rights and delegated power have been for ever set aside for those who have been

delivered from his bondage by Him, who in death endured all the judgment of God against them, on account of their state and guilt, and who thus effected their redemption. One other example may be cited. In 2 Timothy i. 10, our Saviour Jesus Christ is said to have "abolished" death, and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel. The *Revised Version* keeps the word "abolish," while the *New Translation* again gives "annulled," which is a happier rendering. For the abolition of death will not be, even for God's people, until the morning of the resurrection, when, as we are expressly told, death will be swallowed up in victory. In the meantime, while the believer may fall asleep, and depart to be with Christ, the claims and power of death over him have been abrogated. Hence it is that, in the prospect of death, he may triumphantly cry, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." But the time is approaching, in the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, when the last enemy that shall be "destroyed" (abolished now—it is the same word) is death; "for He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet." The reader will find much instruction and profit in following out the subject.

II.

JOHN viii. 38.

This scripture does but express the total and absolute contrast between our blessed Lord and His enemies. As another has said, "This opposition between the

revelation from above, and that which is in the world and from below, characterizes the chapter, and forms its basis"; and it is the testimony of Christ, as the sent One of the Father, which calls out this opposition in its most distinct form. Thus in verse 23, He says to them, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world"; and verse 38 sums up the contrast in the declaration that His words were morally the revelation of what He had seen with His Father, even as their deeds were the moral expression of what they had seen with their father. (See verse 44 for the sad explanation of their moral origin.) But the question is, what are the things which Jesus had seen with His Father? In verse 25, in answer to the question, "Who art Thou?" Jesus replied (to give a more exact translation), "Altogether that which I also say to you," that is, His word, His speech, presented Himself, being Himself the truth. But He was the revealer of the Father; and hence He could say, "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of (from) Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." (Chap. xiv. 10.) All that He said, therefore, and all that He did, as recorded in this connection, contained the revelation of Himself, and consequently of the Father; and thus He said to the Jews, "If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also." (v. 19.) We understand, then, "that which I have seen with My Father," to refer to the Father Himself and to the Father's things, which He came down from heaven to declare (compare chap. xvi. 14, 15).

NAZARITESHIP.

NUMBERS vi.

IN considering this subject, it must ever be borne in mind that there were two kinds of Nazarites in the past dispensation. There were those like Samson and John the Baptist, who were Nazarites from their birth (Judges xiii. 7, Luke i. 15); and there were those who, as in Numbers vi., vowed "a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord." In a general sense, it might be said that all Christians answer to the former, inasmuch as they are separated unto God through conversion and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and hence they are saints by calling. The latter class will represent rather those who are called out, and who in obedience to the divine call devote themselves, to some special service in the power of the Holy Ghost. But whether the former or the latter, both alike were to be separated from all that man, as man, finds pleasure in, and from all defilement, in order to be wholly for God. Things lawful even, that is, not evil in themselves, were to be renounced that nothing might interfere with a full and entire response to the absolute claims of God.

Before explaining the typical details of our chapter, it may help to point out that the perfect illustration of the Nazarite path of consecration is seen in the life of our Lord and Saviour. Now He is actually separated from sinners (Heb. vii. 26), but when on earth He was morally as separate from them as now that He is in

heaven. As another has remarked, "He was ever separated from human joy as from all evil—there was no honey as there was no leaven, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, as passing in holy love through a world of sinners—His love driven back, and thus Himself straightened and pent up: the atonement opened its sluices." It is only, indeed, as one carefully studies the gospels, that the discovery is made how complete the separation of Christ was. Coming to do God's will, He was wholly for Him in every thought, and word, and act; but this involved His being apart, not only from evil, but also from those things in which even a Christian ordinarily finds comfort and refreshment. "Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with Thee." His answer was, for the consecration of His God was upon His head, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" And then, stretching forth His hand towards His disciples, He said, "Behold my mother and my brethren." When, moreover, He received the message that Lazarus, whom He loved, was sick, He abode two days still where He was, refusing to gratify His own affections, because He was here to do the will of the Father alone. The most accessible of men, as sometimes said, He was yet the loneliest of all, because of His perfect devotedness to the glory of His God.

If we keep Him before our souls, we shall be better able to comprehend the teaching of our chapter. One difference has to be remembered in the application to ourselves. The Nazarite separated himself from certain things that he *might be* "unto the Lord." The

Christian separates himself because he *has been* set apart for God. Not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world, he seeks grace, for example, to be kept from its evil, according to the prayer of our blessed Lord. (John xvii.) There are, then, three things which were to characterise the Nazarite. He was to separate himself, in the first place, from wine and strong drink; and, in fact, he was to touch nothing that was made of the vine tree, from the kernels to the husk. Taking, then, the symbolic meaning, a Nazarite was to be outside all human joy, the joy of natural relationship and of social intercourse. It will be remembered that this form of Nazariteship is connected with a call to special service; and hence, when all Christians are included, as in Ephesians, the exhortation is, "Be not *drunk* with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Only, if we are filled with the Spirit, we shall be borne into a region outside of all earthly joys, inasmuch as the Spirit will become the source of our thoughts, feelings, affections, and enjoyments. And who can doubt that the more entirely we are "unto the Lord," the more our hearts will be filled with His joy? (See John xv. 11.)

Moreover, "all the days of the vow of his separation" no razor was to come upon his head. As the apostle reminds the Corinthians, nature itself teaches that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him. This affords the key for the interpretation of this particular. It is really giving up one's place, as man in the world for God's will—the renunciation, or laying aside, of his position and rights with the view of being free for God's

service. This was exactly what Christ did. With the title and right to everything, He gave up all, claimed nothing, and never asserted His rights. Thus, while the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had their roosting places, He had not where to lay His head; and, on this very account, He warned those round about Him, that, unless they forsook all they had, they could not be His disciples. It is for each of us to say in how far this feature is exemplified in our lives. It carries us, as will be confessed by all, into a region completely outside of the first man and his things; but it is essential for us to be in this region, if the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus is to be displayed in our walk and ways. The saddest thing of all is the exhibition of the contrary spirit, the spirit of man in the midst of those on whom the light of the truth has been shining unhinderedly for so many years.

The third thing enjoined is that, during the days of his separation unto the Lord, he shall come at no dead body; he was not even to "make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head." Death is the fruit and consequence of sin, and on this account it was regarded as defiling. We thus read in chap. xix. that "whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days" (v. 16). For us, the defilement is contracted through contact with moral death; and consequently a dead man will represent one dead in his sins. And it is a very solemn consideration for us all that, situated as many are in the

midst of unconverted relatives, defilements may be so readily incurred. The blessed Lord, being what He was, and ever in perfect and unclouded communion with His Father, could touch the leper and not be unclean; but we, with that in us which answers to the evil in the heart of those morally dead—with the same nature indeed—are easily defiled, even when seeking to deliver them from that which has alienated them from God. How much, therefore, we need to be on our guard in our daily conversation, if we would preserve our place of separation and of communion! Let us never forget, then, that all the days of our separation—and this, for the Christian, is the whole of his life—we are holy unto the Lord (v. 8). We shall then recognize, at all times, whatever intimate relative appeals may be made, the absoluteness of God's claims.

Provision is next made for what might almost be termed accidental defilement, through the case of a man dying "very suddenly" by the Nazarite. It is supposed that he could not help himself, as there would be no opportunity for precaution, or for avoidance of the uncleanness. But, in the interpretation, we have to enquire into what would answer to this for ourselves. Sudden and unexpected contact with one morally dead in our homes, or when in the midst of our occupations, or any manifestation of the flesh, or sin committed, in our presence, might be the cause of defilement. We say "might be," because in chapter xix. we learn, in a similar case, that it was only the open vessel, which had no covering bound upon it, which was rendered unclean. This will teach that

when we are walking in the power of the Holy Ghost in the maintenance of communion, we are closed against, and repel the defiling influences by which we may be surrounded. There is no necessity, indeed, as John declares, that the believer should sin; but then he adds, "he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." There must, therefore, be for this end incessant watchfulness, and the preservation within us of an ungrieved Spirit.

In the old dispensation, the Nazarite, under the ceremonial law, could not, in the case supposed, help being defiled; and the Spirit of God turns this to account by giving us a very solemn instruction concerning the consequences of defiling the head of our consecration. Although the defilement might be accidentally contracted, so to speak, the Nazarite could not go on as if nothing had happened, but he must take full account of his state, for God cannot go on with defilement, if we can. First, he must have a thorough sense of his condition before God. Seven days must elapse before he could be cleansed—seven days, that he might view himself according to God—and then he was to shave his head, remove the public sign (his long hair) of his Nazariteship. After this, on the eighth day, the commencement of a new period (the resurrection day for us, which introduces us into that new order of things which the resurrection of Christ has inaugurated), he was to bring a sin offering and a burnt offering to the priest, to make an atonement for him, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation—Jehovah's meeting place with His people. In a word, he was to be brought

anew under the full efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ; and lastly, he was again to hallow his head, and offer a lamb for a trespass offering. Thus we learn that God will have His people understand what uncleanness is in His sight, and that nothing can avail to remove it but the efficacy of the sacrifice of Him who is the propitiation for our sins. What a comfort, therefore, it is to know, that if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Lastly, remark that "the days that were before" the Nazarite's defilement were lost, because his separation was defiled. All had to be re-commenced. Let the following words explain this: "Anything which brings us into contact with sin produces its effect on our Nazariteship. We lose the power attached to the communion of God, and the special presence of the Spirit with us, whatever be the measure in which this power was granted to us. Alas! the time which has preceded is lost; we must begin again. It is great grace that all privilege of serving God is not taken from us; but though it be not, we suffer something from the effects of our unfaithfulness, when the power is restored unto us. A blind Samson was obliged to kill himself in killing his enemies. It belongs to us, in any case, immediately to acknowledge our defilement, to go to Christ, and not pretend to be Nazarites externally, when we are not so in the eyes of God. Nothing is more perilous than the service of God, when the conscience is not pure; however, let us ever recollect that we are under grace." May these weighty observations have their due effect in each one of our souls!

“AFTER HIM.”

THERE are three mighty men spoken of in 2 Samuel xxiii., who are not only distinguished by name, but also by the two little words at the head of this paper, “After him.” And although the words refer to David’s mighty men, they also contain a lesson on lowliness for the children of God in general; and they are not without an application to every humble-minded servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The list of those mighty men is headed with the name of “Adino the Eznite,” whose weapon of war was a spear, with which he slew no less than eight hundred Philistines at one time. *And after him was* Eleazar, the son of Dodo the Ahohite, to whose name the number of those slain is not attached, but of whom we read, “He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword”; and *after him was* Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite, who “stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines.” After this a name is added of far more importance than all the rest, in connection with which the secret also of the warrior’s success is revealed: “And the Lord wrought a great victory” (2 Sam. xxiii. 8–12), thus leaving His servants free to acknowledge Him as their Deliverer, and render unto Him His due. It gives us to see, at the same time, how He identifies Himself with His servants, and lends His strength to those who are engaged in His battles against the enemy. This was realized by the apostle Paul when he had been deserted by those around in

his deepest need, and yet could say, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me . . . and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." He had fought the good fight, and finished his course; and while waiting for his promotion from earth to heaven, and with the expectation of receiving his crown of righteousness from the hand of a righteous Judge, he recalled the deliverances which the Lord had wrought in his behalf, and which have been recorded in the word of God for the encouragement of every Christian warrior.

We have another illustration in a remarkable miracle which was wrought upon a lame man, through the instrumentality of the apostle Peter. When the people saw the man "walking and praising God," they greatly wondered, and shewed undue regard to the apostle; but he said, "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" He then traced the power by which the lame man had been healed to the Prince of Life at the right hand of God; and pointed out that it was by means of faith in "the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" the man was made whole. The apostle then charged them with the guilt of Christ's rejection and crucifixion, assuring them, at the same time, that the One they had so used would readily forgive and willingly receive them, if they would but repent of their sins. This truth applies to every unconverted person during the few remaining moments of this present day of grace; after which, the harvest being past and the summer ended, the opportunity for salvation will have gone for ever.

We have seen how readily those honoured servants

of Christ, who stood in the forefront of the battle at the commencement of the present dispensation, ascribed the praise and glory to God in their service. And, no doubt, a kindred spirit, to some extent, was found in King David's mighty men, to whom the privilege was given of owning the claims of the Lord while fighting under His banner, accepting also their promotion at His hands, and as a token of His favour which entitled them to share in His victories. We cannot imagine for a moment that Eleazar would be guilty of envying Adino, or that Shammah claimed equality with Eleazar; and what but spiritual pride could account for a servant even desiring to place next his own name the words, "*After me*" in preference to "*After him?*" Neither is it likely that Adino, who distinguished himself from the rest by his great success in slaying eight hundred Philistines at one time, would even wish for such a thing as that "*after me*" should be placed near his name, for the admiration of his fellow-soldiers, any more than the apostle Peter would desire to exalt himself, because "about three thousand souls" were added to the Church as the result of his preaching? We hope to show that this was not the apostle's practice; for although we find the name of Peter identified with the long list of saved ones, we have also seen how ready he was to give all the glory to God. And we also see how willingly he gives preference to others of the Lord's servants, for when speaking of the apostle Paul he says, "Our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you" (2 Peter iii. 15), thus taking a place in connection with Paul of one to whom the words, "*After*

him," apply. If the same spirit of yieldingness were more exhibited among the people of God, and each esteemed others "better than themselves," what a reproduction of Christ there would be in this world during His absence! And what heavenly order and happiness there would be in the assemblies of His saints!

We get three characteristics of a good soldier of Jesus Christ in connection with David's mighty men — (1) the great success of Adino; (2) the great devotedness of Eleazar; and (3) the great endurance of Shammah. The success of the Christian warrior depends upon his devoted subjection to the word of God. This is illustrated in the case of Joshua, who was told to "meditate therein day and night" and thus ensure "good success." (Josh. i. 8.) The same thought also connects itself with what is said respecting Eleazar, the son of Dodo, who smote the Philistines "until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword." So it is with any faithful and devoted follower of Christ who, through long experience in the ways of God, and by strict adherence to His word, refutes the reasonings of men, and defeats the enemies of God's people. And the more he accustoms himself to the use of "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," the more assured he is of its all-sufficiency for every emergency. His delight in the law of the Lord will be in proportion to his desire for it; and the sense of its preciousness increases day by day, while his heart retains the impress of the blessed word of God, just as the hilt of the sword left its impress in the hand of Eleazar. And, *after him,* we read

"was Shammah," who is not accredited with holding anything so important as a "fort." It was a field of lentiles, and he distinguished himself as a good soldier, by holding possession thereof until the enemy was completely defeated. And thus we find the last on the list of the three mighty men was one who could both "resist" and "overcome" the enemy. He could "hold fast," and "endure hardness" because he was "strong" in the Lord and in the power of His might.

We may safely say that there cannot be success in the service of God, apart from endurance and devotedness to His word. A further proof of this is given in what is said by the apostle Paul to Timothy, "My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." And again he says, "Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. ii. 1-3.); from which we are to learn that the demand made upon the Christian warrior is in proportion to the dangers and difficulties which beset his pathway; and that both the work and warfare of these last days is of such a peculiar character as to call for great spiritual power, and freshly-supplied courage. But the exhortation "Be strong in the Lord," signifies that our resources are in Himself, and therefore *never-failing*.

"Our whole resource along the road,
Nothing but Christ, the Christ of God."

H. H.

"SUCH as Paul are chords on which God strikes, and on which He produces a wondrous music; but Christ is all the music itself."

PHARISAISM AND SADDUCEEISM.

MATT. xvi. 6-12.

RESISTANCE to grace and truth, to holiness, light, and love, according to the measure in which the divine revelation of these has come out in different dispensations, has been the sad history of man from the fall onwards. It becomes more definitely marked and emphasized in proportion to the clearness of the communications made by God, until the dispensational point is reached, when all that was in man was brought out by the presence of the Son of God on earth.

Of the various forms of opposition by which the blessed Lord was met, none were more malignant in their hatred, more subtle in their workings, or more disastrous in their effects, than that of Pharisaism and Sadduceeism, against both of whose doctrines the Lord, on more than one occasion, specifically warns the disciples and the people. From the position which this special warning occupies in Matthew xvi., there is ground for the conviction that there was emphatic suitability in the Lord's warnings at that particular moment. For they come in between His final rejection of, and departure from the Pharisees and Sadducees (*v.* 4), and so from Judaism (morally judged by Him as fully identified with, and characterized by, these two schools), and the introduction of that which was now, not only fully before His own mind, but about to take the place of Judaism, *viz.*, the Church.

It may be well, then, to look a little closely into what was involved in the doctrines of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, in their special bearing upon this new revelation.

It is clear that Pharisaism was the claim to personal righteousness, on the ground of acceptance before God (Luke xviii. 11, 12). But this, carried to its full issue, implied the presentation and acceptance of the first man; and it practically and absolutely denied the necessity, on the ground of guilt and sin, of *death*, not only as coming in to meet man's guilty condition, but as closing for ever that history, which had only been the long record of his absolute inability to meet, in virtue of personal worthiness, the claims of God. This culminated in man's then undergoing the crucial test as to what was in him, in the presentation of the Messiah and Son of God, which only brought into clearer light the irremediable condition in which he was.

Thus Pharisaism practically denied *death* as an absolutely righteous necessity on the part of God, and so of bringing in atonement for sins, and at the same time ending the history of the man whose incompetency and guilt was now fully manifested, and for whom the ages of probation were about to close.

Hence, it further struck at the root of that which lay at the foundation of purpose and promise, viz., the death of Christ, now at this particular moment first promulgated by the Lord Himself, in v. 21 of our chapter—"from that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer," &c. By His own death He was about to clear the ground of that which hindered the

progress of purpose, and the fulfilment of promise, in not only atoning for sins and condemning sin, but ending the history of man for ever, in his fallen and estranged condition.

But the doctrine of the Sadducees was a step further in advance of that of the Pharisees, according to Acts xxiii. 8. "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit" (New Translation). This constituted the specific denial of *resurrection*, and consequently of Christ's resurrection, for, as Paul puts it, "if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen" (1 Cor. xv. 13). But this was the very condition upon which the purposes of God founded that which was to take the place of the displaced and superseded "first man," in the person of the "Second Man," upon whom, as "Son of the living God," the new edifice was to be built; for "upon this rock I will build My church." While Christians of the present day are scarcely in danger of denying resurrection, there is yet great danger of depreciating its results for God, and of forgetting, or ignoring, the vitally important place it occupies before Him, as furnishing the new ground upon which everything now proceeds for God. This was initiated by Christ in resurrection, whether as head of a new race (2 Cor. v. 15-17), or head of the body, the Church. (Col. i. 18.) Hence the danger lies in the *practical* denial of resurrection in its bearing upon the believer now, even though as doctrine it may be accepted.

The prospective bearing of these two forms of antagonism are thus apparent; and they were then the dangerous rocks ahead, upon which the Church should make shipwreck as to outward manifestation. From the earliest period of its existence, in Acts ii, these

have, in one form or another, characterized the deadly hostility, and the hidden danger, to the testimony, and to the reception, and maintenance of the truth concerning this last revelation.

With far-reaching, because divine, foresight, the Lord put His finger upon, and laid bare the two doctrines, which constituted the dangers most assiduously to be guarded against, and which would most successfully mar the dispensational testimony then dawning.

But as with the disciples of old, so now, we are slow to understand the deep meaning and importance of this suitably-timed warning. We are slower still in learning the measure and extent to which modern Pharisaism and Sadduceeism affect the perception and reception of the special dispensational revelation of the assembly of God, founded upon death, which closes the door for ever on the "first man out of the earth, made of dust," and opens it upon the "Second Man, out of heaven" (1 Cor. xv. 47, New Translation), the old order and old scene giving place to a new order and a new scene.

Apart from the spiritual apprehension of these things, perception and progress as to the Church of God are impossible. Even Peter fell into the snare of discrediting the Lord's own testimony, and retaining, after His communication of approaching death, what became a merely human thought concerning the Messiah-ship, not comprehending the effect of the new announcement, which was soon to be a manifested thing on earth. "Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (v. 23.)

Is there not deep need for us, as Christians, to be on

our guard, lest human thoughts should hinder us, too, from entering upon divine ones; lest we should underrate the value and importance of the warnings which the blessed Lord Himself has, in grace, left on record. By taking heed to these the apprehension of that which is now dearest to the heart of Christ will become of deepening moment and interest.

We may add that Christendom is sorrowfully leavened with these two doctrines, viz., insisting upon the suitability by means of reformation of the first man, and the practical denial of resurrection as introducing that new divine order or structure, which as directly connected with, and founded upon it, stands perfectly distinct and apart from the principles and system of the world. Very emphatically the Lord announces the two counter truths to these two false doctrines, as realised in His own person: v. 21—“Jesus began to shew unto His disciples how that He must . . . be killed, and be raised again the third day.”

Let Christians seek, then, with that diligence, which is due to the greatness of the grace which has communicated it, to enter practically into the divine intention of the Lord's own warning as to these two forms of subtle doctrine, which mainly contribute to dim the spiritual perception of a new, divine order, and a new, divine structure, viz. “the Church of the living God.”

Finally, the Lord invites His own to follow Him, but no longer as the Messiah, for (v. 20) “Then charged He His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ,” but in the new pathway opened, and first trodden, by Himself, viz., that of death and resurrection.

The characteristics of that pathway, when really entered upon by the believer, are given in v. 24, and consist in denying self, *i.e.* the rule of the flesh and sin (Rom. vi. and vii.); and in taking up His cross, *i.e.* voluntarily accepting the application of death. This is to make the cross personally "His cross" (2 Cor. iv. 10); and "following Him" (Col. i. 1-3) in the new status, and to that new scene, to which His death was but the dark vestibule, and in which He divested Himself of all that belonged and appertained to man's ruined estate, preparatory to entering upon the status and condition of the "Second Man" and "Last Adam," as Head of a new order. Phil. iii. 10 introduces the apostle Paul to us very fully as in this pathway, and there in the deep earnestness of one who well knew that blessing was only to be found in it; "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."

But the object of this paper is more to draw attention to the Lord's warning, as to what must effectually hinder apprehension of, and progress in, the truths that are peculiar to Christianity, rather than to dwell upon the new positive status accomplished in Christ through redemption.

Being forewarned by the Lord, and accepting that warning, we shall find ourselves practically fore-armed against these two subtle efforts of the enemy to dim the distinctness of the Christian revelation to our souls as it has reached us from the Lord. His question to the disciples then may well, and deeply, exercise our hearts now, "How is it that ye do not understand?"

M. C. G.

THE UNFOLDINGS OF GRACE IN REDEMPTION.

FAR in dim and distant ages,
 Long ere time its course began,
 Read we in the sacred pages
 God had set His thoughts on man.

Tread we softly, for the story
 Scarcely human lips may tell,
 How in that eternal glory
 God the Son did ever dwell
 In the bosom of the Father :
 Then was formed the wondrous plan,
 That the Son of God should gather
 From the race of fallen man,

Heirs for glory—blessed purpose !
 Wisdom infinite, divine !
 Bend we low in adoration,
 Praise, our God, be ever Thine !

* * * * *

Hark ! ye messengers from glory
 Praising God's most blessed name,
 Tell to earth the wondrous story,
 Christ is born in Bethlehem.
 He, the long-foretold Messiah,
 God's Beloved ere time began,
 See Him then, Jehovah's Fellow,
 Son of God and Son of Man !

Trace His footsteps in that pathway
 From the manger to the grave,
 Loving, patient, gracious Saviour
 He had come to heal and save.

Come to bear in fullest measure
 All the fierceness of God's ire ;
 Spotless victim on the altar,
 Lo ! He has consumed the fire.

None is left for guilty sinners,
 Who to Him for refuge flee—
 Worthy of God's righteous judgment—
 None is left for you and me.
 Now in resurrection power
 God has raised Him from the dead ;
 At His own right hand in heaven
 Set Him over all as Head.

Soon His ransomed, blood-bought people,
 Looking to the dawn afar,
 Shall arise to meet their Saviour,
 Bright and beauteous Morning Star.
 Then with Him in brightest glory
 Gladly will they shout the words,
 Echoed by heaven's host around them—
 " King of Kings, and Lord of Lords ! "

Forth as Conqueror comes He with them,
 Earth shall tremble at His word,
 All the nations bow before Him,
 Israel own her rightful Lord.
 Then, the thousand years accomplished,
 See Him on the judgment throne,
 Heaven and earth have fled before Him,
 Every tongue His name must own.

Till at length, in new creation,
 How those words our hearts enthrall !
 God shall *dwell* among His people,
 God Himself be all in all.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

CHAP. V. 6-12.

“**THIS** is **He** that came by water and blood, Jesus the Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.” (v. 6.)

We must be careful to notice that “He that came” is characteristic, involving our blessed Lord’s entire mission and His present position in heaven. It evidently does not refer merely to His birth into the world, but to the entire character of His coming and work.

The reference to John xix. is very clear: it was from the side of a dead Christ that the blood and water flowed. The difference of the order in the gospel and epistle has often been noticed, and is no doubt well understood. In the gospel, the blood precedes the water, expiation being set forth first. It was when the last act of spite had been performed, when the spear had pierced the side, that the full answer of grace came out (expiation and purification) to man.* But in the epistle, the water is mentioned first; and it will be helpful to us to examine this more closely.

There can be no purification for man, but by the death of Christ. There must be an end made to the history of Adam and his sons (the first man), before

* Do we not see in John’s gospel man’s desperate need more than in any other? In the world even ruffians do not, as a rule, insult their victim’s dead body. Henry III. of France, kicked the corpse of the assassinated Guise, but he (Henry) was a very bad man

ever the water can be applied; and the very application of it judges and sets aside all that is of the flesh. To use a bold figure, as the flood washed away the antediluvians (the end of all flesh having come before God), so does the water here answer to man's need, not by any modification of his nature, but by setting him aside in order to bring in a new thing.

But, then, it is perfectly true that we had committed many sins, and that there was need of expiation; and this we find in the blood. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. Here is a perfect answer to the whole state of a child of Adam, and the introduction into that order of things in heaven, where the ascended Christ is now gone; thus we have (through His blessed mission, coming by water and blood), the way by which we are brought into the supreme blessing described in this epistle.

There are three witnesses to the judgment of the first man, and to the fact of life being given to us in the Son.

The Spirit is the third witness, and immediately takes the first rank, though His descent from heaven came later than the event alluded to in John xix. The Spirit is the truth; and the meaning of this reciprocal proposition is that the Holy Ghost descended from a glorified Christ, revealing all that is in Him, setting everything in its true place. The infallible Vicar of Christ has come down to take *His* place, who said that He was the truth when He was here, and thus everything is fully declared; the world and its prince, man's true state, God's own nature, all is now known by the Holy Spirit.

The witness borne by the Spirit, the water, and

the blood, all tends to one point, to that which God testifies concerning His Son; and that no blessing, or life, is to be found in the whole human race that began with Adam and Eve.

We receive the witness of men of "average veracity" in this world; and when two or three independent witnesses concur in any statement, the fact is established. And should we not believe three infallible witnesses, which constitute the "witness of God" here? God hath borne witness concerning His Son, and we are happy to have received it, and to have God's verdict pronounced upon the first man, and to know that all that is ours, as believers, is in the Son now risen and glorified. If the history of the first man is closed, there is infinite blessing in the One who is now at the head of this new family, Himself, the source of all good.

The believer has the witness in himself, for all is made good to him by the Spirit; he who believes not has had the audacity to refuse God's testimony. To make God "a liar" is a terrible thing, and there can be no excuse for those who reject His testimony, whatever may be His work of grace in the believer.

This is the witness, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son; it is very blessed to know that it is in Him, and no such expression could be applied to us, nor is there ever any thought of life independently of Him. He that has the Son has life; we enjoy already heavenly things, and not merely security in Him. We shall eat of the tree of life* in the glory, but we have already the power of

* The leaves of the tree shall be for healing of the nations: but we shall eat the fruit of it.

entering into these privileges and joys, and all is in the Son. He that has not the Son of God has not life; he has no part at all in the happiness and divine realities that are the believer's part. Of course security is implied, and life being in Christ is secure indeed; but we should not make "life" merely a synonym for "security," for while it implies this, it is far more.

These things were written that we may know (have the consciousness) that we have eternal life. The epistle was written that believers might know and experience the joy and blessedness of the children of God as a present thing; all had been put to the test, and the true character of the divine nature maintained by the inspired writer. The great end of the whole teaching was that the joy of the saints might be full in the knowledge of the Father and the Son, by the Holy Ghost. May it be so for us; and may we enter more and more into the conscious delight of having life in the Son. May He be the true Object of our hearts and lives, and may we not hinder the blessed work of God in us, by His Spirit, of leading us into all truth!

E. L. B.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

HEBREWS xii. 22, 23.

THE perplexity of the ordinary reader of this passage is caused by the confusion of the punctuation. The various clauses are plainly marked in the original; and they should run as follows: "Unto Mount Sion; and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly

Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly; and to the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven; and to God the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; and to the blood of the sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." It will thus be observed that the words, "The general assembly," belong not to the church, as in our Bibles, but to the innumerable company of angels. It is these that constitute, as has been well said, the universal gathering of the invisible world (see, for example, Rev. v. 11), for they belong to heaven, not through grace, as in the case of the church of the firstborn, which "are written in heaven," but through creation, although this might be said, in another way, to be also of grace. And yet, and this is the marvel of grace, the church of the firstborn, brought into association with Christ, and sharing with Him all that He will inherit, in virtue of redemption, will eternally occupy a place above that of angels, in nearness to, and intimacy with Him who loved the church and gave Himself for it. But the question is asked, Why is God here introduced as "the Judge of all"? If the character of the whole scene is apprehended, the answer will be indicated. What, then, the apostle here presents is the complete order of millennial blessing in its several parts, not as yet realized, but as already embraced by faith. This is seen from the first words of this scripture "Ye are come unto Mount Sion." Now Sion is on earth, and represents sovereign and royal grace, grace established in the king when all else had failed (see 1 Chron. xxi), but only to be fully exemplified hereafter in Him who is

both the root and the offspring of David. And because Mount Sion is royal grace, it is brought in here in contrast with Sinai. Next, we have the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, which will not be completed until the Lord's return, and which will not be displayed in the glory of God until His appearing. Then after the general assembly of angels, and the church of the firstborn, both being in heaven, "God the Judge of all" follows. It must again be recalled that what we have here is the millennial scene of blessing; for it is in connection with this that God is introduced as the Judge of all, as looking down upon earth, then to be under the sway of the true King, and ordering all according to the revelation of Himself in relation to the kingdom. The object, indeed, of the King, who will reign in righteousness, is to make good in government, all that God is, "for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth" (Psalm xcvi. 13). We understand from this, the introduction, in the next place, of "the spirits of just men made perfect," for they will have a special interest in the glories of that day (see Matt. viii. 11); and finally, we are reminded that all the blessing of that time, as it has been secured through the blood of the new covenant, will be administered through Jesus as its Mediator (Compare Hebrews ix. 15).

II.

ROMANS iv. 13.

In the exact words given in this scripture there is no promise recorded, in the Old Testament, that Abraham should be "the heir of the world." But

this is undoubtedly the sense and meaning of "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xxii. 18), for we are taught authoritatively, in Galatians iii. 16, that "thy seed" signified Christ. The promise then looks onward to that future time when Christ will exercise His sovereignty over all the kingdoms of this world, and when "He shall reign for ever and ever." (See Revelation xi. 15.) If any difficulty is felt in that the promise was made to Abraham that *he* should inherit this dominion, it will be removed by the first verse of the gospel of Matthew, where we read that "Jesus Christ" was "the son of David, the son of Abraham." It is another instance of the fact that Christ is everywhere before the mind of the Spirit; and that He therefore is the key for the interpretation of Scripture. (See also Heb. i. 2.)

III.

REV. xii. 5.

"Her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne." The question raised is, whether this refers to Christ alone, or whether the Church is included. So far as the words go, the "man child" must indicate Christ, inasmuch as it is said that He "was to rule all nations with a rod of iron," but there are other considerations to be taken into account. The symbolic woman, in verse 1, "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars," is Israel clothed, according to the purpose of God, with supreme authority, "invested with the glory of perfect administration in man, and all the original reflected glory of this under the old covenant,

under her feet." But all this could only be realized in Christ as the Messiah; and hence Satan, as the enemy of God and man, sought to destroy Him as soon as He was born into this world; and finally succeeded in uniting the chosen nation with the Gentile power in His rejection. This of necessity, all the while however according to God's eternal counsels, postponed the establishment of the kingdom, and consequently the child (Christ) was caught up unto God and to His throne—that throne which will be the source of His power in the kingdom. The very next verse (*v.* 6) shows that the time here introduced—the last half of Daniel's seventieth week—is subsequent to the "rapture" of the saints, as described in 1 Thess. iv. In order therefore to comprehend the events of Rev. xii., the Church must be included in the Child who was caught up unto God, and to His throne. The remarks of another may open this out more fully: "Satan, as the open, infidel enemy of God and God's power in Christ, sought to devour the Child as soon as born, who was to have the rule of the earth from God. But the child, Christ, and the assembly with Christ, is caught away to God and His throne—does not receive the power yet, but is placed in the very source of it, from which it flows. It is not the rapture as regards joy; for it goes back to Christ Himself, but the placing Him, and the assembly in and with Him, in the seat from which power flows for the establishment of the kingdom. . . . The assembly, or heavenly saints (as Christ, note!) go up to heaven to be out of the way. The Jews, or earthly ones, are protected by providential care upon earth."

SAMSON.

JUDGES xiii.-xvi.

SAMSON is an example of the class of Nazarites who were such from the day of their birth. As we read, "No razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb." In Numbers vi. it is a vow of a separation unto the Lord for a particular time and purpose; and when the time was completed, the Nazarite, after complying with the prescribed rites, returned to the ordinary life of one of God's people. He, therefore, will represent one who is called out for some special service, one who, in the power of the Holy Ghost, rises above the claims and enjoyments of nature, and surrenders his name and place amongst men, that undistracted and disentangled, he may, in the path of holiness, be unreservedly at the Lord's disposal. Samson indeed was designated for a particular mission; but inasmuch as this was before his birth, he exemplifies rather Christians in general, who are set apart to God from the very outset, whatever the position they may finally have to occupy. Paul speaks of this aspect, when he tells us that he was separated to God from his mother's womb.

Two things marked the time of Samson's advent. There was increasing corruption amongst God's people; and, "at that time, the Philistines had dominion over Israel." (Chap. xiv. 4.) It is the sad characteristic of

the Book of Judges that, notwithstanding the constant interventions of God in grace, for the succour and deliverance of His people through His chosen vessels, they became increasingly corrupt and disobedient. Relieved from the hand of their oppressors, they for the moment rejoiced and turned to the Lord, but, the pressure gone, they almost immediately fell again under the sway of the lusts of their own evil hearts. And to be under the dominion of the Philistines marked the worst possible state and condition; for the Philistines, to borrow words, were not a scourge, a chastisement sent from without: they dwelt in Israel's own territory, in the land of promise. To accept their rule, therefore, was to surrender their own title to the land, which, by God's favour, they had possessed as their inalienable inheritance. To make peace with the enemies of God and of His people is a sorrowful shame and disgrace; to allow them to be masters within the sphere of the promised land indicates a still lower stage of humiliation.

One of the main lessons of Samson's career is gathered from the two facts just mentioned. It is this—that when God's people have lost the truth of their calling, and have submitted themselves, through unfaithfulness to God, to the rule of the enemy, Nazariteship—entire separation to God—is the only way of power. It is so at all times, but it is especially illustrated in seasons of apostasy, and in conflicts with God's enemies. This may be strikingly seen, for example, in the contrast between Saul and David. The former could never prevail over the Philistines, even though he was at

times successful against foes from without ; and, finally, he perished, together with his sons, when in conflict with them on Mount Gilboa. The most splendid victories of David, on the other hand, were gained over the Philistines. This fact gives the key to the history of Samson. Raised up to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, his mission could only be fulfilled by his being separated unto God from his birth, and by his being apart from the joys of human life as such, and from all the defilements of the world, and by his maintenance of complete subjection to God's authority, and of dependence upon His strength. (xiii. 7.)

But Samson's history is one of failure ; and yet, in proportion as he realized his place and calling, he was successful against the oppressors of his people. It is remarkable, indeed, that with his constant stumblings, he was so used. However recovered, the moment he returned in any measure to his Nazariteship, the power of God was with him. Two or three instances of this may be cited. First, however, we may call attention to what happened to him, when, with his father and mother, he was on his way to Timnath to seek a wife from amongst the Philistines. *In heart* he had already declined from his calling, or he could not have thought of such a thing. (See chap. xiv. 2.) But when the young lion roared against him, "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid." This was surely God's voice to His servant, reminding him that he would be superior to all the enemy's power, as long as he walked in accordance with his call and mission. "The lion," as another

has said, "has no strength against one who belongs to Christ. Christ has destroyed the strength of him that had the power of death. By the might of the Spirit our warfare is victory, and honey flows therefrom. *But this is carried on in the secret of communion with the Lord.*"

Samson, however, was deaf to the divine instruction; for he was bent upon his purpose, to marry his Philistine wife. But God rescued His servant from the alliance which he had contracted, not indeed by any active interposition, but by permitting the weakness of Samson and the unfaithfulness of his wife to stir up strife and enmity between Samson and his un-circumcised friends. Thus freed from his entangling yoke, God could again be with him, and use even His servant's folly to chastise the enemies of His people. The world may succeed in alluring the servants of God from their steadfastness, but, whenever it does so, it brings itself under God's just judgment. In this case, the Philistines were constrained to acknowledge the justice of Samson's complaint against the father of his wife, and they themselves inflicted summary punishment upon them. But Samson, no longer under the blinding influences of his natural affections, saw now the real character of the Philistines; and hence he said, "Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease. And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter."

This manifestation of power in the enemy's territory called forth determined enmity; and the Philistines

went up and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi. Samson must be captured at all cost, that they might do to him as he had done to them. But Samson was now in the midst of the chosen people, and surely he might count upon their assistance and succour. So far from it, they, accepting the rule of their enemies in forgetfulness of their true position, regarded the Nazarite as a disturber of their peace, and they agreed to deliver him into the hands of the Philistines (xv. 12). When God's people become worldly and corrupt, they cannot endure those who are really separate. What they want, when in this condition, is ease and prosperity; and for this, conflict must be avoided, and peace, at any price, must be purchased. The Samsons, therefore, must be sacrificed to procure the good will of the enemy, as a means to their end. This is seen in its fullest exemplification, when the Jews urged Pilate on to pronounce the condemnation of our blessed Lord and Saviour.

But the men of Judah were as ignorant of the source of Samson's power as the Philistines. No, they said, we will not ourselves kill thee, but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines, and accordingly they bound him with two new cords and brought him up from the rock. What a spectacle! God's chosen vessel a captive apparently in the hands of the men of Judah! Well might the Philistines congratulate themselves and shout against him; for now, with no danger to themselves, they might conclude, their enemy was at their mercy. And what could Samson do, with three thousand of the men

of Judah against him, as well as the army of the Philistines? By himself nothing, but the conflict was not his, but the Lord's; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him. It was thus no longer a question of one man against thousands; it was the LORD against HIS enemies. If the Lord is our light and our salvation, it will be as David describes: "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear." So was it with Samson, for as soon as the Spirit of the Lord came' mightily upon him, his cords became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from his hands. Then finding a new jawbone of an ass ready to his hand, he slew therewith a thousand men. Wearied with his victory, and "sore athirst," he might still have fallen into the hands of the uncircumcised, but he turned in his need to the only source of his strength, and, calling on the Lord, he received succour through the water of life which flowed out of the place of death. "En-hakkore" ("of him that calleth") marked both the place and the secret of his deliverance.

The next chapter descends to a much lower level. The last verse of chapter xv. shows that Samson's career, as the Spirit of God would have it remembered, was brought to a close. Failure follows in every particular; for once yield to the solicitations of the flesh, the path to defeat and disaster is sure and inevitable. Passing by this, on this occasion, we only refer to it now to touch, for a moment, on the revival of Samson's power at the end of his life. Carried away once again by his natural desires, he yielded at last,

notwithstanding repeated proofs of her object, to Delilah's allurements, and betrayed to her the secret of his strength. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and it should ever be an inviolable one between Him and their souls. Together with the loss of his secret, and the consequences, the Lord departed from him, though he wist it not. This is the saddest symptom of all, when a soul has forfeited the Lord's presence, and does not even suspect it. Thereupon he fell an easy prey to his enemies, who "put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house." Thus God's Nazarite became, through his own folly, a desolate and abject prisoner. But the Philistines, not knowing God, ascribed their victory to Dagon, and they came together in festal assembly to magnify their god, and to get sport out of their once-dreaded enemy. But Samson's hair had begun to grow again; and in his sorrow he turned to the Lord. It is true he did but desire to avenge himself; but, inasmuch as the Philistines were the enemies of His people, God heard his cry; so that "the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." The power of God was again with him, but he himself perished with his enemies. God was magnified in judgment, for which He could use His servant, though He could not spare him to continue in His service. It was a solemn close to the life of a Nazarite.

We always need immediate strength from Christ when acting on the part of Christ—abiding strength; for without Him we can do nothing.

GRACE AND GOVERNMENT.

A WARNING BEACON FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT.

“The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him.”—2 CHRON. xv. 2.

It was a very significant and memorable moment when these words were uttered by the son of Oded in the ears of king Asa. God had given Asa and those with him a triumphant victory over the Ethiopians—a mighty host of a thousand thousand warriors. Yet they were smitten before Asa, in answer to the prayer recorded in chapter xiv. 11: “And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou *art* our God; let not man prevail against Thee.”

It was a great deliverance, and well calculated to strengthen Asa's faith in the living God. The Lord had shewn Himself strong in battle for His people. By His manifested power for them, and His presence with them, Asa was greatly encouraged, as verses 8 and 9 record. “And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he *took courage*, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of all the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the Lord, that was before the porch of the Lord. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of

Simeon : for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance *when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.*" Asa had, but a short time before, ascended the throne of Judah. To be confronted by this enormous army, which threatened his overthrow, was a trying moment in his history. But in his felt weakness, he wisely betook himself to the Lord, and the enemy was completely vanquished by divine power, and Asa was established on the throne of Judah.

It was a good start for Asa. This was one of the brightest revivals in the history of the kings of Judah, from the days of Solomon till that time ; but alas ! the sequel shows the end was not so bright. Asa's heart departed from the Lord, and, turning to human strength, a dark cloud overshadowed his end. While he was with the Lord, the Lord was with him ; but when he forsook the Lord, and turned to human aid, making an unholy alliance with the king of Syria, the Lord's presence and power could no longer be manifestly with him.

It is important to remember that, whilst all our blessings are purely and simply on the ground of grace, and therefore unconditional, yet if we are to be in the enjoyment of these blessings, *there must be a suitable condition of soul.* Hence the need of continual exercise of heart before God, lest we be robbed of that which is our proper portion. We see this very clearly in the book of Joshua. The people of Israel were about to enter the promised land, and God said to Joshua, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. . . . There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life ; as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."

I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." (Josh. i. 3-5.) The land had been promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to their seed after them. It was not because of what they were that Jehovah gave them the land, for had He not said, "Thou art a stiffnecked people"? It was for His own Name's sake.

All so far was purely unconditional grace. But mark, if they were to drive out their enemies, and take, as well as hold, possession of the land, there were conditions which must be complied with. In verse 8, strict obedience is enjoined. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." This verse clearly indicates that their prosperity and success depended on strict obedience. But did they obey, and did they drive out all their enemies? Alas! no. And what was the result? Sad failure, and the deepest sorrow and shame. Even as early in their history as chapter vii., we see the saddest failure of all.

In chapter vi., where their great triumph over Jericho is recorded, God warned them, in verse 18, "And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it." But the solemn warning was unheeded, and the next chapter opens with, "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger

of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel." Though it is a most blessed thing to be brought to God, and to know His love, and to have to do with Him in grace, yet it is solemn also, as we learn from all this.

How blessed for Israel to be emancipated from the cruel bondage of Egypt, and to be ransomed from the oppression of Pharaoh! How blessed, again, to have witnessed the mighty power and outstretched arm of Jehovah, in dividing the waters of the Red Sea, that they might pass over dry-shod—to have seen those very waters which were a wall and defence to them, close in upon their enemies to their utter destruction, so that in their song of deliverance they could sing, "The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone"; and also, "Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters!" They had, also, been led through the wilderness like a flock, guarded, and protected, and fed by Jehovah's hand; their very clothes waxed not old upon them, nor did their foot swell for forty years.

After this Jordan is crossed, and the land is sighted and entered upon; and after seven days' marching around those high walls, which seemed so impregnable to the unbelieving spies, they fell down flat at the sound of the rams' horns and the blowing of the trumpets. Whoever had heard of such instruments of war before? Not an axe nor a pick was used; nor a hand lifted to strike a blow, yet the great, high walls of Jericho were razed to their very foundations. The truth of what the faithful witness-bearer, Joshua, had uttered years before was now realized. "For they are

bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not."

How very encouraging all this was, and how blessed for them to have witnessed, with their own eyes, such a display of divine power. It was well calculated to humble Israel, and strengthen their faith in the God that redeemed them. Yet alas! instead of being humbled before God, they were soon puffed up and exalted in their own eyes, and filled with self-confidence. All this only betrayed their own wretched state; and God allowed them to be smitten before such a small city as Ai, which they in their pride and self-confidence thought they could so easily take, that He might bring them low before Him, on account of what was in their midst. God would not forsake them utterly, because they were His people; but unjudged evil was in their midst, and therefore God could no longer manifest His power with them, until they had judged themselves and put away the sin.

No sooner is this done than God says to Joshua:—"Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land: and thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king." Humbled and broken in spirit, but in the power of faith, Joshua now goes up, and all the people of war with him; the city is taken and set on fire; the people put to the edge of the sword, and the king hanged on a tree.

What a lesson for Israel was all this discipline, *and for us too*; for we must remember that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our

learning"; and also, "All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." Israel had to learn, as we have, that the secret of divine power on their part lay in their strict adherence to God's word. It is well for us to remember that the question of eternal salvation is not raised in any of the instances we have adduced, either with Asa or with Israel. That is not the question at issue; nor is it with God's people now in reference to their walk down here. That all who are in Christ are beyond death and judgment, and will be eternally saved, we have no doubt, for scripture makes this plain. But the question is, *How are we to conduct ourselves down here?* Are we to settle down and rest, thinking that because we are saved we are all right, and can live as we please? This is a fatal mistake, and those who think thus, and act accordingly, will ultimately become a prey to Satan, as Asa did; if indeed, by the allowance of such a thought, they are not already caught in his wiles.

We need to be awake and alive to our responsibility. The Lord has left us here to be His witnesses and to fight His battles—the greatest honour that could be conferred upon us. But this should not make us negligent or careless in the least; on the contrary, we ought to be stirred up to the greatest diligence, watchfulness, and prayerfulness, lest Satan should get any advantage of us whereby he might upset us or turn us aside from the path of testimony, and of God's will. In ourselves we are no match for such an enemy. Many a true servant of God has been entrapped by his wiles, and has fallen from the place of testimony where

God had set him ; all this we should seriously and solemnly lay to heart. If so with others, is there no danger to us ?

But God is for us, and if we seek Him He will be found of us, and will encourage us in every way ; and if we walk with Him in humility of mind, seeking His will, all His resources will be at our service. He will be with us, as well as for us, and the sense of His presence will make us bold and courageous, and will enable us to stand amidst all the opposition Satan can bring against us.

To return for a moment to the history of King Asa. It will be seen from 2 Chron. xvi. that the test, under which he failed, was not nearly so great as God allowed in the beginning of his career, yet he broke down completely under it. In verses 1-3 we read, "In the six-and-thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha, king of Israel, came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the Lord and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father : behold, I have sent thee silver and gold ; go, break thy league with Baasha, king of Israel, that he may depart from me."

How sad and solemn that Asa should have so forgotten the Lord, and the mighty power displayed on his behalf at the beginning of his reign, as to turn to an arm of flesh. Instead of having grown in the knowledge of God he had manifestly declined and backslidden, which this test served to bring out.

However, the blessed God, who is ever faithful to His servants, sent another prophet to him; not, as before, to encourage, but to rebuke him for his reliance on an arm of flesh; at the same time reminding him of what had taken place at the beginning—even of his victory over the Ethiopians and Lubims, which were a huge host; but the prophet's rebuke only brought out the pride of his heart; he was enraged, and actually put God's faithful servant in a prison-house. Such is man; and such would any servant be if not kept by divine grace. But does God finally give up His servant? We think not, for we read, "And Asa in the thirty-and-ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians." This I have no doubt was God's dealing with His servant in chastening, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." He was loth to give Asa up, notwithstanding his failure, and the chastening was evidently intended for blessing, had he but bowed under God's hand and humbled himself in His sight. But alas! he was hardened, instead of being softened and subdued, as was shown by his turning from the Lord and seeking help from the physicians.

So ends the history of one of the most faithful kings of Judah. He began well. His beginning was very bright indeed; and had he gone on in simplicity and in the energy of faith, what a different tale would have been left on record. Instead of going into port like a vessel that had encountered a great hurricane, disabled and broken, without mast or sail, he would have gone in with flying colours and all sail set. How it reminds us of that word which says, "Let

not him that girdeth on his harness boast, himself as he that putteth it off."

May the Lord in His mercy give to both reader and writer to profit by what has come before us, and may we not be content by merely starting well—important though it be to make a good start—but may we be like the devoted apostle who said, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." And so may we finish *our* course with joy.

P. W.

"CHRIST . . . BECAME POOR."

"YE know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.)

We have, in this lovely little verse, one of the many incidental proofs, in which the scriptures abound, of the deity of our Lord Jesus. It contains no formal statement of that fundamental truth, for that is clearly not the object of the passage, still it does declare it in the words "*though He was rich,*" a very distinct allusion to the glory He had with the Father before the world was. Time was when He was not rich; and, may we not ask when was that?

Let us briefly trace His life when here.

First, His birth was evidently in circumstances of poverty. Though "born King of the Jews," His birth-

place was a manger, and the appointed offering made by His parents on the occasion of His being presented to the Lord, was a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons—a small offering indeed, and indicative of anything but wealth on their part.

Again, when engaged in His public service He said to the scribe who volunteered his devotedness, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." (Matt. viii. 20.) Such was the whole path of Jesus here below. Could we say He was rich here? Never! When asked for tribute money He instructed Peter to catch a fish and find in its mouth the exact amount required for Himself and Peter. (Matt. xvii. 27.) That is, He had not the money in hand. Again, when pursuing what is called His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He bade His disciples go before Him into a certain village, where they should find an ass tied. This they were to bring to Him; and, should the owner question their conduct, they were to say simply that the Lord had need of him. No bargain was to be struck, nor money offered as hire. The Creator, and such He was, though in circumstances of poverty in His own creation, had the prior claim, and the owner yielded thereto, allowing the disciples to fulfil their mission. Yet what a contradiction—the Creator in poverty!

Finally, when death had taken place, His body was laid in Joseph's tomb. "He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death." God had pre-arranged this new tomb for the body of our blessed Lord, just as He had inclined the heart of the owner of the ass to surrender that animal on His demand.

Now, each of these incidents goes to show the constant poverty of Jesus, nor can one instance be found of His having handled money that belonged, as it were, to Himself. Judas carries the bag.

If, then, He was poor during the entire period of His gracious sojourn below, the question arises, When was He rich? Clearly before He came here. Then He must have pre-existed His incarnation? Certainly. But pre-existence in wealth and glory, in Sonship and creatorial power, necessitates Deity. Certainly. Therefore Jesus was God, rich and glorious, and became man, poor, humble, and sinless! Yea, "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth." And, notice, His self-impoorishment was, "*that ye . . . might be rich.*"

Ah! there is the charm for us, in His mighty stoop of self-surrender. He had our eternal wealth before His heart in His deep impoverishment. The point of His utmost poverty when alone in absolute solitude, bearing God's judgment against our sin during those hours of impenetrable darkness—that point procured our everlasting blessing. He was made sin for us . . . that we might become the righteousness of God in Him—blessed Saviour! And now the eye can turn to the glory, whither He has gone, freighted with wondrous spoil, and crowned with honour, deserved and welcome. Nor is there a voice in those righteous courts which does not acknowledge His worthiness to receive, in the fullest way, all the dignities which He refused on earth. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," resounds the heavenly chorus, "to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." (Rev. v. 12.) Yes, sevenfold honours

crown His brow, and beaming praises celebrate His fame.

“Rich in glory, Thou didst stoop,
Thence is all Thy people’s hope ;
Thou wast poor, that we might be
Rich in glory, Lord, with Thee.”

J. W. S.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

CHAPTER v. 13-21.

THERE is boldness in the presence of the God who has given us eternal life in His Son. This follows at once upon the statement that the epistle had been written that believers might know that they had eternal life; and it is clear that it is not any mere dogma, but that those who have it, have liberty and confidence in the presence of the God who is love.

“Boldness,” or full confidence, is an expression to be remarked. If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us; and then we know that we have the petitions we have asked, if we know that He hears us. It is not said that the answer will be given quite as we expected; but we know that the petition has gone in, and will certainly be answered. It has been well said that all true prayer comes down first from above, because the desire to see Christ glorified is formed in His presence, and goes up again in the form of a true petition.

I suppose that it was according to God’s mind that Paul should go to Rome; he had often prayed for it (Romans i. 10), if it were God’s will, and I have no doubt that the request was granted, though not quite in the way that the apostle had anticipated it. He

probably had no idea, when he was praying (Romans i. 10-12) that he might get to the saints at Rome, and impart to them some spiritual gift, that he would go there bound in chains; but so it was, and at the same time his prayers were answered, and more than answered. It is the same for us, and we feel the need of constant exercise, in the liberty of God's presence, so that we may ask that which is according to His will.

A kind of challenge is then given; a test as to whether we have God's thoughts as to what to ask for. "If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." It is a question of spiritual discernment; that is, to be able to distinguish whether the person in question has sinned "unto death" or not.

Some sins are such, from their circumstances, as to oblige God to take away the one sinning from the earth, in His righteous government. If the testimony to His name be compromised, so that His glory demands it, He may be obliged to remove such an one from the earth, where it is his privilege to serve the Lord. Of this kind, no doubt, was the case of Ananias and Sapphira; the circumstances of their falsehood aggravated the crime; they lied to the Holy Ghost. Many who bear the name of Christians have, alas! lied since, though not in such a way that demanded the immediate judgment of God. The conduct of the Corinthians at the Lord's Table also called for extreme discipline on His part.

Now in the case where a brother sins "not unto death," a request may be made for him, and it should be answered by his being spared to live, as a privilege.

in order to glorify God upon this earth. It is evidently a question of spiritual discernment, for there were cases (of sin unto death) where it would not be according to God's mind to make a request. "All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death." I do not think that any particular sin is alluded to, but there are some sins that call for the judgment in question, and others that do not, and we need to have God's mind as to what to pray for. It has struck me sometimes that the prayer (when an example of prayer is given) is for some one else, not for ourselves.

Then comes the divine nature in verse 18; everyone that is begotten of God does not sin, "but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

It is interesting to notice that three times it is repeated—"we know."

1. We know that every one, &c. (v. 18.)
2. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one.
3. And we know that the Son of God has come, &c. (v. 20.)

The first knowledge (and it is conscious, Christian knowledge) is concerning the absolute holiness of the divine nature.

The second is, that we are of God, and as far as things are at present, the whole world (that ornate system we have so often spoken of) lies in the wicked one.

The third is, "that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know Him that is true" (this time "know" is objective, we know Him as fully revealed); and we are in Him that

is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. The deep, abstract character of the epistle has often been remarked—the change from God to Christ, and the presentation of the divine nature in its absolute character.

“He is the true God and eternal life.” He is the true God, as in contrast with all idols,* and then there is a further description of the same Person—He is eternal life.

Our blessed Lord’s absolute deity is thus insisted upon; and He is also eternal life, as being Himself the source of all blessing and joy to us. We have all in Him, once dead, now risen, the life-giving, last Adam.

Then comes the exhortation to keep ourselves from the idols. There are many false gods and imitations in this world; many are the attempts of the enemy to lead us astray. I recollect hearing of traders in Mexico deluding the country people, and inducing them to change real gold and precious stones for cut glass and Birmingham jewellery; and surely the enemy with whom we have to do is seeking more than ever to lead God’s people astray. But idols are detected when the saint is walking with God.

May the blessed Lord Himself fill our hearts and minds. *He is the true God and eternal life.* E. L. B.

* I have a good note from a student of the Word as to this. “The word *ἀληθινός* would necessitate the use of the article in this case, “the true God” as opposed to *εἰδώλα* (see v. 21) as *always*. Compare J. N. D. on the Greek article, page 14: “The true light, in contrast to other false lights.”

It is only as we are outside of the influences and excitements of things around, and walking in the power of the Spirit, that God’s will and path can be discerned.

not be truly said that they are "in the Lord," as the phrase means to have one's life and walk in the circle where His Lordship is owned. When the apostle, therefore, says that a Christian widow is free to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord, he does not mean, in our judgment, any converted person, but rather he indicates that regard is to be paid to the practical state of the believer in question. If this be so, one who might be walking disorderly, or one who was living in disobedience to the Lord's authority, as expressed in His word, would not come within the limits of the apostle's description. It is of the utmost importance to note this distinction; and much confusion and sorrow would often be avoided by its observance. To be governed by the word of God is happier than to gratify the natural affections.

II.

1 CORINTHIANS x. 3, 4.

THE reference in this Scripture is plainly to the manna, and to the water which flowed out of the rock (Exodus xvi. xvii.) wherewith God satisfied the needs of His people in the wilderness. They are probably described as "spiritual food," and "spiritual drink," because they were both divinely given, the direct gift of God's grace, and were in no sense natural products. But there is another reason, and that is their typical significance—the one speaking of Christ meeting the needs of His people in their pilgrimage, and the other of life in the power of the Holy Ghost, without which the pilgrimage could not be undertaken. The apostle thus, as led of the Spirit, had his mind on the spiritual

realities, of which the manna and the water were but shadows or types, and hence the language in question. The same remark applies to the words, "And that Rock was Christ," that is, it represented Christ; and, as the instructed reader knows, it set Him forth in a most striking manner. As the Rock was smitten before the water flowed out, so Christ was smitten on the cross before the Holy Spirit was given. Hence the Lord's own words, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John vii. 37-39.) This explains the type very clearly. The only difficulty, therefore, in the passage is the statement that the Rock followed them; but if we again recall that Paul was treating of the spiritual significance of the things mentioned, it is very easily understood that he is calling our attention to the unwearying care and unchanging love of Israel's God, who made provision for His people's necessities every step of their journey. It is only a gross materialism which finds difficulties in such a statement; the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

III.

ROMANS xv. 15, 16.

A MORE exact translation of this scripture throws a flood of light upon its meaning, by revealing the allusion to an Old Testament scripture, which was in the mind of the apostle. We take the rendering from

the *New Translation*: "But I have written to you the more boldly, brethren, in part, as putting you in mind, because of the grace given to me by God, for me to be minister of Christ Jesus to the nations, carrying on as a sacrificial service the message of glad tidings of God, in order that the offering up of the nations might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." If now the reader turns to Numbers viii., he will there find the account of the "offering up" of the Levites before the Lord, in the place of the firstborn of the children of Israel, that "they may execute the service of the Lord." They were set apart for this, consecrated, through the prescribed sacrifices and rites, before they entered upon their service, under the direction of Aaron, in the tabernacle. Studying the interesting details there given, it is very certain that Paul alludes in our scripture to this "offering up" of the Levites. Reading it in this light, we learn that he regarded his preaching the gospel among the Gentiles as a priestly service, and that his object was that they (the nations) might be presented to God as an acceptable offering, through the infinite value and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. There is the further thought, that those who were converted to God (here the nations) through the apostolic preaching, were as wholly devoted (presented) to the Lord for His service as were the Levites. It thus should never be forgotten that the Levites are not a type of a special class of "sacred persons," but that they set forth all Christians in the servant aspect, just as Aaron and his sons prefigure the whole Church as the priestly family.

IV.

HEBREWS ii. 10.

A great contrast will be perceived between verses 9 and 10. In the former, Jesus is presented as crowned with glory and honour at the right hand of God; in the latter we behold Him at the head of the many sons, who were being brought unto glory, being made perfect through sufferings. Three things may be especially noted in this scripture. First, there is the character of God, as set forth in the words, "it became Him." That is, if our blessed Lord, in His grace and devotedness at all costs to the will of God, identified Himself with the "many sons," and undertook their cause, "it was fitting that God should vindicate the rights of His glory, and should maintain it with reference to those who had dishonoured Him, and that He should treat the One who had taken their cause in hand, and who stood before Him in their name, as representing them in that respect." All that God is, His glory, necessitated, for example, that Christ, in dying for His people, should be made sin upon the cross, inasmuch as He was there in their place, and on their behalf. Secondly, we have the objects of God's heart, and the accomplishment of His eternal purpose introduced in the words, "in bringing many sons unto glory." It is very sweet to see the outflow of divine love in this expression—sons on their way to glory; they are His sons at the outset, and His glory is their goal and home. Lastly, the Captain of their salvation is made perfect through sufferings; and it was this, as already explained, that the glory of God

required; for it was only in virtue of the sufferings of Christ, His vicarious sufferings, that the many sons could be redeemed from the hand of the enemy, conducted through the wilderness, and brought into the enjoyment of that salvation on which they will enter when He appears the second time. (Chap. ix. 28.) The phrase "made perfect" must be carefully guarded. The word so translated is sometimes given as "consecrated," as in chap. vii. 28, in the sense of initiation into office. This should be borne in mind in order to exclude from the word any thought of being made morally perfect, which would be utterly inconsistent with the truth of His glorious Person. In fact, "made perfect" here signifies that Christ was perfectly qualified through His sufferings to become the Captain of His people's salvation. The sufferings He went through, in order to this end, will include, therefore, all that He endured, according to the requirements of the glory of God, for their salvation. But it should be added, that it was only after His resurrection and exaltation He became the "Captain." It is *from* the glory, He is the Leader of the many sons, that He ministers to them the needed mercy and grace, succours them out of temptation, saves them "to the uttermost," and conducts them to glory. Meanwhile, though in the wilderness, He, as the Great Priest over the house of God, having Himself initiated the way "through the veil, that is to say, His flesh," gives them boldness to enter into the holiest in the power and efficacy of His precious blood. But this path can only be trodden through death and resurrection.

A NAZARITE'S SNARES.

NOTHING is more certain than that Satan will use every art and device he can command against a Nazarite. If the people of God fall in with the ways of the world through forgetfulness of their heavenly calling, Satan will leave them very much alone, for in that condition, as he well knows, they are worthless for God's service and testimony. But if, under the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit, they are awakened to the absoluteness of God's claims, and walk in the Spirit as well as live in the Spirit, they will soon discover that they have to encounter the snares of the enemy on every hand. It is on this account that the history of Samson is so doubly instructive, teaching us in one aspect, as seen in a former paper, that all the power of God is with the one who is separated unto Him; and then, in another aspect, showing us the character of the temptations to which he succumbed. It cannot, therefore, but be profitable to consider these, that we may be forewarned of the "sunken rocks" that lie in the Nazarite's course.

At the very outset of Samson's career we are told the story of his Philistine wife of Timnath. It is quite true that "it was of the Lord, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines"; but it was none the less the fact, that this alliance with a woman of the world—"the world within the enclosure of God's people"—was manifest departure from the path of separation, and flagrant disobedience to the word of God. What was

it, then, that seduced him into this act of sin? Twice it is said that the Philistine woman pleased Samson well (chap. xiv. 7); and indeed this was the answer he made to the remonstrance of his father and mother on the subject. It would seem, therefore, that two things led him astray—the lust of the eyes, and the gratification of his affections. This woman answered to the desires of his heart, and he proceeded, without seeking counsel from God, to obtain the coveted object. The question was never asked if she pleased God; it was enough that she pleased Samson. One of old said, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee,” but Samson, under the sway of his natural feelings, ignored and completely set aside this lamp for his feet. “All that is in the world,” says John “. . . . the lust of the eye is not of the Father, but is of the world.” Now the strength of the Nazarite can only be maintained by walking in communion with God, and in obedience to His word; and Samson lost both of these conditions through allowing himself to be governed by the sight of his eyes and his own affections.

Remark this also, that when, in self-pleasing, we attain the object of our pursuit, we are sure to fall under its power, and thus be led further astray. It is the striking remark of another, that when the Christian allies himself with the world, the approximation is all on one side. The believer can draw near to the world because he has the flesh in him, that which responds to what the world enjoys; but the world cannot draw near to the Christian, inasmuch as it has not one single thing in common with him, but is under

the sway of the adversary of Christ. Samson, therefore, abandoned his own place when he married; and he lowered himself to the level of his wife. The consequence was that she, when the controversy arose respecting her husband's riddle, united herself with the children of her people. Moreover, she gained her point by enticing him through those very feelings which, as we have seen, led him astray. It is ever so that what we enjoy apart from God, that is, not in communion with Him, becomes our master. Alas! how often have many of us experienced this to our lasting sorrow. Let us, then, beware of the temptations addressed to the natural heart, lest we have to learn practically that he that trusteth his own heart is a fool.

The next fall of Samson shows him in a still lower place. When we have once lost our Nazariteship, unless it is followed by a full recognition of the fact, a thorough self-judgment and restoration of communion, we never recover our former condition. Hence it was that in "the law of the Nazarite" (Numbers vi.) it was prescribed, that if a Nazarite contracted defilement, "the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled." Samson, as explained, was a Nazarite of another kind; but he, as much as the other, needed to confess his failure and sin. But of this there is no trace; and this will account for the sad record at the commencement of chapter xvi. He had evidently lost all perception of what was suited to his divine call and mission. Satan, therefore, became bolder with his allurements, and consequently now appeals, not to the natural affections, as before, but to fleshly lusts.

Samson's eyes were his constant snare: he "*saw* a woman in Timnath," and because she pleased him he would seek her in marriage; and here he "*saw* an harlot," and at once fell before the temptation. This was alliance with the world in a grosser form, according to the teaching of Jezebel (who had derived her doctrine from Balaam), who seduced the Lord's servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. (Rev. ii.)

But it may be rejoined that Samson's strength still remained. Two things may be urged in answer to the objection: first, the use he made of his strength, and, secondly, the fact that he was still God's servant, whatever his condition. While Samson was in Gaza, his enemies "compassed him in," and made sure of their prey. But though Samson was wallowing in the mire, his enemies were God's enemies, and God would not yet allow them to triumph over His fallen servant. Samson was thus allowed to deliver himself by his great strength—but *this was all*. He obtained no victory over the Philistines, and brought no glory to God. He simply escaped from the hands of his foes. And let the reader remark, that the name of God does not appear in the incident. What a contrast to the close of the previous chapter. There Samson called on the Lord, and, owning His hand in the deliverance he had just received, besought Him for still further succour; and God heard His servant's cry. Here he seems to act in self-confidence, and to use what had been divinely bestowed for his own ends—a further proof of his lamentable state of soul.

The following incident contains his final temptation, and the details of his downward course until he reached the bottom of the incline, down which he had been so rapidly rushing. One word, which the Spirit of God uses, gives the key to the character of this last snare. It says that "it came to pass afterward, that he *loved* a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah." This word "loved" plainly shows that Satan, having now discovered Samson's special weakness, combined the two former temptations in one, and attracted Samson to Delilah, at one and the same time, through his natural affections and through his fleshly desires. And the fact that the object of his desire was again a Philistine, reveals that he was still out of communion with the mind of God, and in disobedience to His word. The moment, indeed, our hearts are set *on anything* on which the Lord's heart is not set, we are out of communion; and once out of communion we soon become the sport of every passing snare and temptation. Oh! how we need to be constantly in the presence of God, and to cry with the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Samson's weakness had now become so apparent that even the lords of the Philistines (Satan's instruments) had found out the readiest way to entrap their enemy. "Entice him," they say to Delilah, "and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him"; and, offering her a large bribe, she became their willing servant.

Attention should be given to the word "entice"; it is the same word used by Samson's "companions" at the marriage feast. It unfolds the secret of Satan's method of procedure. He will terrify where possible; but, failing this, he ever resorts to enticements. And many a servant of the Lord, who has been in the forefront of the battle, and who, by God's grace, never quailed in the presence of Satan's hottest assaults, has afterwards fallen an easy victim to this more subtle mode of temptation. Even David is an illustration in point, for he was also God's chosen champion in Israel's conflicts with the Philistines, and again and again he smote them with great slaughter; and yet he fell into the abyss of sin and shame before the "attractions" of a Bath-sheba. Well might we remember in this connection the Lord's warning to Peter, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Delilah became a ready tool in the hands of the Philistine lords, and proceeded at once to "entice" Samson's secret out of his bosom. She made no concealment of her object, or of the purpose of his enemies: "Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee." There was no excuse, therefore, for Samson in yielding himself to the blandishments of Delilah. But she had ensnared him in her toils, or he would have recoiled with horror from her request. "The secret of God, the possession of His confidence, is the highest of all privileges. To betray it to a stranger, be he who he may, is to despise the precious position in which His grace has placed us: it is to

lose it." Samson indeed was not willing to reveal it, for, unable to surrender his gratifications, he adopted subterfuge after subterfuge to retain it. His fatal mistake was that he dallied with, instead of resisting, the temptress; and the issue was that he was hunted out again and again from his refuge of lies, until at last the avenue to his strong citadel was discovered; and then, without a struggle, he fell into the hands of the Philistines.

What a lesson, and what warnings are conveyed to us all by this sadly instructive history. As long as he retained his Nazariteship he was invincible, for the power of God wrought mightily through His servant. But, losing this, he was weak, and as another man. And not only so, but "he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." The surest sign of backsliding is ignorance of one's own condition, for the backslider becomes gradually habituated to the loss of the enjoyment of the Lord's presence. Finally, he was helpless in the hands of his enemies, who proceeded to put out his eyes and to bind him with fetters of brass. He had long since lost his spiritual vision, and his bodily condition did but proclaim it. As we gaze upon the picture, we can understand the lament of the prophet: "Her Nazarites were purer than snow"; "but now their visage is blacker than a coal." The Lord keep us near to Himself, in the secret of His own presence, and make us ever watchful against the least departure from the way of holiness, that in the constant practice of self-judgment, we may abide uninterruptedly in communion with Him, and in obedience to His word.

GALILEE AND JERUSALEM.

MARK xvi.

It has very often been remarked that we have two terminations to the gospel history of our blessed Lord; one being in a scene laid in Galilee, the other in Jerusalem and Bethany. The first aspect of the gathering of the disciples in Galilee corresponds to the assembling of the earthly tribes in the last days, as fully shown to us in Isaiah (see chapter ix. 1-7, etc.); whereas the second is rather that of the Jewish remnant which becomes the Church, and is in connection with a heavenly calling and testimony. At the end of Mark's gospel, we find the two terminations. The first eight verses correspond with our first aspect; then the remainder of the passage goes with the second.*

I would very briefly note one or two things in these two passages in Mark; calling attention, first of all, to the well known character of this gospel, that of our blessed Lord's service.

1. The sun has risen in this first part, and the declaration of the angel is that they (the women) shall see Jesus in Galilee, where He is gone before them.

The aromatic spices were useless, like many other things that have cost much and are of no use for the present time; the stone was rolled away; Jesus was risen, and the glory of the risen Messiah should be

* Though this is not a paper on critical questions, yet it may be well to state that I suppose that none of our readers reject the verses 9-20; surely there is abundant evidence that they form part of Scripture, whatever Tischendorf may say.

known in His splendid kingdom. The whole earth should be full of His glory, as the risen sun was filling it physically with light and warmth. The Sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings, should arise (Malachi iv.); Israel and the whole earth should be brought into blessing. Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified, was risen, and should precede the faithful into Galilee; full earthly blessing is assured.

2. The second part is of the greatest importance to us, and I merely wish to notice the mission given here to the apostle, the services of Christ in connection with His heavenly position, and the heavenly calling of the Church.

It is evident that the ninth verse begins a fresh subject, and Mary of Magdala is mentioned, as we find in John xx., to whom the risen Saviour declared the blessed and heavenly relationship of His own with His Father and God, and whom He sent with the glorious message to the disciples. This would seem to be emphatically stated (notice the pronoun) in the tenth verse of our chapter. This is distinctly connected with a new and heavenly order of things.

Then in verse 12, we have the journey to Emmaus, which is given us in detail in Luke xxiv., which surely is an introduction to our blessed Lord's new position in glory; and again notice the emphasis on the pronoun in verse 13, "*They* went and told it unto the residue."

Then comes the mission to which I have alluded, and which no doubt is given to us in Luke. The point I wish to dwell upon is the complete victory of the Lord over the powers of evil, and His sending out the gospel to the whole creation. Happy they who enter

into the thought at the end of the passage, where the Lord, from the glory, carries on His ministry, working with them whom He has sent out in this glorious labour, and strengthening them to the end.

It may be well to notice that Mary Magdalene and the two going to Emmaus are spoken of before the commission is given to His servants; for I presume that, as we have noticed, the relationship and full heavenly position are made known—fully announced—before true Christian service begins. Then the service is given. The good news is to be preached in all the creation; and the signs of the complete victory over evil are announced. Demons should be cast out: the first source of evil to man was their coming in.

Then the Babel was counteracted; the terrible confusion of tongues, so justly merited by mankind, should be overcome through perfect grace. They should speak with new tongues. Serpents should be taken up, and poison have no effect. Although, no doubt, these wonderful gifts were not permanent (see, for instance, Acts xxviii.), yet they form a wonderful picture of victory over evil, and of the superiority of the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ over all the adversary's power.

Then they should lay hands on the sick, and they should be healed. We must not wonder at the amount of sickness and number of invalids in this serpent-bitten earth, where so much poison is freely circulated, and so readily bought and consumed. Sickness is very general; but the sick should be healed.

Jesus is still seated at the right hand of God in heaven; and is still from the glory directing the

service of those whom He has sent forth. The mission is glorious indeed, for we are sent out into the domain of death, suffering, sickness, and confusion of tongues, to announce the good news of the God of glory; and to bring into this afflicted earth life, joy, healing, and peace.

I speak of the principles of Christian service, and of the present place of our exalted Lord; taking the symbolic gifts to His first servants as a moral encouragement to us all till He comes.

May we fulfil our mission!

E. L. B.

"THAT which hinders" (2 Thess. ii.) is in general only an instrument, a means, which prevents the manifestation of the man of sin—the wicked one. So long as the assembly is on earth, the pretension to be God in His temple cannot take place, or at least would have no influence. Satan has his sphere, and must needs have it, in the mystery of iniquity; but there is no longer a mystery when the place of God in His temple is openly taken. That which hinders is, therefore, still present. But there is a person active in maintaining this hindrance. Here I think indeed that it is God in the Person of the Holy Ghost, who, during the time called "the things that are," restrains the evil and guards divine authority in the world. As long as that subsists, the unrestrained exaltation of wickedness cannot take place. Consequently I do not doubt but that the rapture of the saints is the occasion of the hindrance being removed.

J. N. D.

GREEN PASTURES.

JOHN x.

It will be noticed that the first five verses of this chapter are spoken as a parable to the Pharisees. Apart from an understanding of the truth conveyed therein, the whole of the chapter must be an enigma, even where certain verses are enjoyed by Christians.

Chapters ix. and x. are closely connected; and on careful examination we find that the blind man's cure and its consequences are really the explanation of the parable; or, rather, that the Lord puts in the form of a parable the truth which exactly unfolded the position which He Himself occupied, in company with the blind man cured.

The sheepfold expresses the guarded enclosure of the Jewish faith, in which all the Jewish believers were kept up to the time of the coming of their Messiah, Jesus, the Son of God. Morally they were supposed to be shut off from the nations around them by the laws and worship of Jehovah. Evidently no person possessed the right to lead the sheep, until *He* came whose right it was. (Ezek. xxxiv.) There had been *impostors* who came not in the appointed way, who preferred claims over them—hirelings, and not shepherds. But Scripture had pointed out certain marks by which the true Shepherd was to be known. His very birthplace, the character and glory of His Person, and the circumstances of His life were foretold. The only One who ever possessed these marks—and who thus

came in by the appointed way, the door—was Jesus. To Him the porter opened; and we may easily see that John the Baptist—or the Holy Ghost through John—flung the door wide open, at the commencement of the mission of Jesus.

His voice was heard and recognized by the waiting remnant, *i.e.*, those souls who possessed true faith in the midst of the unbelieving mass of the Jewish nation. At the end of chap. viii., we see how the mass rejected Jesus, notwithstanding the mighty grace which longed to bless them. Being thus refused by them, the sheepfold could no longer be the place for the sheep. Jesus as a divine Person takes His place outside, and it became a necessary consequence that the true sheep must also come out. For the believers of that day it was a question of either going on with a religious system which rejected Jesus and refused Him His place, or going right outside to Himself, whatever the consequences might be.

Unconsciously the man of chap. ix. was led into this position. Disowned by neighbours and relatives, he is at last excommunicated by the religious authorities, because he persisted in giving Jesus credit for being what He was, and for doing what He had done. So now, if *we* persist in giving Jesus the only place of which He is worthy, we shall find how decidedly the religious world of to-day endorses *their* action towards the blind man cured, and casts us out.

Was he the loser? The man had lost his religious status with the Jews. His communications with friends and relations were all broken off; he was for the moment against all the religious opinion of the

day, and was regarded as a stupid upstart. Again we ask, was he the loser?

There could not have been a more fitting moment surely for the blessed Lord to appear on the scene; and by privately disclosing His own personal glory to the solitary outcast (chap. ix. 35-38), He vindicated his position against his opponents (compare Isa. lxvi. 5), and showed the incalculable gain that accrued to one who was outside of any, or every, religious system in the company of the Son of God.

Such is the position unfolded to us in the parable at the beginning of chap. x. Although rejected by the corrupt Jewish professors, the sheep had really heard the voice of the Shepherd Son of God, and had followed Him outside of all that he had known and valued.

But the Lord now goes on to describe the marvellous gain that this man (and with him all who occupy a similar position with Himself) had received. The ninth verse points out instantly three blessings which were the common and known portion of those who entered in by Him, the rejected Shepherd. It is well known that neither salvation, liberty, nor food, in the sense of this verse, could be enjoyed by Old Testament believers.* By pasture we understand that the sheep have access to the place where the food grows.

It will be noticed how the Lord throws the door open to any poor sinner; and if one were now to

* Blessed as it was to know Jehovah in the old dispensation, its chief characteristics were (1) a priestly order between Jehovah and His people; (2) the repetition of sacrifices which never settled permanently the question of sin; and (3) the consequent impossibility of the believer's happy approach to, and delight in, God. The veil was not rent till Jesus died.

enter in by Jesus, i.e., avail himself of that blessed, rejected Saviour, he would straightway be saved, and become a *sheep*. What does a *man* want with pasture?

Now there are four things which may be said to constitute that pasture. The first is *life* (v. 10); the second, *intimacy* (vv. 14, 15); the third, *unity* (v. 16); and the fourth, *security* (vv. 27-30). With regard to the first, *life*, Jesus says, "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (v. 10, R.V.) The life which all the sheep have is "in abundance," *i.e.*, there is no stint of it. How much we have apprehended of it is another question; it is ours. It is a life completely beyond any imputation of sin (Rom. viii. 1-4), a life of victory over sin and death (1 Cor. xv.), a life, too, of relationship and favour with God (John xx. 17), and of fellowship with the Father and the Son. (John xvii. 3.) Nothing less than this, let me repeat, is the portion of Christ's sheep.

The ground on which it is made ours is necessarily His death, for how else could the judgment that lay on us be removed? As He says, "The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." We have now no fear in approaching God.

The second thing is *Intimacy*. Most will have learned that in the Revised Version there is no break between verses 14 and 15 of John x. It reads, "I am the good Shepherd, and I know Mine own and Mine own know Me, even as the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father." We are baffled by the *depth* of such a statement, but its *nature* is clear; that just as there was an unbroken freedom of intercourse between Jesus

and the Father, even so it is our portion to have the same character of intercourse with Him, as our Shepherd. He once more reminds us of the basis of it—His own death. We are learning, I trust, what this is. Jesus was ever in *the Father's bosom* (John i. 18): John rested on *His* (John xiii. 23). What Jesus enjoyed with the Father, John was free to do with Jesus. Oh! to think that such a *home* has been opened to us as the Shepherd's breast! Young believer, this is a special privilege for you (Is. xl. 11), to have no reserves with Him. There are none on His side; let there be none on yours.

The third thing is *unity*. Gathering the Jewish sheep out of that religious system which had so long held them, the Shepherd tells (in v. 16) how He was about to associate others with them, doubtless believers from amongst the Gentiles ("not of this fold"): and that there would be *one* flock, and *one* Shepherd. There is a great cry for practical unity amongst Christians to-day, but how many of those who seek it are aware that the only ground upon which it is possible, is that we should rally round the One Shepherd? You may devise new rules that appear to afford a wide basis for unity: but, at best, it will only be like a new *enclosure*—an abiding contradiction to that liberty of following Himself, which the Lord points out as the portion of all His sheep. It is only as you give the Son of God His place, and allow Him to have His way, that practical unity can be realized.

Moreover, it is blessed to see that it is in the midst of the company thus rallying round Him as one flock, that we have unfolded the Father's love to the Son (v. 17, 18), and the Son's perfect accomplishment of

the Father's will. Would that we knew more of Him! Depend upon it, there is a power and a warmth little dreamed of by most, in such a place. It may be "winter" outside (v. 22), but not for those within who are reposing on Jesus' breast. No chilling blasts are felt within the circle of the Father's love.

The last thing is *security*. The Jews challenge the Lord's rights to the sheep, when they ask Him if He is the Christ (v. 24). This leads our Shepherd to state clearly enough (for any who have ears to hear) that He has indeed rights over the sheep, and that He will never, no never, give them up. Being the Shepherd, the sheep heard *His* voice, and followed *Him*. This was a very convincing fact, that should have brought home to everybody the truth that Jesus was the true Shepherd come at last (contrast v. 8). He tells the Jews seven things about His sheep which may well gladden our hearts. Four things mark their intimacy with their Shepherd:—(1) They hear His voice. (2) He knows them. (3) They follow Him. (4) He gives them eternal life.

Let me point out, without going into detail, that He says "I know them," before He says "I give unto them eternal life." It is in the full knowledge of all that we are, that Jesus has bestowed upon us eternal life.

The remaining three things are—(5) The assurance that they shall never perish; (6) That they are protected by the Lord's own hand; and (7) That anyone attempting to get them would have to reckon first with the Father, who "is greater than all," and whose hand covers them likewise.

Nothing could be more conclusive an answer to the Jews' cavil about Jesus' rights to the sheep, than the

fact that the Father had given them to Him. It is this that makes us so precious to Him that He will never let us perish.

As we survey the wealth and freshness of such a place as this, into which the Son of God has brought us, we feel that they are, indeed, green pastures. Truly, "the Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want." Some may say, "How shall we be supported, if we act upon such truth?" Well, dear reader, if the blind man was a beggar at *the beginning* of chap. ix., receiving from man's hands from day to day, he was still a receiver at *the end* of the chapter, only now not from man, but from the Son of God. Jesus never calls *your faith* into a path where *His faithfulness* will not sustain you, and His resources are equal to every emergency. Even if you have to go into a desert with Him, remember He can, out of your "five barley loaves, and two small fishes," not only feed the "five thousand" around you, but give you a goodly twelve basketsful for yourself as well.

W. H. W.

To grow in the knowledge of Christ is our life and our privilege. To search after novelties which are foreign to Him, is a proof of not being satisfied with Him. But he who is not satisfied with Jesus does not know Him, or, at least, has forgotten Him. It is impossible to enjoy Him, and not to feel that he is everything; that is to say, that He satisfies us, and that by the nature of what He is, He shuts out everything else.

J. N. D.

“WHOLESOME WORDS, EVEN THE WORDS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

1 TIM. vi. 3.

“Never man spake like this Man.”—JOHN vii. 46.

“All bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.”—LUKE iv. 22.

NOT only did that which was spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ partake of the character of grace, and truth, and wisdom, at which men marvelled, but, being a divine Person, the very form of language in which His blessed communications were cast, was divinely perfect. Language with Him was what it could not be with any other, viz., the vehicle by which He perfectly conveyed what He desired to communicate. Prophets of the Old Testament, and apostles of the New, though themselves failing men, were also divinely guided and divinely guarded in their writings. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter i. 21.) In like manner an apostle could lay claim to speaking, “not in *the words* which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” (1 Cor. ii. 13.) And, further, he urged Timothy to “hold fast the form of sound *words*, which thou hast heard of me,” and again he could write of those things which he taught as “wholesome *words*, even *the words* of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The utterances recorded in the Word of God being thus safeguarded as to their divine accuracy, in the very language employed, on our side the responsibility is twofold.

First, that ministry should be in terms of Scripture; interpretation not being so much what is needed, as the spiritual application of terms that are divinely accurate in themselves. The word "interpretation" does not appear to stand anywhere in Scripture in connection with ministry, though frequently found in relation to visions, dreams, languages, or proverbs.

Christendom has suffered for centuries from the insistence by some of a title to *interpret* Scripture, with disastrous consequences to the individual and to the Church of God: meanings have been read into, and out of, large portions of the Word of God which the terms of Scripture themselves, in the passages concerned, do not authorise or clearly express.

Hence, the servant's responsibility in ministry is to enforce, and spiritually apply, according to the measure of his own discernment, the language in which the divine mind is expressed, a course which both vindicates the accuracy of inspiration and relieves the servant from any possible charge of arbitrary interpretation of the Word of God.

Secondly, the responsibility, as well as the safeguard, of those to whom ministry is addressed, consists in the acceptance of that *only* which clearly applies, and jealously adheres, to the terms of Scripture.

The facility with which divine words may be misrepresented, by failure to retain them in the form in which they were delivered, is brought before us in a very remarkable and striking manner in John xxi. 21-23, on the occasion on which the Lord said to Peter, "If I will that he (John) tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" These words came to be interpreted "among the brethren" as meaning, "that that disciple should

not die." To the natural mind, this appeared to be the only conclusion from the Lord's words, and their absolute equivalent. But, jealous of the exact words in which the communication was made, yet leaving the meaning of those words undetermined, the Holy Ghost's comment, which amounted to grave rebuke, was, "Yet Jesus said not unto him" (Peter, perhaps pointing to where responsibility lay) "He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee"; thus recording again with something more than a correction, the precise words which were uttered by the Lord, and emphasizing once and for ever the importance attaching to the unaltered words in which truth is divinely recorded.

"The sincere milk of *the word*" is thus, and only thus, furnished for the "babes," *i.e.*, the nourishing element of clear and unmistakeable truth in terms of Scripture; and "strong meat" for "them that are of full age" is dispensed and distributed, as with the disciples to the multitude, in the form in which they received it from the Lord, and for us in "wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ," which are life-giving, health-giving, and health-sustaining.

M. C. G.

"**THE** *written word* is the rule which God has given, containing all that He has revealed. It is complete (Col. i. 25). It can, because it is the truth, be the means of communicating the truth to a soul. The Holy Ghost can use it as a means; but at all events it is the perfect rule, the authoritative communication of the will and the mind of God for the assembly."

JESUS ONLY.

“They saw no man, save Jesus only.”—MATT. xvii. 8.

HE alone, the vision filling—
 Rapturing the heart ;
 He alone, chief of ten thousand,
 He alone my part.
 He alone, God's well beloved—
 Fairest of the fair :
 He alone, what need of others ?
 All I want is there.

He alone, in whom is centred
 All the Father's love :
 He alone, who now, exalted,
 Fills the heavens above.
 He alone, whose name excelleth ;
 All to Him shall bow.
 He alone, the peerless Saviour,
 Crowned with glory now.

He alone! No room have rivals
 Where He reigns supreme.
 He alone! From earth to heaven
 He the heart doth wean.
 He alone, God's blessèd Treasure,
 Given in grace so free.
 He alone! Is “*Jesus only*”
 All in all to thee?

E. E. N.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

JOHN vii. 38.

It is admitted that this is not a citation from the Old Testament, or rather, that these exact words are not found; but there can be no manner of doubt that it is a very direct reference to an Old Testament scripture. Let the two, then, be compared in their respective connections. In John we read, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Turning now to Isaiah we find: "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, *and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*" (Isaiah lviii. 10, 11.) Commenting upon the latter scripture first, it may be observed that two things follow upon a certain condition (the condition being ministering to the hungry and to the afflicted soul), viz., satisfaction of soul in times of drought, and a state resembling that of a watered garden and a perennial spring. Turning now to our Lord's words in John, we shall see the same two consequences flowing from a certain condition. The condition is necessarily changed in the

day of grace, which our blessed Lord had inaugurated : and hence it is here not works of mercy, but "coming" to him, and "believing" on Him. He thus says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me" (to Him glorified in virtue of redemption, as shown in v. 39) "and drink." Responding to this blessed invitation, and drinking unhinderedly, the soul will indeed be abundantly satisfied, for all our springs are in Him. Then, further, "He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of water." Notice, that believing here means the continuous exercise of faith ; and what the Lord promises is, that where this is the case, where faith is in uninterrupted activity in Himself, the soul will be in the state described in the scripture—the scripture in Isaiah ; and, in accordance with the surpassing character of the day of grace, should indeed far transcend it, in that rivers of living water would flow out of that soul. We do not offer an exposition of these words on this occasion, inasmuch as we desire to confine ourselves to the question of the scripture to which our Lord referred.

II.

I CORINTHIANS xv. 21, 22.

The following remarks of another so forcibly explain this scripture, that we give them as they were written : "There are two great principles established here : by man, death ; by man, the resurrection of the dead ; Adam and Christ as heads of two families. In Adam all die ; in Christ, all shall be made alive. But here there is an important development in connection with the position of Christ in the counsels of God. One side of this truth is the dependence of the family, so

to call it, upon its head. Adam brought death into the midst of his descendants—those who are in relation with himself. This is the principle which characterizes the history of the first Adam. Christ, in whom is life, brings life into the midst of those who are His—communicates it to them. This principle characterizes the second Adam, and those who are His in Him. But it is life in the power of resurrection, without which it could not have been communicated to them. The grain of wheat would have been perfect in itself, but would have remained alone. But He died for their sins, and now He imparts life to them, all their sins being forgiven them. When, therefore, it says, 'even so in Christ shall all be made alive,' the being made alive goes on to, and includes, resurrection; and this resurrection is described by the Lord Himself as the 'resurrection of life.' (John v. 29.) The term 'in Adam' will thus comprise his whole race, except, indeed, those who have been, or who shall be, dissociated from him through death with Christ, those, in other words, who have been, or shall be, converted; and the term 'in Christ' will include all who are His, from the first saint on earth until the close of all dispensations. For, inasmuch as the subject of this chapter is the resurrection of the body, the 'in Christ' does not go so far as the same expression in Romans or Ephesians—unless, indeed, it be thought that the apostle has only Christians in view. The whole subject of the two hardships, with the far-reaching consequences of death and life, resurrection and condition, may be earnestly commended to the reader. It is the entire contrast between the first man, who is of the earth, earthy: and the second Man, out of heaven; between, in fact,

the old and the new order, as represented by their respective heads."

III.

MARK viii. 34-38.

The point of this scripture, as we understand it, is discipleship; but there is undoubtedly an intimate connection with what precedes. Peter, as taught of God, had just confessed that Jesus was "The Christ." Thereupon, for He had been really already rejected, the Lord began to teach His disciples, "that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." Thus, with the cross in full prospect, everything was changed, and this is marked by His passing from the title of the Christ to that of the Son of Man. "And He spake that saying openly," for the time had come for His disciples to face the altered situation. The sad response of Peter, who took Him, and, in his temerity and self-confidence, began to rebuke his Lord, shows how little he had entered into the truth of his confession, and how ill-prepared he was for the consequences of being identified with a rejected Christ. The folly of his utterance drew down upon him the withering rebuke: "Get thee behind Me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." Alas! how feebly we comprehend that mere human thoughts are morally the expression of Satan; and that turning aside from the cross is the effect of Satan's power! It was this that led the Lord to declare, both to the people and to his disciples, the character of discipleship. It may be summed up in one short word: To follow a rejected

Christ in this world involves rejection. Hence it is that He says, "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Self refused, even as Christ sought not to please Himself; and the cross accepted, just as He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross—are the abiding and inexorable conditions of discipleship. But there are many temptations to avoid these; and thus the Lord proceeded to say, "Whosoever will save his life," that is the things in which a man finds his life in this world, in fact, his enjoyments, "shall lose it"; and, on the other hand, whosoever for the sake of Christ and the gospel, shall lose—surrender—his life, the same shall save it. It is impossible to gratify the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—for it is in these things "life" in this world consists—and to please Christ. Then follows the solemn warning, in the questions put: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" If any one fall into the temptation of bartering away the future, for the sake of present enjoyment, for a mess of pottage as Esau did, he will lose everything, and he will find out, when, alas! it is too late, that the redemption of the soul is beyond all price, and that he is eternally lost. Finally, the Lord goes right down to the root of unwillingness to follow Him in the midst of a hostile world, and proclaims, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation: of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." May we all lay to heart these solemn and searching words!

IV.

PSALM lxxxiv. 6.

IN some margins "Baca" is correctly translated as "weeping"; and so understood the meaning is both significant and beautiful. Verse 5 commences the second part of the Psalm; up to the end of verse 4 we have the house of the Lord—the tabernacles—as the object of the heart, because the living God is there, together with the blessed occupation of those who dwell there—"they will be still praising Thee." Then two things follow: The blessedness of the man whose strength is in Jehovah, and in whose heart are the ways—the ways to the house. These two things constitute the needed equipment for the pilgrim journey, and thus lead on to what is found in the next verse. For it is such, such as are described in verse 5, who passing through the valley of Baca ("weeping") make it a well. When the heart (that is, to give it the Christian interpretation) is on the Father's house above, the believer realises that he is but a stranger and a pilgrim here, and that this world, now become a wilderness to him, is truly a vale of tears. But the very exercises and sorrows through which he is passing, when gone through with God, become to him a well-spring of life. With Hezekiah, he finds that by these things men live, and that in all these things is the life of his spirit. Nor is this all; for "The rain also filleth the pools." Not only does the exercised soul receive blessing through his trials and sorrows; but blessing also descends from God, like the gentle rain from heaven, and fills "the pools" to overflowing with gratitude and praise. May we know more of these blessed testing experiences!

LIGHT AND SALVATION.

PSALM xxvii.

It is not Christian experience, as every instructed believer knows, that we find in the Psalms, for the simple reason that the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus had not yet come, and was not yet glorified. But it is true, notwithstanding, that the Christian may learn most blessed lessons from the various exercises, whether prophetic or otherwise, which the Psalms record. The Psalm before us contains certain feelings and experiences, which will mark God's elect remnant from among the Jews in a future day, before they look upon Him whom they have pierced, and before, therefore, they are brought in the grace of God to recognize that the once lowly Jesus of Nazareth is their glorious Messiah. Subjects of the workings of the Spirit (doubtless shadowed forth in the personal history of David, the writer of the Psalm) they turn to Jehovah as their only resource, and they discover in Him, and in Him alone, the answer to all their need in the sorrowful circumstances in which they are found. We do not further pursue this primary application, as our object is a practical one—to gather lessons of edification for ourselves.

Before proceeding, however, to these, it will be helpful to call attention to the structure of the Psalm. It will be at once perceived that the first six verses go

together, and also the next six, and the last two are the lessons drawn from the whole subject. It may also be pointed out that in the first part we have the confidence of the psalmist (the vessel of the Spirit, it will be remembered, to tell out the experiences of the elect remnant) in the presence of his enemies; while the second part gives us his deep exercises in the presence of God. It has often been remarked that *we* might have been tempted to change the order, to put the psalmist's confidence in the second part, and his fear and distress in the first. But a deeper acquaintance with the inner life will justify the way of the Spirit of God. We have, indeed, an illustration of it in the life of our blessed Lord Himself. In Gethsemane, while not forgetting the special character of His "strong crying and tears," when He bowed there with His face to the ground, we behold Him in His "agony" crying to the Father; and, on the other hand, we see Him in perfect calm and confidence in the presence of all the raging enmity of His persecutors. We may surely conclude, therefore, that the same order will be reproduced in Christians in similar circumstances.

It is very profitable to notice that the ground of the psalmist's confidence, at the commencement of the psalm, is laid in what Jehovah is, as known by the soul: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (v. 1.) God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all; but the kingdom of Satan is characterised by darkness. In Colossians,

therefore, after we are said to be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, we are described as being delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And if we take salvation in the Psalm in its evident sense of deliverance, we see how largely the psalmist had anticipated the truth of Christianity; for Jehovah had become his light—in a region outside of Satan's kingdom and power—and hence also his deliverance. Moreover, Jehovah was the strength of his life, and thus the One on whom he could lean in the sense of his own utter weakness, and the One on whom he could confidently count, whatever the forces arrayed against him. Well, therefore, might he cry out, Whom shall I fear? And again, Of whom shall I be afraid? So will it be with all who enter, in any measure, into what God is for us as revealed in Christ; for if God be for us, who can be against us?

The next two verses contain a fact and an anticipation, or an experience and an expressed confidence. David had been surrounded by wicked enemies; they had come upon him like wild beasts of prey, to eat up his flesh, but they stumbled and fell. Outcast as he was, and as the remnant will be whom he represents, and with all the power of the kingdom of his enemy against him, he was yet safe under the protection of his Light and his Deliverer. Again and again Saul determined to destroy David; but all his efforts were frustrated; and that without a blow being struck by David for his own preservation. The more completely the believer leaves himself in the hands of

the Lord, whatever the apparent hopelessness of his situation, the more fully he will realize the Lord's succour and deliverance. And David's past experience, recalled by present faith, led him to survey fearlessly the possibilities of the future: "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." We cannot live upon past experiences, but faith argues that God is ever the same, and that as He has delivered, He will continue to deliver. (Compare 2 Cor. i. 10.) It is very blessed, therefore, to learn what God is for us from His past dealings, and from His interventions on our behalf.

Indeed, it is clear from this psalm, that the more we learn of God, and the more we meditate upon the manifestations of His love, the more we desire to know of Him. It was so with David, for after telling us what Jehovah was to him, how He had succoured him, and his confidence in view of future dangers, his whole heart flows out in the next verse, as he says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple." (v. 4.) Little can be done beyond giving an outline of what is here involved; but we earnestly press the reader to ponder upon it until his whole soul is possessed with the desire and purpose which governed and formed the heart of David. Remark, first of all, that he not only had desired this thing of the Lord (which surely was a true beginning), but that it was also the purpose of his

heart to follow after it. And what was it that David so ardently longed for? It was to dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of his life, that there he might contemplate the display of His glory and His beauty, and learn His mind, for it was in the temple that Jehovah communicated His thoughts to them that waited upon Him. (Compare Psalm lxxiii. 17, etc.) Is not David in this an example to all believers? For to know Christ, and to be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, should ever be the supreme object of our hearts. Let us, then, learn that to attain this we must constantly live in spirit where Christ is. Nowhere else can we behold His glory, or hear His voice.

The connection with the following two verses is very beautiful. When Christ becomes everything to the soul, everything is secured—fear and anxiety are all dispelled, and faith, confidence, and joy possess the heart. The psalmist thus continues, "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock." Dwelling in the house of Jehovah, and engrossed (may we not say entranced?) with His beauty, he is really in a region outside of all trouble; and if it were possible for it to penetrate into that divine circle of light and blessing, there is the action of Jehovah in concealing the one who has been drawn into His presence; He will hide him even in the secret, in the innermost recesses, of His tabernacle, and keep his soul in the undisturbed tranquillity of His own peace. "He that dwelleth in

the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Yea, more; "He shall set me up upon a rock"—upon an immutable foundation, one therefore which will ensure security and stability for ever. This blessed assurance overflows, in the next place, in confidence and praise. On such a rock, his head should be lifted up above his enemies round about him, and he would offer sacrifices of praise to Jehovah. Delivered from all fear of his enemies, yea, assured of final victory over them all, and dwelling in the house of Jehovah, he becomes a worshipper. He has reached the climax of his blessedness.

In the second part of the Psalm, as already observed, the tone is changed. It is not now the note of confidence and praise, but that of entreaty and supplication; for what we have here is the exercise of the soul before God, while waiting for His succour and deliverance. There is confidence indeed, because, in *being before God, the soul had responded to His own invitation*. "When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Still, with the consciousness of deserved chastisement, and with no desire to conceal it, he cries, in lowly self-abasement, "Hide not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." (v. 9.) Only one who had known the Lord could have uttered such a cry. It was, indeed, because the Lord had been his help that he pours out in his distress this agonizing supplication. Ah! it is the recollection of past enjoyments in the Lord's presence

that fills the soul with such poignant sorrow when, through failure or sin, the need of self-judgment has arisen.

But it is most instructive to notice that relief is experienced as soon as the burden of his complaint is laid down before the Lord. Exercised souls will understand this. They know that the heart is eased and strengthened the moment the sorrow is told out into the ear of God. (See Philippians iv. 6, 7.) It is so with David; for no sooner has he implored the God of his salvation not to forsake him, than he turns round to declare his unshaken trust in the Lord: "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." If all who are nearest and dearest (those upon whom he had the claim of the most intimate natural ties) should turn away from him, when thus utterly alone, the Lord would seize the opportunity of manifesting His favour. This is the Lord's way, as we see in the blind man' in John's gospel. Cast out by all alike—in complete isolation—the Lord drew near, and revealed Himself to him as the Son of God. Blessed Lord! Thou lovest to comfort those who are cast down, and to display Thy love to those of Thine own, who, because of faithfulness to Thee, are rejected on every hand. (Compare Psalm cxlii. 3). Two prayers follow—the first concerning the Lord's way, with a desire to be led in a plain path because of his enemies, who were watching, in the hope that he might go astray; and the second for deliverance from his enemies, because false witnesses had already risen up against him, and such as breathed out cruelty. (See Psalm lxii. 2-4.)

Two lessons, drawn from what he had passed through, conclude the Psalm. It will be seen that the words "I had fainted" have been added, to make out the sense of verse 13. The verse is really an exclamation, and runs thus: "If I had not believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!" That is, believing he would see this goodness had been his stay and support. And then he tells us, from his own experience, that the only resource for the soul, tried and in adversities, is to wait on the Lord. "Be," moreover, he exhorts, "of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart"; and, lastly, he repeats, as containing the sum of all he has to say, "Wait, I say, on the Lord." And Jehovah Himself has said, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." (Isaiah xlix. 23.)

THE STILLNESS OF FAITH.

FAITH may express itself in two ways, either in activity or in passiveness; and the latter is by far the more remarkable. To see a child of God surrounded by a thousand calls to active effort, by which alone he can, to all appearance, extricate himself from a position of difficulty or peril, remain quiet and in the exercise of hidden dependence on a Hand which defers its help, is, indeed, a wonderful sight. It is so natural to shift for ourselves, to strain every nerve, to wrestle, throughout the long night of our perplexity, in the hope that we may overcome by struggling. And there are, no doubt, occasions when such struggles may be necessary, and when faith is called on to show herself as a

veritable slave. An Abraham may have to arm his household, and sally forth to the conquest; or he may have to conduct an only son to the sacrificial hill-top.

Such vast demands may be made on the faith of a child of God; and they call for immense activity of soul. Thus we read, in the secret history of Paul, that his, we may say, daily exercise was to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord—his Lord! And the following part of the same chapter (Phil. iii.) indicates the extraordinary spiritual energy that marked the faith of that devoted man of God.

And we, too, in our much lesser degree, should seek a similar spirit—one of preparedness for soul-activity, even when our hearts are quietly and patiently learning a dependence on God, and a confidence in His power and love that declares a deeper work of His Spirit in us than the accomplishment, perhaps, of outward victories. There are three facts to be noticed:—

First, the work of Christ for us.

Second, the work of the Spirit in us.

Third, the work of God by us.

On the first—the blessed work of Calvary—we rest, through the grace of God, without a tremor, for eternity. “By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Hebrew x. 14.) That offering needs no addition on our part. It stands complete. God appraises its essential perfection, even if guilty Rome should see fit to supplement it by “the sacrifice of the Mass.” By that one offering sin is remitted—no other is needed. Woe, indeed, to the despiser of it!

Perfection of conscience results from faith in that perfect work of Christ.

Secondly, the work of the Spirit in us. This is our present subject.

Now, this, as we have seen, may be outwardly expressed in forms of activity; for, of a truth, the sap of the tree must exhibit itself in fruit. But the development of the affection, the cultivation of the spring of divine life, the devoting of oneself to the Lord, the hidden communion with Him, the feeding on His word, the secret prayer, the learning obedience in suffering, the varied, yet unspeakably important, exercises of soul, which are the gracious evidence of the Spirit's indwelling, that life-long lesson of the utter and absolute evil of the flesh, and also, thank God, of the many graces and glories of our blessed Lord—all this goes on quietly and imperceptibly, even when an outward testimony is being rendered in true Christian activity. Indeed, the two exercises, though ever distinct, must go on together, and hand in hand. Nevertheless, as the sap so is the fruit. How striking, for instance, are the three statements:

First, "*Stand still*, and see the salvation of the Lord." (Exodus xiv. 13.)

Second, "Their strength is to *sit still*." (Isaiah xxx. 7.)

Third, "*Be still*, and know that I am God." (Psalm xlvi. 10.)

This attitude of *stillness* betokens a spirit of rich reliance on God. And may we not say that there is progress of soul in the order in which we have quoted these three verses? It may be more easy for us to stand still than to sit still; and yet it is our strength to sit still. Again, it may suit us better to sit still

than to be still, and yet it is in being still that we learn that "I am God." This is surely the most valuable lesson.

Here we have faith in happy and thorough passivity. Man is silent—he has no place—God is supreme—He exalteth Himself. And is not this the very highest and most honourable phase of faith? Does it not hereby bring more glory to God, since it allows Him entire and perfect control: allows Him to act for Himself, and to have His own way? Let us but call to memory the words of our Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but Thine, be done." What passivity! What setting aside of a will, which, though real, was ever in harmony with that of the Father. The Father's will was to be supreme, though at such a cost to Him who surrendered His own. Ah! what a perfect example of being thus, *still*, we have in Jesus.

His life, so full of activity in doing His Father's pleasure, as also in seeking the good of poor worthless man, was one of constant dependence on God. He came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. His "Father's business" is His first recorded utterance (See Luke ii. 49), as "It is finished" fell last from His blessed lips, ere He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. (See John xix. 30.) How worthy is that wondrous life of the most unwearied study! The contemplation of it is not only most profitable for the heart of the disciple, but it leads him to admire, and love, and worship that precious Saviour, who, though God, was yet found here as the dependent, obedient, and perfect Man. He carried and illustrated in Himself every grace.

Then, lastly, we may just add that the work of God

by us becomes a simple matter, when it is seen that we are to be but vessels in His hand. Yes, vessels! Alas, how soon, and how often we display our independence and self-reliance as though something depended on ourselves!

Just in proportion, however, as we permit self, or nature, to intrude, in so far do we hinder God. The excellency of the power is of God and not of us. Our wisdom is to let Him use us as vessels. Thank God, He is patient and gently teaches us by our very failures. The very idea of a *vessel* is the negation of self. It is for the use of another. Thus Mary said, "Be it unto me according to Thy word." She lay passive in His hand to accomplish His will. And we may be certain if we are privileged to accomplish any divine results that they are the fruit, not of our zeal or activity, but of the Spirit of God within us. This may well encourage all of us. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit," said our Lord. It is ours to abide in Him, His to give the gracious effect. "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." (John xv. 8.)

J. W. S.

THE SONGS OF DEGREES.

THE Psalms bearing this title are fifteen in number (Ps. cxx.—cxxxiv.), and, while diversified in their contents, are manifestly bound intimately together, and make progress towards a desired goal. They have afforded much interest and instruction to God's people in all ages, even if imperfectly understood and applied; and the interest and instruction will rather be

deepened, if their divine intent and object are apprehended. The significance of the title, which these Psalms bear, has been much discussed; but almost all the various opinions offered may be included in what undoubtedly is the true solution. For example, the word translated "degrees" is almost universally allowed to be that used of the recurring journeys of Israel up to Jerusalem for the several festivals, and some accordingly have maintained that these songs were sung by the godly at the various stages of their route. Others seeing references to a later period, to the turning again of the captivity of Zion (Ps. cxxvi.) have concluded that they were used on the pilgrim-journey from Babylon to Jerusalem for the rebuilding of the temple. (Ezra i.-iii.) Another class of interpreters assert that the whole of the fifteen Psalms were sung on "the fifteen steps between the court of the men and the court of the women," as the pilgrim bands were actually entering the precincts of the sacred building. Without discussing these several theories, it will suffice to point out that all alike coincide in making the temple the object, or goal, to which the faces of the pilgrims were turned; and secondly, that all alike fail to perceive the prophetic character of these Psalms. It is in the combination of these two points that the truth will be found.

To take the latter point first, it is easy from many allusions to prove that the Psalms are mainly prophetic. Reference has already been made to Psalm cxxvi., where it is said, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the

heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them," etc. (*vv.* 1, 2.) That the restoration from Babylon was a shadow of a larger fulfilment may be readily conceded; but to those who are acquainted with the predictions of the prophets concerning the establishment of the kingdom under the glorious Messiah, nothing short of the future deliverance and glory of Zion could be accepted as answering to this description. The last verse of the Psalm, indeed, will only find its complete fulfilment in Christ as King in Zion. Predictions, only to be realized after the Lord has restored His earthly people to blessing, under His own sway, are as plainly found in Psalms cxxiv., cxxv., cxxviii., cxxx., cxxxii.—iv.

The last three Psalms of the series undoubtedly justify the contention that the temple, the habitation of the Mighty One of Jacob, is the longed-for end, or consummation. If, however, the prophetic interpretation of these Psalms be allowed, the temple will not be that which Solomon, or Zerubbabel, built, but that which the Man, whose name is the BRANCH, will build, even He who shall bear the glory, and shall sit, and rule, a priest upon His throne; that is, Christ Himself.

Another point must be mentioned; viz., that it is clear from many parts of these Psalms that Israel is viewed as in the land, after their having been scattered, and yet not finally delivered from the power of their oppressors. The reader should notice the recurrence of the word Israel, as showing that it is not only the presence of the two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) in the land, but that also the ten tribes have been restored; that, moreover, they now once again

form but one nation (see Ezekiel xxxvii. 18-28), and that Zion and the temple form the centre, as the seat of government and blessing for all. Still, as already said, they are not yet finally delivered from their adversaries. They thus cry "Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud." (Psalm cxxiii. 3, 4; also Psalm cxxiv.)

What we have, then, in these Songs of Degrees is the progress and experience of Israel, after their restoration, while waiting for the interposition of Jehovah to deliver them from all their enemies, and to establish them in security and blessing. It is not, therefore, Christianity, or Christian experience, which must be sought for in these Psalms; but, inasmuch as the principles of the divine life, or of the divine nature, in souls, are the same in every dispensation, much instruction may be here gleaned by Christians. Two things are never found in the Psalms, nor, indeed, in the Old Testament—the revelation of the Father, and, consequently, the Spirit of adoption. They are only known after Pentecost, though our blessed Lord revealed the Father when with His disciples. (John xiv. 9-11.) It was not possible, however, for them to apprehend the revelation made until they had received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Unless we bear in mind this distinction, when reading the Psalms, we are apt to lose sight of the heavenly calling, and the heavenly character of Christianity.

A few words may be added concerning the structure of this interesting group of Psalms. "All are grouped,"

says a pious expositor, "around Psalm cxxvii., which was written by Solomon. . . . On both sides there stands a heptad (*i.e.*, seven) of pilgrim songs, consisting of two Psalms written by David, and five others, which have no name attached. Both sevens are divided into four and three.* Each heptad (seven) contains the name of Jehovah twenty-four times; each of the connected groups (Psalms cxx.-cxxiii., cxxiv.-cxxvi., cxxviii.-cxxxii., cxxxiii.-cxxxiv.) twelve times." Surely the facts here stated show the impress of a divine Hand, the Hand which guided and controlled those who have been thus used as vehicles both of a divine design, and of divine thoughts. To cite once again, "the unity (of these Psalms) is not one merely of *form*, it also refers to the thoughts," for while different servants were chosen to express them, the Author of all alike is the Spirit of God.

PSALM CXX.

A Song of Degrees.

- 1 In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me.
- 2 Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.
- 3 What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?
- 4 Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.
- 5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!
- 6 My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.
- 7 I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.

* The reader may recall that this division is also found in the New Testament, as, for example, in the seven parables of Matthew xiii., in the seven churches, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, etc., of the Apocalypse.

As is seen in many of the Psalms, the result of the exercises through which the soul has passed is first stated. "In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me"; and then the character of the distress is described. According to the interpretation of these Psalms already given, this distress is that through which Israel will have to pass after their restoration. He that scattered Israel will, in His infallible faithfulness, gather him (Jer. xxxi. 10); but there will be enemies still in existence at the commencement of the kingdom (see Jer. li. 20-23), whereby Jehovah will test His people; and then He will manifest Himself to them as their Messiah and Deliverer, so that once again they will sing, "The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation." (Psalm cxviii. 14; compare Exodus xv. 2.)

Who the particular enemy alluded to here is, it may not be easy to decide. One of his characteristics is a deceitful tongue, combined with lying lips. Some have thought that it is a prophetic reference to the little horn of Daniel viii., that is, to the king of the north in the last days. A well-known writer thus says, "It does not seem to me to be the oppression of Antichrist, or the beast at Jerusalem, but to apply to those who, in the land, found themselves where the last hostile power which had pretended to favour them, and had led many to apostatize for quietness and prosperity, now showed himself as only a deceitful oppressor."* In Daniel it says of this personage, that "he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also, he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand."

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. ii. p. 232.

(Chap. viii. 24, 25.) If this be the adversary in view, the Psalm goes back to a time anterior to the restoration of all Israel; but Israel, recounting the Lord's mercies in becoming his salvation, might well identify themselves with the sorrows which Judah had first undergone in the land. The people will, at this period, be once more united; and they will consequently claim the "distress" of any portion of the nation as their own.

Some difficulty has been felt concerning the mention of Mesech and Kedar as the place of sojourn (*v.* 5) inasmuch as they would seem to have been widely sundered. Meshech is mentioned in connection with Gog (Ezekiel xxxix.), whereas Kedar was a descendant of Ishmael (Genesis xxv. 13), and he evidently became the founder of a well-known Arab tribe. (See also Canticles i. 5.) They are probably moral expressions, indicative of the hostility of the enemies of God's people. The Christian can in measure enter into this sorrow, for he is hated by the world, and is also the object of Satan's enmity, only he has the consolation of knowing that Christ has overcome the world (John xvi. 33); and that since Satan is a defeated enemy, he will ever flee if resisted in the power of the Holy Ghost (James iv. 7).

It is interesting to notice that there are, in this short Psalm, the three forms of the flesh which are developed in the epistle to the Colossians. In Genesis vi., two of these are found, corruption and violence (*v.* 11), and after Satan is exposed as a liar and the father of lies (John viii. 44), the third form, falsehood, is added. [See Colossians iii. 5 (corruption), 8 (violence), and 9 (falsehood)]. So in our Psalm we have lying

and deceit, which is moral corruption, in *v.* 2, and violence in *v.* 7.

Such were the circumstances of this pious soul who is taken up by the Spirit of Christ and made the mouth-piece—the vessel of the sorrows—of His earthly people in a later day. And thus surrounded by these various forms of evil, and having long dwelt with him that hated peace, what was his consolation? In what way was he sustained? By the assurance that Jehovah had heard his cry. He had the sense that God had heard his cry, and this pacified his alarms; for, as the apostle John has written, “If we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.” (1 John v. 15.) Hence it is that the psalmist anticipates with certainty deliverance through divine judgment upon the enemy. “What,” he cries, “shall be given unto thee? Or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty”—the arrows of the King, which will soon pierce through the hearts of His enemies (Psalm *xlv.* 5), and these, combined “with coals of juniper,”* coals kindled with the fires of holiness, wherewith Jehovah will search, and judge, all the workers of iniquity.

In conclusion, it may be noted that, while it is not the circumstances of the Christian which are here presented, the resource of God’s people in all dispensations is in God Himself, and in His interposition, with delivering power, on their behalf.

* “Juniper” would seem to be a mistaken translation. It is said to be a shrub called “Genista,” the roots of which were famed as making the best charcoal. The figure, therefore, will denote the intensity of the fire of judgment.

"HIS NAME . . . JESUS."

Jesus! O Name supreme!
 Thrice told upon the cross.
 For every nation: bringing salvation:
 Sent at the King's own cost.

Jesus! O Name of Love!
 Zealous, and strong as death.
 All ye who labour, ye heavy laden;
 "Come unto Me," He saith.

Jesus! O Name of Light!
 Name from God's glory given!
 He who believeth: that Light receiveth,
 Turneth from earth, to heaven.

Jesus! O Name of Joy!
 Joy of the realms above!
 "Jehovah—Saviour": "Man," yea, "My Fellow";
 Wisdom, declaring Love.

Jesus! O Name of Peace!
 Peace through the blood once shed;
 Christ died for sinners: for the ungodly;
 God raised Him from the dead.

Jesus! O Name of Power!
 Each at that name must bow.
 Mighty Creator: Alpha: Omega:
 Worthy, O Lord, art Thou!

Jesus! O Name supreme!
 Seen "o'er His head": "His cross"!
 Hear ye the story: He from the glory,
 Seeketh and saves the lost.

H. K. B.

FULNESS OF JOY.

AMONGST true believers there is nothing more lacking in the present day than spiritual joy, and where this is so there is sound reason for the lack *on our side*. Thank God it is all bright on His side. We are introduced into unclouded blessedness. Our place is before God in all the acceptance of the Beloved. "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath taken us into favour in the Beloved." And our privilege is to share the fellowship of the Father and His Son Jesus Christ—the circle of divine love.

What wondrous grace that God should be pleased to take us up, and not only save us from all the ruin of the first man, but bring us into all the joy and blessedness of the Second! "As He is, so are we in this world."

Many and various are the causes which operate to hinder our enjoyment of what has been thus given to us in Christ. There are weights which hinder, and sin which so easily besets, and Satan behind all, seeking to entrap our feet, and impede us in every possible way. But there is no necessity why we should be overcome, or turned aside. God is for us, and the Holy Spirit is given to strengthen us; but if we grieve Him He will not be free to minister Christ to us, and how then can we rejoice?

In John's gospel the Lord speaks of joy—

In relation to obedience. (Chap. xv.)

In relation to dependence. (Chap. xvi.)

In relation to separation. (Chap. xvii.)

OBEDIENCE.

In chapter xv. 9 the Lord assures the disciples of His love for them: "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love." His love to us is only measured by the Father's love to Him. Wondrous to think of! Have our hearts taken in this marvellous truth? Are our souls basking in the enjoyment of it? Do we really believe that at this moment, notwithstanding all our fickleness, and feebleness, and waywardness, the Lord's love is just the same towards us as ever? It cannot change, because it is divine and eternal. He will never love us less, and He can never love us more. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

Though His love never changes toward us, yet the enjoyment of it may be lost to us, because of our not seeking to please Him by walking in the path of His will; this is what is involved in obedience.

It has been said, and said truly, that "happiness lies in obedience," but this demands *the setting aside of ourselves and the renunciation of our own will in everything.* This we may not always be prepared for. But observe how the Lord sets Himself before us as our example. In verses 10, 11, He says, "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

DEPENDENCE.

In chapter xvi. 23, 24, He says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you.

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

This is to be our resource in His absence, and what more could we desire? We are to ask the Father in His name; that is, as representing Him here, which would exclude all that would merely gratify ourselves.*

Now prayer is the expression of dependence; for why pray if we have no need, or if we have any resource in ourselves?

How blessed for us to be so consciously weak in ourselves, that we are absolutely cast on the Lord as our only resource. *Conscious weakness is the pathway to divine power.* Even Paul had to learn, "when I am weak, then am I strong"; and blessed for him that he did learn it. He gloried in what made little of himself before men, and took pleasure in difficulties of the most trying kind, that the power of Christ might rest upon him.

Obedience and dependence are inseparable. If there be not subjection of heart to the Lord's will, which is expressed in keeping His commandments, we shall not realize His sustaining power. He will not support us in any path of our own devising, nor could we in this look to Him in confidence to be kept, and this I have no doubt is the cause of such a manifest want of joy amongst God's people to-day.

In Psalm lxxxi. we have a striking instance of what Israel lost through their disobedience and lack of confidence in God. Jehovah reminds them of what

* Asking in the name of Christ or in the name of the Son is, we judge, rather the going before the Father with all the claim which the Son Himself has upon the Father's heart. But to do this can only be with the Son's warrant or authority.—ED.

He had done for them, and in verse 10 He says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Could they have desired more? They were promised blessing without measure or stint, but, alas! they would not hearken to Jehovah's voice, and the later part of the Psalm is His lament for what they had lost through their wilfulness and disobedience. He as much as says, If you had only obeyed My voice, and been content with My ordering for you, and trusted Me simply, I would have done far better for you than you could possibly have done for yourselves.

What a pity that we are so often like them, and in our unbelief try to do better for ourselves than He is doing for us, and so are robbed of the blessedness and satisfaction found in simple dependence on the Lord alone. If we had more confidence in the Lord's love, and in His unerring wisdom, we should be saved from many a sorrow and heart-break. Whether we realize it or not, He is doing His very best for us. True love could not do anything else. And though He may permit us to be tried for some wise reason (unknown to us it may be), yet He will never fail 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." (Heb. xiii. 5, 6.)

SEPARATION.

In John xvii. the Lord takes His stand on the ground of accomplished redemption. He sets His disciples in His own position before the Father, and they are sent into the world to represent the Lord. We are allowed to hear the breathings of His soul into the Father's ear about them. He entrusts them to the

Holy Father's care, to be kept in His name as He had kept them in the Father's name, and in verse 13 He says, "And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." In verses 18 and 19 He also says, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

His separation from all that is here is the measure of our separation. We are sanctified according to the place He has taken for us, and are sent into the world to be here for Him as He was here for the Father. What marvellous grace! What an honour He has conferred upon us! Oh, for grace to rise up to the moral dignity of such a position, and ever seek to be more separate in heart and ways from everything that is unsuited to the place He has taken for us. May the one desire of our hearts be to *live* Christ, to occupy *for Him* in whatever sphere He has placed us, and thus to have—what nothing else can compensate for—*His joy* filling our hearts.

Never was it more important than now to insist upon, and maintain, a holy separateness from this defiling world. If there is any compromise with it in any way, be assured we cannot be in the realization of *His joy*; nor can we know what fulness of joy is. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James iv. 4.)

Nothing is more insidious and subtle than worldliness. It meets us everywhere, and is sure to creep in upon us if we are not watchful. It presents itself

in a thousand forms, and no one is beyond being influenced by it. But in whatever guise it may present itself, we ought to seek grace to refuse it absolutely. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John ii. 16.)

The verse just quoted classes the world under two heads—(1) self-gratification and (2) self-exaltation. Each one, therefore, can test himself, or herself, before God thus—How far am I living for my own personal gratification? and How far am I seeking my own exaltation?

May we never forget that we are called to follow in the footsteps of a *rejected* Christ—One for whom the world had neither heart, nor eye—One for whom there was no room in the world's inn. May we be able to say with Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"; and, may we, in this day of increasing worldliness, lay to heart the exhortation, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." P. W.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

ISAIAH lxiii. 11.

THE key to the expression, "He that put His holy Spirit within him," is found, we judge, in Haggai. There we read, "According to the word that I covenanted

with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you," etc. (Chap. ii. 5.) It is not a question, therefore, of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in individual believers; for, as we know from other scriptures, this could not be until after Jesus was glorified. (See John vii. 39; Acts ii. 4, etc.) If, indeed, the context in Isaiah be carefully examined, it will be readily perceived that the prophet is speaking, not of individuals, but of the Jewish people corporately. What we gather then, in combination with the passage from Haggai is, that God, after the redemption of His people out of Egypt, ever wrought in the midst of Israel with the power and influences of His Spirit; so also, undoubtedly, in the hearts of His saints, as all the desires for, and yearnings after, His presence and blessing, which are recorded in the Psalms and Prophets, abundantly testify. But the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit is distinctive of Christianity; and, as far as revealed, will never be repeated in the age to come, that is, in the period of the kingdom during the thousand years.

II.

MATTHEW xxviii. 9; JOHN xx. 17.

It is in the difference in the two gospels that the apparent discrepancy (as objectors love to term it) between these two scriptures is to be explained. It lies on the surface of Matthew, as the most superficial reader of the first three chapters may see, that Christ is here presented as the Messiah. The last chapter is in entire keeping with this leading feature. There is consequently no ascension; but, risen from the dead, He arranges to meet the believing remnant in Galilee;

and when there He announces, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Thereon He commissions His disciples to go and teach all nations, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." All, therefore, is in view of the kingdom. It is thus as the risen Messiah, risen but on earth, that He greeted the two Marys, as they departed from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and permitted them to hold Him by the feet, as they worshipped Him. In John's gospel it is wholly different, as the message He gives to Mary Magdalene shows. Here everything is connected with heaven. Indeed, He forbids her to touch Him, on the ground of His not having yet ascended to His Father. There it is His ascension and His new place in heaven, now as Man, though ever the Son, which He has in view. The message not only confirms this interpretation, but also reveals the association, in virtue of His glorious death and resurrection, of His people with Himself in His own relationship and place. About to ascend to His Father, He would have His "brethren" know that henceforward their place and relationship were as His—heavenly; His Father was now their Father, and His God their God. Mary needed to learn this lesson, for her thoughts had evidently not yet gone beyond having Christ back again *on earth*; and hence she was told to touch Him not. But the time would soon come when she would understand that, in her heavenly association with her blessed Lord, she possessed Him in an infinitely more intimate way than she could have done had He only come back to her as the risen Messiah. How plainly it all teaches that Christianity is entirely heavenly!

THE CONSECRATION OF THE LEVITES.

NUMBERS viii.

IF Aaron and his sons represent the Church as a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, the Levites are a prefiguration of the saints as set apart to God for His will and service. Read in this light, the chapter before us is full of interest and instruction; for if, on the one hand, we rejoice in the enjoyment of access (in our case) into the holiest, we must not forget, on the other, that we belong wholly to God for His service while passing through the wilderness. It is in the adjustment of these two things that so many of us fail. There are some who prize, as beyond all value, the privilege of being in the presence of God as worshippers; and there are others who count it as the highest favour that they are permitted to serve. But the perfection of the Christian life lies in the combination of the two, as exemplified, for instance, in the case of Elijah. "As the Lord of hosts liveth," he speaks, "before whom I stand." He lived within, and was thus ready to serve without. The one, therefore, who most enjoys his priestly privilege, will be the best qualified for his Master's service.

In the first place, it may be pointed out that the basis of the Lord's claim upon the Levites was the destruction of the firstborn of Egypt. If God redeems

through sacrifice and judgment, He claims those whom He redeems, and hence we read, "All the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself." (v. 17.) All the firstborn among the children of Israel were thus bought with a price, the price of the blood of the Passover Lamb, type of the precious blood of Christ. From chapters iii. and iv. we learn that afterwards all the Levites were taken instead of the firstborn of the children of Israel, and that the transaction whereby the substitution was effected was so solemn and exact that the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who were in excess of the number of the Levites, had all to be redeemed according to the divine estimation of their value. (See chap. iii. 44-51.) Now all these things were types, and they are written for our admonition, that we may understand that we belong to the Lord, on the ground of redemption, as absolutely as the Levites did. Indeed, we can never occupy our true place until we have entered into this, and until, through grace, we have accepted the position. In saying this much, we are not speaking of "gifts," or of those who are called out for service in a special and extraordinary way, but of all Christians, all of whom alike have been redeemed, bought with a price, and who are, therefore, the Lord's servants.

In this way, then, Jehovah claimed the Levites; and we may now consider their cleansing as the qualification for their work. For if they had been divinely designated for their work they must also

be divinely qualified: "Thus shall thou do unto them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean." (v. 7.) There is no mention of sprinkling with blood, as in the case of the leper (Lev. xiv.), because the Levites are regarded as being already on the ground of redemption, and, consequently, in a recognized relationship with God. It is a question, therefore, of purification and not of expiation, and hence of cleansing with water. In the full Christian sense water signifies death; and washing, therefore, as in the example before us, will mean the application of death to all that we are as children of Adam, so that all that is contrary to God is removed out of the way; for all that we *were* has come up under the eye of God for judgment in the death of Christ, and has passed away for ever, and also for faith. This is the cleansing with water—the removal of all that was offensive to God in us by the application of the water, the death of Christ. The blood has expiated our guilt, and the water has cleansed us from our sinful condition by bringing it to an end in the cross of Christ.

But in the application of this truth it goes further. There are many who rest in what is true of them before God, without knowing its practical power. The sprinkling of the Levites was done for them; but then they were themselves to carry out the application of what this signified, first to themselves, and then to all the details and surroundings of their daily lives. They were to shave, as in the case of the leper, all

their flesh. No product of the flesh, however alluring it might be to the eye of man, was to escape the keen edge of the word of the cross. How much we all need to bear this prescription in mind. We are not so much in danger from the manifestly corrupt and violent manifestations of the flesh, as from those subtle forms of it which tend to commend us to others, or to give us a place of exaltation before their eyes. *All* the flesh must then be shaved, and daily shaved, if we desire to be kept cleansed. They were, moreover, to wash their clothes. Clothes are a figure of habits and surroundings; and it is necessary to bring all these constantly under the application of the water, if we are to be maintained before God with a good conscience, and to be found ready for His call and service. Indeed, the three things mentioned must be done before we are clean.

Next, they must be before the Lord in the conscious enjoyment of certain aspects of the life and death of Christ. "Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering." (v. 8.) Before, however, their sacrifices were offered two things had to be done. The Levites were brought by Moses "before the tabernacle of the congregation," in the presence of the whole assembly of the children of Israel; and then it is said, "And thou shalt bring the Levites before the Lord: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord for an offering of the children of Israel, that

they may execute the service of the Lord." This is exceedingly beautiful, as it is also a striking exemplification of God's grace. Although chosen out of Israel for the service of the tabernacle, the whole congregation were identified with them, as shown by the laying on of their hands, and the Levites were, moreover, presented to the Lord by Aaron as the gift of the children of Israel. Belonging to Jehovah, claimed by Him on the ground of their deliverance from Egypt through judgment, He will yet receive them as the gift of His people, that they might be represented before Him in all the service of the Levites. Do we not learn that if service is individual in its responsibility to the Lord it is yet rendered on behalf, and in connection with the unity, of His people?

Called, or designated, to their special place, and presented before the Lord as the offering of Israel, they must also be before Him in the efficacy of the sacrifices which they were instructed to bring. It teaches very plainly that, apart from the sense of acceptance in Christ, no true service can be rendered. In connection with this part of their consecration their hands were to be laid upon the heads of the bullocks—one of which was for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering. This action, as with the Israelites (*v.* 10) signified identification, but here a difference has to be noticed. Putting their hands upon the head of the sin offering transferred, so to speak, their guilt to the bullock—the bullock became identified, before it was offered, with their sin; whereas in the same action in respect of the burnt offering, the

Levites became identified with all the acceptance of its sweet savour when burned upon the altar. There was thus clearance from guilt and positive acceptance. But besides these, there was the meat offering, which was offered together with the burnt offering. This signified the entire devotedness of Christ, at all costs, to the will of God through the whole of His life and up to death; and in which He is the blessed and perfect pattern of all service. There was no peace offering, as has been often observed, because it was a question of service, and not of communion.

After this manner were the Levites qualified for their position; thus they were separated "from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be Mine. *And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.*" (vv. 14, 15.) It is no light thing, therefore, to enter upon the Lord's service; and it may be for profit to recall the points of the instruction of the Levites. They were then designated for their work by the Lord Himself. So every true servant must be divinely marked out, and so plainly that his call will be apparent to God's people. They were wholly the Lord's. He claimed them absolutely; for they were His through redemption. In like manner now the servant must recognize that he is not his own, that he is wholly devoted to the Lord's will. No other claim, therefore, must ever be allowed to come between him and the Lord. (See Luke ix. 59-62.) They were in their service the representatives of the whole assembly. In correspondence with this, the Lord commissioned

His disciples when He was in their midst on the first day of the week (John xx.); and they were thus to go forth, as sent by their Lord, from the assembly as the centre, and, as it were, on the assembly's behalf. Finally, the Levites were to be before God in all the value of the death of Christ and in the enjoyment of what He was as the perfect example of entire devotedness to God's glory. No one can ever serve aright if he be not in the sense of the present acceptance and favour of God, and in the enjoyment in his own soul of God's delight in His beloved Son.

One last particular remains to be observed. The Levites were given as a gift to Aaron and to his sons, for service in the tabernacle of the congregation. Regarding the Levites in this aspect as typical of all saints as servants, we learn that the Church is given to Christ for His service on the earth. Given to Him for salvation, as every believer is, we have also to remember that we are a gift to Him for His absolute disposal. Our only proper attitude, therefore, is that of Saul of Tarsus, who said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" How precious it is to remember that we are wholly the Lord's, and that as such there is no room whatever for self-will or for man pleasing, only to labour that, whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to Him. May He vouchsafe to grant to us to be true Levites, and that in all our service we may be distinguished by that single eye to His glory which ever accompanies true and entire devotedness to Him and to His will.

“NO SHEPHERD”;

OR, THE LAST REQUEST OF MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD.

THE twenty-seventh chapter of the book of Numbers contains what may be termed the last request of Moses, the man of God, which not only shows his submission to Jehovah's sovereign will, but also seems to savour of that love of which God Himself is the source, and which makes channels for itself to flow into the hearts of His people.

Moses was released from the service of God before the Israelites crossed the Jordan on their way to the promised land; and the One that gave him his release was the One to whom he appealed at the time with a heart burdened with desire for the welfare of His people, for whom he made the following request:

“And Moses spake unto the Lord, saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have *no shepherd*.” (vv. 15-17.)

It would have been difficult for Moses to give a stronger proof of his affection for the people of God than that which is conveyed in this prayer; and the readiness with which it was responded to on the part of God was an evidence of His goodwill towards one that had sufficient interest in His people to make their future happiness his chief concern—even at the time

when he himself was about to be set aside. His concern for them was so great that he could not die in peace, and leave them in the wilderness unprovided for, "as sheep which have *no shepherd*."

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight; . . . And Moses did as the Lord commanded him." (*vv.* 18-22.)

The request of Moses is in perfect keeping with the purpose of God, with which also the blessing of His people is intimately connected; therefore, in making request for the latter, he showed his regard for the former by asking God to raise up a man that would both lead them *out*, and bring them *in*; and he not only looked for power to be exercised in their behalf to this end, but requested of God that the personal presence of their leader might be known in the midst of His people by going out before them, and by going in before them.

Abel is the first keeper of sheep mentioned in scripture. Moses also, after he fled to Midian, followed the same occupation, for he "kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law." He was thus trained for his future mission; for, while he was so engaged, the Lord appeared to him, and sent him back into Egypt as His messenger to Pharaoh, and to become the leader and shepherd of His people in their exodus from the land of their bondage, and in their journey through the wilderness.

A servant of God, who has recently been called home, made a distinction between "the fish-net" and

"the sheepfold," pointing out that the increase of the former comes from *without*, like the work of the evangelist, as the result of preaching "the gospel to every creature," and that of the latter comes from *within*, and is connected, in figure, with predestination and the purposes of God. The evangelist proclaims the glad news, "Whosoever will, let him come," and rejoices over his converts, in harmony with the mind of heaven; and those who have the welfare of the saints at heart rejoice also, while tracing every bit of blessing to its source in God, and looking upon each saved soul added to the assembly by the Lord as the Father's gift to the Son, "before the foundation of the world." (Eph. i. 4.)

The servants of God should have no divided interests. Each receives his commission from the same source. One is sent to find the sheep, and another to feed them; others, like Moses, may be called to do a little of both, and each one will be rewarded according to his faithfulness. We may learn, however, from the example of Moses, what are the leading characteristics of a faithful shepherd. Failure there may be, and surely was, in his case; but love there *must* be, whether the saints appreciate it, or whether there is no response, as was seen in the case of the Israelites, and also in the case of the Corinthians towards the apostle Paul, compelling him to say, "The more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." (2 Cor. xii. 15.)

A true shepherd lives for his sheep, studies their comfort, suffers in serving them, and seeks by every means to shield them from ill. If this be true in ordinary life, it is much more so with respect to the

faithful shepherd of God's sheep. And beautiful it is to see the devotedness of men like Moses and the apostle Paul, who faced the worst of dangers, and even death itself, in order to serve and deliver the objects of their love. All this, we well know, is attributable to the grace of God. And the request of Moses, with respect to His people, was but a feeble reflection of what was in the mind of God respecting them, and was used of Him as a means of giving us to know how tenderly He cared for His people. He not only showed His regard to His servant's desire by raising up Joshua to take his place, and to go before His people, but also sent One whose interest in the sheep is equal to His own, and whose love for them far exceeded that of any under-shepherd however devoted.

Alas! alas! the very thing which Moses dreaded befel the sheep; not that God had ceased to regard His servant's request, but because He could not pass over the sinful practices, in a later day, of their shepherd, King Ahab. Hence the solemn prediction, which was uttered by the faithful prophet Micaiah in the ears of the king, was fulfilled: "Then he said, I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have *no shepherd*." (2 Chron. xviii. 16.) And in the book of Ezekiel we find that God had a controversy with both the shepherds and the sheep. While exposing their sins, He threatens them with judgment, and then tells out His compassion towards the feeble remnant of the flock, in the most touching manner possible, saying, "Because there was *no shepherd*, neither did My shepherds search for My flock. . . . therefore will I save My flock . . . And I will set up one shepherd over them . . . even

My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd." (Ezek. xxxiv. 8, 22, 23.)

There was but one way for the fulfilment of this promise, and the accomplishment of God's purpose in respect to His people—either *they*, or their *sins*, must be put away. But rather than do the former, He devised means for the accomplishment of the latter, by sending His own Son, of whom David is a type, and who is spoken of in the New Testament as "the Good Shepherd" who gave His life for the sheep," as "the Great Shepherd" who took it up in resurrection, and also as "the Chief Shepherd" who will soon appear, and will then reward His faithful servants with "a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

If we turn to Matthew's gospel for a moment, we shall find the Shepherd-King viewing His poor sheep as they surround Him, and the very way He speaks of them shows how strikingly their condition answered to the description of the prophet Micaiah. "But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having *no shepherd*." (Matt. ix. 36.) The Lord had come to fulfil Ezekiel's prophecy:—"Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out." He found them where Ahab left them, and came to bring them back to God, not only those who were Jews, but Gentiles also, forming "one flock," with "one Shepherd." "And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice." (John x. 4.)

Much as there is to admire in Moses as an under-shepherd, and great as his attachment was to the sheep

of the house of Israel, and that of the apostle Peter was towards the lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ, as soon as the Good Shepherd appears on the scene, we see the perfection of that which is shadowed forth in His servants.

"We'll sing of the Shepherd that died,
That died for the sake of the flock,
Whose love to the utmost was tried,
And firmly endured as a rock."

There is but one Person in the whole universe to whom the foregoing lines can be applied, and He was the only One that could be fully trusted by the Father—first to find the sheep, and then to feed them. It is of Him we read, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." (Isaiah xl. 11.) And after finding His sheep—some from amongst the Jews, and others from amongst the Gentiles—He forms them into one flock, takes His place at the head of it, and claims the honour which is due to Him, of being "the Good Shepherd" who gave His life for them all. After leading them *out*, He commences the wilderness journey with the determination of bringing them *in*, not to a place of rest below, but to the Father's house on high. At the commencement of their wilderness journey, the sheep were favoured with the personal presence of the Good Shepherd, who went *out before* them and went *in before* them until the time of His departure arrived. Then He addressed the Father on their behalf, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name:

those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost," etc. (John xvii. 11, 12.)

The most devoted under-shepherd that ever lived could not claim to have equal interest with the Father in the sheep. The Father had trusted the Good Shepherd to bring back the wandering sheep for He was trustworthy, and He could fully rely on His Father to care for them during His absence. And since that time the sheep have had numberless proofs of the Father's tender solicitude, which reminds them how worthy He is of all *their* trust.

We have seen the regard which God had to the request of His servant Moses, in His raising up a Joshua to lead His people into the Canaan rest; and the regard the Father had for the request of His Son, in His sending the Comforter both to abide personally with the sheep, and to minister all needed blessing to their souls. The mournful expression, therefore, "No shepherd," could never more apply to the sheep, for henceforth they should know no want. (Ps. xxiii. 1.)

It is to those that have turned from God, and have *not* returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, that the expression, "No shepherd," applies. And should the eye of any wandering soul rest on the closing remarks of this paper respecting the Good Shepherd and His sheep, let him be assured that the same heart to which He binds His own sheep is yearning to bless him by bringing him back to Himself. More than this, he may be privileged to hear Him saying to-day, what he may not hear to-morrow, or again for ever, "I am the door: by Me if *any man* enter in, he shall be saved," &c. (John x. 9.)

A SCRIPTURE STUDY.

“DEATH BY SIN,” “SIN DEAD,” ETC.

THE terms “sin” and “sins” stand related to death in scripture under various forms of expression which may be thus enumerated :

“*Death by sin.*”

“*Sin dead.*”

“*Dead in sins.*”

“*Dead to sins.*”

“*Dead to sin.*”

“*Dead because of sin.*”

As the clear understanding of the bearing of these expressions must contribute considerably to the intelligent apprehension of the word, as well as to the practical effect of the truth upon the walk and practice of the believer, it is proposed to consider them separately, in the connection in which they are found in the word of God.

The first expression—

“DEATH BY SIN,”

is found in Rom. v. 12. The thought in connection with it is simple, and is expressed in the same epistle in two other forms, viz.: verse 21, of the same chapter, “sin hath reigned unto death”; and again, chap. vi. 23, “the wages of sin is death.” Very early in man’s history God announced to the first man, while on probation in the garden of Eden, when forbidding to him the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” This

was the earliest intimation given by God of the attachment of the judgment of death, as the penalty of sin. It is the universally accepted, fundamental doctrine held by christendom generally, as constituting orthodoxy, that the judgment of death, carrying with it punishment in a future state, has been irrevocably attached by God to sin. We may therefore pass on to the consideration of the next expression, which some may possibly view with surprise as occurring at all in the word of God, viz. :—

“ SIN DEAD.”

Nevertheless it can be found in Rom. vii. 8—“ without the law sin (was) dead.”

Christendom is familiar with the idea, as that towards the attainment of which every spiritual effort is to be made. What more laudable or plausible object to endeavour to effect, than to reach a state or condition of spiritual life, in which sin has, through a process of attenuation, enforced by power within, lost all vitality and, as “*dead*,” no longer harasses with its hated energy and loathsome fruit.

But is this the meaning that the spirit of God attaches to the term, which is of His own dictation to the apostle Paul? In strange contrast, it is almost startling to discover that the expression represents, according to the mind of God, a *wholly unconverted state*. In proof of this the context must be carefully examined. The apostle has been, in verse 7, treating of the means by which sin, unsuspected as to its presence before, is detected. “I had *not known* sin, but by the law: for I had *not known* lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” Then at the close of verse 8 he says “without the law sin (was) dead,” which must

be read in the further light of the succeeding verse, with which there is evidently a direct connection. "For I was alive without (or apart from) the law once"; words plainly descriptive of the time when conscience had not as yet been crossed by the authoritative voice of God's holy demands, and righteous threatenings; *i.e.*, when he was in complete unconsciousness of sin within, as a living, irresistible energy of evil—like a bather dreamily drifting with the current, the force of which, while thus floating down with it, it is not possible that he can be sensible of, since he is, temporarily, absolutely identified with it. Every movement of that current is his movement; to him its living energy is but a dead and unknown quantity. But while thus listlessly enjoying the passing moments, a voice from the bank reaches him, with earnest, authoritative warning as to the falls that lie hidden from view, towards which the treacherous current is surely carrying him. And now what? Put again into terms of scripture "when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The warning being heeded, listlessness is banished in a moment. The swimmer, alarmed by his suddenly discovered danger, endeavours, by straining every muscle, to make headway against the tide that so lately carried him, perfectly undisturbed, on its bosom; its living energy he has *now* become perfectly conscious of; it lives in irresistible power for him *now*. "When the commandment came sin revived," and with that the sentence of death, for self-effort is proved to be all unavailing, "and I died."

"Sin dead" is consequently descriptive of that careless, unconverted state, in which the sinner is so absolutely identified with the old nature, as to be perfectly

unconscious of its true character and energy; from which the voice of a holy God seeks to arouse to earnestness, by warning with divine authority of impending danger.

For the third expression quoted, viz.:

“DEAD IN SINS,”

we must turn to Ephesians ii. 5—“when we were dead in sins.” This term expresses the divine estimate of those whose spiritual condition has been previously described in the words “sin dead.” For God, such are “dead in sins.” This constitutes the initial condition which the epistle to the Ephesians introduces man as being in *before God*, in contrast to the condition brought out so clearly in the early part of Romans, viz., guilty as *living in sins*. (Rom. iii. 19.) The latter tells of responsibility, failure, and justification through grace, faith, and the blood of Christ, presented on the mercy seat; the other of *lifeless state Godward*, bringing in the necessity, if any divine purposes of grace are to be accomplished, of quickening, *i.e.*, of giving life. (Eph. ii. 5.)

These three terms thus bring out very solemnly man's threefold condition. Firstly, as the slave of sin under the judgment of death. Secondly, perfectly unconscious of the irresistible energy of the nature of perfect evil by which he is dominated within. Thirdly, absolutely dead as to any germ of life for God, in His divine estimate; but once and above all, sovereign grace and power supreme, under which the judgment of death is borne by another, the active living energy of sin is brought to the consciousness of the one in whom “sin (was) dead;” and those who were dead in sins were quickened together with Christ by divine power.

The next expression,

“DEAD TO SINS,”

which may be found in 1 Peter ii. 24, together with the two following, directs attention, not—as the former ones—to *the natural man in estrangement from God* but, to the believer in his practical relation to God of holiness. It is of moment to note the force of the word “dead” here, which is not at all that of the word already considered.* In the former sense it will be readily admitted that the word could not be applied to sins which, in themselves, have no existence (as sin in the nature has), apart from actual commission: hence “dead,” as we have considered it, to what has been actually committed would remain without any intelligent meaning. The actual meaning of the word translated “dead” in this passage is rather “done with,” in the sense of non-committal, or refusing: the appropriate relation of the believer to *sins*.

The suffering of the Lord on account of sins is the subject from verses 21 to 24, on which the apostle founds a powerful and touching appeal to the believer no longer to continue in those things which entailed unfathomable depths of suffering and sorrow upon the blessed Lord, but rather to have done with them.

This constitutes the practical answer in holiness of the believer to the grace of the Lord Jesus, who became his Substitute, bearing his “sins in His own body on the tree.” The grace and sufferings of Christ become the powerful motives for forsaking sins.

Our next term,

“DEAD TO SIN,”

* Nor, indeed, is it the same word in the original as that used in the other five terms.

which occurs in Romans vi. 2 and 11, though identical, save as to one letter, with the last, embraces a totally different thought, and one of extreme importance rightly to apprehend; "sin" being in this connection *the evil nature*, not the acts. This will be apparent from the context, if it be carefully examined. In verse 6 we read, "That henceforth we should not *serve sin*"; in verse 12, "Let not sin therefore *reign*"; in verse 14, "For sin shall not *have dominion* over you." These expressions clearly indicate the contrast between sins that are committed, and sin that seeks to dominate. It is in connection with this latter that the expression "dead to sin" occurs.

Two things are of immense importance to note here. Firstly, that "dead indeed unto sin" in the 11th verse is an *assumed relation* or attitude *towards* sin, not a substantive fact, of which sin is the subject, accomplished in the believer at any time. Secondly, that this verse is linked, as a direct parallel, with the verse immediately preceding. The first point will become clear by *emphasizing the words* "*reckon ye . . . yourselves to be*"; the second by *emphasizing the words* "Likewise . . . also."

It is not too much to say that *these are cardinal points of extreme importance*.

Tracing the apostle's argument down to the 10th verse, it will be apparent that the subject treated of is Christ, not dying, or bearing judgment, *but in actual death*, and the believer's identification, by faith and the power of the Spirit with Him, as dead; the substantive fact being that Christ has died.

One little preposition, inserted not without divine purpose, determines this; viz., "with," which occurs

three times—verse 4, “Buried with Him by baptism into” (*i.e.* unto) “death”; verse 6, “Our old man is crucified with Him”; and again, verse 8, “If we have died with Christ” (New Translation). It thus becomes distinctly characteristic of the apostle’s explanatory reply to the question raised in the second verse, “How shall we, that have died to sin, live any longer therein?” which involves the further question, “How have we died?” Bearing, then, these two points in mind; viz., the death of Christ, and our identification with Him before God in His death, appropriated by the believer by faith, the climax of Paul’s divine reasoning is reached in verse 10: “In that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.”

A Christ *in death*, with whom before God the believer is identified, is a Christ dead *to sin*, as having, in that death, ended for ever all connection and association with it. He not only died FOR our sins, as in the early part of Romans, but He died TO sin, as one who loses his life FOR another also dies TO all that with which he stood connected in life. Hence, as divinely parallel, the believer, being identified with Christ’s death, his relation to sin within is set forth in the words, “*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.*” Christ’s attitude in death to sin becomes, by virtue of the believer’s identification with Him in death, his attitude morally, but in the form of an assumed relation; *i.e.*, *reckoning* himself dead, the only divine, legitimate sequence to *having died* with Christ.* This,

* And essentially needs the Spirit’s power to enable him to do so effectually.

practically carried out, involves *not responding to*, or obeying, the nature which seeks to dominate. This is the substance of the apostle's further communication, "Let not sin therefore *reign* in your mortal body, that ye should *obey it* in the lusts thereof." (v. 12.) "Neither *yield ye your members* as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead" (v. 13); *i.e.*, after the pattern of one raised up from death, and now energized only by what is of God, and not of sin within.

It is well to point out that there is a danger to which a general interpretation of this passage, instead of the simple application of its divine terms, will inevitably lead, and into which many earnest souls, actuated by the best and truest desires, have fallen; viz., that of engrossing occupation with the words "dead indeed unto sin" apart from the divinely-qualifying words, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be." This error tends directly to the conclusion that a substantive, inward condition of death, or deadness, is attainable—a condition necessarily connected with *the evil nature*; and the doctrine built upon this issues in that of holiness *through the death of sin* within, by the attainment of which the question of the domination of sin, and how to meet it, is to be permanently solved—a condition in which sin is dead.

But we have already seen, in considering our second term, that "sin dead" is an unconverted state, as estimated by God in His word; hence, *it could not be* His desired aim for His own. If scripture is allowed its own simple force, it will be learned, with divine relief to the exercised soul, that liberty is found in

reckoning oneself, as to any practical obedience, *dead* to that which will not, and does not, die,* the evil nature remaining *in itself* unaffected and unaltered, as may be experienced by yielding obedience to it *at any moment.*

M. C. G.

(*To be continued.*)

“ARISE, LET US GO HENCE.”

“If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father.”—JOHN xiv. 28. S.M.

No longer here art Thou,
 Lord Jesus, nor alone.
 Thy work well done—Thou restest now,
 Crowned, on Thy Father's throne.
 Exalted there, enthroned,
 Thy toil and sufferings o'er,
 At God's right hand Thou, Lord, art owned,
 Most blessèd evermore.
 “Friend” in our sorest need,
 For us Thou cam'st to die—
 The Just for the unjust indeed—
 To God to make us nigh.
 To Calvary Thou wert led,
 The Victim on the tree ;
 Thou, Lord, hast suffered in our stead—
 God's wrath was borne by Thee.
 God raised Thee from the tomb,
 He opened heaven for Thee ;
 Earth for Thy presence had no room,
 Thou high o'er all must be.

* “The carnal mind is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” (Romans viii. 7.)

Thee, precious Lord, we love,
 With Thee we now rejoice ;
 Thou 'rt to Thy Father gone, above,
 He always hears Thy voice.

Saints, angels, seraphim,
 Together praise Thy name.
 Ascribing glory unto Him
 Who is, and was, "The Same."

Praise unto Thee we bring,
 We worship and adore.
 Thy praise, O Christ of God, we sing
 Now and for evermore.

Glad will that moment be
 When Thou wilt take us home.
 Thy blood-bought bride, from earth set free,
 Shall share Thy wondrous throne.

Soon shall we see Thy face,
 Be with Thee where Thou art.
 Oh, God! the glory of Thy grace
 Eternally our part!

M. S. S. (revised).

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

PSALM xl. 12.

FAR as this Psalm goes, we cannot think that it includes atonement. The Lord is seen in this verse identifying Himself with His people's sins, and so fully that He can say, "*Mine* iniquities have taken hold upon Me"; He has thus the sins of His people on Him, as it were; but this is the furthest point,

we judge, that the Psalm reaches. It does not go forward to expiation. The reason for this conclusion is found in verse 14, where He prays for the confusion of His enemies. In Psalm xxii., where atonement is so strikingly presented, there is no imprecation of judgment upon His adversaries; but, on resurrection, grace flows out in ever-widening circles until the ends of the world are embraced, and they "remember and turn unto the Lord." In Psalm lxix., on the other hand, where the sufferings the Lord passes through are exclusively from the hands of men (and, therefore, not atoning), there is no indication of grace, but rather unsparing judgment for His enemies. These familiar distinctions need to be borne in mind in reading the Psalms, as they are absolutely necessary for a right estimate of the death of Christ. It is not only in the Old Testament that the death of Christ is presented under different aspects. In the New, likewise, there may be seen that devotedness in His life to the will and glory of God, reaching up to His death, which is especially the teaching of the meat-offering; His devotedness to the glory of God at all cost in death itself, which is foreshadowed by the burnt-offering; or, again, His suffering as the sin-offering. Moreover, He is also described as dying as a martyr—a martyr because of His perfect fidelity to God. It is a wonderful subject for study and meditation.

II.

John xiv. 1, 27.

Attention to the connection of the two exhortations will show their force and application. At the close of

chap. xiii. we find that, after the Lord had spoken of His being glorified as Son of Man in virtue of His glorifying God on the cross, He revealed to His disciples that He was about to depart from them. It was in view of their being thus left in the world that He sought to bind their hearts together in the imperishable bonds of divine love, and to teach them that the exhibition of mutual love would be their most efficacious testimony. (*vv.* 34, 35.) Lastly, He set aside all that man is in himself by declaring the impending denial of Himself by Peter. Truly everything was lost here for the disciples, and they might well be depressed and sorrowful at the prospect. The Lord knew their state of soul, and the first verse of chap. xiv. is addressed to it. Their heart *was* troubled, but He supplied the antidote in presenting Himself as the object of faith in the Father's house after He should have departed. Nothing was left for them here, and this enabled Him to disclose to them the Father's house, and Himself as preparing a place for them, and waiting to return to fetch them, and to have them there with Himself for ever. Having demonstrated the character of the world by His presence in it, He opens out to their view the new world, the Father's house, in which He Himself would be the centre of all the glory, as the place to which they henceforward belonged. In verse 27 He announces that He leaves peace with them, peace in their relationships with God, which would be established in virtue of His death and resurrection. (See John xx. 19.) Still further, He adds, "My peace I give unto you," opening out the possibility of their entering upon the possession of that perfect peace which He Himself ever enjoyed,

while here, in His unclouded communion with the Father. It is this which forms the basis of the exhortation—"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." In the enjoyment of this peace (compare Colossians iii. 15, reading, "the peace of Christ") there would be no room for inward anxiety or apprehension, for heart sorrows, for fear of outward dangers or hostility. Provision is thus made both for the inner and the outer life, but all in connection with Himself, and with what He gives.

III.

REVELATION xiv. 4, 5.

It is really the moral characteristics of the 144,000 that are given in these verses. It should be carefully observed that this is an entirely different company from the 144,000 in chapter vii. There it is the sealed remnant from all the tribes; here it is those that have been brought through the unparalleled sorrows of the period of Antichrist's sway in Jerusalem, immediately before the appearing of Christ. They belong, therefore, only to the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, inasmuch as it was only these (although there might have been individuals from other tribes) that were brought back from the captivity in Babylon. In both cases the number is symbolical rather than actual—twelve times twelve—and, as the reader may recollect, twelve is the number of perfection in administrative government. This remnant have, as it should be read, "His (that is, the Lamb's) name and His Father's name written on their foreheads." This was their distinctive honour, marking them out as belonging

to the Lamb and His Father, inasmuch as by their open confession of God and the Lamb they had been faithful witnesses, and had suffered rejection in the same way, if not in the same degree, as Christ Himself had suffered it from His confession of the name of His Father. They receive the special recompense of being associated with the Lamb on mount Sion, the centre and seat of His government after He has established His kingdom, and they "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." (v. 4). They have, moreover, a certain connection with heaven; for none but themselves could learn the song, "as it were a new song," which was sung "before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders." Then follow their moral features. They had preserved themselves from the unholy and defiling contaminations with which they had been surrounded: they were virgins, that is, they were virgin in character, chaste and undefiled through their fidelity to God and the Lamb. In their mouth, too, was found no guile—no deceit; they were true in word and holy in walk; "for they are without fault," the same word as is translated "unblamable" in Col. i. 22," "without blemish" in Ephes. v. 27, "without spot" in Hebrews ix. 14, etc. It is possible, therefore, that this "redeemed" company may be in a resurrection condition through being "changed" by the resurrection power of the Lamb. They are termed the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb, because they will be, in fact, the first to be brought into blessing in connection with the kingdom. But if the firstfruits, they are "bought" with the precious blood of Christ.

A ROYAL FUGITIVE'S RESOURCE.

PSALM iii.

As the superscription of the Psalm, declares, it was composed by David when he fled from his son Absalom. This was a solemn moment in the king's history. Nathan had warned him from the Lord, after his grievous sin in the matter of Uriah the Hittite, that the sword should never depart from his house. For while God could, and did, pardon His servant, on his confession of his guilt, He did not interpose (as He seldom does) to shelter him from the governmental consequences of his iniquity on earth. Grace can righteously restore a fallen saint, but God's government is immutable in its laws and principles. It must be remembered also that David's transgression had set God's law at defiance, and thus had relaxed, by his own example, the moral obligations of the people to their God. David was God's anointed, and God's representative in government; and yet he had trampled under foot one of God's fundamental laws. The anointed king had thus become the guiltiest sinner in his kingdom.

Still, as we have seen, God pardoned him: "the Lord also," said Nathan, "hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." But before these gracious words were uttered he had also said, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house," and he proceeded to tell him that his "neighbour" should

do, before all Israel and before the sun, what he had done secretly. The next chapter (2 Sam. xiii.) begins the narrative of the fulfilment of this judgment. Ammon, David's firstborn son, sinned, and Absalom, having, in revenge, and with subtilty, killed Ammon, fled to Talmai the king of Geshur. And how did David regard the crime of his son? He mourned for his son every day . . . and he longed to go forth unto Absalom; for he was comforted concerning Ammon, seeing he was dead! Alas! the kings' moral susceptibilities had been weakened by his own iniquity, and he failed, through natural affection, or in the requisite courage, to vindicate Jehovah's righteous law.

We need not recall the familiar facts of the history. Through Joab's intrigue, Absalom was brought back, and finally was admitted to see the king's face. Untouched by his father's grace, he used his recall as an opportunity to foment rebellion; and so successfully, for he had stolen the hearts of the men of Israel, that David, with his servants and those that still clung to their king, sought safety in flight. It is, perhaps, the most pathetic passage in all the king's eventful life: "And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot; and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up." What a spectacle! And yet, morally considered, David was now in the place of exaltation. He had humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, and hence, whatever painful experiences he might yet have to encounter, he was sure to be

exalted in due time. Blessed is it for all of us when we are in the lowest abasement before God, if we are in the confidence of His grace.

If we now recur to the Psalm, we shall learn that it was so with David at this very moment. In the first three verses the circumstances and the position are stated; and the Psalmist, like Hezekiah of a later age, spreads out his case before the Lord. This fact sheds the clearest light upon his condition of soul. Brought into his present straits through his own sin and folly, he can yet turn in fullest confidence to Him whose hand was so heavy upon him in chastisement. He "hears" the rod, and who has appointed it. "Lord," he says, "how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God." This reproachful taunt was the bitterest ingredient in his bitter cup. He had known throughout his life what it was to face enemies, and to be hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, but if the wicked insinuation that he was now abandoned of God were true, he was never in such an evil case. And, to human sight, his enemies were in the right; for every sign of God's intervention and favour was absent. But faith triumphed, though David were in the deepest pit of adversity, and he appealed from men to God, crying, "But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head."

As Elisha said to the young man, They that be with us are more than they that be with them, so was it

with David, spite of appearances. Fleeing from Absalom, the Lord was yet with David, and not with Absalom, and this was the foundation of David's assurance, as the next three verses show. From verse 4 we learn that the king had been in the presence of God about the whole matter: he had cried to the Lord with his voice. As in another Psalm, he had been searched and tried, and thus, through exercise and self-judgment, obtaining the "true heart," he could, in the full assurance of faith, cast his burden on the Lord. And, as he tells us, the Lord heard him out of His holy hill. Not that deliverance was immediately vouchsafed; it was not, as we know; but David had the sense in his soul that the Lord had heard his cry, and he could therefore quietly wait and anticipate His succour in His own time and way. And as the apostle John writes, "And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." It is indeed enough for the soul, whatever the outward circumstances, to be in the confidence that God has inclined His ear and heard its cry.

This is strikingly exemplified in David's case. He was so tranquilized by the assurance that God had heard him, that he laid himself down and slept. His circumstances were in no way changed, only now he had the Lord between him and his circumstances, and that changed everything. Peace therefore reigned in his soul, and he could lay himself down and sleep, for, in truth, the everlasting arms were underneath him. He thus adds, "I awaked; for the Lord sustained me." Blessed repose which is induced by the sense of the

Lord's protection and favour! And there is no sleep so refreshing as that which is followed by the assurance, on awaking, that the Lord has sustained. But there is yet more: "I will not be afraid," he continues, "of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about." If God be for us, who can be against us? Courage, divine courage, now possessed the king's heart; for it was no longer a question of appearances or numbers. He had no more supporters than when he had escaped out of Jerusalem; and he had no human probability of overcoming the forces arrayed against him; but Jehovah had manifested Himself in blessing to his soul, and now he could quietly hope and wait for His salvation.

His own personal relationships with the Lord re-established, he could cast himself and his cause upon God. This is his resource, and he thus cries, "Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for Thou hast smitten all *mine enemies upon the cheek bone; Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.*" Faith makes sure, and gives substance to, the things hoped for; and hence David saw all his enemies smitten and vanquished. He was already in the enjoyment of victory, because he knew that God had undertaken his cause. It is an immense thing for the soul when, in times of greatest extremity, it can lean with unshaken trust on the Lord and leave everything in His hands. We are so apt to think that something depends upon our own energy and activity, and in this way we shut out the Lord. Bring Him in, and this is what faith does, and then we can calmly await His interposition on our behalf. Well might

it then be said, as at the close of the previous Psalm, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

The end is now reached ; and the lesson of the whole Psalm is proclaimed. It falls into two parts : "Salvation [belongeth] unto the Lord : Thy blessing is upon Thy people." Let it first be remarked that a more accurate rendering is, "Salvation is from, or of, the Lord." This is the very lesson Jonah learned when in the whale's belly ; and the reader will remember, that the moment the words passed from his lips, the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. To instruct them in this precious truth is the object of all God's dealings with His people. Through all their sin and failure, as with David, Jonah, and Peter, God always has this end in view. *The lesson must be learned* ; but oh ! what sorrowful experiences many of the saints of God have to pass through in order to acquire it. They have to be sifted, broken down, and chastised, that they may discover that *there is no help for them* but in God. Then hopeless and helpless as to themselves, if they do but turn upward, as in Romans vii., and cry, Who shall deliver ? The answer will at once be vouchsafed, Salvation is of the Lord. Rest not, dear reader, until you have learned this blessed truth ; for it is the secret of a calm, victorious, and holy life. Welcome therefore all experiences, however bitter and painful, which will help you onward to this desired goal.

Together with this, for the two things are bound up together, you will find out that God's blessing is upon His people. Grace cannot be apprehended until you

know experimentally that salvation is of the Lord. Before this, legality, in one form or another, will mix largely with your thoughts of grace; but now you will trace everything down from the heart of God, as unfolded and displayed in Christ, and you will perceive that He blesses His people according to His own thoughts, and according to His estimate of Christ. The consequence will be liberty—liberty of soul in the presence of God, and leisure therefore for occupation with the One through whom all this blessing has been secured and bestowed. The Lord grant that the reader of these lines may be led into the apprehension and power of this precious truth!

CHRIST IN GETHSEMANE.

MATTHEW xxvi. 36-46.

HERE we are drawing to the last scenes of the blessed Lord's life. He is here the tested, but perfect Victim, while, alas! the disciples again show what man is; but all only brings out the Lord's grace. It is not, as in John, a divine Person above all, offering up Himself, nor the man overcoming in dependence all that pressed upon Him. Obedience and grace must be perfect in the true and spotless Victim. Death and the cup were there; and He must be put fully to the proof in His obedience. But He passes through it all with His Father, and yet can think of others who can think but little of Him; for, as to them, it is the testing of the disciples more than what is special to Christ that is portrayed. He looked for their watching, and they failed Him. But we have Jesus perfect in patient

obedience, Jesus perfect in referring all to His Father, though feeling, and when feeling, all He had to go through.

It is the perfectness of His mind when His being a victim is in view that is here specially brought before us. He takes all His disciples with Him to Gethsemane; and then, telling them to tarry there, while He went on farther and prayed, He takes Peter and James and John, who had also been with Him on the Mount [of Transfiguration, and afterwards had the place of pillars farther on; and there all that was before the blessed One came upon His spirit. He began to be sorrowful and very heavy; He felt as man what He had to undergo, not mere pain or suffering; the power of death weighed upon His spirit—weighed upon it as man, yet with a weight no man could fathom. Yet with what calm simplicity He tells it out! We ought to know it, though it may be beyond our knowledge. “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” His need was there, and told out to hearts that ought to have felt it and watched earnestly, occupied with Him. He looked for this, for some one to have compassion. “Tarry ye here and watch with me.” Blessed Saviour! what ought a heart to have felt to whom He said it? Oh, how should it have watched! but, alas! what are we?

He went on to be alone there with His Father about that which with Him only He could enter into, and which must be altogether with Him. He was perfect in referring it to His Father, and referring it alone. There the solemn question must have its solution. There alone it could, and there alone His perfectness could bring it. He fell on His face and prayed, saying,

"Oh, my Father," in supplicating earnestness, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." He should feel it fully and He did; submission would not have been perfect else, but then His obedience and submission were perfect: "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." In the perfect sense of the cup to be drunk, and the holy desire to avoid it, the piety of soul which desired it (for it was all the repulsion of sin from God, and what our wretched souls had fallen into—what man was as departed from God, which He must take upon His soul, if, indeed, He had to drink it—if He undertook our cause—and it was a holy desire to shrink from such a judgment and being made sin, even as bearing it before God), yet with perfect submission and obedience to His Father, whatever His will was. And to His Father He brings it, there where it ought to be brought, alike perfect in desiring not to drink it, and obediently submitting to drink it if it was His Father's will. And this was His second utterance, "If this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Thy will be done." The no reply now to His first demand leaves His soul in the unclouded perfectness of the second and third, for He was with the Father in full and solemn sense of what it was, but with Him He is occupied with it. How could it be otherwise? It ought to have been so. The disciples sleep, leaving Him alone with God. Where else could He have now been with such a work, such a cup, before Him? Now it is over, one can linger round this scene to learn His perfectness and love—the love we shall enjoy in brighter days when we shall see Him as He is; when He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Yes, it was well; it was only right that He should

be alone with His Father then. It could have been nowhere else, and He went naturally there, if I may so speak, for all His thoughts were perfect.

But where was *he* (let us think of ourselves) who was to go to prison and to death? With what touching grace He calls up to view the strange inconsistency: "Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" Where was the strength that was going through everything just now? Yet with what grace He warns, with what grace He excuses: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." How must one have hated oneself for such a want of earnestness and love to Him! Alas! now we have to do with it. But here so perfectly is He with His Father for the depth of what was before Him. So perfectly had He all that with Him only, that the free unhindered grace could in all liberty be as perfect towards His poor feeble, but failing disciples; no weight on His spirit with them; that was borne with His Father. How perfect are all His ways! What could they be else! But He can warn them, and warn them as to what was just going on. To Him it was now the path of obedience; but what was not, that was temptation. So indeed with everything; all we meet with is occasion of temptation or obedience, only there brought out where all was brought to a crisis with man. But this intercourse with the disciples at this moment is a witness of a depth and calmness in His path which is divine perfection, though in man, and in human ways and grace, which calls for adoring recognition. We struggle or faint, or hide our sorrow in pride. I have known what it is not to know relief till I said, "Oh, my God,

my soul is cast down within me." But He has all with God, and can state it as to the fact in perfect simplicity to man. We cannot tell our grief, we need support; and where are we to trust it if it be heavy? He had His resource so elsewhere—all His heart out, looking to His Father—that He could confide where really there was nothing to lean on, only truth of heart—the spirit was willing.

Now this is greatness, only in perfection, yet in lowliness, not in self-sufficiency, in conscious weakness of humanity, but all told in perfect faith and dependence to God His Father, yet never losing His human place, yea, the very expression of it. It is here it comes out so perfectly; never a thought that was not human, indeed, but never one that was not suited to such a place in the presence of God, that is, to death and drinking the cup, yet, though a man's feelings there in view of it, not one but what was according to the perfectness of One in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. It would not do that He should not have been fully in conscious manhood there, for He was there for us; nor that, in that place, a thought or a feeling that was not divine in the fitness for it should have been there, and so it was. He was not drinking the cup, but He had to feel it as to all that it was, and feel rightly about it; had He not been God, as well as man, that could not have been. Surely He could not have drunk it else, but He could not have thought of it adequately, if a divine source and measure of thought had not been the spring of it, in man's necessity before God.

Blessed Lord, I do not pretend to fathom what Thou **wast**: **who could?** But we may learn from it, and

adore in our hearts; we may look on and learn Who was there, and with thankfulness of heart. No man knows the Son but the Father, but oh, what traits of paramount blessedness flow forth from this Son being a man! And we shall see that very man as He is (and who shall tell the joy of that?) yet He is as perfect in gracious gentleness to man. What it must have been to them, when they had the Holy Ghost to look back to, and when they knew themselves in their flight from, that which He was going to meet! Humbling surely, but a great thing for the heart to have been thus humbled, for, after all, we must learn what we are where Christ was, save, of course, atonement, and even there, in respect of guilt, to know the perfectness that is in Him. It is not by our minds, but in looking at perfectness in the same place in our weakness. Who will know strength like the weak one that leans on it? Still we know it as taught of God, as He in the perfectness of His person.

In verse 45, in tender words, which yet shewed them their service was over, and how He had been alone, He says, "Sleep on now (watching time is finished, the power of evil in act is here) and take your rest: behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." But they must be fully proved; He does not send them away. They must be with Him to the end, and learn the tale, however gently they may. If there was over confidence in Peter, yet, even so, it fitted him to strengthen his brethren when restored by a deeper knowledge of what human strength came to in the things of God. But we must learn ourselves, where He was, save where He was wholly for us, instead of us, making

propitiation for our sins. Who else could have been? He was practically alone in Gethsemane, but He looked for their watching with Him, though, indeed, He had only to feel how man failed Him even in that. If He looked for that watching, the sense of someone with Him, it was to feel that there was none!

J. N. D.

A SCRIPTURE STUDY.

(Continued from page 163.)

THIS brings us to the last of this series of terms; viz.,

“DEAD BECAUSE OF SIN,”

as found in Romans viii. 10, “But if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin.”

Further light is furnished here as to what it is that is to be held as dead to sin, the complete sentence indicating *the body* as that which is so to be accounted. But this carries us back to Romans vi. 12, in which the “mortal body” is viewed as being no longer the servant of sin—“Let not sin therefore reign in your *mortal body*.” Sin is here assumed to be that which lives, not dies, since it endeavours to dominate—“reign.” Hence the “mortal body” necessarily becomes that which is to be *accounted* dead, in accordance with verse 11. In the full Christian status of liberty, the apostle consequently speaks definitely—“The body is dead because of sin.”

As another has said, commenting on Romans vi. 10, 11, “Christ being in us our life, we reckon even now our body to be dead.”*

* *Synopsis on Romans*. 3rd edition, revised. J. N. D.; p. 165.

Deliverance having been already experimentally treated of in chapter vii. as to soul exercises in self-knowledge, which, in a more or less modified form, invariably precede the practical appropriation of chapter vi., the 8th chapter—deliverance being known—opens with viewing the believer as “*in Christ*,” and proceeds further to bring out, that full Christian position in liberty is characterized by Christ being *in the believer* by His Spirit. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (not of Him); *i.e.*, the full position of the Christian is not his, though he may be on the way. “But if Christ be *in you* the body is dead because of sin.” This clearly involves *the indwelling of the Holy Spirit*, with consequent title to the supreme control of the body, in contrast to the domination under which it lay as controlled by the nature—sin. In perfect harmony with Romans vi. we learn here that the body, which is to be accounted dead to sin, is intended, in full liberty, to be energised by the Spirit of God. “*The Spirit is life* because of righteousness.” It is not maintained that this can be carried out in permanent perfection, but that, in *the measure in which divine principles are acted on*, the believer is practically, as *temptation arises*, freed from the actual rule of sin, and can thus be, in liberty, subject to the Spirit instead; the result being that the blessed fruit of the Spirit is yielded. “Against such there is no law.”

This is divine fulness of liberty, which, in all its details, is treated of in chapter viii.*

* With reference to Romans vi. 6, “That the body of sin might be destroyed,” it may be well to say that the “body of sin” is the totality of sin in its dominating energy; but “our old man is

The characteristics, then, of these three last terms are: First, having done with sin; secondly, accounting oneself dead to sin; thirdly, the body—that which is to be held for dead to sin, and energized by the Holy Spirit, for fruit in righteousness. These six expressions consequently group themselves into two classes; viz, the first three descriptive of man under the power of darkness; the second three descriptive of man under the influence of light—conditions described in Ephesians v. 8, in the words, “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.”

Well for us if we profit by the apostolic exhortation that follows, “*Walk as children of light.*”

crucified with Him” (Christ) “that the body of sin” (that dominating energy) “might be *annulled*”—destroyed being wholly an incorrect translation—“that we should not *serve sin.*” The clause consequently confirms the apostle’s argument by announcing the full judgment of “our old man,” upon which is based the reckoning of ourselves dead. (See also Romans viii. 3.)

M. C. G.

It is worthy of note, that the testimony of the disciples in the world was to be *love*—love one to another. Having told them that He was about to be glorified, Jesus gave them a new commandment, “That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” Each one was to become to the other, and to all, the expression of Christ’s own heart; and in this way their hearts, knit to Christ, would be bound together in the living unity of divine affections. And the mutual display of this love would be the unmistakable sign for all men that they were the disciples of Christ.

THE SONGS OF DEGREES.

PSALM cxxi.

IN the preceding Psalm, distress and conflict mark the condition of God's people; whereas here, while the pressure is still upon them, we are permitted to see what the Lord is on their behalf in their special circumstances. The greater the sense of need, the greater the discovery of what God is for us; and hence it is that, like these saints of a future day, we are often put to the test, in order that, learning our own helplessness, we may realize that our help and succour are to be found alone in God. This will explain the connection between these two Psalms. In the last verse of the cxx., the Psalmist cries, "I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war." What, then, is his resource? The answer is found in the first two verses of the cxxi. Psalm:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

"My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." (*vv.* 1, 2.)

The beauty of the connection will be more fully seen if a slight rectification is made in the rendering of the first verse. Many read as follows: "I will lift up my eyes to the hills: from whence shall my help come?" And then the second verse is taken as the answer to this question.* Adopting this change,

* See the *Revised Version* of the Old Testament, also J. N. D.'s *French Bible*, in which he gives the above as an alternative rendering.

it will be perceived that faith is in activity; for no sooner does the soul cry in its sorrow, "From whence shall my help come?" than the answer springs forth, "My help cometh from the Lord," etc. This part illustrates a principle found everywhere in the Scriptures. If God works for the succour and deliverance of His people, He acts in connection with, and in response to, their faith. For example, when Peter writes of the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for believers, he adds, "Who are kept by the power of God, *through faith*, unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter i. 4, 5.) Truly, faith itself is produced and sustained in the soul by divine power, but none the less is it the living link between the soul and God, and that which secures His intervention, brings Him in for our aid and deliverance. (See Mark ix. 23; Hebrews, xi., etc.)

It is to be remarked, as pointed out in the last paper, that God is here known as Jehovah, the covenant name of God as in relationship with Israel; and also that the words—"Which made heaven and earth"—are appended; for this was according to the revelation God made of Himself to His earthly people. So Jonah confessed to the mariners, "I am an Hebrew: and I fear the Lord (Jehovah), the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land." (Chap. i. 9.) Of this creation, Jehovah revealed Himself to His ancient people as the Creator, although He discovered much more than this to Moses (Exodus xxxiv. 5-7), when He announced the sovereignty of His grace and mercy as the foundation on which He could spare His guilty people after the sin of the golden calf. The Christian

is in the light as God is in the light, for God is now fully revealed in and through the Lord Jesus Christ; and the believer is, moreover, in accordance with God's counsels, brought, through association with Christ, into His own place and relationship. We know God, therefore, in a far more intimate manner, inasmuch as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is our God and Father. (John xx. 17; Ephesians i. 3-5.) This difference must ever be borne in mind when reading the Old Testament Scriptures.

Passing now to *v. 3*, we have the divine response, through the Spirit, to the faith expressed in the second verse. Turning in the confidence of faith to Jehovah, who made heaven and earth, the soul is assured of the support and protection of its Omnipotent Keeper:

"He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber." (*v. 3*.)

Two things are brought before us in this assurance, first, that whatever the dangers, or the slippery character of the path, the Lord will not suffer the foot of one trusting in Him to be moved, or, perhaps, to slide; and, secondly, that there is never a moment when the eyes of the Lord are not upon His people, when He does not maintain unceasing and constant vigilance on their behalf. The night may be never so dark round about us, but for Him the night shineth as the day, and even as Jesus saw from the mountain-top His disciples toiling in the rowing, so God withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous, but ever beholdeth them in all their circumstances of trial and sorrow. And, let it be observed, that He who thus watches over His saints, is their Keeper, the One who guards, keeps safe, preserves—for such is the force of the word here used. What

encouragement is thus ministered to God's tried and suffering people! And what an invitation to unwavering repose in Himself in the midst of surrounding trials and agitations!

The next verse seems to proceed from another speaker, as *v. 5* resumes the address to the individual soul, though he is undoubtedly the representative of the people. Still, *v. 4* appears as an emphatic endorsement of the assurance of *v. 3*, and, at the same time, giving it a wider application. In the structure of the Psalm, it may be a chorus breaking forth at this point, all the people uniting in the song—

“Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” (*v. 4*)

It is not, therefore, merely that Jehovah will preserve His people in their special difficulties; but He is introduced as Israel's Keeper. It is a characteristic relationship; and, consequently, additional force is given to Jehovah's not slumbering, by the words “nor sleep”; that is, He is ever wakeful; He never at any moment forgets His own; and there is, therefore, no intermission in His watchful care and keeping. Nor should the shadowing forth of the unity of God's people be overlooked. He is not only the keeper of the believer, but He is also the keeper of *Israel*. There are many touching illustrations of this unity in the Old Testament, showing how even the people themselves rose sometimes to the level of God's thoughts, and were thus enabled to embrace their oneness as the chosen nation. Much more should this be the case with us, who have been taught the blessed truth of union with Christ, and, consequently with all the members of His body. Not that the

individual aspects of blessing are to be forgotten, but rather that we should be in communion with the mind of Christ as to all His own, who together, corporately, form His body, and will be His bride. It is when we enter into this, in the power of the Holy Ghost, that the affections of Christ for His people are reproduced in us, if but feebly, and we behold them with His own vision, as robed in His own beauty and excellencies.

The chorus having been sung, the address to the representative individual is resumed:

“The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.

“The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.” (*vv.* 5, 6.)

The first sentence, the reiteration of the truth at the close of verse 3, is the foundation on which are built up the following pledges of security. “The Lord is thy keeper” means nothing less than that He is an absolute and perfect keeper, and the subsequent details are but the consequences of this, or the application of the general truth. In itself, however, it is an immense thing to know that the Lord is our keeper. In dangers, difficulties, and trials, it would calm our fears immediately, as well as dispel our anxieties, if this assurance were held in power. That it is true, whatever our state of soul, is undeniable, but it must be remembered that faith alone can avail itself of the blessedness of being kept by God, or can turn to Him for succour at the moment of need and pressure.

After the statement that “the Lord is thy keeper,” it is said “the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.” “Shade” may be understood, from what follows, as protection, even as we read in Isaiah, “Thou hast been

. . . a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." The force of "at thy right hand" may, perhaps, be gathered from another Psalm, where we read, "Because He (Jehovah) is at my right hand I shall not be moved." (Psalm xvi. 8.) The expression would thus seem to signify that the Lord's protection is ever available, always, to use a common phrase, "at hand" for His people. This protection is manifestly spoken of in reference to what follows:

"The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." (v. 6.)

The rays, both of the one and of the other, would be necessarily obstructed by "the shadow of the Almighty," wherewith He surrounds His people, and under which they for ever safely abide. The "sun" and the "moon" are but emblems of the evil influences of the day and the night, of which these luminaries are the respective rulers. Both the scorching rays of the glaring day and the noxious evils of the night will be powerless to affect those who repose under Jehovah's overshadowing care. How fearless, therefore, God's people may be, and would be, if they did but realise how perfectly they are guarded on every hand! These promises, it will be remembered, are for the earthly people in their primary application, but they are also available, in even a higher sense, for the christian. Thus, the Apostle could say, "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom." (2 Timothy iv. 18.)

The last two verses do but amplify the assurance contained in verse 6.

“The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul.

“The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”
(*vv.* 7, 8.)

The promise, “The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil,” must not, we apprehend, be taken as applicable independently of the state of soul. As before remarked, the living link between the soul and God is faith, and God works through it to bless and protect the believer. Faith can thus take up, and repose upon, this word of consolation in the darkest days, when Satan’s power is demonstrated on all sides. The believer, moreover, will remember that, when the Lord presented His own before the Father, He said, “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” The Apostle Paul also assures the Thessalonian saints that “the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.” (2 Thess. iii. 3.) All these scriptures show us God’s care over His people, and how abhorrent the thought of evil is to Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. How solicitous we should be, therefore, to answer to His mind in this respect, and the more in that both His love and His power are engaged to keep us undefiled as we walk in His ways.

The next clause is, “He shall preserve thy soul.” The word rendered “soul” is, as in Greek also, a little ambiguous. It is sometimes translated “life,” and, inasmuch as preservation for blessings in Messiah’s kingdom is a characteristic Jewish promise, it is possible that this is its significance in this place.

Lastly, Jehovah's overshadowing care includes the going out, and the coming in, of His people "from this time forth, and even for evermore," on through the thousand years, to the close of the millennial kingdom. Everything is thought of, and we are thus permitted to have a glimpse into the heart of God for His people, as expressed in the daily and unwearying watchfulness which He exercises over them for their preservation and blessing. It is well to ponder it, and to observe that the foundation of all our security lies in what God is for His people. We need to remember this at all times, for, in the wretched legality of our hearts, if we are not established in grace, we are tempted to think that something depends on ourselves. No! we are wholly cast upon God, upon what He is as revealed in Christ. "But must we not watch and pray, and the like?" Even for the power to watch and pray we are dependent on the Lord, and it is as we realize this, that we repose quietly and peacefully upon Him, that faith is called forth into constant activity; and, consequently, understanding what God is for us, we can exclaim, with the Apostle, "If God be for us, who can be against us? . . . I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." May our eyes be ever kept upon Him from whom alone cometh our help!

"IN Ephesians Christ as man is raised by God; in John it is the divine and quickening power in Himself."

THE HOLIEST.

“Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. . . . Let us draw near.”—HEB. x. 19-22.

AND are we, O most Holy Lord,
 In that most Holy place,
 Fruit of the anguish of thy Love,
 And God the Father's Grace.

We trace Thee from the highest height
 Of Glory to the gloom
 Of that dark hour, when Thou alone
 Didst bear our rightful doom.

Abyss of anguish, awful night,
 Thy cup did then o'erflow,
 While darkness brooded o'er the deep
 Of that unuttered woe.

'Tis past, that storm of wrath is o'er,
 Exhausted on Thy head,
 And we in Light serene, divine,
 With confidence may tread.

Nor Light alone, the scene is Love,
 The Father's Love divine,
 Mid Light and Love our Souls recall
 The night that once was Thine.

O Light and Love our hearts are bowed,
 We worship and adore,
 The God who gave—the Lamb who died,
 Worthy for Evermore.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

MARK vii. 10-12.

THE scribes and Pharisees had found fault with the disciples for eating bread with unwashed hands, complaining that they did not walk according to the tradition of the elders. (vv. 2-5.) To this the Lord gave a threefold answer: first, He charged the Pharisees with hypocrisy, inasmuch as they were satisfied with honouring God with their lips, while their hearts were far from Him; secondly, He declared that worship which was regulated by man's commandments was vain; and thirdly, He told them that they had rejected the commandments of God in order to maintain their own tradition. As an illustration of the last point He cites a special case, and it is in connection with this that the word "Corban" occurs. First, then, the Lord adduces the law of Moses, the word of God—"Honour thy father and thy mother." This command plainly made it obligatory upon the Jews to maintain their parents, if necessary. (See Proverbs iii. 9, for a similar use of the word "honour.") But they desired to escape this responsibility, and they devised a pious pretext for doing so. They taught that, if a man devoted his property to God for His service, they were released from the duty of honouring their parents; and consequently they said, "It is Corban"—that is, a

gift, or a thing devoted to sacred uses—to excuse themselves from their responsibility. They thus set aside the word of God, through their own tradition, and made the word of God of no effect. Truly, in every age, it is necessary to proclaim that to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams; and that no greater dishonour can be done to God than by the substitution of man's teachings in the place of His commandments.

II.

HEBREWS v. 8.

The question has been raised whether our blessed Lord's learning obedience by the things which He suffered, is not confined to what He endured in Gethsemane. There is no possible doubt that *v. 7* refers to His experience in the garden; and it is remarkable that the statement in *v. 8* should be found between it and His resurrection. Still, the subject which the apostle is here unfolding has to be borne in mind. He is dealing with the qualifications of Christ for the priestly office; and he points out, first, that He had been divinely designated to it; and, secondly, that He possessed the personal qualifications for its exercise. And, as we understand it, Gethsemane is cited, in connection with the latter point, as showing how fully and completely He had gone through human suffering and anguish in doing the will of God. As another has written, "His glory (although it gives Him His place in honour before God, and consequent on redemption, so that He can undertake the people's cause before God

according to His will) does not bring Him near to the miseries of men. It is His history on earth which makes us feel how truly able He is to take part in them." "In the days of His flesh," that is, here below, He went into all the anguish of death in dependence on God, making His request to Him who was able to save Him from it ("out of" it, that is, in resurrection.) For, being here in order to obey and to suffer, He did not save Himself. He submitted to everything, obeyed in everything, and depended on God for everything." But this equally applied to His whole life, as seen, for example, in His temptation by Satan in the wilderness. For He came to do the will of God; and this entailed upon Him suffering at every step; and we conclude therefore that He learned obedience by the things which He suffered throughout the whole of His life upon earth, but that Gethsemane is referred to as the climax of His suffering because it was connected with the pressure of death upon His soul.

III.

MATTHEW XXV. 14, 15; EPHESIANS IV. 8.

The question put is really whether the "talents" in Matthew are the same as the "gifts" in Ephesians. The answer, we apprehend, must be determined by the special character of the respective scriptures. In Matthew it concerns the kingdom of heaven, in Ephesians the church is in view; in Matthew, it is what is entrusted to His servants during the absence of the King; in Ephesians, while it is said, He gave gifts unto men, it is, as *v. 11* shows, the men themselves

who are the gifts, men however endowed with different aptitudes for service. There is yet another difference to be noted. In Matthew it is sovereignty in the bestowal of the talents, but it raises the question of the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of those who had received them; and this is to be dealt with on the Lord's return. In Ephesians there is also the sovereignty of grace in giving the gifts (v. 7), but fidelity in their use is not touched upon, only the object of their bestowal, which is "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." In Matthew therefore the servants are to labour in the prospect of the reckoning when their Lord shall return; in Ephesians they are to labour in communion with the Lord's own heart in His love to, and care for, His body, the church. Remembering these distinctions, it may be safely said that *in principle* the talents are the same as the gifts, as the ability for the special service to which the Lord calls His servants proceeds, in both cases, from Himself, and from Himself on His departure from this world. Thus, as another has written, it is not "natural gifts (in Matthew), however responsible we may be for the use of them; it is what Christ gave to His own servants when He went away." We are therefore reminded that we are wholly debtors to His grace, if He has in any way qualified us to serve; that we are entirely dependent upon Him for power to exercise His gifts, and that He holds us responsible for their use.

"JESUS creates, in His own position as man, the place into which He introduces us by redemption."

PAUL, PHILEMON, AND ONESIMUS.

There are few Christians who have not pondered with delight the tender and intimate relationships which grace had formed, on the one hand between Paul and Onesimus, and on the other between Paul and Philemon. It has been well said that the epistle in which these touching particulars are preserved "is an expression of the love which works by the Spirit within the assembly of God, in all the circumstances of individual life." In addition to the names at the head of this paper, Apphia,* probably Philemon's wife, and "Archippus our fellow-soldier" are mentioned. The latter is also named in Colossians iv. 17, in connection with the ministry he had received of the Lord, and he is urged by the apostle to take heed that he fulfil it—an exhortation which every servant of the Lord might well lay to heart. It would appear also, from the description of Onesimus in Colossians as "one of you," that Colosse was the place where both he and Philemon lived.

The occasion of the epistle is very interesting. Onesimus, a slave belonging to Philemon, had fled from his servitude, and had found his way to Rome, where Paul, at that time, was in captivity. In some way or other, Onesimus had been brought into contact with the apostle, and had heard the gospel from his

* The more generally accepted reading is "to the *sister* Apphia" instead of "beloved Apphia."

lips. God had been watching over this poor unhappy bondsman (for indeed He had chosen him in Christ before the foundation of the world); and now, in His own way and time, He led him to the house where the apostle of the Gentiles was a prisoner. How often is it that God allows a soul to drink the very dregs of wretchedness just as He is about to manifest Himself in grace for salvation! One can well imagine with what a heavy heart Onesimus passed through the portals of Paul's prison-house on that eventful day. But the glad tidings of the gospel are especially sent to heal the broken-hearted, and Onesimus, the subject of the grace of God, heard and believed. The apostle, therefore, could speak of him as his son Onesimus, whom he had begotten in his bonds. (v. 10.)

Converted, a difficult question had at once to be faced. Onesimus had wronged his master by his flight. He might, in some circumstances, have been tempted to argue that slavery was not according to God, and that he was entitled to freedom. But the Christian is never permitted to redress his own grievances, or to seek to establish his rights, even if he possess any. Besides, the apostle was at hand to counsel him, and to instruct him in the way of the Lord more perfectly. Not only so; but in the strength of his affection for this new convert, his "own bowels" as he terms him, he undertook his cause with Philemon. And the reader may remark how fully Paul recognizes Philemon's claims, even when fervently pleading for the slave. He did not fail, at the same time, to remind Philemon of the new relationship

which had been established by his servant's conversion—"Not now," he says, "as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord."

Let us, then, glance a little at this inspired letter to Philemon, written under the circumstances which we have considered. The first three verses are the superscription and the salutation. It will be perceived that Philemon received the assembly in his house, and the apostle, although writing on a personal matter, includes the church in his greeting. We learn from it that even the individual interests of the people of God are of necessity connected with the assembly; that we are so intimately bound up with one another that we cannot isolate ourselves from the general state and welfare. This may be illustrated from the case before us. If Philemon, for example, had entertained hard thoughts of his fugitive servant, he would have affected for evil the church in his house. Including, therefore, the assembly in his salutation, he omits the word "mercy" which he employs in the personal epistles (1 Tim.; 2 Tim.; Titus), and writes, as in all the epistles to assemblies, "Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

In the next four verses (4-7), Paul expresses his love for, and tender interest in, Philemon himself. He tells him that he always made mention of him in his prayers, and thanked God as he heard of his love and faith which he had toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints. What a privilege to be thus laid on the

heart of the apostle! And what a testimony is thus borne—divinely borne—to Philemon! Paul's desire for Philemon was (we give another translation to make it simpler) "that thy participation in the faith should become operative in the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in us towards Christ Jesus"; and he then states the ground on which he was encouraged to make this request, in the affecting words, "For we have great joy (or, as some read, thankfulness) and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother." What the apostle then prayed for was, as we understand it, that Philemon might perceive that Paul, in writing to him on this subject, was animated by the glory of Christ Jesus. Christ, in other words, was both his motive and object—this was the "good thing" in him which he hoped Philemon would acknowledge. He wrote from the heart to the heart, in the power of the Holy Ghost, and the foundations of his appeal, thus laid, could not but secure the desired response. It was a mighty outflow of the affections of Christ, which it would be impossible to resist.

After such a preface, the apostle proceeds to the matter in hand. Having a title to enjoin what was "fitting," he would not use it; "for love's sake" he would rather beseech, "being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ." What emotions would be produced in Philemon's heart as he read these words! And what a preparation for what was to follow! "I beseech thee," Paul continues, "for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds,"

&c. (*vv.* 10–19.) It is not only an exquisite picture of spiritual affections—of the indestructible ties which exist between Christians, and especially between the servant and the converts who have been vouchsafed to his ministry; but it is also a striking presentation of the heart of Christ for His own. It is true that it is Paul's feelings, Paul's tender love, and Paul's pleadings; but in all these he was but the vessel of Christ. We should not therefore read these words aright unless we discerned the heart of Paul's Lord expressing itself in these affecting beseechings. "That ye love one another, as I have loved you," the Lord once said; and when it is in any measure done, it is His own love flooding our souls, which overflows towards His people.

A few special points may be indicated in the apostle's appeal to Philemon. The meaning of the name Onesimus is "profitable," and Paul alludes to this in *v.* 11, as he says, that in past days Onesimus had been "unprofitable," but now he would answer to his name both to Philemon and to the apostle himself. Notice, moreover, how fully Paul identifies himself with his convert—"receive him," he says, "that is, mine own bowels." Again, "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself." (*v.* 17.) Yet once more, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it." (*vv.* 18, 19.) Christ has "repaid" (and how much more!) what we owed to God, for He charged Himself with the whole of our responsibility; and He has given us, in association with Himself, His own place and relationship with the Father, so that we

are received as Himself. How blessed the correspondence between the servant and his Master! May we all follow in this, the example of the apostle.

Nor should we omit to remark upon the delicacy with which the apostle, while recognizing Philemon's claims over his servant, commends Onesimus to his master's care and affection. Paul would fain have retained him for needed service in the bonds of the gospel; "but," he says, "without thy mind would I do nothing." Whatever might be done on Philemon's part, must be the free acting of his own heart in the Spirit, the fruit of the spontaneity of love, which could not suffer any external compulsion, even from the apostle. Paul, therefore, sent Onesimus back—not only as a slave, but as "a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord." Wonderful effect of Christianity, which, while it ever maintains the relative positions and duties (Ephes. vi. 1-9), reveals that in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, because all are one in Him. (Galatians iii. 28.) It is to enforce his appeal—but to enforce it with a full heart—that the apostle reminds Philemon that he owed unto him his own self besides. It would appear, therefore, that Philemon was indebted for his conversion, equally with his servant, to Paul's instrumentality. Having said so much, he can now add, "Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord."

It is remarkable, it may be pointed out in conclusion, that the apostle has the full assurance of the desired response to his loving appeal. He has entire confidence

in the obedience of Philemon, and he plainly says that this led him to write, "knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say." With a full heart of love, he counted on an abounding answer from Philemon. Himself in the truth of grace, which delights to give, he expected the unstinted action of grace from his friend and brother. Last of all, he prefers a personal request: "But withal prepare me also a lodging" (or receive me as a guest): "for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." Further comment is unnecessary; but at a time when the exhibition of love in the Spirit is not, perhaps, a general characteristic, this precious epistle may be commended to the reader's study. May the Lord Himself produce in all our hearts a larger response to His own love, that we may be the more distinctly characterized by love one to another!

ANTAGONISM.

JOHN viii.

IN the eighth chapter of John, amongst other things, two figures are seen standing out in prominent relief—the Son, and Satan.

The antagonism between them is maintained all through the Scriptures, from the day when the announcement was made, "I will put enmity . . . between thy seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." From that day till the end of time we find the Son of God on the one side, and the great enemy on the other, directly opposed to one another.

I wish merely to notice some very striking points of

contrast between our Lord and His terrible antagonist, as we find them in the latter half of this chapter; for terrible as the adversary is, we have in Jesus one who is infinitely superior to him. We have, too, in this contrast light thrown upon the present state of things upon earth, and great help for our souls.

Jesus, in the twenty-fifth verse, is asked by the Jews who He is. The force of the answer is lost, I think, in some versions, and perhaps the best interpretation of our blessed Lord's answer is simply, "Absolutely* that which I also say to you."

There was a Person upon earth whose words described what He who spoke them was in Himself. There was not a word too much nor too little, there was no change nor variation in Him who was, and is always, the Ancient of days, and yet could come down a true Man amongst men to speak truth (v. 46) in a world of deceit and imposture. We shall never have sounded the depths of the immense truth of the incarnation, nor explored the glories of the One in whom there is no change, and who at the end of the chapter, as it has been said, when forced, by a godless world, to declare who He is, stands there in changeless majesty as the great I AM. May He enlarge our hearts to apprehend His glory.

And now the contrast to this is to be seen in the forty-fourth verse, where it is said of the great enemy that he "has not stood in the truth."†

* "In the principle and universality of what I am." See note in J.N.D.'s Translation of N. T.

† I borrow again from the New Translation, for it is very important to observe the force of the perfect tense. The great cherub stepped off the ground upon which he was placed, and he *still continues* on the ground of falsehood and opposition to God.

The terrible step taken by the "anointed cherub" is described in Ezekiel xxviii. 11-19. There had been a great moral fall in one who occupied one of the highest places in the universe; his heart was lifted up because of his own beauty, and he was cast to the ground. To have one's own self as the object of the heart, to become enamoured of one's own beauty, is the certain precursor of apostasy; and in the case of the bright and exalted creature before us, the fall was terrible, and the consequences, which still endure, are even more terrible. For what is all the opposition of the enemy but that work which is founded upon an independent position outside the truth? He abode not in the truth.

Let us look well at these two prominent figures in the passage before us—the unchangeable, obedient Son, and the apostate head of the revolt against God.

We need not torture our minds with Byzantine questions as to the origin of evil; we have enough in that which is revealed in Scripture, which presents to us the Son of God manifested that He might undo the works of the devil. It is blessed to think of the end of the controversy.

Two things, I think, are especially presented to us in our Lord's conversation with the Jews here, and in them the contrast may be pursued. The adversary is a murderer from the beginning; the opponents of the blessed, dependent Jesus were seeking to kill Him. They should know more as to Him (v. 28), when they should have lifted Him up as the Son of man: the carrying out of their murderous policy should establish life and blessing on a firm basis, and a humble believer, keeping Christ's words, should never taste death.

Then, again, we have in Satan a liar and the father of lies. There is no truth in him; he is off the ground of truth himself, and is a constant source of lies and falsehood. There is a peculiar deliverance offered to the believer in the midst of all the importance of this world, and that is knowing the truth and being made free by it.

Knowing the Son, and being made free indeed, is the bright side of this last contrast. The whole question of sin, misery, and condemnation has been met and settled for ever; and then we know Him who lives for ever, the same unchangeable Jesus. No matter what impostures may surround us, what lies may be circulating in this world of deceit, we have the truth; we have the Son Himself; and His words—that cannot be added to nor diminished—in the very passage before us, give us to know exactly the true character of the Father, the Son, the world, Satan, and everything else.

Happy they who, not content with being delivered from the cruel enemy (the murderer and liar from the beginning), seek to know more and more of the changeless Son of God. If we have been delivered from the dire apostate, let us give all diligence to learn ever more and more of Him who has made us free, the blessed Son, Revealer of the Father's heart to our souls!

“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.” (New Translation.)

E. L. B.

NOTES ON THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM AFTER THE GLORY.

ZECH. ii. 8.

THE gospel to the lost sheep of the house of Israel will not have gone over the cities of Judah till the Son of man be come. (Matt. x. 23.) It will probably be preached by those who have fled from Jerusalem during the great tribulation.

Prophecy speaks of the Lord's coming to execute judgment on the nations,* breaking them with a rod of iron, and dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel. (Ps. ii. 8, 9.) This is what may be called the warrior judgment which occupies the Lord on His return to the earth (see Rev. xix. 15, where He is represented as coming to "smite the nations," treading the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God).

Particular nations will be specially dealt with, such as Edom, where the Lord goes in person to tread the winepress, returning with His garments stained with blood (Isa. lxiii.), and the nations who come up against Israel in the great confederacy of the latter day. (Zech. xiv. 2, 3, 4.)

This warrior judgment will have reference, to a large extent, to the treatment of the Jews by the nations, and especially to the conduct of those nations who

* Translated sometimes *nations*, sometimes Gentiles, and sometimes heathen.

have been used as the rod of His anger for the chastisement of His own people. (Isa. x. 5-12.)

Prior to this judgment there is no message of peace sent to the nations. The "everlasting gospel," however, is preached before this warrior judgment, as we see from Revelation xiv. 7. The burden of this gospel is, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea." This is a message of coming judgment, based on His rights as Creator, as were the messages of Enoch (Jude 14) and Noah (Gen. vi. 13, and 2 Peter ii. 5), and is hence appropriately called the everlasting gospel. And those who hear this message will, I doubt not, be among those who are spared in the time of the warrior judgment.

After this judgment, executed either by the Lord in person (as in some cases), or by the Jews as instruments (in other cases), comes the gospel of the kingdom—(J. N. D. gives this name to the gospel preached by the Jews before the Lord comes: see *Synopsis on Matthew*, p. 174)—in which the glory of Him who has come to reign is declared. This is a message of peace, and is carried abroad to all the nations. The messengers of this gospel are probably Jews. In Isaiah lxvi., the prophet, after telling of the warrior judgment in which the Lord pleads with all flesh by fire, and by His sword (*vv.* 15, 16), says that He will send those that escape of them to declare His glory among the Gentiles. The escaped ones referred to are a spared remnant of Jews. (See Zech. xiii. 8, 9.)

In the millennial summons in Psalm xcvi., those addressed are told to "declare His glory among the heathen" (*v.* 3), and to "say among the heathen that

the Lord reigneth." (v. 10.) So, in Micah v., after describing the judgment of the great Assyrian invader of the latter day, the prophet says that the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord. Again, in Zechariah viii. 13, the house of Judah is told that, as it had been a curse among the heathen, it will be a blessing.

The proclamation of this message of peace after the warrior judgment is referred to in many passages, as Isaiah lii. 7-10, Nahum i. 15, Zechariah ix. 10, Zechariah ii. 8; but I do not refer to these and the many others particularly, as they do not contain any special reference to the agency used for its proclamation.

It is after this proclamation of peace that the King sits upon the throne of His glory, and holds the sessional judgments described in Matthew xxv. and Joel iii. And the subject of these judgments has almost entire reference to their treatment of the Jews, whether as scattered amongst them, or as having gone out with the message of peace: called "these my brethren" in Matthew xxv., and "my heritage Israel," or "the children of Judah," in Joel.

The commission given to the apostles in Matthew xxviii. 19 is one which was formally given up to Paul (Gal. ii. 9), who went under different directions. (1 Cor. i. 17). It has yet to be fulfilled by the Jewish disciples of the latter day, who will go forth discipling and baptizing all the nations. A. M. M.

THE Scriptures are the permanent expression of the mind and will of God, furnished as such with His authority.

“YE REBELS”;

OR, THE THRICE-SMITTEN ROCK.

ONE of the worst things Moses ever did, and one of the best things he ever said, have been brought together in Numbers xxvii. 12-17.

What was said by Moses on that particular occasion has been remarked upon in a former paper, and is contained in verses 15 to 17, where he addresses God in view of his decease, and on behalf of His people, after they had provoked him to commit the sin which exposed him to God's displeasure, and which caused him to forfeit the land of Canaan.

The expressions of his regret at the loss he had sustained are recorded in the early part of the book of Deuteronomy; and, in connection with them, he reminded the people of the strong provocation they had given him to act as he had done at the waters of Meribah, saying, “And I besought the Lord . . . saying . . . Let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me.” (Deut. iii. 23-26.) Instead of fainting beneath the rod, after failing to obtain his wish, he rose superior to his circumstances, bore up God's chosen people upon his heart, and made his final request for them to the effect that they might enjoy the good of that land, which God had called them to inherit.

One of the worst things Moses ever did is referred to in verse 14, where the Lord charges him with commit-

ting an offence similar to that which the Israelites were guilty of at the same time. "Hear now, ye rebels," said Moses; "must we fetch you water out of this rock?" and, instead of speaking to the rock, he smote it twice over with his rod of power and judgment, after having smitten it once before, by divine command; which smiting was intended by God to be "once for all." (Num. xx. Ex. xvii.)

There are two kinds of anger spoken of in scripture—righteous anger and what may be called fleshly anger. We have a striking example of the former in the case of Moses, when he came down from the mount with the tables of stone in his hands, and witnessed the idolatry of the people. He acted in defence of the holiness of God by breaking the tables in pieces beneath the mount; and, although his anger "waxed hot," his behaviour was in perfect keeping with the exhortation, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." (Eph. iv. 26.) But when Moses raised his rod in order to smite the rock, and said, "Ye rebels," his anger had degenerated to such a degree that, instead of defending the character of God, as he had done on the former occasion, he exposed himself to His righteous indignation, by acting in direct opposition to His word and will. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water . . . of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin." (vv. 12-14.)

Moses had never used his rod before except at the divine commandment. But the mere raising of it at Meribah was a sign of rebellion against the One who was dealing in grace towards His people, when Moses desired to act on the principle of righteousness.

The sin of Moses in smiting the rock, and that of Gehazi the servant of Elisha, in taking the money from Naaman the Syrian in connection with his cleansing, are of a somewhat similar character.

At the same time, it is important to distinguish between the persons themselves; for although Moses had to suffer the consequence of his sin as well as Gehazi, the former we know was a man of God, and the latter was a covetous person. But the resemblance of their sins consists in the fact that what Moses did in smiting the rock, Gehazi did in taking the silver from the cleansed leper. They misrepresented God, who was acting in grace at the moment—a sin which is very grievous in His sight, as is seen by the severe judgment which fell upon those who committed it. For God is no respecter of persons, and therefore, according to His governmental dealings, Moses had to suffer the consequences of his sin, as well as Gehazi. The former died without entering into Canaan, and the leprosy of Naaman clave to the latter.

As to the future, we can say nothing with respect to Gehazi, but Moses appeared with Elias in glory on the mount of transfiguration (Matt. xvii.), and the apostle in writing to the saints at Corinth says, "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should *not be condemned with the world.*" (1 Cor. xi. 32.) We see, then, what indignation God shews towards those who interfere with His ways in

grace, and dare to seek to hinder its outflow, whether towards saints or sinners. Therefore, while Moses was permitted to smite the rock, his sin in so doing was not allowed to stem the tide of God's grace, which rose higher than the sins of His people—including that of His servant Moses—and which was seen in what took place after the rock had been twice smitten: "And the water came out *abundantly*, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also." (Numbers xx. 11.)

The same grace of which we have been speaking, and which ministered to the need of the Israelites in the wilderness, is seen in the days of Elisha the prophet, making way for itself among the Gentiles through the instrumentality of a little maid from the land of Israel: "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." (2 Kings v. 3.) The little maid said nothing about silver, gold, or changes of raiment, but simply proclaimed the free, unconditional grace of God for the benefit of her master. Naaman evidently did not understand it, or he never would have offered to recompense the prophet for cleansing him from his leprosy, and thus mar the joy of the man of God, and likewise the testimony of the little maid. And because God must have all the praise, Elisha the prophet refused to have any of the silver, gold, or changes of raiment.

"As the Lord liveth," said the man of God, "before whom I stand, I will receive *none*." And afterwards he bade him "Go in peace." (vv. 16 to 19.)

The Syrian captain had not long started on his homeward journey, without his leprosy, and with all the silver, gold, and changes of raiment he took with him to Elisha's door, when the covetous Gehazi

came up behind the chariot, and, with lying lips, began to plead for a portion of Naaman's money in his master's name. After hiding his ill-gotten gains in the tower, he appeared before Elisha, who, with holy anger, was used of God to administer the chastisement which Gehazi had merited by his sin, saying, "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." (v. 27.)

The Galatians, again, it appears, had not long started on their way rejoicing, when they were overtaken by the Judaizing teachers, who prevented their running the heavenly race, by teaching them that they must be circumcised and keep the law, in order to be saved, thus causing these once happy, liberated saints to fall from grace. It was this which constrained the apostle in holy anger to say, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" "I would they were even cut off which trouble you."

The Galatians were already, as the result of Paul's preaching, free from condemnation through the death and resurrection of Christ. The truth of this had been, in measure, made good in their souls by the Spirit of God, and nothing, in reality, could lessen the value of the work of Christ, or weaken the authority of the word of God. And yet, through listening to these teachers of the law, the Galatians suffered themselves to be brought again into bondage, and they thus lost the assurance of salvation. It was in order to undeceive these subjects of grace that the apostle affectionately exhorted them, saying, "Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are," &c. (Chap. iv. 12.)

The enemies of the gospel had succeeded in disturbing the faith of the Galatians to that extent that the apostle entertained serious doubts with regard to the issue, though he was not without confidence in the Lord concerning them; and in that confidence he could say, "Be as I am; for I am as ye are." "The truth" which made the apostle "free," made the Galatians "free" likewise; but the former remained free, while the latter had allowed themselves to be brought again into bondage. Therefore the apostle invites them to come over to *his* side, which, in reality and through grace, was their own side. And, again, he exhorts them to "stand fast . . . in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Chap. v. 1.)

The life which the believer possesses, and which God imparts to him by the Spirit, can never be touched by the enemy. But the liberty which is intended of God to accompany it is that which Satan hates, and seeks, by every possible means, to deprive us of. His agents, therefore, are as active as ever, seeking to bring into bondage the subjects of grace by binding them down to keep the commandments, instead of proclaiming liberty. The God of all grace is misrepresented, and the hearts of the righteous are made sad, while seeking to fulfil that law from which—it is their privilege to know—they have been for ever delivered through the death of Christ.

H. H.

THE Man who in the might of His love touched the leper, without being defiled, was the God who alone could remove the leprosy which made the one afflicted with it miserable and an outcast.

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND WITH THE SON.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS ON 1 JOHN i.*

THE subject of this epistle is the communication of divine life. In the gospels we have the exhibition of it in the person and character of Jesus Christ: but in the epistles we have the communication of it, as also *tests* of divine life. These tests are given to assure us of the possession of life, as "hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments."

Divine life in fellowship with God exhibits sin in us, and the question arises as to how we can have fellowship with God. But of this the first four verses do not treat; they exhibit the beauty of eternal life *outside* of us—first as manifested in the Man Christ Jesus, and afterward as communicated through Him from God.

From the 5th verse to the end treats of fellowship with God.

Now fellowship, or communion, with God is necessary to our being happy in His presence. If we seek to walk with Christ without having fellowship with Him, we shall be miserable. We must have common feelings with Him and common objects, or we cannot be happy with Him! Impossible; less than this is worse than nothing.

How can such as we have fellowship with the Father and with the Son? By the communication of an entirely new life. Something we never had before,

* As far as ascertained, these particular notes have never been before published.

or could have had save by direct communication from God. Adam had it not, not any more *in* Eden than *out of* Eden. In Eden Adam was a happy, innocent, obedient creature, but he had not Christ—he did not want Him. He had Him as Creator, of course. Adam was good, no doubt; but the first Adam is not the second Adam, and never will be. The last Adam is the Son of God; He became man, and *as* man manifested the divine life here on earth in a way that it never could have been manifested but for sin. It could not have been displayed in heaven in this way. The light shone in darkness. Not only was not the first Adam the second Adam, but he saw no beauty in Him. The second Adam had to say, “for My love I had hatred.” Man saw nothing to admire. There was not a feeling to respond to the revelation of God’s grace. Blessed be God, the patience of grace was greater than sin, and it is sweet to see the unfoldings of this grace.

Divine life was adapted to our needs by being in the Man Christ Jesus. He went through all that we have to go through, “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” There was no sin, of course. But in *Him*, the heart to which life has been communicated can see the perfection of divine life. It could not have been thus seen in heaven, although it was there with the Father long before. No angel wanted such grace; no angel demanded such patience; it was for man as a sinner that divine life was manifested. Thus we see love adapting itself to us in the person of the Man Christ Jesus. Perfection has come to meet us (I speak of those who know Christ, though all may come to Him as sinners).

The apostle says, "we have seen Him and heard Him." They heard Him every day, and what was it they saw? Eternal life. You may ask many a Christian what is eternal life, and he cannot tell you, though he has it within him. Christ is eternal life. John says, "the life was manifested, and we saw and heard"; they saw and heard Christ, and *He* was eternal life.

First manifested, then communicated; as is said farther on, "this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." And, then, "he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath *not* life." Our responsibility is to believe the record: Adam's was obedience. A man may be very respectable and well conducted, without having life, because whatever he may have got he has not got life, unless he has got Christ. If you have not got Christ, you have not got life (divine life, of course). If I have not got Christ, I have no life in me. Immense joy there is in the fact that the life I have is in *Christ*—not in myself; as Paul says, "not I, but *Christ in me*." Divine life was perfectly manifested in Christ: we have the treasure in earthen vessels, therefore it is exhibited feebly in us.

Now, we have to follow Christ's precepts in obedience, but that is not divine life; the communication of life, by giving us a new nature, makes it natural to us to love what Christ loves, and to do as Christ does. Obedience is necessary. "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth."

Obedience to God is the essence of doing right, but Christ has set Himself apart as the perfect and glorified Man, to attract my *heart's affections* to Himself, and my desires must flow according to the new

nature which He has imparted. And thus, as in ch. ii. 8, that which is true in Him is true in you who believe.

Then God is holy, and I am not holy. Christ becomes my hope, and His blood cleanses me from all sin. If I receive His word, I receive Christ, and He is eternal life. Henceforth I hate sin, and the Son of God is my life. The second verse puts me into fellowship. If Christ is my life, that is fellowship. When He is in me all things are changed; He is my object; He is my life; and we have a real fellowship by nature. My walk should not be the result of obedience merely, but of the same feelings as Christ's. So the Spirit by John says, “Walk in the light,” not *according* to the Light, which would be obedience, but *in* the Light, which is fellowship. J. N. D.

(*To be continued.*)

“IN TIME OF NEED.”

JOB ix. 8-12.

SAVIOUR! Thy sovereign skill,
 Thine all-controlling word,
 Thy holy “Peace, be still,”
 O'er all the storm is heard.

Thou dost the billows tread,
 Thy way is in the deep:
 Thou, risen from the dead,
 Dost love's whole vigil keep.

Tempests obey Thy voice,
 Cease, and there is a calm,
 Sure as Thy word, “Rejoice,”
 Sweet as Thy Gilead's balm.

Thou art Thyself our Peace,
Conflicts must end in Thee.

Thou makest strife to cease :
Thou settest captives free.

Thou art Thyself our life :
Lord, when Thou shalt appear,
Then shall the Lamb's own wife,
Shine as Thy fair compeer.

Hope of our hearts art Thou :
Thy coming forth again
Dawns on faith's vision now—
Come, Saviour, come : Amen.

H. K. B.

March, 1895.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

ISAIAH vi. 13.

IT is only necessary to consult the Revised and other versions of the Old Testament to discover the difficulty of giving an exact rendering of this scripture. Perhaps the following paraphrase, which we borrow from a well-known exposition, will help the reader to the understanding of its meaning:—"And yet, even after the entire desolation which had been first mentioned (v. 11)—*in it*—the desolated land—(there shall remain) *a tenth* or *tithe*—here put indefinitely for a small proportion—and (even this tenth) *shall return and be for a consuming*—*i.e.* shall again be consumed—but still not utterly, for—*like the terebinth and like the oak*—the two most common forest trees of Palestine—*which, in falling—in their fallen state, or when felled—have substance or vitality in them—so a holy seed shall be, or is the substance—vital principle—of it—the tenth*

or remnant which appeared to be destroyed. However frequently the people may seem to be destroyed, there shall still be a surviving remnant, and however frequently that very remnant may appear to perish, there shall still be a remnant of the remnant left, and this indestructible residuum shall be the holy seed . . . the 'remnant according to the election of grace.'" The words in italics in the above extract are the translation, and the rest is explanatory according to the judgment of the author. If we now append J. N. D.'s French version, the reader will be able to compare it with the foregoing (we give a free rendering): "But there shall be there again a tenth; and it shall return, and it shall be as the terebinth and the oak, of which the trunk [remains] when they are cut down: the holy seed shall be the trunk." The general significance may thus be clearly apprehended. It is to the effect, as stated above, that whatever desolating judgments may be poured out upon Israel, there will always be a holy seed remaining, which will one day appear, just as the trunk of an oak or terebinth will send forth new shoots after having been felled to the ground. Some have connected Isaiah xi. 1 with this passage, and it is quite true that the word rendered "substance" in chapter vi., and "stem" in chapter xi., are both (they are different words) used of a trunk of a tree; but in the former case it is the nation, or at least the remnant, which is indicated, whereas in the latter it is the family of David—"the stem of Jesse." Doubtless the preservation of the remnant, the maintenance of its life and blessing, are bound up with the Branch that shall grow out of Jesse's roots, with David's Son and David's Lord, and in this sense the connection is most

intimate. As attention has been recently directed to it, another thing may be observed. In chap. vi. 12, the word given as "men" is in the singular, and hence it has been suggested that the passage points to God's judgment on *man*, in the cross of Christ, as the foundation of all the blessing promised. It cannot be too often repeated that the setting aside of the first man in judgment is the foundation for the accomplishment of all God's counsels concerning the second Man out of heaven: but whether this truth lies in this scripture is another question. In the first place the word rendered "men"—"Adam"—has no plural, and hence it is constantly used in a collective sense for men in general, as well as for the race; and, secondly, the context would seem plainly to point to the removing of the guilty nation in judgment. At the same time, as already said, the introduction of the new order of things on earth, under the sway of Emmanuel, can only flow from the death of Christ (see John xi. 51) and the judgment which was there visited upon all that man was, and upon his deeds. The whole subject is worthy of the most careful consideration.

II.

MATTHEW xix. 28; TITUS iii. 5.

It is only in these two passages that the word "regeneration" is found. No doubt in theological usage it is used as equivalent to new birth, or being born again (John iii.); but, in fact, the word used for the latter is different in its compound. That there may be a moral connection between the two things signified is quite probable; for "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," that new state of things—outside

the dominion of Satan—where God's authority is owned as supreme. Attention to the use of "regeneration" in Matthew will help to the consideration of the second passage. It is evident, then, that the Lord is speaking of His coming kingdom in this world. He says plainly, "When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory." This consequently is the time of the "regeneration" of which mention is made. It will thus mean, in this connection, that totally new order of things which will be introduced under the reign of the Son of man in this world—a change so great as to amount to a complete renewal of the face of the earth, and one which could only be accomplished by divine power in resurrection. (See Phil. iii. 21.) Passing now to Titus, we see at once that the application of the word is not to the future, but to the present, and hence that it indicates a new order of things spiritually, into which believers are now introduced. This will be clear if the whole passage be cited. It says, "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," &c. It is thus connected with the process of our salvation, and is wholly the work of God. The term "*washing of regeneration*" is very significant, as it points to the application of water through the Word to cleanse—and to cleanse by its removal—that which was utterly defiled and corrupt before God. It involves, therefore, "*a passage from the state we were in into a wholly new one, from flesh by death into the status of a risen Christ.*" The "regeneration" will here then go on to the new creation. But there is also the

renewing of the Holy Ghost, so that there might be constant growth and an inward state in correspondence with the new order of things to which we now belong (compare as to the "renewing," Col. iii. 10); and this renewing can only be produced by the unceasing power and activity of the Holy Spirit. How diligent, then, should we be to seek grace for the maintenance of an ungrieved Spirit within us from day to day!

III.

HEBREWS vii. 18, 19.

If the reader has the New Translation at hand, he will perceive that the obscurity of our version is entirely removed. As it stands it reads, that while the law perfected nothing, "the bringing in of a better hope *did*." But this is not at all the sense. What the apostle shews is, that the Levitical priesthood is superseded, or set aside, by the Melchizedek priesthood of our blessed Lord, and that, "the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." (v. 12.) Then, in verse 18, we are told why "the commandment going before" has been disannulled, namely, because of its weakness and unprofitableness, "for," he adds, parenthetically, "the law made nothing perfect," and then, besides the disannulling of the commandment going before, there is also, in connection with the Melchizedek priesthood, the introduction of a better hope, by which we draw nigh to God. This makes the passage intelligible. We append the version to which we have referred: "For there is a setting aside of the commandment going before for its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law perfected nothing), and the introduction of a better hope, by which we draw nigh to God."

THE PASSOVER AND THE CLOUD.

NUMBERS ix.

AT the end of chapter vi., we find that the camp having been arranged according to God, and the true position of Israel as the Nazarite having been depicted, God puts His blessing and His name upon the people. In chapter vii., the princes of Israel, who "were over them that were numbered," brought their offerings for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and, moreover, they offered, each prince in his day, as representing the twelve tribes, for the dedication of the altar, after that it was anointed. Following upon it, the position of Moses as the mediator is given: he had access into the holiest, and received divine communications from off the mercy-seat that was upon the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubims. Next, the candlestick is introduced; and the lamps lighted by Aaron were to give light over against the candlestick. The vessel of the Spirit is ever beautified with the light of its own testimony. Then the Levites, cleansed and purified, were offered before the Lord for an offering of the children of Israel to "execute the service of the Lord."

Such is the moral order of these striking chapters, and so far everything is perfect according to God's own thoughts; that is to say, everything is viewed from His own side, and hence imperfections on His people's side are not taken into account. With chapter ix. we enter upon a new phase; though everything is still marked

by the perfection of grace and of government. For if defilement is seen to be existing, it is only mentioned as bringing out more fully the provisions of God's grace for His people in wilderness circumstances. Leaving this for the moment, it may be noted that the chapter is occupied with two subjects—the Passover and the cloud. And it will help us in the consideration of these, if attention is given to the date of verse 1: "And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt." Now from Exodus xl. 17, and verse 15 of this chapter, we learn that this was the very time when the tabernacle was "reared up," and when the cloud "covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." It was thus at the time when God definitely took possession of His sanctuary that He might dwell among them—the sign and fruit of accomplished redemption.

In prescribing the observance of the Passover* at this particular moment, we learn, therefore, that God would have His people always in remembrance of the redemption-ground on which in grace He had placed them. In Egypt, the Passover was associated in their thoughts with shelter from judgment; with the means of their safety when God passed over them when He smote the land of Egypt. In the wilderness they celebrated it as the ground of their deliverance from Pharaoh's bondage and servitude; of their passage

* It is remarkable that before the kingdom we have only the celebration of the Passover three times—in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land.

through the Red Sea; in a word, of Jehovah's salvation. As they themselves had sung, "Jehovah is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation." The blood of the Passover lamb had, in fact, secured everything for them which they now enjoyed. Estimated at its own proper infinite value by God Himself, He could gratify His own heart, and act righteously, in bringing them through death and judgment (the Red Sea), and in surrounding Himself with them as His redeemed people. "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation." If the children of Israel, therefore, were now God's pilgrim host in the wilderness, they were to be in fellowship with God's thoughts concerning the work which had brought them into this blessed position. They were thus to keep the Passover in its appointed season.

But there were certain men who were defiled by the dead body of a man, so that they could not keep the passover on that day. Surely many a Christian might learn a lesson from these Israelites; for they were not only conscious of their uncleanness, but they also painfully felt their deprivation of the privilege of celebrating the memorial of their redemption. For the Passover, indeed, was a symbol of the unity of God's people as His redeemed; and these defiled saints were excluded by their state from participation in it. And they keenly felt it; and they came to Moses and Aaron to inquire why they might not offer an offering of the Lord in His appointed season among the children of Israel. Their action brought out another valuable

lesson. Moses could only refer the matter to the Lord; and hence we gather *that the word of the Lord alone must govern the observance of the Passover*. These children of Israel had a perfect title to the Passover feast; but they now understand that the title, in and by itself, was not sufficient, but there must also be a state suited to the title; and, moreover, that Jehovah alone could order the manner of its celebration. These instructions are valuable for all time for the people of God, and, if heeded, would preserve them from confusion and corruption.

God tenderly regarded the desire of His people. Longing for full identification with His own, and for the enjoyment of the privileges He Himself has bestowed, is always the indication of a right state of soul; and He thus directed that exceptional provision should be made for the case. Such saints, as well as any who might be on a journey, should not be debarred from their place at the Passover table; but they should keep the feast on the fourteenth day of the second month,* but careful, at the same time, to keep it according to all the ordinances thereof. If, however, anyone who was clean, and not on a journey, forbore to keep the Passover, "that soul shall be cut off from among his people; because he brought not the offering of the Lord in His appointed season, that man shall bear his sin." It is thus a very solemn thing—and many Christians might well lay the warning to heart—to neglect the memorial of our redemption, and the re-

* It may be remembered that Hezekiah kept the Passover under similar circumstances in the second month—availing himself of the gracious provision of our chapter.

membrance of Him whose death and resurrection have secured it, in His own appointed way, in the breaking of the bread, and in drinking the cup. Grace now reigns through righteousness; but this should only make us more sensible of the unspeakable love which lays upon our hearts the remembrance of Himself.

Occasion is taken, in connection with these regulations, to make provision for the stranger—for those who were not Israelites, but who were found sojourning amongst the children of Israel. God is God in all dispensations, and His heart, not yet set free in righteousness, was ever yearning to bless. If, therefore, one with no title, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of promise, desired to keep the Passover unto the Lord, he might do so, provided he did it according to the ordinance and the manner thereof. There was to be one ordinance both for the stranger and for him that was born in the land; and, according to this ordinance, no uncircumcised person could partake of it—whether an Israelite or a stranger. (See Exodus xii. 48, 49.) This is one of the striking pre-intimations of grace which are continually found even in the legal dispensation; and they proclaim very distinctly that God was ever looking onward to the time when His grace could travel out in the gospel to all the world: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." And notice, as a foreshadowing of this blessed time, that here there was no command to the stranger to keep the feast: if he desired to do so the way was open; only he must have the qualification for it, equally with the children of Israel. He must be a circumcised

person—a lesson vocal with admonition for many in this day.

The Passover having been celebrated, our attention is directed, in the next place, to the cloud which covered the tabernacle from the day of its erection. The cloud always covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. "And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents." In this way the Lord placed Himself at the head of His redeemed people, and in His patient grace led them in the various stages of their wilderness journey. And the movement of the cloud was identified with the Lord's word: if it rose from off the tabernacle, it was equivalent to His command; and so if it tarried upon the tabernacle. We thus read: "At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed; and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched"; and again, "At the commandment of the Lord they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed." The Lord thus undertook the guidance of His people through all their pilgrim path; and He made His presence known to them through the cloud, and His will by the movements of the cloud. Moses could thus say of Jacob, that the Lord "found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him." (Deut. xxxii. 10-12.)

On the people's part, their responsibility was twofold: to keep their eye upon the cloud—the symbol of Jehovah's presence—and to be guided alone by its movements. The Lord's will, as thus expressed, was to be their only law; and, consequently, unquestioning obedience was their sole responsibility. If the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle they remained in their tents and journeyed not; if it were taken up, even the next morning after they had pitched their tents, they were again to march forward; and so also if it were taken up, whether by day or by night. When they should recommence their travels, or where they should next pitch their encampment, was absolutely not their concern. Everything was undertaken for them by the One who had redeemed them out of Egypt; and knowing this they might have rested in His infinite love and wisdom without a single care or anxiety. May we, on whom the full light has shone, learn the lesson, that we may only concern ourselves with the path of the Lord's will; and that, keeping our eye upon the Lord, we may be enabled to hold ourselves entirely at His disposal!

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND WITH THE SON.*

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS ON 1 JOHN i.

IN the 4th verse we have, "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." "These things," as expressed in the opening verses of the epistle, are the manifestation of divine life in the person of Christ, and the communication of divine life through Him to such as believe; and thus the *detail*,

* Continued from page 219.

however real, and true, and valuable, of conflict and experience in the believer, is set aside as a *source* of joy.

Divine life has been manifested, divine life has been communicated, "and these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." It is the fact that God in Christ has become a man, that is my life and joy. And this is fellowship with God, and blessing to saints. Is Jesus the Father's delight? Is He His Well-beloved? So is He mine; feeble no doubt my affections may be, but in measure they flow in the same direction as the thoughts of the Father. This is communion with the Father. And, then, is the Father the Son's delight, and His confidence and joy? So is He mine; and this is fellowship with the Son. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

Here sin is left out; there is no question of sin here, because the new life has nothing to do, so to speak, with sin (though we have). The new life is in the last Adam; this life and this joy is the blessedness of heaven. There is no other blessedness but Christ in us, the hope of glory.

Perfect (no doubt as regards our enjoyment of it) the blessedness will not be, till we are in heaven; but there will be no change. Christ is my life and joy now, and heaven has no other life or joy. Now I have done with self, because I have got another self, who is more my real self than I. My connection with the person of Christ is new life in me.

Therefore, I am not in the flesh—the flesh is in me, and drags me back sometimes—but I might be a very decent, respectable man, and have no life—(divine life, of course, I mean). I can go to the vilest sinner in the

country and offer him life. Your respectability is not life. Grace upsets that to magnify God, grace puts down man to give new life which is altogether of God. But we are responsible.

Eternal life has been manifested, and now the message to us is, that God is light, and there is no darkness in Him, so that if we say we are in fellowship with Him while we are walking in darkness (the apostle uses great plainness of speech) *we lie*. You wish for heaven? If you have not fellowship with God you would be more miserable in heaven than ever you can be on earth. If I talk of fellowship I must be able to stand the light of God's presence. If that light can discover a spot upon me, all is over with me. The fact is (it is a solemn fact), you are all this moment in the light of God's presence without a veil. The veil is rent. I do not say you all enjoy this. God knoweth, and my earnest desire for you all is, that you may joy in God and be happy in His presence, that He may manifest Himself to you. But whether you know it or like it, there you are; "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Measures of guilt are useless here. It is not "Have I more spots or fewer? am I better or worse? a great or a little sinner?" not this at all, but, Can I enjoy God in Himself? Am I full of joy at the manifestation and communication of His own gift—eternal life? If I cannot stand in the light I cannot see God. Under the law God was hidden. He said, "I will dwell in the thick darkness." From thence He sent out His commandments.

But do you think the law was the manifestation

of God? No, but of *you*. The law showed what you ought to be, it also showed what you are. The law said, "You ought to love God." You say, "Who is He, that I may love Him?" "Well, He is that Being who is up thundering and lightening upon Mount Sinai." "Oh, I cannot love Him, I am awfully afraid of Him." "What! cannot love Him? Then you have broken the law, and there remains nothing but the curse for you." This is all you can get from the law, because the law does not say that God loves man, but that man should love God. The children of Israel said, "Let not God speak to us." Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake," but in the infinite grace of God the law was the schoolmaster up to Christ, who was with the Father, and who in the fulness of time was manifested in the world.

It is certain you ought to love God: they do it in heaven. Man cannot love Him, does not love Him, and so is under the curse of the law. Then God cannot allow sin. So He hid Himself. The fiery mount, the thick darkness, the veil, all had the glory of God, till at last He hid it in Christ, that He might manifest His grace and eternal life in Him. Thus the veil was rent, and man stands in the open presence of God. God was hid behind the veil: the veil is rent, and you here now are all in His presence. God reveal it to you, if you know it not; for if you are not fit for His presence, you have nothing to say to Him. I do not say that grace cannot unfold this to you. I say grace can do so. But I speak of light, the light of God's holy, immediate, unveiled presence, and if you are not spotless in that light, you have nothing to do with Him. I repeat it, you have nothing to do with Him.

Under law, my first impulse on the discovery of sin in me is to flee from God. When Israel heard the noise, and saw the light from Sinai, "they removed, and stood afar off." When the woman taken in adultery was brought to Christ, He stooped down and wrote on the ground, having said that anyone who was without sin might cast a stone at her, and when He looked up again they had all run away. That is what law does, it shows me myself and makes me flee from God.

If I talk of having fellowship with God, I must be able to bear and to enjoy His presence. It is not that I am good, but that God has cleansed me. It does not depend on my filthiness, but on His power to cleanse. When I have washed something, I do not keep thinking whether it was much dirty or little dirty, but that now it is clean. And so with saints, "But now ye are clean," and God delights to look on me, because He has washed me. It does not depend on my great or little sins, but on the good washing, on the value of the blood. So I read, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow"; that is the good washing.

Now do you, beloved friends, believe this? If you do you are walking in the light, you cannot believe it any other way, for, of course, if I am in darkness, let me be a clean man or a dirty man, I cannot tell which I am.

Do you believe that you are washed? It is a personal question in which every man's conscience is brought into the light of God's presence. If you can stand there you stand in the rent veil, and in that you stand spotless. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all* sin." You have fellowship with God

and with His Son Jesus Christ. God has cleansed you, and He is delighted to do it. He loves to do it. Christ has died and done it. Once in that holy presence without spot, I can stand still and look back and admire the ways of grace. My soul, my heart, my conscience, are all engaged, and this produces integrity. If I am under law I may be trying to get God, but I cannot get to Him. God certainly looks upon these blind strivings, and reveals Christ in grace, but I can never reach Him through law.

The prodigal son had made up a speech for his father, asking him to make him a hired servant, and no doubt as he went along he thought, "Dear me, how shall I be received, and what will my father think of my rags?" The nearer he got to his father the more uneasy he would be, till at last, when his hand might be on the knocker, he would fear to knock. We know his father never let him wait for that, but rushed forth to meet him, and fell upon his neck. Then he forgot his speech that he had made. How, indeed, could he have uttered it? He might well be ashamed to do so with his father's arms about his neck, just as he was, rags and all. But the father did not like the rags for all that, and what was to be done? "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." So he bids us put on Christ, the best robe, to cover our filthy rags; and here comes in the 32nd Psalm: "Blessed is the man whose sin is covered."

Verse 9: "If we confess our sins," not sin merely, but sins. It is not a very humbling thing to confess that we are sinners, and have an evil nature in the abstract. We can all do this, and take it very quietly, too. We have an evil nature, but we have an evil

conduct also when we do not keep down the evil nature.

There are the two distinct things—forgiveness of sins committed, and cleansing from sin in the abstract. Suppose, now, I was a wild, extravagant young man, and got into debt. Well, my father comes forward and pays my debt. Is that all about it—that I am free from debt? Oh, dear, no. I have grieved my kind father, and I want to confess that, and to have his forgiveness. I get both. My father is glad to have me. He has been on my neck. Still, though it is all grace to me, God says *faithful* and *just*, because Christ paid for me. God cannot have sin in His presence, and He wants *me*, so He washes me. That is it. And as Balak said to Balaam, "I wot he whom God blesses is blessed," so I wot he whom God cleanses is clean. Do I say I have no sin? If I do I am a liar, and I make God a liar. (*vv.* 6–10.)

I cannot come into God's presence at all except through Christ, and coming through Him I come spotless, absolutely clean. Then there is my daily weakness. I am reconciled as a matter of fact, but I am weak. So the details of such a one's course are now given. He who seeks to walk in the light often fails, but never excuses himself. He cannot say, "I could not help it," because God has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee; My strength is made perfect in weakness." He often fails, but that does not alter the ground of his righteousness before God. Christ is my righteousness; I have no other. If you have any other, you are without "hope, and without God in the world"; you are alone. The agony of Christ and His death secured my righteousness. *I change, I fail; He is*

unchangeable, infallible. Can He allow my guilt? No. He is my advocate as well as my propitiation, and I apply to God, and He forgives.

But will He allow me to go on without this? No. And does He use the law to charge my sin on me? Ah! no. Through the affections of my renewed heart, He can work all things in me. As my Advocate, He can make me feel my sin, and I say to myself, "You wretched creature, you have been delighted where Christ has been pained; you have gone and found your pleasure where Christ found His agony." That is what I can say to myself, and in fellowship with Christ I hate the sin I commit.

Jesus makes me feel my unkindness to Him, not by imputing it to me, but, as in Peter's case, the Lord turned and looked upon him. Peter boasted, "Though all men forsake Thee, yet will not I." Jesus never charged the sin upon Peter, but it was enough He should look on him to convince him of sin. Had Jesus done with the matter then? No. After He was risen He said to Peter, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" Hast thou still the same self-confidence? Is there still a root of pride? And Peter was grieved.

Now, perhaps I may show my pride through an impatient temper. Christ will convince me of it. He will not impute it to me, but He will remind me that He *died* that He might not impute it to me; and more than that, if I do not judge that sin in myself He will, and He will never let me alone about it until it is cut up and broken down to the root.

If I detect my own pride, without indulging it, I may judge it myself, and then be humbled by my pride. It need not break forth if I do watch over it

in this way. Christ ever lives to intercede for us, and He watches over our ways, and works in our hearts, souls, and consciences through the new affections, so that while there is all peace with God, there is none with sin. Some think it humbling that they must be cleansed every day. The feet must be washed, we must confess our sins, but sin is for ever put away. If you do not believe that your sins are put away by the sacrifice of Christ, what has God said to you? God has said, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission"; and God has said, "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."

J. N. D.

LIBERATION AND SEPARATION.

CHRISTIAN deliverance has various aspects; and the death of Christ, by which deliverance is effected, is variously applied in its relation to these. Thus, besides deliverance from guilt, we are said to be "made free from sin" (Rom. vi. 18); "delivered from the law" (Rom. vii. 6); delivered "from this present evil world" (Gal. i. 4). Freedom from the first, viz. sin, is said to be effected by *accounting* ourselves dead, inasmuch as Christ has died unto sin once, and we with Him; from law, by our *becoming* dead to the law, finally and absolutely—the link being broken by the (dead) body of Christ. These two deliverances partake of the nature and character of *liberation* from that in relation to which there has been a condition of bondage; of which the believer becomes conscious by the possession of a new nature, and groans for deliverance, as Israel in Egypt from the tyranny of Pharaoh. Of these two

subjects Romans treats in fullest detail, and the manner of deliverance, both doctrinal and experimental.

Beyond, however, a passing though important exhortation,* this epistle does not contain any detailed instruction, doctrinal or experimental, as to the manner of deliverance from the world. But so vitally important a subject for the Christian, cannot fail to be treated of with some detail in the inspired Word.

It is the object of this paper to draw attention to the special epistle in which, from the very point at which Romans teaching stops, the believer is again taken up, and carried on in fuller and further instruction as to the character and manner of his deliverance from the world. The aspect of Christ's death, in its application to deliverance from the world, will be found to vary considerably from its aspect in Romans, where deliverance from sin and law are treated of. The type, furnished in the Red Sea—deliverance of Israel from Egypt—throws a very clear light upon the Colossian aspect of Christ's death, which it is proposed to consider. Israel was clearly *liberated*, when they stood on the wilderness side of the Red Sea, from that under which, as the people of God, they had groaned. Their willing hearts went into thankful praise with the deliverance; and the pressure of praise found utterance in that wonderful song of Exodus xv. But scarcely did they complete the celebration of their deliverance from the power and tyranny of Pharaoh ere they were brought face to face with the fact which furnished no element of thanksgiving in their song. That same sea, which witnessed to their being perfectly *liberated* from the

* "Be not conformed to this world," &c. (Rom. xii. 2.)

hand of Pharaoh, also *separated* them from the land towards which their fleshly hearts still reached out in desires for those especial gratifications which peculiarly belonged to it. In view of this, the Red Sea furnished an impassable *barrier*; and it is easy to see that it assumed a very different aspect from that in which, as a means of deliverance from bondage, it had so recently appeared.

The prepositions used in Rom. vi. 14 and vii. 14, with reference to believers when sin and law are under consideration, and that used when flesh is the subject, are characteristic and important to notice. "Under" is applied to sin and law; "after" to flesh, as in Rom. viii. 4, 5, 12, 13; and these are nowhere found transposed—"under" expressing domination; "after" inclination or disposition. Hence, uniformly, "under the law," "under sin"; but "after" the flesh. The same distinction is observable in Galatians iii. 25 and iv. 4, 23, 29.

If the believer finds cause of thankfulness and praise in that aspect and application of Christ's death which liberates him from sin and law, he very early discovers that the attractions and allurements of the world, in which the natural man finds his gratification, still in measure hold their sway. Nor can he honestly say that, as in the case of sin and law, he finds positive relief and delight in Christ's death as a deliverance from what naturally attracts and interests him. It is the instinct of his new nature, rather than an intelligent divine pathway for him, that at this stage makes him sensible that he must *separate* himself from these things. And he finds pain—which surely leads to blessing—not pleasure, in consistently carrying out his convictions; but there is as yet no full intelligent object that more

than compensates, in full, divine satisfaction, the self-denial he practises. It is not deliverance from a tyranny of which he is now sensible, but the pain of separation from what attracts and perhaps fascinates.

The teaching of Romans will not exactly meet this phase of soul experience: even as the sense of deliverance from bondage to Pharaoh failed to affect the cravings of Israel for the fleshpots of Egypt. This was to be effected, according to Jehovah's intention, on a totally different principle, viz. by the impassable barrier which the Red Sea constituted.

But this Red Sea barrier accomplished and involved two things, whether they were appreciated or not: it shut the nation *out* from Egypt, and *IN* with Jehovah—whose infinite and unfathomable resources, all indeed that *He Himself was*, in wisdom, love, and power—were available on behalf of His people. All that *He was*, was intended now to take the place, *as a satisfying portion*, of all that had hitherto satisfied and gratified. A fuller, deeper, holier satisfaction was to displace in the hearts of the Israelites, the pleasures, objects, and interests of Egypt, from which the Red Sea effectually cut them off.

In this is presented very clearly *the divine principle of deliverance from the world*, which leads us directly to the Epistle to the Colossians to examine its structure, and in doing so to gain instruction on this important, but often much misapprehended subject. Like Israel, God's people now may fail to appreciate His ways in accomplishing His intentions and desires; but it is of vital importance that *the divine principle* upon which He works should be clearly understood. Otherwise all is confusion for the earnest soul. Spiritual

results must fail in accomplishment, and legal exercise and practice will usurp the place of happy, intelligent progress in the divine path.

Colossians opens very distinctly with the apostle's acknowledgment that they were well acquainted with the gospel—the line of truth presented in Romans. "Faith in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii. 25; Col. i. 4); and "love to all the saints" (Rom. xii. 10); and "hope laid up in heaven" (Rom. viii. 23-25), are recognised as characteristic, and call forth the apostle's thankfulness and thanksgiving. Of these they had "*heard before* in the word of the truth of *the gospel*" (v. 5, 23). They had "*known the grace of God* in truth," and learnt it afresh from the lips of Epaphras. But all this only serves to furnish the foundation and groundwork of further and deeper desires on the part of Paul for the Colossians: namely, that they might be "filled with the knowledge of His will"; secondly, that they might "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." These two things in themselves go beyond the mere reception of grace through the gospel. In sum (v. 12-14), relationship, meetness, and redemption in its double aspect—"delivered from the power of darkness" and "*translated into* the kingdom of the Son of His love"—carrying with it forgiveness of sins, furnish the elements of the gospel already received by the Colossians, and which may without difficulty be traced in the Epistle to the Romans.

We might pause here to note the general contrast of these two epistles, and the apparent object of that contrast.

In Romans, the *first man's* degradation and ruin are first brought forward, and then *the work* of redemption

in lowly incarnation by *the Second Man*, is set forth with the object of *liberating* man from the guilt and bondage in which he is found.

In Colossians the varied glories of the Person of the Second Man are first displayed, His Headship and His fulness set forth, with the object of separating the believer from the world in every form, by satisfying him with that revealed fulness. Romans sets the believer, as delivered, "in Christ" with "no condemnation." Colossians addresses him as "complete [filled full] in Him." In Romans, where the work, *i.e.* redemption, is in view, it is opened out in all its full detailed application to the need which it meets. In Colossians, where the Person is the subject, the full and fathomless glories of the Son are presented in counter attraction to the ensnarements and entanglements of the world.*

The introductory verses, having led up to the Person of the Son of the Father's love, the apostle *at once* proceeds to unfold His glories, which the Colossians are, so to speak, called aside from everything else to contemplate. In view of this, the suitability of a full standing in relationship, meetness, and redemption, including forgiveness, will be clearly apparent (chap. i. *vv.* 12-14.) The first and transcendent glory of the Person of the Son as man, which the apostle names, is "Image of the invisible God"—absolute in His deity, though man; the deep mystery of which remains a matter for holy contemplation, but is in itself

* Romans deals with the subject of bondage, Colossians with that of beguilings (chaps. ii.-iv.), and introduces *the world* as the scene to which they belong; and *the flesh* the medium by which they affect the believer.

unfathomable and incomprehensible. Then He is the "Firstborn of every creature." A casket of dignities and glories is here contained in the title "Firstborn." Jacob's definition of the "Firstborn" in Genesis xlix. 3 may be accepted probably, as embodying the divine ideal, "Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of power." The application of each of these terms to Christ is too apparent to need comment. (See also Deut. xxi. 17 and Psalms cv. 36.) Passing on, supreme creatorial power is ascribed to Him: "*By Him were all things created,*" &c.; supreme dominion and authority, "All things were created . . . for Him"; self-existent before all created things, "He is before all things"; omnipotent in power that sustains all things, "By Him all things consist"; "Head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead." All fulness is pleased to dwell in Him—reconciliation glories rest upon Him, whether of *persons now*, or of *all things* in a coming day. How inexhaustible and complete the fulness and the glories embodied in the Son of the Father's love! As children of that same Father, we may well lend an attentive ear to the glories of His Son.

We are then recalled to the fact that whether it be "the gospel," or "the mystery," Paul is the special vessel through which all was revealed. "Whereof I am made minister," is said by Paul of both, but with the latter he is now specially occupied; not "the gospel," of which they had "heard before"; nor yet "the grace of God," which they knew in truth, but rather that which completes or fulfils the word of God, in itself the topstone of revelation.

Keeping fully in view the supreme and transcendent glories of the Son of the Father, already announced to be Head of the body, the Church, the apostle now emphasizes the marvellous dignity and absolute identity of the assembly with Christ as His body. It is not here His dignity who is Head, treated as before, but the Church's identity with Him who is the repository of these many glories; and the dignity of her marvellous relation to Him as His body. This was divinely calculated to rivet and entrance the hearts of the "saints to whom" (v. 27) Paul says, with deep and fervent energy, "God would" (having the force of will or desire) "make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Thus he completes the identity of the saints with Christ in union, by *His* indwelling, the guarantee of future glory. The full, deep exercise and energy of Paul's heart for them then follows. (i. 28—ii. 1.)

M. C. G.

(*To be continued.*)

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

PSALM xxiii.

LORD JESUS, we rejoice,
 Thou bright and morning star;
 We hail Thee crowned in light—
 'T is "Aijeleth Shahar"—
 In risen glory's new estate,
 Our Shepherd, good, and chief, and great

No want shall us assail ;
 Thine are the pastures green,
 And thine the waters still,
 Within Thy glory's sheen ;
 Thou lead'st our ransomed souls along
 To feed or rest—Thy praise our song.

And if, alas ! our tongues
 Cease to announce Thy fame,
 Thy grace doth then restore,
 For Holy is Thy name.
 In paths of righteousness we tread,
 In Thee we live, with Thee we're dead.

Thy Shepherd rod and staff
 With comfort fill the hour,
 When we are called to pass
 Where death-shades darkly lower ;
 That worsted foe we will not fear,
 But still rejoice, for Thou art near.

Our baffled enemies
 (Dwellers in Egypt's night)
 Must see our feast of love
 Spread in a scene of light ;
 Our head anointed is with oil,
 Our cup runs o'er, through *Thy* great toil.

Thy loving-kindness great,
 And goodness e'er pursue,
 Till in the Father's house
 Sweet praises we renew :
 In bridal nearness there to be
 Thy joy through all eternity.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

1 THESSALONIANS ii. 7, 11.

These are but illustrations by which the apostle, as led of the Spirit, expressed the character of his ministry amongst the Thessalonian saints. But how much they reveal of the exercises of his heart in his service in their midst while preaching unto them "the Gospel of God"! First, then, he employs the figure of a nurse—he was gentle among them "as a nurse cherisheth her children." Tender fostering care, combined with watchful love, thus marked him, as he sought, on the one hand, to minister the suited nourishment, and, on the other hand, to guard them from every hurtful and malign influence which was calculated to impede their growth. Secondly, he says, "As ye know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye should walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory." In this illustration we have implied that spiritual relationship which had been divinely formed between Paul and these believers. It was through his instrumentality that they had been converted. (Chap. i. 5, 6.) They were therefore his children in the faith; and, sustaining this relationship towards them, he was invested with a special responsibility. He therefore sought to train them up in the way they should go; and to this end he exhorted them, when he saw the need of urging them forward; comforted them if they were depressed, despondent, or

sorrowful; and charged them individually as to their responsibility, while explaining to them that the standard set before them was, that they should walk worthy of God who had called them unto His kingdom and glory. It was with paternal affection and solicitude that he enforced these things on his beloved children, begotten through the gospel; anxious only that God might be glorified in their walk and conduct, and that they might be stimulated to this through the maintenance of communion with God in the purpose and object of their heavenly calling. As we meditate upon it, we can only exclaim, "What a pattern ministry!" and, at the same time, earnestly pray that many of the Lord's servants may be characterised by these features of the apostolic example.

II.

DEUTERONOMY xix. 16-18.

The question concerning this scripture is whether the directions here given have, in principle, any application to Church discipline. A brief exposition of the passage will best prepare the way for an answer. It will be noted that the instructions of the chapter were given in view of the land into which the Lord was bringing His people. The priests and the judges will therefore represent the channels of the communication of the mind of God (the priests), and the governing authorities (the judges). From v. 15 onwards, the subject dealt with is what may be termed the law of evidence; and it is expressly enjoined that in no case should a man be condemned at the mouth of one witness; that no accusation against another must be accepted unless substantiated by at least two

witnesses. The apostle Paul alludes to this, and affirms the principle (2 Cor. xiii.); and how much sorrow and confusion would have been avoided had saints everywhere accepted, and acted in accordance with it. The readiness, indeed, with which false reports and accusations are received and circulated, calls loudly for humiliation before God. Having dealt with what constitutes sufficient evidence, Moses next treats of the case of a false witness, and lays down most exactly the order of procedure to be observed. Both the witness and the man against whom he has brought a charge are to "stand before the Lord, before the priests, and the judges . . . and the judges shall make diligent inquisition." From Matthew xviii. we learn that in case of personal trespass, which cannot be settled privately, the Church is the ultimate court of appeal. To stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, in Deuteronomy, therefore, will entirely correspond with an assembly investigation now; and the responsibility of undertaking the examination, in both cases, lies upon those who are in the place of rule or government—that is, if we speak of the assembly, upon those who, in fellowship with their brethren, have the place of lead, and possess the confidence of the saints. Then, lastly, if it be proved that the witness has testified falsely, the punishment to be inflicted is specified. But this was under the legal dispensation; and hence, for a similar sin, on its being detected and exposed, the discipline to be meted out must be gleaned from the New Testament scriptures. There is no need, and in fact this would not be the place, to go into details. But it may be remarked that the

character of the false testimony—whether unwittingly or wittingly brought—would have to be carefully enquired into before the suited discipline could be declared. Finally, it may be added that the Scriptures are all-sufficient for guidance; although the use and application of these can only be made in communion with the mind of God, in the power of the Holy Ghost. Suppose, for example, one guilty of false testimony should refuse to submit to the judgment of the assembly; the person sinned against is directed as to his attitude towards such a one in Matt. xviii. 17; in other cases, where 1 Cor. v. 13 has not been deemed applicable, Rom. xvi. 17, 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14, 15, and similar scriptures, will furnish the requisite wisdom. But as to our own state of soul (if it be a case of sin against ourselves), let us never forget the searching word contained in Col. iii. 13 and Eph. iv. 32.

III.

EPHESIANS IV. 25.

It is important to notice the exact force of the word rendered "lying"; and the connection will help in its apprehension. In verse 23 the apostle, speaking of the new man, which these believers were said to have put on, tells us that "after God" it was "created in righteousness and true holiness," or, literally, holiness of the truth. All falsehood, therefore, is entirely excluded—could have, indeed, no connection with, or part in, this new creation of God. Hence the apostle proceeds, "Wherefore putting away lying"—which belonged to the old man which had been put off (v. 22)—"speak every man truth (the characteristic of the new man, together with righteousness) with his

neighbour: for we are members one of another." Comprehending this, it will be readily perceived, what has been pointed out by a well-known translator, that "lying," or "falsehood," means "everything that has the character and nature of falsehood. It is abstract: *what has this quality, not merely the act of lying.*" This should be much remembered, inasmuch as, in its application, it might search many of us who might not be betrayed into telling positive untruths. According to the above interpretation, a look, a gesture, demeanour, ambiguity of speech, evasion, compliments, and many other things, might fall under this sense of lying. In other words, the new man could only find expression in what is according to God, and in what, therefore, is marked by righteousness and holiness of the truth. The Christian so walking and so governed would be very real and very devoted; for he would be walking in the power of the Holy Ghost, and consequently have no object but Christ. (See *vv.* 20, 21.) Remark also the ground on which Paul urges the exhortation—"We are members one of another." To remember this would be a guard against any temptation to "lying," by showing us the character of such a sin against our brethren, bound up as they are with us in such intimate and indissoluble relationships. It may be added for the sake of any who have only the common translation at hand, that verses 22, 24, should be rendered "your having put off . . . the old man," and "having put on the new." It is regarded as having been done, through the *acceptance* of death with Christ, and through having been raised with Him, which is a very different thing from being exhorted to do it.

“MY NEW NAME.”

REVELATION iii. 12.

As this expression is not elsewhere found in the Scriptures, it requires but little discernment to perceive that it must have a special significance. In chapter ii. 17, the overcomer is promised “a white stone, and in the stone *a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*” This is a new name for the believer, and one that will contain a secret between the Lord and his own soul—a name of affection and approval, which the Lord will bestow upon the one who has been victorious in conflict with evil within the assembly. The overcomer in Philadelphia has the new name of Christ Himself written upon him; and this as the climax of all the blessedness into which he will be introduced. There is, therefore, a great contrast between the two; for, unspeakable as will be the enjoyment of the one who obtains the white stone, with his new name engraven upon it, from the Lord’s own hands, it could scarcely be comparable with the blessedness contained in the words, “And I will write upon him *My new name.*”

Is it possible, then, to ascertain what this new name is? The key to its meaning will undoubtedly be discovered in the special place and connection in which it is found. There are few who have not noticed the peculiar character of the promise to the overcomer in Philadelphia. Two things distinctly mark it. It is all

a heavenly condition of blessedness; and it is all to be enjoyed in association with Christ, as may be seen from the repetition of the word "My"—the temple of *My* God, the name of the city of *My* God, new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from *My* God, &c. Another thing may be observed. All the terms thus used really bring before us the accomplishment of God's counsels in redemption. For example: It was not until after His resurrection that our blessed Lord said, "My God, and your God"; and, as we all know, "the city of My God, new Jerusalem," is the Church in glory—in relation, indeed, to the millennial earth during the thousand years, but the tabernacle of God with men in the eternal state, according to its presentation in this book. In other words, it is the bride of the Lamb. The promise to the Philadelphian overcomer is, therefore, to be realized in full heavenly blessedness in association with Christ.

If we have understood the import of the above remarks, we shall the more readily apprehend the meaning of "My new name." It will indicate the new condition of our blessed Lord as being glorified as Man. Ever, from the moment of His incarnation, the Second Man out of heaven, it was not until risen and glorified that He assumed, if the words may be reverently used, His true and proper condition as the Heavenly Man. Down here, though in sinless and holy humanity, He was in weakness and sorrow—the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He hungered, He thirsted, He was weary, He wept, and He slept; but risen out of death, while He retains

the same body (Luke xxiv. 39, 40; John xx. 19-29), He is altogether in a new state and condition. As glorified, He presents to us Man according to God's counsels, the order of the Second Man according to which God is now working; and hence, the model to which all the redeemed are to be conformed. (John xvii. 19; Romans viii. 29.) We regard, therefore, "My new name" as the expression of this new condition on which Christ has entered; and thus "name" here, as elsewhere, will keep its proper significance as the expression of the truth of what the Person is.

It is, on this account, important to remark that "My new name" refers to the glorified humanity of our blessed Lord. It is only to Him, as the glorified Man, that we can be conformed; and, consequently, it must ever be held fast, although His Person is one and indivisible, that He is also over all, God blessed for ever, the true God and eternal life. Always bearing this in mind, it cannot be pressed too earnestly that believers are after the order of the Second Man, that they *now* belong to this order, and to the place where Christ is as the glorified and heavenly Man. It is one of Satan's most subtle and successful beguilings, especially at the present moment, in turning aside the saints from their heavenly calling, and in leading them into the acceptance of principles which are essentially Jewish. They are willing to have Christ with them in their circumstances; but they are not prepared, like Peter, to abandon the boat, and to walk on the water to go to His side. But, "if any man be in Christ," [there is] "a new creation: old things are passed away;

behold, all things are become new." It is of this new creation that Christ, as risen and glorified, is the beginning; and it is, moreover, of this new creation that we, by the grace of God, already form part, and to which we even now belong. Let this blessed truth be ever remembered.

We may now enquire more particularly as to what is meant by having the new name of Christ written upon the overcomer. It will be observed that "My new name" follows upon "the name of My God" and "the name of the city of My God"; and this is very significant. Keeping the term "name" to the meaning already given—viz., the expression or the revelation of the truth of the Person, or the thing, with which it is connected—we shall discover a very full entrance into the character of the blessedness indicated. "The name of My God" will then import the revelation of all that God is as displayed in Christ on the ground of redemption. But when our blessed Lord says "My God," it is manifest that He speaks as man (compare Matthew xxvii. 46; John xx. 17, &c.); and consequently we learn here that the overcomer will be brought into the enjoyment of all that God is, as so revealed, *in association with Christ*. "The name of the city of My God" will, in a similar way, betoken the impress upon the overcomer of the whole truth, which is told out in the Church, of the structure of which, indeed, he is a component part as a living stone; but a living stone which will then be radiant with the glory of God. The overcoming is an individual thing; but the moment the thought of the city

is introduced, the individuality of the overcomer is merged in the organization and unity of the city. And, again, it must be noticed that it is "the city of My God." Christ is the living link—if such a term may be used—between God and the city; and it is with Him as the glorified Man, as the Firstborn among many brethren, that the overcomers will for ever be associated in this heavenly glory.

We shall now understand more clearly the additional blessedness of having "My new name" inscribed upon the overcomers. Two things, following the symbolical teaching of this book, may be affirmed: First, that the overcomer will thus be declared as belonging to Him who Himself had trodden the path of conflict, and had been an Overcomer. (Chap. iii. 21.) It is a principle, indeed, everywhere seen in the New Testament scriptures, that whatever virtue or excellency is displayed at any time, or under any circumstances, in the saints, has been first exemplified in Christ. The new name written will, then, be the eternal proclamation that Christ, in His new estate and position as the glorified Man, claims the overcomer for Himself. But, secondly, it will also teach that the overcomer will be wholly conformed to Christ. "My new name" will be reproduced in the overcomer; and hence it will be everlasting association with Christ in his heavenly state as being conformed to His image. The overcomer will thus be the perfect expression of His likeness; every moral feature of Him who is the model of the redeemed will then unhinderedly shine out through every possessor of His new name. What a prospect!

And what a wealth of blessedness is here disclosed for the encouragement of the Philadelphian believer in holding fast that which he has, that no man take his crown!

It may, however, be enquired whether these exceeding great and gracious promises are limited to the overcomer. The very question misses their significance. They are given to this assembly—the only assembly which, in the closing days of the Church's history, meets the mind and approval of Christ. It is the only one of the last four phases of the assembly on which He looks down with entire satisfaction. And it should be carefully noted that overcoming in this assembly is simply maintaining, holding fast what they had received. All, therefore, are encouraged to be overcomers; and the special promises, which we have considered, are given as an incentive to their fidelity. Doubtless the blessedness they speak of will be the portion of all the redeemed; but this is a very different thing from finding in this glorious portion our sustenance while contending for the truth, and our motive to whole-hearted devotedness to Christ in the midst of general indifference and infidelity. This is the use the Lord would have us make of these promises, even as He Himself, "for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God."

No wilderness experience, be it ever so faithful, has anything directly to do with this heavenly life, although the grapes of Canaan may cheer the pilgrims by the way.

LIGHTS IN THE WORLD.

It is a great favour of the blessed God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that we should each be individually a light in the world where we have been darkness and contributing to it: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Eph. v. 8), and this independently of the candlestick, which is the corporate light. Now, when the candlestick is removed, our responsibility is, if anything, greater that we should answer individually to the grace which He has given us.

Light is a remarkable quality; it sets forth everything in its true colour according to God. It begins with each of us personally. "If thine eye be single," set on Christ—that is, if Christ is your object—having no part dark, the body is light; you come out personally in quite a new way. It is not merely what you say, but what you are. A man who has received light, by degrees finds out how little he has seen things according to God. As he walks in the light the things that he could admit of at one time he cannot admit now.

The first great action of the light, as we see in John ix., is to separate us from man's ideas about God, until in the solitude of light we enjoy the Lord Himself as the source of it. Thus the first mark of light is in relation to God, and how we are here suitable to Him. We have to learn that mere religious associations, which are not in the Spirit, do not suit Him, and are not according to light; this is the first great action of the light—separation from everything that does not suit

God in our approach to Him, and, as this is arrived at, we come out in a new way in our natural and home circle. Things are avoided and separated from that at one time seemed harmless and allowable, but the more we understand the new position we are in, the greater the sense of our responsibility to maintain the distinctness of this great favour; and this we are encouraged to do in dependence on the Lord, that we may be according to the mind of God, not only in the assembly, but also in our own private circle. It is as we are true in the latter that we influence those around us.

It is remarkable how a person, looking for light, will be attracted by a person that has light; but the more he is attracted to him who has the light, the more he will scrutinize all his ways and everything about him, in order to see if he is walking up to his light. Many years ago, after speaking on Acts xvi., a near friend of mine said to me, "The address was liked; but," it was added, "I wonder what sort of man he is at home?"

What I may call the third circle is that of the servant. If in any of his ways he indicates the corrupt taster of the world, he is like a waster in a candle, he spoils the light and invalidates his influence, because he has a dark part—that is, a natural taste which he has not overcome in himself; it hinders him being an exponent of the light. This dark part is the real test to every Christian, and is not removed by introspection, which is inspecting the old man, and betrays ignorance of the beginning of the work of Christ. How can you inspect that which is removed from the eye of God? The dark part, the working of the flesh, is not removed by introspection, but by sowing to the Spirit. We all

know what sowing to the flesh is, looking for some harvest to come from it. But it is important to bear in mind that souls, as they are set for the light, seek it, as we see, if we look around, that where there is light there is the separation that begins with God. I have heard a preacher say, who had a chapel of his own, "My converts do not stay with me more than a year or two; they go elsewhere to look for more light." The Lord is pleased to give the light, and the light is here, and those who value it find it out, no matter how retired or unknown the person is.

The great characteristic of a servant who has light from God is, that he insists on positive truth, not that he overlooks the negative, but his great aim and object is the positive; for instance, he not only insists that the old man is removed from the eye of God, but he insists also on our acceptance with God, and that we are able to enjoy it by the Spirit. We are in Christ by the Spirit able to enjoy our acceptance, as we see in the parable of the prodigal son.

It is to be borne in mind that it is not so much what a servant says as what he is; because if there is a dark part in him it is sure to affect him, and to weaken his ministry—"Having *no* part dark." No man's word is effective beyond the effect it has on himself; his own life testifies to the truth of what he ministers; a convert takes his colour from his spiritual father. A man might enunciate the truth from mere study, but one who is ruled by the truth himself becomes necessarily an effectual exponent of it; and if the light is opposed and refused, the resistance to it is always greatest where there is most need for it—"He that doeth evil hateth the light."

It is true that one might assume to have the light when he has it not; the true and divine way of correcting him is not by merely opposing him, but by setting forth from Scripture what is the light, and this exposes his misapprehension, as Abel exposed Cain.

It is easy to say to another, "You are wrong," but it is a great thing to show him what is right, and you cannot substantiate it unless you are right yourself. Let us rejoice that the Lord is the light, and that if we love the brethren we walk in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in us; we shall be as "the children of Issachar, who were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." (1 Chron. xii. 32.) "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

J. B. S.

LIBERATION AND SEPARATION.

(*Concluded.*)

BUT what means this "divine labour" of the apostle—"Striving according to His working which worketh in me mightily"—a "great conflict"? It is noteworthy that "striving" (i. 29) and "conflict" (ii. 1) have the same root from which our English word "agony" is derived; literally the strivings of one for victory in the arena, the whole man being in tension. It was a conflict which embraced not only the Colossians and them at Laodicea, but also "as many as have not seen my face in the flesh," *i.e.*, the universal company of the saints on earth. The words seem fuller, and the exercise deeper, even than when Paul's spirit was stirred within him when, at Athens, he "saw the whole

city given to idolatry." If the measure of the apostle's exercise is to be taken, and surely it may, as an index of the importance of that which pressed upon him, believers may well be arrested by his earnest agony on their behalf.

The subject-matter of this exercise is announced in v. 2, and concerned not the cold and formal "acknowledgment," as our translation puts it; but "the full assurance of understanding" extending to the "full knowledge of the mystery of God," and that with a view to their hearts being "encouraged—being knit together in love." In these words the apostle unburdens himself of the travail of his soul.

One question remains to be asked, viz., Why did Paul travail in this deep desire for the saints of God generally? Let Paul answer: Because for him the mystery was that "in which are hid *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (New Trans.), which were alone capable of counteracting the beguilings of man's enticing words. (vv. 3, 4.)

Should it not be a matter of confusion of face, and confession of want of heart, that these unveiled glories of the Son of the Father, Head of the body (of which each individual believer is a member), and the deep, divine emotions of the great apostle of the mystery, should so little affect the saints of God generally? And is not the reason for this to be found in the fact that the very danger and snare, which Paul set himself to meet by a divinely adapted ministry, have first insidiously infected, and then largely leavened, the people of God? "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words."

But let us follow the apostle a little further, as he

unfolds the groundwork of separation more fully. He says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk (ye) *in Him*." "Rooted and built up *in Him*," &c. The fulness and sufficiency of "the Christ Jesus the Lord" (New Trans.) is here applied to the Christian's walk; all that concerned foundation and growth was contained "*in Him*," and "*in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*"—that is absolutely, as the glorified Man.

The divine intention as to the believer is then set forth: "and ye are complete [filled full] in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power"; *i.e.*, of all that can legitimately claim authority and dominion He is the Head; and He who is such is Head of "the body, the Church," whose whole satisfaction and delights are circumscribed and self-contained in the person of the Christ. Such is the doctrine presented by Paul, but which rests upon a foundation which he now proceeds to unfold, possibly referred to in the expression previously used—"rooted . . . in Him."

With striking abruptness the fulness and Deity of the Son as man are followed by the words, "In whom also ye are circumcised," &c. It would be difficult to find in Scripture a more instantaneous transition from the full glories of the Son as man to that moment when as man He was cut off "by wicked hands." Is there not divine intention in this? Inspiration does not admit of accident in composition. It is impossible to question that a powerful divine effect must have been produced upon the hearts of the Colossians by the very suddenness with which the apostle turns from the glories of Christ, the Head

of that body of which they were members, to the fact that in Him they had been cut off from all that from which His circumcision had cut Him off. If they were identified with Him in a marvellous union, they were identified, too, with that death which severed them from all that which it severed Him from: that is, morally and spiritually, for they were still in mortal bodies.

Let us notice the divine intention which first unfolded all that He was in the fulness of His person; the weight and effect of which would be carried into the conviction, that they were severed by His death *from* all that was properly "of the world," *i.e.*, severed IN Him who was thus circumcised, to all that He was in His own divine person.

We return to the Red Sea type for a moment. On the wilderness side of the sea, Israel was severed *from* all that Egypt contained; but the sea, that separated them from it, separated them at the same time *to* the full resources of Jehovah, to whom they thankfully sang, in the joy of redemption, in the recognition of what He had displayed Himself to be in power and resources. Henceforth there was absolutely no provision for them but in Himself. Their position was "complete [filled full] in Him." The type is thus wonderful in its confirmation and illustration of the line of truth in Colossians, and might be further followed, for the beguilings of the land from which they were severed became their danger and their ruin, as with the Church in its history through the wilderness. A Caleb and a Joshua, appreciating the Red Sea severance, and the full and unbounded resources of Jehovah, with their hearts set upon His land, might and did honour Him who had so wondrously redeemed them and brought

them to Himself (Ex. xix. 4); but the nation as a whole was "spoiled"; *i.e.*, led away by the beguilings (Col. ii. 8, 9) that belonged to Egypt.

It is of importance to note the aspect in which Christ's death is introduced, *viz.*, as *circumcision*. In Romans it is not so expressed. It appears to be peculiar to Colossians, and conveys the thought of separation in being cut off, which the idea of circumcision involves; and this is further borne out by the application of Christ's circumcision, as *putting off* "the body of the flesh." ("The sins of" should be omitted.)

Thus Christ's death is presented as the great barrier, which at once separates the believer *from* the world in its various forms of beguilings and enticements, and separates him *to* and *in* the One in whom all fulness dwells.

Baptism figures or represents what is accredited to the believer by God, *viz.*, that he is buried with Christ, and as really risen with Him, "through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him *from the dead*." As another has said, commenting on this verse,* "We have done with the flesh in Christ: it is not an effort to have done with it, we are dead But we do find it said, 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.' (Chap. iii. 1-5.) This supposes us to be dead, and to have "our life hid with Christ in God all that Christ is, and all that Christ has done, is mine in Him.† Has He been put to death? So have I. Is He risen? So am I. Therefore I am able to mortify,

* *Col. Writings*, vol. xxvii. pp. 422, 423.

† "It is all ascribed by God to me as though it had happened to myself."

&c. . . . And mark how this is brought in. The faith is not in my being risen, but in Christ's having been raised. This distinction is far from unimportant: many a sincere soul is continually turning in upon itself to know if it be risen; but this is not 'the faith of the operation of God who raised Him from the dead.'"

Four aspects in which the world beguiles, through the body of the flesh, appear to be indicated by the apostle, from all of which this remarkable ministry is directed to deliver; viz., philosophy, ordinances, the rudiments of the world, and gross lusts. He thus sums up possibly all that by which the world appeals to the flesh in the believer. The Egypt from which Israel was delivered remarkably possessed these different attracting elements.

As a nation of slaves, its philosophy and its science might have had but little attraction for them; but its heathen "ordinances," its principles or rudiments, and its gross lusts and gratifications, held their sway after they had been delivered, as their history records. But philosophy existed as a snare for the Colossians; viz., all that high intellectual culture, of which Greece and Rome were successively the centre and the source. ordinances, the religiousness of the natural man, to which Judaism, as given by God, had been degraded, mingled as it was with forms of idolatry and Gnosticism. The rudiments or elements of the world—every subtle principle and motive that has its origin from the world, apart from God, involving all that goes to compose the spirit and character of the world, whether religious or irreligious; and, lastly, those gross lusts of which the apostle speaks, when he says, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth," &c. In a sense,

all constituted the rudiments of the world; but it is important to note the special term which Paul employs in verse 20, as to the bearing of the believer's death with Christ toward the world. "Wherefore if ye be dead [have died] with Christ [not to the world, but] *from the rudiments* of the world." There are many relations in which the believer necessarily stands towards the world, which affect the accuracy of the statement of his having died with Christ *to* the world, viz., corporeal needs, earthly duties and relationships, &c. What is said with divine accuracy to be true of him is, that he has "died with Christ* *from the rudiments* of the world"; maintaining again the separation character of Christ's death as bearing upon him. With equal accuracy the believer is instructed to *reckon himself* to be dead indeed unto *sin* (Rom. vi. 10), and to have *become dead to the law* by the (dead) body of Christ. (Rom. vii. 4.) Divine terms are not only perfectly accurate, but perfectly essential to the clear apprehension of the divine mind in the word. The expression "dead to the world," so frequently used, is fully understood as not to mean absolutely done with the world; "for then must ye needs go out of the world." It is important to note that the term the Spirit of God uses, conveys the divine idea exactly, viz., "have died away from the rudiments of the world."

Enough has, perhaps, been said as to the separation character of the Epistle to the Colossians, itself the very essence of "sanctification." This, according to

* A very strong preposition, literally "away from," as translated in chapter i. 23. It also occurs in v. 26 twice, where it gives peculiar force to the secrecy of the mystery.

I Cor. i. 30, Christ is said to be made to us of God, and fully brought out in our epistle. The divine groundwork also, upon which separation rests, has also been treated of, viz., full satisfaction in Christ, as the repository of untold and unfathomable glories; cut off as the Christian is, *in and to Him*, by *His* circumcision or cutting off, as well as away *from* the various forms in which the world bids for his interest, after its rudiments, "*and not after Christ.*"

Failing all this divinely adapted ministry, there is but one alternative, viz., that there must be a lapse (and how solemnly the centuries have witnessed to it) into that which the apostle sums up as "the satisfaction of the flesh" * (ch. ii. 23, New Trans.); that is, "alive in the world" (v. 20, New Trans.), instead of dead from its rudiments, which effectually hinders the heavenward progress of the individual believer and the assembly.

The closing verses, up to the detail of household responsibilities, include the having put off the old man, and put on the new; *i.e.*, Christ, His order and His life, both accomplished in Him, by His death and resurrection, and the believer's identity with Him. On this is based *practical* exhortations to "put off all these—anger, wrath, malice," &c., and "put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies," &c.; the character of the early ministry being fully insisted on, viz., "Christ is *all* and in all."

Further, the Colossians are exhorted to "let the peace of Christ preside in their hearts" (N.T.), as that to which they were called, in the unity of the body; and to let the word of the Christ dwell in them

* See Numbers ii. 4-6, and 18.

richly; probably the ministry contained in the epistle about the Christ.

God's divine institution on earth from the beginning is then acknowledged, and the various relationships involved therein separately dealt with: wives, husbands, fathers, children, servants, masters; with their characteristic responsibilities. These may *test* the Christian, but are not in conflict with his separated character, seeing that they do not partake of the nature of "the rudiments of the world," having a *divine*, not a *worldly* origin. If each of these relationships is mutually carried out, through the Spirit, on the principles and lines laid down by the apostle, the "rudiments of the world" are practically excluded from the household; and this divine institution becomes, in Christianity, the expression of what is divine, and not worldly: separated and satisfied in a divine way.

A few final, closing exhortations of deepest moment follow: "Continue in prayer," specially "that God would open . . . a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ," a prayer as much needed now as then; "walk in wisdom towards them that are without"; speech should be "alway with grace, seasoned with salt," *i.e.*, in charity without laxity as to any corrupting tendency; "redeeming the time."

Some special and beloved labourers are then personally named. Epaphras's prayer, at the close of the epistle, supplements Paul's at the commencement very fittingly, and is fully in the spirit of the ministry of the epistle—that the Colossians may stand "perfect and complete [filled full] in all the will of God." (Chap. i. 9; iv. 12.)

Noticeably, the Laodicean assembly seems in a very distinct way to be on the apostle's heart. To them this special ministry of separation from the world was commended (chap. ii. 1, 4; xv. 16); Rev. iii. 17 furnishes the sad record of its failure as to abiding effect. The Laodicean assembly there is seen blossoming out into complete separation, not away from "the rudiments of the world," but away from Christ: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing."

Generally speaking, then, Romans *liberates* from sin and law, which at first *dominate* the believer, who is made sensible of the bondage by the possession of the new nature; while Colossians *separates* from what *fascinates* by means of the possession of the old nature. The death of Christ is the basis and foundation of both deliverances; liberating in the former cases, and separating in the latter case to Him in whom all full heavenly glories subsist.

As Galatians has been referred to in connection with deliverance from the world, mentioned in chapter i. 4, it may be well to add, that the truth of separation from the world by Christ's death is fully confirmed in that epistle (chap. vi. 14), in the double crucifixion there spoken of. Whatever fellowship may have preceded crucifixion, as may have been the case with the two thieves, their double crucifixion effectually brought it to an end: so with the Christian, the fellowship that once existed, has been by the cross of Christ practically annulled.

It is both deeply interesting and important to refer for a moment to John xvii. 17-19, which presents Christ, as to His Person, sanctifying or setting Himself

apart in heaven, *i.e.*, as raised and glorified; not only as object, but as the effective means by which those whom he speaks of as "in the world" are sanctified, or set apart.

We get here the germ truth, so to speak, from the lips of Christ Himself, upon which it would appear the apostolic Colossian ministry is founded, *viz.*, the fully detailed way in which the ministry of a glorified and glorious Christ *operates* in separating, by fully satisfying, the believer as filled full in Him, in whom he is circumcised, *i.e.*, cut off in His death. M. C. G.

JESUS.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 9.

BEHOLD thy King cometh unto thee, Jerusalem!
 He cometh—just, and having salvation,
 Lowly—riding upon an ass:
 Come forth, Jerusalem, to meet Him.
 See the children how they cry to Him, Hosanna!
 See the multitude proclaim Him Son of David!
 Wherefore, daughter of Zion, holdest thou thy peace?
 Wilt thou not say to Him, Lo! Thou art our God,
 We long for Thee have waited?
 Wilt thou not say of Him, Blessed is He who cometh—
 Cometh in the name of Jehovah?

* * * * *

How shall we say of *Him* that He is our God?
 Have not our fathers told us?
 Have not our prophets prophesied unto us?
 Say they not that we shall have a *King*?
 Who is this Nazarene, the Son of Joseph?
 Is not "His name *Jesus*?"
 The prophets never spake of such.

"*His name shall be called* WONDERFUL,
COUNSELLOR, the MIGHTY GOD, the EVERLASTING FATHER,
The PRINCE OF PEACE":

As to *this* Man, we know not who He is.

* * * * *

O Jesus! wherefore this Thy name?

This name, which, so despised, yet

Is as ointment poured forth.

The nameless One of whom the prophet spake
That He should be "despised" and not "esteemed";

That He, the fair "green tree," should be

But as "a root out of dry ground"—

That He should be a "Man of sorrows,"

And from Him all faces should be "hid"—

All faces; even the face of Him who loved Him—

How should men recognize in Him

The King—the King of kings—the Lord of lords!

Yet was He "bruised for our iniquities,"

For our transgressions "wounded";

For us He took this name unspoken of,

That He might save us from our sins.

Oh, mystery of godliness!

God manifest in the flesh: He who, in form of God,

Found it no robbery to be equal with God,

Yet emptied Himself.

Oh! mystery of godliness!

That Jesus should become a servant—

That Jesus should become obedient—

Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!

Ah! *therefore* doth His Father love Him

With love unutterable.

His *former* love incomprehensible; yet of it do we read

That in this Son the Father found ineffable "delight"

Ere time was; in Him He did rejoice

“In the beginning of His way”; He
Was the “Son of His love” ere He established the ends of
the earth.

Such glimpses are revealed to us.

But of this *new* love—it,

Like the name that won it, is unspoken.

It is the *new* name which none, but He who hath it, knoweth;
The name that giveth joy, with which no stranger inter-
meddleth;

The name which He to win did to the depths descend.

And for this cause God did Him high exalt,

And gave Him *gladly** such a name that all must bow to—

“A name which is above every name.”

Ah! 't is not coldly given, because it is His due,

And may not be withheld.

No; but out of that unspoken love the Father seeketh

The gift that doth beseem the Son He loves;

And there He finds a name, borne

Amid sorrow, suffering, shame—

A name that now pre-eminent shall shine

Above all names in glory—

The name of *Jesus*.

And that He *gladly* gives

To Him “whom the King *delighteth* to honour.”

* * * * *

O Jesus, Lord! Thou *knowest* that I love Thee,

Teach me in my poor heart to honour Thee!

Fain would I do so.

I know a willing spirit Thou dost find,

But oft therewith the flesh is weak, and hinders.

Constrain me with Thy love: *make* me to please Thee,

To work for Thee, to wait for Thee, till the day dawn—

The day wherein mine eyes at length shall gaze upon

“The Man whom the King *delighteth* to honour”—

Even Jesus—Jesus—Jesus!

J. S. O.

EVIL THOUGHTS UNBIDDEN AND HATED.

(EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.)

I HAVE your letter, and I am sure that the enemy is very busy, as well as the evil heart within. What you need is, thorough deliverance from yourself; that is, the flesh. You speak of evil thoughts, unbidden and hated, springing up in the heart, even when you seek to be occupied with the Lord; this, too, when really thinking of Him. Then you stop to confess them, and the occupation for a moment in confession only provokes another evil thought. And so it is, as you say, an unending all-day work.

My feeling is that you have never yet enjoyed full deliverance from self and flesh. You are what Scripture calls still "in the flesh," though a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe if your soul were free you would find the simple, yet profound truth of "reckoning yourself dead" (Romans vi. 2) would so act, that the thought of turning aside to confess what would spring up unsought for in your soul would be found to be really and only *allowing the flesh a triumph*, in leading you to be occupied with it. When there is no *will*, such thoughts will be left, turned aside from, and treated as "not I." Of course, when the soul is not free, I could not say you could do so at all; but were freedom enjoyed, you could not be the sufferer from such things. What I would simply say to you is, when evil thoughts are present to your soul, unsought for and hated, do not stop or cease from your

measure of occupation with the Lord to confess them. If will enters, they must be confessed; but if not, pass by them as you would avoid an evil person who is not yourself, and who you know is incorrigible, and with whom contact is only misery and defilement. "Avoid such; pass not by them," but leave them there. *To own them at all*, is but to give the flesh the place it seeks—a recognition in some way or another. This, even when it is only to abhor its workings, will be a *satisfaction to the flesh*.

Oh, that you had grace to leave "the flesh" unrecognised and disowned, and to pass on, conscious that it is always there, and will be in you to the end! How blessed that we can, by grace, disown and refuse to hear its suggestions when it works, knowing, through mercy, that it is no more "I." Your case is one that has been, and is, common to most of the Lord's people, if not all. I refer to unsolicited, hated, and wandering thoughts. You should simply go on and take no notice of them whatever, as by doing so, you only give the flesh the place it seeks. Go on as not hearing the suggestions—be, as it were, deaf to them. Confess to God if you find *will* at work; but not so as to be occupied with the analysis of the evil; rather look up to Him, the sense of weakness and impotency filling your heart, and in the attitude of dependence of soul, pass on with your eye resting on Him, out of whom strength comes whenever there is conscious weakness.

J. N. D.

OUR moral existence before God is in the Spirit, not in the flesh or natural man.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

GENESIS iii. 15.

IN dealing with Adam and Eve concerning their disobedience and transgression, God traced their sin up to its root and source in the temptation of Satan. Conscious of their nakedness through their fall, and the consequent knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons; and, moreover, when they heard the voice of the Lord God, walking in the garden in the cool of the day, they hid themselves from His presence amongst the trees of the garden. These two effects of sin are reproduced in every sinner; he ever seeks to conceal his true condition, and he is afraid of God. But, remark, that though Adam had covered up his nakedness from his own eyes, he stands consciously bare and exposed before the eye of God: "I was afraid *because I was naked*; and I hid myself." It is then that, in reply to God's searching questions, he seeks to throw the blame upon Eve, and even upon God Himself—it was "the woman whom Thou gavest to be with me" who gave me of the tree. Thereupon the woman, in answer to her question, cast the blame upon the serpent; and it was, indeed, the serpent who beguiled Eve to distrust the goodness of her bountiful Creator. This will explain why God first passed judgment upon the tempter. But if God pronounces unsparing judgment

upon His enemy and man's, He takes occasion to proclaim the counsels of His grace, which should be effectuated in the advent of the woman's seed, and His victory over Satan and Satan's power. As often pointed out, this is no promise to the first man; how, indeed, could there be a promise to Adam, who was already under judgment? No; "it is neither a promise to Adam and Eve from God, nor a hope of improvement in their children; but God pronounces judgment upon the enemy, and in the midst of it the revelation is made of the Saviour, the seed of the woman who had ensnared the man to be ruined of the devil. The woman's seed shall bruise the serpent's head; but He is bruised Himself first. What grace; yet righteousness! What humiliation; yet victory!" The Seed of the woman is thus Christ (Rome has falsified the word of God by translating—"she shall bruise thy head," and interpreting this of Mary!), and the seed of the serpent will mean all who are his servants, and who bear his moral likeness, as, for example, in John viii. 44. Bruising his head is a figure of Christ's complete victory over Satan (see Colossians ii. 15; Hebrews ii. 14, 15), through His death upon the cross—a victory so assured that the apostle could write to the saints at Rome, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Bruising the heel of Christ will refer to the cross, where He was crucified through weakness, and where, to the outward eye, He suffered defeat, for it was there that He was by wicked hands, under the leadership of Satan, crucified and slain. But risen from the dead He has the keys of hell and death, and He will finally cast Satan into the lake of fire and brimstone. (Rev. xx. 10.)

II.

ROMANS viii. 18-22.

“If children,” the apostle says, “then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.” This is a wonderful presentation of our association, through grace, with Christ; co-heirs; co-sufferers, and co-glorified. Our suffering with Christ springs from the fact that we are children and heirs of God. Of the same nature, and in the same position in this world, we must suffer, in measure at least, as He suffered. But the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in (or “to”) us. This statement gives occasion for the introduction of the “creature”—in fact, the creation, the state of which, through man’s sin, being the cause of the sufferings of the children of God, linked, as they are, through their bodies with it. From verse 20 we learn that this creation was made subject to vanity; that is, to the bondage of corruption, not willingly, or of its own will, but in consequence of Adam’s fall, who thus brought in ruin upon the whole of this creation; and hence it says, “by reason of him who hath subjected the same.” But according to the purposes of God, as it has shared in the consequences of man’s transgression, so will it partake in the issue of his redemption; and thus the apostle proceeds (the reader will note the change of a word, and the alteration of the punctuation), “in hope that the creature [creation] itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.” It cannot participate in grace, but it will in the glory of God’s

children ; and, consequently, "the earnest expectation of the creature [creation] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." This makes it very clear that the time of which Paul speaks is that in which Christ will come to be glorified in His saints, when, in fact, He will display them in the same glory as His own, and with Himself. It is of that same time John writes when he says, "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." (Rev. v. 13.) Until that time the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together ; and even believers, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of their body. For while saved as to their souls, it is not until the resurrection morn that our salvation will be consummated ; for it is then that the bodies of our humiliation will be fashioned like unto the glorified body of Christ, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. We are thus saved "in" hope ; and we wait for the time for which creation also waits ; only, meanwhile, the Spirit helps our infirmities, and becomes in us the interpreter before God of the sorrows of the scene around, which we feel but cannot utter. But in the very groans which He produces He makes intercession for us according to God.

THE power of resurrection-life takes all strength from Satan.

ON DAVID'S SIDE.

1 CHRONICLES xii. 16-18.

IN chapter xi. David is anointed king over Israel, according to the word of the Lord, by Samuel. The events which intervened between the death of Saul and David's accession to the throne are not here recorded, for the kingdom is looked at, in this book, as "ordained of God in blessing, rather than the historical account of all that took place, excepting so far as was necessary to furnish this picture. There is not perfection here; but there is the order which God appointed. The faults and the sufferings of David, whether before or after he was made king, are consequently passed over in silence." These sentences give, in fact, the key to the understanding of the Chronicles, and fully explain, at the same time, what has so often perplexed the natural mind, viz., the seeming want of agreement between the records in the Books of the Kings and of the Chronicles. The kingdom being established, the list and the feats of the mighty men are then narrated.

Coming now to our own chapter, we find that the Spirit of God leads us back to the time prior to David's exaltation to the throne, and expatiates with delight upon those who had identified themselves with him in his rejection, "while he yet kept himself close because of Saul, the son of Kish." Through grace, one can understand this, for it needed deeper convictions,

and a greater energy of faith, to acknowledge David as the Lord's anointed, when he was hunted by Saul as a partridge upon the mountains, than when he was accepted as king by all the tribes of Israel. The same distinction is often made in the Scriptures, between the time of the Lord's rejection and that of His kingly rule and power. Thus, David himself, speaking prophetically (his own experiences, doubtless, giving the occasion), says, "Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people; Thou hast kept me to be head of the heathen: a people which I knew not shall serve me. Strangers shall submit themselves unto me; as soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me" (2 Samuel xxii. 44, 45). Faith alone, indeed, could lead to the acceptance of the rejected king, whereas fear or self-interest might produce subjection to him when his kingdom is established in power. Thus, the dying malefactor confessed Christ, as Heir to all the royal rights of David, as God's Christ, when He was crucified in weakness; whereas, on the other hand, the time will come when, through the greatness of His power, His enemies will submit themselves unto Him, and yield Him "feigned obedience" (Psalm lxvi. 3).

It is of great interest to observe that the Spirit of God first names, of those who ranged themselves under David's banner when he was cast out and rejected, Saul's brethren of Benjamin. The greater the natural obstacles, the greater the faith required. Every natural interest, every instinct of the flesh, their tribal pride and loyalty, would tempt the Benjamites to adhere to the house of Saul. To forsake Saul, and to

follow the leadership of David, would bring down upon them the wrath of their brethren, as well as the enmity of the king in power. Nothing but faith—faith which viewed David according to God's thoughts, and Saul likewise, could have enabled them to break every tie which bound them up with the house of Benjamin. Hence it was that the Lord declared that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household," and, He added, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." These Benjamites did love David more than father or mother, son or daughter, and, under the power of his attractions, they were enabled to take up their cross and follow him.

After Saul's brethren, the Gadites are the next mentioned. The Gadites, it will be remembered, had received their inheritance (together with the Reubenites and half the tribe of Manasseh) on the other side of the Jordan. They had chosen what suited themselves and their flocks (Numbers xxxii.), instead of the land flowing with milk and honey, a land on which the eyes of the Lord their God were resting always, from the beginning of the year unto the end of the year. They had thus sunk far below the height of their calling, and on this very account it is all the more remarkable to notice that God was still working in power in their midst. The very terms by which this company is described reveal the mighty effects of grace, according to the truth of the dispensation under which they

lived. They were "men of might," who "separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness," "men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains" (v. 8). Such were the men of this tribe, who were drawn to the man after God's own heart, men who were strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, and thus qualified for conflict with the enemies of the Lord's anointed. For Dávid's sake they had abandoned home and everything, and were ready to endure hardness, as good soldiers of the host of God.* It is of these that the record is given, that, like Joshua and Israel of old (Joshua iii. 15), they went over Jordan when it had overflowed all its banks, and were victorious over all the power of the enemy.

We come now to our immediate scripture, from which we learn that some of the children of Benjamin and Judah came to the hold unto David. Saul's brethren (v. 2) were also of Benjamin; but they would seem to be more immediately connected with his family, whereas these are simply specified as belonging to the tribe. This company, composed of members of the two tribes, is distinguished moreover by the record of what passed between them and David when they went to offer themselves for his service. First, observe that

* The reader may be interested in searching out the meaning of the eleven names given. With the exception of the last, all tell of grace and the work of the Spirit. The last signifies a "cloak." In every company on earth, even as in the midst of the twelve disciples, there is imperfection, and, *perhaps*, a traitor.

"David went out to meet them." It was the response of his heart to their own desire. It is a foreshadowing (even if but faintly) of the welcome which our blessed Lord ever accords to those who, through grace, offer themselves as vessels for His will and service. The first step towards Him ever draws Him towards us, even as He turned and saw the two disciples of John following Him, and said, "What seek ye?" Then, in the next place, David said, "If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you." David's love should be their wages; and truly it is the devoted servant, the one who has no will but that of his Lord, who enjoys most of his Lord's affections. Lastly, David left his cause in God's hands. Should it be that treachery lurked in the hearts of his proffered helpers, conscious of his own integrity, he could leave his vindication with the God of his fathers. Truly David was governed by the Holy Spirit in this greeting.

Nor is the reply of this company, through the lips of Amasai, the chief of the captains, less beautiful. We are expressly told, indeed, that the Spirit came upon him and ordered his speech; and we may therefore call especial attention to the words which he uttered. "Thine are we, David," he said. Here it is where all true service commences—in the acknowledgment that we belong to Christ. There are many Christians who have never distinctly taken this ground. They have found relief for their consciences through the efficacy of the precious

blood of Christ, but they have never really received Him as their LORD. It was the first thing which Saul of Tarsus did. Subdued by the grace of the One who had sought him, when in the full career of his enmity against Jesus of Nazareth, he bowed at His feet with the words, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And, though there were failures, this was the attitude he maintained throughout the whole of his devoted life. What then of ourselves? Suffer the question, dear reader, Have you definitely taken this place, owning the Lord's absolute claims upon and over you? If this has been done, let us remember, at the same time, that it needs constant watchfulness, and the realization of entire dependence, day by day, to continue in the place taken. We may say to-day, "Lord we are thine"; and to-morrow, we may allow our own wills. But if we have accepted the yoke of Christ, and if our eyes are ever fastened upon His blessed example, as the meek and lowly One, we shall indeed find rest to our souls. *Thine are we, Lord Jesus!*

Amasai continued: "And on thy side, thou son of Jesse." This would mean that Amasai and his companions had ranged themselves on the side of David, as the true king, and against all his enemies. Henceforward they refused Saul, and were on David's side in all the conflicts he might have to wage on his way to the throne and the kingdom. They now had God's thoughts concerning both David and Saul, and they identified themselves with that son of Jesse whom Samuel had anointed as God's elect king. In

the application to ourselves two meanings may be distinguished. If we are of the same spirit as Amasai and his company, we shall be on the side of Christ in all His controversies and conflicts; we shall be *for* Him and *against* all His adversaries. Like Paul, we shall seek to be "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Then we may advance a step further. Amasai and his companions had turned their backs upon the man in power, and had now taken their place outside of his world and its attractions, in becoming identified with the man of God's own choice. Have we, in like manner, turned our backs upon the man in power in the world, and assumed our true place on the side of God's accepted Man, the Lord Jesus Christ? To do so there is a journey to be taken—even as Amasai and his companions went out from the kingdom of Saul to take their place with David. May it be true of us that, in this sense, we are on the side of Christ.

Having thus declared themselves, Amasai added, "Peace, peace, be unto thee, and peace to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee." This was the language of faith, for Amasai's responsive salutation was grounded upon the assurance that God was David's helper. Outwardly, everything was at this time against David. Saul was on the throne, and he was using the whole power of his kingdom to destroy the one whom he knew had been chosen of God to reign

over His people. But faith possesses God's thoughts, and hence looks onward to the sure and certain accomplishment of the word which He has spoken. These men of Judah and Benjamin, therefore, already realized the coming glory of David's reign; for faith is the "substantiating" of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. In like manner, the believer now is not deluded by what he sees, by the glamour which the god of this world throws on all around him, because he knows that by God's immutable decree all things are put under Christ as the Son of man, and that He will soon assume His power and reign until all enemies are put under His feet. May we ever discern, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the true character of things around us, that we may never be deceived by appearances, and that, while waiting for the coming glory and kingdom of our blessed Lord and Saviour, we may be found unmistakably on His side!

"YE IN ME, AND I IN YOU."

JOHN xiv. 20.

ONE of the most remarkable and wonderful communications, which the blessed Lord made to His disciples, is to be found in John xiv. 20. The deep affections of His heart were fully in exercise in those solemn closing hours of His life on earth. "Having loved His own . . . He loved them unto the end." Marvellous communications, which were but little understood, fell in rich abundance from His lips, the intelligence of which was left for a time

then future, but not far off. Among the many new and divine revelations of which the Lord spoke, perhaps none were fuller in meaning or result, than that contained in the verse named: "At that time ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you."

That the Son was "in the Father" had already been referred to (verse 11) and had been demonstrated in the life of the Son on earth. "Ye in Me, and I in you," had never yet received its demonstration, but awaited, as to an existing fact, the presence of the Holy Ghost promised at this time by the Lord. The anxious intelligence of the three announced facts hung, however, upon that same Spirit's presence. These two latter priceless germ-truths announced by the blessed Lord, as was the case with many others, are developed in detail by that special servant and apostle to whom all the divine revelations were made that were essential to the full intelligence of Christian standing and Christian state. Hence, in several epistles, these corresponding and related truths appear, and, though the same in fact, it will be found that they are varied as to application to the believer.

Looking at the Epistle to the Romans first, we shall see that the believer is in that epistle viewed both as "in Christ" and "Christ in him," in chapter viii. In verse 1 the application of the truth of the believer's being "in Christ" is connected with the intelligent consciousness that he no longer belongs to, or stands in, the order to which condemnation attached, and in which acceptance was impossible. But now he belongs to that which, having Christ

risen as its head, he stands, and necessarily so, emancipated from all association with Adam's headship and its consequences *for God*.

This is the soul's "deliverance" in its first apprehension, and is accompanied by thanksgiving. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Its character being negative rather than positive—in application not going further than "no condemnation." Relief is reached at last, through searching exercises, that have produced thorough self-knowledge.

But in verse 10 we read, "If *Christ* be *in* you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." This, being connected with verse 9, is evidently by the indwelling of the Spirit of God, and results in Christian *state*. The body annulled as to active obedience to sin (the nature), by reckoning dead, and taken up again as the vessel whose life is the Spirit of God.

This is probably the most remarkable statement of what Christian *liberty* is; for such a state could only result in fullest, holiest liberty, in its character anticipatory of resurrection, of which again the Spirit is the quickening power, as to the mortal body referred to in the next verse. Thus, "in Christ" in Romans is *deliverance*, while Christ "in" the believer is *liberty*.

Colossians may furnish us with the next instance of the application of these words to the believer, in chapter ii. 10. This will be found to differ materially from that in Romans.

The subject of Colossians is separation from the world in all its rudiments or elements, including its philosophy, its ordinances, or its grosser attractions, by means of the heart's full satisfaction. This is

summed up and expressed by the apostle in the words, "Ye are complete [filled full] in Him, who is the head," etc. It is positional satisfaction; the One in whom the believer is suffices to meet the deepest and holiest desires; all that He is, of divine life in him, circumscribing his joy and satisfaction, including Christ as the full measure of the Father's revelation of Himself: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

But the alternative truth, "Christ in" the believer is also presented in this epistle. (Chapter i. 27.) "Christ in you, the hope of glory," begetting the prospect of eternal glory by His presence; the realization in the believer, as yet in hope, of the Lord's own words in John xiv. 3, "That where I am, there ye may be also." His indwelling effects this.

Colossians consequently presents the believer as "in Christ" for fullest satisfaction, and "Christ in" him as "hope of glory," in perfect suitability with the general object of the epistle, which treats of divine counter influences to the present scene through which the believer is passing, and in which he is encouraged to set his mind "on things above, not on things on the earth."

In Ephesians these terms are also found. "In Christ" (chapter ii. 6) being the believer's heavenly position as viewed from the height of God's eternal purpose. "Seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." It is not yet *with* Christ as accomplished fact, which awaits the application of that same quickening power to the body in a coming day. We are here in the presence of the highest and most marvellous com-

munication expressed in scripture by the words, "in Christ."

But Christ is also spoken of as being *in* the believer in this same epistle (chapter iii. 17), viz. dwelling in the heart by faith, *i.e.* intelligently, through the affections, apprehending Him who thus indwells as the centre and circumference of all that purpose stands connected with, viz. (verse 19), "the fulness of God" so vast, so infinite, that the heart turns with relief to that which, in its simple and perfect expression, furnishes definite and satisfying rest, viz. the love of Christ, sensible of being *the object* of that love which passeth knowledge.

In Ephesians, consequently, "in Christ" has to do with heavenly position, while "Christ in" the believer connects itself with "all the fulness of God."

Thus "ye in me" tells of

Deliverance in Romans;

Satisfaction in Colossians;

Heavenly Position in Ephesians:

While "I in you" is expressive of

Liberty in Romans;

The Hope of Glory in Colossians;

All the Fulness of God in Ephesians.

How perfect in their simplicity the blessed Lord's words were; and what profound and inexhaustible truth lay concealed beneath them, to be appreciated and enjoyed only by the communication of their deep meaning by the Holy Ghost! "*At that day* [this day of the Spirit's presence] *ye shall know* that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you."

M. C. G.

DEVOTED OR BACKSLIDING: WHICH?

EVERY true servant of Christ and lover of God's people must feel greatly the apparent lack of true and whole-hearted devotedness to Christ in this day amongst those who profess His name. It is most lamentable to see that the increase of light and Scripture knowledge has not produced the corresponding effect of devotedness to Christ and separation from this world. It has often been remarked that when people were less enlightened there was more true devotedness. How many there are who say "Lord! Lord!" and yet do not what He enjoins.

This is not only true of the vast profession which bears Christ's name, and which will eventually be spued out of His mouth, because of having proved unfaithful to Him; but also of those who have been privileged with the greatest light. As was said in another day, "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Hence the great want of *self*-surrender to Him. Where devotedness for the Lord is lacking, there cannot be true faithfulness and uncompromising testimony for Him in this world where He was, and still is, rejected.

The great secret of whole-hearted devotedness to Christ is to know and enjoy His love, and thus to be absorbed with Himself alone. No wonder Paul bent his knees, and prayed so earnestly for the Ephesian saints, that they might be not only strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ

might dwell in their hearts by faith, but that they also might know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and so be filled unto all the fulness of God.

Nothing but true affection for Christ can draw us from the influences of this world, or keep us from them. Our hearts must be centred in, satisfied with, and controlled by an Object outside of self and seen things, if we are to be preserved from the present awful current of worldliness around us. No amount of intelligence can produce devotedness. We might be a walking encyclopædia of Biblical knowledge; we might have ransacked the whole domain of theological literature; we might have committed to memory, and might be able to explain, every verse in the Bible; we might be able to define and settle in a most authoritative way the hardest points in theological controversy; our lips might utter very high and heavenly truths, and all the while our hearts be cold and indifferent to what suits the Lord at this present moment.

Moreover, our Church position might be unassailable. We might be maintaining the right ground, as people speak, and the Lord might say of us as He said of Ephesus, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless, I have it against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." (Rev. ii. 2-4, R.V.)

It is a great mistake to think that devotedness is only shown by great acts of service. Not that service should be made little of: but a person might be most

active in service, and to all appearance might be very energetic in it, and all the while might not be truly devoted to Christ. If Saul thought he was doing a great service when he spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the Lord his God in Gilgal, Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Martha is an example of this, as well as the Ephesian assembly which has come before us. "She was careful, and troubled about many things," and she said to the Lord, "Dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" She evidently wanted Mary to leave her sweet retreat for the moment, and help her. But the Lord said, "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Mary sat at the Lord's feet, and learned His mind, and thus knew what suited Him. This the Lord most appreciated and commended, and from this place all true and effective service must ever flow.

No doubt, where devotedness to the Lord is true and real, it will be seen in some form of service. But it might not be of such a character that men would esteem or value it. For instance, when Mary of Bethany showed her devotedness to the Lord by bringing a pound of very costly ointment, and anointing His feet, and wiping them with her hair, Judas said, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" He thought Mary's devotedness was all waste. Men would doubtless have thought far more highly of what the rich men cast into the treasury than what the poor widow cast in. Not so the Lord—"That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God"; "The first shall be last, and the last first."

There is nothing the blessed Lord is so jealous of as our heart's love. He does not ask us to love Him without giving us the motive to do so—His own deep, unfathomable, unchanging love, of which we have been the eternal objects, so fully expressed in giving Himself for us. As Paul says, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." And also, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live *should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him* which died for them, and rose again." Also, when Paul sought to move the Corinthians to a truer devotedness and greater liberality in giving to others, he used the mightiest possible lever to move their hearts when he said, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

Nothing is so jealous as true love: it cannot bear rivalry. But, alas! how much the blessed Lord has to bear with us; for is He not often rivalled in our hearts? "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," is a word which is often forgotten and greatly overlooked. Anything that supplants Christ in the heart of a Christian is an idol, and ought to be judged and put far from us.

"Take Thou our hearts, and let them be
For ever closed to all but Thee;
Thy willing servants, let us wear
The seal of love for ever there."

It is extremely sad to see departure from first love, and to witness the declension of those who were once burning and brilliant in testimony for Christ. Of old,

God said of Israel, "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." And the prophet Haggai said to the returned captives of Ezra's and Nehemiah's days, in whom declension was so soon manifested, "Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little . . . ye drink, but ye cannot be filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it in a bag with holes. . . . Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. *Because of Mine house that is waste, and ye did run every man to his own house.*" What sad declension!

It has been remarked that "backsliding begins at the closet door," which is quite true. It behoves each one of us, therefore, to watch the beginning of things. No matter how far advanced we may appear to be, or how much truth we know, it cannot be held in divine power if we do not seek to be *alone* with God in our closets. I shall never forget a servant of Christ saying that "if we judged ourselves for a dull half-hour we would never get a fall." If our dulness arises from something we may have allowed in our walk and ways to grieve the Holy Spirit, how true this is. But if we judge ourselves, and turn to the Lord in confession, "*we shall not be judged.*"

Now soul declension is far more common than many suppose. How many there are who, though not openly backsliding, are nevertheless backsliders in heart. They may never miss a meeting; they may be very

correct and upright in their ways; they may maintain a perfect outward decorum; but all the while they may evince very little heart for Christ, or His interests. Of such the Scripture says, "They shall be filled with their *own* ways," not the ways of Christ, or what pleases Him. We might call such people lean-souled Christians—like those of old, of whom it is written, "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul." The Lord save His people from such a wretched state!

No state of soul, perhaps, is so serious in any saint as to be in a declining state, and not to know it, or to be indifferent to it. God said of backsliding Ephraim, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not." Yet think of the compassionate heart of God saying, "*How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together.*" (Hosea xi. 8.)

How very comforting to be assured of the fact that, though the Lord may allow us to reap the fruit of our own ways, and make us feel the bitterness of having departed from Him, yet His love never changes toward us: "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Nothing could ever induce Him to give us up, though we, in our foolishness, may be tempted to give Him up.

Though Peter denied Him, yet the Lord's heart remained unchanged toward Peter. With a look that must have expressed the deepest love for Peter, the Lord broke Peter's heart, and afterwards fully restored

him. What marvellous grace! how like the Lord this is!

May the Lord attach our hearts more to Himself, in the place where He is, outside this world. May we have the same spirit as Ruth, when she said, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

P. W.

THE BEARING OF ROMANS VI.

ROMANS vi. does not describe a state which is true of every Christian, whether he knows it or not, and which has to be believed to be realized; but it describes the part with Christ in His death *to* which we were baptized, and which it is for faith—and therefore the privilege of every Christian—to *take* and *keep* upon the warrant of God's own exhortation. Except as so taken, it is not ours or true of us, but as so taken in faith it is our proper and settled portion as Christians.

As the exercise of this faith becomes a habit and characteristic (the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus working as a law), so the settled character of the portion becomes apparent. But "dead to sin" and "alive unto God," in this scripture, are not expressions referring to that which has been accomplished once for all and for good. They involve maintained exercise of faith. The experimental realization is by the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. If we were actually

dead, it would be a thing once for all and for good, without any reckoning about it, but the being dead to sin in Christ's death, and the living to God in Christ Jesus, are experimentally entered into through the reckoning of faith in the power of the Spirit, which, on the authority of this scripture, accepts Christ's death to sin as my death to sin, and His living to God as my true and proper portion also. Our position in Christ Jesus is absolute, but our living unto God—*i.e.* with God as the object of the soul, instead of sin as its object, as before—involves the exercise of faith in its first initiation, as well as in its maintenance. The warrant for the reckoning is presented in the very chapter in which the exhortation is given.

It is interesting to observe the "we," in verses 4-10 of Romans vi., brought in to help those whom the apostle is addressing. He addresses them directly as "ye" in verse 3, and turns again to them in direct exhortation in verse 11. In between come verses 4-10, containing an account, according to Christian intelligence, of what the bearing of Christ's death is, and of our state as having died with Him according to the reckoning of faith. Death with Christ, and the answering link with Him in life, are thus brought in as having become a reality for our souls, and a real deliverance. We are not actually dead, but according to faith's reckoning we have died with Christ, and thus found deliverance. Except as so reckoning ourselves, the identification here referred to does not exist, neither is the deliverance known.

Having thus told out in the words of Christian knowledge what our state is, as reckoned by faith in relation to Christ's death, the apostle returns, verse 11,

to the "ye," exhorting them to plant the foot of faith in like manner—"Likewise reckon *ye also yourselves,*" etc.

In exemplification of what has been said above, in reference to verses 4-10, now take, as an instance, the words "knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him." This is a description of our state according to Christian knowledge, put into the mouth of those who have appropriated the true bearing of Christ's death; it is not a judicial fact or position objectively presented as true of me, whether I know it or not, and which I am called on to believe and realize, but it is an identification with Christ, which has been accepted in faith, and is thus described in the language of faith; and with this identification is essentially bound up the deliverance of the soul. Like the words, "I am crucified with Christ," of Galatians ii. 20, it is faith which speaks according to its reckoning. As another puts it—"When we die with Christ, it is 'we.' 'I am crucified,' a real experimental thing, not judicial, though we get liberty in seeing it accomplished in Christ." I do not, of course, refer here to the words "Ye have died," in Colossians iii., for these are spoken (as so often pointed out) from God's side, whereas what we have in Romans vi. is the reckoning from the faith side. The reckoning of faith in Romans vi. is not founded on Colossians iii., but on Christ's death to which we were baptized.

A. M. M.

GOD would have us not merely holding our heads above water, but going on in the strength of His **grace**.

THE KEY TO THE PSALMS.

THIS Psalm (xviii.) presents us also with a direct scriptural proof and illustration of a most essentially important principle as to the nature of all the Psalms, giving a key to their general character and form. We know from the Book of Samuel that the occasion of this Psalm was the celebration of David's deliverances from the hand of Saul, and of all his enemies. But it is evident that the language of the Psalm in no way stops short at any events in the life of David, or that in its main purport the Spirit of God contemplates even what happened to that already anointed sufferer, who was the occasion of the Psalm. The Spirit of God takes up the circumstance which has present personal interest for him whom He uses as prophet merely, as the occasion to bring out the larger and wider scene of which Christ alone can be the centre, giving a meaning to the whole, in respect of which the more immediate circumstance only forms a partial, though perhaps a most interesting link in the chain which leads up to the full display of God and His ways in the great result. So it was with all the prophets, only here more personally predictive. Sennacherib's invasion, for example, is the occasion of bringing on the scene the Assyrian of the latter days. Thus prophecies had an application of the deepest interest at the time, and became the instrument of the present government of God, but were also the revelation of those ultimate events on the earth in the same peoples and nations in which the government of God would be fully and finally displayed. They are no private interpretation (*ιδίας ἐπιλύσεως*). They formed part of the great scheme of divine government, J. N. D.

BLESSER, BLESSED, AND BLESSING.

“ Freely ye have received ; freely give.”

CHRIST'S perfect excellence alone
By God Himself is fully known,
To whom He yielded up in death
A life undimmed by sin's least breath.

For us that spotless life was given ;
For us the temple veil was riven ;
God now on us shines forth in grace,
Accepted in His Son's own place.

To God in Christ now brought, we see
What fills with peaceful ecstasy,
All who at Jesus' feet abide,
With goodness won, and satisfied.

No distance now ; no fears, nor woes,
No obstacle can interpose
To daunt or lure the restful hearts,
Whom from their Saviour nothing parts.

Converse with God in daily life,
'Mid—yet above—earth's fields of strife,
Makes fat the bones, and tunes with praise
Our lips and lives for endless days.

Filled full in Christ, our spirits still
Freely acquire, of God's good-will,
Rich, fresh supplies from stores divine
While feasting in that House of Wine.

Here resting, we are ever taught
To own as His, all to us brought
By His own hand : Lord, still we yearn
More of Thy blessedness to learn,

That, blessed with Christ, these blessings we
May in our ways show forth for Thee :
Some small return allowed to make
Of love, thus loved for Jesus' sake.—W. C. C-B-C.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

LAMENTATIONS i. 12.

IT is asked whether this scripture is descriptive of the Lord's sufferings on the cross. The slightest examination of the chapter, and the recurrence of the names Judah, Zion, and Jerusalem, will show that what the Spirit of God had in view, in speaking through Jeremiah, was not the cross, but the desolating judgments which were about to be poured out upon the holy city through Nebuchadnezzar. God had borne, with much long-suffering, the grievous sins and rebellion of His people; but, as the last chapter of Jeremiah shows, wrath without remedy was finally their portion. Lamentations i. depicts the effect of this; and hence we read, "Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness." (vv. 3, 4.) Such, in our judgment, is the *interpretation* of this scripture; but, when this is held fast, an *application* may often be made in other directions, and with edification. Thus it is true that there was no sorrow, and never could be any sorrow, like unto the sorrow of our blessed Lord and Saviour, both in Gethsemane and on the cross; and it is also beyond doubt that His surpassing and unequalled sorrow (we speak now of His atoning

sufferings alone) sprang from the fact that Jehovah afflicted Him, as we read, indeed, in Psalm lxxxviii. 7, "Thy wrath lieth hard upon Me, and Thou hast afflicted Me with all Thy waves." There is no difficulty, therefore, in using the passage in Lamentations as an *illustration* of our Lord's sufferings.

II.

JOHN vi. 53-57; 1 CORINTHIANS xi. 23-26.

The question is, if there be any connection between these scriptures. There is no reference to the Lord's Supper in the former, while the latter deals exclusively with it; and yet both alike relate to the Lord's death. In John it is a question of entering into the enjoyment of eternal life and what is connected with it. It is the will of the Father "that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I," said the Lord, "will raise him up at the last day." (v. 40.) There is therefore the sovereignty of grace in the gift of eternal life in and through the Son, and there is also the title to its possession, viz. faith in the Son. When we come to verse 54 we have another thing, and that is the way in which the believer appropriates, so as to enjoy, this heavenly blessing, eternal life. And this, as we read, is by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man. There is no question but that the flesh and blood express death; this all accept. It only remains, therefore, to point out that eating and drinking signify the appropriation for ourselves of the death of Christ as here presented. It is, indeed, the acceptance through faith of the judgment which fell upon Him as our due; so that we put ourselves under, so to

speak, the stroke of judgment which He endured. We thus become identified with, and morally assimilated to, His death; and we find in this the doorway into the possession of eternal life, inasmuch as we pass out of this scene through death, accepted and morally known, and enter into the circle of heavenly things, where fellowship with the Father and with the Son is enjoyed. In 1 Cor. xi. the eating the bread and drinking the cup are expressly connected with the *remembrance* of Christ, and showing, or announcing, the Lord's death. (*vv.* 24-26.) No doubt that it speaks to us also of communion with His death; but the word "remembrance" signifies an active recollection, or calling to mind. It is therefore the *Lord's* death we celebrate in the supper. This, in brief, will suffice to show the difference between the two scriptures.*

III.

ROMANS xiii. 8.

It does not seem, in our judgment, that the apostle had debts in his mind in writing these words. Indeed, this verse flows out of the exhortation in the preceding one—"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." Then, summing up every possible variety of obligation, and generalising the principle on which the believer should act, he proceeds, "Owe no man anything" (this will necessarily include every form of indebtedness), "but to love one another: for he that loveth

* Acts ix. 19, which was also quoted in the question, must surely be taken to refer to natural food, for it says in v. 9 that Saul was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

another hath fulfilled the law." Love therefore, if the word may be used, is an obligation (see 1 John iii. 16) which is never discharged; and, moreover, it is the "fulness" of the law. As another has expressed it in few words, "By the conduct which flows from love, the law is already fulfilled before its requirement is applied." It is, then, in the activity of love (of the divine nature) in the believer that his conduct is to be regulated in every relationship; and hence he gives to all their "dues" expecting nothing in return, even if he encounter, like our blessed Lord, little but ingratitude and hatred. We thus read, in the passage already cited, "Hereby perceive we the love [of God], because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Such is to be the Christian's path amongst his fellow-believers, and through a selfish and loveless world.

IV.

ROMANS xv. 4.

THE addition of a single word, omitted in the received text, and consequently in the authorised version, renders this scripture much more intelligible. It should then run, "that we through patience [endurance] and *through* comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." If, moreover, we take the word "comfort" to mean, as it often does, "encouragement," it will be a further help. What we have, then, in this passage is as follows:—The apostle has been citing from the Scriptures, to show that even Christ did not please Himself. He then says, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (instruction), and to the end "that we, through

endurance," as following in the footsteps of Him who encountered reproaches on every hand because of His immovable fidelity, "and through [the] encouragement of the Scriptures," that is, through the encouragement which God ministers through His word to His tried and faithful servants, "might have hope"—hope in the ultimate issue of present trials, even in the glory of God Himself. The reader may be interested in noting the large place which hope fills in the Epistle to the Romans. In chapter v. 2, the justified hope in the glory of God; in verse 4, it is the result of experience, proving what God is, in our journey through the wilderness; in chapter viii., "we are saved" (not "by," but) "in hope," inasmuch as we are still waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. In chapter xv. also, the Gentiles are said to *hope* (not "trust," as we read) in the Root of Jesse; and in the very next verse God is termed the God of hope. This is similar in its connection with verses 4, 5; for immediately after mentioning "patience and comfort," the apostle speaks of God as the God of patience and consolation (the same word as comfort, or encouragement). We learn from both that whether it be hope, or endurance, or encouragement, God is the blessed fount and source, and that He alone can produce these things, these graces, in the soul. Whatever, therefore, He desires to be in us, He alone can produce; and we are thus dependent upon Him for everything. And it may be added that, if Paul prays that the Christians at Rome might be filled, by the God of hope, with all joy and peace in believing, it was to the end that they might abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

“WE SPEND OUR YEARS AS A TALE.”

PSALM xc. 9.

THE brevity of human life is the subject of continual mention, and in a variety of aspects, in the Old Testament; and, generally speaking, it is associated with sorrow and regret. For example, when Hezekiah had been warned of his approaching death, he records, after that the Lord had, in answer to his prayer, lengthened his days, that he had said, “I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd’s tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: He will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt Thou make an end of me.” (Isaiah xxxviii. 10-12.) Similar expressions of lamentation may be gleaned from Job, the Psalms, and the Prophets. Even our blessed Lord, who charged Himself with the infirmities and sorrows of His people, cried, when He poured out His complaint before Jehovah, “My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass”; and again, “He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days.” (Psalm cii. 11-23.)

Passing by the special significance of these words in their application to our Lord as the rejected Messiah, we may enquire what it was that led to these utterances of grief over the shortness of human days and

the prospect of death. The answer is simple: earthly blessing was the characteristic promise to the saints of old. Death, therefore, was the end to them of all their hopes. To die was to die out of the sphere in which their special promises were to be realised. Read, for instance, Deuteronomy xxviii. 1-13, and it will be at once seen that the blessings promised on the condition of obedience were limited to the earth. It is quite true that God had spoken of life in connection with keeping His statutes and His judgments (Leviticus xvi.); but there was nothing to indicate that more was meant than length of days in this world. Twice, moreover, eternal life is spoken of; still, in both cases it looks onward to the time of the Messiah's kingdom. As far as revealed, therefore, the horizon of the Jewish saint did not extend beyond this world. That there were secret things which belonged to Jehovah, Moses said; but he added, "those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deut. xxix. 29.) This fact fully explains why the saints of old spoke of death in the manner we have seen.

In Christianity all this is changed, the reason being that the characteristic blessings of the Christian are heavenly. On earth he is surrounded by mercies surely, mercies suited to his daily path and to his pilgrim condition. He has also the forgiveness of sins and the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries, Abba, Father; but, though faith is the "substantiating" of things hoped for, he does not enter upon his actual

inheritance until after death, or after the Lord has come. The heavenly things are truly revealed by the blessed ministry of the Holy Ghost; and the soul that knows what it is to eat the flesh and to drink the blood of the Son of man will enjoy eternal life, and thus expatiate at large amid the heavenly scenes into which he will one day be introduced. It is, notwithstanding, the fact that the Christian has to wait for the coming of the Lord, or for death and resurrection, before he can enter upon the actual possession of that which has been secured for him in redemption. In one word, the Jew belonged to earth, and the Christian belongs to heaven.

If we remember this, we shall at once understand the different way in which death is regarded after Pentecost. The first time we are permitted to see a Christian in the prospect of death is in the case of Stephen. Surrounded by a mob filled with enmity, and in the very act of being stoned by the false witnesses which had risen up against him, his eyes were upward upon the glory of God, and upon Jesus at the right hand of God, when he called upon God and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." So far from regret at the termination of his earthly life, he was evidently filled with joyful anticipation of being with Him for whom, and to whom, he had testified to his nation, and was desiring at the same time the blessing of his persecutors and murderers. If the case of Paul be also considered the same thing will be witnessed. For four years he had been a prisoner at Rome, and part, if not all, of the time he had been chained to

a pagan soldier. At any moment, as far as human probabilities went, he might have been fetched and cast to the lions, to suffer a cruel and shameful death. What then were his feelings? Was he cast down at the thought of being "deprived of the residue of his years"? Not so; for he speaks almost with exultation at the possibility of his martyrdom, writing, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." There is, therefore, the greatest contrast imaginable between the earthly and the heavenly saint, and it is good for us to know it.

There is another secret of this difference of feeling in the prospect of death, and that is the resurrection of our blessed Lord. The apostle was showing the bearing of this upon the believer in 1 Cor. xv., and he concludes with the triumphant outburst, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Life and incorruptibility have thus been brought to light in the gospel; and hence it is that the Christian looks upon death as the path of life, and the path of life into the presence of his Lord. Indeed, he has already passed out of death into life—life morally known and enjoyed; and when, therefore, he departs to be with Christ, he does but enter upon the sphere to which

he already belongs, and where, after he is conformed to the image of God's Son in resurrection, he will enjoy, in the power of the life which is already his, fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

The conclusion, then, is, that if we are living at the height of our heavenly calling, we shall neither regret the rapid flight of years, nor sorrow, if the Lord tarry, at the prospect of death. If not on our guard, we may soon descend to the level of the Jewish saint, when we are reminded of times and seasons at the close of a year. May the Lord help us rather so to live in His presence, and so to have Himself filling our hearts, that "dying daily" we may be already living beyond death the life of heaven. As Paul said, "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

DIVINE strength cannot be where human strength is.

If we do not know how to be nothing, God must make us nothing.

THE place of nothingness is the place of moral exaltation. (Matthew xviii. 4.)

THE EXERCISE OF GIFTS.

No one can receive a gift from the glorified Head of the Church without being intended, by the Head Himself, to use that gift for the good of the whole assembly of God. The gifts given by Christ, who has gone up above the heavens, in Ephesians iv., are given to the assembly, and there can be no narrower sphere of exercise than that of the entire Church. •

Supposing that the great truths of Psalm lxxviii. 18, and Ephesians iv. 8 *et seq.* are accepted, and that the scope and intention of the Giver be entered into, a very practical question will suggest itself at once; that is, How shall a gift be exercised in such a day as the present one?

There seem to be hopeless obstacles in the way. Arbitrary rules, binding a great number of Christians to human societies and "churches" on the one hand; the general dispersion and startled condition of the sheep on the other, are alleged as reasons for precluding the free work of the ministry, even when its importance has been acknowledged. If we look around, how many true gifts will be seen lying useless (perhaps I should say, not in use); and how many a man who has received such from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, has been prevented from carrying out the true exercise of the gift by the efforts of the enemy!

The heart of Christ for the assembly, and the good of the assembly, will surely be subjects that will occupy a loyal soul who has received a gift from the Lord; and the practical question will arise as to how

he is to use this great treasure in obedience to the Head, for the good of the whole body.

I suppose that it is hardly necessary to insist upon the fact that a true gift from Christ will always be recognised by those who are walking in subjection to His will. The old illustration of the means of discovering whether a man be truly a baker will serve here. If there be any doubt whether anyone is to be recognised as a baker, the question will be settled at once by the fact of his making bread that is good and digestible. If his customers find that they thrive upon his rolls and loaves, they are right in supposing that he is a baker. There is a kind of analogy in true ministry; for there, where souls are fed, strengthened, and encouraged, there is certainly a gift.

And now let us look at one or two things in connection with our first question.

It is well to see that there can be no jealousy or party work in serving the Church of God. The very thought of such service will put the man himself in the background, to look for the exaltation of Christ and the prosperity of the sheep of the flock of God. I believe that there will have been deep and true exercise before God before entering truly into the service of the Lord and the Church; a kind of experience through which the great apostle of the Gentiles had passed, when he said: "By the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Cor. xv. 10.) This will not be learned without the acceptance of death, no doubt; and it is only after that one has seen the end of oneself as a religious "somebody," that one can leave to the Pharisees the occupation of seeking the high places in the synagogue.

If a truly gifted person sees grace working more in another he will rejoice over it, and magnify that grace. It is said that angels are not jealous of one another, and I suppose, indeed, that they are not; but angels have never known the grace of God, and if we are in the sense of this, there can be no self-exaltation. The exercise of a gift will entail humility, and the coming down to meet the subjects of ministry. Perhaps the greater the gift the more bending down; as in physical things, a tall man will bow down to help a child with a better grace than a short one. The vertebrae of a dwarf are very much against bending or making a proper bow.

And then there will be the sense that there is room for all. A lesser gift will be kept from the snare of saying that it does not belong to the body because it is not a hand, or some such member; and a greater one cannot say to a smaller that he has no need of him. I think one might use the illustration that the lights, large and small, are to burn together, and contribute to one illumination; and there is no reason why a smaller lamp should be snuffed out because larger ones be near. The ground is very wide ("until we all come to the full knowledge of the Son of God," and see following verses in Eph. iv.), and woe be to him who would interfere or restrict the use of the gifts in any way that is not according to the scope of the Giver. It is wonderful to see how the Lord will bless and use gifts that He has given, even in this day of confusion, when there is real dependence upon Him.

There is one more thing that I should like to notice, and it is this, that when there is the sense of having

received of the Lord a means of conferring light and blessing to His own, there will be a corresponding sense of the entire work being the Lord's. There will be the repose of heart in leaving results to Him; there will not be, there *cannot* be, any forcing of the truth on anyone, but there will be faith (in the exercise of ministry) in the Giver, so that He may operate in those to whom the truth is ministered; and whilst there will be activity of service, there will be true waiting upon Him that the blessing may be consummated. There will be a sense of having no peculiar or personal views to uphold or defend, so that even if there be opposition to the truth, the opponents can be left to the Lord.

May He awaken our hearts, so that His interests may be ours, and that we may not make the actual state of the Church on earth a pretext for remaining in an inert state. He, the Giver of the gifts, shall give grace and faith to the end, in the exercise of the very gifts themselves. May we all be reminded in receiving the ministry of the Word, that all gifts proceed from the exalted Head for the good of the whole Church!

E. L. B.

A MAN may speak; but, if his lips be not anointed by the Holy Ghost, his word will not take permanent root. This is a solemn consideration, and . . . it should lead to much watchfulness over ourselves, and much dependence upon the Holy Ghost. What we need is thorough self-emptiness, so that there may be room left for the Spirit to act by us. It is impossible that a man full of himself can be the vessel of the Holy Ghost.

C. H. M.

"KNOWING THE TIME."

THE value and object of time here are very different in God's thoughts from what they are in man's. To look at everything from God's standpoint—to reckon as He does—is the only way of true gain and profit for the believer. It is in measure, at least, understood by believers that this is the day (or time) of God's grace to man, when grace is reigning "through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," and most, too, have some sense that it is the time of His longsuffering with a guilty and rebellious world. But even these great truths we may hold without much exercise of soul as to whether our ways here are rightly affected by them, and our attitude to all around formed thereby.

It is clear from the epistles that these truths are intended to act upon us and give character to our lives and ways here. Not only so, but we find all through the Scriptures that where the ways or actings of God at any given time were apprehended, they were intended to form the conduct of those who knew them in harmony therewith. It was, moreover, the mark of the faithful that this effect was produced, whereas failing to act in fellowship with the revealed ways of God was judged as unfaithfulness. One or two instances may make this clear, and impress the importance of this truth upon our souls.

We find a remarkable illustration of both faithfulness and failure in this respect in the account given of the cleansing of Naaman, the Syrian leper. Naaman was to learn that there was a God in Israel who could

cleanse the leper, but it was also intended that he should learn that God acts in pure sovereign grace, that He is a giving God (blessed be His name, He has always delighted to show this out to poor sinful man), who acts in view of the need and misery of man, and not in respect of his fancied greatness and nobility.

Elisha was in the secret of God's mind, and therefore of His grace, even to a poor Syrian leper. Hence he ignores Naaman's greatness, and considers only his leprosy, and gives clear and simple instructions as to his cleansing. When Naaman humbles himself to this he gets to the full the blessing he sought and needed. But he would fain still be the great man, and would reward the man of God for his cleansing. He was not yet quite willing to be a "debtor to mercy alone." But Elisha refuses all his offers. His heart is free from covetousness, and he cares only for God's glory, and that *He may be known* in His true character. This is very beautiful on the part of Elisha, and affords a fine example of one "knowing the time," and what he himself, at least, ought to do, even when all had gone to ruin in Israel.

How different, alas! were the spirit and purpose of Gehazi, his servant. He, too, knew, or ought to have known, what befitted the occasion; but the honour of Jehovah was not before his soul. He eyed and coveted the silver and raiment of Naaman, as Achan, in his day, did the spoil of Jericho, and he sinks every other consideration to gain his desire, for "when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Solemn consideration! But nothing is hidden from God; all is naked and bare in His eyes, and so Gehazi soon found it to be. The

hidden things are made manifest, and the prophet of God, in pronouncing the solemn judgments about to befall him, does it more especially on the ground of his failure to act in keeping with what the occasion demanded, as it related to God's glory and name, rather than in respect to his deceit and lies, shocking as these were. The latter would, indeed, be readily condemned by the moral sense of his fellow-man, judging of right and wrong only as it relates to himself, but caring little for what affects God's glory, or what misrepresents His character.

Let us mark what the prophet lays stress upon. "Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?" This was what Gehazi forgot. He did not form his ways by the character of the moment as relating to God, but sought what pleased and ministered to himself; and solemn indeed was the discipline he had to undergo, for "if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself."

On the other hand, how faithful He is in loving-kindness and care to the one that trusts in Him, taking note of the smallest need, and never failing in the ministry of His hand to supply all that is really needed and best!

We must, however, bear in mind that we are not connected with an inheritance on earth. We are partakers of the heavenly calling. Woe to the believer who seeks great things here; he has lost sight of God's thought and will for him, and has forgotten the character of the present time in God's esteem. To any who are in danger of following in the line of greatness here—so serious and disastrous in its results

in every way—there is much instruction and warning in the divine message communicated by Jeremiah to Baruch in Jeremiah xlv. 4, 5. I will not, however, comment upon it, but desire to notice, briefly, another illustration of the importance of "knowing the time," furnished us towards the close of the Old Testament history, and recorded for our instruction in the Book of Haggai, chap. i. Through their unfaithfulness, God's earthly people had previously been driven out from their own possession. A remnant had, however (through God's sovereign mercy), been restored to the land, that they might there, in feebleness and fewness of numbers, be, on the one hand, the witnesses of Jehovah's power and grace in preserving them and in *maintaining* them in spite of all opposition; and, on the other hand, that they might, though in weakness, maintain the testimony to His name, His holiness, His faithfulness, His truth, and His righteousness; and all in connection with His *altar*, His *house*, and His *city*. And they began in this spirit, and with this purpose and aim. Alas! they soon forgot what was due to Him, and what was called for and suitable for that time. They did not reckon the value of the time from His standpoint, or in relation to His holy house and altar; and so the prophet Haggai has, in his turn, to raise this question of the value of the time, and how they were employing it. True, in their case it was not openly so bad as in that of Gehazi, but *in principle* it was the same, and, therefore, the appeal and the warning to them are very solemn. "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and *this* house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; *Consider your ways.*"

Has this no voice for us? Has their case no parallel, no counterpart, at the present time? Are we redeeming the time because the days are evil? Is it our own things—our houses, our comforts, our, it may be, worldly honour and reputation, that we are seeking after? Do we not well to ask ourselves at the close of another year, "What is the aim of my life? What is my heart really set upon, and what is its governing motive?" Should we not "consider our ways," and enquire why there is so little fruit for God, so little zeal in His things, and, hence, so little real joy and happiness; whether we are making provision for the flesh, rather than putting on the Lord Jesus Christ?

Let us call to mind what the Spirit of God addresses to *ourselves*: "It is high time to awake out of sleep, for *now* is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is *far spent*, the day is at hand." Our life here is but like a brief moment, and then we enter eternity. Yet of what immense value is this brief moment in which we have the inestimable privilege of serving Christ; of suffering with Him and for His sake; of showing forth His virtues (not our own); of seeking to testify of Him; to

"Know Him as we shall not know
Through heaven's golden years."

He has loved us as none other has or ever could do. He bore our judgment; washed us from our sins in His own blood; opened up the way into eternal life and glory; and secured all the joys of heaven (yea, of the Father's house) for us.

But He has been rejected here. This is what marks the present time in God's account as regards the

course of this world. On the other hand, He is gathering out of it those who are destined to be joint-heirs with Christ, and forming the Bride for His Son, and by the Spirit revealing and ministering heavenly blessings and glories. And as we know the love of Christ, and thus love Him, we shall find our joy and interests in what is for His glory and joy, and be in fellowship with the mind and heart of God as regards this present time. "The Father loveth the Son"; all is ordered and judged in the light of this. Hence we also read, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha."

God has called us to the fellowship of His Son (marvellous calling!), and this is enjoyed in and by the power of the Holy Ghost, given to all who have truly received Christ. This is our calling, and this the nature and character of the present time in the sight of God. Are we alive to it, and exercised as to the importance of what we profess to believe and hold? Nothing, perhaps, is more solemn and injurious than holding and professing truths, and yet walking in a course which is a practical denial of the reality and value of them. It is like the salt that has lost its savour—fit for nothing good.

May the Lord really exercise all our consciences and hearts as to His own declaration to those who profess to be His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth"! If any really desire to be here for Him, and to answer to His purpose for them here, He gives the power and the grace; and the Spirit of God so leads to the sense of His love, that what is surrendered is felt to be as nothing (save dross) in comparison to the great gain!

S. M. A.

THE GREETINGS OF A GLOWING HEART.

A CHRISTIAN who regards his own happiness will never cultivate bad tastes by either speaking or thinking evil of others—especially of those with whom he claims relationship through grace, and to whom he is united in the most endearing bonds.

The Scripture speaks reprovably when it says, "In many things we offend all"; and, because the natural tendency with us is to act contrary to the exhortation, "Let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. ii. 3), failure in regard to the above is not infrequent. And, as a consequence, we suffer often as evil-doers and busybodies in other men's matters. In fact, the word failure is not sufficiently strong to apply to that which may be classed with those things which are an "abomination to the Lord." (Proverbs xvi. 5.)

Now we read that "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." (1 Peter iv. 1.) The suffering spoken of in this passage is altogether of a different character to that referred to above, and is both profitable and praiseworthy—as much to be desired as the other is to be dreaded. The former is promoted by means of self-indulgence, including the sin of dwelling upon the failures of others, by means of which our hands are weakened for warfare with Satan, and also for the work of God. But, by applying the cross to ourselves in a practical way, we cease from sin—suffer as a consequence, and glorify God; and by ceasing to do evil we prepare ourselves for our next lesson to "learn to do well."

In Luke xii. the Lord Jesus makes use of the word "consider" twice over, in order to call attention to two things—"the raven" and "the lily." The former may remind the children of God that they ought to be without carefulness, and the latter of what they are to be at Christ's coming. "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." (1 John iii. 2.) The Apostle Paul often seeks to lead us into the knowledge of what we are in Christ, and also to instruct the saints as to the privilege of looking for that which is Christlike in one another even now. And to this end he says to the Philippians, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report . . . think on these things." To this he added the moral weight of his own example: "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." (Phil. iv. 8, 9.)

What they had thus learned from his lips and received through his preaching was made good in practice before their eyes, which placed the apostle in a position among the saints answering to what was seen in Gideon of old, when he said to his three hundred followers, "Look on me, and do likewise." (Judges vii. 17.) The blowing of Gideon's trumpet was accompanied by the breaking of his own pitcher, and the things which his companions had "heard and seen" in their leader, they were commanded to do; and as soon as they obeyed the word, and followed his example, their enemies were put to flight and a great victory was achieved. Breaking the pitchers was just

as important as blowing the trumpet, for until this was done the light contained therein was obscured, but then the light shone forth. The Apostle Paul may refer to this when he says, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." To which he adds, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed," etc. (2 Cor. iv. 7, 8.)

"Preaching is not Christ," is said to have been one of Samuel Rutherford's sayings; neither does it savour of Christ, we may venture to add, except the pitcher be broken. Eloquence there may be on the part of the speaker, and everything that is attractive to the natural mind, but when it becomes a question of "Christ," the souls of the hungry are often ready to famish for want of food. Happy the man, therefore, that could say, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2), which was the outcome, so to speak, of a broken pitcher. In other words, it was the presentation of a crucified Christ, by one that knew what it was experimentally to be crucified with Him, and could likewise say, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) Christ in glory had become the object of the apostle's heart, and was also the subject of his preaching. Difficult would it have been for his hearers to say, "Where was Christ in all we heard him say?" It would have been far easier to say, "Where was Paul?"

The Gideon-like man of whom we are speaking blew his trumpet faithfully by not shunning to declare all the counsel of God; and deliberately broke his pitcher by the manner in which he referred to himself while writing to the Corinthians: "Neither is he that planteth anything." (1 Cor. iii. 7.) He stood like a warrior in the battlefield without flinching before the enemy, and victor-like could say at the close of his career, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." And yet he could write of himself as "the least of the apostles," even while he recalled the mighty acts which had been shown in connection with his service.

There are two circles represented in the Epistle to the Romans, in each of which the apostle shows himself to be "a debtor." First, he declares himself to be a debtor in the outer circle of the first chapter: "Both to the Greeks and the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." (v. 14.) Those that were wise in their own conceits had become fools before God, and those that were unwise had been made wise unto salvation through the apostle's preaching. They were the fruit of his labours, and he takes the place of being their debtors. The other circle is the inner one, of the last chapter, where we find the apostle busily engaged in making out a long list of debts of love which he owed to his friends and fellow-sufferers, and which he knew he could never repay. The list of names is headed with "Phebe," who was commended by the apostle to the fellowship of the saints at Rome, and referred to as one that had succoured many, including himself. He then greets a married couple, to whom he was all the more indebted on account

of their devotedness to him, even risking their lives in serving him. The assembly also in their house is remembered by the apostle, in connection with which he salutes his "well-beloved Epænetus," who was the "first-fruits of Achaia," and further acknowledges himself a debtor to Mary," saying, "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us." (v. 6.)

We must leave the reader to trace the remainder of the names of these remarkable men and women, who, by means of their hard labour and sincere love for the Lord, had so endeared themselves to the apostle that he could not close the epistle without sending showers of salutations with greetings from his glowing heart, as he recalled them by name. And if we are humbled as we meditate upon the fervent charity which thus flowed out from the heart of Paul, let us each seek to cultivate more of the affections of Christ, that we may see every saint of God as robed in His own beauty.

H. H.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

NUMBERS iv. 23, 30, 35 ; viii. 24, 26.

ON the surface there does, undoubtedly, seem to be a discrepancy between these scriptures as to the age at which the Levites commenced their service. But there cannot be, by any possibility, a mistake on such a simple matter ; and the difficulty is at once removed by the suggestion often made, and generally accepted, that they were tested from twenty-five to thirty before they finally entered upon their appointed work. If so,

the first five years were a probationary period before their formal installation. Then, at the age of fifty, they were to cease waiting upon the service of the tabernacle, and were to serve no more. Still, they were to continue to "minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service." Thus they were no longer to carry the appointed burdens (chapter iv.) in their journeyings through the wilderness, though they might share with their "brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation." But they were still to keep the charge of the Lord, if they did no service. As the people in chapter ix. both journeyed and rested at the commandment of the Lord, so the Levites kept "the charge" both in their labours and when they ceased waiting upon their service. We learn that the will of the Lord is thus to govern us equally, whether in activity or retirement; at His word we are to labour, and at His word we are to rest. The only concern, therefore, of the servant is to be in communion with the Lord's mind.

II.

JOHN ii. 11 ; xi. 40.

IF these two scriptures are compared, the respective meanings of "the glory" in each will be apparent. In the first, Jesus had just turned the water into wine, a miracle which could only be wrought by divine power. Now it was this very putting forth of this divine power which the Spirit of God here connects with the truth of His Person; and He consequently says that He "manifested forth His glory"; that is, the inherent glory which belonged to Himself. The

disciples might afterwards work miracles, and do even "greater works" (John xiv. 12), but in their case they received the power for it, as we are more than once distinctly told (Matthew x. 6, Luke ix. 1, etc.), from their Lord and Master. Jesus, on the other hand, while ever maintaining the place of entire dependence, and doing not His own will but the will of the Father, and abiding at the same time in perfect communion, did but exercise His own power, whether in healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, or raising the dead. (John v. 19-21.) Reading His miracles in this light, we behold His glory (that is, the divine glory of His Person), and our faith, as with the disciples, is confirmed. Coming now to chapter xi., it is still Jesus who acts, and yet, in the prospect of raising Lazarus, He tells Martha that she should see, if she believed, the glory of God. In verse 4 He had said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." The raising of Lazarus was, indeed, the demonstration of the truth that Christ was the Son of God, for it was only omnipotent power that could call a dead man out of the grave. (Compare chapter v. 25-29.) But the display of this almighty power was a part of the glory of God, and in the light of its shining forth on this occasion Jesus was seen, by all whose eyes were opened, to be the Son of God. And this, moreover, was *for* the glory of God, that His beloved Son should be received and honoured according to the testimony which God rendered to Him by the grave of Lazarus. What unfathomed depths often lie concealed in the simplest statements of the word of God!

III.

JOHN i. 21.

THE personages here mentioned were the two that every godly Jew expected to appear at some time or another in connection with Messiah. Hence, when John came upon the scene, the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him three questions. Was he the Christ? Having confessed that he was not, they then, with reference to Malachi iv. 5, 6, enquired, Was he Elias? This also having been denied, they further asked, and now with Deuteronomy xviii. 17-19 in their minds, "Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No." It is very clear, therefore, we judge, that the Jews had not connected this promised prophet with their Messiah; and this is remarkable when it is considered that such ample testimony is borne to Him in this character. The blindness, moreover, of the leaders of the Jewish nation is strikingly seen in the fact that, minutely acquainted as they were with the letter of the word, they overlooked the special scripture that did describe John and his mission, the one to which John pointed them. The knowledge of Scripture indeed only blinds those who are not in present communion with the mind of God. In such a case, the light possessed becomes darkness. Thus the Pharisees who had interrogated John, instead of bowing to the word given them, evaded its application by turning aside to dispute his right to baptize, if he were not the Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet. But John—an example in this to every servant—only used their querulous unbelief as an opportunity to testify of the One whose forerunner he was. Truly he was a single-eyed, devoted servant.

“SURELY I COME QUICKLY.”

(TUNE—Easton.)

“THE Lord Himself!” ’t is He
Whose death on earth we show ;
His life, His power, His victory,
Through grace we know.

He shall from heaven descend ;
“Chief Messenger,”—’t is He
Whose coming shall faith’s trial end,
And make us “free.”

The dead in Christ shall rise,
And we, transformed as they,
Caught up with them in yonder skies,
His voice obey.

He ’ll meet us in the air,
Beyond the clouds of time ;
In glory and in beauty there,
In joy sublime.

His signal-shout, “Arise !”
God’s trump, our ears shall greet ;
One blissful moment of surprise—
Our Lord we meet.

All need for patience o’er,
“Like Him” in truth and grace,
With Him in glory evermore,
Then face to face.

H. K. B.